

Two Generations of Mordtmanns in Istanbul. Diplomatic and Scholarly Lives in Times of German and Ottoman Transformations

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ABSTRACTS

This article highlights shifts and continuities in Ottoman-Germansphere relations by tracing the professional and intellectual activities of two generations of the Mordtmann family that lived in the Ottoman Empire between 1846 and 1918 and played an influential role in the German-speaking communities there due to their positions as diplomats, doctors, and Orientalist scholars. By comparing the experiences and attitudes of the family members before and after the foundation of the German Reich, the article illustrates how major political transformations were reflected in complex ways in individual life stories, and how they determined and shaped trans-imperial encounters on a diplomatic, academic, and interpersonal level.

Der Artikel untersucht Veränderungen und Kontinuitäten im osmanisch-deutschen Verhältnis, indem er die professionellen und intellektuellen Aktivitäten von zwei Generationen der Mordtmann Familie nachzeichnet, die zwischen 1846 und 1918 im Osmanischen Reich als Diplomaten, Mediziner und Orientalwissenschaftler tätig waren und eine bedeutende Rolle in den dortigen deutschsprachigen Gemeinden spielten. Durch einen Vergleich der Erfahrungen und Einstellungen der Familienmitglieder vor und nach der deutschen Reichsgründung zeigt der Artikel auf, wie sich grundlegende politische Transformationen in komplexer Weise in individuellen Lebensgeschichten niederschlugen, und wie sie trans-imperiale Begegnungen auf diplomatischer, akademischer und zwischenmenschlicher Ebene prägten.

1. Introduction

This article traces the life-stories of three members of the Mordtmann family, who all engaged in diplomatic, scholarly, and interpersonal contacts with a large variety of representatives of the Ottoman state and society, as well as European diplomats and expatriates. The professional and intellectual activities of the family in the Ottoman Empire began in 1846, when the “founding father” of the dynasty Andreas David (1811–1879) moved from Hamburg to Istanbul to serve as diplomatic representative for the Hanseatic Cities. His two sons Andreas David (1837–1912) and Johannes Heinrich (1852–1932) followed in his footsteps as well-respected members of the German community in Pera and distinguished Oriental scholars, until in 1918 all surviving family members had to leave Istanbul after the defeat of the axis powers in World War I. While the father operated in a political environment marked by German particularism and, on the Ottoman side, the modernizing impetus of the Tanzimat reformers, the next generation of Mordtmanns carved out their careers in the climate of increasing German as well as the Ottoman imperial ambitions that set in after the *Reichsgründung* and the establishment of Hamidian rule. Based on written accounts by the three Mordtmanns themselves, in the shape of diplomatic dispatches from the Hamburg and Berlin state archives, as well as correspondences with friends and fellow academics, this article will discuss their experiences and their self-positioning in the changing political circumstances in the context of recent scholarship on the German speaking communities in late Ottoman urban centres, on Istanbul as a diplomatic venue, and on the history of Oriental studies in the German lands.

The careers of Andreas David Mordtmann and his sons reflect in manifold ways the changes and continuities in the relationship between the Ottomans and the German-sphere before, during and after the establishment of the Prussian-dominated German Kaiserreich in 1871. The history of the German community in Istanbul before 1871 – actually the period when most communal institutions were set up – still awaits examination in a systematic manner.¹ Both Malte Fuhrmann and Anne Dietrich frame the story of the German community within the trajectory of their respective greater narratives – the impact of colonialism or national socialism – and touch only cursorily on the community’s foundational years.² A similar argument can be made concerning the literature on diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Germansphere: while the (presumed) friendship between the Wilhelminian and the Hamidian state has been dealt with extensively,³ the time preceding the *Reichsgründung* has received much less atten-

1 An exception is the edited volume by E. Pauw et al. (ed.), *Daheim in Konstantinopel: Deutsche Spuren am Bosphorus ab 1850*, Nürnberg 2014.

2 A. Dietrich, *Deutschsein in Istanbul: Nationalisierung und Orientierung in der deutschsprachigen Community von 1843 bis 1956*, Opladen 1998; M. Fuhrmann, *Der Traum vom deutschen Orient. Zwei deutsche Kolonien im Osmanischen Reich 1851–1918*, Frankfurt am Main 2006.

3 See, for example, M. v. Kummer (ed.), *Deutsche Präsenz am Bosphorus*, Istanbul 2009; C. Schöning et al. (ed.), *Türkisch-deutsche Beziehungen: Perspektiven aus Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, Berlin 2012.

tion, and if so, either as a kind of final act in the Habsburg-Ottoman relations, or with a focus on Prussia as a rising power.⁴ Such an approach is in line with the traditional nation-state and great power focus in diplomatic history, but it disregards the complex realities on the ground. Before 1871, subjects of most (independent) German states did not have an official representation in Istanbul to turn to, and had thus to search protection from a “foreign” mission – in many cases the Hanseatic one. Similarly, while the recent interest in so-called German Orientalism is highly welcome, most literature focuses on the institutionalization of Oriental studies at German universities, thereby involuntarily replicating the marginalization of academic amateurs like Mordtmann Senior who had a major share in setting the foundations of the discipline.⁵ An examination of how he and his sons shaped different phases of communal, diplomatic, and academic history provides us with a perspective from the margins of German and Ottoman politics, making us see German unification not as a smooth transition but as a complex process full of ruptures in the interactions between Ottoman society and the German-speaking community in Istanbul.

In the context of this special issue’s theme, an intergenerational comparison of the family members’ social and intellectual involvement can provide a highly instructive case study to reconsider the history of German-Ottoman relations beyond the analytical framework of the nation state, which tends to project later cultural and political demarcations back in time. Instead, a close-up investigation of the experiences and attitudes of individual actors on the ground highlights the fluent, often make-shift character that community institutions, diplomatic arrangements and personal life stories could adopt before the advent of the German Kaiserreich. In this context, the heuristic concept of a Germansphere provides us with a perspective that is open for the multiple and often contradictory frames of cultural and political affiliation among the German speakers staying in the Ottoman Empire, especially with regard to interactions on the micro-historical level. The Germansphere approach, in stressing the communalities as well as the differences between the expatriates, thus facilitates a more nuanced grasp of the local dimensions of German-Ottoman encounters, which presented themselves far more multi-layered and transculturally entangled than what the nationalist paradigm could account for. The history of the Mordtmann family is as much an Istanbul story, as it is a telling example of the many shapes and shades that the personal and communal biographies of Germans living in the Ottoman Empire could assume. Covering a timespan of more than 70 years, it puts into relief the intricate shifts and continuities in the interactions between the Ottoman Empire and the Germansphere on the levels of diplomacy, scholarship, and interpersonal encounters.

