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# Hasan Olalı: pioneer of tourism education and research in Turkey

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## Introduction

Even though the tourism industry in Turkey essentially boomed starting in the 1980s, the history of academic tourism, for both education and research, goes back to the 1950s. The Republic of Turkey and its founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, aiming to reach the level of modern civilizations starting with the nation's establishment in 1923, made significant changes in public administration beginning in the 1930s. *Türkiye Turing ve Otomobil Kurumu* [The Turkish Turing and Automobile Association] was founded to support publicity efforts, towards which the country has made considerable progress since 1923. In the 1940s, under the guidance of several authors and researchers, a number of studies were added to the literature on tourism.

In economic terms, tourism investments began to increase in the early 1950s, following Turkey's affiliation with NATO and the start of its Democrat Party's close relations with the US. During these years, the first tourism incentives were established, and then public institutions such as the Bank of Tourism were established. One of the notable developments of the time was the establishment of the first Hilton Hotel outside the US, which commenced operations in Istanbul in 1954.

All these developments led to increased interest in the tourism industry, along with several new regulations in public administration. Tourism was first represented at the ministerial level in 1957 under the newly established Ministry of Press, Information and Tourism. Several companies were formed in these years to provide for the workforce requirements of newly established hotel businesses. One product of these enterprises was a programme to send students to Switzerland for vocational education on tourism and hospitality over six-month periods and to France for postgraduate studies.

Professor Hasan Olalı is one of those individuals sent to France for postgraduate studies. While teaching at a Business College in Izmir, a city in Western Turkey, Olalı was dispatched to France to conduct postgraduate studies on tourism. Being one of the first people to specialize in the field of tourism in Turkey, Olalı would become the initiator and head of tourism studies for the entire country upon his return. I will explain Olalı's contributions to tourism education and research in Turkey based on classes I took from him in the beginning of 1990s, when I was conducting my doctoral studies. I have studied his books and articles when I was preparing his bibliography. I also have put together a research study based on this bibliography (Kozak, 2000a).

## Hasan Olalı and his academic life

Hasan Olalı was born in Drama, which is now part of Greece (1923). Due to the population exchange between Greece and Turkey according to the Treaty of Lausanne, he and his family had to come to Turkey only as an immigrant. In an interview conducted in 2014 as part of the Oral History Project on Tourism and the Hospitality Industry in Turkey, Olalı explained that period as follows:

*I was born in Drama in 1923, and at the end of the same year, we moved from Drama to Izmir. Since my uncle and father were in the tobacco business, they went around Manisa and its surroundings by train to find suitable soil for tobacco farming. They determined that Akhisar was a feasible place for a tobacco farming; they saw it was fit. They told the family about it and we all accepted, which is to say the elders of the family accepted, and thus we moved to Akhisar and settled there. (Olalı, 2018, p. 25)*

Olalı, who is one of his family's six children, completed his education in Akhisar and Istanbul, Turkey. He studied at Kabatas High School as a grantee boarding student. He completed his university education in economics at Istanbul University, where he attended lectures by faculty members of Jewish descent who, in 1933, had fled Nazi Germany and relocated to Turkey. Olalı explains the circumstances in the Faculty of Economics as follows:

*There weren't any Turkish academics back then; the Turkish lecturers had just been appointed as assistant teachers (for the university). All the teachers were from Nazi Germany. They were Jewish and had escaped to Turkey out of fear of the Nazi regime. Then, also through the incentives of Atatürk, they started teaching at Istanbul University, where they were all extremely valuable teachers. However, I only realized all this later, after I had begun my studies. (Olalı, 2018, p. 26)*

After graduating from the Faculty of Economics, Olalı started teaching at a high school in Izmir (1945). In the meantime, he successfully completed the examination for students wanting to be sent to France on a state scholarship. Olalı explains this event as follows:

