

Merve Tekgürler, Stanford: Recounting News, Gathering Information: Ottoman Experiences of Eastern Europe in the Time of the Polish Partitions (1772-1795).

In this presentation, I will be talking about the networks of news and information that connected the Ottoman borderlands in the north of Danube river to the center. I chose to focus on the late eighteenth century, with an emphasis on the changes in the borderlands due to the First Partition of Poland (1772), the Ottoman-Russian War and the Treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca (1774), and the end of the Crimean Khanate (1783), among other events that drastically affected the region. I argue that the information transmission was of particular importance in this period and that this is best understood through a framework that conceptualizes different categories of information and news, together. I call this approach intelligencing, to point out the nuances that differentiate this framework from the history of intelligence, as well as the history of news. Furthermore, I take a brief look into the reception of these materials in the center, by focusing on two documents, a *telhis* from 1770s and a *layiha* from 1790s. Tehlis as a document genre refers specifically to summaries written by the grand vizier (or less often by Reis ul-Kuttab), presented to the sultan. They often contain a response by the sultan in the form of his *hatt-i humayun* or the sultanic writ. Layihas, particularly the ones that I am discussing are reports containing opinions of various leading figures in the administration and their reform suggestions. Selim III, to whom this layiha was presented, actively encouraged and requested members of the Ottoman bureaucracy to present him layihas on the reform policies he was implementing. In conclusion, I argue that Ottomans were heavily invested in acquiring information and understanding the developments in Eastern Europe, especially because of the implications of these changes for the continuation of the Ottoman state.