4 See M. Kurz et al. (ed.), *Das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburgermonarchie*, Wien 2005; K. Pröhl, *Die Bedeutung preußischer Politik in den Phasen der orientalischen Frage*, Frankfurt am Main 1986.

5 See S. Mangold, *Eine weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft. Die deutsche Orientalistik im 19. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 2004; S. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship*, New York 2009; U. Wokoeck, *German Orientalism: The Study of the Middle East and Islam from 1800 to 1945*, London 2009.

2. Orientalist Pioneer and Transcultural Broker: Andreas David Mordtmann the Elder

The existence of the rather short-lived Hanseatic legation in Istanbul (1842–1859) may seem like a mere footnote in the broader context of European diplomatic history,⁶ but it assumed, due to the fragmented political landscape of the German federation before 1871, a high symbolic and also very practical importance as one of only three German diplomatic representations in the Ottoman Empire – next to Prussia and Austria. As such, it played a significant role for the small German-speaking community in Istanbul, as well as for travellers passing through the city. This prominence as a contact point for expatriates and transients from the German lands was reinforced by the local connections and activities of the head of mission Andreas David Mordtmann (1811–1879), a self-made oriental scholar who spoke fluent Turkish, had established excellent connections to Ottoman intellectual circles, and was very familiar with the history and present of the country that he had travelled himself.⁷

The establishment of the Hanseatic mission was part of the very active, mainly trade-oriented foreign policy of the three northern German city states Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck who entertained a network of more than 200 diplomatic and consular outposts worldwide to further their mercantile interests.⁸ Mordtmann's main qualification to head the Istanbul mission was his proficiency in oriental languages that he had taught himself as he could not afford to attend a university.⁹ The diplomatic appointment for him meant a substantial increase in social prestige. Coming from a poor family background, he suddenly belonged to the influential class of Hamburg burghers and could afford higher education for his sons, while his daughters grew up to be popular marriage candidates in the German-speaking community in Pera.¹⁰

The Hanseatic legation was endowed with a tight budget which meant that Mordtmann had to set it up in a modest, rather makeshift way – some local Germans mockingly referred to it as a mission “run from the parental bedroom”.¹¹ Nevertheless, it acted as a full-fledged diplomatic representation, and Mordtmann was treated by the Ottoman

6 On the history of the legation, see E. Fiebig, *Hanseatenkreuz und Halbmond: Die Hanseatischen Konsulate in der Levante im 19. Jahrhundert*, Marburg 2005.

7 See F. Babinger, *Andreas David Mordtmann's Leben und Schriften*, in: A. D. Mordtmann, *Anatolien. Skizzen und Reisebriefe aus Kleinasien 1850–1859*, Hannover 1925, pp. VII–XXXIV; H. G. Majer, *Mordtmann, Andreas David*, in: NDB 18 (1997), pp. 92–93; T. Völker, *Vom Johanneum an die Hohe Pforte: Das Leben und Wirken des Hamburger Orientalisten und Diplomaten Andreas David Mordtmann*, in: Y. Köse (ed.), *Osmanen in Hamburg: Eine Beziehungsgeschichte zur Zeit des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Hamburg 2016, pp. 25–44.

8 See A. Graßmann, *Hanse weltweit? Zu den Konsulaten Lübecks, Bremens und Hamburgs im 19. Jahrhundert*, in: Graßmann (ed.), *Ausklang und Nachklang der Hanse im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Trier 2001, pp. 43–65.

9 On the circumstances of the appointment, see T. Völker, *Holding High the Hanseatic Cross in the Levant: Andreas David Mordtmann and the Diplomatic Milieu in Istanbul*, in: *International History Review* 43 (2021) 5, pp. 1122–1141.

10 Mordtmann to Curtius, 11 September 1857, St[aats]A[rchiv] H[ansestadt] H[amburg] 111-1_46191, fo. 5.

11 Smidt to Merck, 8 January 1858, StAHH 111-1_46191, fo. 8.

authorities and in the diplomatic milieu according to his rank as *chargé d'affaires*.¹² He recalled his “exhaustive discussions” with the Porte’s foreign ministers on the Ottoman state of affairs,¹³ and even though he had to explain repeatedly what the Hanseatic Cities were (and why they mattered),¹⁴ his Ottoman interlocutors seem to have respected him as a distinguished European man of letters. When his diplomatic employment ended in 1859, these contacts secured him an appointment in Ottoman state service, where he worked as judge at a mixed commercial court (*ticaret mahkemesi*).¹⁵

In the context of the German-speaking community in Istanbul, Mordtmann used his diplomatic position to carve out a prominent role for himself in the establishment of the small German Protestant congregation (*Deutsche Evangelische Gemeinde in Constantinopel*) that took place around the mid-century.¹⁶ A hospital, a school, a church, and a burial site were set up within a short period of time, and Mordtmann for several years presided over the parish council, the *Wohlthätigkeitsverein*, that got all these projects off the ground.¹⁷ In the politically turbulent times around 1848, the organizational and ideological set-up of these institutions was the subject of much in-fighting that in many ways mirrored the political fault lines within the Germansphere. Most communal infrastructure was denominationally aligned, and the rivalry between Austria and Prussia for predominance within the German Federation found its expression in their representatives’ patronage of the local Catholics or Protestants respectively. Mordtmann in this hegemonic quarrel took a fervent stance to preserve the Protestant and at the same time decidedly federal character of the communal institutions, fighting a two-front battle against, on the one hand, proponents of the German nationalist movement who tried to take over the *Wohlthätigkeitsverein* and give it an all-German ecumenical orientation,¹⁸ while on the other hand countering Prussia’s efforts to dominate the Protestant congregation in line with its imperial ambitions. In 1853, the conflict with the Prussian minister escalated to the point that Mordtmann, under protest, left the German congregation and started to attend the services of a nationally mixed Protestant parish under Dutch protection.¹⁹

