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Laughter and Morality: The First Caricatures of the 19th-Century Ottoman Humour Press in Istanbul

Abstract

The oldest known caricatures of Ottoman humour press in Istanbul were published in *Zuarchakhos* 'Joker' (1856), an Armeno-Turkish humour gazette written in Turkish using Armenian script. It is also the oldest known humour gazette in Turkish. This gazette and its Armenian contemporary *Meghu* 'Bee' (1856) are the only known examples before the 1870s, when humour periodicals in Turkish using Ottoman Turkish script first appeared. The discourse of morality and normative caricatures featured in the Ottoman humour press in early 1870s. This phenomenon can be traced back to *Zuarchakhos* with many continuities. This article questions how subversive and satirical these first caricatures were, focusing on those featured in *Zuarchakhos* and two other gazettes in Ottoman Turkish language and script–*Latife* 'Joke' (1874) and *Tiyatro* 'Theatre' (1874)–all published by Ottoman Armenians. In doing so, this study explores what morality meant in this context, taking these caricatures as discursive formations. It could be suggested that morality was instrumentalised by the government to silence satire and political opposition and that humour gazettes in turn resorted to morality to push the boundaries of censorship. *Alafranga* was one popular topic shared by all three gazettes in question. At another level, this study seeks to contribute to the integration of the little-studied Armeno-Turkish humour press into Ottoman historiography.

Keywords: morality (*ahlak/edep*), humour (*mizah*), Ottoman, Armeno-Turkish, censorship, normative caricatures, social inequality.

1. Introduction

'If we close humour gazettes, can we restrain the hands of the illustrators (*ressam*s)? Let the impudent (*edepsiz*) be disciplined, but I am not of the opinion that banning humour would be a sound decision,' said one deputy during the lively debates of the Ottoman Parliament on 8 May 1877, when the second clause of the Article 8 of the new Printing Law–stipulating the prohibition of humour gazettes–was being voted upon. He was responding to allegations from the government's Director of the Press on the harmful effects of the pictures (*resim*s), that is, caricatures. Most other deputies opposed the ban, some basing their arguments on the morally instructive role of these gazettes, among other reasons.[1] During the same sitting of the parliament, Macid Bey, the Director of the Press, had argued that humour gazettes were unnecessary, of no good, and even harmful. To prove his point, he too, appealed to 'morality' by referring to some *resim*s he had seen in humour gazettes along with a French gazette. These *resim*s, he argued, were impudent (*edepsiz*) and acting

1 Us 1939, 216; 212–7.

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in a way contrary to public, household, and political morality. According to him, 'gazettes have two duties, that of defending laws (*muhafaza-i hukuk*) and that of instruction (*mürebbilik*), where there is no need for buffoonery.' Macid Bey was apparently speaking on behalf of the government, as one opponent deputy criticised that comments made by Macid Bey were not his own, but those of a Director of the Press.[2] Ottoman Parliament was newly opened, about two months after the declaration of the First Constitution on 23 December 1876. These first parliamentary discussions over humour periodicals showed that the Ottoman government policy approach towards humour had not changed much, since the emergence of humour gazettes in Istanbul around the middle of the 19th century and those in the Ottoman Turkish language and script in 1870s. Instrumentalisation of morality for contesting interests and ideologies by Ottoman state officials, intellectuals, and authors alike had been an underlying feature of Ottoman political discourse since earlier centuries.[3] Moral ideology not only provided justifications for government policy but also shaped how they conceptualised humour in theory in the 19th century.

The humour press was to be gradually suspended as of 1877–1878, particularly in Ottoman Turkish language and script.[4] The next period continued abroad in the form of political satire.[5] The Revolution of 1908 brought in another period with relative freedom[6] and satirical gazettes with plenty of subversive caricatures containing political satire boomed in Istanbul within the climate of the Revolution.[7] Studies on Ottoman humour periodicals from the 19th to 20th centuries, however, usually generalise them all as 'satirical' without classifying them in terms of freedom of the press, the nature of the humour, and caricatures.[8] One exception is Brummett's work on the revolutionary press of 1908, in which her terminological choice was methodological. She deliberately employed the term 'satirical' because the lighter forms such as 'humorous anecdotes, witticism' (*latife*) or 'amusement' (*eğlence*) did not fit the political cartoons that she studied.[9] Yet, the nature of humour in earlier Ottoman humour press remains unclear. To address this problem, this article tries to answer the question of how satirical and subversive the earlier caricatures were by

2 Us 1939, 212–7.

3 See Abou-El-Haj 1988; Mardin 1974, 415; 425–42; Oğuz 2021.

4 Secondary sources cite a few Armenian humour periodicals from the late 19th century despite this period of suspension, such as Hagop Baronyan's *Khigar* 'Wise' (1884), but without illustrations. See Bardakjian 1979, 18–9; Stepanyan 2005, 590. For censorship during the Hamidian period, see Demirel 2007.

5 For the Ottoman satirical press in exile from 1878 to 1908 in London and Geneva, see Çeviker 1986, 269–98.

6 Yet, a new censorship would be imposed under the CUP regime, which one caricature in *Kalem* complained about in February 1909. See Brummett 2018, 82–6; Yosmaoğlu 2003, 15–49. Yosmaoğlu notes that censorship would gradually transform 'into an institutionalized form of social and political control' from the 19th to 20th centuries, and that not only the Hamidian period, but also the CUP regime, was violent against political opposition.

7 See Brummett 2000; Heinzelmann 1999, 2004.

8 For example, Elmas 2013; Georgeon 1998; Strauss 2001.

9 Brummett 2000, 17–8. Also, for a study focusing on the nature and strength of satire in a satirical magazine from modern Turkey, see Marcella 2021, and 2022.

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focusing on some of the oldest known examples that appeared in the Ottoman humour gazettes *Zuarchakhos / Zuarchakhōs*[10] (Զուարճախօս) 'Joker'[11] (1856) *Tiyatro* 'Theatre' (1874), and *Latife* 'Joke' (1874). *Zuarchakhos* was started in 1856 and is known to have published only three issues.[12] Both *Tiyatro* and *Latife* were published from 1874 to 1877. This study is not only based on the caricatures but also on the textual content of the accessible issues no. 1 and 3 of *Zuarchakhos* from 1856; those of the issues no. 1–87 of *Tiyatro* (1874–1875) and of issues no. 1–39 (1874–1875) and no. 1–43 (1875) of *Latife*.

The oldest known caricatures of the Ottoman humour press in Istanbul appeared on 25 October 1856 in the first issue of *Zuarchakhos*, which, whilst largely written in Turkish in Armenian script, had a small section in Armenian. This gazette and its Armenian contemporary *Meghu* 'Bee' (մեղու) from 1856, are the only known examples before the 1870s, when humour periodicals in Ottoman Turkish script first appeared in Istanbul. As two cases of the latter are *Latife* and *Tiyatro*, both published in Ottoman Turkish language and script. All three gazettes consisted of four pages and were quite similarly structured, starting with an editorial introduction (*mukaddime*) followed by conversational and witty short narratives, humorous news items, comic anecdotes, and a commercial advertisement on the last page. They usually published one caricature, while *Zuarchakhos* contained four per issue. Using a discourse analysis as a methodological approach, this study takes these caricatures as discursive formations. A discourse of morality was featured in the Ottoman humour press in the early 1870s. Along with the integration of Istanbul into the world capitalist system and the modernisation reforms of the 19th century, the social and economic transformations in the background featured prominently on the agenda. Yet the discourse in these periodicals was not generally that of westernisation or modernisation but one of morality. Shaped by censorship and government patronage, mainly justified by 'morality,' the caricatures in *Latife* and *Tiyatro* in the first years of 1874–1875 were humoristic and normative rather than satirical and subversive. This pattern can be traced back to *Zuarchakhos* with many continuities. This article suggests that morality was instrumentalised by the government to suppress satire and political opposition and that humour gazettes in turn resorted to morality to push the boundaries of censorship.

This study traces the emergence of the Ottoman humour press, examines how morality was used in censorship, and analyses caricatures as sites of indirect political subversion. The topics of *alafranga*, urbanisation, and transport were selected for this study, as all three draw attention to practices depicted as corrupt and as generating social inequalities. By reassessing understudied Ottoman Turkish and recently rediscovered Armeno-Turkish caricatures, this article seeks to contribute to the integration of Armenian humour gazettes into Ottoman historiography.

10 Library of Congress (LC) Armenian romanization system will be used for Armenian words, except for the editors of the gazettes, as they used the Turkish spelling of their names in signatures. See URL: https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/romanization/armenian.pdf (accessed 14 August 2025). For an alternative transcription system, see Çelik and Sargsyan 2022.

11 Hagopian 1907, 393.

12 See Step'anyan 1963, 83.

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2. Emergence of the Ottoman Humour Press: Integrating Armenian Humour into Ottoman Historiography

The Ottoman humour press of the imperial capital Istanbul originated around the mid-19th century, coinciding with the *Tanzimat* (reorganisation) Era (1839–1876) of reforms. Progress (*terakki*) and civilisation (*medeniyet*) were two defining concepts of this period. The reforms were modelled on European counterparts, especially those of France, to attain Europe's level of progress. The first gazette in the Ottoman Turkish language and script was the official gazette *Takvim-i Vekayi* (1831), which started as a government initiative as a part of the progress being aimed at. This was followed by the foundation of private periodicals, language reform, and publishing activities involving translations from European literature.[13] It comes as no surprise that one of the first humour gazettes in Ottoman Turkish language and script was named *Terakki* (1870). The Reform Decree of 1856, which created a relatively liberal atmosphere on the part of Ottoman Christian and Jewish Communities, in addition to the *Tanzimat* Decree of 1839, laid the preconditions for growth in print culture.[14] In this respect, Armenian Community played a significant role in development of the Ottoman humour press.

During the 19th-century cultural revival known as the Armenian Renaissance, *Zartʻōnkʻ* (*Զարթօնք*), already started in the 18th century, a prolific number of periodicals, newspapers, dictionaries, and books were printed. Classical and modern works in Latin, French, and Old Armenian were translated into Modern Armenian. Armenian schools delivering modern education were established both in the Ottoman Empire and abroad. Catholic and Protestant missionaries, among which Mekhitarists made an enormous contribution, took part in this process such as in the flourishing of printing and publishing in vernacular Armenian, translations of European literary works and comedy plays, the transfer of European thought, and foundation of numerous schools.[15] Hovsep Vartanyan, the author of the first Turkish novel in Armenian script, *The Story of Akabi* (*Akabi Hikyayesi,* 1851),[16] had also studied at Mekhitarist School in Vienna.[17] Modern comedy was carried over to the humour press, as in Baronyan's *Tiyatro*, which not only used the elements of Ottoman performative traditions but also published plenty of modern comedy plays.

