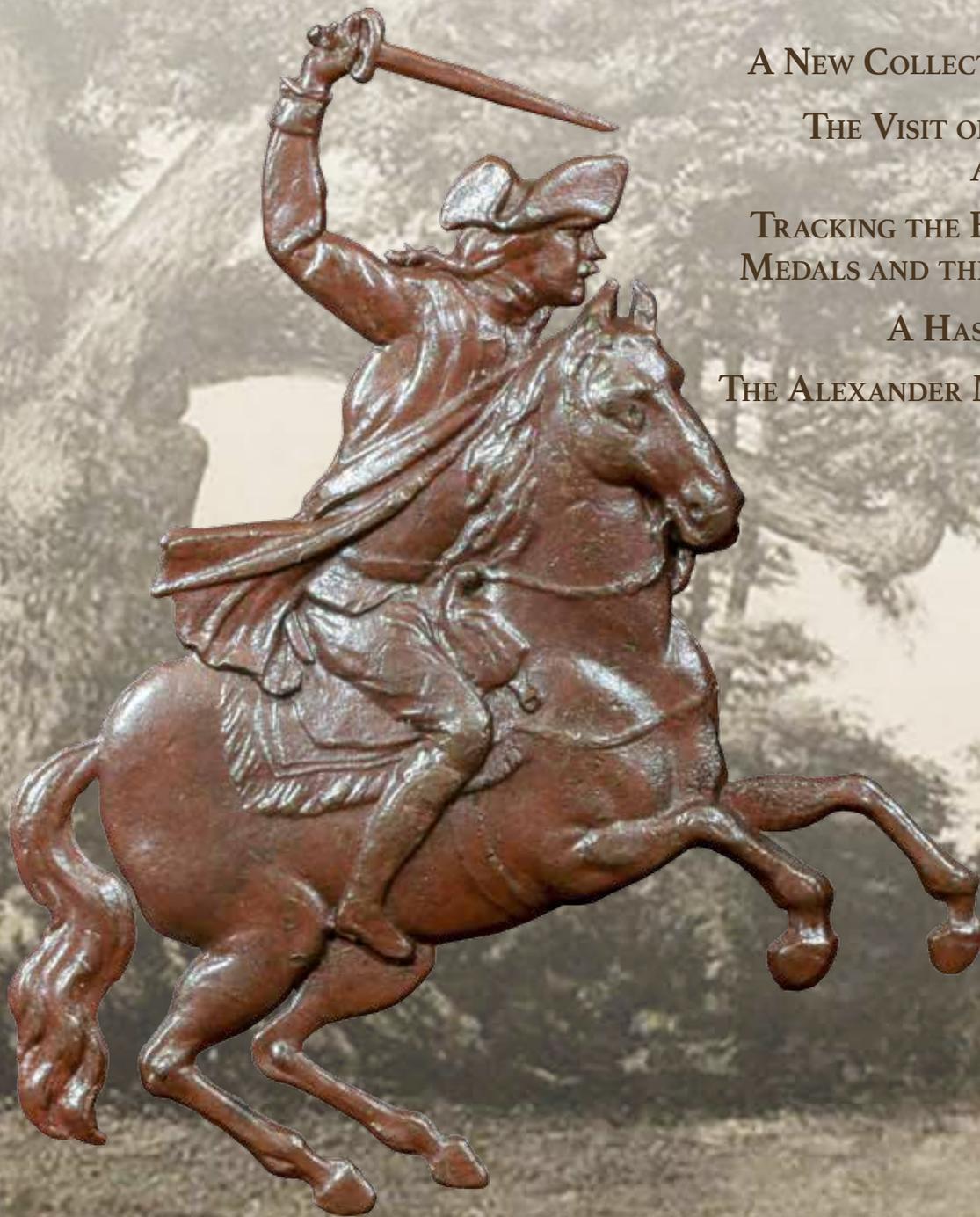


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A NEW COLLECTING CHALLENGE

THE VISIT OF SULTAN ABDUL
AZIZ TO LONDON

TRACKING THE BRETON/REFORD
MEDALS AND THEIR PROVENANCE

A HASHTAG OF EAGLES

THE ALEXANDER MACOMB MEDAL

MEDAL COMMEMORATING THE VISIT OF SULTAN ABDUL AZIZ TO LONDON, REVISITED

by Benjamin Weiss

It is not unusual for errors to appear in the literature and to remain there for generations, constantly being repeated, largely because of the universally well-respected reputation of the original source of the information. Such is the case for the medal commemorating the visit of Abdul Aziz (Abdülaziz), Sultan of Turkey, to London in 1867, one of the most sought-after pieces from the series of medals struck by the Corporation of the City of London.

This group of medals, commonly called The City of London Medals, constitutes a collection struck by The Corporation of the City of London to celebrate the accomplishment of the city's most notable public works, or to commemorate episodes of national and civic importance, such as visits of prominent personages to London in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The medals in this series, some 30 in all, were issued from 1832 to 1902 and serve as some of the most outstanding and enduring chroniclers of events that occurred during this period of British history. The standard reference book, published in London in 1894, is *Numismata Londinensia* by Charles Welch. This book includes those medals issued from 1831 to 1893. In it, all the medals are photographed, and, as the text was written largely contemporaneously with the period examined, the events prompting their issue are described in great detail.

Subsequent to the publication of *Numismata Londinensia*, a few other medals have been issued by the Corporation of London. Those medals issued from 1831 to 1973 are described in *Coins and Medals*, November 1977, where their mintage figures are provided (most of the medals were struck in numbers between 350 and 450; a notable exception is the lead, glass-enclosed piece commemorating the Removal of Temple Bar from the City of London, which is