The emerging picture of a German-speaking community divided by linguistic, religious and stately affiliations was counterbalanced on a daily level by a high amount of pragmatic cooperation. Mordtmann’s consular practise reflects this ambivalent stance towards

12 See Völker, Holding High.

13 Mordtmann to Merck, 6 May 1857, StAHH, 111-1_46188.

14 Mordtmann to Merck, 28 February 1852, StAHH 111-1_46175, fo. 5.

15 On the history of these courts see G. Bozkurt, *Batı Hukukunun Türkiye’de benimsenmesi: Osmanlı Devleti’nden Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’ne Resepsiyon Süreci (1839–1939)* [The Adoption of Western Law in Turkey: The Process of Reception from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey (1839–1939)], Ankara 1996, pp. 155–159.

16 See C. Pschichholz, *Zwischen Diaspora, Diakonie und deutscher Orientpolitik: Deutsche evangelische Gemeinden in Istanbul und Kleinasien in osmanischer Zeit*, Stuttgart 2011.

17 See M. Kriebel, *Die Geschichte der deutschen evangelischen Gemeinde in Konstantinopel-Istanbul 1843 bis 1932*, unpublished manuscript; see also *Akte betreffend Erwerbung eines Begräbnisplatzes für die protestantischen Christen in Constantinopel*, StAHH 111-1_46178.

18 Mordtmann to Merck, 21 January 1851, StAHH 111-1_46173, fo. 247–254.

19 Mordtmann to Merck, 20 May 1857, StAHH 111-1_46178, fo. 7.

his fellow Germans. On the one hand, he made a point of representing first and foremost the Hanseatic citizens that he considered politically more mature than most other Germans due to the long tradition of republicanism in the Cities.²⁰ On the other hand, he offered consular protection to subjects of other German states if they requested it, and helped ships from various German ports with the harbour formalities.²¹ His attitudes concerning what he considered his compatriots could be described as arranged in three concentric circles. In terms of his political affiliation, he clearly promoted Hanseatic independence, while on a religious level he felt a strong bond with other Protestant Germans. The imagined community of a German nation state based on a shared cultural heritage also appealed to him but conflicted with his advocacy for federal autonomy that he saw undermined by the Prussian enforcement of its political and ideological hegemony.²² In terms of Mordtmann's academic career, the move to Istanbul turned out to be a mixed blessing. As a researcher with first-hand access to primary source material, he was cajoled to become a corresponding member of several important scientific societies – like the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft or the Bavarian Academy of Sciences – who published his extensive articles on a regular basis and praised him as “our man in Istanbul”.²³ On the other hand, his relocation to Istanbul cut him off the general trend at German universities where the field of Oriental studies was in the process of establishing itself as an independent, mainly philologically oriented discipline.²⁴ When Mordtmann arrived in Istanbul in 1846, self-made orientalist like himself were fairly wide-spread, most of the fellow researchers he encountered had studied theology and/or classical philology while the necessary language skills were acquired in situ.²⁵ But hand in hand with the institutionalization of the discipline went the evolution of methodological tools, the installation of formal academic training and the establishment of specialized libraries that Mordtmann had no access to.²⁶ After just a decade of living in the Ottoman Empire, when trying to land lucrative assignments to do field work for prestigious research endeavours – like Mommsen's *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* or the Leiden at-Ṭabarī project –, Mordtmann had to compete with oriental scholars specifically trained at Western European universities, and he found himself lacking in state-of-the-art research techniques.²⁷

20 Mordtmann to Smidt, 5 February 1858, StAHH 111-1_46192.

21 Mordtmann to Sieveking, 19 March 1846, StAHH 111-1_46169, fo. 15-17.

22 Mordtmann to Merck, 20 June 1860, StAHH 111-1_46190, fo. 119-20.

23 H.L. Fleischer, *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, in: *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* 277 (Dezember 1849), col. 1060–1061.

24 See Wokoeck, *German Orientalism*, pp. 86–116.

25 See Marchand, *German Orientalism*, pp. 84–101 and 143–156.

26 Mangold, *Weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft*, pp. 78–91 and 155–164.

27 Mordtmann had been asked by Mommsen to copy inscriptions on the Monumentum Ancyranum, a task that was carried out simultaneously by Georges Perrot. While Perrot had the newest photolithographic equipment at his disposal during a well-funded six-month excursion, Mordtmann had to arduously climb up the monument and trace the inscriptions by hand. On Perrot, see A. Schnapp, „Perrot, Georges“, in P. Kuhlmann/H. Schneider (Hg.), *Geschichte der Altertumswissenschaften. Biografisches Lexikon*, Stuttgart 2012, Sp. 950–952. Mordtmann's doomed effort to copy the Istanbul manuscript of at-Ṭabarī's *Ta'riḥ* has been described in detail

Sabine Mangold has taken Mordtmann's case to illustrate the "exclusion of the autodidacts and travellers" from the "disciplinary community at German universities".²⁸ This holds true to a certain extent but the young field of Oriental studies certainly comprised more than what Mordtmann would have called the "bookish escapism" ("Stubengelehrsamkeit") of its academic exponents.²⁹ Mordtmann argued for the value of scientific experience, and it is telling that the recognition he (partly) missed from the German academia was made up for by the high esteem he enjoyed in Ottoman intellectual circles long before 1860 when he entered the imperial state service. The above-mentioned good relations to high-ranking Ottoman officials and his regular visits to some of the most influential literary salons in Istanbul had gained him the reputation of being a renowned European specialist in Oriental history and culture and had generated a wide-spread intellectual network that included Armenians, Greeks, and Turks.³⁰

