

History of the Ottoman Empire: A Study of the Role of the Sheikh al-Islam and Sadr al-Azam in Istanbul (1299-1923)

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Abstract:

The history of the Ottoman Empire has received a great deal of attention from scholars and researchers, but the efforts have focused on highlighting the work and achievements of the rulers of this state in the fields of politics, administration and war, while the contribution of other categories of society in managing this state is still in urgent need of research and study, and for this reason, this study came to highlight the role contributed by the personality of the Sheikh of Islam and the Grand Sadr in Istanbul, because this role that they played in all fields of daily life has a great impact in making our modern history.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, Shaykh al-Islam, Sadr al-Azam, Istanbul, Sultan.

تاريخ الإمبراطورية العثمانية: دراسة عن دور شيخ الإسلام والصدر الأعظم في إسطنبول (1299-1923)

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الملخص:

لقد حظي تاريخ الدولة العثمانية باهتمام كبير من قبل الدارسين والباحثين، إلا أن الجهود انصبحت على إبراز أعمال وإنجازات حكام هذه الدولة في مجالات السياسة والإدارة والحرب، بينما لا تزال مساهمة فئات المجتمع الأخرى في إدارة هذه الدولة في حاجة ماسة إلى البحث والدراسة، ولهذا جاءت هذه الدراسة لتبرز الدور الذي ساهمت به شخصية شيخ الإسلام والصدر الأعظم في إسطنبول، لما لهذا الدور الذي قاما به في جميع مجالات الحياة اليومية من أثر كبير في صنع تاريخنا الحديث.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإمبراطورية العثمانية، شيخ الإسلام، الصدر الأعظم، إسطنبول، سلطان.

Introduction:

The Ottoman theories derived their origins and interpretations in their concept of the state, and the ruling political authority from Islamic heritage texts whose owners unanimously consider the ruler, caliph or sultan as a representative of the divine will over the earth, and what is observed on the sultans of the Ottoman state that they are of two types, the first type, Osman and the last of them Suleiman the Magnificent, and they were strong and the second type tended to inactivity and resignation and this in general far from the course of internal and external events in their state, and they left the definition of state affairs to the great sadr and his assistant, Sheikh al-Islam, given our desire to know these two figures and their mission H

Who is Shaykh al-Islam and Sadr al-Azam? What are their historical roots? Was their function limited only in the Ottoman state? What are their tasks? What was the status of this function over the stages of the state?

1. The nature of the relationship between the Sheikhs of Islam and the ruling Ottoman authority:

The early Ottoman sultans derived their understanding of Islam from a number of Sufis, and Dervishes who were abundant in these regions, and in the eyes of the local population and subjects, the Dervish sheikhs played an important role in legitimizing Ottoman sovereignty (Ihsanoglu, 1997, pp. 157-158).

Since the reign of Sultan Bayazid I, the Ottoman sultans began to get closer to the category of scholars and their relations with them became stronger over time, and their concept of Islam based on the rules of Islamic law began to impose its place on the political and administrative entity of the state, and then became a main pillar around which all the central policy affairs of the state revolve (Ihsanoglu, 1997, p. 158), (Muhammad Ali, 2008, p. 22).

In general, the decisions and rulings issued by the Sultan must be monitored by the Mufti, who has the discretion to adapt them to the will and desire of the Sultan before they are issued in the form of a decree or religious legal order, and if the decision is contrary to Sharia, it will be canceled, stripped of its content and status, and replaced by another decision that is valid (Ben Moussa, 2012, p. 61).

In recognition of the heavy responsibilities that the Mufti of the capital was carrying out, the state decided to distinguish him from the rest of his colleagues from the muftis working in most of the states and regions of the empire, so it gave the Mufti of the capital the title of Sheikh Islam (Saban, 2000, p. 142). as the highest position in the Ottoman state and its owner is one of the highest officials and is a follower of the Hanafi school and the representative of the prevailing jurisprudential line in the state, thus becoming the de facto head of the ruling Islamic religious body, although the Sultan remained the head of this body in theory (Ben Moussa, 2016, p. 43). and this title reached its height of power which allowed it to acquire political and religious importance over time and Sheikh Adah Bali is the first mufti (Latifa, 2011, p. 61).