Thanks to linguistic works largely of the Mekhitarists in Vienna, Modern Armenian *ashkharhapar* (*աշխարհաբար*), grounded in the vernacular and relatively free of foreign words, as opposed to classical Armenian *krapar* (*գրաբար*) succeeded in becoming a literary language.[18] While *ashkharhapar* was based on the language already spoken by Armenian community, many community members could only speak Turkish. A significant number of publications, including those of Mekhitarists, thus used Armeno-Turkish

13 For a quick overview of reforms, see, for example, Hanioğlu 2008; Shaw 1977.
14 Artinian 1988, 48–58; Barsoumian 1997, 175–201.
15 Bardakjian 1979, 2–7, 183–4; Der Matossian 2019; Nalbandian 1963, 30–67; Oshagan 1997, 156–60; Strauss 2003, 42–55, 58–65.
16 Tietze 1991.
17 Pamukciyan 2003, 373.
18 Artinian 1988, 70–2; Oshagan 1997, 155.

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in this century to reach a wider audience, advancing the mission of enlightenment and public education. This hybrid language, known as Armeno-Turkish (*Hayadaṛ T'rk'erēn*), that is, Turkish written in Armenian script, was the primary medium of the Armenian periodical press in the 19th century, whose reach was not limited to Armenian community. Publications in this script could be read and followed by some Turkish Muslim literati and bureaucrats as well, such as Grand Vizier Reşid Paşa of the *Tanzimat* period.[19] Based on vernacular Turkish, many Armeno-Turkish texts are closer to Modern Turkish and were easier to understand for the Turkish-speaking public than was Ottoman Turkish. [20] *Zuarchakhos*, too, states in the introduction that it was written in Turkish, as many Armenians could only speak Turkish, although some literate members of the Armenian community had learned Armenian.[21]

Terakki 'Progress' and *Diyojen* 'Diogenes,' the oldest known humour gazettes in Ottoman Turkish language and script, first appeared in 1870 without any caricatures[22] other than a vignette on the headers (*serlevha*). *Diyojen* was started on 24 November 1870. *Terakki* was published by Ali Râşid alongside a serious, 'non-humorous' gazette with the same name several months before *Diyojen*. Some of the early issues of *Terakki* accessible only contain small pictures, such as that of two dogs as a vignette for a short story named 'Conversation between Two Dogs' (*İki Kelbin Muhaveresi*).[23] *Diyojen*, published by the famous Ottoman Greek satirist Teodor Kasap (1835–1897), included only three drawings over its entire lifespan until 1873. The first one, from December 1871, actually used caricaturing techniques.[24] Kasap later published more illustrated humour gazettes: *Çıngıraklı Tatar* (1873) and *Hayal* (1873). These were followed by other illustrated ones in Ottoman Turkish language and script, including *Tiyatro* (1874), *Latife* (1874), *Kahkaha* (1875), and *Çaylak* (1876).[25] *Tiyatro* and *Latife*, usually published one caricature per issue, which from 1874 to 1875 looked more like a straightforward illustration.

Despite the intertextuality of the Ottoman humour press, scholarly literature has focused almost exclusively on gazettes published in the Ottoman Turkish language and script. Humour gazettes in other languages and scripts have largely been neglected, due to the tradition of national historiography, as well as language barriers and the inacces-

19 Cankara 2015a, 9; Der Matossian 2019, 15; Strauss 2003, 53.

20 Traced back to 14th century, Armeno-Turkish was used in diverse fields, even in the financial documents of the merchants in the Ottoman Empire, Der Matossian 2019,1–34; Pamukciyan 2002.

21 '…milletimizde kitap okuyan zatların bir fıkrası Ermeniceyi tahsil edebilmiş ise de pek çoğu dahi yalnız Türkçe söyler ve okur olduğundan bir taraftan yalnız Türkçeye aşina olanları okumak eğlencesinden yad etmemek…' *Zuarchakhos*, no. 1, 25 October 1856, 1. As a matter of fact, according to Cankara, many publications offer this explanation as to why they were written in Turkish. See Cankara 2015b, 118–20.

22 Not all prints used caricaturing techniques, and some were rather comic prints. Yet, in this article, all will be called 'caricature' in the broader meaning of present day.

23 E.g. Ali Râşid, *Terakki*, no. 8, 1 Rabi'ul-āhir 1287 [1 July 1870].

24 For these caricatures, see Özdiş 2010, 85–9. The first caricature is said to be a satirical portrait of Garabed Panosyan, Armenian editor of the Armeno-Turkish gazette *Manzume-i Efkâr*.

25 All accessible at Beyazıt State Library. See also Çeviker 1986; Duman 2000.

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sibility of these sources. The press of the Ottoman Armenian community in Istanbul is a good example of this largely unexplored heritage.[26] However, thanks to recent cataloguing and digitisation efforts, these periodicals are now more accessible, which has in turn highlighted the need to revise the existing literature. A case in point, *Boşboğaz Bir Adem* 'Blabber,' published in 1852 by the Ottoman Armenian civil servant, literati, and journalist Hovsep Vartanyan or Vartan Paşa (1816–1879),[27] was mistakenly labelled as the first humour gazette.[28] It is in fact titled as a 'treatise' (*risale*) on the header with no issue number and is not structured like Ottoman humour periodicals of the 19th century. It looks like a treatise containing an illustrated story in Ottoman Turkish written in Armenian script.[29]

Terakki and *Diyojen* had been hitherto thought to be the oldest known humour gazettes in Turkish. On the other hand, *Zuarchakhos* 'Joker,' which was started about 14 years earlier, on 25 October 1856, was also in Turkish written in Armenian script. *Meghu* 'Bee,' which was published by Harutyun Sıvacıyan, a few weeks earlier than *Zuarchakhos* on 15 September 1856, did not contain any visuals until 1859, other than a 'beehive' vignette on its header. Both *Zuarchakhos* and *Meghu* were published by Ottoman Armenian community members in Istanbul, with the difference that *Meghu* is in Armenian language and script.[30] The visuals and the content of *Zuarchakhos* are unsigned. The editor is not indicated either, as the gazette was published under the pseudonym *Zuarchasirats Ěngerut'yun* 'Society of Joke Lovers' (*Զվարճասիրաց ընկերություն*). Only some unverified information about the identity of the editor(s) is available.[31] We as yet have no information about *Latife*'s editor Zakarya Beykozluyan, other than the fact that he was from Eğin.[32] Some caricatures in *Latife* and *Tiyatro* bear the signature of Armenian artists Nişan Berberyan and Tınghır. These caricaturists were renowned for their art, with their caricatures appearing in many other humour gazettes of the 19th century.[33]

Tiyatro's editor was the famous Ottoman Armenian satirical playwright, author, and journalist Hagop Baronyan (1843–1891). Baronyan was of middle-class origin and, according to Bardakjian, was writing from a humanistic standpoint, with a concern for the whole Ottoman public in general, regardless of ethnicity. He criticised the dominant

26 Both Turkish and Armenian historiographical traditions approach these periodicals as isolated cases. For an exception, see Strauss 2001. For a recent study on the Armeno-Turkish press, see also Uygur 2021.

27 Pamukciyan 2003, 373–4. Cankara's work verifies Vartanyan as the author. See Cankara 2014, 59.

28 E.g. in Çeviker 1986, 17; Elmas 2013, 246. Yet, these are very precious works about the 19th-century Ottoman humour press. Cankara and Strauss also mention this issue; Cankara 2017, 12–3; Strauss 2001, 122.

29 When examined, it is a 31-page, unsigned, humorous treatise, intended 'to show what malignancies can arise from gossip.' Vartanyan 1852, 1 (URL: http://haygirk.nla.am/cgi-bin/koha/opac-MARCdetail.pl?biblionumber=116231, first accessed 9 February 2017).

30 Sıvacıyan, Harutyun. *Meghu*. no. 1, 15 September 1856.

31 Kiraz 2024, 74–5.

32 Pamukciyan 2003, 126.

33 Çeviker 1986, 109–14.

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role of the Armenian aristocracy (*Amiras*) in the Armenian community and demanded equal rights and parliamentary democracy in the government of the Ottoman Armenian community.[34] In that regard, Baronyan's political stance seemed close to that of revolutionary intellectuals, known as the Young Armenians and the Young Ottomans.[35] The Young Ottomans also wrote for humour periodicals; Namık Kemal, for example, published his essays in *Diyojen*.[36] Although the Ottoman intelligentsia of the *Tanzimat* era was not unified in their thought, their one common mission was public enlightenment and reform.[37] In line with that, all periodicals under consideration in this article were written in vernacular Turkish. The editor of *Zuarchakhos* seems to pursue the same mission, specifying in the first issue that the gazette was written in a clear language so that it could be enjoyed by everybody.[38]

Ottoman humour gazettes were so intertwined that *Tiyatro* and its Armenian version *T'adron* published simultaneously by Baronyan, sometimes published the same caricatures and the same content.[39] They also borrowed caricatures from periodicals in Paris and London. Not only French fashion, but also the print culture of France had gone global in the 19th century. The famous British satirical paper *Punch, or The London Charivari* (1841) was inspired by Charles Philipon's *Le Charivari* (1832).[40] We don't know for how long, but the French publication itself circulated in Ottoman Empire according to an archival document from 1895, showing an import restriction imposed on this publication in the late 19th century.[41] As can be inferred from the content of *Tiyatro* and *Latife*, the word *şarivari* had come to mean 'humour periodical' in the Ottoman context. The short-lived Ottoman humour gazette *Şarivari Medeniyet* (1874) and the Armeno-Turkish *Şarivari* (1876) seem to have derived their names from *Le Charivari.* Periodicals resembling *Charivari* or *Punch* were established in many places from Istanbul to Cairo, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Melbourne, and South Asia.[42] *Kahkaha*, Çaylak, and *Letâif-i Asâr* published identical and modified versions of caricatures from *Punch* (1841), as Elif Elmas has shown.[43] In testimony to such transfers, *Tiyatro* ironically reported that pictures (*resim*s), that is, caricatures, appearing in Kasap's *Hayal* were being taken 'free of charge' from illustrated (*resimli*) humour periodicals (*şarivari mecmuaları*) published in Paris.[44] On the other hand, caricatures appearing in *Zuarchakhos, Latife*, and *Tiyatro*, with very few exceptions, look more original in terms of their depictions of the local scenery in Istanbul.

