THE SULTAN AND THE SULTANATE:
ENVISIONING RULERSHIP IN THE AGE OF SÜLEYMĀN THE
LAWGIVER (1520-1566)

A thesis presented

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ABSTRACT

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The Sultan and the Sultanate: Envisioning Rulership in the Age of Süleyman the Lawgiver (1520-1566)

My thesis examines the formation of a uniquely Ottoman theory of rulership during the age of Suleiman the Lawgiver (1520-1566) through an extensive study of political treatises written in this period, most of which are in manuscript form and new to current scholarship. My thesis shows that a paradigmatic transformation took place in political reasoning that in turn led to a new mode of political writing and an extensive reshuffling of political ideals, visions, symbols, and theories in this period that had a lasting impact on the way the Ottoman ruling elite viewed their ruler, government, and society.

The conventional perception of rulership as a continuation of the historical caliphate with the claim of presenting the sultan as the universal head of the Muslim community lost its appeal. Instead, because of the permeation of Sufistic imageries into political theory, the caliphate was defined as a cosmic rank between Man and God, attained in the spiritual sphere. The pursuit of moralism and piety in rulership that dominated the previous political theory gave way to legalism that evaluated governance by the ruler’s observation of laws rather than his moral behavior. In this approach, the observance of customs, religious code, and sultanic laws became the touchstone for measuring the quality of government that was previously gauged on the basis of the sultan’s piety.
The focus of political analysis shifted from the personality of the ruler to the existing government, its institutions, and procedural practices. In contrast to previous conceptions that reigned supreme in political theory, in the new paradigm, the grand vizier replaced the sultan as the center of government. The sultan was then conceived to be a distant but a legitimating figure for the dynasty while the grand vizier was promoted to the position of actual ruler in the Ottoman state. Consequently, relatively divorced from the moralistic, idealistic, personality-oriented, and sultan-centric paradigm in political reasoning, this realist and empirical approach to the question of rulership promoted such ideas as ‘government by law’ and ‘institutional continuity of the state’ as primary objectives of rulership.
To the memory of my father

Yusuf Yılmaz (1930-2005)
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### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AÜ</td>
<td>Ankara Üniversitesi</td>
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<td>Belleten</td>
<td>Türk Tarih Kurumu Belleten</td>
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<td>BN</td>
<td>Bibliothèque Nationale</td>
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<td>d.</td>
<td>died</td>
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<tr>
<td>EI</td>
<td>Encyclopedia of Islam, first edition</td>
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<td>EI²</td>
<td>Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition</td>
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<tr>
<td>İA</td>
<td>Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı İslam Ansiklopedisi</td>
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<td>MS</td>
<td>Manuscript</td>
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<td>r.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tarih Dergisi</td>
<td>İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi</td>
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<tr>
<td>TDAY</td>
<td>Türk Dili Araştırmaları Yıllığı</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDVİA</td>
<td>Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSMK</td>
<td>Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi</td>
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<td>TTK</td>
<td>Türk Tarih Kurumu</td>
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the theory of rulership during the age of Süleyman the Lawgiver (r. 1520-1566) as displayed in the political corpus produced during this period. It focuses on three basic components of rulership: the sultanate, the sultan, and the vizier. This study does not aspire to be an exhaustive treatment of everything that may fall within the sphere of rulership. Nor does it aim to address all the major questions and issues of rulership and government that have been dealt with by scholars of Süleyman’s time or problematized in current scholarship. Although conceptions of rulership are analyzed from the broadest perspective relying on available primary sources and innovative approaches to intellectual history in modern historiography, this study does not aim to provide an encyclopedic account of what has been written on the subject by the Ottoman authors of the period under consideration. The central question of this work is how rulership was envisioned by the ruling elite of the Süleymanic age as propounded in political tracts written by Ottoman men of learning and statesmen. Among numerous potential topics offered by primary sources, notions of law, administrative conventions, principles of government, relations between the ruler and the ruled, and designs for an ideal society are included in the analysis insofar as they explain aspects of rulership.

In the age of Süleyman, while inheriting a diverse body of written, oral and institutional traditions of rulership and government, the incorporation of the Ottoman experience in governance into political reasoning in this period brought about an extensive reshuffling of ideals, visions, symbols, and theories pertaining to rulership and governance that had a lasting impact on the way the Ottoman ruling elite viewed their
ruler, government, and society. This paradigmatic watershed in the course of Ottoman political thought, a definitive development that appears to be no less important than any other aspect of the Süleymānic age in its originality and future effects, can be summarized in four points. First, the pursuit of moralism in government that dominated the previous political theory gave way to legalism that evaluated rulership by the sultan's observation of laws rather than his moral behavior. In this approach, the observance of customs and sultanic laws became the touchstone of measuring the quality of government that was previously gauged on the basis of the sultan’s piety.

Second, the conventional perception of rulership as a continuation of the historical caliphate with the claim of presenting the sultan as the universal head of the Muslim community lost its appeal. Instead, the caliphate was defined as a cosmic rank between Man and God, attained in the spiritual sphere, with implications of a more comprehensive authority over both temporal and spiritual realms of creation. This was the result of a fusion between esoteric teachings of sufism and the conventional conceptions of rulership expressed in mainstream political theories.

Third, the focus of political analysis shifted from the personality of ruler to the existing government and its institutions. From this perspective, institutional aspects of government and procedural practices mattered more than the personality of ruler or his direct control of day-to-day affairs of state. This development gradually led Ottoman authors to envision the state as the primary object of analysis and an entity separate from the household of the sultan or the dynasty.

Fourth, unlike previous conceptions that once reigned supreme in political theory, in the new paradigm, the grand vizier replaced the sultan as the center of government.
The sultan was then conceived to be a distant but a legitimating figure for the dynasty while the grand vizier was promoted to the position of actual ruler of the Ottoman state. This shift in perception was facilitated by the Ottoman experience in government that endowed the grand vizier with such powers as that made him the sole governor of the state. Consequently, in contrast to the moralistic, idealistic, personality-oriented and sultan-centric paradigm in political reasoning, this realist and empirical approach to the question of rulership promoted such ideas as ‘government by law’ and ‘institutional continuity of the state’ as primary objectives of rulership.

Examining the theory of rulership in the Süleymānic age may not require further justification than indicating that this study deals with the political thought of an era which commonly represents Ottoman civilization in modern textbooks. The age of Süleymān is by far the most extensively studied period in both academic as well as popular historiography because it is considered a pivotal era of Ottoman history. More biographies have been written on Süleymān than any other Ottoman sultan.¹ No other period of Ottoman history has attracted such a degree of curiosity. The achievements accomplished during his reign gained Süleymān the epithet ‘lawgiver’ (Kānūnī) in the memory of later Ottomans, an epithet that suffices to stimulate interest in the political thought of his time. Without delving into a philosophical discussion of what justifies calling a certain era an ‘age’ in Ottoman history, this study dubs the period under consideration the Süleymānic age simply because Süleymān was commonly perceived to

¹ During Süleymān’s own lifetime a number of works were written on different aspects of his reign or personality that bear his name in the title, usually called Süleymānmâme (the book of Süleymān). This interest continued among the Ottomans after his death with similar works, and in modern times through biographies and analytical works giving rise to an extensive body of scholarship and literature in diverse languages. İskender Pala, for example, recorded 23 works written in the Süleymānmâme genre, mostly in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. See İskender Pala, Divan Şii‘i Sözlüğü (Ankara: Akçağ, 1995), 492-494.
be an epoch-making sultan in both Ottoman historical memory as well as in modern historiography. ²

The Süleymānic age in this study does not refer only to the reign of Süleymān but to the period delimited by the enthronement of his father Selīm I in 918/1512 and the death of his son Selīm II in 984/1574. These exact dates do not sharply demarcate the intellectual history of the period under consideration but mainly delineate a time frame that roughly corresponds to the reigns of three consecutive rulers that defined a distinct phase in the history of Ottoman political thought. The intellectual landmarks of this period were İdrīs-i Bidlisī (d. 927/1520) who wrote his treatise on political philosophy, Qānūn-i Shāhshāhī in Persian, and Ʃınālīzāde ‘Alī (d. 980/1572), the author of a popular work of ethical philosophy in Turkish, Aḥlāk-‘ Alā‘ī. During this time, Ottoman intellectuals displayed a burgeoning interest in writing on various aspects of rulership and government, and this led to the emergence of a sizable corpus of political literature with an unprecedented variety and range of dissemination.

After a long tradition of political writings in the form of translations and reworkings of previous works, as well as a few original compositions since the rise of the Ottomans, Qānūn-i Shāhshāhī appeared to be the first major attempt at an elaborate theory of rulership at a time when the Ottomans had just conquered Syria and Egypt and were in need of a sophisticated formulation of rulership at a new level. Perceived by later generations as one of the major legacies of the Süleymānic age, despite the considerable debt it owes to previously formulated theories of ethics, Aḥlāk-‘ Alā‘ī was written with a

claim to surpass all other works on the same subject, and conceived to be an exposition of
Ottoman moral, social, and political ideals of the period. The period between Bidlisî and
Kınalızade was a flourishing era of intellectual vigor, creativity, and curiosity among
Ottoman men of learning.

What makes this extended period of almost three quarters of the sixteenth century
a Süleymânic age is that Süleymân’s mark was already present before his succession and
after his death. His forty-six year reign was almost three times longer than the reigns of
Selîm I and Selîm II combined. Neither Süleymân’s succession nor his death caused any
major disruption in administrative continuity. Although Süleymân was enthroned in
927/1520, his appearance on the Ottoman dynastic scene took place during the succession
struggle of his father Selîm I before 918/1512. By planning a crucial role in his father’s
takeover of the throne, Süleymân secured his own succession as the crown prince. When
he succeeded to the throne at the age of twenty-five upon the sudden death of his father,
he continued to rule along with the statesmen and ‘ulemâ promoted by Selîm I, most
notably Grand Vizier Pîrî Pâşâ (d. 939/1532), Şeyhüislâm Zenbîlî ‘Alî Cemâl Efendi
(d. 932/1525). When he died in 974/1566, Grand Vizier Sokollu Meşmed Pâşâ (d.
987/1579) and Şeyhüislâm Ebû’ssu‘ûd (d. 982/1574), two top figures of his later reign,
remained in office until Selîm II’s year of death 982/1574. Regardless of the boundaries
of Süleymân’s reign, the first three quarters of the sixteenth century could still be viewed
as a distinct period in Ottoman intellectual history marked by two generations of

3 Beyâni and Kâtîb Çelebi, for example, considered it a better book than those of Tüsi, Davvânî, and
Kâshîfî. See Beyâni, Tezkiretü’-Şuarâ, ed. İbrahim Kutluğ (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1997), 183;
Kâtîb Çelebi, Kasîf al-Zûmûn an Asâmî al-Kutub wa al-Funûn, ed. Şerafettin Yaltkaya and Rûfât Bilge
(Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1941-43), 1: 37; Aynî, an early twentieth century scholar of ethics and
philosophy, considered Kınalızade’s Aḥlâk-i ‘Alâ’î the greatest work of ethics written in the Ottoman
Empire, still unsurpassed by his time. See Mehmet Ali Aynî, Türk Ahlakçılılar (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 1993),
80-81.
influential men of learning, among whom were Kemälpaşazade (d. 940-41/1534), Çivizade Muhyiddin (d. 954/1547), and Birgiv Mehmed (d. 981/1573), whose influence on Ottoman thought was permanent.

It has been customary in modern scholarship to explain Ottoman state tradition and political ideals as primarily a synthesis of Turkic, Iranian, and Islamic models with some influences from the Byzantine and European experiences. This explanation still holds true insofar as the origins of Ottoman political thought are concerned but proves imperfect when applied to the whole corpus of political writings in the Süleymānic age. The Ottoman experience in government and the creativity of Ottoman authors are two missing components that needed to be added to this explanation.

In political thought, the age of Süleymān was characterized by three coeval developments that decisively affected the course of Ottoman intellectual history. First, because of geographical expansion and increasing contacts with the outside world, the spread of learning institutions and spiritual orders, the rise of new curiosities and interests sparked by social change, and necessities created by the expanding government apparatus, the Ottoman ruling elite developed an increasing awareness of non-Ottoman cultural repositories that made them more sensitive and inquisitive about available resources. The unification of the central lands of the Islamic world had by itself changed the Ottoman ruling elite from recipients of the cultural heritage of this region to its inheritors and protectors. Increased mobility of scholars and circulation of classical works opened new venues for Ottoman men of learning to get acquainted with political

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ideas that found expression before their time or outside their former cultural geography. For the first time in their history, Ottoman men of learning became fully exposed to the vast corpus of political writings produced before them or outside their former territory. Ottoman political thought in this period, both at the level of learning and of exposition, became fully integrated into diverse traditions of political writing formed in the Islamic world. Although there was no standard set of readings for training in political theory, and although not every author acquired a solid background on this subject, the Ottoman learning system and cultural centers provided ample opportunities for anyone who wished to further his knowledge in the field. A contemporary witness and the author of a political treatise, Taşköprizade, praised the reigning sultan Süleyman for his exceptional care for libraries. He observed that these libraries provided all kinds of books, religious or non religious (ṣāri‘a ghayr ṣāri‘a), in Arabic or Persian, to the extent that there was no book one could not find there.5

Second, issues and questions regarding contemporary rulership and political theory in general became an integral part of Ottoman public discourse in this period. Struggles for succession among princes, factional rivalries in government, voices of dissent in society, competition among social groups to gain the favor of the sultan or to influence his policies, and clashes with neighboring dynasties turned various political questions into public matters. Ottoman political writings before this period were dominated by translations of some of the well-known classics of political works in Arabic and Persian. While the translation activity continued with accelerating speed and diversified interests, Ottoman men of learning from different walks of life during the age

of Süleymân grew more confident and began to compose their own works on the subject. Accompanying this growing body of political literature was a body of official documents which came to be produced *en masse* and became increasingly freighted with political ideas. Law codes, sultanic decrees, inscriptions, correspondence with other states, legal opinions issued by the leading *ʻulemā* and official chronicles, in addition to the specific reasons for their compilation, served as media to express political views. Further, histories, poetical works, biographical dictionaries, and hagiographies were charged with contemporary ideals, interests, and sensibilities regarding rulership and government.

In the age of Süleymân, writing on rulership and government, once the preserve of a small group of leading men of learning and statesmen, became part of a public discourse where ordinary scribes, obscure mystics, low-ranking commanders in the provinces, and poets with no training in statecraft could write on political matters. Although most of the political corpus was still dedicated to the sultan or the grand vizier, they ceased to be the sole addressees of political writings. ʻUṣākprizade, in his encyclopedia of sciences, explained why ordinary people needed to learn about governance:

> The science of government (*ʻilm al-siyāsa*) is the knowledge of what state and government entail, the condition of dignitaries, the situation of subjects and the welfare of cities. This is a science which rulers need first, and then other people. Because man is by nature social. A person is required to reside in a virtuous city and migrate from an unvirtuous one, and to know how the residents of the virtuous city could benefit from him and how he could benefit from them.\(^6\)

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\(^6\) ʻUṣākprizade, *Miftaḥ al-Saʿāda*, 1: 408.
Third, the broadening acquaintance of learned men with the extensive corpus of Islamic political literature and the rising exotericism in expressing views on matters of government coincided with the rise of Ottoman identity in political theory. This development turned political thought into a public discourse which had been the reserve of elite scholars. Writing within the confines of conventional genres, scholars such as Қıңалыздә and ԅәләзәдә, despite their unflinching conviction about the greatness of the Ottoman state and society, were still reserved in incorporating the Ottoman experience into political theory. These conventional genres that took form in non-Ottoman cultural and political contexts were characterized by peculiar issues, questions, and terminology, and did not offer particularly suitable opportunities to express political views with specific relevance to the realities of the Süleymanic age.

In the face of such inherent constrictions, the rising Ottoman consciousness that introduced the Ottoman experience into political theory brought about the genesis of a completely new type of political writing of which the epitome was Lütfi Paşā’s Āṣafnāme. Despite its innovative approach to the question of governance Āṣafnāme owed as much to pre-Ottoman traditions of political writing as to the genius of its author and the unique Ottoman experience in government. Writing around the same time, the anonymous author of Meşālihü ’l-Müslimīn achieved a complete break with traditional forms of political writing and conventional ideas by dissociating political theory from the ruler and his morality and replacing them with state and law as primary objects of

7 The work appeared in many scholarly and popular editions. The most useful two editions are Rudolf Tschudi, Das Аṣafnāme des Lütfi Pascha (Leipzig: Druck von W. Drugulin, 1910), and Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, “Lütfi Paşâ Āṣafnāmesi,” in Prof. Dr. Bekir Kütükoğlu'na Armağan, ed. M. S. Kütükoğlu (İstanbul; İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Araştırma Merkezi, 1991), 49-99.
political reasoning. This new breed of works that increasingly dominated the crowded scene of Ottoman political discourse from the mid-sixteenth century onwards was marked by a focus on contemporary issues of Ottoman rulership and government. Authors who wrote in this vein were mostly statesmen or officials who employed an empirical method of analysis, a critical perspective from their observations, and a terminological framework drawn from the current administrative language.

Among the variety of sources consulted, the backbone of this study is formed by the analysis of texts exclusively written on any aspect of rulership and government, or those containing substantial sections on the subject. Translations, chronicles, poetry, literature, juristic, and theological works, as well as archival documents are studied insofar as they are available in published forms. Political texts written during the age of Süleyman that are used in this study roughly corresponds to what has been known as the siyāsetnāme literature in modern scholarship. This appellation largely originates from the Ottoman experience of political writing itself, for numerous works which are related to some aspect of rulership, regardless of their original titles, are simply dubbed siyāsetnāmes by copyists. Dede Cöngi’s treatise on criminal law, for example, was better known as siyāsetnāme than as al-Siyāsa al-Shar‘iyya, its original title. The term siyāsetnāmes, in this study, simply refers to a diverse the body of texts related to any

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aspect of rulership, written in a variety of disciplines and genres.