Sheikh al-Islam was appointed to his position based on a sultanic decree and was chosen from among the teachers famous for their knowledge and piety, and there was a great disagreement about the period in which the title Sheikh al-Islam was given to the Mufti of the capital, so some attributed it to the period of Sultan Murad II (Khalil Ahmed, 2012, pp. 01-09). who called him the Mufti of Edirne, the capital of the state, and it is most likely that Mawla Shams al-Din al-Fanari was the one who assumed the post of Mufti of Anam (Kabrizadeh, 1957, pp. 17-23), (al-Ghazi, 1945, pp. 21-22). and some others believe that Sultan Muhammad the Conqueror was the one who gave the title Sheikh al-Islam to the Mufti of the capital, while some go to say that the legal Sultan Suleiman is behind this designation due to many laws issued during his reign (Al-Rashidi, 2013, p. 05), (Amjan, 2014, pp. 12-13).

It can be said that starting from the second half of the 16th century AD, the features of a clear convergence between the work of the jurist through his fatwas and the work of the Sultan through his undeclared policy, as the Sultan is the owner of sovereignty and authority and has the initiative in making decisions and issuing laws that the jurist can find a legal justification for it that confirms its Islamic legitimacy, as he thus justifies the Sultan's policy. He draws a new line for the beginning of the institutionalization of the Ifta function, starting from the administrative and legal institution created by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent under the title "Sheikhdom of Islam", thus shifting the Ifta function from a role of an independent and open Islamic ijthadic nature to an administrative and institutional role disciplined within the laws of the state, its agencies and decision-making centers (Kawtharani, 2015, pp. 108-109).

2. Sheikhs of Islam in the Ottoman Empire: Roles and Effectiveness:

The Ottoman sultans relied on the Sheikhs of Islam, who had a role in creating the broad and basic outlines of the system of government and its

functioning, as evidenced by the historical evidence that highlighted aspects of this:

When Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent wanted to execute Prince Mustafa at the instigation of his wife Khurram and the Grand Sadr Rustam Pasha, he needed a legal justification to justify his action (Ahmed Mohammed Al-Thaqafi, 1431, pp. 115-119), (Khalifa, 2001, pp. 382-383). knowing that he did not have strong evidence indicating the prince's treason, so he presented the matter to Sheikh al-Islam Abu al-Saud Effendi in its original parameters and whether the fatwa was issued under pressure from the sultan's wife or not (Adwan, 2011, pp. 261-270), it was the beginning of the intervention of the sheikhs of Islam in the affairs of the sultanate to become a major part of the ongoing conflicts before the weakness of the sultans especially that they are the legal face of the state to make the post a double-edged sword especially if people seeking their benefits to achieve their benefits to the detriment of the state's benefit arrive (Yusuf, Sami'a Ali Hassan, 2016, p. 296), (bin Saleh Al-Mudayyan, 1995, pp. 53-54).

They issued fatwas that were the basis for the deposition of Sultan Osman II, namely that the pilgrimage of the Badshahs is not obligatory, and staying in their place is better for them (Ahmed Yaghi, 1996, pp. 106-107). so that there is no sedition, and the Janissaries did not want the Sultan to leave Istanbul, especially after they heard his intention to eliminate the forces of Qabi Gulu, so the Sultan tore up the fatwa issued by the Sheikh of Islam to exploit the situation, which resulted in a mass revolution that brought down Sultan Osman and eliminated him (Oztuna, 1988, p. 461).

We refer to their great contribution to the deposition of Sultan Mustafa I after a 3-month rule, only to see them play a dangerous role in his removal for the second time, and thus they color by changing positions to the wind in the service of their interests, and when the voices demanding retribution for the murderers of Sultan Osman were raised, they rushed to support the situation so that Sheikh al-Islam Yahya gathered the scholars to take a decision to depose the mad sultan. Istanbul judge Hussein Efendi cooperated with Sultan Murad IV's mother, Kusum Mahabakir, to obtain a fatwa to depose the mad sultan and distribute the money to the necessary parties, which the Janissaries will support again to obtain the sitting gratuities (Yousef Yusuf, 2009, p. 305).