*In my second year of teaching, a notice from the Ministry of Education arrived at my high school stating, "we will send one person to France for tourism education." A teacher named Hamdi Karaçil, the head of the business school and principal of the business college said to me, "Hasan, would you like to go?" "I would, sir," I said. "How good is your foreign language?" he asked. I said I had been as an assistant teacher at Galatasaray High School for two years while studying at university. "That's why my French is not bad. Well, at least the foreign teachers working there said so." "So, that's go," he said. "You'll do fine." And so I did my specialization in France, my doctorate, in other words. I never hesitated . . . Well, since the Ministry of Education had sent me to specialize in tourism, and since both the school of tourism and the school of hotel management were in the same building, I shuttled from one to the other. That's how I studied for about one or one and a half years (Olalı, 2018, p. 26).*

After completing his postgraduate studies at the School Ecole Hôtelière de Paris – Lycée Jean Drouant in France, Olalı returned to Turkey and began teaching tourism classes at the high school where he had been posted. Later, he started his academic life. Olalı qualified for his doctorate in 1961 with his thesis on "The Role of Tourism in the Development of Turkey" and began his academic career as a member of the Faculty of Izmir Economics and Commercial Sciences. He becomes an Associate Professor in 1963 and a Professor in 1969 at the same institution. After a life of 94 years, Olalı passed away in 2016.

### **Hasan Olalı's contribution to academic studies and research in Turkey**

The university-level study of tourism in Turkey dates back to the mid-1960s. One of the first higher educational institutions was *Ticaret ve Turizm Yüksek Öğretmen Okulu* (School of Teaching in Commerce and Tourism), which opened in 1965 to educate and train those who would be teaching tourism classes in high schools. Another significant institution was the Tourism Institute, one of the leading founders of which was Hasan Olalı. The first book published by this institute, which was established in 1963 as a part of the Izmir School of Economic and Commercial Sciences, was Olalı's doctoral dissertation. Olalı also played a significant role in the opening of the Department of Tourism Management at Ege University (1968). This department was the first in Turkey to develop and train university-level personnel for the tourism industry.

In addition to opening the department of tourism management in the 1970s, Olalı played a significant role in postgraduate-level studies in the field of tourism and the accompanying preparation for thesis studies. Postgraduate and doctoral studies in the field of tourism also began at Ege University in 1972, as a result of his continuous efforts. The students who studied with Olalı,

or who took part in the postgraduate level tourism programmes opened by him, later pioneered and popularized tourism education and studies at institutions such as Ege University, Dokuz Eylül University, Adnan Menderes University, Bogazici University, and Gazi University. Olalı was a distinguished academician, who assumed various administrative positions, such as department head and dean, as well as made great contributions to expanding tourism education and research in Turkey. Within the scope of academia broadly Olalı paved the way for undergraduate-level tourism and hospitality management programs in addition to higher-level studies at academic institutions such as Ege University, Dokuz Eylül University, and Adnan Menderes University.

## Publications and academic studies

Another significant contribution Olalı made to the field of tourism and hospitality management was his publications. There are various lecture notes, reviews, research books, and articles about tourism and hospitality management contributed by Olalı dating back to the mid-1950s. These studies were considered significant references within the country's tourism literature until the mid-2000s. In fact, approximately two-third of books on tourism published in Turkey between 1960 and 1990 were written by Olalı. He also authored tourism and hospitality management textbooks for students educated at high schools. Despite the books are represented in various fields, they mostly focused on economics, finance, marketing, and tourism policy and planning. Olalı had approximately 70 books published in his whole lifetime.

In an article written by the author of this essay (Kozak, 2000b), where the author divides the Turkish tourism academicians before 2000 into three generations, Olalı is among the first-generation. Like other first-generation academicians, Olalı was trained in non-tourism disciplines and considered tourism studies as more of an applied field. As mentioned before, Olalı benefited from tourism as a field of application for his scholarly studies. Within this context, Olalı published books and articles and delivered lectures on tourism economics, tourism policy and planning, tourism finance, and tourism marketing. In this sense, he set important precedents for the interdisciplinary structure of tourism studies during those years, and he put forward many studies reflecting this structure and its underlying principles. Like much interdisciplinary works, Olalı's studies used qualitative methods.