In most taxonomic depictions, however, a vastly variegated corpus of Ottoman political literature is commonly classified under a single category of the *siyāsetnāme* genre as a continuation of the chiefly Persian tradition of mirrors for princes.\(^{10}\) The Seljuk vizier Niżām al-Mulk’s *Siyar al-Mulūk* is commonly cited as the archetypical model of this form of political writing, despite the fact that the work did not seem to have any notable impact on Ottoman political writings and remained untranslated during the period under consideration.\(^{11}\) According to mainstream conviction, a standard feature of the works in this genre is that they are mainly manuals of rulership with a focus on administrative practices and just government, consisting of counsels illustrated by exemplary stories, aphorisms, and other literary devices. This consideration led to a widely-shared assumption that there is a great deal of continuity in form and content between the Persian mirrors for princes genre and Ottoman treatises on government. Further complicating the issue was the tendency in modern scholarship to categorize works simply by reference to what their titles connote.\(^{12}\) This modern confusion was largely the result of equating the whole body of works that were known as *siyāsetnāmes* or bear titles suggestive of works of advice with the genre of mirrors of princes, or *Fürstenspiegel*, as they came to be known in European literature.

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\(^{10}\) See, for example, Ahmet Uğur, *Osmanlı Siyāset-nāmeleri* (Kayseri: Kültür ve Sanat Yayınları, 1987), 13-17.

\(^{11}\) The fame of this work is largely a modern construction. Despite being one of the most sophisticated and original compositions in the history of Islamic political theory, it faced a dull reception among the Ottoman men of learning. Although there are sporadic references to Niżām al-Mulk’s teachings, there are only three known manuscript copies of his *Siyāsetnāma* in Istanbul libraries. For a description of these copies see İbrahim Kafesoglu, “Büyük Selçuklu Vezirı Nizāmü’l-Mülk’ün Eseri Siyāsetnāme ve Türkçe Tercümesi,” *Türkiyey Mecmuası* 12 (1955): 231-56.
However, a close examination of the Ottoman political corpus does not confirm any of these established views. First of all, the so called ‘siyāsetnāme genre’ is not uniform in content, format, or message. There is a great deal of variety among such works which include works written from juristic, administrative, philosophical, Sufistic, and literary perspectives. There is hardly any common feature among these diverse works except for their being relevance to rulership. Secondly, even when the broadest definition of the genre is accepted that still leaves out the bulk of Ottoman political writings of the age of Süleymān. Works such as Dede Cöngi’s al-Siyāsa al-Shar‘iyya, for example, a juristic exposition of government, were not written as ‘advice books’ and do not contain literary devices in formulating their views. This siyāsetnāme-centric perspective that tends to bundle together a variety of works with different formats and content veils the genuine features and messages the works might offer.

The scope of this study is limited to the Ottoman authors who wrote on political theory during the Süleymānic age, those who either dedicated their works to the sultan or lived in the core provinces of Asia Minor and the Balkans, excluding other parts of the Empire. Many authors who wrote on the subject from the Arab provinces such as al-Ḥamawī (d. 936/1529) are excluded from the study. Ottoman authors, intellectuals, scholars, literati, and a variety of other designations that are constructed with the adjective ‘Ottoman’ refer to a cultural identity and perception, not an ethnic, political, or geographical one. The only criterion observed in selecting authors and texts to be

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12 Bosworth, for example, considered Faḍl Allāh Ruzbihān’s Sulūk al-Mulūk, a mirror of princes, thought it is in fact a juristic work on rulership and law. See C. E. Bosworth, “Naṣḥat al-Mulūk”, *EI*.  
analyzed in this study is the one established by the Ottomans themselves. A flurry of conquests in the East and the South turned a large number of learned men living in these regions into Ottoman subjects within a generation or two. But the self-perception and cultural identity of the Ottoman literati did not extend to include every subject of the Ottoman sultan, especially those who fell under Ottoman authority in Arabic-speaking lands. Ancient centers of culture and learning, these regions already had flourishing learning and civic institutions which preserved their autonomy after the conquest. Numerous medreses in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt were not integrated into the central and hierarchical Ottoman system of learning. Although an increasing number of Arabic speaking scholars and bureaucrats entered into service in various branches of the ruling establishment only few of them were included in biographical dictionaries composed by Ottoman scholars who were mostly located at the capital and were closely affiliated with central government.

The adjective ‘Ottoman’, in a broad sense, consisted of two major cultural zones of Arabic and Turkish. In a narrower sense, it referred to ehl-i Rūm, namely, the people living in Asia Minor and the Balkans, whose primary medium of communication was Turkish. Biographical dictionaries written in this period, most notably those of Taşköprizade, Sehī, Latīfī, and ‘Āşık Çelebi, included in their works scholars, Sufi sheikhs, and poets who were deemed to be Ottoman, or ehl-i Rūm, excluding their counterparts outside Asia Minor and the Balkans. Nonetheless, what they considered to be Ottoman was not based on a strict definition; they almost exclusively included learned people who lived in Asia Minor and the Balkans. They were mostly graduates of Ottoman learning institutions even if they lived in Arabic or Eastern provinces, or
immigrants who entered the service of the central government.

Despite the frequent proclamation of well-entrenched convictions and explanations regarding the theory of Ottoman rulership in modern historiography, writing the history of political thought in this period is still a fledgling enterprise, in dire need of in-depth studies on authors, texts, and ideas. Among the handful of historians who have probed political thought in the Süleymānic age, Inalcik stands out as the author of the first ground-breaking articles that immensely influenced the course of later studies on the subject.\textsuperscript{14} With evidence drawn from the governmental practice of the period as well as political texts, Inalcik portrayed Süleymān as the apex of the Ottoman sultanate whose achetypical image was created by Meḥmed II.\textsuperscript{15} Concepts of justice, modes of succession, ideas of law, origins of state tradition, and patrimonialism were among the major topics addressed by Inalcik. Guided by the quest for laying down the principles of Ottoman state tradition, and imperial ideology, Inalcik depended more on archival material than literary texts and weighed the role of Turco-Persian influences over other traditions in the formation of Ottoman political ideals.

By contrast, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak weighed the Islamic tradition more than others in his construction of the ruling ideology of the Ottoman Empire and its binary opposition expressed by heterodox subjects of the sultan.\textsuperscript{16} According to Ocak, with the exception


of Sufistic texts, the Ottoman literary corpus on rulership and government was nothing but a repetitive continuation of the Islamic tradition of political writings that produced its classical expositions in Persian and Arabic. While the official ideology of the ruling elite was constructed on the basis of theological precepts, the ideologies of dissent were formed by various interpretations of a pantheistic world view that prevailed in heterodox Sufism, in addition to being influenced by non-Islamic beliefs, traditions and mythologies current among the subjects. Ocak studied the heterodox movements and their political ideologies within a diachronic context of Islamic and Turkish history, demonstrating their intellectual and social origins as well as emphasizing certain cultural continuities that shaped the religious and political life of sixteenth-century Ottoman society. Along with Barbara Flemming, Inalcik, and Fleischer, Ocak laid the foundation for a new field of inquiry in Ottoman studies that focused on the non-mainstream elements of Ottoman culture.

Unlike Inalcik and Ocak, who occasionally dealt with the political thought of this period, Cornell Fleischer devoted most of his studies to the analysis of political ideas in the sixteenth century. Except for his biography of Muṣṭafā ‘Ālī that mostly related to the

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post-Süleymānic era, with a focus on unorthodox political ideas, ideologies, imageries, motifs, prophesies, and beliefs, he examined millenarian, apocalyptic, and eschatological views that came into circulation in and around the Ottoman court during the reign of Süleyman. As one might expect, this quest led him to an in-depth analysis of the occultistic and mantic literature of the period, a body of literature that had barely been touched upon for any purpose in Ottoman historiography. His examination of these texts brought to light previously neglected aspects of Ottoman political thought and revealed that around the middle of the sixteenth century, or only decades before the end of the first millennium according to the Islamic calendar, a new ideology of rulership centering on the personality of Süleyman was in the making, depicting him as the Last World Emperor, Saint of Saints, and Messiah.\(^{20}\) Fleischer studied this phenomenon from a broad historical perspective and concluded that the prevalence of apocalyptic, millenarian, and eschatological ideas about the perceptions of rulership was part of a wider wave of development from the Christian Mediterranean to Shiite Persia and beyond.\(^{21}\)

While Fleischer investigated the unconventional messianic turn in ruling ideology, Colin Imber inquired into how the mainstream juristic theory of government affected the formulations of ideology during the reign of Süleyman. His study of the most renowned of all Ottoman Şeyḥülislams, Ebū’ssuʿūd, is among the few monographs


that examine the theological, legal, or political views of an Ottoman jurist. In his portrayal, Ebû’ssu‘ûd appears to be a scholar of extraordinary achievements who managed to reconcile classical juristic theories with secular practices of the Ottoman state and formulate a workable solution for the endemic shortcomings of legitimacy for Ottoman rulership. According to Imber, while the Ḥanafī juristic theory enjoyed canonical status in the Ottoman legal establishment, it fell short of providing all the legitimating mechanisms for Ottoman governmental practices or dynastic claims. Ebû’ssu‘ûd removed this discrepancy by reinterpreting Ḥanafī law and providing juristic sanctions for Ottoman law, government practice, and imperial ideology.22 Although he did not write any specific work on political thought, numerous legal opinions on a variety of questions he issued as well as law codes and inscriptions he crafted for the sultan led to the formation of a ruling ideology that originated from the practical needs and objectives of the Ottoman dynasty but took its legitimacy from sharī‘a law.

Identifying theories of rulership in the Süleymānic age and examining their contextual meanings is possible only by gaining access to the world in which the authors under consideration expressed their views. Although the dissertation focuses on a very specific theme, in order to provide a more comprehensive treatment of the subject, I pursued three main objectives in examining the political corpus of this period. First, a topographic map of the political discourse in this period is constructed. Authors who wrote on subjects related to rulership in this period are identified, and their lives, motives, objectives, and influence are examined. Languages of political expression, modes of

thinking, major traditions of writing, and characteristics of particular disciplines and
genres are pointed out when necessary. Second, concepts, ideas, and theories as well as
prevailing beliefs, principles, ideals, and motifs related to aspects of rulership are
examined with regards to their contextual meanings and significance. Major questions,
issues, and debates that shaped the political discourse of the time are taken into
consideration. Finally, significant developments in the political thought of this period are
situated within the broader context of the history of political thought in the Middle East.
I also explained, when it is relevant to my analysis, how Ottoman authors engaged with
non-Ottoman political traditions and what was genuinely Ottoman in the political
writings of this period.

This thesis examines the subject in four chapters, on political discourse, the
sultanate, the sultan, and the vizier, respectively. The first chapter introduces the political
literature in which ideas about rulership were propounded and examines the
characteristics of a vibrant political discourse that problematized diverse aspects of
rulership in this period. It identifies contextual factors that led to an unprecedented surge
in political writing during the Süleymanic age and their effects on authors, texts, theories,
and audiences. It lays out the foundations and development of Ottoman political thought
and sixteenth-century articulations on governance by examining genuine compositions
written by Ottoman authors as well as Turkish translations of non-Ottoman political
works that came out between the inception of the Ottoman state and the end of the
Süleymanic age. The chapter then analyzes in detail juristic, Sufistic, philosophical and
administrative texts, showing their peculiarities and significance, and describing the
background and motives of their authors, as well as their impacts on their audiences.
The remaining three chapters of the thesis analyze the three major components of rulership as reflected in the political writings of Ottoman authors. These three components formed the backbone of most Ottoman writings on governance and almost no political author envisioned a political authority without first perceiving it as a sultanate comprised of a sultan and a vizier. Focusing on concepts of the sultanate and the caliphate, the chapter thus explores how the Ottoman ruling elite of this period conceived of political authority and what types of political authority were envisioned. It focuses on perceptions and definitions of political authority and its relation to the ruled. It analyzes the depiction of God’s government as the primary model of rulership and the status of political authority among mankind, the concept of Prophethood as the human imitation of divine government and a binding model for rulership conceived as the caliphate, and the division of rulership into two levels, spiritual and material, the former superior to the latter. It also deals with the ideal of combining the two as perfection in rulership.

After discussing conceptions of political authority, the third chapter delves into imageries and perceptions of the ruler, the primary component of the sultanate who was entitled to the status of rulership among mankind. It examines theories that explain the acquisition of rulership on the basis of God’s grace, personal merit, and subjugation, the relationship between man’s nature and rulership, and portrayals of the ideal ruler. It also analyzes the moral theory of rulership that sought the quality of rulership in moral perfection, and views that depict a uniquely Ottoman ruler.
The final chapter examines the second leg of the sultanate, with particular emphasis on the unique features of the Ottoman grand vizierate that made a substantial impact on political authors in developing their ideas on the function of the vizierate in a sultanate. It deals with theories of the vizierate, historical models, semantic explanations of the term “vizier”, the status of the grand vizier in a sultanate, his position in government relative to the sultan, his relationship with the sultan, and the perils he encountered. It also explores different visions of the vizierate and the emergence of an Ottoman theory of the vizierate and its functions in government, as well as the implications of this new concept of viziership for Ottoman political thought.
CHAPTER ONE

THE OTTOMAN DISCOURSE ON RULERSHIP: AUTHORS, TEXTS, AND ISSUES

In the history of Ottoman political thought, the age of Süleymān was characterized by an unprecedented upsurge of interest among intellectuals in writing on government and rulership. About thirty texts on various aspects of rulership were written in these sixty some years, more than the total number of political works composed in the preceding two centuries since the rise of the Ottomans. The same is true for the number of translations and reworkings of non-Ottoman political texts by Ottoman intellectuals of the period. A diverse body of political literature, written in different languages and genres, was produced by an equally diverse group of authors from various backgrounds who belonged to different segments of society, including statesmen, jurists, and Sufis. Accompanying this broad-based writing activity was an increase in the readership of political texts. Although for various reasons, the majority of political writings remained known by only a few, certain works such as those of Lütfi Paša, Dede Cöngi, and ڭинализادة reached a wide circulation by the standards of the period.

An in-depth analysis of sixteenth century political thought necessitates its contextualization within a broad historical perspective in order to explore the origins of particular ideas and interactions among different strands of political writings, to identify historical factors that influenced political authors, and to differentiate between what was inherited and what was genuinely created during this period under consideration. With
these objectives in mind, this chapter analyzes the field of political thought during the age of Süleymān as well as its historical background in three areas. First, I portray the formation of Ottoman political thought during the first two centuries of the empire, including translations and genuine compositions that served as the most accessible capital for authors who wrote on the subject during this period. Second, I analyze the intensive translation activity that took place in the age of Süleymān, an activity that conveyed many classics of Islamic political writing as well some obscure works into the Ottoman context, and one which greatly contributed to the education of Ottoman statesmen and men of learning on the subject. Third, I examine political discourse in the age of Süleymān along with cultural, political, and social factors that sparked new curiosities about, and interests in, writing and reading about government.

The Formative Period of Ottoman Political Thought Before The Sixteenth Century

A definitive date for the beginning of Ottoman literature on political thought cannot be established with certainty. If western Asia Minor is taken as the broader cultural context of the early Ottoman state, then it was born into one of the most vibrant and versatile cultural centers in the Islamic world. The political origins of the Ottoman Empire remain somewhat shrouded in mystery and the beginnings of its cultural history are elusive. Its boundaries with neighboring regions were transparent. Because of high social mobility, indefinite political identities or affiliations, frequently shifting frontiers, and nascent institutions of learning, it is hard to distinguish Ottoman men of learning from others living in the region. Translations excluded, there is no known text that can
safely be included in Ottoman political literature of the fourteenth century. Because of the special circumstances of their frontier principality, Ottoman statesmen of this period seem to have shown less interest in sophisticated political theories which had been formulated in well-developed polities. What was in high demand in such a frontier society were epics, and they dominated early Ottoman literature at least until the fall of Constantinople.¹ Many of these epic stories also included political lessons illustrated in the lives of heroes, an entertaining way of educating about rulership that early Ottoman rulers might have found more appealing. If they showed any interest in the subject, the statesmen and learned men of the early Ottoman society seem to have relied on political texts written elsewhere. Whether by coincidence or as a result of the catastrophic consequences of the Ottoman-Timurid war of 1402, the first exclusive and sophisticated works on rulership appeared in the first decades of the fifteenth century. By then, the Ottoman government, military, and learning were becoming visibly institutionalized, a situation that required a more sophisticated education on government.

i. Amāsī and his Mirror for Kings

There is no known work on rulership composed by an Ottoman author during the first century of the Ottoman State. The first notable attempts to compose works exclusively concerned with rulership and government began in the early fifteenth century. Among those, Aḥmed b. Ḥüsāmeddīn el-Amāsī’s Mirʾātī‘l-Mālīḵ (Mirror for Kings) might cautiously be considered the first genuine work of political thought by an Ottoman

¹ For a well-known example of this literature that brought together history, mythology and wisdom see Aḥmedī, Iskender-Nāme, ed. Ismail Ünver (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1983).
author. Written as a mirror for princes, *Mir’ātū’l-Mūlūk* provides an illustrative case for analyzing the development of early Ottoman political writing. The author dedicated the work to Meḥmed I (r. 1413-1421) in 1406, who consolidated his rule after more than a decade of civil war (1402-1411), better known as an interregnum (*fetret devri*), following Bāyezid I’s defeat in the battle of Ankara. As suggested by his toponym, Ahmed b. Ḥūsāmeddīn was from Amasya and was born to a well-established local family, the Gūṃūṣlūzādēs, a family that raised scholars, Sufis, and statesmen. There is very little information about the author, and the extant two copies of *Mir’ātū’l-Mūlūk* suggest that the work did not reach a wide audience.

In the course of Ottoman political writing, *Mir’ātū’l-Mūlūk* established a pattern which continued in later centuries. In this pattern, authors expressed their views on rulership by appropriating the content of Arabic and Persian political works for their own texts through selective translations or quotes with modifications or additions. In composing these types of texts, authors usually chose well-known texts and limited their discretion to making selections and organizing them in a format suitable for conveying a particular message. Ebū’l-Fażl Mūnšī’s *Dustūr al-Salṭanat*, which was based on Najm al-Dīn Rāzī’s *Mīrṣād al-‘Ibād*, and Kemāl b. Ḥācī ‘Īlyās’ *Ādāb al-Mūlūk*, a work drawn

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2 I thank Halil İnalcık for bringing this work to my attention in 1995 and providing me with his own microform copy from his personal library now preserved at Bilkent University.


5 Şakir Yılmaz, “Political Thought in the Beginning of the Ottoman Empire,” 1-3.
from Ghazālī’s *Naṣṭḥa al-Mulūk*, were two sixteenth-century examples of this pattern.\(^6\) In this way -and beyond the spread of originals and their translations- contents of non-Ottoman classics of political theory found an additional channel of circulation which extended their reach in Ottoman society.