extremely rare). Descriptions and other interesting historical notes are included in excellent compendia published more recently. (See *British Historical Medals* by Laurence Brown, and *British Commemorative Medals and Their Values* by Christopher Eimer.)



Figure 1a. OPENING OF THE NEW COUNCIL CHAMBER, GUILDHALL (Closed case - shown reduced)



Figure 1-b. OPENING OF THE NEW COUNCIL CHAMBER, GUILDHALL (Open case) By Joseph Shephard and Alfred Benjamin Wyon, England, 1884, Bronze, 76 mm.

Reference: Welch 19; BHM 349/3177; Eimer 1705; Taylor 206a; Weiss BW296 (Weiss Collection - shown reduced)

The City of London Medals are largely of high relief, struck mostly in bronze (two are also in silver), and are of exceptional quality, as they were executed by some of the finest medallists of the period, including several members of the Wyon family (Benjamin, Joseph Shephard, Alfred Benjamin, and William Wyon, probably the most celebrated of the Wyon family of medallists), the sculptor George C. Adams, the Belgian medallist Charles Wiener, the British medallist Frank Bowcher, and the fine Austrian medallist Anton Scharff. Most were issued in custom leather boxes, stamped in gold lettering, sometimes with explanatory text printed on the silk interior. Several were issued as a double set so that both sides of the medal could be seen at the same time. Such double sets are now rarely encountered. (For images and description of all these medals, see the author's website, linked at endnote 1.)

An example of one such double set commemorating the opening of the New Council Chamber of the Guildhall is shown here.

The obverse (shown on the right in figure 1-b) depicts the Interior of the Council Chamber surrounded by scroll work, with a wreath of oak and the arms of the City.

The reverse (shown on the left in figure 1-b) shows the City, supported on right by Commerce, on left by Magistracy, addressing a council attended by Liberty, Liberality and Learning (seated).

The exergue depicts the Cap of Maintenance above an oak wreath and City sword and Mace entwined with a ribbon bearing the City motto: **DOMINE DIRIGE NOS** (Lord, Direct Us).

Another in this series, the subject of this discourse, is the medal commemorating the visit of Sultan Abdul Aziz to London in 1867 (Figure 2).

