

# OTTOMAN AVIATION 1909-1919

The original Ottoman Aviation 1909-1919 was first researched in the 1980ties and now 25 years later much new material has surfaced especially with regards to illustrations. As 2012 celebrates the first flight of a Turkish owned aircraft it seems appropriate to make a Version 2 of the original book in that year.

In the first Version Bulent Yilmazer contributed much material for the first 3 Chapters, but has since made his own publications, however his original contributions are preserved also in the revised version. The rest of the book has been collected and re-arranged by Ole Nikolajsen in this revised Version 2.

25 years ago little was known outside Turkey about the role aviation had played in the formation of the modern national state. The original book and this revised version is attempting to rectify the lack of information outside and to some degree inside Turkey. The material researched for this book, is not an official presentation solely from official Turkish archives, but has also drawn on foreign material found by the author and cross referenced with other papers.

Aviation came early to Turkey or the Ottoman Empire as it then was known before 1919. In the 14th century, interest was already shown in the flight of man and later in 1909 when conditions became fertile for modernisation, flying in its modern form - powered aircraft and balloons - was introduced in Turkey. From then onwards aviation has progressed both in war and peace. Many Turkish air crews fell for their country but also in peace, great feats were performed. Feats never easily achieved. Contrary to what is generally known, large aviation forces were established and dispersed to all fronts of the Ottoman Empire in the 1st World War. With great sacrifice Turkish and German air crews fulfilled their assignments in their fragile aircraft in the deserts of Arabia and Iraq, over the towering mountains of Caucasus and in the stormy waters of the Black sea.

The accounts of the 1st World War battles will give the reader a general political and military introduction, followed by a highly detailed insight into aircraft operations - from the Turkish point of view. Many accounts have been published about these events but this book will give a unique insiders view into operations from the losers side. Moreover, a more balanced impression of many famous 1st World War battles - Gallipoli, Kut-al-Amara, Sinai, Palestine - can be derived from the information.

On October the 30th 1918, Turkey achieved armistice but not peace. Soon strong outside powers were interfering with the apparent aim of ripping apart the former empire and then the Turkish motherland. These plots by the victors of the war never succeeded due to the determined resistance of the Turkish people under its visionary leader Mustafa Kemal Paşa-Atatürk.

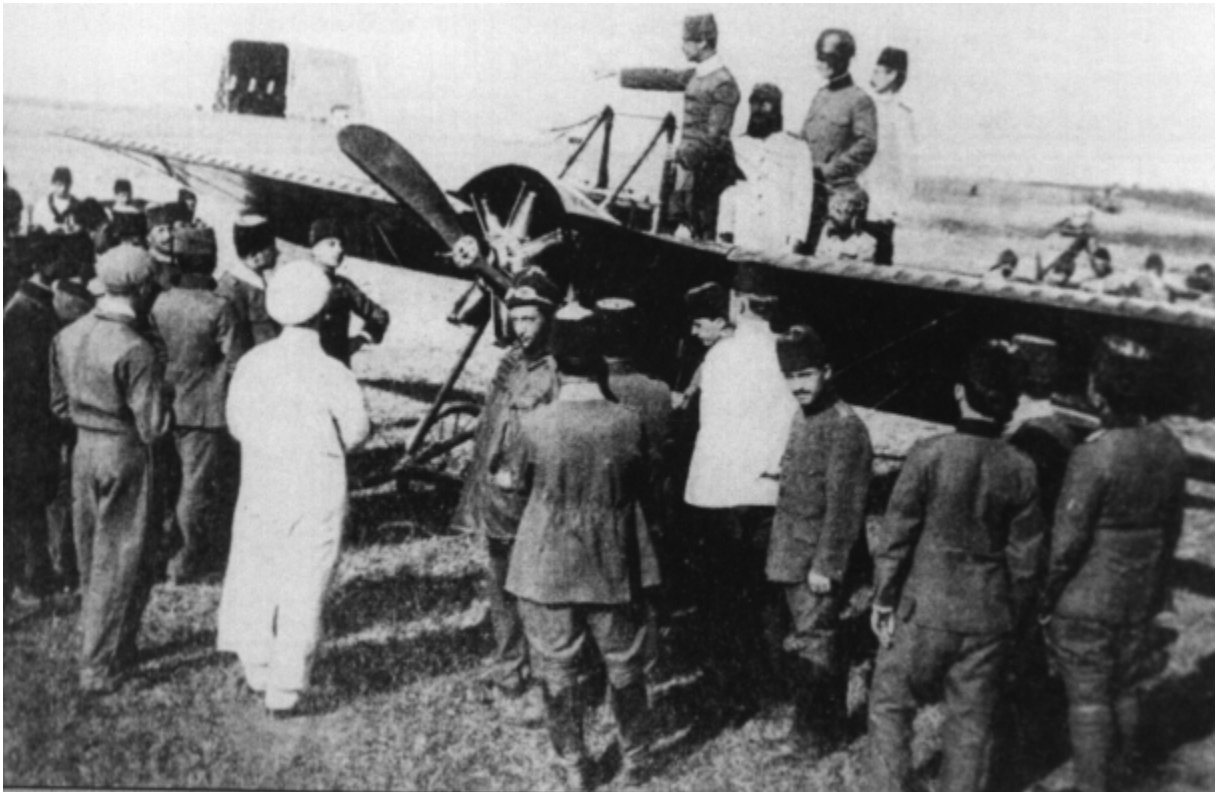
This book is a documentary on aviation. War is only included because war existed almost continuously from 1911 to 1919 for the Turkish people.