How much Mordtmann's scientific involvement in the Ottoman and the German sphere intertwined is best illustrated by his numismatic collecting activities. For European scholars like Johann Gustav Stickel (1805–1896) in Jena,³¹ he served as an important contact due to his first-hand access to Oriental coins, while in Ottoman learned circles, his status as a serious collector bolstered his academic reputation and served as a strong bond with other collectors, as for example the minister of education Abdülatif Subhi Pascha (1816–1880)³² who became the first Ottoman scholar to write a numismatic treaty which on Mordtmann's initiative was translated into German and published in the *ZDMG*.³³

After 1860, now a member of the imperial administrative elite, Mordtmann intensified his engagement in the nascent Ottoman scientific community. He became a (founding) member of Münif Pasha's *Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye* (Ottoman Scientific Society)³⁴ and its Phanariot counterpart, the *Greek Philological Association of Constantinople* (*Syllogos*) that he even vice chaired at some point.³⁵ He repeatedly presented his scholarly findings

by A. Vrolijk, The Leiden Edition of al-Ṭabarī's Annals: The Search for the Istanbul manuscripts, in: H. Kennedy (ed.), al-Ṭabarī. The Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work, Princeton 2008, pp. 319–326.

28 Mangold, Weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft, p. 89.

29 [Mordtmann], Skizzen: Nachwort, p. 284.

30 See Völker, Holding High.

31 On Stickel's contacts to Mordtmann (father and son), see S. Heidemann/C. Sode, Christlich-Orientalische Bleisiegel im Orientalischen Münzkabinett Jena, in: Aram 11–12 (1999–2000), pp. 533–593.

32 See A. Akyıldız, Subhi Paşa, Abdülatif, in: DİA 37 (2009), pp. 450–452.

33 Subhi Bey, Compte-rendu d'une découverte importante en fait de numismatique musulmane, in: ZDMG 17 (1863) 1, pp. 39–47.

34 See A. Karaçavuş, Tanzimat Dönemi Osmanlı Bilim Cemiyetleri [Ottoman Scientific Societies of the Tanzimat Period], dissertation, Ankara 2006, pp. 197–332.

35 See O En Kōnstantinoupolēi Ellinikós Filologikós Sýllogos. Sýgγραμμα Periodikōn 6 (1873), pp. 64–77; 7 (1874), pp. 15–22; G. A. Vassiadis, The Syllogos Movement of Constantinople and Ottoman Greek Education, Athens 2007, p. 243.

at the society's gatherings,³⁶ and in the 1870s introduced both his sons to the Syllogos once they joined him in Istanbul after finishing their studies at German universities.³⁷ Christoph K. Neumann has described Mordtmann's intellectual positioning as "liminal", exploring both sides of the ideologically constructed "civilizational" divide between Orient and Occident.³⁸ He certainly was an academic self-made man who kept reinventing himself: from autodidactic Oriental scholar to ethnographic field researcher and scientific traveller to learned man and collector in the Ottoman sphere. These intellectual profiles didn't take shape in chronological succession but were overlapping and contextual. It might be argued that they were similarly in flux as his civic and professional arrangements, only that it seemed to be not so much Mordtmann himself who was changing but the academic world around him. First-hand knowledge of local social and political conditions as well as proficiency in modern oriental languages was little respected within the discipline of Oriental studies, while it was in high demand with political advisors and newspaper editors. It is no coincidence, then, that Mordtmann, apart from carving out a professional existence for himself as European expert in Ottoman service, for more than twenty years acted as correspondent for one of the most important political dailies in Germany, Cotta's *Allgemeine Zeitung*.³⁹ He was thus, it might be summarized, at the same time well-connected and marginalized, personally involved in diverse cultural, professional and intellectual fields, linking the German and the Ottoman sphere in a manner that went far beyond what would traditionally be considered a "cultural contact".

3. A Pillar of the German Colony: Andreas David Mordtmann the Younger

Mordtmann's eldest son (1837–1912) who was named after his father, first came to Istanbul with his parents in 1846, at the age of nine, but was sent back three years later to attend the most prestigious high school in Hamburg, the Johanneum.⁴⁰ His father states that by then he had picked up so much Greek, Turkish, and Italian in the streets of Istanbul that he was fluent in all three languages.⁴¹ He went on to study medicine in Göttingen and Erlangen, and in 1864 found himself a well-paid job at the German hospital in Pera. In 1872, he married the Istanbul-born catholic Maria Capoleone with whom he had three sons and a daughter.⁴² They resided on Grand Rue de Pera in a flat

36 A. Zborowski, *Griechisch, Osmanisch, Modern: Spätosmanische Identitäten. Der griechische philologische Verein in Konstantinopel*, Baden-Baden 2019, pp. 128–130 and 334–344.

37 See Vassiadis, *Syllogos*, pp. 245 and 248.

38 C. K. Neumann, „Ein Osmane“ und die Osmanen: Andreas David Mordtmann d. Ä. als Beobachter des geistigen Lebens im Osmanischen Reich seiner Zeit, in: Pauw, Daheim, pp. 93–107.

39 See G. Mühler, *Wie ein treuer Spiegel. Die Geschichte der Cotta'schen Allgemeinen Zeitung*, Darmstadt 1998.

40 On his biography, see [Anonymous entry], Mordtmann, Andreas David II., in: *Lexikon der hamburgischen Schriftsteller bis zur Gegenwart* 5 (1870), entry 2688.

41 Mordtmann to Sieveking, 16 November 1846, StAHH 622-1/90, E2_3, fo. 16.

42 Parish register of the Evangelische Gemeinde zu Constantinopel, entry d/1872.

big enough to also host his father (his mother had gone back to Hamburg in 1860), and he even possessed a summer house on the Bosphorus.⁴³ He died in Istanbul in 1912.