On the obverse is a bust of Sultan Abdul Aziz wearing a fez, the inscription reading **ABDULAZIZ OTHOMANORUM**

or St. Sophia). It is not. As this article will show, the building is, rather, another important mosque in Istanbul, the Mosque of Sultan Ahmed (the spelling of *Ahmed* has changed through the years: *Achmet* is an antiquated English spelling, the one used on the case of this medal; the old Turkish is *Ahmed*; another spelling is *Ahmet*). This mosque is noted for its predominantly blue Iznik tilework — whence it derives the name ‘The Blue Mosque.’ The mosque was completed in 1616 by Sultan Ahmed I, and is famous for being the first mosque in Turkey to



Figure 2.
**RECEPTION OF
ABDUL AZIZ, SULTAN OF TURKEY,
TO THE CITY OF LONDON**

By Joseph Shepherd & Alfred Benjamin Wyon, Turkey, 1867, Bronze, 76 mm
Reference: Welch 10; BHM 270/2872; Eimer 1591; Eldem 235; Weiss BW295
(Weiss Collection)

IMPERATOR LONDINIUM INVISIT MDCCCLXVII (Abdul Aziz Emperor of the Ottomans Visited London 1867).

On the reverse is Londinia (City of London), standing before a burning altar decorated with the city shield and inscribed **WELCOME**, clasping hand of Ottoman Empire (Turkey); behind are St. Paul’s Cathedral to the left and the Mosque of Sultan Ahmed (Blue Mosque) at Constantinople (Istanbul) on the right.

The medal was issued housed in a leather-covered, silk-lined presentation case (Figure 3).

This medal is noteworthy not only for the historic event itself but, from the standpoint of medal collectors, for the error in how it is most often described, a mistake that has been restated in the medallic literature for more than one hundred years. This error is in the identification of one of the buildings on the reverse of the medal. While the building on the left of the standing figures is generally and correctly identified as St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, the mosque to the right of the standing figures has been misattributed as being one of the most famous buildings in Istanbul, the Hagia Sophia (also known as the Sancta Sophia

have six minarets. Facing Hagia Sophia, from which it borrows certain stylistic elements, the Blue Mosque combines the two great influences of Byzantine and Ottoman religious architecture.

When one corrects information that has been so well established for over a century, one is compelled to be certain of the facts. The evidence that the building depicted on the reverse of this medal is, indeed, the Mosque of Sultan Ahmed at Istanbul rather than the Hagia Sophia, is derived from different sources. The first piece of evidence comes from an examination of the image of the buildings themselves, that is, a comparison of the image on the medal with that of the photographs of the Mosque of Sultan Ahmed (Figure 4) with that of the Hagia

Sophia (Figure 5).

Though superficially similar, on close examination the two buildings show obvious differences in their structure. As can be seen, the lower domes of the mosque shown on the medal correspond more closely to those in the photograph of the Blue Mosque (Figure 4) rather than to those of the Hagia Sophia (Figure 5). (See also Figure 6).



Figure 3. Case containing the medal of the Visit of Abdul Aziz, Sultan of Turkey, to the Corporation of London (Weiss Collection - shown reduced)

The dome immediately below the main dome has step-like features on the mosque shown on the medal as well as on the photograph of the Blue Mosque (Figure 6). No step-like features are apparent on any of the domes of the Hagia Sophia. Further, unlike Hagia Sophia, whose secondary domes are far below the main dome, the Blue Mosque has multiple domes immediately beneath the main dome, just as is depicted on the medal.

More obviously, one can see that the medal has two balconies on the minaret behind the dome, similar to that on the Blue Mosque, which has two or three balconies on each minaret (See Figures 4 and 6); none of the minarets on the Hagia Sophia has more than one balcony (Figure 5). [A ‘Minaret’ (Arabic: “beacon”), a feature of Islamic religious architecture, is the tower from which the faithful are called to prayer five times each day by a muezzin, or crier. Such a tower is always connected with a mosque and has one or more balconies or open galleries. A ‘gallery’ is a balcony that encircles the upper sections from which the muezzin may give the call to prayer.]

