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## Osman Hamdi

**Osman Hamdi** (1842–1910) was an artist and director of the Ottoman Imperial Museum and the Istanbul Academy of Fine Arts. He played a pivotal role in fashioning European formulations of art within a transforming Ottoman context.

As the son of İbrahim Edhem Pasha (1819–93), Osman Hamdi was born in Istanbul to a complex cross-cultural legacy unusual even within Ottoman society. His father, who at age nine had been orphaned and enslaved during the Greek War for Independence (1821–30) and adopted by the Grand Admiral of the Ottoman Navy, Hüsrev Pasha, was one of the first of three Ottoman students sent to Paris for his education. İbrahim Edhem served as French tutor to the sultan between 1847 and 1851 and as minister of education and then minister of trade during the 1860s. His son Osman Hamdi grew up in a Francophone and Francophile environment that understood modernisation through a French vision of civilisation. Although strongly opposed to direct colonial rule this social group emulated French modernity within Ottoman

territories as a means of participating in universal progress.

Although Osman Hamdi travelled to Paris in order to study law, he discovered a vocation in painting while taking courses at the Academy of Fine Arts in the studios of painters such as Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904) and Gustave Boulanger (1824–88), both of whom included fantastic scenes of the Orient rendered in realistic styles within their highly esteemed academic repertoires. Upon his return to Istanbul at the onset of the Franco-Prussian war in 1871, Osman Hamdi was sent to assist the noted reformer Midhat Pasha (1822–84) in the province of Baghdad, thus becoming personally engaged in the modernisation of Ottoman administration. He was appointed Ottoman commissioner at the Vienna World Exhibition of 1873, where he oversaw the preparation of goods taken to the exhibit and the construction of the Ottoman pavilions housing valuable works from the imperial treasury. Two catalogues for the exhibit, *L'Architecture ottomane* and *Les costumes populaires de la Turquie en 1873*, both of which included text in German, French, and Turkish, reflected a conceptual