Andreas David had adopted his father's interest in oriental studies, and when he came to Istanbul in 1864, followed by his younger brother Johannes Heinrich ten years later, the various scholarly activities that included field research, collecting and intellectual networking turned into a family affair. Together, they founded a highly productive archaeological study group within the *Syllogos*, which issued a regular supplement to the society's almanac filled with articles written for the most part by the three Mordtmanns themselves.⁴⁴ Andreas David also got involved in his father's collecting activities, specializing in leaden seals of Sassanidian and Byzantine descent. Through his father, he got into contact with Stickel in Jena, with whom he engaged in an extended correspondence on the subject.⁴⁵ Another family member that got involved in the collecting activities was the eldest daughter Doris (* 1841) who was married to the Ottoman commander Ömer Pasha, a renegade with the birth name Albert von Gerstorf.⁴⁶ She followed her husband to his various deployments in Syria and Iraq, and used their extended stays in archaeologically prolific places like Palmyra to gather coins for her father and brother.⁴⁷ The financial crisis in the Ottoman Empire that culminated in the state insolvency of 1875 put an abrupt end to the flourishing Istanbul-based collecting activities. Many local collectors were forced to suspend their activities or even sell their holdings, while in Germany the *Reichsgründung* led to frantic buying by the Berlin museums to satisfy the new empire's need for cultural representation.⁴⁸ Mordtmann's collection seems to have stayed intact until his death in 1879, but thereafter a major dispute over the inheritance broke out within the family, and even though the relevant documents do not reveal the whereabouts of the coins there is no indication that Andreas David continued his numismatic activities.⁴⁹ Thirty years later, a part of his collection of leaden seals turned up in Vienna and was bought for the imperial museums.⁵⁰

A comparison of Mordtmann and his eldest son with regard to their social standing in the community of German expatriates shows clear parallels, while at the same time putting into relief how fundamentally the situation of the family as well as the world around

43 Detailed information on the family situation is given in the correspondence between his daughter Christel and her fiancé Edoardo de Nari, in the Büke Uraş Arşivi, Istanbul.

44 Andreas David joined the society in 1871, Johannes Heinrich in 1877: Vassiadis, *Syllogos*, pp. 245 and 248.

45 See Heidemann/Sode, *Bleisiegel*.

46 On Dorothee's life there are only scattered pieces of information. She was born in 1841 and was still alive in 1925 when Babinger wrote his biographical sketch on Mordtmann. Her husband was from Kurland and had entered Ottoman service after the suppression of the 1849 uprisings. See H. J. Kornrumpf/J. Kornrumpf, *Fremde im Osmanischen Reich, 1826–1912/13*. Bio-bibliographisches Register, Stutensee 1998, p. 361.

47 Some of her letters from Palmyra have survived among the papers left behind by her brother Johannes Heinrich that have been included in the estate of Franz Babinger at the LMU in Munich.

48 See J. Gottschlich/D. Zaptcioğlu-Gottschlich, *Die Schatzjäger des Kaisers: Deutsche Archäologen auf Beutezug im Orient*, Berlin 2021.

49 His last letter to Stickel dates of November 1877. There he claims that the findings of leaden seals had dried up, and that he felt hesitant about publishing the material he had gathered so far. Mordtmann (Jr.) to Stickel, 8 November 1877, Thüringische Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Jena (hereafter (ThULBJ)), estate Stickel, fol. 17.

50 W. Seibt, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich*, vol. 1: Kaiserhof, Wien 1978, p. 35.

it had changed within just one generation. As diplomat and physician respectively, both men held prestigious and quite influential positions among the German expatriates in Pera. But in the father's case, his respectability was based mainly on his title, his pecuniary affairs being precarious most of the time. Ironically, it was only when he turned "Ottoman", that his financial situation improved significantly.⁵¹ The environment in which he acted was the small and transient German-speaking community that around the mid-century consisted of just a few permanent residents and many fortune seekers and political refugees drifting by.⁵²

His eldest son, by contrast, was heading one of the most well-off families in what was now known as the "German colony" in Istanbul.⁵³ The letters of his daughter Christel to her fiancée Edoardo di Nari give a vivid impression of the life of a well-brought-up young lady from the upper bourgeoisie: spending bored summer months in Büyükdere, filled with piano lessons and occasional visits at the German ambassador's summer residence in Tarabya, then returning to Pera for a winter season of soirées, dance events and theatre performances, often at the premises of the German club *Teutonia* that had become the focal point of most communal activities.⁵⁴

Her father also took part in the social life of the German colony. He was an honorary member of the *Ausflugsverein* that was founded during the second wave of infrastructure building, when, after all the basic institutions – school, church, hospital, graveyard – had been set up, various forms of organized sociability were being established for the growing number of Germans living in Istanbul. The *Ausflugsverein* met at the Teutonia and arranged outings into nature and to historically interesting sites, complementing these excursions with lectures and other cultural events.⁵⁵ Andreas David held several talks that dealt with the history of Istanbul and the traces of German presence in the city and were published in the society's bulletin afterwards.⁵⁶

Malte Fuhrmann has shown how in the Oriental expatriate communities Bismarck's ideas of "Stärkung des Deutschtums" (Strengthening of the German element abroad) were widely spread.⁵⁷ At first glance, there is little indication that this dictum applies in any palpable way for the *Ausflugsverein*. The short history of the society that was published on occasion of its 25th anniversary lists love of nature, the promotion of sociability (*Geselligkeit*), and interest in history as the main aims of the association while references

51 Mordtmann to Merck, 20 June 1860, StAHH 111-1_46190, fo. 119–120.

52 Kriebel, *Geschichte*, pp. 1–7.

53 This common self-denomination used by German expatriates wasn't necessarily framed in nationalist terms but referred to a community of settlers in a foreign land that in numbers and social standing was strong enough to preserve their "national" character. See A. Brasch, *Moderne – Regeneration – Erlösung: der Begriff der "Kolonie" und die weltanschauliche Literatur der Jahrhundertwende*, Götting 2017, pp. 17–44.

54 Correspondence Christel Mordtmann to Edoardo de Nari, Büke Uraş Arşivi, Istanbul. On the history of the Teutonia see B. Radt, *Geschichte der Teutonia: Deutsches Vereinsleben in Istanbul 1847–2000*, Istanbul 2001.

55 See Gedenkschrift zur Feier des 25jährigen Bestehens des Deutschen Ausflugs-Vereins, „Gottfried Albert“ (1885–1910), Konstantinopel 1911.

56 The bulletin came out irregularly and changed its name twice, with 14 issues being released during the first 25 years of the society's existence (Gedenkschrift, 3). Mordtmann contributed a text to almost every issue.