Second, and most compelling, is the very inscription on the inside of the original case in which the medal was housed (Figure 7). As can be seen, it states the following: **THE CITY OF LONDON RECEIVING TURKEY WITH EMBLEMS OF HOSPITALITY AND FESTIVE WELCOME. IN THE BACKGROUND ARE REPRESENTED, ON THE ONE SIDE, ST. PAUL’S CATHEDRAL, AND ON THE OTHER, THE MOSQUE OF SULTAN ACHMET AT CONSTANTANOPLE.**

One can assume that the esteemed Wyons were well aware of the building they engraved on this medal.

Finally, and equally convincing, is the fact that a Edhem Eldem, an eminent scholar and faculty member in the Department

of History at Bogazici University, Istanbul, Turkey, who has written extensively on the history of the Ottoman Empire, provided unimpeachable confirmation that the building shown on this medal is clearly not the Hagia Sophia but rather closely resembles that of the Mosque of Sultan Ahmed. Professor Eldem suggested further that the mosque shown on the reverse of this medal “is a highly stylized depiction by Wyon, who probably worked with some kind of derivative image.” He goes on to state: “So, in that sense, I would say that this is a sort of generic Ottoman mosque representation, probably inspired by an image of the Mosque of Sultan Ahmed.” (Edhem Eldem, personal communication). Indeed, in his book on the history of Ottoman orders, medals and decorations (Eldem, 2004), Eldem describes the reverse of the Abdul Aziz medal correctly as “the Mosque of Sultan Ahmed in Istanbul”.

Despite all this evidence to the contrary, the misattribution of the building on the medal of the visit of Sultan Abdul Aziz to the City of London, which appears to have been originated as early as 1894 with the publication of *Numismata Londinensia*, continues to this day in the general medallic literature.

Numismata Londinensia (page 69) describes the reverse of the medal as follows: “Behind to the left St Paul’s Cathedral and to the right the Mosque of St. Sophia”. Based on this reputable source, such a standard reference work as Christopher Eimer’s wonderful compendium on

British Commemorative Medals and Their Values, published in 2010, also refers to the building as “the mosque of St.



Figure 4. Mosque of Sultan Ahmed (Blue Mosque) in Istanbul, Turkey (from Wikipedia)



Figure 5. The Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey (from cdn.kastic.org)



Figure 6. Comparison of image of mosque on medal of Abdul Aziz with a photograph of the Mosque of Sultan Ahmed in Istanbul

Sophia”. Auction catalogs are likewise not immune to this error. For example, the recent auction catalog of the venerable auction house Baldwin’s (Auction Number 93, lot 636, May 2015; and Auction Number 98, lot 2545, May 2016) describes the building incorrectly as “the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul”. In fact, every auction catalog this author has seen, irrespective of the auction company, states, incorrectly, that the building depicted on the reverse of this medal is the Hagia Sophia.

Several websites currently on the internet also misattribute this building. Thus, www.The-saleroom.com describes this medal as follows: “in the distance St Paul’s Cathedral and the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul”. Likewise, the fine website of Hedley Betts www.medalsoftheworld.com records: “In the background St. Paul’s Cathedral and the mosque of St. Sophia”. The website www.Emedals.com incorrectly identifies both buildings: “London’s Westminster Abbey to the left, Constantinople’s Hagia Sophia to the right”. Finally, an Ebay auction confidently describes the reverse of the medal of the visit of Abdul Aziz to the City of London as: “Londinia, standing before a burning altar decorated within the City shield and inscribed WELCOME, greets the figure of Turkey. Beyond, St. Paul’s Cathedral, l., and the mosque of St. Sophia, r.”

Obverse of Medal

An examination of the origin of the bust of Sultan Abdul Aziz depicted on the obverse of this medal also led to some interesting findings. This bust apparently was copied from a photograph shown in Figure 8. As pointed out by Öztuncay (2003), this photograph of Sultan Abdülaziz was taken by the studio of Abdullah Frères, in Istanbul, on June 18, 1869, and was used as the model from which the medal by Wyon commemorating Sultan Abdülaziz’s visit to London was made.