Sheikh al-Islam Abd al-Rahim Effendi , who assumed the Sheikhdome of Islam in 1647 AD, along with some scholars in support of the revolutionaries, who issued a fatwa to depose Sultan Ibrahim I. It is a recognized historical fact in the history of the Ottoman Empire that any military insurrection that is not supported by the scholars is put down by the khagan and it never happened that any khagan was able to put down any insurrection supported by the scholars, so

it was decided to execute him along with Sheikh al-Islam and Sadr al-Azam under a fatwa for fear that he might return to power as a result of the opposition of the Sabaiyah teams to the installation of Sultan Muhammad IV for his young age (Mantiran, 1993, p. 352).

In 1825 AD, Muhammad Tahir Effendi Qazizadeh assumed the position of Sheikh of Islam, who emerged as an actor in the political aspect with his famous fatwa on the establishment of the new army during the days of Sultan Mahmoud II, who wanted to rely on the new army instead of the Janissaries, so he ruled to cancel the Janissaries' formations when what is known in Ottoman history as the Charity incident occurred in 1826 AD (Yousef Yusuf, 2009, p. 305).

Sheikh Hasan Khairallah Effendi, who held the sheikhdom twice, had a great role in the events that took place in the state, as he took over the first time in 1874 AD to be removed in the same year by Sultan Abdul Aziz, while his second sheikhdom was in 1876 AD until 1877 AD, where his sheikhdom witnessed the deposition of Sultan Abdul Aziz, then his murder and the assumption of Sultan Murad. Then he was deposed according to a fatwa from the same sheikh, which states that the Sultan is crazy and has no experience to run the affairs of the state to take over Sultan Abdul Hamid II, and as a result of his deposition of the sultans, Sheikh Hassan Khairullah was called Khaleel al-Sultans to be deposed from his position by order of Sultan Abdul Hamid, considering that he was one of the participants in the deposition and killing of Abdul Aziz's uncle (Ahmed Yaghi, 1996, pp. 106-107).

3. Sadr al-Azam and his circle.

Before talking about this character, it is important to trace the historical roots of this character:

3.1 The historical roots of the term Sadr al-Azam and the beginning of its emergence in the Ottoman Empire:

The meaning of the word minister in the Arabic language is an aide or assistant, and the first to create this title was Abdullah al-Sifah, the founder of the Abbasid state, who granted it to his first minister, Abu Salama al-Halal, in 750 AD, and the ministers of the first two sultans were only called agents (Dawson, 1942, p. 69).

This position dates back to the reign of Sultan Orkhan, when it was assumed by his brother Alaeddin, the Sultan's viceroy, and in the various political, military, and economic matters of the state, he has broad authority, but

two important bodies in the state apparatus have no direct authority over them, namely the service in the Sultan's palaces and the religious institution (Gharbi, 2007, p. 30).

It can also be said that the Ottomans recognized the position of the minister, who at the beginning of the state's era was called "Parwanah," a Persian title they took from the Seljuk Romans, and this term means a chamberlain, commander, inspector, or holder of a royal patent or certificate. So it can be said that they were initially called agents or parwanah until Sultan Murad I, who in 1370 gave the title of minister, and the title was given to the gendarme Karah Khalil and then he would allow this position to his son after him (Suhail Taqoush, 2013, p. 564), (Condots, 2008, p. 618).

The Great Sadr or the Sultan's agent is the second head of the procedure and implementation in the state, the occupant of this position has been characterized by the title of the first minister or the Grand Vizier since the time of the conqueror Orkhan, and was called the Great Sadr starting from Suleiman the Magnificent, and there are many terms referring to it, and there are many terms for it: Sadr al-Aali, the owner of the state, but the seal of the Grand Vizier remained on the inscription of the Grand Vizier until it was canceled with the fall of the state (Condots, 2008, p. 618).