*Mir‘ātū ’l-Mulūk* consists of two parts. The first part derives its material from the thirteenth-century philosopher Nāṣīr al-Dīn Țūsī’s (d. 672/1274) celebrated work of practical philosophy (*ṭīkmat-i ’amalī*) called *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*.\(^7\) The second part is mostly taken from Ghazālī’s (d. 447/1055) *Naṣīha al-Mulūk*, the most widely circulated work of the mirror of princes genre in the Islamic world.\(^8\) Amāsī did not make any reference to these works or their authors, and simply presented himself as the author.\(^9\) He combined the content of these two works by selective translations adding few modifications of his own. It seems unlikely that he could appropriate the content of two well-known works in their respective fields of ethical and political thought without this being noticed by his contemporaries. It is quite possible, however, that by the conventions of the time, both author and audience considered the work a genuine compilation.

Regarding translations and appropriations from Arabic and Persian, throughout the history of Ottoman political thought, more works with entertaining features and

\[^6\] Ebū’l-Faṣḵ el-Mūnṣi el-Ṣirāzī, *Dustūr al-Saltana*, MS Bibliothèque Nationale Persan 135; Kemāl b. Ḥacī ʿIlīyās, ʿĀdāb al-Mulūk, MS, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 2841/1.


simple literary styles were conveyed into Turkish than works with philosophical content or complex technical language. The outcome was an abundance of mirror for princes literature and a scarcity of philosophical and juridical works dealing with politics. Thus, while works such as Qībūsnāma of Kaykā’ūs (d. after 475/1082-3) were translated many times, works such as al-ʿAḥkām al-Ṣulṭāniyya of Māwardī (d. 450/1058) remained untranslated and rarely referred to. Considering the two sources of Amāsī, while there is no known translation of Akhlāq-i Nāšīrī, there were at least five different translations of Naṣīḥa al-Mulūk by the end of the sixteenth century. While Amāsī followed an exceptional path by partially translating Akhlāq-i Nāšīrī, he also put his work into the mainstream by combining it with Naṣīḥa al-Mulūk.

The language used in the two parts of the work differs significantly: in the first part, it is more philosophical and the terminology more scholarly; in the second part, the content is more literary whereas the terminology is closer to the Ottoman usage of Amāsī’s time. Political terms such as raʾiyet (subjects), pādişāh (ruler), and ṣulṭān (oppression), which are widely used in the second part, are rarely used in the first part where more generic words such as abnāʾ-i jins, malik, and jawr are used instead. Unless writing for a wider audience, Ottoman authors used little discretion in translating the terminological framework of works composed in traditional Islamic disciplines, grammar, and philosophy. The use of such an elevated language by Amāsī indicates that he wrote the work for a learned audience rather than the general populace. In this regard, Amāsī’s compilation of a mirror of princes in the Turkish language using selections from two classical works offered the Turkish reader a new work on the ethics of rulership within a sound conceptual framework that employed a sophisticated language. By the
standards of the early fifteenth century, Amāsī’s Turkish represented an exceptionally elevated language which would easily appeal to the literary taste of sixteenth century readers as well.

In his selections for the compilation of *Mirʾātū l-Mūlūk*, Amāsī included chapters that have more practical relevance for the ruler. He made use of only three of the eight chapters of *Akhlāq-i Nāshīrī*: on the need for civilization, the government of the king and the government of servants, and the manners of following kings. These subjects were commonly dealt with in the mirror for princes literature and largely linked to the relations between rulers and their subjects. Those chapters Amāsī did not include were on love, divisions of societies, fidelity, and friendship, topics that are more social than political in nature. While the integrated chapters deal with a vertical relationship between the ruler and the ruled, the omitted chapters basically deal with a horizontal relationship among groups or individuals in society. By his selective appropriations from *Akhlāq-i Nāshīrī* Amāsī thus created an exclusive treatise on rulership from a general theory of ethics.

Amāsī undertook the same approach in deriving his material from Ghazālī’s *Naṣīḥa al-Mulūk*. He made Ghazālī’s already practical book of mirrors more relevant to actual situations by excluding its theoretical part that dealt with principles of creed. The first half of *Naṣīḥa al-Mulūk*’s long introduction, metaphorically entitled ‘the roots of faith,’ explained God’s attributes. By contrast, a mid-sixteenth century translator of *Naṣīḥa al-Mulūk*, ‘Alāyī, wrote an extensive commentary on the theoretical part of the work while simply translating the second part that used literary devices to educate the

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10 Translations of chapter headings were taken from Ṭūsī’s *Akhlāq-i Nāṣīn*.
ruler on statecraft. Writing during the height of the Ottoman-Safavid feud with its flaring theological disputes, ‘Alāyī was more concerned with the creed of the ruler than with his education on statecraft. Amāsī, however, writing at a time when the Ottoman state was just consolidating after a long civil war, was more interested in the principles of rulership. In appropriating the second part of Naṣīḥa al-Mulūk, Amāsī was content with selecting stories and leaving out the moral lessons and explanations given by Ghazālī. He put the ruler in a more central position than he occupied in the original work by excluding stories and explanations which dealt only indirectly with rulership. The overall idea of this part of the work was to exhort the ruler to do justice and warn him against committing injustice. By incorporating into his treatise Naṣīḥa al-Mulūk, a work which educates the reader through stories and aphorisms, Amāsī made Mirʿātūʾ-ʾl-Mūlūk more entertaining and easier to read.

When molded into Mirʿātūʾ-ʾl-Mūlūk, the philosophical content of Akhlāq-i Naṣirī and the theological content of Naṣīḥa al-Mulūk received less emphasis. Philosophical abstractions and theological formulations regarding government that had little relevance to early-fifteenth century Ottoman rulership were left out. A chapter of Akhlāq-i Naṣirī, for example, which discusses characteristics of various types of associations and rulers, is not included. Likewise, from Ṭūṣī’s lengthy discussion of four different types of government only government by a king is included in Mirʿātūʾ-ʾl-Mūlūk. Among the readers of Akhlāq-i Naṣirī, Amāsī is not the only one who disregarded these two chapters which displayed one of the most genuine discussions about alternative forms of political

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associations in Islamic political thought. More influential figures such as Davvānī (d. 908/1502-3), Kāshifī (d. 910/1504-5), and Kınalızade (d. 980/1572), who wrote ethical works that also relied heavily on Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī, likewise omitted these topics. They seem to have shared Amāsī’s objective of turning the general theory of ethics composed by Tūsī into a practical handbook of morality for rulership by focusing only on righteous political association and behavior, leaving out the philosophical discussion of alternative systems. While philosophy and religion still served as two main sources for political ideas in the first and second parts of Mir’ātü’l-Mülūk respectively, Amāsī opted to exclude abstractions in both cases in order to make his book more useful for the needs of the sultan facing contemporary realities and current necessities, as well as to make it more appealing to read and easier to understand.

In composing the work, Amāsī arrived at an eclectic presentation of selections from his sources rather than a syncretic reformulation. In Mir’ātü’l-Mülūk, one can still find the ethical philosophy of Tūsī, and the religious counsels of Ghazālī as well as historical anecdotes and aphorisms from sages; however, they are not molded into a synthesis. Making few modifications, Amāsī concisely presented the distinct ethical and religious content of both works. Through such a combination he put philosophy, religion, and history side by side and presented the result as a mirror for princes. In this way, while he introduced philosophical content into this genre, he also made ethical philosophy more comprehensible by relating it to history, and more binding by grounding it in religion.

Considering the sequence of the two parts of Mir’ātü’l-Mülūk, the theoretical weight of the work lies in the first part which is taken from Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī. In this
format, which is widely used in Islamic wisdom literature and later Ottoman political writings, the first part serves as a philosophical introduction to the second part which consists of real stories taken from history. That is to say, in the first part, the author outlines the governing principles of human nature and social life, while in the second part, he presents actual historical events through which these laws can be observed and lessons drawn. With few exceptions, all the themes in the second part of the book have their theoretical counterparts in the first part. Almost all major topics in the political sections of the first part such as justice, fiscal administration, and punishment of criminals, are illustrated in the second part. While the first part establishes the principles of politics, the second part presents them in the form of advice along with stories and aphorisms.

Amāsī’s presentation of the same views from different perspectives in the two parts serves to strengthen the messages he intended to convey in his treatise. In the first part, he explained rulership as a natural outcome of an inherent human need for association, and justice as maintaining equity in society. In the second part, however, he portrayed rulership as a grace (ni‘met) from God and justice as a return of that grace. Well-entrenched in diverse strands of Islamic political literature, these two ideas, the inherent human need for political authority and the attainment of rulership as grace from God, became staples of sixteenth century political thought during the age of Süleymān.

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14 Amāsī, Mir‘āt‘u‘l-Müllūk, 52a-55b.

15 Amāsī, Mir‘āt‘u‘l-Müllūk, 66b-68b.
Thus in the first part of the work, he established the relationship between the ruler, and, in the second, the ruler’s relationship to God. The overall profile he presented of a just ruler was one who applied justice as a requirement for maintaining order and at the same time rendered justice as a religious duty. He then illustrated these principles with historical stories and anecdotes. In this way, political ideas in *Mir‘ätü ’l-Mülük* became philosophically defined, religiously sanctioned, and historically proven.

There is very little teaching in *Mir‘ätü ’l-Mülük* on institutional aspects of government. It is certainly not a handbook of government that explains administrative structures and practices. Instead, it focused more on the cultivation of a just ruler than on designing a just government. Amāsī stressed principles of personal perfection more than the rules of governmental efficiency. Thus, the personality of the ruler and his actions rather than administrative structures occupied the central place in the book. Amāsī set the conditions for just rulership as moral integrity in the first part with a focus on virtues (*feżāyil*) and as piety in the second which highlighted good deeds (*‘amel-i şāliḥ*). In both parts, however, intellect (*‘aḵal*) is given a superior status compared to all other personal traits and disciplines of training. As one anecdote clearly illustrates, one of the main messages of the *Mir‘ätü ’l-Mülük* was that the attainment of moral perfection, religious salvation, and political justice were all dependent on the ruler’s intellectual capabilities: “It is narrated that an angel came to a certain prophet and asked him to choose one among intellect (*‘aḵal*), religion (*dīn*) and knowledge (*‘ilim*) which the angel brought; the prophet chose intellect; the angel told knowledge and religion to leave; they replied; “we cannot be separated from intellect.”

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Amāsī composed *Mirʿātūʾl-Mūlūk* by completely relying on two of the most celebrated works of ethical philosophy and mirror for princes literature because he recognized these works as authoritative texts in their respective fields and considered their teachings universally applicable with little modification. Further, he fully endorsed Ghazālī’s and Tūsī’s teachings to the extent that he conveyed their views as his own. Whether or not he perceived the Ottoman case as different from that of past governments, his objective was guiding the Ottoman sultan with the teachings of Tūsī and Ghazālī. He focused on the fundamentals of human character and just political order rather than on dynastic peculiarities and specific structures of government. Such a perception emphasized continuities between previous experiences in government and the Ottoman experience by highlighting certain perennial principals of just rulership.

Although *Mirʿātūʾl-Mūlūk* did not seem to have any major impact on the course of Ottoman political writing, the way Amāsī composed his treatise was widely shared by later generations of political authors. Many authors after him continued to compose political works by appropriating the content of some of the well-known classics of non-Ottoman political theory. In this way Ottoman authors extracted the teachings of past authorities on the subject and reintroduced them to their own context in a new format. Even though these works did not constitute much of a contribution to political theory in terms of genuine ideas or concepts, they served to disseminate certain political theories under different guises. Amāsī might have found the works of Tūsī and Ghazālī a source for conveying his own political views. But the overall political imagery and teaching created in *Mirʿātūʾl-Mūlūk* as well as the main message and objectives of its author were markedly different from what Tūsī and Ghazālī envisioned in their individual works.
Tūsī’s work was a comprehensive treatise on ethical philosophy while Ghazālī’s was a catechistic and pietistic manual for the ruler. As the title announces, Amāsī designed *Mirʿatīl-Mülük* as a mirror for princes with philosophical content but fully compatible with mainstream theology. Through the works of other authors who shared Amāsī’s approach, political views of non-Ottoman scholars, philosophers, and Sufis, such as Māwardī, Fārābī, and Ibn ‘Arabī, were introduced to the Ottoman audience under different names, even though their works remained untranslated into Turkish.

Among numerous ways of conveying the non-Ottoman heritage in political writing into the Ottoman context, composing new texts from well-known works through reworking and adaptation seems to have had the most direct influence on Ottoman political thought, more so than translations. In a translation, the translator, whether or not he/she fully embraces the ideas in a given work, informs the reader that these are not his ideas. In a reworking of previous texts, such as those by Şeyhoğlu, Celâzłâde, and Ebû’l-Fažl Münșî, whose works shall be discussed later in this chapter, the reader is not aware of the original source of the ideas unless he/she is well versed in political literature. Unlike translations, a reworking enables an author to establish a direct relationship with the reader instead of being an intermediary; the author has full control over the ideas he has appropriated from other sources. In this way political ideas that were born elsewhere in the past found fresh exposition in the Ottoman context, and became completely internalized, on a par with Ottoman tradition.
ii. Development of Ottoman Political Writing

Before the sixteenth century, a standard advice book for the ruler was Kaykā’ūs b. Iskandar’s Qābūsnāma. The book was translated into Turkish at least six times during the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries and, three of the translations were dedicated to Ottoman rulers or statesmen.\textsuperscript{17} Bedr-i Dilşad translated it in verse with the title Murādname (The Book of Murād) and dedicated it to Murād II in 831/1427, a work which did not reach a wide circulation.\textsuperscript{18} Mercüme Aḥmed’s translation, however, which was dedicated to Murād II as well, became the definitive Turkish rendition and was widely read throughout the Ottoman realm. Although the work continued to be read and quoted, the text was not subject to a new translation despite its plain Turkish of the 15th century that did not appeal to a sophisticated reader of later centuries.\textsuperscript{19}

Qābūsnāma was an ideal advice book for the rulers of the fledgling Ottoman state. Its author, Kaykā’ūs, was the ruler of a small dynasty that flourished in western Persian lands (Tabaristan and Gurgan) between c. 319/931 and 483/1090, the Ziyarids, surrounded by hostile neighbors, much like the early Ottomans.\textsuperscript{20} Kaykā’ūs wrote the work in 475/1082-3 for his son and intended successor Gīlān Shāh to educate him about


\textsuperscript{18} Âdem Ceyhan, Bedr-i Dilşad’ın Murād-Nāmesi, 2 vols. (İstanbul: MEB, 1997).

\textsuperscript{19} Nazmīzāde Murtaţā Efendi revised Merümek’s translation in 1117/1705 at the behest of Hasan Paşa, governor of Bagdad, and replaced its plain Turkish with a more literary one by current standards. See Rıza Kurtuluş, “Keykāvus b. İskender”, TDVİA.

\textsuperscript{20} C. E. Bosworth, “Key Kā’ūs b. Iskandar”, EI².
morality, government, courtship, and professions other than rulership, in case he failed to succeed. In that capacity, Qābūsnāma served as one of the principal mediums through which Perso-Islamic ideals of government and society passed into early Ottoman political culture. After the fall of Constantinople, as the Ottoman state evolved into an empire by a wave of institutionalization and expansion, its influence gradually attenuated and no Ottoman intellectual seems to have attempted an updated translation of Qābūsnāma perhaps because it failed to address the newly arising interests of the Ottoman ruling elite or the general populace.

Unlike Qābūsnāma, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī’s (d. 654/1256) Mirṣād al-ʿIbād, a comprehensive compendium of Sufism whose fifth part dealt with government, continued to influence Ottoman political thought for centuries. Rāzī composed the work in 620/1223 for the Seljuk ruler ʿAlāʾeddīn Keykubād while he was in Asia Minor, seeking safety during the Mongol onslaught. Rāzī was an initiate of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 617/1220), the founder of the Kubrawiyya order that flourished in Transaxonia, and Iran but did not take a firm hold in Ottoman lands. Although Rāzī left Anatolia disappointed, the teachings of the Kubrawiyya influenced all branches of Ottoman Sufism through his Mirṣād al-ʿIbād as well as his Quranic commentary.


22 Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, The Path of God’s Bondsmen, 10-12.

23 For more information on the spread and disappearance of the Kubrawiyya in the Ottoman Empire see Reşat Öngören, Osmanlılar’da Tasavvuf: Anadolu’da Sûfîler, Devlet ve Ulemâ (XVI. Yüzyıl) (Istanbul: İz Yayınları, 2000), 219-20.

As the fame of *Mirṣād al-‘Ibād* quickly spread from Cairo to China it was widely read by the Ottomans in its original Persian as well as Arabic and Turkish translations. Many of these copies consisted of only the fifth part of the work, circulating as a separate treatise on government. Ebū’l-Fażl Münşī, for example, dedicated this fifth part of *Mirṣād al-‘Ibād* to Süleymān as a separate book, with few changes and without mentioning the book that was its source. It was first rendered into Turkish by Şeyhoğlu in 803/1401 with the title *Kenzū’l-Küberā* and dedicated to an Ottoman statesman Pāşā Ağa. Much like Amāsī, Şeyhoğlu did not mention the source and presented himself as the author of the work. He included in his translation only the first four chapters of the fifth part, and turned it into more of a mirror for princes by adding lengthy poems of his own. A definitive Turkish translation of the work, however, was achieved by Kasım b. Maḥmūd el-Ḵarāhīsārī who dedicated the work to Murād II in 845/1441. This was a full translation of the work and was widely read throughout Ottoman history. Kasım Çelebi (d. 924/1518), a scholar and a mystic who succeeded Çelebi Ḥalīfē in the Ḥalvetī order, translated the work for Meḥmed II for which he received the sultan’s compliments. He

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27 The editor briefly discusses the possibility that the work could be a translation of *Mirṣād al-‘Ibād* and prefers to accept it as a genuine compilation. See Yavuz, Şeyhoğlu, 10-16. Hüseyin Ayan, who edited Şeyhoğlu’s *Ḫursīd-Nāmē*, compared *Mirṣād al-‘Ibād* and *Kenzū’l-Küberā*, and concluded that the latter is an expanded translation of the former. See Şeyhoğlu Mustafa, *Ḫursīd-nāmē (Ḫursīd ü Ferahsad)*, ed. Hüseyin Ayan (Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1979), 16-23.


was also Bâlî Efendi’s sheikh, a prominent figure in the mid-sixteenth century debate on cash foundations, who wrote a separate treatise on rulership and a commentary on Ibn ‘Arabî’s *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*.³⁰

In addition to *Mirṣād al-‘Ībâd*, Râzî wrote another work on Sufism called *Manārât al-Sā’irîn* in which he explained the stations and experiences of human beings in spiritual wayfaring.³¹ This is a text that gives one of the most extensive treatments of the Sufi concept of the caliphate, a concept that deeply affected sixteenth-century Ottoman political thought. While the work was well-received in the Ottoman world of learning in its Arabic original, a certain ‘Alî Şîblî al-Dûgehî translated it from Arabic into Persian for Bâyezîd II.³²

In the history of Ottoman political thought, if the first half of the fifteenth century was marked by translations and adoptions of non-Ottoman political literature, the second half witnessed the appearance of a series of treatises composed by Ottoman authors. Two leading scholars who wrote on rulership during the reign of Mehmâd II were Muşannifek and Kaﬁyeçî. Muşannifek (d. 875/1470) who was from Harat in Transaxonia was already a famed and prolific scholar before his move to Anatolia in 848/1444.³³ He wrote two works on government as a tribute to his new patrons, *Tuhfâ al-Salâfîn* in 856/1452

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³² Hamađânî, Nağm ad-Dîn Kûbrâ, Nağm ad-Dîn Dâja,” *Der Islam* 24 (1937): 1-42. Because Meir states that *Manârât* is an Arabic translation of *Mirṣâd*, Algar finds it strange that it was translated back into Persian. See Algar, *The Path of God’s Bondsmen*, 14-15. A textual comparison reveals that the two works are completely different.

for Meḥmed II and *al-Tuhfa-i Maḥmūdiyya* in 861/1456 for the Grand Vizier Maḥmūd Pāšā. Written in Persian, both works are largely on moral principles that the ruler and vizier should observe while in office.