This photo raises a question as to the date that the medal was actually struck. Although the visit of Sultan Abdul Aziz took place in 1867 (the date engraved on the medal), the evidence that the photo was taken in 1869 suggests that, although the medal is dated 1867, it must have been engraved and struck after that date, a not-so-uncommon occurrence, although not often so readily documented. To quote Edhem Eldem, “Earlier sources had assumed that the medal was based on a photograph of Abdul Aziz taken in London...However, thanks

to Bahattin Öztuncay’s extensive research, it has been possible to ascertain that the photograph was not only taken in Istanbul, by Abdullah Frères, but also on June 18, 1869, thus proving it impossible for the medal to have been produced before 1869...This delay in the production of the object is further confirmed by a document, dated May 20, 1869, mentioning that the medal to be minted in London would bear the Imperial Portrait.” (Eldem, p 229)

Another photograph of Abdul Aziz, also taken on his visit to London 1867, is an unlikely source for the image on the medal, as this photo is of the Sultan facing front (Figure 9).

A Brief History of the Ottoman Empire

An admittedly superficial glance at the history of the Ottoman Empire allows us to introduce other medals related to the period of Abdul Aziz and his predecessor Sultan Abdul Medjid (Abdülmeceid Khan), and to show, once again, how religion influences history.

The Ottoman Empire, one of the largest and longest lasting empires in history, was inspired and sustained by Islam and its Islamic institutions. It was founded at the end of the thirteenth century in northwestern Anatolia by the Turkish tribal leader Osman Gazi (transliterated as Ottoman). The name of Turkey was derived from the term Turk, which was used to refer to the Anatolian peasant and tribal population.

The early period of Ottoman history was characterized by almost continuous territorial expansion. The Ottomans became a transcontinental empire in 1453, following the conquest of Constantinople, which brought an end to the Byzantine Empire, a region that had been ruled by Christians ever since the Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in the fourth century.

The Ottoman Empire reached the height of its power during the 16th and 17th centuries under the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent, who greatly expanded its territory. Because of its strategic location and control of lands surrounding the Mediterranean, the Ottoman Empire became the center of trade between the Eastern and Western worlds, maintaining this influence for six centuries.

During the reign of Sultan Abdul Medjid (1839-1861), the Ottoman Empire had the third largest naval fleet, behind only France and England. His successor Abdul Aziz expanded and



Figure 7. Inscription on Inside of Case Housing Medal of Visit of Abdul Aziz to London (Weiss Collection)

modernized this navy. Although considered to be Abdul Aziz's biggest achievement, the increased military expenditures put a strain on the economy. This, in turn, resulted in a decision to increase agricultural taxes to pay foreign creditors, and ultimately led to a series of events, culminating in the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) shortly after his death. Abdul Aziz also expanded the Ottoman railway network, thereby uniting a group of previously unconnected railways. Some years later, this network of railways became the famed Orient Express, traveling at that time from Paris to Constantinople.

During the eighteenth century, the empire fell behind its major European rivals, the Russian Empire and the Hapsburg Dynasty of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and even though it was on the winning side during the Crimean War, the Ottoman Empire suffered greatly.

Its alliance with Germany during the First World War led to its defeat and occupation by the Allied Powers. This, in turn, caused a revolt against the occupying forces and, in 1923, the emergence of the Republic of Turkey, the end of the Ottoman monarchy and the beginning of secular rule.

The Crimean War: The Crimean War (1853-1856), a conflict between Russia and an alliance made up of Britain, France and the Ottoman Empire, greatly influenced the subsequent reign of Abdul Aziz. It began when Russia occupied the Ottoman territories of Moldavia and Wallachia, forcing Turkey to respond by declaring war. In 1854, at the Battle of Sinope in the Black Sea, Russia, under Tsar Nicholas I, destroyed the Turkish fleet of Abdul Medjid, who was at that time the Ottoman Sultan of Turkey. France and Britain then joined the Turks and declared war against Russia. After the allies forced the Russians to evacuate Sevastopol, and Austria threatened to join the allies, Nicholas' successor Tsar Alexander II surrendered Russia's claim on the Ottoman Empire at the Treaty of Paris (1856).