The Absolute Viceroy or Grand Vizier is appointed by Sultani's decree and delivered to him, without the ministers, the Hmayyad Seal, the Nama Law states: "**The Grand Vizier is the head of the ministers and princes and the absolute agent in all affairs of the state, the book is the home of the agent of state funds, and the Nazir is above him, the Grand Vizier...**"(Condots, 2008, p. 619).

3.2 The functions of the Grand Vizier in the Ottoman Empire:

The administrative powers of the Grand Vizier can be summarized as follows:

- Fulfillment of the services of religion, the state and the Sultanate.
- Enforcement of punishments and ta'zir, such as hudud and qisas.
- Consider private lawsuits when necessary, make legal rulings and pay grievances.
- Organizing the administration of the state structure and appointing the Taimar, Ziyama and Alaafa.

- Appointing or dismissing officials from the military-scientific category without exception, such as the Amir of Princes, the Amir of Sanjak.

Decide on all legal and customary matters (Condots, 2008, p. 619).

As can be deduced from the contents of the formations, his duties are as follows:

- Supervises all appointments for military and civilian positions at the level of the central administration or in the administration of the provinces.
- Enforces internal law and order within the Ottoman Empire.
- He commands the army when the Sultan is not personally involved in the campaign with the help of two army judges and issues rulings in the name of the Sultan.

The Grand Vizier's orders are generally called "Pyuruldi" - derived from the Ottoman verb pyur, which means "order" - while those that refer them to another party are called "Banja." The Grand Vizier is restricted by two basic conditions in carrying out his authorized powers:

- Presenting a summary of appointment procedures or important state matters to the Sultan.

There are several ample documents of things that the Great Sadr presented to the Sultan, but he rejected them based on their impermissibility according to the fatwa of the Shaykh al-Islam, and he used to fulfill the duties of his job, except for the Hamayuni Court, in his headquarters called Bab al-Basha, also called Bab al-Ali (Condots, 2008, pp. 619-620).

3.3 The stages of the Ottoman Empire's grand vizier

It can be said that the term Grand Vizier as a term began with the reign of Murad I in 1370 AD, where the title of Grand Vizier was given to Qara Khalil, which was also given to his son Ali Pasha and his grandson as his successor, and thus the Jandarli dynasty has occupied the position of Grand Vizier for almost a century after the death of the last of them, Khalil Pasha in 1453 AD (Dawson, 1942, p. 69).

Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror thought that the appointment to this position should be limited to slaves, after he feared the widespread influence of the Al-Jandarli family, whose members held this position. The Sultan suspected the last of them, Khalil Pasha, of having a relationship with the Byzantine Empire,

accused him of treason, and executed him in the same year in which Constantinople was conquered (Suhail Taqoush, 2013, p. 565).

The first to become a slave minister was Mahmoud Pasha, one of the Sultan's Christians, who remained in office from 1453 to 1466, and since that date, a succession of ministers, most of whom were of Christian origin, have been recruited as child soldiers through the Dafsharma system, which refers to child prisoners of war who are raised in an Islamic education, knowing no father but the Sultan and whose profession is jihad, and have been trained in the Sultan's schools and the palace (Gharbi, 2007, p. 31).

Muhammad the Conqueror introduced the system of ministers of the dome, who are ministers assigned to the Grand Vizier, and the aim of this is to limit the powers of the Grand Vizier, but this system gave powers to the ministers that they tried to increase their influence in addition to conspiracies and destabilize the authority of the Grand Vizier and threatened the security of the system was abolished in the early 18th century under Sultan Ahmed III -703 AH/1730 AD-.

However, Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent violated this rule when he appointed Ibrahim Agha to the position of the Great Sadr, who is the head of his private chamber, and the successors followed his example in installing any of the men they wanted in this position, even those without experience, and some sultans married the Great Sadr from their daughters or sisters, and in this case the title "Damad", an Ottoman word meaning son-in-law, was attached to the name of the Great Sadr, in addition to the title "Damad" (Suhail Taqoush, 2013, p. 567).