Unlike Muṣannifek, Ḵāfiyecī (d. 879/1474) was born and trained in the Ottoman Empire but moved to Egypt where he became one of the most respected scholars of his time. With his lectures, works, and the students he trained, such as the famous Suyūṭī, Ḵāfiyecī deeply influenced both Mamluk and Ottoman learning. Among his many works on diverse fields, he wrote *Sayf al-Mulūk wa al-Ḥukkām* from a distinctly Ḥanafī perspective in order to educate both the ruler and the ruled on religious obligations to be observed in government.

A contemporary of Muṣannifek and Ḵāfiyecī was Sinān Pāšā (d. 891/1486), who wrote *Maʿārifnāme* (Book of Learning), also known as *Naṣīḥatnāme* or *Aḥlāknāme*, from a distinctly Sufi perspective. Coming from an established ‘ulemā family he received an exceptional training from a very early age and his questioning mind could hardly be curbed by his father, Ḥızir Beg, the first ḳādı of Istanbul after the conquest. Because of his excellence in learning, he was appointed as preceptor (*ḥāce-i sulṭānī*) to Meḥmed II and became a confidante of the sultan, a relation that led to his appointment to the rank of

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34 Kātīb Çelebi stated that Muṣannifek dedicated *Tuhfa al-Salāfīn* to the Timurid ruler Ulugh Beg b. Shāhrukh (r. 850/1447-853/1449). His description of the work indicates that it was not the same work that was dedicated to Meḥmed II. Muṣannifek seems to have written two similar works with the same title for two different rulers, or made two different renditions of the same work. Kātīb Çelebi, *Kashf al-Zīmān*, 1: 367.


37 Hasibe Mazıoğlu, “Sinani Paşa”, *IA*. 
vizier, at a time when Meḥmed II crushed the influence of the ‘ulemā and promoted his palace trained recruits to high ranks in government. At some point in his career, probably as a result of an intrigue orchestrated by rival ‘ulemā and statesmen, he incurred the wrath of Meḥmed II and was dismissed from his position. He narrowly escaped execution through the intercession of many leading scholars of the time on his behalf. After his dismissal he fully devoted himself to the Sufi path and became an initiate of the head of the Zeyniyye order of Şeyḫ Vefā (d. 896/1491), one of the most revered mystics of his time. His fame and stature were restored with the succession of Bāyezīd II to the throne, during whose reign he wrote all of his Turkish works, some of which are masterpieces of Turkish prose.

One of these works was Maʿārifnāme, which reflects Sinān Pāşā’s vast learning as much as his personal experience in life. It is an encyclopedic work in scope following no particular genre, a collection of instructive advice on various topics ranging from philosophy to poetry, aimed at moral purification and spiritual perfection. “Which subjects should I include in this book?” Sinān Pāşā asked himself and decided “perhaps I should follow wherever the word drags me.” He further explained his objective: “my aim is to say a few words on moral purification. Some advice would be added and whatever comes to mind would be put down. Although I reiterate what Plato had said, I take it from the Quran and prophetic traditions.” While his ideas in Maʿārifnāme testify that Sinān Pāşā was an erudite scholar well-versed in traditional learning, the way he composed the work shows that he was an antinomian, uneasy with following established conventions of his time. In addition to his sporadic thoughts and advice regarding

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38 Hasibe Mazıoğlu, “Sinan Paşa”, İA.
rulership that are scattered throughout the work, *Maʿārifnāme* contains a number of topics related to government, the vizierate, the sultanate, and justice. By resorting to strong and personal language in his criticism of the vizier, he implied that he held the vizier responsible for his own demise.\(^{39}\) Overall, he was very critical of the moral and scholarly standards of his time, displaying a notable bias against statesmen and the ʿulemā. Accompanying his strong social criticism was a sense of the vanity of life that pervaded his work and which led him to call for moral purification through submission to a master. When he discussed issues of government and rulership, he designated the reasons for corruption and inefficiency and provided a brief prescription, consisting of moral recuperations and tested principles of government.

Sinān Pāšā’s contemporary Tūrsūn Beg (d. after 895/1490) was a historian who worked in various scribal positions before becoming treasurer in the reign of Meḥmed II.\(^{40}\) He came from a military family and accompanied the restless Meḥmed II in his numerous military campaigns. He worked in the service of the Grand Vizier Maḥmūd Pāšā who was known for his excellence in learning and his protection of scholars. Tūrsūn Bey prided himself upon the training he received from the Grand Vizier.\(^{41}\) His only known work is *Taʿrīḥ-i Ebūʾl-Fetḥ*, a narrative history of Meḥmed II’s campaigns, written from an eyewitness perspective.\(^{42}\) He wrote a long introduction to this history, which stands alone as a separate work on rulership. Among other books of philosophy (*kūṭūb-i ͟ḥikemīyye*) he consulted and cited Tūšī’s *Akhlāq-i Nāšīrī* in composing the

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\(^{39}\) Hasibe Mazoğlu, “Sinan Paşa”, *İ.A.*

\(^{40}\) Tursun Bey, *Tārīh-i Ebūʾl-Fetḥ*, ed. Mertol Tulum (İstanbul: İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 1977), xvii.


\(^{42}\) Tursun Bey, *Tārīh-i Ebūʾl-Fetḥ*, xvi, xix.
Ta’rīḥ-i Ebū’l-Feth is not only one of the first Turkish texts to genuinely deal with political thought but, by virtue of its being a history book, it appears to be the first one that took Ottoman experience in government into account in developing political theory.

Although Ta’rīḥ-i Ebū’l-Feth was crafted as a theoretical exposition on political philosophy with a sophisticated terminology, bearing in mind that it was written at a time when Prince Cem (d. 900/1495) was still a contender for the throne, Tūrsūn Bey’s main objective appears to have been the elimination of doubts about the legitimacy of Ottoman rule. He placed a particular panegyrical emphasis on Bāyezīd II’s superior moral qualities. The work appears to have been written more for a broader audience than for the ruler and statesmen. After proving man’s need for rulership, bolstered by the prophetic tradition, he emphatically argued that the status of the ruler is second only to that of the prophet. As such, the position of the ruler was the highest in the world and one that required full submission. The work exalted Bāyezīd II as the ideal ruler, and Maḥmūd Pāṣā, the Grand Vizier of Meḥmed II, as an ideal Grand Vizier, not only in the salutatio but throughout the introduction. When explaining the required moral traits for the ruler, Tūrsūn Bey proudly stated that he would simply list those of Bāyezīd II. After profiling the perfect ruler, Tūrsūn Bey reported Maḥmūd Pāṣā’s responses to questions regarding rulership, government, and ethics. He then illustrated Maḥmūd Pāṣā’s resolutions with historical cases and anecdotes from the experience of past rulers.

43 Tursun Bey, Ta’riḥ-i Ebū’l-Feth, 16.
The Translation Movement of the Süleymānic Age

In our time the majority of statesmen possess a better command of Turkish. Although readers of Persian and Arabic are in abundance as well, this humble author intended to translate this sweet treatise from Arabic and Persian into Turkish.\footnote{“Ve bu zamanede çünkü ekser-i ḥükkmām-i zevi’l-ihtirāmin mümāreseti Türkî dilinde artdur. Egerçi ki Farşî ve ‘Arabînun daahi elhi çokdur bu fâkîr-i keşîrî’t-taḳṣîr murâd idindi ki bu risâle-i şîrîn-maḳâleyî ‘Arabî ve Farşîden Türkî diliyle tercüme idem,” in ‘Alâyî, \textit{Neticettî’s-Sûlûh}, 5a-5b.}

In the preface to his translation of Ghazālī’s \textit{Naṣīha al-Mulūk}, a work dedicated to Selīm II, ‘Alâyî, whose family were émigrés from Shiraz, pointed to a practical necessity which prompted him to translate the work. He had in mind statesmen as a target audience because of their poor command of Persian and Arabic. This was one of the two most commonly cited reasons motivating the political authors of the sixteenth century to undertake translations of Arabic and Persian works into Turkish. The second reason was to make non-Turkish works accessible to a broader Turkish-speaking audience.

Translators did not always act on their own but in many cases were commissioned by a patron to make a particular work available in Turkish. There was a considerable demand for works on the theory of rulership and government, and making translations for that purpose was a handsomely rewarded activity for Ottoman men of learning.

In the sixteenth century, even a Venetian ambassador to Istanbul could hope to gain the sultan’s favor by presenting him with a translation that contained political wisdom. Ambassador Marino de Cavallo presented the sultan with a long dialogue between Murād II and Prince Meḥmed, allegedly recorded by his grandfather, Andrea
Coscolo, who had witnessed the conversation. De Cavallo stated that he found the manuscript among the papers of his grandfather and decided to present it to the sultan as a goodwill gift. De Cavallo had the manuscript translated into Turkish by a palace interpreter, Murâd Bey, and presented the work to Süleyman in 967/1559 with the promise that he would also have the work translated into Latin and many other languages so that Murâd II’s advice would be known by others as well.

The work consisted of Murâd II’s responses to Prince Meḥmed’s questions about old age. The basic message of the text is that a young ruler should give priority to intelligence rather than the sword in his government, a point commonly reiterated in other mirrors for princes as well. There is a similar section on the comparison of old age and youth in Qābūsnāma, that was translated and presented to Murâd II, and in Îskendernâme, an epic story of Alexander’s life composed by Aḥmedî and dedicated to Murâd II’s father Meḥmed I. If authentic, Murâd II’s advice then seems to have been inspired by the advice of Kaykā’ûs for his son. But whether the work was authentic or not, by presenting it to Süleyman at that particular juncture, De Cavallo must have aimed at ameliorating Venetian-Ottoman relations at a time when they were strained. The ambassador attempted to gain the favor of Süleyman by presenting him with an invaluable gift, the wisdom of his ancestors. The ambassador could only hope that the peaceful message of Murâd’s advice to his son Meḥmed could temper Süleyman’s expansionist policies in the Mediterranean basin.

45 For Cavallo see W. Andreas, Eine unbekannte venezianische Relazion über die Türkei (1567) (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1914).

46 Abdullah Uçman, Fatih Sultan Mehmet’e Nasihatler, 12, 45.

i. The Eastern Flux

Until the nineteenth century, Ottoman culture was more exposed to the artistic and literary works composed in eastern Muslim states than any other part of the Islamic world. Works on ethics and government written in the east of the Ottoman Empire historically enjoyed a wider circulation among Ottoman men of learning. The translation movement of the sixteenth century shows that the Ottoman men of learning of this period found more cultural and political affinity with the Turko-Mongol states in the east than the Arab states in the south. Although the Ottomans fully inherited the cultural heritage of the fertile crescent and had politically dominated these areas after 921/1516, the cultural impact of this region in terms of political and ethical teachings was rather limited. Most Ottoman intellectuals writing on ethics and rulership translated the works of the easterners, took them as models in their own writing, and were greatly inspired by their teachings. The Ottoman men of learning shared the political ideals of their counterparts living in Iran, Transaxonia, and India.

 Keskin, who modeled his work primarily on that of Davvânî who lived under the Aqquyunlus, applied the same political ideals to the Ottoman case without modification. Similarly, Celâlzâde based his ethical work on that of Kâshifî, expanding it while endorsing all the main ethical teachings Kâshifî prescribed for the ruler of his time. Thus the two most widely known ethical works of the sixteenth century were nothing more than adaptations of the social ideals of the Aqquyunlu and the Mughal dynasties for the Ottoman context. Celâlzâde and Keskin, had they traveled to the east and worked under the ruling dynasties there, would have felt at home in terms of their cultural taste.
and social ideals. This is one reason why the Ottoman rulers tried to lure intellectuals such as Jāmī, Davvānī and Kāshifī from the courts of the eastern dynasties. By contrast, the huge number of political and ethical works compiled during Mamluk times found very little reception among Ottoman intellectuals before the conquest of Egypt and even for a while thereafter. Besides the similarities in these polities, a major facilitating factor that led the Ottomans to fully embrace Eastern ethical teachings was their infatuation with Persian literature. The literary renaissance taking place in the east made the Ottomans closely follow the literary and scholarly achievements there while largely remaining indifferent to the culture of the south. In addition to their status as authors of works on ethics, sufism and various Islamic disciplines, Davvānī and Kāshifī were, above all, literary icons for the Ottoman literati.

One of the most influential works on sixteenth-century political and ethical thought was Kāshifī’s Akhlāq-i Muḥsinī. Thanks to the established fame of Kāshifī, upon its completion in 900/1494-5, the work quickly disseminated throughout the Turkish and Persian speaking Islamic world, along with many other works by its author. Kāshifī wrote Akhlāq-i Muḥsinī for Abū’l-Muḥsin, the son of Sultān Ḫusayn Bayqara.\footnote{Gholam Hosein Yousefi, “Kāshifī”, \textit{EI}².} Ottoman intellectuals, especially those who were close to the dynasty, found in Akhlāq-i Muḥsinī a ready recipe for the ethics of rulership to groom Ottoman princes for their future positions. The work was less philosophical than the works of Ṭūsī and Davvānī and more artistic, embellished with anecdotes and poetry, thus making it easier to read, and more suitable for Ottoman taste. Celâlzâde and Čınalızâde, whose works were perceived to be almost canonical expositions of Ottoman ethical ideals, made extensive use of Akhlāq-i
Muḥsīnī in composing their own texts.

In addition to numerous copies of the work in Ottoman libraries which indicates that it was widely read in its Persian original, it was translated four times in the sixteenth century alone. Among these translations, ʻAẓmī Efendi’s (d. 990/1582) Enīsūʿ l-Ḵulūb, which he dedicated to Selīm II in 974/1566-7, became a popular work among Ottoman intellectuals.49 ʻAẓmī Efendi, a famed poet, was a professor at the Süleymāniye Medrese at the time of his appointment as tutor to Mehmed III in 988/1580.50 He was a son of treasurer Pîr Aḥmed Çelebi (d. 950/1543) and, thanks to his father’s connections, received excellent training from distinguished scholars.51 During the early stages of his career, he was an assistant (mūläzim) to ʻĀmilīzāde ʻAlī, who wrote the most celebrated work of ethics in all of Ottoman history.52

Firākī ʻAbdurrahmān Çelebi (d. 983/1575-76), who translated the work in 1550, was a well-known poet and preacher.53 Among the attendees at his sermons in Kütahya was Prince Bāyezīd for whose succession he prayed publicly.54 He was a close friend of

49 Pîr Muḥammadʿ Azmī Efendī, Enīsūʿ l- ʻArifīn, MS, SK, Laleli 1601; Hamidiye 629; Lala Ismail 243; Şehid Ali Paşa 1533; İstanbul Üniversitesi, Türkçe Yazmaları, 283, 2745, 2757; Nuruosmaniye 2246, 2280, 2281, 2302, 2303; Ankara Üniversitesi Dil Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi, Muzaffer Özak Kitapları, Liste I 246; See M. N. Şahinoğlu, “Ahlāk-ı Muhsinî”, TDVIA.

50 Beyâni, Tezkiretü-ʻṣ-Ṣurarā, 171.


54  ʻĀtâ-ı devletine lâʾîk eyle

Lāmī’ī Çelebi, a Sufi-minded scholar who compiled two works on Sufi ethics, İbretnümä and Şerefi‘-İnsän, and translated Jāmi‘s Nafaḥāt al-Uns. His contemporary Ebū’l-Fażıl Meḥmed (d. 982/1574-75) was a son of the famed military judge İdrīs-i Bidlīsī, a prominent political philosopher who wrote Qānūn-i Şahenshāhī. Receiving his first education from his father, and also editing his father’s works, Ebū’l-Fażıl Meḥmed was already well-versed in political theory. After serving in various judicial and teaching positions he became chief treasurer, gaining him his epithet Defterī (treasurer, literally bookkeeper). The last of the sixteenth century translators of Akhlāq-i Muḥsinī was Nevālī Efendi (d. 1003/1594) who served as Meḥmed III’s tutor (mu’allim) replacing ‘Aẓmī Efendi in 990/1582.

No less popular than Kāshifī’s Akhlāq-i Muḥsinī was Hamadānī’s (d. 786/1385) Zakhārat al-Mulūk which was translated three times over the course of the sixteenth century. Hamadānī was affiliated with the Kubrawiyya order, and himself founded the Hamadānī branch of the order. He was well-known to the Ottomans through his works in which he labored to harmonize Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings with those of the Kubrawiyya. Although the Hamadāniyya order did not flourish in Ottoman lands, with his writings and the order he instituted, he was among the most influential mystics in the history of Sufism.