An important medal issued to commemorate the ultimate defeat of Russia after France and England came to the defense of the Ottomans during the Crimean War is shown in Figure 10.

On the obverse is a bust of Sultan Abdul Medjid Khan surrounded by eight cartouches bearing the names of commanders and statesmen of the allied powers.

On the reverse is Winged Victory, seated, holding a wreath, inscribing a pyramid with the inscription: **VICTOIRE. NAPOLEON. 1854. LA MER NOIRE ET LE DANUBE SERONT LIBRES** (Victory of Napoleon 1854. The Black Sea and the Danube Shall be Free); in the background, the dome and minaret of a mosque; in the foreground, a serpent and an olive tree. Around, **LA FRANCE ET L'ANGLETERRE UNIES POUR LA DEFENSE DU DROIT.** (France and England United for the Defense of Rights). The exergue reads, **DIEU LE VEUT** (It is God's Will).

The immediate cause of the Crimean War was religious in nature, in particular the rights of Christians in the Holy Land, which at that time was controlled by the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans supported the Muslims, the French the Roman Catholics, while Russia supported the Eastern Orthodox Church.

This medal commemorates the allied operations in the Danubian region, leading to the ousting of the Russian army from Moldavia and Wallachia, as well as from the western shores of the Black Sea. The Winged Victory is seen writing history, celebrating the military successes attributed to the French Emperor Napoleon III. (Eldem)

(The Crimean War is also known for the infamous Charge of the Light Brigade and is noted as the war in which the nurse Florence Nightingale made her entrance into history and folklore.)

A further glimpse into the religious history of the period, discussed below, allows us to focus on another Islam-related medal, one of the wonderful architectural medals from Jacques Wiener's *Medals of the Most Remarkable Edifices of Europe*.

Arab Muslim conquests: Of the earliest religious wars in the modern period, the Arab Muslim conquests of 632 to 732 stand out. Also termed the Islamic conquests, they began after the death of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad and spread from the Arabian Peninsula to an area stretching from northwest India, across Central Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, southern Italy, and the Iberian Peninsula, to the Pyrenees. Its general purpose was to

supplant Christianity with Islam. In some form or other these objectives continued through the 18th century and beyond.



Figure 8. Sultan Abdülaziz. (Photo was kindly provided by Bahattin Öztuncay; See also Eldem pp 228, 229)



Figure 9. Sultan Abdülaziz during his Visit to the United Kingdom in 1867. W&D Downey- From an album of 'Royal Portraits' compiled by Queen Victoria Royal Collection Trust. United Kingdom. (Image from Wikipedia)



Figure 10.
CRIMEAN WAR
COMMEMORATIVE

(Battles of the Danube and Black Sea)

By Laurent Joseph Hart, Turkey, 1854, Bronze, 72 mm.

Reference: Page-Divo, 125/215; Forrer II, p. 435; Eldem 171; Weiss BW155
(Weiss Collection)

An example of a medal illustrating one result of the conquest of Muslims over Christians is illustrated in Figure 11, depicting the Mosque of St. Sophia at Constantinople (Hagia Sophia) by Jacques Wiener. This is the building many mistakenly identified as that depicted on the medal of Abdul Aziz's visit to the City of London.

Unlike most of the medals in Jacques Wiener's series of European edifices, which have the exterior of the building on the obverse and the interior on the reverse, this medal of the Mosque of St. Sophia in Constantinople shows different views of the interior on both the obverse and reverse. (For images and descriptions of Wiener's wonderful series of medals depicting remarkable buildings in Europe, follow the link at endnote 2).