34 Bardakjian 1979, 30–41; 181; 304–5; Basmajian et al. 2005, 404–7; Pamukciyan 2003, 102–3.
35 Artinian 1988, 59–65; Mardin 2000; Oshagan 1997, 151–2.
36 Özdiş 2010, 83.
37 Artinian 1988, 59–65; Mardin 1974, 428.
38 '… Ermenicesi olmuş Türkçesi olmuş gayet fasih lisanla yazılmak üzere gazetemizi iki fıkraya taksim ettik…' *Zuarchakhos*, no.1, 25 October 1856, 1.
39 Bardakjian 1979, 304.
40 Price 1957, 353.
41 B.O.A, HR.TH. 155–40.
42 Harder and Mittler 2013.
43 Elmas 2013, 250. I am also thankful to Tobias Heinzelmann for pointing out to me (before Elmas' work) that he had come across caricatures from *Punch* in *Kahkaha* (1875).
44 *Tiyatro*, no. 5, 3 April 1290 [15 April 1874], 1.

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3. Morality, Regulations, and Government Patronage

The nature of the caricatures was heavily defined by a specific censorship, government patronage, and thus by moral ideology, as will be outlined in what follows. Although the humour press was arbitrarily administrated regardless of laws in effect, regulations on printing and publishing had been drafted since the 19th century. Before the first humour gazettes came out in Ottoman Turkish language and script, Penal Code of 1858 had already brought a restriction on satire and caricatures, stipulating 'those printing and having printed impudent joke (*hezl*) and satire (*hicv*) in prose or verse contradicting with public morals (*ādāb-ı umūmīye)* or impudent pictures or portrayals (*edepsizce resim ve tasvir*) be subject to penalty and imprisonment from 24 hours to a week.'[45] The Press Law enacted in 1864 introduced another legal framework for censorship and would still be in effect in the late 19th century.[46] The requirement to obtain a licence from the Ministry of Education as per the first article of the law reveals that the Ottoman press was conceived as a component of public education. The law provided for penalty and imprisonment for the content contrary to so-called public morals; penalty and imprisonment for improper words and expressions (*elfaz ve tabirat-ı gayri layika*) about the sultanate and the members of the dynasty, for verbal attack (*taarruz*) on the government, and criticism of bureaucrats as well as the sovereigns of other states allied with the Ottoman state. The satirisation (*ẕemm* or *hicv*) or lampooning of civil servants, an official committee or council, foreign ambassadors, and of ordinary people would again be subject to penalty or imprisonment.[47]

Punishments prescribed for violation of 'public morals' (*ādāb-ı umūmīye*), that is, equal to *ahlāk-ı umūmīye* in meaning,[48] in this context, constitutes an example of the instrumentalisation of morality. Fortna suggests that *ahlāk-ı umūmī* would be used in the context of the late-19th-century Ottoman education project in the same communal sense, that is, 'the qualities that have been accepted as custom in a society.' Moral ideology was devised to build an obedient culture, as he remarks.[49] This suggestion may also be valid for the early Ottoman humour press, where the said regulations do not allow subversion of government policies and violation of certain social norms constituting so-called 'public morals.' Ambiguity of what would be considered 'morally acceptable' made arbitrary administration easier.

More to the point, journalists were expected to be a mouthpiece of the government and to deliver instruction on morality as underscored by the *Kararnâme-i Âli* governmental decree announced in 1867 during the reign of Abdulaziz (1861–1876). This decree specified that the gazettes had been acting contrary to common interests and even speaking against the fundamentals of the state, whereas 'their duty was to correct and reform morals (*tehẕib ve ıslah-ı ahlāk*).' Further, the gazettes allegedly published harmful (*mużır*)[50]

45 *Cezā Ḳānunnāme-i Hümāyûn*, 1858, Article 139, *Düstur,* Tertib 1(1), 568.
46 See *Düstur* (Tertib 1), 1289 [1872].
47 Matbûʿāt Nizamnâmesi, 1864, Article 1, 14–7, 20–5 *Düstur,* Tertib 1(2), 220–4.
48 *Edep* is defined as *terbiye*, that is, 'good morals' in Sami 1317 [1900], 83.
49 Fortna 2000, 379–84.
50 Sami 1317 [1900], 1361.

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ideas and fabricated news, while 'they were supposed to eliminate the oppositions to the government.' It is added that the 'excitement of minds' (*tahdiş-i ez̧han*)[51] and hostility between communities caused by publishing unfounded news could not be ignored, even though the government 'wished to allow gazettes to publish ideas to some extent with the expectation that they would contribute to government affairs as well as to the reformation and 'progress' (*terakki*) of society.' 'Necessary corrective actions and preventive measures, in addition to the provisions of the Press Law, would thus be taken by the government.'[52] The two ambiguous terms *tahdiş-i ez̧han* and *mużır* served to legitimise censorship in aforementioned provisions and numerous archival documents in the 19th century.[53] In this context, the former could be interpreted as something that is 'politically engaging' and the latter as 'anything contradicting with the policies of the government.'

It could be contended that 'morality' served as a pretext for the government to put a damper on satire, caricatures, and political opposition, although not arguing that this was a case unique to this period or to this geography. The form of humour allowed by the regulations was an impersonal, non-political humour aimed at instruction of morals and amusement through wit, jokes, and gentle satire rather than lampoonery and direct political satire. *Diyojen* acknowledged this by describing the aims of the gazette as 'to serve as the voice of the government and the instruction of morality.'[54] Again, *Latife* highlighted instruction of morality as its purpose in its foreword.[55] Rare cases of direct satire, especially political satire, would be punished, as in the case of Kasap's humour periodicals. For example, *Diyojen*'s publication was interrupted on numerous occasions for that reason.[56] *Hayal*, another humour periodical of Kasap, published a caricature criticising legal restrictions brought on the humour press in 1876, and its publisher was even subjected to imprisonment for three years.[57] *Tiyatro* was suspended due to its undesirable content in 1875[58] and reported the suspension of *Latife, Letâif-i Âsâr*, and *Hayal* a few weeks later.[59] *Latife* verified this by announcing that the gazette was being put on hold because of a piece of allegedly harmful (*mużır*) content in the previous issue.[60] Another humour periodical *Meddah* (1875), which announced its aim as entertainment, also ironically wrote

51 *ibid*., 388.

52 This decree was published without title in the official gazette, see *Takvim-i Vekayi* 9, no. 875, 5 March 1283 [17 March 1867], 2, URL: https://dijital-kutuphane.mkutup.gov.tr/tr/Periodicals/Catalog/Issue/?IssueId=27916 (accessed 25 October 2022).

53 These terms would be more widely used later in the 19th century during the Hamidian period, as can be quickly verified by a keyword search in the catalogue of the Ottoman Archives, URL: https://katalog.devletarsivleri.gov.tr.

54 *Diyojen*, no. 1, 12 Teşrin-i Sāni 1286 [24 November 1870], 1.

55 *Latife*, no. 1, 22 Mart 1291 [3 April 1875], 1.

56 Çeviker 1986, 70–2; Özdiş 2010, 82.

57 Çeviker 1986, 72–3.

58 Baronyan, the editor of *Tiyatro* ironically notes that the paper had ceased operation for the previous two months because it was diagnosed with an illness, apparently referring to interruption by regularity authorities: *Tiyatro*, no. 62, 28 Kānūn-i Evvel 1290 [20 December 1874], 1.

59 *Tiyatro*, no. 66, 25 Kānūn-i Sāni, 1290 [6 February 1875], 3.

60 *Latife*, no. 37, 24 February 1290 [8 March 1875], 1.

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that 'unlike those humour gazettes publishing personal satire (*şahsiyet aleyhine*), it would not use language that might lead to the gazette's closing' as an indicator of self-censorship.[61] Whether any punishments were imposed on *Zuarchakhos* is as yet unknown, but it may have been discontinued due to closure after the third issue.

4. Discursive Formations: the First Ottoman Caricatures

In alignment with the administrative language, Ottoman humour gazettes in this period called their prints 'pictures' (*resim*), whether the image in question was a caricature or a comic print. In contrast, *Zuarchakhos* called its prints *karikatura*.[62] Probably due to censorship and self-censorship, the first Ottoman humour gazettes limited their topics to everyday life in the city with a discourse of morality, which also shaped the character of the visuals. Generalising these periodicals with their *resim*s as 'satirical' would thus be a category error, considering that most of them during the first years, particularly in the official language roughly until 1875–1876,[63] were rather humoristic[64] and normative,[65] in line with the permitted forms of humour laid down in press regulations. Again, probably due to censorship and the lack of artists and technology, one does not come across a great number of caricatures in the humour press of early 1870s in the Ottoman Turkish language and script. This may be because the caricaturing techniques of distortion and exaggerations are what make a visual 'satirical.' It is thus fascinating to see that *Zuarchakhos* started with four prints mostly in the form of caricature, using caricaturing techniques such as distortion, exaggeration, and bewilderment. It may be the fact that this gazette was not in Ottoman Turkish script that afforded it a certain degree of freedom at the time, or perhaps it passed unnoticed by the administrators? These questions remain unanswered. Yet, there are known cases of censorship imposed on humour gazettes of Ottoman Armenians in the 1870s, as in the case of Baronyan's humour periodicals.[66] It should also be noted that *Zuarchakhos* was started following the *Tanzimat* Decree (1839) and a few months after the Reform Decree (*Islahat Fermanı*), improving the rights of Christian communities. *Meghu* would also publish caricatures even after the ban brought upon visual satire by the Penal Code of 1858.[67]

61 *Meddah*, no. 1, 10 Muharrem 1292 [16 February 1875], 1.

62 'Mukaddime-i Gazete:…beher gazetede birer sayfa ekalli dörder resimle donatılmış olarak karikaturalar…derc olunacaktır.' *Zuarchakhos*, no.1, 25 October 1856, 1.

63 For satirical caricatures in the 19th-century Ottoman humour press, see Elmas 2016 and Özdiş 2010.

64 In this article 'humoristic' means humour based on comedy, using jokes and gentle satire blended with 'wit' rather than direct satire and lampoonery.

65 For a collection of these caricatures, see Çeviker 1986, 139–265.

66 Bardakjian 1979, 12–5; 88; 144–5.

67 See *Meghu*, no. 9, 31 March 1859, and no. 12, 30 April 1859. Baronyan simultaneously published *Tiyatro* and its Armenian version *T'adron.* He could more freely publish political criticism in the latter, according to Bardakjian, whereas *Tiyatro*, being written in Ottoman Turkish, 'came under stricter control than *T'adron*.' See Bardakjian 1979, 302.