However, despite these powers and appearances, the grand vizier was at the mercy of the conspiracies and wives of the sultans, and his life was linked to the satisfaction or anger of the sultan, as happened to the grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha, when he was accused of being an aspirant to the throne of Hungary, relying on the relationship between him and the ruling family, and the result was that he was dismissed in 1536 by order of the sultan.

The history of the Ottoman Empire has been marked by the succession of civilians and military personnel to the position of Grand Vizier, most notably the Koberly family, which gave birth to many great images (Suhail Taqoush, 2013, p. 567).

If the history of the Ottoman Empire was marked by the history of these great presidents, it also knew a number of others who constituted the vast majority who were either ignorant or reached the great presidency in crooked and dishonorable ways, including those who started their lives as a servant in the

Sultan's palaces, or a nanny for the Sultan or a woodcutter in the palaces, for example:

Sulu Muhammad Pasha: Who occupied the position of the Great Presidency at the end of the reign of Sultan Suleiman I the Magnificent, and remained in this position for about 13 years until he was killed in 1579 AD during the reign of Sultan Murad III, despite what he did and was respected in the state, he was described as stingy before the great gifts that increased his income and made him very rich, and even in his foreign relations, Sulu Pasha obtained a bribe from Venice to buy a peace against the interest of the state.

The bullying grand vizier Mehmet Pasha: During the reign of Sultan Ahmed III, he took a bribe from Peter the Great when the Ottoman armies besieged him on the Prut River and forced him to ask for peace.

Although it can be argued that the Great Sadr in the second reign of the state is stronger, not all Great Sadrs were characterized by wisdom, for example, after the assassination of Sulu Pasha in 1579, about 9 Sadrs led in the remaining period until the arrival of Mehmet Koprulu Pasha (Suhail Taqoush, 2013, p. 568).

When the Grand Vizier was dismissed from his post, one of the Ray's employees went undercover, usually the "Kublagler Katkhedeh Si", to the High Door with a written order from the Sultan, and presented it to the Grand Vizier, who respectfully accepted the "honorable writing" and just returned the Sultan's ring to him, then got up from his couch and left the palace without even being allowed to see his family, and went under the command of the Sultan's messenger to the place where he was exiled, as he had no right to stay in Astana, but if the order to arrest him came, "Bastanji (Suhail Taqoush, 2013, p. 568).

There are two sections:

The first section: They leave only mustaches and are the deputy of the treasury, the head of the veil.

The second section: They grow beards, including: Al-Salhadar Agha, Al-Jukhadar Agha, Al-Mahdar, who seals the minister's private letters.

The salary of the Grand Vizier was initially no more than 10,000 piasters, and Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent raised it to 25,000 for his minister Ibrahim Pasha.

So it can be said that the Great Sadr is the second man in the state and the first minister and his task is to obey and implement the orders and decisions of the Sultan and convey them to senior officials and governors of states and regions, and also carries complaints and suggestions of ministers and scholars. ... The Great Sadr supervises the employees of the Serai through the “Qabi Agassi” as an intermediary (Suhail Taqoush, 2013, p. 568).

Conclusion:

The figure of Shaykh al-Islam is considered one of the prominent figures in the Ottoman system of government, as the decisions and rulings issued by the Sultan must be monitored by the Mufti, who has the discretion to adapt them to the will and desire of the Sultan before they are issued in the form of a decree or a religious legal order.

Sadr al-Azam as a term did not exist in the past, but as a position that existed, including in the Abbasid state. The position of grand vizier was established with the reign of Orkhan, when he appointed his brother Alaeddin as grand vizier to look into internal issues. In the second half of the Ottoman Empire, the power of the grand vizier increased as the state's affairs came to rest on his shoulders.

We also conclude that the lives of the Sheikh al-Islam and the Sadr al-Azam as a career were in danger, on the one hand their power in the state due to the Sultan's eye and on the other hand those who fell victim to palace intrigues. In addition, the gradation of the Sadr al-Azam rulers from the family of al-Jandarli to competent slaves, and then to incompetent Sadr al-Azam, especially in the second half of the Ottoman Empire. In general, the Grand Vizier has powers and tasks limited by the “Nama Law” of Mehmet the Conqueror.

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