The inscription in the exergue of the obverse reviews the history of the building as follows: **STE SOPHIE A CONSTANTINOPLE BATIE PAR L'EMPEREUR JUSTINIEN 532-537 CONVERTIE IN MOSQUEE 1453 RESTAUREE SOUS LE REGNE DU SULTAN ABDUL MEDJID 1847-1849 PAR G. FOSSATI.** (Saint Sophia in Constantinople, built by Emperor Justinian 532-537, converted into a mosque 1453,

restored under the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid 1847-1849 by G. Fossati)

This medal serves as a reminder of the changes that have taken place in houses of worship with each conquering group. The building was at first a church, started in the sixth century during the reign of Emperor Justinian I in the city of Byzantium (later Constantinople, now Istanbul), the former capital of the ancient Byzantine Empire and later the Ottoman Empire. In 532 a great fire prompted a rebuilding project that is now regarded as the apotheosis of Byzantine art and architecture. Most of the existing structure of the Hagia Sophia dates from this period. The building remained as the largest cathedral ever built in the world for nearly a thousand years, until the completion of the Seville Cathedral in 1520.

As the legend on the medal indicates, the church was converted to a mosque in 1453 when Constantinople was conquered by the Ottoman Turks. It was restored during the reign of the Muslim ruler Sultan Abdul Medjid by the architect G. Fossati. Over the years of Ottoman rule, Christian features, such as the bells and altar, were removed, and Islamic features, such



Figure 11.
ST SOPHIA AT
CONSTANTINOPLE

By Jacques Wiener, Turkey, 1864, Bronze, 59 mm

Reference: Van Hoydonck 206; Eidlitz 69/419; Reinecke 60; Weiss BW274
(Weiss Collection)

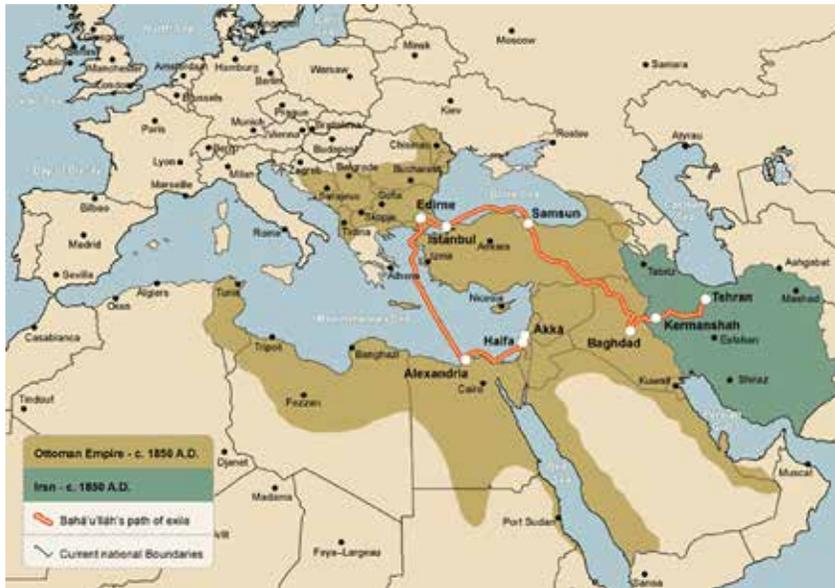


Figure 12. Territory of Ottoman Empire in mid-nineteenth century (mapssite@blogspot.com).

as the four minarets, were added. The Hagia Sophia remained a mosque until more recent times when the government, now the Republic of Turkey, became more secular and converted this building into a museum.

While this medal does not overtly promote religious bigotry, it does tell the story of how a religious building changes depending upon the religious practices of the different power structures, and implies that the conquering group does not often tolerate the religious observances of those it conquered. One might add that such religious intolerance has its counterpart in the manner in which the Native American Indian Nations were treated by their Christian European conquerors (Weiss 2012).

Abdul Aziz: Abdul Aziz (1830-1876), the second son of Sultan Mahmud II, was born in Constantinople. In 1861 he succeeded his brother Abdul Medjid, becoming the 32nd sultan of the Ottoman Empire. During their reigns, the Ottoman Empire still encompassed a considerable geographic area, extending through large parts of the Middle East, including portions of what is now Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, the Palestinian territories, Egypt, the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula, swaths of Southern and Eastern Europe, and Northern Africa, including sections of what is now Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia (Figure 12).