With the start of 1919 aviation in Turkey became TURKISH aviation and the book is therefore appropriately called OTTOMAN AVIATION 1909-1919.

# OTTOMAN AVIATION 1909-1919

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**FRONT PAGE** Yeşilköy Apr.26 1912. The Minister of War, Army commanders and "Tayyare Komisyonu -Aircraft Committee" members have just witnessed the first Ottoman military flight.  
*Gnkur.* Abbreviation for *Genel Kurmay*  
*Kolordu* corps, as a military unit  
*Kurmay* staff officer  
*Ordu* army


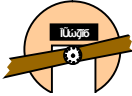






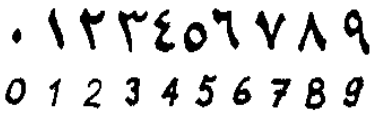
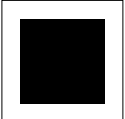


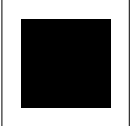
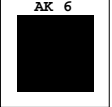

*Piyade*

Infantry

Ottoman Aviation Pilot`s Brevets



**NATIONAL MARKINGS OF OTTOMAN ARMY/NAVY AIRCRAFT  
MARCH 1913 - OCTOBER 1918**

	WINGS	FUSELAGE	TAIL FIN
<p><u>ARMY ONLY</u> MARCH 6, 1913 TO MARCH 1915</p>			<p style="text-align: center;">Name in arabic letters</p> 
<p>MARCH 1915 TO APRIL 1916</p>			
<p><u>NAVY ONLY</u> 1914 TO APRIL 1916</p>			<p style="text-align: center;">Arabic numbers</p> 
<p>ARABIC NUMERAL CALIGRAPHY:  </p>			
<p><u>ARMY &amp; NAVY</u> APRIL 1916 TO MID-1917</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">G 961 </p> <p style="text-align: center;">Army      Navy</p>	
<p>MID-1917 TO OCT. 1918</p>			

## INTRODUCTION

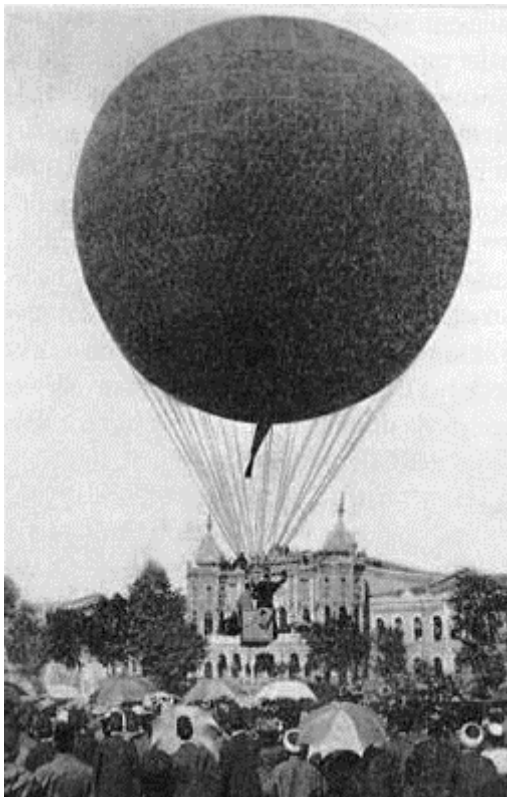
As in other parts of the world, the concept of manned flights fascinated the people of the varied and cosmopolitan Ottoman Empire. Science and arts played a significant role in the Empire and it was primarily the scholars of these interests who also looked upon the flight of man.

The first projects and attempts were approached in two ways; by rocket power or winged flight.

In the 14th century, a thesis, detailing the manufacture and theory of rocket flying was written by a group of military rocket artillery commanders -Alaaddin Tayboğa, Al Omari, As Saki and Al Meliki.

In the middle of the 15th century Sultan Mehmet "Fatih" ordered courses in rocket technique to be held for Ottoman officers.