## Hasan Olalı as told by his students

As mentioned before, many academicians were educated by Olalı as a both lecturer and supervisor and these academicians have had an academic position in tourism education and research in Turkey in recent years. The opinions of some of his students about Olalı are as follows. Professor Alp Timur studied with Olalı more than any other of his students. Timur completed his graduate-level studies with Olalı. He states the following about his master:

*Hasan Olalı was the person who shaped my entire academic career ... He was extremely hardworking; he used to work 18 hours a day and never complained once ... It was both very difficult and pleasant to work with Prof. Hasan Olalı. He was tremendously hardworking ... He was extremely scientific and brought many innovations. He read a lot and was very diligent. He always appreciated you and supported you if you worked hard. Being his assistant was so difficult and tiresome, but it was also very pleasant to work with Olalı. He taught me a lot. (Timur, 2018, p. 13)*

Professor Meral Korzay, who worked closely with Olalı starting in the 1970s, explains her professor's influence on his students as follows:

*While I gratefully cherish the role of Olalı, especially on the development of my academic career, I also feel lucky because I had the chance to work with him and the academicians who played a role in his career development. When he was asked the following question, "Do you have any students who became significant figures in their respective fields?" Olalı said all of his students were important for him and they all had successful careers. (Korzay, 2018, p. 278)*

Another dissertation student of Hasan Olalı, Professor Öcal Usta, explains his opinions about his master as follows:

*Hasan Olalı was a department head ... He taught us tourism in all of its aspects. Hasan Olalı always appreciated me and he had a direct influence on my education. We always kept in touch. I have always loved and respected him, and I still do. He would also treasure us, and mutual appreciation always yields successful outcomes. Our studies were so successful and special. (Usta, 2018, p. 82)*

Professor Orhan İçöz, one of Olalı's graduate students, explains his opinions about his supervisor as follows:

*Our thesis advisor and experienced teacher, Hasan Olalı, was the one who guided and directed us towards this profession. I have learned a lot from him on how to give a good lecture. Thus, I can easily say that the great majority of the academic studies on tourism were conducted by Hasan Olalı and his successors. This was a pretty important start because it was a major milestone in the field. Hasan Olalı wrote almost a thousand-page-long book at a time when there were no other books on hotel management in Turkey. The books he wrote afterward were all among the firsts in their respective fields. (İçöz, 2018, p. 53)*

Dr. Mehmet Özdemir, who is a government executive and academician and is known for his studies in the field of tourism sociology, describes Olalı as the “connoisseur of tourism” in one of his articles about Olalı, and adds:

*Being a qualified and distinguished academician with an ever-increasing reputation of more than 50 years and being “the teacher of all teachers”: These are obviously good merits. But the most important among all merits is to be a great human being! The man I know is among the most significant figures in this “human category. (Özdemir, 2000, p. 7)*

Olalı's students readily attest to his work discipline and exuberance. The oral history interviews conducted with Olalı in 2014 show that even at over 90 years of age, he was still distinguished by his strong memory and energy.

## Conclusion

Hasan Olalı was sent to France to complete graduate-level tourism studies in a period when the tourism industry in the modern Turkish Republic was in the process of development, and he played a significant role over the following years in the development of tourism and hospitality management education and studies. Although he came across the field of tourism coincidentally when tourism in Turkey was in the process of a great transformation, he dedicated his life to its development. He paved the way for the first tourism and hospitality departments, research centres, and schools; contributed to the development of tourism literature with the many books he wrote; and was responsible for the education of many academicians in the field of tourism today. Olalı was a distinguished scholar, author, supervisor, consultant and director, who made a very direct and personal contribution to the development of tourism literature in Turkey between 1960 and 1990.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes on contributor

*Nazmi Kozak* received his master degree in Tourism Management from Hacettepe University and PhD in Tourism Management from Dokuz Eylül University (Turkey). He worked at Baskent University (Turkey) between 1997 and 2001. He has been working at Anadolu University since 2001. His main study is tourism and hospitality marketing, bibliometrics and oral history. However, he taught some courses including Theory of Tourism, Research Methods in Social Sciences in master and doctoral programs.

## Selected Publications

- Olalı, H. (1953). *Genel Ekonomi* [Introduction to economics]. İzmir: Berrin Matbaası.
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