55 Latīfī, Tezkiretü’-şu’ara, 423; According to Muṣṭafā ‘Ālī, Fīrākī marketed himself as Lāmī’ī’s pupil. See İsen, Künhū ’l-Ahbār in Tezkire Kismi, 253.
56 Ebū’l-Fażıl Meḥmed b. İdrīs el-Defderī, Terceme-i Aḥlāk-ı Muḥsinī, MS, Topkapı Sarayı, Revan H. 347.
57 Atâî, Hadaiku’l-Hakaik, 188-90.
58 Atâî, Hadaiku’l-Hakaik, 267, 390.
59 For a brief analysis of Hamadānī’s political teachings within the context of Indian political thought see Aziz Ahmad, “Trends in the Political Thought of Medieval India,” Studia Islamica 17 (1962): 121-30.
60 Tahsin Yazıcı, “Hemedānī”, TDVİA.
at the Indian subcontinent and in Iran. Hamadānī composed Zabhūrat al-Mulūk’s sections on ethics and piety by heavily depending on Ghazālī’s two celebrated works IFYA Ulūm al-Dīn and Kimyā-i Sa‘ādat. On sections regarding rulership, the caliphate and spiritual perfection he seems to have been influenced by Ibn ‘Arabī, mainly through the works of Dāvūd el-Ḵayserī. To an Ottoman reader who grew up in a culture that greatly admired Ghazālī and Ibn ‘Arabī, the teachings of Zakhūrat al-Mulūk were already familiar, a factor that contributed to the warm reception of the work by the Ottomans.

Among the translators of the work were Zihnī, who translated it for Selīm II, and Muṣṭafā Kātib, who dedicated it to Murād III in 985/1577. Although Zihnī’s identity can not be established with certainty, he probably entered the service of Selīm II while he was a Prince and later served as treasurer in Diyarbakır and Aleppo. As for Muṣṭafā Kātib, he was probably a scribe in the civil service working during the reign of Murād III. Besides these obscure translators, a high profile scholar and mystic, Sūrūrī Efendi (d. 969/1561-2), a close friend of ‘Āşık Čelebi, translated Zakhūrat al-Mulūk for Prince Muṣṭafā. Sūrūrī was a famed poet, a polymath scholar, and a prolific author, who failed to advance in the learning profession because of intrigues, and instead chose the mystical

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64 Kınah-zade Hasan, Tezkiretü’-Ṣuarā, 1: 394.
65 Muṣliḥuddīn Muṣṭafā Sūrūrī Efendi, Zaḥīretü’l-Mulūk, MS, Topkapı Saray, Revan 403; MS, SK, Ayasofya 2858; Mehmed Reşad and Tiryal Hanım, 922; The work was translated again in the seventeenth century by Muḥammed b. Ḥuseyn with the title Hilyetül-Mulūk. An autograph of this translation, dated 1052/1642, is in Topkapı Saray, Hazine, 360. See Tahsin Yazıcı, “Hamedānī”, TDVİA.
Among the leading 'ulemā he studied with was Taşköprizade, who himself made extensive use of Zakhīrat al-Mulūk in composing his treatise Asrār al-Khilāfa. Sūrūrī tutored Muṣṭafā ‘Ālī who later wrote a comprehensive political treatise that dealt with the question of decline in the Ottoman Empire. He became a member of the Naqshibandīyya order and established himself as a popular voice on Sufi poetry through his sermons, public lectures and commentaries on such past masters as Sā’dī, Rūmī, Jāmī and Ḥāfīz. He accepted Süleymān’s request to become tutor to Prince Muṣṭafā in 955/1548 against the wishes of his friends and foes, a decision that cost him his career and prestige because of the execution of Muṣṭafā by his father in 960/1553. As part of his job, during his sojourn at the court of Muṣṭafā, Sūrūrī produced a number of other works for the education of the Prince. To instruct the Prince in rulership, Sūrūrī Efendi chose to translate Zakhīrat al-Mulūk, a work on political ethics and piety written from a Sufi perspective.

Within the stream of eastern political wisdom, Ghazālī’s Naṣīḥa al-Mulūk was probably the most influential text on Ottoman political thinking. From very early times

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66 Ömer Faruk Akün, “Sürûrî”, İA.

67 Atâî, Hadaiku’l-Hakaik, 32.

68 Fleischer, Bureaucrat and Intellectual, 28-29.

69 Atâî, Hadaiku’l-Hakaik, 23.

70 His friends, particularly Gubari, who observed a great potential in him as a mystic and scholar, criticized him for leaving higher spiritual ground for worldly gains in pursuit of positions. His biographer Kınalızade Hasan expressed that reaction as well: “While being the king of the world he turned himself into a slave.” See Kınalı-zade Hasan, Tezkiretü’ş-Şuarâ, 458; İsen, Künhü’l-Ahbâr’ in Tezkire Kısımları, 229.


72 Tahsin Yazıcı, “Hemedâni”, TDVİA.
on, the Ottomans were infatuated with this work, translating it numerous times throughout Ottoman history, and extensively using it in compiling their own treatises on rulership and ethics.\footnote{An incomplete list of these translations in Istanbul libraries is as follows: ‘Abdülcelîl b. Mollâ Cemîl, \textit{Naşihatü’l-Mülük}, Fatih 3479. He translated the work in 1147/1734; Anonymous, \textit{Ādâbû’l-Mülük}, translated for Sokollu Mehted Paşa and Selim II, Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa 788/1; Anonymous, \textit{Neşâyiîh-i Mülük}, Istanbul Üniversitesi, Türkçe Yazmalar 1384, 1845; Seyyid Mehted Lütiî Ürgübî, \textit{Neşâyiîh-i Mülük}, translated in 1266/1849 for Mehted Hürev Paşa (d. 1271/1854), SK, Hürev Paşa 294; Vüçüdî, Mehted b. ‘Abdül’azîz (d. 1021/1612), \textit{Fevâyiikû’s-Sülük ve Neşâyiîhü’l-Mülük}, Istanbul Üniversitesi, Türkçe Yazmalar 3235; See Levend, “Siyaset-nâmeler.”} Ghazâlî wrote the work in Persian towards the end of his life for one of the Seljuk sultans Muhammed bin Malikshâh or Sanjar.\footnote{For a detailed examination of the work and its author, see Frank R. C. Bagley \textit{Ghazâlî’s Book of Counsel for Kings (Nasihat al-Mülük)} (London & New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), ix-lxxiv; for discussions about the authenticity of the work see Patricia Crone, “Did al-Ghazâlî Write a Mirror for Princes? On the Authorship of Naşihat al-Mülük,” \textit{JSAI} 10 (1987): 167-91.} \textit{Naşihat al-Mülük}, in both Persian and Arabic versions, turned out to be one of the most widely read books in the Islamic world. It was an ingeniously crafted work, a simple and entertaining mirror of princes, embellished with telling aphorisms and anecdotes. It was a book on the morality and piety of the ruler with little specific guidance on government practice, which made its teachings appealing and equally applicable in every setting.

Composed in two parts, the first part was on the right creed and the second was on the right morality with an overarching emphasis on justice as the single most important virtue of rulership.\footnote{Ann K. S. Lambton, “The Theory of Kingship in the \textit{Nasihat ul-Muluk of Ghazâlî},” \textit{The Islamic Quarterly} 1 (1954): 47-55.} Unlike authors of juristic works that instructed the ruler about government and religion through strict principles, Ghazâlî aimed to achieve the same end in a more entertaining way in \textit{Naşihat al-Mülük}. For a translator, this characteristic of the work made it an ideal gift for any ruler to guide him in justice and make him observe religious principles.
Mu'allimzade, ‘Āşık Çelebi, and ‘Alāyī, all contemporaries, translated Ghazālī’s *Naṣīḥa al-Mulūk*. Mu’allimzade (d. 980/1572) translated the work for Süleymān and presented it to Rūstem Pāşā. Mu’allimzade was the son of a revered sheikh of the Zeyniyye order who chose to advance on the judicial track. Though praised for his command in giving legal opinions he does not seem to have produced much scholarly work. Thanks to his friendship with Selīm II’s tutor, ‘Aṭā’ullāh Efendi, he became chief military judge, the highest position after the şeyhülislām. Like Mu’allimzade, ‘Āşık Çelebi translated the work in 970/1562 for Süleymān and submitted it to the Grand Vizier Rūstem Pāşā to convey it to the sultan. He studied with, among others, Ṭāsköprızade and Sürūrī, two mystics who conveyed Hamadānī’s *Zakhārat al-Mulūk* to the Ottoman audience.

Much like his younger friend Muṣṭafā ‘Ālī, ‘Āşık Çelebi was a chronic malcontent throughout his career in the judicial track. Although he was better known as the author of his celebrated biographical dictionary of poets, *Meṣā‘īrū’-ṣ-Ṣu‘arā*, he was one of the most prolific translators of his time. In addition to *Naṣīḥa al-Mulūk*, he translated two other works on rulership and government, Ibn Taymiyya’s *Siyāsā al-Shar‘iyya* and Ḥaṭībzade’s *Rawḍ al-Akhyār*.

Unlike ‘Āşık Çelebi, ‘Alāyī was not a notable figure of his time despite his dozen other works on various subjects. He translated the work for Selīm II and the work was

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well received by the wider audience as its many copies suggest. He wrote an extensive commentary on the first part of Naṣīḥa al-Mulūk that deals with the principles of creed.

A work similar in format was Ḥaṭībzāde’s Rawḍ al-Akhyār which was translated by ‘Āşık Çelebi. The work was itself an abbreviation of Zamakhshāri’s massive Rabī al-Abrār. Zamakhshāri (d. 538/1143), a Mu‘tazilī prodigy of Arabic language and literature, was best known to the Ottomans through his al-Kashshāf, a Quranic commentary that was standard reading for every advanced student of religious sciences in the Ottoman Empire. He wrote Rabī al-Abrār in the same format as Ibn Qūṭayba’s (d. 276/889) celebrated ‘Uyūn al-Akhbār, an encyclopedic collection of wisdom literature that contained poetry, anecdotes, prophetic traditions, aphorisms, all arranged according to some thirty five topics. This muḥādarāt genre which includes such excellent samples of Arabic literature as Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī’s (d. early 11th c.) Muḥādarāt al-Udābā, was widely read across the Islamic world and such works, beside having their own literary, entertainment and didactic values, served as major source books for authors writing on any topic.

Ḥaṭībzāde abbreviated this work and rearranged it in fifty chapters. He turned the new version into a mirror of princes with chapters regarding rulership in the beginning

79 ‘Alāyī bin Muḥibbī el-Ṣirāzī el-Ṣerīf, Neṣṣetū’s-Sūlūk fi Terceme-i Naṣīḥatū l-Mūlūk. MS, SK, Pertevniyal 1011.

80 ‘Āşık Çelebi, Tercüme-i Ravżu’l-Aḫyār, MS, SK, Reşid Efendi 540, Laleli 1696; Meḥmed Muḥyiddīn bin Ḥaṭīb Kāṣım, Rawḍa al-Akhyār al-Muntakhab min Rabī al-Abrār, MS, Topkapı Sarayī, Emanet Hazinesi 1327.


while making it more readable and relevant for the ruler.83 Originally from Amasya, Ḥaṭībzāde was a polyglot scholar who taught in the highest institutions of learning and was appointed as tutor to Prince Aḥmed by Bāyezīd II.84 He completed the work in 921/1515 and later dedicated it to Sūleymān. ‘Āṣīk Čelebī, who appreciated the endeavor, decided to make it available for Turkish readers as well and translated this work for Selīm II while he was prince, without interfering with its content or form.85

ii. The Ottoman Discovery of the South

In comparison to the continuous flux of scholars, poets and cultural products from the East, Ottoman culture was much less exposed to the literature and learning of the Arabic-speaking lands of the South. Unlike the popular political and ethical works of the East that were subject to several translations, works composed in the South had much less recognition among the Ottoman men of learning. Only in the sixteenth century did the Ottoman scholars notice the greater bulk of the cultural heritage produced in Arab lands and start to translate works of political import. The most notable among these was Vuşūlī Meḥmed Efendi’s (d. 998/1589) translation of Ṭurṭūshī’s (d. 520/1126) Sirāj al-Mulūk.86 Vuşūlī, better known as Ḥubbī Mollāsī, for marrying the daughter of the female poet

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83 The third chapter is titled “On rulership, governorship, the vizierate, governance, justice, and forgiveness.” See Amāsī, Rawḍ al-Akhūr, 52.

84 Mecdî, Hadaiku ʾṣ-Sakaʾikh, 399.

85. ‘Āṣīk Čelebī, Terceme-i Ravzuʿl-Aḫyār, SK, Laleli 1696, 1a-1b.

86. Vuşūlī Meḥmed Efendi, Şems-i Hidāyet, SK, Reisülküttap 772; See Sait Aykut’s introduction in Muhammed b. Ṭurtūshī, Sirācuʿl-Mulūk: Siyaset Aḫlāku ve İlkelerine Dair, transl. Said Aykut (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1995), 22; Meḥmed Tahir, Osmanlı Müellifleri, 2: 422.
 Hubbī Ḥātūn, had been a protegé of Selīm II since his youth. Upon Selīm II’s assignment to governorship he shifted his appointment to Kūtahya and was a member of closest circle of the prince’s retinue. Thanks to this connection, he quickly rose in the teaching and judicial track and served as the Ṭādī of Istanbul. Sirāj al-Mulūk, which he translated in 992/1584 with the title Şems-i Hidāyet, was one of the two works recommended by Ṭaṣḵūprīzāde in his Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda on the science of manners of rulership (‘ilm ādāb al-mulūk).

Ṭurtūṣhī, a Mālikī and ascetic-natured scholar from Spain, whose older contemporary and role model was Ghazālī, wrote the work in Egypt in 516/1122 for Wāzīr Ibn al-Batāʾīhī. Despite being translated into Turkish only once, Sirāj al-Mulūk was one of the most influential works on sixteenth-century Ottoman political authors and widely read throughout the Islamic world. It was one of the most comprehensive treatises written on government in medieval Islam which addressed both the ruler and the ruled. With very few specific instructions or principles of government, Sirāj al-Mulūk is a work of literature that explains principles of good government through philosophical aphorisms, anecdotes, historical cases, and exemplary stories. This characteristic made it one of the most quoted works in Ottoman political literature, a source book consulted to find appropriate stories and aphorisms to illustrate political views.

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87 Mecdī, Ḥadaikuʿ-Ṣakaik, 311-2; İsen, Kūnīhʿ-1-Ahbārʿ in Tezkire Küsm, 318; Beyānî, Tezkiretū ʿṢ-Ṣuwarā, 321-2.

88 Ṭaṣḵūprīzāde, Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda, 412.

89 A. Ben Abdesselem, “Ṭurtūṣhī”, E2.

90 Aykut recorded that in Suleymaniye Library alone there are 25 copies of the Arabic version of Sirāj al-Mulūk, indicating its popularity among Ottoman readers. See Aykut’s introduction in Turtūṣī, Sirācuʿ-1-Mulūk, 23-24.
The above ‘Āşık Çelebi made an abridged translation of Ibn Taymiyya’s al-

Siyāsa al-Shar’iyya, adding two chapters on war and treasury respectively, and dedicated the work to Selim II. Ibn Taymiyya, a prolific author, activist and controversial Ḥanbalī scholar of the fourteenth century, wrote the work between 709/1309 and 714/1314 during the third reign of Muḥammad I b. Qalāwūn (r. 709/1310-741/1341).

Unlike many other authors of works on government intended to persuade the ruler of the supremacy of a given legal school or to provide a sectarian prescription for rulership, Ibn Taymiyya composed his work to vindicate the sharī‘a in general, and it contains no particular criticism of other sects. By addressing all office holders, umarā and ‘ulemā, both of whom he considered legitimate authorities to command (‘ulī al-amr), Ibn Taymiyya advocated an uncompromising application of the sharī‘a laws and keeping the believers under close scrutiny with respect to observing duties.

While the Arabic version of the work enjoyed widespread popularity in both the Arabic-speaking and Turkish speaking halves of the Ottoman Empire, ‘Āşık Çelebi’s translation also seems to have attracted a broad interest. There was nothing in the work which would compromise Ottoman concerns about legitimacy, for Ibn Taymiyya did not

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91 ‘Āşık Çelebi, Mi’rācū’ l- ‘Iyāle ve Minhācū’ l- ‘Adāle, MS SK, Şehid Ali Paşa 1556; MS SK, Reisülküttabl, 1006; MS SK, Esad Efendi 1901 & 1803/1; MS SK, Çelebi Abdullah Efendi, 51/2; MS, Topkapı Sarayi, Hazine 1768, Revan 1610; See the introduction in Ibn Teymiye, Siyaset: es-Siyasetû š-şerîyye, transl. Vecdi Akyüz (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 1985), 7.

92 On many issues he relates views of jurists from other schools of law as well. See for example the question of punishing the rebels, Ibn al-Taymiyya, al-Siyāsa al-Shar’iyya fi ʾIślāḥ al-Rāʾi wa al-Raʾiyya, ed. ‘Abd al-Bāšit b. Yusuf al-Gharīb (Dammām: Dār al-Rāwī, 2000), 117-121.

93 In conflict with the common practice in Ottoman law, for example, he strictly criticized the substitution of penalties for cash payments. On the other hand, his dictum that authorities should make sure that all believers perform their daily prayers duly was an official policy in the mid-sixteenth century.
consider the rigid conditions elaborated in the classical theory as necessary for the enactment of the caliphate, particularly the Qureishī descent which Ottoman rulers lacked. Ibn Taymiyya’s shift of focus in juristic political theory from the question of the conditions and legitimacy of the universal caliphate to the conformity of government practice with the sharī‘a was completely in line with the sixteenth-century approaches of leading Ottoman jurists to rulership and government. Despite having opposing views among themselves, such jurists as Ḵīnâlîzâde, Kemâlpâşâzâde, Ebû’ussu‘ûd, Birgivî, Çîvîzâde, Dede Cûngî, and many others were strongly concerned with the conformity of government practices with the prescripts of the sharī‘a, as was apparent their writings and major debates of the sixteenth century such as the cash foundations controversy.