Although he was educated in the Ottoman tradition, Abdul Aziz greatly admired the progress of the Western countries, and in 1867 he became the first Ottoman sultan to travel to Western Europe, visiting Vienna, Paris and London, the latter prompting the issuance of a medal commemorating his visit, the subject of this discourse.

In 1870 he created the Bulgarian exarchate (an administrative district of the Eastern Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire), thus separating the Bulgarian church from the Greek

Church at Constantinople. He acquired great wealth but squandered it extravagantly. The sultan's profligacy led to an outbreak of Muslim discontent and fanaticism and culminated in Bulgarian atrocities.

Abdul Aziz was an intellectual, writing histories of the Ottoman Empire and composing music. He also expanded the museum system.

The sultan was deposed in 1876 by a group of prominent politicians. His death is attributed to suicide.

So why did Abdul Aziz visit London in 1867?

In 1867, having concluded treaties of commerce with France and England, Abdul Aziz decided to travel to Western Europe to visit a number of important European capitals. He first visited the exhibition at Paris. From there he traveled to the United Kingdom where he was afforded several honors, one of which was to be made a Knight of the Garter. Figure 13 shows a painting of Queen

Victoria investing Sultan Abdul Aziz with the Order of the Garter on board the Royal yacht. The Sultan is accompanied by his nephews and young son.

While in England, he accepted a previous invitation from the Corporation of London to visit the Guildhall (for a medallic image of the Guildhall, see Figure 1), prompting the issuance of a medal commemorating this event (Figure 2).

The visit of Abdul Aziz to the Guildhall was described in some detail in *Numismata Londinensia*, accordingly: The Sultan was transported in the Queen's carriage and was seated with the Prince of Wales and Lord Mayor of London. Besides entertainment which included a concert, ball and supper, there was a welcoming address given by a representative of London, containing the following statements: "... We rejoice too, to see in your Imperial Majesty an enlightened Sovereign, who unites to a firm attachment to his own faith, the desire to afford to all his subjects the free exercise of their religion." Abdul Aziz responded by stating the purpose of his visit, as follows: "I have two objects in view in visiting this and other parts of Europe: one to see in these centers of civilization what still remains to be done in my own country, to complete the work which we have begun; the other, to show my desire to establish, not only among my own subjects, but between my people and the other nations of Europe, that feeling of brotherhood which is the foundation of human progress and the glory of our age."

Conclusion

As scholarly collectors of medals, we must always question the validity of past pronouncements and descriptions of the material we collect. An example of this dictum is presented in this article, which reveals an error in the identity of a building on the reverse of the medal commemorating the visit of the Sultan of Turkey, Abdul Aziz, to London in 1867. While this may seem to be a relatively unimportant and even trivial revelation,



Figure 13. Queen Victoria Investing the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Aziz I with the Order of the Garter
By George Housman Thomas, 1867, Oil on Canvas. (From Wikimedia).

it does provide the important lesson to us all that errors may find their way into the numismatic literature and remain so for more than a century. The answer to how this may occur lies in the blind acceptance of material in deservedly reputable and historically important standard reference books on these medals, in this case *Numismata Londinensia*. Published in 1894 and prepared with the authority of the Corporation of London under the direction of the Library Committee and written by Charles Welch, Librarian to the Corporation of London, it is considered the “bible” on this series of medals. The message to numismatists is that no matter the reputation of the author and publisher, we must be aware that errors do crop up even in apparently unimpeachable sources, and we should consider it our duty to correct them.

Endnotes:

1. www.historicalartmedals.com/MEDAL%20WEB%20ENTRIES/THUMBNAILS/CITY%20OF%20LONDON/brand%20new%20thumbnails.htm
2. www.historicalartmedals.com/MEDAL%20WEB%20ENTRIES/THUMBNAILS/BELGIUM/WIENER-EUROPEAN%20CATHEDRALS/brand%20new%20thumbnails.htm

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