57 Fuhrmann, *Traum*, pp. 142–195.

to nationalist discourses are markedly absent.⁵⁸ This might be due to a large extent to the influence of the chairman Gottfried Alberts who shaped the profile of the *Ausflugsverein* for nearly twenty years.⁵⁹ He was from Basel and taught at the interdenominational *Deutsche und Schweizer Bürgerschule* that addressed the whole German speaking community in clear opposition to the Austrian *Nationalschule* and the *Deutsche Evangelische Gemeindeschule*.⁶⁰

So while the *Ausflugsverein*, at least in the first twenty years of its existence, strove for inclusivity, bringing together expatriates from the whole Germansphere, it nevertheless was dedicated to the cultivation of a German national identity that was framed in terms of a shared cultural heritage. The communal spirit that is being evoked in the society's official statements assumes a well-established (and clearly segregated) German colony that is quite different from the fragmented and discordant community of circumstance that Mordtmann Senior describes in his dispatches. A sense of this new collective self-confidence is also manifest in some of the texts Andreas David wrote for the *Ausflugsverein*. A talk from 1894 on the history of German-Ottoman diplomatic relations begins with the remark that "since 1870, when Germany was resurrected, the former Frank suburb Pera turned into Little-Germany".⁶¹ Another article called "German Memories from the Bosphorus" recalls in a rather episodic manner the fate of several "Germans" who had left their traces in Istanbul over the last 500 years.⁶² Again, the *Reichsgründung* is made out as a major turning point ("gewaltiger Umschwung") for the community: before, Germans staying in the city had been doomed to "lose their national identity" ("Volkstum"), while now it had become so popular to be (and remain) German that many Greeks and Italians were trying to claim German descent.⁶³ The time when his father served as Hanseatic chargé d'affaires is being described as a kind of pioneer era when "romantically minded men" ("schwärmerisch angelegte Männer") were exploring the country, unknowingly "tracing the course of the future Bagdad railway".⁶⁴

The heightened prestige of the German community in Istanbul was also palpable in the relationships with the Ottoman authorities. Andreas David continued and extended the good relations his father had established to the imperial elite. While Mordtmann Senior had started as a representative of a small German state, who had increasingly mixed with the local elites to eventually get fully integrated as an imperial civil servant, his son was included into the higher power circles straightaway. He participated in several high-ranking health commissions, co-funded the Ottoman Red Cross and even served as me-

58 See Gedenkschrift, pp. 1–4.

59 See F. Braun, Dem Gedächtnisse Gottfried Alberts, in: Bosphorus: Mitteilungen des Deutschen Ausflugsvereins, „G. Albert“, new series: 1 (1906), pp. 3–7.

60 See U. Münch, Die Anfänge der heutigen Deutschen Schule Istanbul: Gründungsjahre der „Deutschen und Schweizer Bürgerschule“ von 1867 bis 1874, in: Pauw, Daheim, 128–163.

61 A.D. Mordtmann (Jr.), Eine deutsche Botschaft in Konstantinopel anno 1573–1578, Bern 1895, p. 2.

62 A.D. Mordtmann (Jr.), Historische Bilder vom Bosphorus III: Deutsche Erinnerungen vom Bosphorus, in Bosphorus: Mitteilungen des Deutschen Ausflugsvereins, „G. Albert“, new series: 4 (1907), pp. 73–109.

63 Ibid., pp. 87–88.

64 Ibid., pp. 93–94.

dical attendant for one of the princes.⁶⁵ This more or less immediate access to the highest Ottoman elites was partly due to inherited family influence. In addition to his father's good standing within the Istanbul intelligentsia, his father-in-law was Dr. Capoleone, the private physician of sultan Murad V. who had treated the sultan during the mental illness that led to his deposition.⁶⁶ Moreover, the new German influence at the Porte added further gravitas to his professional prestige. The German hospital that since 1877 resided in a newly-built, highly representative building in Beyoğlu, was one of the pillars of the German colony, a kind of flagship institution with the clear notion of representing the German *civilizing mission* in the Ottoman Empire, and, in the words of Andreas David's younger brother Johannes Heinrich, a "little piece of home", an "oasis in the half-Asian wilderness".⁶⁷ To sum up, his social standing not only in the German colony but also with the Ottoman authorities was fundamentally different from the situation his father had found himself in when he first arrived in Istanbul. He had represented three German city states that appeared marginal in the eyes of the Ottoman elite whereas his son who worked at the "German Hospital" seemed to indirectly represent a newly established Great Power that repeatedly claimed its good intentions vis-à-vis the Ottoman state. How this shift in Ottoman-German relations affected the careers of individuals who chose to live and work in the Ottoman lands can be seen even more clearly in the case of the youngest offspring of the Mordtmann family, Johannes Heinrich.

4. Representing the German Reich: Johannes Heinrich Mordtmann

Johannes Heinrich Mordtmann (1852–1932) was born in Istanbul in 1852. In 1860, he accompanied his mother to Hamburg and was sent to the *Johanneum*. He attended Bonn and Leipzig universities,⁶⁸ and in 1874 was awarded his doctorate in Oriental Studies by Theodor Mommsen in Berlin, with a thesis on the *Monumentum Ancyranum* that his father had visited twenty years earlier.⁶⁹ In 1876, he entered a diplomatic career as dragoman at the German embassy in Istanbul. In 1887, he married Caecilie Battig with whom he had a daughter.⁷⁰ The same year, he was appointed as consul in Thessaloniki and in 1903 in Izmir, until, in 1910, he retired from diplomatic service and started working for the administrative board of the Mersina railway.⁷¹ But when the First World War broke out, the German foreign office called him back to support the team of the embassy in Istanbul.

65 See A.D. Mordtmann (Jr.) an Stickel, 8 November 1877, ThULBJ, Stickel estate, no. 17. The Ottoman prince was the fifth son of sultan Abdülmejid, Mehmed Burhaneddin Effendi; see A. D. Mordtmann (Sr.) to Cotta, 28 July 1876, Deutsches Literaturarchiv (DLA) Cotta, portfolio, Briefe Mordtmann an Cotta, fo. 13a.