In addition to these high profile scholars of the Arab lands, İbn Fîrûz (d. 1018/1609), a little known Ottoman scholar, translated a work of an obscure Mamluk author, Khayrbâyi’s Durra al-Gharrâ, for Selîm II with the title Gurretü ’l-Beyzâ. He was better known in the biographical literature as the son of the Grand Vizier Aḥmed Pâşâ’s steward Fîrûz Bey. A low ranking medrese professor, İbn Fîrûz was not a high


95 For Ḵīnâlîzâde’s criticism of excessive capital punishments see Ḵiḥâk-‘Alâ‘î, 3: 11-14; Dede Cûngî’s al-Siyâsa al-Shar‘îyya was in large part a treatise on the religious foundations of capital punishment; For Ṭâşkoprîzâde’s vindication of the superiority of the sharī‘a over siyâsa see Miftâh al-Sa‘âda, 1:404-5; For the cash foundations controversy see Jon E. Mandaville, “Usurious Piety: The Cash Waqf Controversy in the Ottoman Empire,” International Journal of Middle East Studies 10 (1979): 289-308; for the jurists’ role in reconciling Islam and sultanic laws see Inalcık, “Islamization of Ottoman Laws on Land and Land Tax,” in Festgabe an Josef Matusz: Osmanistik – Turkologie – Diplomatik, eds. Christa Fragner and Klaus Schwarz (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1992), 101-119.


97 Atâî, Hadaiku’l-Hakaik, 529.
standing scholar of his time, and has left known work other than this translation. Khayrbaytī (d. after 843/1439), a Ḥanafī jurist, wrote the work for the Mamluk ruler Sayf al-Dīn Chaqmaq (r. 842/1438-857/1453) in 843/1439 as an instructive manual for the sharʿī foundations of rulership, government and public law. The treatise was written from a strictly Ḥanafī point of view, in refutation of the views of other major schools of law on rulership, especially the Shiʿī views. Ibn Fīrūz’s introduction of this work to the Ottoman audience came at a time when the legitimacy of Ottoman rulership was being questioned by certain circles.

A strictly juristic work in its judgments, Durra al-Gharrā was written in the form of a mirror for princes, where juristic dictums and opinions were supplemented by authoritative and exemplary stories mostly from the experience of Muslim rulers. Although the original was only noticed by a few, Ibn Fīrūz’s translation seem to have found some readership among Ottoman intellectuals. Qualifications of the caliph, his responsibilities, rules pertaining to the government and the military and various branches of the sharʿa law were among the topics broached. Although the treatise did not offer a viable solution for the endemic legitimacy crisis of Ottoman rulership, it nevertheless

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98 Khayrbaytī, Maḥmūd b. Ismāʿīl b. ʿĪbrāhīm, al-Durra al-Gharrā fī Naṣīḥa al-Salāfīn wa al-Quḍāt wa al-Umarā (Mekka and Riyāḍ: Maktaba Nazār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1996). There is no consensus about the toponym of the author among the copyists of the work or modern scholars, who give it as al-Jīzī, al-Kharpūṭī, al-Khartabīrū, and al-Khirmūṭī. As for the title of the work, there is disagreement as well as to what follows al-Durra al-Gharrā. For a discussion about the author see the preface of the above edition, and Cici, “İbn Fîrûz ve “El-Gurretü’l-Beydā” Adlî Eseri.”


100 Extant copies of the work differ from each other. Levend and Cici claim that the work is an abridgement whereas Mehmed Tahir stated that the copy he had examined was an expanded translation. See Levend, “Siyaset-nâmeler”; Cici, “İbn Fîrûz ve “El-Gurretü’l-Beydā” Adlî Eseri”; Mehmed Tahir, Osmanlı Mülîellîferi, I; 227.
appealed to the Ottoman audience because it tackled some of the current debates regarding rulership and provided a collection of mainstream Ḥanafī views on the subject. Despite representing the Ḥanafī perspective, Khayrbayṭī’s *Durra al-Gharrā* did not provide a viable solution for the specific concerns of Ottoman rulership.\(^{101}\) It was *Tuḥfa al-Turk*, a work by another Mamluk author, which forwarded a workable solution for the endemic legitimacy crisis of the post-Abbasid Turkish dynasties. It was translated into Turkish before 967/1559 by an anonymous author under the title *Naṣīḥatūʾ-\(M\)ūlūk.\(^{102}\) In plain Turkish, the work is an exact translation of *Tuḥfa al-Turk*, with no mention of the original work. Ṣarsūsī (d. 758/1357), the chief judge (qādī \(al-q\)adī) of the Ḥanafīs in Damascus from 746/1345 to 758/1357, wrote his polemical treatise during the second reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Ḥasan (r. 755/1354-762/1361) to vindicate the legitimacy of the rule of the Turks and strongly criticize of other major schools of law, exhibiting particular animosity towards the Shāfi‘īs.\(^{103}\)

By comparing the rulings of Ḥanafī and Shāfi‘ī jurists on government, Ṣarsūsī demonstrated that the Shāfi‘ī view delegitimized the rule of the Turks and many of their current government practices. Thus he aimed to convince the sultan to promulgate Ḥanafī jurisprudence as the official law of state because it fully endorsed the legitimacy of the ruler as well as various government practices.\(^ {104}\) Further, *Tuḥfa al-Turk* is an

\(^{101}\) On the question of Qureishi lineage, for example, Khayrbayṭī offered a workable solution for the Mamluk ruler by ruling that if a ruler is appointed by somebody who belonged to the Qureish, then the Qureishi lineage is not required for the ruler. See Khayrbayṭī, *al-Durra al-Gharrā*, 118.

\(^{102}\) *Naṣīḥatūʾ-\(M\)ūlūk*, British Museum, OR 9728.


instructive treatise on how to reconcile government practices with the prescripts of Hanafi law. Written in a format much like a mirror for princes, content bears the mark of three distinct genres: the law of government (al-āhkām al-sulṭaniyya), disagreement of jurists (ikhtilāf al-fuqahā) and reform treatises (iṣlāḥ al-siyāsī wa al-dīnī). Despite the sophistication of its arguments, the fame of its author, and the solution it provided for the Mamluk dynasty, Tuḥfa al-Turk did not reach a wide readership.

Although the Hanafi school was the official sect in the Ottoman Empire, no legal treatise was written to legitimize rulership on the basis of Hanafi law. This gap seemed to be filled with the appropriation of the works of Mamluk jurists who endeavored to justify and glorify the rule of Mamluk sultans who seem to have suffered problems similar to those of the Ottomans. In addition to these two translations, after the conquest of Egypt, the Ottomans appropriated a large number of juristic works on government and rulership written for the Mamluk sultans, many of which were kept in the palace library.

iii. The Ottoman Aristotle

The unprecedented demand and curiosity that led the Ottoman men of learning to translate from the East and the South brought one of the most influential texts of medieval political theory to their attention. It was the above Nevâlî, the translator of

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105 See al-Sayyid’s introduction in Ṭarsūsī, Tuḥfa al-Turk, 21-22.
107 For some of these works see F. Ethem Karatay, Topkapı Sarayi Müzesi Arapça Yazmaları Kataloğu (Istanbul: Topkapı Sarayi Müzesi, 1962), no: 6948, 6949, 6981, 6982.
Kāshīfī’s *Akhlāq-i Muḥsinī*, who undertook the translation of the pseudo-Aristotelian text on rulership, *Sīr r al-Asrār*, under the title *Ferruçnâme*. With meager literary skills, Nevālī was a respected professor, known for his excellence and piety, who taught at the highest learning institutions including the Süleymāniye. He translated the work for the Grand Vizier Sokollu Meḥmed Pāşā in 969/1571, during the reign of Selīm II. As he believed, *Sīr r al-Asrār* was a book of advice written by Aristotle, the Grand Vizier of Alexander the Great, on affairs of the sultanate and procedures of the caliphate (*umūr-i saḥḥanat ve merāsim-i ʿilāfet*). While he did not reveal in the text the original copy he used, the colophon of the book stated that Nevālī translated the work from Greek, a point which cannot be substantiated because there was no such complete book in Greek. In fact, for reasons still not known, Aristotle’s *Politics* was never translated into Arabic while his *Nichomehean Ethics* enjoyed great popularity.

*Sīr r al-Asrār*, also known as *al-Siyāsā fī Tadbīr al-Riyāsa*, took its final form in the tenth century after going through a number of revisions and expansions for two centuries in the hands of different authors. The final version established itself as the definitive translation of Aristotle’s treatise on government, and claimed to have been made by Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥīṭrq. Although spurious in many ways, the final work was a


109 Nasuḥî Akhiṣārî Nevālī, *Ferruçnâme (Aḥlāq-i Nevālī)*. SK, Hafid Efendi 253. *Sīr r al-Asrār*, translated into Latin as *Secretum Secretorum*, was widely read in both the Middle East and Europe.

110 Nevālī, *Ferruçnâme*, 3b.


great success as it became one of the most popular works on rulership in both the Muslim and the Christian worlds soon after its composition.\textsuperscript{113} It had an immense effect on Muslim political theory, particularly on the mirrors for princes literature. Among the later works which fell under the spell of this work were some of the most renowned examples of this genre such as Ghazâlî’s \textit{Naṣîḥa al-Mulûk}, Niẓâm al-Mulk’s \textit{Siyâsatnâma}, Kaika’us’ \textit{Qâbûsnâma}, and Ibn ‘Arabî’s \textit{al-Tadbîrât al-Ilâhiyya}.\textsuperscript{114} After being translated into Latin as \textit{Secretum Secretorum}, of which some fifty manuscripts survived, the work was rendered into a number of European vernaculars as well. At least fifteen different translations exist in English alone.\textsuperscript{115}

Besides the prestige Aristotle enjoyed in Muslim culture and the intrinsic value of its teachings, what made this work popular was the extent of its scope in advising on rulership and government. Unlike many other advice books of its kind, \textit{Sirr al-Asrâr} included sections on onomancy, physiognomy, and hygiene, in addition to more traditional topics regarding principals of government, just rule, and ethics. \textit{Sirr al-Asrâr} contained one of the earliest, but certainly the most elaborate exposition of the circle of justice, an ancient maxim that pervaded the Muslim literature on government and ethics, and reached a paradigmatic status in designing/perceiving the ideal government in Ottoman culture.\textsuperscript{116}

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Nevâlî’s *Ferrûfnâme*, which he undertook at the behest of the Grand Vizier Sokollu Meḥmed Pâşâ, is not an exact translation of *Sirr al-Asrâr* when compared to that work’s standard edition. As he indicated in the preface, *Ferrûfnâme* is an abridged and selective (telhîs ve intihâb) translation of *Sirr al-Asrâr*.\(^{117}\) Aside from Nevâlî’s aptly made selections to make the work more appealing, three features of *Ferrûfnâme* turned it into an exposition of the pseudo-Aristotelian ideals of government within the Ottoman context. First, as a serious translator, Nevâlî wrote a long introduction to the work, where he described the lives of Aristotle and Alexander the Great which he claimed to have gathered from a variety of sources. He presented both Alexander and Aristotle as believers who had achieved unmatched excellence in wisdom and government, and portrayed them as role models. Second, Nevâlî islamized the text by inserting aphorisms, prophetic traditions and Quranic verses to support Aristotle’s advice to Alexander, thus integrating it into the Islamic tradition. Third, he used the current political and administrative terminology in translating the Arabic text. In his portrayal, Aristotle was a grand vizier, Alexander was a caliph, a prince was a şehzâde, and a tutor was mu’allim. He thus eliminated historical distance and made the text a fresh product of Ottoman culture and fully relevant to current expectations in political culture and government practice. Nevâlî managed to present the pseudo-Aristotelian teachings as proven by experience, sanctioned by Islam, and fully compatible with the Ottoman mode of government at the time.

\(^{117}\) Nevâlî, *Ferrûfnâme*, 4a.
Texts, Authors and Issues

Besides displaying a given author’s views, writing on government and rulership was an act of engagement with the corpus that preceded it. Each text was shaped by its author’s learning and grasp of other works on the subject as well as his/her own experience, objectives, and creativity within the cultural and social confines of the time. The Ottomans inherited a huge body of scholarship on politics, in various disciplines and genres, that conveyed political theories and concepts produced in Islamic, Turkic, Persian, Indian and Greek polities. When writing on rulership and government, these authors were usually well-acquainted with different cultural zones of the Empire, if not far corners of the Islamic world. Despite the absence of statistical data, the abundance of political works in Ottoman libraries of Asia Minor and the Balkans suggests that rulership and ethics were among the most appealing subjects to readers.

Thanks to their useful linguistic talents and universally recognized identities, scholars, Sufis, and men of literature were conventionally a highly mobile group, traveling across the cultural and governing centers of the Islamic world for purposes of learning, teaching, propagating, and seeking better prospects for life. The unification of the greater part of the Middle East under a single administration and the turning of diverse populations into subjects of the same political authority opened more channels of interaction among men of learning and the ruling elite. The rotation system, for example, required graduates of Ottoman educational institutions to serve in different corners of the Empire, exposing them to local traditions and populations while ensuring the standardization of administrative and judicial practices across territories. Rotational
sojourns for government service enabled Ottoman men of learning to discover in the local libraries of Arabic speaking provinces, works that had not yet circulated in Turkish speaking zones.

The rapid expansion during this period and increasing contacts with the outside world sparked new curiosities among Ottoman scholars and statesmen about the history and culture of other peoples. *Ta’rīḥ-i Hind-i Garbī*, a description of the West Indies composed in 1580, was a result of this new curiosity.\(^\text{118}\) Similarly, a history of French monarchs, composed in 1572, speaks for an interest in the histories of other states.\(^\text{119}\) It was reported that Selīm I, on his way to conquer Egypt, wished to read Ibn Taghibirdī’s history of Egypt, al-*Nujūm al-Ẓāhirah fī Muḥāl al-Ḥisn al-Qāhirah*. He commissioned Kemālpāşāzāde for its translation, who was translating a section each night for the Sultan to read it the next day.\(^\text{120}\) One of the most widely read political translations was a product of this curiosity: Selīm I, who demanded to learn more about the government of Egypt and to benefit from its past experience, ordered the translation of *Nahj al-Maslūk*, a work compiled by Shayzarī for Salāḥ al-Dīn Ayyūbī, the defeater of the Mongols and the founder of the Ayyūbid dynasty in Egypt.\(^\text{121}\)


In the sixteenth century the Ottomans discovered their own past and the Islamic past at the same time. The Empire became the sole political system, stretching across the central lands of Islam for the first time since the Abbasids. While in the fifteenth century its size was comparable to the territory of the Mamluks and other dynasties in the fertile crescent in the sixteenth century, the Empire at its zenith was comparable only to the greatest of the past empires such as the Abbasids. This made the Ottoman Empire worthy of scrutiny in the eyes of Ottoman intellectuals who had previously been more interested in the polities and histories of past glorious empires. For the first time in this century elaborate world histories began to be written situating the Ottoman Empire among the greatest empires of the past. Perceiving themselves to be living in one of the foremost empires of history, Ottoman intellectuals turned to their own past in order to find and study the elements of its greatness and continuity. A conspicuous sign of this new self-realization was the institution of the şeynâmeceî, the office for recording the glories of the Ottoman ruler.  

**i. Juristic Perspective**

*Risāla fī mā Yalzim ‘alā al-Mulūk* (A Treatise on What Rulers Need), whose author remains anonymous, was dedicated to Süleymān. It is written as a true advice book for statesmen, replete with principles of government, ethical norms, and anecdotes of wisdom drawn from a diverse body of sources. The author, who appears to be well-

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versed in both religious sciences and literature, wrote the work in Arabic, a language that addressed a smaller audience but enjoyed a higher authority in relating the intended message. The treatise lacks a systematic structure and all sections start with the phrase ‘know that’ (i’lam) without a title, a literary style that evokes the master-pupil relationship, mostly used by the ‘ulemā in various types of advice books. Besides Quranic verses, prophetic traditions and ample anonymous reports that start with the phrase ‘it is reported that’ (qīla), the text is rich in its references as the author quoted from such authors as Avicenna, Ghazālī, Abū al-Lays, Baydāwī, and many others.

Among various religious, ethical and political questions addressed in the book, there are four issues that the author seems to be emphatic about in advising the reader. First, in setting out part of a ruler’s duty, the author urged the sultan to be diligent in undertaking a fight (jihād, ghazw, muḥāṭarā) against the people of polytheism (shirk) and sedition (faṣād), eliminating vices (dāʾ al-sharr), and cleansing disbelief (izāla al-kufr). The author educated the reader about innovations (bidʿa) and admonished the sultan to stay away from them. Such views were voiced by many leading ‘ulemā of the time who wrote treatises and issued fatwās to urge the sultan to continue his expansion policy against the realm of Christians, eliminate the Shi‘i threat posed by Safavid propaganda, and suppress the frequent heretical movements that could easily turn into rebellions.

124 Risāla fi-mā Yalzim ʿalā al-Mulūk, 7.

125 Many prominent scholars, Sufis, and poets wrote treatises to the same effect. The most renowned poet of the time, Bākī, for example, who was hoping to become şeyhülislām, was commissioned by Grand Vizier Sokollu Meḥmed Pāṣā to translate Muḥy al-Dīn Ahmed b. İbrāhīm’s Mashaʿir al-Askhwāq ilā Maṣāriʿ al-ʿUṣkhāq, a work on the virtues of holy war (jihād). Bākī translated the work in 975/1567 with the title Fezāʾ ilū ʾl-Cihād. See Mehmet Çavuşoğlu, “Bākī”, TDVIA; For Şeyh Bālí Efendi, Bākī’s contemporary, who also wrote a treatise on the same topic, exhorting believers to wage war against the infidels, see Risāle fi Ǧazāʾ il-Micāhidın, MS, İÜ, Türkçe Yazmalar 786.
Second, by turning attention to what the statesmen and the ruled should do in
government, the author provided instructions and warnings for people who entered the
presence of the sultan with particular emphasis on the vizier’s relationship to the sultan.
His advice was directed towards securing the attendees’ safety in the face of the sultan’s
temper as well as showing ways of making one’s word effective in the presence of the
sultan. He urged visitors to the sultan (dāḥil ʿalā al-sulṭān) to observe certain rules
because he expected them to perform the duty of commanding right and forbidding
wrong (al-amr bi al-maʿrūf wa al-nahy ʿan al-munkar) and praised as the most virtuous
form of waging jihād according to the authority of a prophetic tradition.126

Third, the author devoted a long section to the personal life of statesmen and
admonished them against the harmful effects of wine-drinking in rulership. The subject
was commonly dealt with in most advice books that regarded the moral and physical
health of statesmen essential for good government. In contrast with the prevailing view
in the advice literature that displayed a degree of complacence in allowing the ruler to
breach certain religious prohibitions, the author put forth strict warnings against
drinking.127 While the anonymous author enumerated formal juristic views on the subject
as well as moral teachings from respected figures, he/she displayed more concern about
preserving the health of government than about keeping the sultan from committing sins.
On rational and empirical evidence, the treatise instructed the sultan that drinking would
impair one’s judgment in decision-making, lead to negligence in rulership, and cause
failure to protect the realm which might result in losing one’s authority (zavāl al-dawla).

