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Epilogue

The experts shaping the intellectual landscapes fostered a vibrant cultural exchange in the premodern and modern periods in the Ottoman Empire and the Eastern Mediterranean. The exploration of the matter of the terminology or the concepts used for the main historical actors in this book explores the nature and definition of experts and their expertise from a conceptual history perspective. A careful interpretation of concepts/terms of experts and expertise could lead to new ideas and aspirations constituting the meaning of these terms as they were used in the broader Eastern Mediterranean from the early modern period to the late nineteenth century.

Dealing with the historical semantics of terms/concepts, one should also see that overlapping terms/concepts bearing a historical character and application shifted over time. Today we define the term ‘expertise’ (derived from the Latin *expertus*) as ‘possession of the specialized knowledge’ but in early modern times, one could find it used to convey a variety of interesting meanings. As mentioned by Michael Wintroub, referring to dictionaries compiled in 1606 by Jean Nicot and in 1538 by Robert Estienne, ‘expert’ is one who is not only knowledgeable and/or practiced, but also ingenious. Along with this usual (customary for the time) definition the dictionaries provide synonyms such as ‘artificial, argutus, solers’ that are associated with the nature of experts and expertise. Interestingly, experience in the dictionaries was also labelled with the term ‘expertise’ and ‘proof.’ This definition was accompanied by critique on imposters, fakes and demonstration of fake qualities.

The terms used in the Ottoman practice and discussed in the contributions enable us to project and determine the indicators of great knowledge and erudition of the ‘heroes’ of the time. Rather than merely exploring the terms used by those actors, a further analysis and interpretation of these concepts offers valuable insights.

The concept of *erib* was used to describe one who is ‘intelligent, shrewd, expert and one that is practised and desirous (in a thing)’ and *erbāb* is explained as ‘expert, people concerned with’ (e.g.; *‘ilim erbābı* ‘experts of knowledge, scholars’). The specific terms such as *‘ehil [ehl]*’ in the sense of ‘men of letters, science’ and *mütebaşşış* as ‘specialist, and expert’ as well as *‘mütefennin*’ in the sense of ‘being learned in the art of science, being a scientist’ were associated with experts (here agronomists) to argue the extraordinary quality and value of ones’ expert knowledge.

Religious and social class affiliations (with and without formal institutional validation) and their expertise outweigh their social ranking, recognition and reputation that could witness the community, group of people and local area. On the one hand, acquired knowledge (e.g. on arts of warfare, *fünün-ı askeriye*) and being trained under the experts of knowledge (*erbâb-ı vukûf*) as well as gaining practical experience of battles made one an expert. At the same time, these experts could be called into question, and even if their expertise was not accepted or trusted, they became a matter of security concern. Multilingualism was also one of the attributes defining the experts and as a kind of a term denoted expertise based on the knowledge of languages even if the readers did not necessarily claim or know to a degree necessary to judge whether the expert in question was actually fluent in another language.

The affiliation of ‘*Khoja Tër*’ that Step’anos bore displays family affluence and his strong ties with clergy, which at the young age made his career path successful as a priest acting in one of the city’s largest churches. Therefore, strong family ties, social recognition, knowledge and practical experience (‘know how’) were the main indicators that helped Step’anos to demonstrate his knowledge and expertise in Tokat and then transfer it to Crimea.

Additionally, a component of being an expert was to be an insider (or one of ‘us’) and to carry the local knowledge of an (imagined) homeland. The Greek adjective ‘ἡμέτερος’ (*imeteros*, ‘our’) or the Turkish equivalent suffix ‘-mız’ in Karamanli-Turkish appears as a component of being or being admitted as a local/regional expert. So, in this case on the one hand, ‘our’ experts addressing internal and external audiences were accepted as ‘fighters’ to contradict already-circulated ‘fake knowledge’ and dissolve the ‘wrong image,’ and they were admitted as new and proficient, skilful and ‘*meharetli*’/‘*mabaretlî*’ ‘real experts.’ In contrast to ‘our’ experts, foreign experts (*efrenci*) were not trusted and were suspect. Furthermore, within the state-sponsored translation project of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, expertise rooted in the intellectual tradition of Ottoman-Islamic education empowered marginalized former Ottoman *ulema* to assert their ‘true’ knowledge and paved the way to discredit and reject expertise from rivals such as orientalist and missionaries, whom they labelled as ‘outsiders.’ Nevertheless, there is a striving within this project to encapsulate a comprehensive and diverse spectrum of expertise, underscored by the contributors’ use of various self-designating terms. These terms encompass both traditional labels and more contemporary descriptors, such as *ulema*, *ibtisas sahibi*, *münevver*, or *ilim adamı*.

Another question is the scepticism experienced through the different terms denoting the same spectrum of expertise used in different regions that displays a lack of or poor recognition of experts and (non) acceptance of one’s expertise. One term is a mirror reflecting traditional experience, passing down from father to son, and another term is expert knowledge acquired from institutions – diplomas, as in the cases of farmers and agronomists, or veterinarians and farriers. A vivid example was discussed showing the different imagery of social recognition of the terms *fallahin* (farmers) and *effendi* (agronomist).

Additional misunderstanding based on shared terms emerged in the case of overlapping terminology for experts who gained their expertise through disparate means.

The term *baytar*, which designated both veterinarians and farriers, led to confusion and veterinarians suffered a bad reputation because of equal recognition with farriers. Representing their expertise as the ‘real one,’ they sought to disqualify others by branding them as ignorant, outdated, unprofessional or *wrong experts*. Disqualifying their adversaries-farriers and seeing them as competitors, veterinarians branded farriers as ‘foul copies’ (*baytar taşlakları*), criticized them and exposed to the public their non-professional and ignorant practices as ‘charlatanry’ (*şarlatanlıkları*). This competitive dynamic between different groups of experts such as veterinarians and farriers illustrates the complexities of expertise recognition. Afterwards the exchange of the used title term *baytar* with *veteriner* paved the way to recognition of a higher level of understanding and a marker of scientific expertise.

Summarizing, we want to point out that terminology is an important tool for studying cultures of expertise in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially because so little is known about the terms and their development in the conceptual history of the Ottoman Empire and the Eastern Mediterranean. Nevertheless, terminology has only an auxiliary function in studying the phenomenon of expertise because cultures of expertise can be perceived only in the totality of their social, intellectual, communicative, and performative environments, which the contributors to our special issue try to reconstruct meticulously in their case studies, even when a concept, such as an explicit term name is not present.