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For the Ottoman Empire, the long 19th century was marked by nationalist movements and continuous wars alongside the integration into the world capitalist market. Transition to a free-market economy, the hegemony of commodities of industrialised European states on the local market,[68] early globalisation of Ottoman capital with global business connections, and an increased number of foreign visitors, especially of Europeans,[69] all dramatically transformed lives in Istanbul. *Zuarchakhos* was published in the aftermath of the Crimean War (1853–1856), which had fostered change in the city.[70] During the war, Pera (Beyoğlu), which Lady Hornby referred to as the 'Frank quarter,' was filled with British and French soldiers, in addition to various other nationals.[71] When it comes to the 1870s, urbanisation gained momentum. Stories of these caricatures are usually set in Pera and Galata, and sometimes in Kağıthane, the favourite leisure sites of the time, while the stories in the first issue of *Zuarchakhos* were set in the Princes' Islands (Büyükada) of Istanbul. Galata was the central business district where the banks were situated and the first stock market was founded, while Pera was a hub for *alafranga* social life. Galata and Pera were home not only to European company offices and diplomatic spots but also to newly opened hotels, French cafes, European restaurants, modern theatre, photo studios, department stores, and shops selling European commodities and French fashion.[72]

Many of the urban reforms and modern transport means, which were popular subjects of the Ottoman humour press in general, were introduced at a time later than could be discussed by *Zuarchakhos*. Although the concession for steam-powered ferries was already granted in 1851, the contracts for horse-drawn trams would be signed in 1869.[73] The fact that only two issues of this gazette are accessible so far, makes it difficult to interpret these caricatures due to lack of context. The topics of the caricatures paralleled those of the textual parts, while not every point of discussion was addressed in the caricatures.[74] Miscellaneous subjects in *Tiyatro* and *Latife* include, but are not limited to, the stock market, economic problems, peddlers, and drunkards, all mocked with a discourse of morality. The diversity of the topics approached from a moral perspective show that the discourse in these gazettes was not generally one of westernisation or modernisation, but rather one of morality. Morality in this case is quite all-encompassing in the humour press and included, but was not limited to, manners or etiquette, literature, and language, consumption and entertainment habits, professions, commerce, and urbanisation. The present study will mainly focus on *alafranga* cultural trends, urbanisation, and transport means among the most popular topics.

68 Pamuk 1987, 29–31.
69 Keyder 2018, 25–37.
70 Neumann 2011, 428–9.
71 Hornby 1863, 85, 32–500.
72 Akın 1998.
73 Ergin 1995, 2291–2, 2398–400.
74 These topics and the discourse of morality also can be found in other humour periodicals of this period. See Çeviker 1986; Özdiş 2010.

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4.1. Alafranga *and Fashion*

Zuarchakhos focuses on the theme of *alafranga* in caricatures. To date, the topic of *alafranga* has been discussed as a Turkish-Muslim phenomenon particularly based on the Turkish literature of the 19th century.[75] It is thus striking to find this topic in a gazette of the Armenian-Christian community. Caricatures appearing in *Zuarchakhos* are evidence that *alafranga* fops or their equivalent *chics* (*şık*s) had entered the vocabulary of the Ottoman periodical press long before they were epitomised in Ahmet Midhat's famous novel *Felâtun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* (1875).[76] Usage of the term *şık* (*chic*) and of this typology by *Zuarchakhos* also constitutes an important continuity with the later Ottoman humour press in Ottoman Turkish script in the 1870s. *Bey*s and *Efendi*s, who were called *şık* and usually represented socio-economically higher class men in *Tiyatro* and *Latife*, were the main target in ridicule of *alafranga*. Though the term '*Bey*' is not found in the issues of *Zuarchakhos* accessible now. Young Ottomans used the title *Beyzâde*, 'son of a Bey' for satirizing young fops of 19th century, who were usually sons of ministers and used the power and wealth of their fathers to be appointed to high bureaucratic posts.[77] According to Hanioğlu, *alafranga* as a term was used by the elite to refer to objects (such as personal items) during the 18th and early 19th centuries and later came to mean a Europeanised lifestyle in the *Tanzimat* period (1839–1876).[78] Although *Alafranga* generally meant 'in a European manner,' it more specifically denoted French cultural trends. *Alafranga* was associated with cultural refinement and becoming civilised and was not always condemned in literature, as seen in Midhat's above-mentioned novel. Accordingly, getting a proper education (for both men and women), mastering French, learning to play the piano, wearing modern clothes properly, and acting according to European rules of etiquette in interaction with Europeans were among the attributes encouraged by the *alafranga*.[79] Humour periodicals focused on those aspects that they found laughable by depicting the supposed *alafranga* as involving pretentiousness, superficiality, and a propensity to show off. When this type of *alafranga* is embodied in a male typology, it was represented by a fop or a *chic*. *Tiyatro* illustrated this by a mention of *chic*s pretending to read French gazettes, holding the gazette upside down, as they could not actually read French.[80]

Zuarchakhos also categorised *alafranga,* with the words: 'What *alafranga* means? There are both good and bad *alafranga*s... Which one is bad and which is good?' Then it moved on to describe *alafranga* for both men and women. Specifically for men, it was

75 For *alafranga* as a Turkish-Muslim phenomenon, see Mardin 1974, Moran 1983, Parla 1990. Parla outlines the paternalistic and normative nature of Ottoman Turkish novels.

76 Balcı 2019. Midhat's novel was also published in Armeno-Turkish in 1879 and can be accessed at the National Library of Armenia.

77 Mardin 2000, 123.

78 Hanioğlu 2008, 100.

79 See Balcı 2019. In the preface to his booklet, in which Midhat states his aim to teach European manners to Ottomans, he notes that the term *alafranga* is either misunderstood or not truly known. See Midhat 1312 [1894] in Gökçek 2016.

80 'Çingene Falı', *Tiyatro*, no. 68, 31 Kānūn-ı Sāni 1290 [12 February 1875], 2.

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wearing fashionable clothing and accessories such as tight trousers and gloves, as well as polite forms of address mixed with French and 'other similar states of being' (*bunlara emsal aher haller*). In the case of women, it was things such as 'hats, ribbons, slim waist, smoking cigarettes, having elegant long conversations....' It is added that '[e]ven sheer veiling (*yaşmak*) instead of thick veiling is considered *alafranga*.'[81]

The first caricature from *Zuarchakhos* (Fig. 1), titled *Alafranga*, features a young woman trying to play the piano, flanked by her parents. Even if the girl was not able to speak French fluently, her parents are still happy because also learning to play the piano would be sufficient to give her an *alafranga* image. This reminds us of one of the heroines in Midhat's novel, the young slave Canan, who is juxtaposed with the neighbour's flamboyant and spoiled girls. Unlike the latter, Canan manages to perfectly play the piano and speak French, because she not only had the skills but also desired to perform them with all her heart, not just to become *alafranga*. The butts of the joke in *Zuarchakhos* seem to be pretentious individuals who had superficially equipped themselves with *alafranga* practices merely to show off.

It must be on the same grounds that the habit of mixing everyday language with French is ridiculed in Ottoman humour gazettes, including in *Zuarchakhos* (Fig. 2). According to Şerif Mardin, this was a continuity with verbal traditions of humour. The 'esoteric' language of the ruling class was one of the main factors that estranged the ruling class from the ruled in cultural terms. In shadow theatre, *Hacivat*, representing the culture of the non-taxpayer ruling class, mixed Turkish with Arabic and Persian. *Karagöz*, representing the Turkish-speaking, taxpaying ruled classes, as a result, did not understand Hacivat's language. Now French was starting to be used in addition to Arabic and Persian as a sign of erudition for the ruling class. This vanity and pretentiousness on the part of the upper classes were laughable elements in both Hacivat and *alafranga* fops and allowed for an indirect political opposition, resistance to oppression, and criticism of social and economic inequalities through indirect satire of the ruling class.[82]

The butts of the joke in the caricature in Figure 2 are apparently those so-called fops, who have adopted French fashion and manners and are peppering their language with French, addressing each other as *mon cher*. Due to the flamboyance of their attire, *alafranga* men were usually mockingly labelled *şık*, derived from the French word *chic*. Along with the clothing, such as tight trousers, the fashionable accessories shown in this caricature, such as a walking stick (*baston*) and the glasses, were also ridiculed. *Zuarchakhos* mentions these glasses as a *lorgnette*, which *alafranga* men favoured. Fops are usually also depicted as drunkards and womanisers. It should also be noted that, this personality could not be described simply as one who drinks alcohol, since the subject of ridicule here is 'drunkenness,' rather than the act of 'consuming alcohol.' In all humour periodicals discussed in this article, it is only the drunkenness that is mocked. This assertation was

81 'Alafranga: Alafranga ne demek?: Alafranganın eyisi fenası var…yohsa hangisidir eyisi, hangisidir fenası: …' *Zuarchakhos*, no. 3, 8 November 1856, 1.

82 Mardin 1974, 424. In definition of *Alafranga*, for example, usage of *estağfirullah* (an Arabic expression) are listed together with the French words: See, *Zuarchakhos*, no.3, 8 November 1856, 1.

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Figure 1. Zuarchakhos*, no. 3, 8 November 1856, 3.*
'Our daughter can speak a little bit of French.… If she can also learn to play the piano, she will become completely alafranga.'

supported by Midhat's novel, where the fact that relatively conservative Ottoman families of middle-class origin also enjoyed alcoholic drinks, especially the local punch (*punç*), was not criticised if consumed in moderation. Baronyan himself is said to have consumed alcohol moderately, and in *Tiyatro* it was only drunkards that he ridiculed.[83]

83 Bardakjian 1979, 16.

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Figure 2. Zuarchakhos*, no. 3, 8 November 1856, 3.*
'Mon cher, you know that Talman has completely become chic (şık). –Ah bah!, Mon cher… Quel he has become chic....'*

* French, *Ah bah!*: an expression of disbelief. See Darqué 1878, 70.

In the next caricature (Fig. 3), both *alafranga* men and women are ridiculed. Women are unable to look around due to the large size of their hats, whereas the womaniser fop is trying to make a move on the women but is unable to see their faces.

Both men and women were the target of fashion humour in *Latife* and *Tiyatro*, as in *Zuarchakhos*. Çeviker suggests that fashion with excessive lines was a good fit for caricaturing for technical reasons and may have led to the popularity of this topic.[84] Yet, caricatures about French fashion and *alafranga* are very rare in *Latife*, even though it allocated many pages to this topic in writing. The caricatures from *Tiyatro* (Fig. 4) and *Latife* (Fig. 5)

84 Çeviker 1986, 40.

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Figure 3. Zuarchakhos*, no. 1, 25 October 1856, 3.*
'If it were not for these hats, I would see a lot more... –Uff! This hat of mine... Can't see anything... Who is that coming up...'

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Figure 4. Tiyatro*, no. 12, 27 April 1290 [9 May 1874], 4.*
'Those who want to accompany alafranga mademoiselles will have to learn acrobatics from now on!!!'

poke fun at the extravagance of fashion–its so-called superficiality and ostentation–in a parallelism with *Zuarchakhos*. Yet, the second caricature (Fig. 5) is not only about fashion. Intertwined with caricatures on urban infrastructure, it presents another layer of meaning implying the incompatibility of the new fashion with dirty streets. This incompatibility had already been a source of laughter in *Zuarchakhos*, where 'taking walks in mud and dust with an outfit normally worn to balls' is a ridiculed *alafranga* habit.[85]

Textual parts of *Tiyatro* and *Latife* provide a very good context for further interpretation of fashion caricatures. The targets of fashion humour were both the shoppers and economic actors. All three gazettes often ridiculed indulgence in French fashion and European commodities, which were being consumed in increasing quantity and frequency. In *Lat-*

85 '…baloya gider hesabında tozda yahod çamurda gezinmeye gitmek…'*Zuarchakhos*, no. 3, 8 November 1856, 1.