66 See D.S. Brookes, *The Concubine, the Princess and the Teacher: Voices from the Ottoman Harem*, Austin 2008, p. 279.

67 Guest Book German Hospital, 9 July 1902, quoted in M. Fuhrmann, *Das Deutsches Krankenhaus*, in: Kummer, *Deutsche Präsenz*, pp. 257–269, at 262.

68 For biographical information see M. Aydın, Mordtmann, Johannes Heinrich (1852–1932), in: *DIA* 30 (2020), pp. 285–286; H. G. Majer, Mordtmann, Johann Heinrich, in: *NDB* 18 (1997), pp. 93–94.

69 J. H. Mordtmann, *Marmora Ancyrae*, Berlin 1874.

70 G. Keiper (ed.), *Biographisches Handbuch des Deutschen Auswärtigen Amtes*, Vol. 3 (2008), pp. 290–291.

71 Ibid.

Around the same time, he joined the *Darülfünun* as lecturer for Ottoman history.⁷² At the end of the War, he was forced to leave Istanbul and ended up in Berlin where he kept teaching and doing research at the institute of Oriental Studies until his death in 1932.⁷³ The beginning of his diplomatic career nearly coincided with the inauguration of the new monumental embassy building that rendered palpable the German claim for imperial representation in the Ottoman capital.⁷⁴ This outward display of power went hand in hand with a more standardized approach to diplomatic recruitment that relied on a new type of specially trained cameralist civil servant.⁷⁵ For Johannes Heinrich, this meant that he entered the service in the lower ranks of the embassy and had to pass several exams on his way up.⁷⁶ Such formalized vocational training had been completely absent in the career of his father who had gotten his post due to his orientalist credentials and a good dose of personal patronage.⁷⁷

Johannes Heinrich's time in diplomatic service that spanned more than forty years unfurled within the broader political framework of the so-called German-Ottoman friendship that culminated in the alliance of "brother-in-arms" during World War I. The cornerstones of this collaboration – the visits of Kaiser Wilhelm II, the railway projects, the assignment of military instructors – are well known.⁷⁸ Malte Fuhrmann has discussed this rapprochement in the wider context of German imperialism and has shown how the German courting of the Ottomans went hand in hand with a general mind-set of a German *mission civilisatrice* that led to demands for systematic cultural propaganda and a slow but effective *pénétration pacifique*.⁷⁹ Even though the "Oriental mission" of the new German Reich was framed mainly in secular terms, the earlier phase of Protestant missionary work – also heralded as "evangelization of the Orient" – constituted an important building block for this endeavour, with the denominationally affiliated institutions that Mordtmann Senior had helped to establish – school, church, hospital – playing a crucial role. Some of these institutions got into the focus of intense fights between different factions of the German speaking community as Berlin was pressing for an exclusively *Reichs*-German orientation whereas other politically or financially influential actors – like the Oriental railway companies – had a strong interest in keeping these institutions

72 K. Kreiser, „Im Dienste ist der Fez zu tragen“: Türkische Vorlesungen deutscher Professoren am Istanbuler Dârülfünûn (1915–1918), in: C. Kubaseck/G. Seufert (ed.), *Deutsche Wissenschaftler im türkischen Exil: Die Wissenschaftsmigration in die Türkei 1933–1945*, Würzburg 2008, pp. 21–40.

73 F. Babinger, J. H. Mordtmann zum Gedächtnis, Berlin 1933 (including a list of his publications).

74 See B. Schwantes, *Das Palais der Kaiserlich-Deutschen Botschaft zu seiner Entstehungszeit*, in: Kummer, *Deutsche Präsenz*, pp. 69–90.

75 This practice drew heavily on the previous Prussian system of an institutionalized professional training for diplomats; see D. Grypa, *Der diplomatische Dienst des Königreichs Preußen (1815–1866): institutioneller Aufbau und soziale Zusammensetzung*, Berlin 2008.

76 He started as Dragomanats-Aspirant, after seven years became Dragoman, another four years later passed the consular exam which qualified him for his posts in Thessaloniki and Izmir. Keiper (ed.), *Biographisches Handbuch*, pp. 290–291.

77 See Völker, *Holding High*.

78 See S. Neitzel, „Die grosse Politik“: Deutschland und das Osmanische Reich um 1900, in: Kummer, *Deutsche Präsenz*, pp. 9–19.

79 Fuhrmann, *Traum*, pp. 281–329.

open for expatriates from the whole Germansphere.⁸⁰ Fuhrmann has worked extensively with Johannes Heinrich's dispatches from Izmir and Thessaloniki to trace some of these conflicts, showing how the consul Mordtmann acted as agent for the German bid for ideological and denominational hegemony. He shows how in the small German speaking colony of an Ottoman port town, a strong consul together with the parish council could successfully dominate communal politics and use his position to promote a German-nationalist and at the same time highly exclusionary agenda, for example by asserting that the school curriculum was in line with his ideas of cultural "Germanization".⁸¹ An even more drastic example for this ill-fated influence is the conflict around the Christian orphanage in Izmir that escalated when the Kaiserswerther deaconry decided to take up Armenian children left parentless after the pogroms of the 1890s.⁸² Johannes Heinrich actively opposed this reallocation of an established German institution into an "instrument of Armenian propaganda" that went contrary to the German Empire's presumed interest, namely its good relations with the Hamidian regime.⁸³

It seems highly ironic that Johannes Heinrich as a diplomat would be such a strong proponent of German cultural expansionism and exclusionism when his own father had pursued completely opposite aims. He had always stressed the importance of Hanseatic independence and detested Prussian attempts at cultural or political domination, while as a member of the German Protestant parish council he had on several occasions opted to support the "Oriental Christians" in their hardships.⁸⁴ He had strongly advocated the idea of summoning the deaconesses when setting up the German hospital.⁸⁵ Forty years later, his son fought the representatives of the very same missionary institution when they tried to revive the idea of solidarity with persecuted fellow Christians, no matter what national or confessional background they came from. Mordtmann Senior's views on these issues had certainly not been uncontested but they were part of a plurality of opinions that mirrored the realities of German particularism. With the hardening of the German expat-communities to "commercial colonies" (*Handelskolonien*), the conflicts got realigned and entrenched along the new ideological cleavages that assigned the *Auslandsdeutschen* a specific role in the context of imperial foreign policy.