Later, in the 16th century, the Turkish art of Pyrotechnics was refined for both military and civil uses. A book explaining the atmosphere of the earth, wind systems and general meteorology was published. In the same period great interest was shown in the ability to soar as the birds. It soon became fashionable in Istanbul to fly large and elaborate kites. In the middle of the 17th century, Hezarfen Ahmed Çelebi started to build wings but instead of imitating the flapping of bird wings, he used them for gliding. During 50 years of tireless work, this scientist worked to perfect his wings and numerous tests were made. He even attempted to launch himself from the Galata tower in İstanbul to cross the Bosphorus. The fact that Çelebi was not killed in the attempt shows that the wings were functional. Eventually a set of wings measuring 9x1,5 meters were found most useful. As with modern hang gliders they carried no tail or steering surfaces, control was obtained by weight shifting. Flights of up to 5 minutes duration were performed. The 18th century also saw a keen interest in rockets and several successful military models were employed. Many large publications were issued on rocket aerodynamics and propulsion. The year 1782 saw the first balloon ascent in the world in France and as early as 1785 an Iranian balloonist made an ascent in İstanbul.



The French balloonist Barbout and Turat ascents in their Astra balloon

Astra (1545, Paris). The balloon sporting the Turkish and French flags was watched by thousands of people including the adjutant of the commander of the 1st

In September 1802 two British balloonists Barley and De Vigne also made an ascent in İstanbul. The first Turkish balloon to fly was a hot air type, constructed and flown by Selim Ogat in İzmir in 1825. The period up to 1900 saw numerous foreign balloonists arrive in İstanbul to demonstrate their equipment with various degrees of success. One particular ascent was made on the 12th of June 1845 by the Italian Comaschi who tried to sell his models to the Ottoman Army.

Although most other countries in Europe at this time were employing military balloons, the Ottoman Army was not interested. The balloonist M. Godard made an ascent in 1859.

In 1861 Atif Bey who lived in Bebek, north of İstanbul, constructed a glider. The first test flight was on the 26th of July when it succeeded in gliding 400 meters.

Manned flight in the Ottoman Empire, however, did not make a real impact until 1909. Then western oriented and open minded Turkish officers came into power. It was the wish of these men to modernise the large empire. On the 13th of April 1909, Mahmud Şevket Paşa became Minister of War and this extraordinarily resourceful man started to modernize the Ottoman armed forces. Invitations were sent to France for aviators to demonstrate their equipment in İstanbul.

First to respond was the French balloonist Barbout who, with his assistant Turat, arrived in İstanbul in May 1909. They performed the first balloon ascent for 40 years in the city on the 28th of May in their

**OTTOMAN AVIATION 1909-1919**  
**FOREWORD**

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Ottoman Army. Three more ascents were made in İstanbul carrying many Government officials.

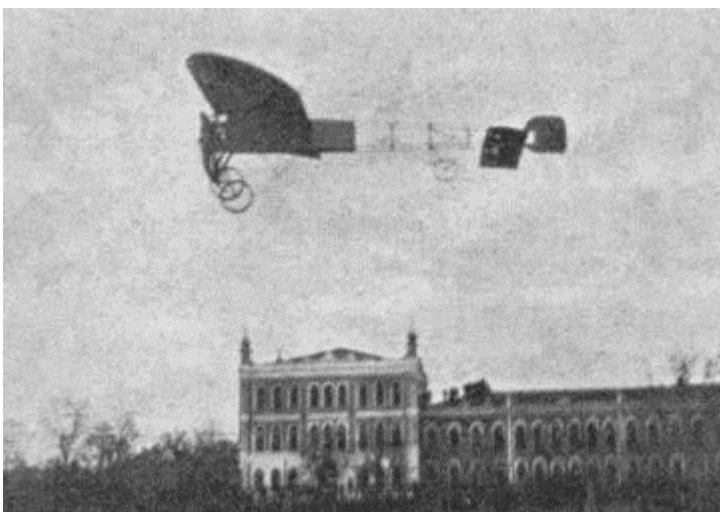
In November, the Belgian pilot Baron de Catters arrived with his yellow painted Voisin aircraft. The Baron made his first flight on the 2nd of December climbing to 20 meters on a 200 meter long flight. This was the first powered heavier-than-air manned flight in Turkey. A second flight was made on the 5th, watched by the Minister of War and several other high ranking officials. This flight lasted more than one hour and took the aircraft as far as Kasımpaşa before a landing was made. De Catters then left for Egypt to demonstrate his aircraft there.

Some days after De Catters had left, the famed aviator Bleriot arrived in İstanbul to demonstrate his aircraft. On the 11th of December, more than 10.000 spectators gathered near Taksim north of İstanbul to watch Bleriot's flight. But, at a height of 40 meters, the aircraft was suddenly caught by a gust of wind. It hit a house and two trees and crashed into a garden. Slightly injured Bleriot was brought to the French hospital in the city where he quickly recovered.

These flights in 1909 made a great impression upon the new young leaders and the general public and soon a decision was taken to buy aircraft for Turkey.



A balloon ascent at İstanbul in 1845 being celebrated with a huge party



On Dec. 11th 1909 Bleriot made a flight in İstanbul. To the right the crashed aircraft.

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