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Figure 5. Latife*, no. 7, 2 September 1290 [14 September 1874], 4.*
'Are you blind? Don't you see the huge road? –I gave you a shout about your dress getting dusty, but you did not hear me.'

ife, a penniless *bey* is pushed by his wife to finance her constant fashion expenditures.[86] In *Tiyatro*, a father complains about his son wishing to buy every new fashion, ordering tight trousers and *redingot*s every week.[87] Though economic aspects were not very discernible in the limited copies of *Zuarchakhos*, people are portrayed as taking special care in ordering new clothing, such as French-style jackets (*setre* and *raglan*).[88] At any rate, fashion was presented by *Latife* and *Tiyatro* as a commercial trick through which economic actors

86 'Bey ile Hanım', *Latife,* no. 3, 19 August 1290 [31 August 1874], 2–3; For numerous other examples, see 'Eldiven', *Tiyatro,* no. 2, 23 March 1290 [4 April 1874], 1–2; 'İki Hane Beyninde', *Tiyatro,* no. 31, 29 June 1290 [11 July 1874], 1; 'Şıllıkların Mükâlemesi', *Latife*, issue 14, 22 April 1291 [4 May 1875], 2.

87 *Redingot* was a trendy French style jacket. See 'Muhaverat: …Efendim bir terzi Mir var imiş. Ona her hafta bir dar pantolon bir de alafranga radingot mu imiş ne imiş işte ondan ısmarlamalı imiş…Hem efendim birçok şeyler daha istiyor. Bir baston almalı imiş. Bir şemsiye almalı imiş. Eldiven almalı imiş. Moda ne çıkarsa almalı imiş…Buna para mı dayanır?...' *Tiyatro*, no. 39, 31 July 1290 [12 August 1874], 2.

88 'Geçen gün iki dost bir mahalde buluşup, şu yolda bir sohbetleri vuku bulmuştur', *Zuarchakhos*, no. 3, 8 November 1856, 1; 'Büyük Ada', *Zuarchakhos*, no. 1, 25 October 1856, 1–2.

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profited. *Tiyatro* lists the winners of the time as dressmakers sewing fashionable clothing and deceptive shopkeepers, as well as chic *bey*s who ordered garments without paying the dressmakers.[89] About a year later, *Latife* followed with a list of additional winners, which again included the producers and dealers of fashion commodities. The list also included bankers, tram and steamboat companies, for reasons discussed in the foregoing section on urbanization and transportation.[90] These criticisms at times sound as if they are striving to protect the local economy against European economic intrusion, a sentiment clearly expressed in *Meghu* back in 1856, when locals preferring French tailors to Armenian ones were criticised, considering that the latter allegedly offered higher quality at a lower rate.[91]

A discourse of moral economy encouraging moderation, which for Şerif Mardin was almost akin to the Protestant ethic, can be felt in how *alafranga* were laughed at.[92] In both *Tiyatro* and *Latife*, people including socially higher-class men referred to as *Bey* or *Efendi* were not paying their debts to the butcher, baker, or grocer, while at the same time they continued to spend on *alafranga* fashion and leisure activities at European restaurants, cafes, and other spots, which the caricatures below are related to.[93] To give a few examples from *Tiyatro*, two penniless *şık bey*s, who had been fired from their jobs in an Ottoman civil bureaucratic office (*Kalem*),[94] attempt to order new clothing from a tailor with the promise of paying later (although they had done so many times before and had not paid) and make plans to defraud the grocer and to spend their last money to have some drinks in Galata. On another occasion, an *efendi* gets caught in a tavern (*meyhane*) by the unpaid butcher and the grocer.[95] This again recalls the Felâtun Bey character in Midhat's novel, who casually goes to work at the *Kalem* while spending all his money and time on leisure in Pera. A caricature from *Tiyatro* (Fig. 6) must be about these penniless chic characters also found in Ottoman literature of the 19th century. Allegedly, money burned a hole in their pocket (*cebi delik şık*).

Latife attributes trousers with hole-ridden pockets to men spending the entire fortunes of their wealthy fathers.[96] In a later issue, *Tiyatro* also mentions a penniless chic spendthrift (*cebi delik parasız şık*) trying to buy a new shirt without paying the store owner and

89 'Kazanan numaralar: ...Terazinin altına balmumu yapıştıran fıstıkçılar...Zengin beylere huni paçalı pantolon diken terziler, Beyoğlu'ndaki modistrolar, veresiye elbise diktiren şık beyler...' *Tiyatro*, no. 37, 24 July 1290 [5 August 1874], 2.

90 'Kazanan numaralar: ...Bir Doğru Yol mağazası, bir şapkacı dükkanı, bir sarraf, bir tüccar, şirket vapurları, bir pudracı, bir gözlükçü, bir eldivenci, bir bastoncu, bir saç boyacısı...' *Latife*, no. 2, 25 March 1291 [6 April 1875], 2.

91 'August Gine', *Meghu*, no. 1, 15 September 1856, 19–24.

92 Mardin 1974, 415–6.

93 i.e. See *Tiyatro*, no. 71, 17 Muharrem 1292 [23 February 1875], 1–2, and 'Müsta'id Uşak', *Tiyatro*, no. 12, 27 April 1290 [9 May 1874], 1–2.

94 For the emergence of the new civil bureaucracy, see Findley 2014. Members of this civil bureaucracy, who knew French and were more familiar with Europe, were among the possible targets in the ridicule of *alafranga*.

95 'İki Şık Beyin Muḥaveresi', *Tiyatro*, no. 75, 9 Safer 1292 [17 March 1875], 3.

96 'Ticariye: Emtia-i *Latife*', *Latife,* no. 5, 26 August 1290 [7 September 1874], 3.

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Figure 6. Tiyatro*, no. 13, 1 May 1290 [13 May 1874], 4.*
'According to today's fashion, pockets should be inside out like this!!!'

promising to send the money later with his servant.[97] Other caricature from *Latife* (Fig. 7) depicts one of those *efendi*s at an entertainment venue, not paying his debts to the grocer and to the butcher standing at his side. In the same issue where this caricature appeared, *Latife* also ridicules people going to leisure sites (*mesire*) on borrowed money.[98]

It could be said that *alafranga* caricatures mainly targeted the ruling classes, including Ottoman civil bureaucracy, Armenian aristocracy, and wealthy merchants, represented by *Bey*s and *Efendi*s. For the purposes of this study, the topic of *alafranga* can be thought of as an egalitarian criticism, attempting to close the growing cultural and economic gap between the ruling classes and the ruled in the 19th century, a gap that had already existed since earlier centuries. This topic provided a space for indirect social satire and political satire of the ruling classes by ridiculing their vanity and pretentiousness. Both the

97 'Geçen nüshamızdaki muḥavereden māb'ad', *Tiyatro*, no. 85, 15 Rabi'ul Evvel 1292 [21 April 1875], 2.

98 'Vay, vay, vay canım…borç edip de eğlenmek için mesirelere gidenlere.' *Latife*, no. 2, 15 August 1290 [27 August 1874], 4.

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Figure 7. Latife*, no. 2, 15 August 1290 [27 August 1874], 4.*
'Bravo! … I waive all my debts! –Oh, efendi! Please don't do this to your grocer and butcher.'

Armenian and Turkish ruling classes were criticised by reformist intellectuals for their unwillingness to embrace the parliament and the constitution. Neither were they taking sufficient steps towards improving public welfare, instead being concerned with their *alafranga* luxuries, further distancing them from the ruled classes.[99] Such criticisms were suggested as valid for Baronyan's satire by Bardakjian, as mentioned. While the political stance of *Latife*'s editor Beykozluyan remains unknown, the content of the gazette looks very concerned with the needs of the general public while targeting ruling classes. *Zuarchakhos*, too, must be mainly targeting the vanity of Armenian dominant classes of *Amira*s and merchants, who could afford an *alafranga* lifestyle. Its intention might even have been indirect political satire, as the government of the Armenian community was under the hegemony of the *Amira*s at the time.[100] Somewhere in the gazette, *alafranga* social circles were mentioned as 'Society' (*Cemiyet*), apparently referring to ruling classes, including the Armenian aristocracy and commercial bourgeoisie.[101]

99 Yet, Ottoman intellectuals were not uniform in their political thoughts as reflected in their writings. See Mardin 2000, 115; Mardin 1974, 414–6, 425–9; Parla 2001, 223–33.
100 See Barsoumian 1982; Artinian 1988, 75–82.
101 Kiraz 2024, 67.

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In the 19th century, a middle class of artisans and craftsman with their moral values such as moderateness in spending formed the base of Ottoman traditional, conservative communities in Istanbul.[102] Many Ottoman authors in this century, some of whom were of middle-class origin themselves, such as Ahmet Midhat, were 'social mobilisers' who wrote from the perspective of the middle class, with a communitarian attitude. Mardin suggests that Ottoman authors instrumentalised morality with the topic of *alafranga* to promote their own ideologies. This populist discourse addressing moral sensibilities of 'little culture,' taking up the theme of 'moral decline,' was deemed an effective way to 'mobilise the masses' as well as the conservative segment of the ruling class, such as the religious class of the *ulema*, to gain public support for the reformist zeal. Thus, the topic of *alafranga* did not necessarily mean that the authors were opposed to *alafranga* trends. Indeed, the authors had *alafranga* habits themselves.[103] Authors' criticisms of the *alafranga* directed at the ruling class should thus be read critically and may have also been motivated by their frustrated career ambitions and exclusion from *alafranga* wealth.[104] Furthermore, it was hard to speak of an independent intelligentsia, as many journalists in the 19th century were an extension of the government, either working as civil servants or chasing careers in state offices.[105] Motivations to make a career and to sell their gazettes should also be considered before making any conclusions about the real political stance of the editors of these humour gazettes. In case of caricatures, for example, when juxtaposing the traditional and the modern, an ambiguous humour accommodating multiple strands of thoughts would be helpful 'for winning audiences or patrons' by playing both sides.[106] However, it is difficult to discern the political views of the editors, if any, due to censorship and government patronage.