An assessment of Johannes Heinrich as Oriental scholar deserves a separate publication. His academic output was impressive, during his whole stay in the Ottoman Empire he published up to ten articles every year. Most of his research deals with epigraphic or historiographic matters, in sharp contrast to his father's strong interest in contemporary topics like ethnography, geography, and politics. Franz Babinger – Johannes Heinrich Mordtmann's friend and most famous student – claims that his academic mentor never

80 Ibid., pp.160–167.

81 Ibid., pp. 175–179.

82 Ibid., pp. 174.

83 Ibid., pp. 191–195, quote at 192.

84 See, for example, his letters to Wichern in Hamburg, where he repeatedly asked to collect alms for Armenian and even Nestorian Christians, Correspondence Mordtmann to Wichern, Archive of the Rauhe Haus, Hamburg.

85 Pschichholz, *Diaspora*, pp. 139–143.

wanted to be a diplomat and always remained a scholar at heart.⁸⁶ The same could be said for his father. They both combined academic research with employments in diplomatic service, using their prolonged stays in the Orient for extensive research in situ. Both can be considered to range among the most important Orientalists of their generation. But while the father had been a self-made man both in the field of diplomacy and scholarship, Johannes Heinrich had grown up in a world where vocational training was seen as indispensable pre-condition for professional success, and this informed his personal views to the point that he found it difficult to appreciate the achievements of his own father whom he considered an academic amateur. With his degree in oriental studies from a German university, he could see the methodological insufficiencies of his father's research, and the fact that his doctoral adviser Theodor Mommsen had only scorn for the epigraphic results provided by Mordtmann Senior haunted him for most of his professional life.⁸⁷

5. Conclusion

Forty years separated Andreas David Mordtmann from his youngest son. During this time-span, the world changed dramatically. This becomes even more clear-cut due to the fact that their professional careers followed very similar patterns – a parallelism in the inter-generational chronology that puts into relief how profoundly the advent of the German nation state not only changed the political realities in the Germansphere but also affected the individual life-stories of Germans living and working in the Orient. Mordtmann's eldest son Andreas David, who in the familial chronology took a middle position, almost a generation apart not only from his father but also from his youngest brother, had as a boy experienced the Istanbul of the “old days”, when his father first arrived there. As quoted above, he observed that with the foundation of the Kaiserreich, Pera turned into a kind of “Little Germany”. Most literature on the German-speaking communities in the late-Ottoman Empire focuses on this period after 1871 when the imperial notions of the newly-created German state reverberated in the ex-pat-communities abroad. A look at the realities that shaped the experiences of the preceding generation can help us understand the dramatic shifts, but also the continuities in Ottoman-Germansphere encounters.

Maya Jasanoff in her book *Edge of Empire* makes a strong point for not projecting the imperialist attitudes and practises of the late nineteenth century onto earlier periods when the world of the “Age of Empire” was still in the making. What makes her book interesting as a reference is her focus on the life stories of “imperial collectors” (British and French), which she uses to examine how “the process of cultural encounter involved crossing and mixing, as well as separation and division”.⁸⁸ This certainly, in complex ways, holds true for Mordtmann Senior as well, with one remarkable difference: if, as a

86 Babinger, J. H. Mordtmann zum Gedächtnis, p. 2.

87 J. H. Mordtmann to Babinger, 11 May 1925, in: Babinger estate, LMU Munich.

88 M. Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire. Conquest and Collecting in the East 1750–1850*, London 2005, quote at p. 7.

collector, he were to be considered “imperial”, this label would refer to the Ottoman rather than the German state. Neither his diplomatic activities were discernibly “imperial”, nor the set-up of the German speaking community in Istanbul that he was a committed member of. The political fragmentation of the Germansphere was reflected on the local scale in the factions of the German expatriates and the patchy set-up of their diplomatic representation. The German nationalist movement, as well as Prussia and Austria in their rivalling imperial ambitions, followed their very own visions of “collecting an empire”, but in this early phase, national unity seemed more urgent a topic than imperial expansion. Mordtmann himself was a vehement advocate of German federalism, and detested all Prussian efforts at political or cultural domination. His strong sense of small-state patriotism was widespread among the members of the German expatriate community – often combined with an enthusiasm for nationalist ideas that evokes Celia Applegate’s famous expression *A Nation of Provincials*.⁸⁹

When it comes to Mordtmann’s sons, they felt very much as members and often representatives of a German community that was imagined as homogeneous, bound together by a shared homeland (Heimat), language, culture, and national character (Volkstum). As has been shown, this evoked unity often glossed over a large variety of particularist affiliations and interests that were articulated along nationalist, sectarian and ethnolinguistic lines. Nevertheless, the German “colonies” had a strong socio-economic standing in Istanbul and other Ottoman port towns, and its members could exert significant political influence, especially if they – as the two Mordtmann sons – worked in prestigious institutions like the German Hospital or the consulates. Like their father, they had exceptionally good knowledge of the Ottoman language and culture, but while the former had used these skills for transcultural engagement, ultimately achieving at least partial integration into the Ottoman administrative and intellectual elites, the members of the next generation were always identified – and identified themselves – as primarily German, in a cultural as well as a political sense. Andreas David Jr. unambiguously acted as representative of the German Hospital when he was called into high-ranking Ottoman sanitary commissions, and Johannes Heinrich during his appointment at the Darülfünun acted upon the explicit instruction of the embassy that he was working for. Their interactions with the Ottoman state and society inevitably took place within the broader political framework of the so-called Ottoman-German friendship, just as their relations within the German-speaking community were affected by the Kaiserreich’s ideological propaganda. The German quest for indirect imperial rule in the Ottoman Empire ultimately determined not only the career choices of many German expatriates, but also changed the way they interacted among themselves as well as with local elites, how they constructed national affiliation, and how the perceived and negotiated transcultural difference.