Ninefeet-century Ottoman politics was filled with casual references to public opinion. Having been popularised as a term in the 1860s, the following decades witnessed a deluge of issues being brought into ‘the tribune of public opinion’. Murat R. Şiviloğlu explains how this concept emerged, and how such an abstract phenomenon embedded itself so deeply into the political discourse that even sultans had to consider its power.

“… In a brilliant first book, Murat Şiviloğlu charts the growth of something like an “Ottoman street”, originating in the link between debt and debate... Based on a broad range of sources, and informed by wider perspectives, this searching analysis sheds new light on the question of Turkish “decline” and restores a sense of openness to history of the late Ottoman Empire.”

Brendan Simms, University of Cambridge

The liberal activities of the jeunes turcs in Paris were widely followed in the nineteenth century. Could the ancient Ottoman Empire be transformed into a new constitutional monarchy and thereby be saved? Şiviloğlu’s brilliant and pioneering work describes the intellectual formation of a “public sphere” in the ancient Empire that gave rise to these fervent hopes of progress.

Nur Yalman, Harvard University

‘A masterful account of the growing role of public opinion in nineteenth-century Turkish politics and culture… This is an impressive, ground-breaking work.’

Orlando Figes, Birkbeck, University of London

Cover image: The Opening Ceremony of Abdülhamid II Fountain in 1901 in Tophane, Istanbul. Istanbul University, Rare Book Collection, 90546. Reproduction: Bahadır Taşkin.