4.2 Urbanisation: Municipal Services

Urban reforms of the 19th century in Istanbul were major subjects of caricatures in the early 1870s. These reforms entailed things such as cadastral works and the widening of the roads; installation of pavements, sewers, and gas lamps along streets; development projects such as the construction of buildings and bridges; and introduction of modern means of transport.[107] Moving away from the paradigms of modernisation or westernisation, these developments are now being approached from the perspective of internal dynamics and the role of local and international actors as well as the state. These revisionist studies underscore that the integration of the Ottoman capital city into the world capitalist system in this century went hand in hand with profitable urban projects involving spatial segre-

102 About this communitarian structure and the conception of morality in Ottoman communities in Istanbul, see Işın 1995, 15–144. Also see Ülgener 1981.

103 Mardin 1974, 414–42. Mardin uses the 'little tradition' vs 'great tradition' opposition to refer, respectively, to 'the ruled' and 'the ruling' classes in relation to their cultural capital.

104 *ibid*., 423, 425.

105 *ibid*., 427–8.

106 Moores 2015, 12–3.

107 For an overview of urban modernisation reforms, see Çelik 1986.

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gation and urban inequalities, which were absent from elite-biased urban modernisation narratives.[108]

The Sixth District (*Altıncı Daire-i Belediye*), Istanbul's first municipal administration was founded in 1857 to the service of Galata and Pera as a pilot project with the possibility of later extending it to other districts. The first director (*müdür*) of the Sixth District was Kâmil Bey, who is said to be a much-mocked *alafranga* fop of the time, 'a living example of Felâtun.'[109] Commission of the municipality was made up of wealthy merchants and bankers from the two districts, such as Camondo. As was the foundation of the municipality, subsequent restructuring of urban space and introduction of modern transportation systems in the second half the 19th century were rather the initiatives of these economic actors in Galata and Pera, where their properties and businesses were located.[110] 'Poor Greeks, Armenians and Turks living in the ravines behind Taksim, in Kasımpaşa, and on the back streets of Pangaltı did not benefit from' these municipal services.[111] Administrated by wealthy ruling classes, the Sixth District, among all other subsequent municipalities founded in other districts, retained a relatively autonomous and privileged position with a higher budget well into the 1870s. The fact that city improvements were financed and run by the wealthy, privileged classes and by foreigners to their own advantage must have made them a target for the Ottoman humour press. In other words, the reform projects served the financial interests of the ruling classes, lacked a civic dimension, and excluded other districts of Istanbul from the outset. One of the first projects of this municipality, for example, was the erection of a stock exchange building.[112]

The Sixth District could only be efficient with the involvement of the State, following the appointment of Ottoman bureaucrat Server Efendi (later Server Paşa) as the director of the municipal body in 1863.[113] After the foundation of the Istanbul Municipality (Şehremaneti) and the Hocapaşa fire of 1865, restructuring was implemented during the same period in Stamboul proper as those of the Sixth District, as did the opening of a streetcar line in Karaköy and between Eminönü and Aksaray in 1871. Yet, the projects were concentrated on areas defined by the financial interests of the elite and foreigners from Taksim Square to Sirkeci Station.[114]

Both *Latife* and *Tiyaro* often wrote about infrastructural shortcomings. Interestingly, *Latife* did not publish any caricatures on these matters in 1874 and only two in 1875,[115] while *Tiyatro* contained many concerning issues such as foul-smelling streets (Fig. 9),

108 For these critical studies see Baruh 2009; Kentel 2018; Neumann 2011; Rosenthal 1982. Kentel's work gives references to other revisionist studies.

109 Neumann 2011, 435; Ortaylı 1987, 190.

110 For a 'List of real estate owners and investors in Pera, Galata and Stamboul between 1868 and 1914', a 'List of most important investors in urban property (1868-1914)' and for a separate list of 'Camondo property' (as a prominent one), see Baruh 2009, 330–84, 385–6, and 405–22.

111 Çelik 1986, 47.

112 Neumann 2011, 434–7, 444; Rosenthal 1982, 374–81.

113 Neumann 2011, 440-4.

114 See Baruh 2009, 224; 1–236.

115 One caricature in *Latife* was about dusty Street of Balıkpazarı in Galata; see *Latife* no. 19, 3 May 1291 [15 May 1875], 4.

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streets flooded by rain, mud puddles, and dusty roads.[116] However, *Latife* was not indifferent to these topics, frequently tackling these same issues in textual parts. Urban reforms were also motivated by a drive on the part of government to make the city look modern,[117] but according to the humour press, Istanbul, with all its urban shortcomings, was far from being a civilised city. Thus, these caricatures also read as civilisational failures of urban reforms. As a matter of fact, Humourists' frustration with urban modernisation as mirrored in 19th-century Ottoman caricatures was suggested earlier by Georgeon.[118] *Latife* and *Tiyatro* treated other problems, such as non-functional newly installed city lights and deficient bridge constructions, in their textual parts, while these issues were addressed in caricatures in other humour periodicals.[119]

The first caricature below from *Tiyatro* about city hygiene (Fig. 8) depicts passers-by holding their noses due to the stench in Galata, implying that no other solution was being offered by the authorities. On a preceding page to this caricature, those overwhelmed by the unpleasant smell are listed among the main export items of this neighbourhood in a humorous geographical description.[120] Potential causes of the odour could be garbage (*süprüntü*) or piles thereof (*süprüntü cezires*i) and animal carcasses on the streets of Istanbul, as reported by *Tiyatro*.[121] The Sixth District, which was responsible for rubbish collection and street cleaning (*tanzīfāt*) in Galata and Pera at the time, must have been the target of this caricature.[122] Yet, there was a particular street not in Galata but in Aksaray, called 'Mehmed Efendi sokağı,' that *Tiyatro* often mocked in its textual parts for the garbage piling up and ignored by the cleaning officers (*tanzīfāt memurları*).[123]

Other smells were connected to the city's sewer problem, where especially Kasımpaşa, a poor neighbour of Pera, and to a lesser extent Galata, were suffering.[124] Sewage from the privileged upper hills being channelled down to the Kasımpaşa river must have been the real cause of the odour in the following caricature (Fig. 9). The Sixth District Municipality had taken steps to improve the sewer system of Pera at the expense of Kasımpaşa, whose inhabitants were mostly lower-income, working-class people, as opposed to the affluent

116 See *Tiyatro*, no. 5, 3 April 1290 [15 April 1874], 4; *Tiyatro*, no. 78, 19 Safer 1292 [27 March 1875], 4; *Tiyatro*, no. 62, 28 Kānūn-i Evvel 1290 [9 January 1875], 4.

117 Ergin 1995, 1268.

118 Georgeon 1998, 24–8.

119 For these caricatures, see ibid., 26, 28.

120 'İthalat ve İhracat: …hastalar, burnu düşmüşler...' in *Tiyatro*, no. 11, 24 April 1290 [6 May 1874], 2.

121 'Suret-i Nutuk: Ey sokaklar!...Eğer siz olmayaydınız kedi köpek laşelerini göremeyecektik…Bazılarınız dahi süprüntü ceziresine müşabih bir halde bulunuyorsunuz…Ey sokaklar! Bazılarınızdan da geçmek isteyen insanların burnu kopuyor...', *Tiyatro*, no. 39, 31 July 1290 [12 August 1874], 1.

122 Ergin 1995, 912.

123 'Coğrafya:…Aksaray denilen mahal şark cihetinden Mehmed Efendi sokağındaki süprüntü cezires… Tanzīfāt memurlarının sokakların süprüntülerini görecek olsalar kaldırmaları şüphesiz ise de her nasılsa göremiyorlar', *Tiyatro*, no. 46, 24 August 1290 [5 September 1874], 1–2.

124 Kentel 2018, 211.

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Figure 8. Tiyatro*, no. 11, 24 April 1290 [6 May 1874], 4.*
'According to the advice given by the medical board to those passing through some streets in Galata.'

quarter of Pera. As Kentel shows, 'several infrastructural interventions in Pera's urban space, regarded as the hallmarks of modernization and the necessities of modern civilization, thus resulted in the deepening of inequalities between two neighbouring quarters not only via making Pera better off, but also through worsening the material conditions of Kasımpaşa.'[125]

Another caricature titled 'On the shores of Kasımpaşa' in *Tiyatro* again depicted the unpleasant odour disrupting the locals.[126] With a moral criticism of the priority given to financial interests over the public's well-being in urban projects, these caricatures constituted a space for 'representation and resistance'[127] through indirect satire of the ruling classes. Association of the modernising city with social segregation, inequality, and corruption is more obvious in relation to modern transport means in *Tiyatro* and *Latife*.

4.3 Means of Transport

Steamboats and subsequently horse-drawn trams and omnibuses started operating around the middle of the 19th century.[128] In 1869, Karapano Efendi was granted a con-

125 *ibid*., 216–7.
126 *Tiyatro*, no. 23, 5 June 1290 [17 June 1874], 4.
127 See Göçek 1998, 1–12.
128 See Çelik 1986, 82–103.

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Figure 9. Latife*, no. 27, 22 May 1291 [3 June 1875], 4.*
'This is how cleanliness is achieved! No other way of passing through is acceptable due to fetid odour of Kasımpaşa river.'

cession to establish a shareholding company with the purpose of building and operating horse-drawn trams, in addition to omnibuses. Among the shareholders were wealthy banker families such as Zarifi, Christakis Zografos, and Camondo, the creditors of Ottoman government.[129] The first shareholders of the steamboat company *Şirket-i Hayriye* again included members of the ruling class, such as the sultan, the sultan's mother, bureaucrats such as Grand Vizier Reşid Paşa and the Minister of War Mehmed Ali Paşa, and the banker Camondo.[130] Caricatures about means of transport indirectly criticised these elite networks. Even if steamboats were targeted for several reasons in the textual content, the difficulty of getting on and off board, whether due to crowding or technical deficiencies, became subject to caricatures. Both the first caricature (Fig. 10) and the third caricature that Latife published in the first year, 1874, depict this problem.[131]

Later in the same year, *Tiyatro* also contained a caricature on this issue.[132] Yet, the real trigger behind these caricatures was the moral issues discussed in the textual parts of both gazettes. One cause of criticism was the socially exclusive nature of the services. *Şirket-i Hayriye*, to take one example, was attacked by both *Latife* and *Tiyatro* for not providing

129 Ergin 1995, 2398, 2408.
130 Çelik 1986, 84.
131 See, *Latife*, no. 3, 19 August 1290 [31 August 1874], 4.
132 See *Tiyatro*, no. 55, 25 September 1290 [7 October 1874], 4.