126 Risāla fi-mā Yalzīm ʿalā al-Mulāk, 11.

127 Bidlîsî and Cahramā both admonished the ruler not to drink wine but nevertheless granted him the
prerogative to drink. Bidlîsî, Kanun-ı Şahensâhi, 148; Cahramā, Siyāsiya Barāya Sulṭān Selīm, 11a.
Writing from a similar perspective but in a completely different format, Hüseyin b. Hasan el-Semerḳandī dedicated his work on the vizierate, *Laṭāʾif al-Afkār wa Kāshīf al-Asrār* (Fine Thoughts and Revealer of Secrets), to Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha.\textsuperscript{128} We know that he was a kādī, but there is no further information available about Semerḳandī in contemporary sources.\textsuperscript{129} He wrote the work in 935/1529, the year in which İbrahim Pasha was appointed commander in chief (*serʿasker*) and governor of Rumelia (*beglerbeg*) in addition to grand vizier just before Süleyman’s fourth military campaign headed towards Vienna.\textsuperscript{130} Semerḳandī’s extolling of İbrahim Pasha in his succinct eulogy in the preface portrays a truly exceptional grand vizier with extraordinary powers.\textsuperscript{131} In order to endow İbrahim Pasha with the basics of Ottoman literary culture a learned statesman was expected to know, Semerḳandī compiled *Laṭāʾif al-Afkār* as a concise encyclopedia of government, ethics, history, literature, and religious traditions, an instructive handbook for the education of a grand vizier who had risen to that position at the age of twenty nine. *Laṭāʾif al-Afkār* consists of three parts: government (*siyāsa*), history of caliphs (*taʿrīḥ-i khulāfā*) and miscellaneous topics including various ethical virtues, manners, literature, the nature of jinnis, and strange events.

Consisting of four chapters, the first part explains principal government functions, *salṭana* and *wilāya*, and two principles of government, consultation and justice. *Laṭāʾif al-Afkār* is among the few texts of this period, and certainly the most elaborate of them, that used juristic terminology in explaining government structure. Semerḳandī instructed

\textsuperscript{128} Hüseyin bin Hasan el-Semerḳandī, *Laṭāʾif al-Afkār wa Kāshīf al-Asrār*, MS, SK, Reisülkütap 698.

\textsuperscript{129} Kātib Çelebi, *Kashf al-Zanūn*, 2: 1552.

\textsuperscript{130} Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 2: 344-5.

\textsuperscript{131} Semerḳandī, *Laṭāʾif al-Afkār*, 2a.
the reader with an authoritative language introducing juristic rulings, ethical admonitions, and various useful information with the word ‘know that’ (i’lam). He then distinguished between what was required in government and what was recommended, by using such juristic terminology as ‘required’ (wājib) and ‘recommended’ (ḥasna). The first chapter established the sultan’s responsibilities and obligations towards God and his subjects. The second chapter explained layers of government positions in two sections: First, the different forms of the vizierate, and second, the six principal offices of government, which were the office of legal rulings (iftā), judicial system (qadā), inspection (ḥiṣba), chancery (inshā’), book-keeping (dafātīr), treasury (amvāl). The qualifications Semerḳandī stipulated for the holders of these offices were quite strict. For him, the muftī (doctor of the sharī‘a law), for example, had to be a jurist capable of independent judgment (mujtahid), a rank that could hardly be claimed by any Ottoman şeyhülislām.

In the following chapters, he presented consultation and justice as indispensable principles of government to be followed by all the office-holders he mentioned. In this way, Semerḳandī provided the first juristic exposition of Ottoman government by prescribing the legal requirements for principal offices.

The second part of Laṭā‘if al-Afkār is a succinct universal history as well as a discussion of the concept of history in general with the aim of placing the Ottoman dynasty in the context of world history. It starts with the creation of Adam and eschatological prophesies about the life of the earth. Semerḳandī seems to have implied, relying on the views of past authorities that the life of the earth should last until 7000 years after Adam and should not extend more than 1400 years after the hegira.132

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132 Semerḳandī, Laṭā‘if al-Afkār, 9a.
time Semerkandī wrote his treatise in 935 Hagira, millenarian expectations were already in circulation. He comforted the reader that the end of days was at least four centuries away. He then described how different ancient peoples started their calendars and then explained the establishment of the Muslim calendar. After providing a clear picture of creation, the earth’s life, the start of history and the calendar, he recounted the history of caliphs starting from the first man and caliph Adam all the way to the Ottomans. He thus placed the Ottoman caliphate in a single lineage that started with Adam and continued through various dynasties. What is striking in his exposition is that, after explaining the caliphate of the Mamluks, he started the Ottoman caliphate with Selīm I, who conquered Egypt and ended the Mamluk dynasty, rather than with the founder of the Ottoman dynasty. For Semerkandī, the caliphal lineage continued after the Mamluks through the caliphates of Selīm I and Süleymān.

A contemporary of Semerkandī was Muḥammad b. Meḥāsin el-Enṣārī, who dedicated his work, Tuḥfa al-Zamān ilā al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Sulaymān (The Present of Time for Süleymān the Victorious Ruler), to Süleymān.133 Tuḥfa al-Zamān is an advice book covering ethical topics and juristic principles of rulership, written from a distinctly Ḥanafī perspective. Enṣārī’s principal source of inspiration appears to have been Ṭūrṭūshī’s Sirāj al-Mulūk which expounded similar juristic views on government and society. His long eulogy for Süleymān in the preface to the work praised the sultan for saving Muslims from oppression, poverty, and heresy. In speaking of the ranks of governorship he instructed the sultan that this hierarchy should be accepted, in a descending order: Damascus, Aleppo, Tripoli, Hama, Safad, Hums and Baalbak. This

133 Flügel, Arabischen, Persischen und Türkischen Handschriften, 4: 280.
suggests that the work must have been written shortly after the ascension of Süleymān to
throne, around 1524, when the Ottoman government suppressed a major rebellion by the
governor of Egypt, Aḥmed Pāşā, and secured order in the newly conquered provinces of
Egypt and Syria. Enṣārī must have been a Ḥanafi jurist from Syria because the few
specific remarks he made about his time all referred to Syria.

Written by a Syrian, Tuhfa al-Zamān bears the stamp of late Mamluk writings on
rulership.134 Besides Birgivī’s brief statement about the community’s obligation to obey
rulers in his Zuhr al-Mulūk, this is the only other treatise that problematized the question
of obeying the ruler in this period. Except for works on political ethics, such as that of
Ḵinalīzāde, all other works were addressed specifically to either the sultan or the vizier
and paid no attention paid to the question of legitimacy because they were dedicated to an
authority whose authority was beyond question. Enṣārī, however, devoted the preface
and first chapter of Tuhfa al-Zamān to proving that the Ottoman rule was legitimate and
that the subjects were required to pay allegiance to the ruler accordance with the sharī’a.
Writing soon after the conquest of Arab lands and the suppression of major rebellions
that ensued, Enṣārī wrote his treatise to address both the subjects and the ruler. Enṣārī
not only prescribed the rules of just government for the sultan to follow but also showed
the responsibilities of subjects, particularly the ‘ulemā, in guiding the ruler to the path of
justice. To this effect, he devoted the second chapter to ‘encouraging the sultan to justice
and benevolence, and the ninth chapter to “warning the sultan against oppression.”
While other contemporary works were content with advising the sultan to consult the
‘ulemā, in chapter four Enṣārī exalted the position of the ‘ulemā above that of the ruler

134 Muḥammad bin Mahāsin el-Enṣārī, Tuhfa al-Zamān ilā al-Malik al-Muṣaffar Sulaymān, MS,
Nationalbibliothek, A.F 357.
calling it “the ruler’s adherence (iqtidā) to the ‘ulemā.”\footnote{Enşārī, \textit{Tuhfā al-Zamān}, 23a.}

Reflecting the author’s juristic perspective, the eighth chapter was devoted to the treasury (bayt al-māl) and legitimate sources of revenue. In this respect, the author appears to have preceded other Ottoman authors, such as Birgivī, Ṭāşköprīzāde, and Dede Cöngī, who displayed a similar concern and wrote treatises or sections on government revenue. While Enşārī made the treasury a part of political theory, the subject was already among the public issues dealt with by the Ottoman ‘ulemā of the period. The diversification of revenues and expenditures in the sixteenth century as well as questionable government policies regarding land regime, commerce, and taxation prompted leading jurists to provide juristic resolutions on monetary, fiscal, and economic issues.\footnote{Inalcık, “Islamization of Ottoman Laws on Land and Land Tax,” in \textit{Festgabe an Josef Matuz: Osmanistik – Türkologie – Diplomatik}, 115-269.} The Hanafī jurists of Syria were even more sensitive on this issue as seen in the writings of Ibn Nujaym, whose concern Enşārī seems to have reflected.

A distinctive feature of \textit{Tuhfā al-Zamān} was its position on the place of non-Muslims in Muslim polity. Enşārī strictly rejected the possibility of employing them in government.\footnote{The same idea had been expressed by Ṭurtuşhī who wrote a separate chapter on the subject. Turtuşhī, \textit{Sirācu’l-Mülûk}, 363.} His concern might seem superfluous, for the Ottomans conventionally abstained from employing non-Muslims in government positions. However, it was a frequent practice in pre-Ottoman Muslim dynasties including the Mamluks with which Enşārī appears to have been more familiar. Given the a well-established Ottoman policy of preserving local political structures after conquest, Enşārī was making an appeal to the Ottoman ruler to stick with the policy of not employing of non-Muslims in government
and to abandon the practice of pre-Ottoman dynasties. He appears to have been so concerned about the issue that he proved the illegitimacy of employing non-Muslims on the ground of two schools of law, Ḥanafī and Shāfi‘ī, although he himself and the Ottoman governing elite were only Ḥanafīs.

Unlike little known jurists described above whose works were imbued with literature, history, and philosophy, Dede Cöngī Efendi İbrāhīm b. Baḫṣī b. İbrāhīm (d. 975/1567) was a high profile jurist who wrote his treatises in a strictly juristic format. A versatile scholar who he took his nickname from a popular commentary on a work of Arabic grammar, Dede Cöngī wrote on a variety of topics within the conventions of classical Islamic sciences such as hadīth (prophetic traditions) and tafsīr (Quranic commentary). He started his ‘īlmiyye career at a relatively late age, while he was an illiterate tanner, but subsequently had a successful professional life. After teaching in medreses in Amasya, Iznik, Bursa, Diyarbakır and Aleppo, he became a muftī of Kaffa, where he retired. Dede Cöngī does not seem to have aspired to high judicial positions nor to have enjoyed close relations with high ranking statesmen. He was a dedicated professor and a spiritual man who spent his retirement as an ascetic. Yet he wrote two pioneering works on government for purely scholarly purposes with no ambition to gain the favor of statesmen.

His lesser known work was a treatise on the public treasury which he composed while he was in Amasya and dedicated to Prince Muṣṭafā.\(^\text{138}\) In this work, he established the legitimate sources of income and their allocation to specific expenses required by the shari‘a. But Dede Cöngī owed his reputation to his second treatise, for he was the first

Ottoman author to write on *al-Siyāsa al-Shar‘iyya*, a political genre popularized by Ibn Taymiyya in the thirteenth century. The treatise, better known as *Siyāsetnāme*, was well-received throughout the Ottoman Empire as it disseminated from the Balkans to Arabic speaking lands. It was translated into Turkish by three different authors and the Turkish translation by Seyyid Sebzî Efendi (d. 1091/1680) became more popular among the Turkish speakers than the Arabic original. *al-Siyāsa al-Shar‘iyya* appears to be the first attempt to delineate sultanic authority in the field of criminal law, an area that was the exclusive preserve of jurists. In this sense, Dede Cöği attempted to reconcile sultanic law (*kānūn*) and the *shar‘i‘a*. Among his contemporaries were many leading ‘ulemā, most conspicuously Kemâlpâşâzâde and Ebû’ssu‘ûd who also took part in an effort to establish the *shar‘i‘a* basis of the Ottoman laws in use.

Dede Cöği made use of a wide range of medieval works of Ḥanafī jurists, including Sarakhsî, Marghinâni, Bazzâz, and Țarâbulûsî. Despite being a Ḥanafī, he used sources from the other three major schools of law as well. Among his principal non-Ḥanafī sources were the Shāfi‘î jurist Mâwardî, a Mâlikî jurist Qarâfî, and Ḥanbalî jurists Ibn al-Taymiyya and his student Ibn al-Jawzî. Dede Cöği legitimized Ottoman criminal law and the Ottoman ruler’s prerogative to pass laws in this field by refuting possible objections from different schools of legal thought. By the time he was writing the treatise, although the Ḥanafī school was already established as the official school of law, the Ottoman state had incorporated Muslim lands where Ḥanbalî, Shāfi‘î, and Mâlikî schools were dominant. Unlike other fields of *shar‘i‘a* law, *al-siyāsa al-shar‘iyya* was an

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area that could not be exercised within the confines of one sect but needed to be a universal standard across the Empire. Thus it had to be legitimate in the eyes of all mainstream schools of law.

In *al-Siyāsa al-Sharʿiyya*, Dede Čöngī addressed three principal issues. First, he offered a theoretical overview of the relation between the sultan’s governance, including legal enactments, and the *sharīʿa*. Second, on the basis of specific examples, he discussed the field of *al-siyāsa al-sharʿiyya* and the extent of the ruler’s authority in its application. Third, he delineated the authority of judges and governors in the application of criminal law, an area that had caused tension and confusion in numerous cases throughout Ottoman history. Dede Čöngī used *siyāsa* to mean both governance and law. In many cases he simply used law (*kānūn*) in referring to *siyāsa* which turned his treatise into a specific discussion of the legitimization of the Ottoman *kānūn* on the basis of the *sharīʿa*. He divided the *siyāsa* into two types, just (*ʿādila*) and unjust (*zālima*), defining the determination of the severity of punishments necessitated by specific conditions as the sole prerogative of the ruler. He advocated a middle course in the implementation of *siyāsa* as the way of *sharīʿa*, disapproved of the other two views which he labeled as extreme (*ifrāṭ* and *tafrīṭ*): The *ifrāṭ* view did not recognize the *siyāsa* that went beyond the limits of the *sharīʿa* while the *tafrīṭ* view legitimized any sort of *siyāsa.*

He clung to two key principles in establishing the legitimacy of the *siyāsa*: change of circumstances (*taghayyur*) and social well-being (*al-masāliḥ al-mursala*). Dede Čöngī envisioned a dynamic *sharīʿa* law and, with ample historical evidence, claimed that

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141 Dede Čöngī, *al-Siyāsa al-Sharʿiyya*, 75-76.
142 Dede Čöngī, *al-Siyāsa al-Sharʿiyya*, 84.
change in historical circumstances required adjustments (and amendments) in legal rules. This was a well-established principle of Ḥanafī methodology applied to the case of Ottoman law.\textsuperscript{143} He then justified the necessity of the siyāsa law by referring to the Mālikī concept of al-maṣāliḥ al-mursala, a principle that allowed adjustments to the sharīʿa law in favor of social well-being.\textsuperscript{144} Its near counterpart in the Ḥanafī school, the maslaḥat, was widely alluded to by other leading Ottoman jurists in advocating the Ottoman law against the literal interpretations of Ḥanafī law in the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{145}

Sharing Dede Cöngī’s concerns about the proper handling of the public treasury, Birgivī wrote a similar treatise on this topic.\textsuperscript{146} Birgivī was undoubtedly one of the most influential of all Ottoman ʿulemā whose works enjoyed wide circulation throughout the Islamic world and are still being published for the popular market today. Among the nearly sixty works he wrote, the better-known ones fall into three broad categories of grammar, piety, and juristic polemics.\textsuperscript{147} His short treatises on Arabic grammar were widely used as textbooks in Ottoman medreses and conferred upon his name a rare authority which also led the audience to his works in other fields. His polemical treatises, particularly his refutation of the established view on the legitimacy of the cash

\textsuperscript{143} For more information on this topic see Mustafa Erdoğan, İslâm Hukukunda Ahkâmin Değişmesi (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İllâhiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 1994).

\textsuperscript{144} Dede Cöngī, al-Siyāsa al-Sharʿiyya, 85-86.

\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Maslaḥat} was a key concept by which Dede Cöngī’s contemporary Şeyhülislām Ebû’s-suʿûd justified the permissibility of cash foundations. See Jon E. Mandaville, “Usurious Piety: The Cash Waqf Controversy in the Ottoman Empire,” \textit{International Journal of Middle East Studies} 10 (1979): 289-308.

\textsuperscript{146} Birgivī Meḥmed, Zuhr al-Mulûk, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Esad Efendi 615/8.

\textsuperscript{147} For a bibliographical analysis of his works see Nihal Atsız, \textit{İstanbul Kütüphanelerine Göre Birgili Mehmet Efendi} (929-981/1523-1573) \textit{Bibliyografyası} (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1966); Ahmet Turan Arslan, \textit{İmam Birgivî: Hayatı, Eserleri ve Araçta Tedrisatındaki Yeri} (İstanbul: Seha Neşriyat, 1992), 77-130.
foundations, brought him face to face with the most respected ‘ulemā of the time and
turned him into a powerful voice of dissent and critique. His works on piety were
directed at eliminating innovations and the reinstituting pristine Islam.

Taṣiyyūddīn Meḥmed b. Pīr ‘Alī (981/1573), who later gained the epithet Birgivī
for teaching in Birgi, was born into a well-known ‘ulemā family of Balḵesir which was
also part of an established Sufi order. After receiving a solid education in contemporary
standards, he pursued a judicial career in early life, becoming an inheritance apportioner
(kaṣṣām) in Edirne in the service of a military judge, his master and patron
‘Abdurrahmān Efendi. Dissatisfied for spiritual and ethical reasons, he decided to
distance himself from government and worldly pursuits, and entered the service of Sufi
sheikh ‘Abdullāh Ğaramānī of the Bayrāmī order.\footnote{Atāi, Hada’iku ’l-Hakaik, 179-181.}

Although little is known about his experience in the Sufi path, at least two of his
later biographers categorized him among the Sufi Sheikhs rather than the ‘ulemā, while
some called him lautbū’l-‘ārifīn (the Pole of gnostics), indicating that he maintained his
Sufi affiliation with distinction.\footnote{Arslan, İmam Birgivî, 66.} When his sheikh opposed ascetic ambitions and
encouraged him to continue to teach and write, he became a professor in the learning
establishment, never seeking promotion but devoting his life to teaching, writing, and
preaching until he died. Birgivī’s own spiritual experiment resembles that of Ghazālī,
who fell into a spiritual crisis and resumed teaching after resolving his inner conflicts and
reaching peace of mind by adopting a synthesis of the philosophical, mystical, and
juristic teachings of Islam. Following a general trend among the Ottoman ‘ulemā Birgivī
also fell under the spell of the Ghazālīan synthesis whose influence is obvious in his works of piety.