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Figure 10. Latife*, no. 1, 12 August 1290 [24 August 1874], 4.*
'Oh, Efendi! Is everything okay with you? Have you had an accident? –No, man! I just get off the boat of the Üsküdar line. Thankfully, I haven't injured myself!'

decent sitting places for passengers unable to afford seats, which were only available in the first-class area (*mevki*).[133] *Latife* also complained that the company was only looking after its own interest, had no concerns for the public wellbeing, and was not spending its profits to improve the transport experience for the public.[134] As a matter of fact, the first

133 'Şu âlemde bir türlü rahat bir yer bulunamayacak vesselam. Tramvaya binilse ayakta durmaya yer yoktur. Üsküdar vapurunda ise mevkisiz oturacak mahal bulunmaz. Kış kamarası, yan kamaraları, davlumbaz üstü mevki inhisarına alınmış. Vâkıâ baş şu inhisardan hariç kalmış ise orayı da halatlar, kırık iskemleler, taifeler tuttuğu cihetle avam için tente ve kazgan ve baca üstünden başka yer yoktur. Hâlbuki ki şu günlerde tente üstüne de şilte serilerek mevki yapılacağı rivayet olunuyor. Bu surette avamın haline ah imdat eyleye.' *Tiyatro*, no. 5, 3 April 1290 [15 April 1874], 3–4.

134 'Şirket-i Hayriye: … Mesela adet-i kadimden beri direktör olan zatın maaşından maada hasıl olan ticaretten yüzde on hissesi var. İşte bunun nısfı bari ahalinin istirahatine sarf olunsa herkes de kıvrana kıvrana tahta üstünde oturmaktan kurtulur ya… Velhâsıl Şirket her saniye kendi menfaatini düşüneceğine biraz da ahalinin istirahat ve menfaatini derhatır etse olmaz mı?', *Latife*, no. 3, 19 August 1290 [31 August 1874].

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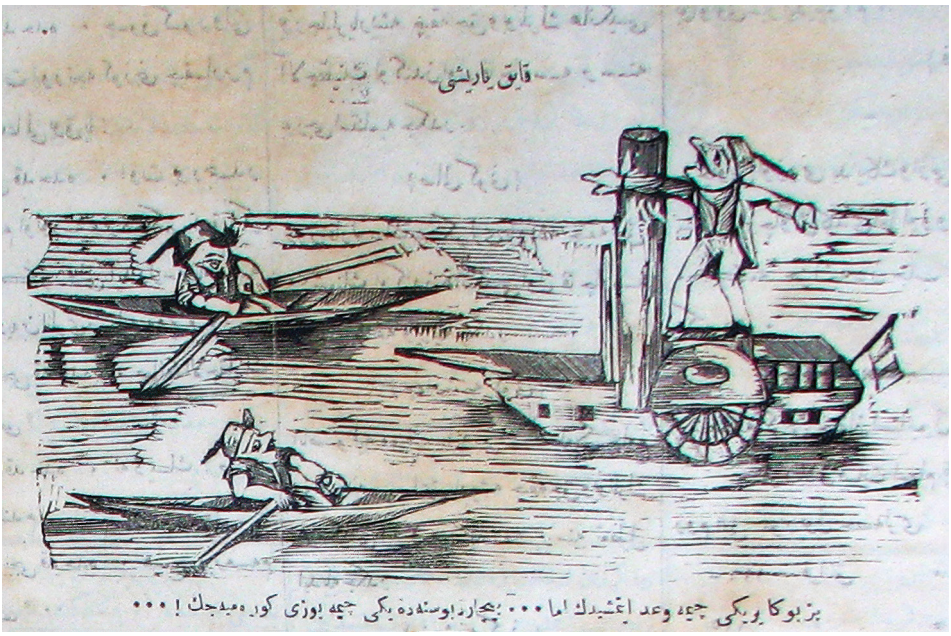
Figure 11. Tiyatro*, no. 44, 17 August 1290 [29 August 1874], 4.*
'Rowboat Race
Though we had promised a new hawser to this... Poor thing, it won't see a new hawser again this year.'



steamboats were meant to facilitate transport for the ruling classes from Bosphorus, where they had moved their residences.[135]

The next caricature (Fig. 11) from *Tiyatro* is about the miserable state of the steamboats, which may have been a real issue, especially with affordable ones, according to a humorous story in *Latife*. Expensive steamboats were new and decent, and they delivered regular services, whereas the cheaper ones were old, deficient, and not operated regularly.[136] *Latife* reports an excessively long waiting time for the steamboat in Kasımpaşa.[137]Austerity measures were one cause of the slowness, as humorously reported by *Latife*. Accordingly, a steamboat of the Kasımpaşa line had slowed down mid-route due to a lack of fuel. Because it was its last service of the day, the operator did not want to add coal to the boiler. This boat was even slower than the rowboats, prompting a boatman to shout at the steam-

135 Koraltürk 2007, 29–30.
136 'Köprü Üzerinde', *Latife,* no. 13, 23 September 1290 [5 October 1874], 3.
137 'Vay, vay, vay canım…Kasımpaşa'dan Eyüp'e gideceğim diyerek vapur bekleyenlere…' *Latife*, no. 2, 15 August 1290 [27 August 1874], 4.

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boat: 'Either move or clear the way!'[138] It could be that service quality was lower in the lower-income neighbourhood of Kasımpaşa, as a further sign of social segregation. Juxtaposition of a steamboat with the traditional means of transport presents an example of the coexistence of the new and old ways throughout Ottoman humour press,[139] with the humour rooted in the incongruity.[140] This caricaturing method goes back to *Zuarchakhos*, where traditional and fashionable women were also contrasted.[141]

The ridiculing of horse-drawn trams had a moral dimension, one which was not limited to these modern transport means. Transport animals, these gazettes claimed, were undernourished and suffered from overwork, while the operators' sole concern was the profit. The following caricatures from *Tiyatro* and *Latife,* both signed by the Armenian caricaturist Tınghır, depict such treatment of the horses. Not properly fed, they are so skinny that their bones are visible. In the first caricature below (Fig. 12), a starving horse heads towards a coffee workshop (*tahmis*), as written in the upper left, where it smells barley. Here, the reader is confronted with the subtle articulation of multi-layered satire in Baronyan's *Tiyatro*, as the means of transport was not the only target: the issue of food fraud as a matter of morality was often raised in both gazettes, and the adulteration of coffee with barley was but one case mentioned on the page preceding this caricature in the 14th issue.[142]

There was probably more to moral criticism of tramline company, as the service quality might have varied depending on the socio-economic levels of the neighbourhoods. As reported in the late 19th century–although we don't know for how long this was the case–it was rumoured that newly purchased horses were put in service first on the Şişli line and that three years later they were transferred to the Azapkapı line. Finally, after getting much older, they were taken to Topkapı and subsequently to the Samatya line.[143] *Latife* verifies the poor service in Aksaray in 1874 by noting how slow the trams were and how weak the horses were, then holding the tramline company responsible in a witty way.[144] The following year in 1875, *Tiyatro* complained that the tramline company was charging the same price between the stations regardless of the distance. It goes on to recommend that the higher authority that granted the concession to the tramline company to run the operations should be contacted if one wants to end this corruption.[145] Obviously, *Tiyatro* was using the term 'higher authority' to refer to the government.

The second caricature (Fig. 13) below, this time from *Latife*, depicts the slowness of the horse, where even the man with crutches can move faster. At first glance, this might look like a comic print for entertainment purposes, but it was probably addressing the issue

138 'Kasımpaşa'ya işlemekte bulunan vapurlardan 12 numaralı vapur son postasını icra etmekte iken hareketine adeta hiç yürüyemez derece ağırlık gelmiş…Hatta bu aralıkta kayıkçının birinin vapura hiddet edip 'ya al yahut yol ver de geçeyim' diye bağırdığı kemal-i taaccüple işitilmiştir.' *Latife*, no. 17, 7 Teşrin-i Evvel 1290 [19 October 1874], 1.
139 Georgeon 2000, 92.
140 For a discussion on the theory of incongruity, see Billig 2005, 61–3.
141 Kiraz 2024, 117.
142 'Mütalaa' *Tiyatro*, no. 14, 4 May 1290 [16 May 1874], 1.
143 Ahmet Rasim cited in Kayserilioğlu 1998, 86–8.
144 'Ajans Tramvay', *Latife*, no. 2, 15 August 1290 [27 August 1874], 2.
145 'Varaka', *Tiyatro*, no. 64, 31(?) Kānūn-i Evvel 1290 [12 January 1875], 3.

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Figure 12. Tiyatro*, no. 14, 4 May 1290 [16 May 1874], 4.*
'Poor things, as they are deprived of barley, they dig into wherever they smell it.'

of the 'horses for rent' (*kira beygiri*) suffering from starvation and exhaustion. Another component in the caricature is the driver beating the horse. One week after publishing this, *Latife* complained that drivers in Yenicami and Beyazıt were beating the *kira beygir*s rather than feeding them.[146]

How transport animals are treated was not a modern concern, with regulations to protect them dating back to earlier centuries,[147] but this subject may have acquired another dimension with concerns surrounding civilisational progress specific to the 19th century. Such treatment of transport animals would not have been called civilised behaviour, particularly in an urban setting, and, for sure, would have damaged the modern image of the city. In the 19th century, the beating and overloading of transport animals and burdening of the weak animals was indeed forbidden by municipal law.[148] While addressing animal abuse as a moral issue in the case of the *kira beygir*s could be thought of as indirectly targeting the administrators for letting this happen, the direct targets in other caricatures were the tramline and steamboat companies.

146 'Bir Varakadır ki Re'y el-a'yn Görüldü', *Latife*, no. 8, 5 September 1290 [17 September 1874], 3.
147 Article 156, Code of Sultan Selim, in Akgündüz 1991, 110.
148 Ergin 1995, 1670, 1798.

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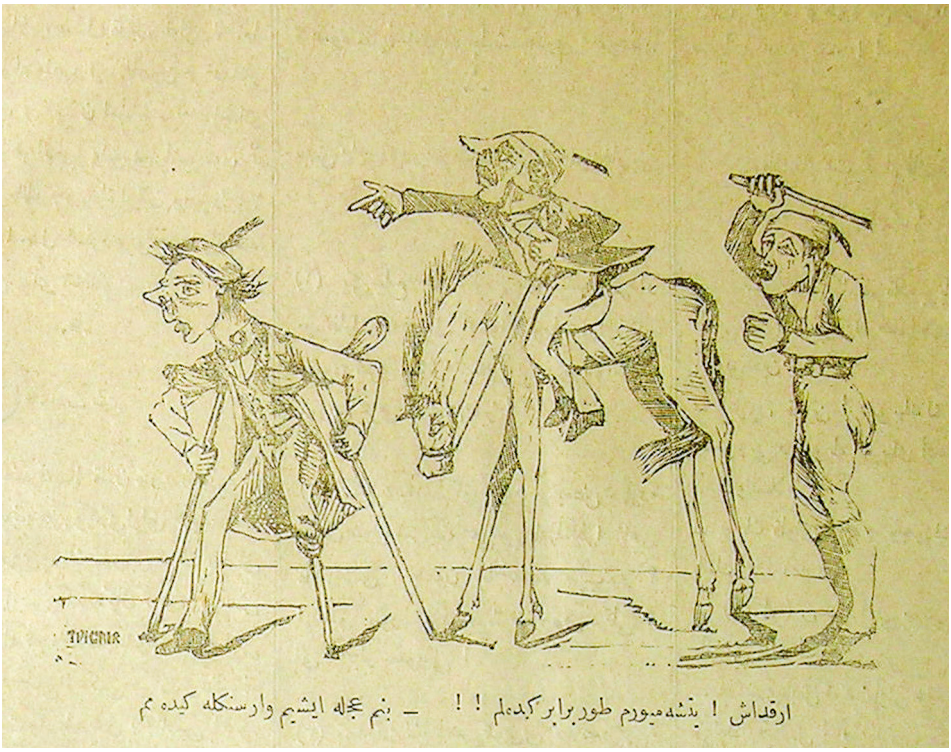
Figure 13. Latife*, no. 6, 29 August 1290 [10 September 1874], 4.*
'Hey! I can't keep up with you. Wait, let's go together!! –I have an urgent business. I can't go with you.'



The last caricature (Fig. 14), again from *Latife* and signed by Tınghır, is about the subway (Tünel) project between Taksim and Galata. The figure of a man, probably representing the ruling class, towering over the poor old woman representing ordinary people or the ruled class, contrasted in size, is quite symbolic of power relations. As the caricature shows, entry to the tunnel was restricted, especially since one is normally not expected to walk through a subway line. Yet, upon a second look at this caricature, a silent protest, a struggle over the control of urban space, almost reminiscent of today's 'commoning' movements, becomes visible.[149] The woman was claiming, in a sense, a Lefebvrian 'right to the city' in trying to use the passage to Taksim. After the opening of the tunnel, *Latife* this time published news (probably fictitious) about a penniless man managing to walk through the tunnel but then getting caught by the conductor on the other side, reminding the man that 'there is no passage, even underground, for men without money' (*parasız*

149 On city commoning, see Büyüksaraç and Özkan 2020.

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Figure 14. Latife*, no. 13, 23 September 1290 [5 October 1874], 4.*
'Where are you going?! Hey! Look at me! –Well, I'm going to Taksim.'

adam için yer altından bile yol yoktur).[150] Indeed, *Latife* did not expect the Tünel project to provide 'public good,' even before it opened.[151] Elsewhere in gazette, the tunnel turns into a monster prepared to swallow people.[152]

Still shuttling today between Karaköy and the lower end of the Grand Rue de Pera (today's İstiklal Street), Tünel is the world's second oldest subway and is also known to

150 'Bir züğürt adamın birisi Galata Tüneli'nin bu başındaki biletçilerin her nasılsa gözlerini boyayıp içeri girebilmiş ve yürüyerek yukarı çıkmış ise de öbür baştaki biletçi merkumu yakalayıp para istemiş…' *Latife*, no. 1, 22 March 1291 [3 April 1875], 2.

151 'Şaşarım, Şaşarım…Galata Tüneli'nin vatana edeceği hizmetten fayda hasıl olacağına…'*Latife*, no. 23, 7 Teşrin-i Sāni 1290 [19 November 1874], 3–4.

152 'Latife'ye Mahsus Telgraflar, Galata Tüneli'nden: Kemal-i dehşet ile adamları yutmaya hazırlanmış isem de henüz nasibim çıkmadı!' *Latife*, no. 11, 16 September 1290 [28 September 1874], 4.

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be the shortest, having only two stations. Undoubtedly a shocking project for its time, the subway was received with suspicion, apart from its potential symbolic value to be used as a manifestation of civilisational progress for Ottoman government. *Tiyatro,* did not contain a caricature on this, but shared *Latife*'s bias through some fictional public reactions published upon the opening of the subway line in January 1875: someone had allegedly found it scary to travel underground, while for some others 'one must be crazy to take the subway.'[153] The major driving factor behind these reactions must have been the concessions, of which both *Latife* and *Tiyatro* were very critical, as shown in the example of tramline company.

French Engineer Eugene Henri Gavand was granted the concession to construct the subway by the Ottoman government in 1868. To put the plan into action, Gavand established a company first in Paris and then in London in 1872. Supposedly designed to provide convenient access from the finance district Galata to Pera, the subway must have been seen as a very profitable venture, attracting numerous local and international investors from the ruling classes, spanning wealthy bankers, merchants, and Ottoman bureaucrats, aside from the significant number of shares held by the engineer Gavand himself. Shares were distributed among the companies in Istanbul, France, and England, as shown by Kentel. The French banker d'Erlanger from London and Camondo, the famous banker of the Ottoman State and the owner of many properties in Pera, held the biggest shares of the subway company. Other shareholders included Charles Helbig, a Levantine businessman from Istanbul; Émile Deveaux, the deputy general manager of Ottoman Bank; Edhem Paşa, the Minister of Public Works; and Ahmet Vefik Efendi, the Minister of Education. More to the point, construction materials and mechanical components were supplied from Europe, particularly France and Italy.[154]

A few months before the subway's opening, *Tiyatro* let its opinion on the project be known by writing: 'as if the Tünel company provided a significant public good for the residents of Istanbul.' It then went on to estimate monthly and annual revenues of the company based on the planned fare (40 *para*) for a single passenger, claiming that revenues would far exceed the cost of construction that the company incurred.[155] Both *Latife* and *Tiyatro* shared the view that the tunnel project was meaningless and did not benefit anyone other than the company. As a matter of fact, 'public good' was supposedly a criterion of the Ottoman government in the decision-making processes before the concessions are given.[156]

Caricatures falling under the themes of *alafranga*, urban reforms, and transport means could thus be thought of as subverting the government and dominant classes through indirect satire. Yet, the question remains: How much did they influence public opinion? Information about the reception and the political impact of Ottoman caricatures

153 'İstanbul ahalisince Tünel'in Tesiri: Muhaverat', *Tiyatro*, no. 65, 18 Kānūn-i Sāni 1290 [30 January 1875], 2.

154 Kentel 2018, 108–13.

155 'Galata'nın Tüneli: –Ey ne olmuş bakalım. Sanki Tünel Şirketi Dersaadet ahalisine büyük bir hizmet etmiş…' *Tiyatro*, no. 57, 2 Teşrin-i Evvel 1290 [14 October 1874], 2.

156 Çelik 1986, 50–1, 74–5.

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in the 19th century is the most difficult to retrieve, also because no subscription lists are available. It has been shown that Teodor Kasap was a politically influential figure of the 19th century[157] and that Baronyan's *Tiyatro* was a fierce correspondent of Teodor Kasap's humour gazette *Hayal*. Baronyan must also have been a noteworthy individual, considering that Bardakjian notes that his humour gazettes were closed after criticising some Ottoman Armenian bureaucrats and the Patriarchate, bothering them enough that they filed a complaint against him.[158]

5. Conclusion

Roughly from 1874 to 1875, the visuals in *Tiyatro* and *Latife* could mostly be characterised as straightforward illustrations rather than caricatures. It is thus astonishing to see that *Zuarchakhos* contained plenty of illustrations using caricaturing techniques about 15 years before the first caricatures appeared in humour gazettes in Ottoman Turkish script. The freedom of the Ottoman humour press, however, did not follow a steady or progressive line of development in the 19th century. Press regulations requiring moral instruction, while banning political satire and lampoonery, again allegedly for moral reasons, defined the nature of the humour in the caricatures. The forms of humour that these caricatures primarily employed were jokes and wit rather than satire and lampoonery. Even when satire was used, it was usually gentle and blended with wit. Rare cases of political and direct satire were punished, as in the case of Kasap's gazettes. Most caricatures were thus initially normative and humoristic rather than subversive and satirical. Satirical nature of the caricatures increased as of 1875–1876 until the suspension of the humour press during the Hamidian period.

In the 19th century, the discourse of morality, which is still used by politicians as a form of populist discourse, especially in authoritarian states with traditional, paternalistic societies, included elements of Ottoman political discourse. Morality as an ambiguous concept provided the government with the justification they needed to impose a ban on satire, particularly political satire, and lampoonery. Humour gazettes, tasked by the government with moral instruction, were also shaped by a discourse of morality. In this way the government could also sustain the imagined conservative and communitarian society, and thus moral ideology, at a discursive level. Taken as discursive formations, however, these caricatures approached certain topics by raising them as moral issues, allowing for indirect satire and indirect political satire. In *Latife* and *Tiyatro*, represented by *Bey*s and *Efendi*s, Ottoman civil bureaucracy, merchants, traders of fashion commodities, bankers, and entrepreneurs, some of whom were also involved in economic concessions, were depicted as morally corrupt individuals for several reasons, in addition to capitalizing on and profiting from urbanisation and new market conditions with unjust gains at the expense of public well-being, they were all at once listed in the ironic list of 'winners' pub-

157 For most recent studies on Kasap as a political figure see, Elfenbein 2017; Benlisoy, Şahin and Topal 2022.

158 Bardakjian 1979, 88, 12–5; 144–5.

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lished by the two gazettes. *Alafranga* luxuries and overspending on the part of the ruling classes did not comport with Ottoman middle class economic values and further distanced them from ordinary people. Laughter at the vanity, showing-off, and pretentiousness of the dominant classes was just one of many continuities between *Zuarchakhos* and later Ottoman humour press exemplified by *Latife* and *Tiyatro*. The latter then brought in the topics of urbanisation and transportation from the perspective of their own historical background. As an Armeno-Turkish gazette *Zuarchakhos* can be thought of mainly as a community gazette, whereas *Tiyatro* and *Latife* were published for the wider Ottoman public. Of the three gazettes, *Tiyatro* wrote the boldest and most satirical content.

These caricatures are best understood with the accompanying textual parts of the gazettes. A second reading reveals that inner criticism of these caricatures were the social inequalities, spatial segregation, and lack of public responsibility that these gazettes observed and raised as moral issues. These were the results of profit-driven and socially exclusive urbanisation and transportation, providing no 'public good' and only benefiting the ruling classes, according to these periodicals. These aligned with the findings of the revisionist scholarship on the transformation of 19th-century Istanbul, beyond a modernist interpretation. All in all, these caricatures indirectly subverted the government and the ruling classes on behalf of the 'ruled,' maintaining the tradition of Ottoman verbal humour. In shadow theatre, Karagöz always beat Hacivat, providing emotional relief from the dominance of the ruling classes. Caricatures as historical materials are underappreciated, considering the unique evidence they can offer due to their historical context. As a final remark, this article has attempted to contribute to the study of little-known Armeno-Turkish humour gazettes, as an integral part of the Ottoman humour press. Indeed, there were many continuities between *Zuarchakhos* and later humour press, although the gazettes of the Ottoman Armenian community were conceived as isolated cases in both Armenian and Turkish national historiography.

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