In contrast to claims in recent scholarship, Ibn Taymiyya did not seem to have any noticeable influence on Birgivī’s thought.150 Because he was a staunch Ḥanafī and a devout mystic with a distinctly Ghazālīan cast in his writings, his works became extremely popular among mainstream learned circles, and were not simply handbooks for a marginal group of religious reformers, as was the case with Ḵādījāzādēlī’s. His epithet in the late Ottoman period was İmām (leader), a rank attributed to the most authoritative among the jurists of a given sect. His contemporary and biographer ʻAlī b. Bālī called him şeyh, a title that denotes his high scholarly standing, and Muḥyī al-dīn (renovator of religion), a title usually attributed to scholars who made a marked impact on religious thought, distinguishing the false from the right.151

Birgivī’s most popular work, al-Ṭarīqa al-Muḥammadīyya (The Muhammadan Path), is found in more than 200 manuscript copies in Istanbul libraries alone, and was subjected to more than 30 reworkings since its compilation, in the form of translations, commentaries, and abridgements. Among the commentators of his works were such renowned scholars as Nābulusī (d. 1731) and ʻAlī al-Qārī (d. 1605-6).152 He was among the few ʻulemā who emerged from the Ottoman medrese system, whose fame and influence extended across the Arab speaking lands of the Empire as well as to India.

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151 ʻAlī bin Bālī, al-ʼĪqd al-Mażīm, 436.

152 Arslan lists some thirty five commentaries and translations of this work. See Arslan, İmam Birgivî, 115-125.
During his most productive years, Birgivî remained outside high scholarly circles of the Ottoman ‘ulemā, teaching in a small provincial medrese built for him by his dear friend ‘Atā’ullāh Efendi, tutor of Selīm II. He made few close friends from the leading ‘ulemā and did not attempt to gain the favor of statesmen as he never dedicated any work to a dignitary. Although he seems to have chosen to live in a small town for reasons of piety, in a letter to ‘Atā’ullāh Efendi, he complained about his lack of good friends or students, his inability to remove innovations and violations, and violence directed towards him by the local population who rose against his criticism of local.

He was a scholar who had full confidence in his opinions and felt that he had acquired an absolute certainty about righteous religion: “Thanks to God, He enabled me to master the sciences of Arabic, Reason and the Sharī‘a, and conferred on me the knowledge by which I am capable of differentiating the ill from the sound, the weak from the strong and the wrong from the right,” he wrote in the preface of one of his treatises; “the knot of imitation in my heart was dissolved and my imitation turned into investigation and certainty of knowledge.” With that peace of mind and personal confidence, he preached and wrote a restless critique of any practice that he deemed contrary to the strictures of religion, whether that practice was at the government level or the street level. In addition to his small treatises, he planned to write a comprehensive book on social critique from a sharī‘a perspective, aimed at eliminating iniquities in government and society:

153 The only possible exception to this is a political treatise attributed to Birgivî which he dedicated to Selīm II. E. Edgar Blochet, Catalogue de la Collection de Manuscrits Orientaux, Arabes, Persans et Turcs Formée par M. Charles Schefer et Acquise par l’État (Paris: E. Leroux, 1900), no. 1133/1.

154 Arslan, İmam Birgivî, 35-38.

155 Arslan, İmam Birgivî, 51.
It occurred to me that I should write a book on the religious violations of our time: First, I would start with the violations of rulers. Then iniquities (münkerāṭ) of viziers, and jurists (mūṭfīn), and professors (müderrisin), and seekers of religious opinions (müsteftīn), and mosques, and streets, and the like. So that I could explain everyone of these in detail with proof.\textsuperscript{156}

\textit{Zuhr al-Mulūk} is Birgivī’s only known work on government.\textsuperscript{157} He composed the treatise in three parts, praising the just ruler, reprimanding the unjust ruler and advising on proper financial administration. It was written as an advice book, in a juristic language, with no criticism of government and no polemical tone. He received a request from his friend and protector ‘Atā’ullāh Efendi to write a book on the state’s finances to which he replied positively and made certain requests to complete the project:

If I write an Arabic treatise on the subject it should be detailed. I do not have full knowledge of the sultan’s total revenues and expenses for which reports vary. I hope that God gives health to my eyes and you provide me the necessary information in some detail as requested or send me someone who knows the subject. I would also need some books such as Badāyī’, Mabsūṭ, commentaries on al-Siyar al-Kabīr and Ādāb al-Qādī commentaries, and the like.\textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{156} Arslan, \textit{Imam Birgivī}, 35; This line of thinking is usually expressed in the Īšba (inspection) literature, a field of Islamic law which allows believers to prevent a wrong when it is witnessed. A similar section, regarding iniquities in mosques, markets, streets, baths, and feasts is given by Ghazālī in his \textit{Kīmyā-i Sā‘ādat}, a work Birgivī admired. See Ghazālī, \textit{Kīmyā-yi Sā‘ādat}, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abbāsī ([Tehran]: Ṭūlū‘ va Zarrūn, 1361 [1982 or 1983]), 389-392.

\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Risāle-i Mūlūkiyye}, Blochet, \textit{Catalogue de la Collection de Manuscrits Orientaux}, no. T. 112.

\textsuperscript{158} Arslan, \textit{Imam Birgivī}, 35. As for the books he requested, there are a number of works having titles starting with \textit{Badāyī} or Ādāb al-Qādī, which makes it difficult to determine which books Birgivī means. The other two books, however, were two well-known works of Ḥanafi jurisprudence, those of Sarakhshī (d. 488/1095) and Shaybānī (d. 189/805), respectively. See al-Sarakhshī, \textit{Kitāb al-Mabsūṭ}, 30 vols., ed. M. Ḥasan Ismā‘īl al-Shāfī‘ī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2001); M. Khaddūrī, ed., \textit{al-Qānūn al-Dawli al-Islāmī: Kitāb al-Siyar li al-Shaybānī} (Beirut: Dār al-Mutahhida li al-Nashr, 1975); for an English translation see Khadduri, \textit{The Islamic Law of Nations: Shaybānī’s Siyar} (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966); For Sarakhshī’s well-known commentary on Shaybānī’s work see Sarakhshī, \textit{Sharḥ Kitāb al-Siyar al-Kabīr}, 5 vols., ed. M. Ḥasan Ismā‘īl al-Shāfī‘ī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1997).
Although Zuḥr al-Mulūk was written on largely the same topic requested by ‘Atā’ullāh Efendi, it is probably not the book referred to in the above exchange. Unlike the book envisioned, Zuḥr al-Mulūk is a short treatise with no specific reference to the Ottoman ruler’s revenues and expenses, and it did not make use of any of the sources Birgivī felt he needed to write the treatise.

Despite being a vocal critic of government, Birgivī began the treatise by endorsing the prevailing Ḥanafī view that it was incumbent upon all believers to obey rulers regardless of whether those rulers were just or unjust. Then he showed his distinctly Birgivīan attitude of differentiating the commendable from the reprehensible by drawing a strictly theological distinction between justice and oppression. On the authority of Māturīdī (d. 944-5) and ‘Ālim b. ʿAlā (d. 1384-5) he proclaimed that whoever calls an oppressive ruler just turns into an infidel, because considering an injustice justice is blasphemy.¹⁵⁹ This view was voiced more elaborately by Khayrbaytī in his Durra al-Gharrā which was translated and introduced to Selīm II by Ibn Fīrūz.¹⁶⁰ Thus for Birgivī, obeying an unjust ruler did not merely entail condoning his injustice. Rather, religion made it incumbent on the subjects to distinguish justice from injustice and know the condition of their ruler, while maintaining their allegiance in order to preserve the order.

In this concise treatise, Birgivī addressed both the ruler and the ruled. After instructing the believers to obey the ruler and admonishing the ruler against committing injustice, he then explained the types of revenues which he divided into three categories:

¹⁵⁹ Birgivī, Zukhr al-Mulūk, 99b.
¹⁶⁰ Khayrbaytī, Durra al-Gharrā, 248-251.
as gifts (ḥaRāzī), treasury (bayt al-māl), and extortions/prohibitions (ḥarām). Although there is no specific reference to government practice, Birgivī aims make Ottoman finances operate according to the sharī’a law by distinguishing rightful types of revenues from prohibited ones as established in Ḥanafi jurisprudence. Gifts, for example, could not be accepted by the ruler or the statesmen, but needed to be returned to the benefactor or to the central treasury. As for the prohibited types of income, he mentions certain tax farming practices such as those applied to fisheries in rivers and seas. For the treasury he gave only four main categories of revenue, each allocated for specific expenses. He thus did not recognize any other type of income for the state other than that sanctioned by the sharī’a. Unlike other leading ‘ulemā such as Ebū’ssu’ūd and Kemālpāşāzāde, who reconciled dynastic laws and administrative practices with the sharī’a, Birgivī stipulated that the ruler needed to make financial administration suit the template he provided on the basis of the Ḥanafi jurisprudence.¹⁶¹

**ii. Mystic Interpretations**

İdrīs b. Ḥūsāmeddīn el-Bidlīsī was by far the most successful and the best known of the scholars who emigrated from the East to the Ottoman Empire in this period. He already had a very successful career in the Aqquyunlu court as a secretary and a tutor for princes. Upon the collapse of the Aqquyunlu dynasty, he left his home despite the Safavid Shah’s offer of work in Tabriz and instead entered Ottoman service. He received

a solid training in classical Islamic sciences as well as in literature and philosophy, and was already a famed scholar before moving to the court of the Ottomans. His secretarial skills and excellence in prose writing were well known by Bāyezīd II through the letters sent by the Aqquyunlu rulers which were written by Bidlīsī. Despite receiving generous gifts for his service from Bāyezīd II, because he felt underrated in the Ottoman court and had a strained relationship with the Grand vizier, he left Istanbul and settled in Mecca. Upon Selīm I’s succession he was recalled to service once more, and he responded with enthusiasm.

In addition to his scholarly and professional capabilities, his knowledge of the Kurdish, Turcoman, and Persian regions of the East made him an indispensable statesman for Ottoman plans to exert control over these areas. His success in subjecting the unruly chieftains of eastern Asia Minor to Ottoman authority and securing order in the region at a time when Ottoman rule faced the greatest threat from the East enabled him to gain the unquestioned confidence of Selīm I, a sultan who found it difficult to trust even the most trustworthy statesmen. In his name, a third office of military judgeship, the highest ‘ulemā rank after the Şeyḫulislām, was created for Arabs and Persians (‘Arab ve ‘Acem Kādī‘askerliği), a position that was dissolved soon after his retirement.

Bidlīsī was a prolific author and translator, writing on such diverse subjects as history, music, cosmology, medicine, philosophy, poetry, Sufism and jurisprudence. He traveled extensively, lived in Diyarbakır, Istanbul, Mecca, and Cairo, and met with the leading scholars and mystics of these regions. Among them were Jāmī, whom the Ottoman court tried to lure but failed, and İbrāhîm-i Gûlşenî who gained the heart of

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162 For a list of his works see Mehmet Bayrakdar, Bitlislî İdris (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1991), 31-52.
Süleyman and spread his order in Ottoman domains. Bidlîsî forged good relations with local rulers and dedicated works to the Aqquyunlu ruler Ya’qûb Beg, the Mamluk Sultan Ghansu Ghavrî, and the Ottoman sultans Bâyezîd II and Selîm I.\(^{163}\)

While still a newly arrived stranger in Istanbul, Bidlîsî wrote the first detailed dynastic history of the Ottomans at the behest of Bâyezîd II, *Hasht Behesht* (Eight Gardens), a work of art in its prose, a detailed account of early Ottoman history and an interpretation of events that make it a milestone in Ottoman intellectual history.\(^{164}\) Then he wrote *Selîmshâhnâme* (The Book of Selîm Shah), a glorifying account of the reign of Selîm I, one of many chronicles that praised the sultan’s accomplishments.\(^{165}\) More than a record of events, *Selîmshâhnâme* is an interpretive history of the reign of Selîm I, whose life served as an illustration of the political ideals Bidlîsî advocated. As in the case of Celâlzâde’s *Selîmnâme*, Bidlîsî wrote this work as a work of art and a didactic description of a model ruler whose reign should serve as an example in government.

His main work on rulership, which he completed shortly before his death in 1520, was *Qânûn-i Shahenshâhi* (The Essence of Rulership), a work he wrote to be a guide for rulers (*dustûrnâma nazd-i har Shâhî*).\(^{166}\) Bidlîsî wrote the work in four parts (*maksad*): the nature of rulership, ethics of rulership, responsibilities of the ruler, and the attainment

\(^{163}\) Abdülkadir Özcan, “İdrîs-i Bitlisî”, *TDVIA*.

\(^{164}\) Babinger, *Osmanlı Tarih Yazarları*, 51-55.


\(^{166}\) Hasan Tavakkoli, “İdrîs Bidlîsî’nin “Canun-ı Şahenşahisi’nin Tenkidli Neşri ve Türkçeye Tercümesi,” (PhD diss., İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1974).
of spiritual rulership, respectively. With few stories of illustration, *Qānūn-i Shahenshāhī* is primarily a work of political philosophy written from a Sufi perspective. Despite his trenchant synthesis of philosophical, theological, and juristic doctrines of rulership, Bidlīsī’s terminological framework was mostly drawn from Sufism, with particular debt to the mystical philosophy of Ibn ‘Arabī. It is a comprehensive treatise covering all principal aspects of rulership, ranging from the vizierate to law, and from ethics to principles of government. Bidlīsī considered rulership an extension of God’s divine government and highlighted moral perfection as its foundation, which he defined as the ruler’s resemblance to God in His attributes. He constructed a genuine model of rulership, inspired by mystical ideals of life, which was shaped by and connected to the divine with only a functional relationship to the society.

Before elaborating on principles of government, Bidlīsī wrote an epistemological introduction to establish the necessity of rulership. He divided knowledge (‘ilm) into two categories: servant knowledge (‘ilm-i khādim) and the Served knowledge (‘ilm-i makhdūm). The ultimate purpose of existence was to attain knowledge of the Served which was the knowledge of God (ma’rifat Allāh). The servant knowledge which he defined as the conventional disciplines of Islamic learning was only instrumental in leading to the served knowledge. This distinction roughly corresponds to the exoteric learning of religion and the esoteric experience of mysticism. Bidlīsī corresponded to

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this epistemological duality. The division of relevant practice into two categories, servant practice (‘amal-i khādim) and served practice (‘amal-i makhdūm), then placed rulership within the second category because he considered it to be a part of higher knowledge and practice. He thus turned the knowledge and practice of rulership into a part of Islamic Gnosticism which led him to emphasize spiritual and esoteric aspects of rulership more so than its material features.

Expressing similar sufistic views of rulership in a much more blatant fashion with reference to current Ottoman sultanate was al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya (Treatise of Sūlimānic Justice) written by an obscure and anonymous author who was most likely an émigré from the East, or somebody who lived on the border during the period of Ottoman-Safavid conflict. The treatise was written in 950/1543 in Diyarbakır and dedicated to Süleymān. Although the work does not seem to have caught the attention of Ottoman literati in general, it probably reached its intended audience, the sultan himself, as the only copy of the work, written in fine ta‘līk script, was preserved in the Palace library. Although the author provided no information about himself, his references to the Malāmātīya branch of the Khalwatiyye order suggest that he must have been affiliated one of the Sunnī mystical orders present in the region. His mode of reasoning in the work is markedly mystical and he appears to be well-versed in esoteric interpretations of religious sources as well as Islamic occultism and eschatology. Teachings of past Sufī masters, ranging from Junayd al-Baghdādī to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, constituted the main stock of inspiration for his views. More specifically, he quoted from Kāshifī’s Akhlāq-i

169 Risāla al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya, MS, Topkapi Sarayı, Revan 1035.
170 al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya, 55a.
Muḥṣini, Jāmī’s (d. 1492) Shawāhid al-Nubuwwa, and Isfarayini’s commentary to support his esoteric views. He also extensively quotes the sayings and teachings of Abū Ḥanīfa, drawn from various sources, as well as the theological formulations of al-Māturīdī to bolster his esoteric and idiosyncratic views with canonical statements by the highest authorities of Ḥanafī jurisprudence and Māturīdī theology.

The author appears to have been a staunch Sunnī and a dedicated enemy of the Kızılbaş, alarmed by the spread of Safavid influence among the Muslims. He wrote his treatise to convince the sultan that that he was a chosen ruler by God and that his primary mission was to eradicate Shī‘ī (Rafaḍa, Kızılbaş) from the face of the Earth. He completed the work eight years after Süleymān’s Eastern campaign that ended in Tabriz, five years before his second campaign against the Safavids that ended with the conquest of Van. The author ensured the sultan that he would be aided by the Pole, the real wielder of power on earth as God’s deputy. He asserted that the current Pole in the world was a Ḥanafī, while the previous Poles were Shāfī‘īs for 258 years, probably referring to the Mamluk era.171 This was a further piece of evidence that the pole was on the Ottoman side with the shift of the political leadership of the Sunnī world from the Mamluks to the Ottomans. The treatise also disproved the Safavid claims of spiritual superiority by showing that the Pole was a Sunnī-Ḥanafī, and Ottoman rule a manifestation of his power.

As for the specific teachings of al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya pertaining to rulership, the work dealt with four main issues. First, after proving the chosen nature of the Ottoman ruler by deciphering the prophesies from the Quran and Hadith, he explained

171 al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya, 6a.
the virtue of justice through anecdotes and brief interpretations.\textsuperscript{172} In addition to
entreatying the sultan to avoid oppression and be compassionate towards his subjects, the
main message of the text was that the sultan should constantly seek advice in
government. Not surprisingly, the author’s anecdotes usually illustrated cases in which
rulers were guided to the right direction by people of spiritual perfection.

Second, he praised the virtue of raids and battles (faḍīlat-i ghazā va ṭarīk-i
\textit{muḥāraba}). He displayed absolute indifference to the fight against infidels; indeed by the
terms ghazā and \textit{muḥāraba}, the author exclusively meant the fight against the Shi‘īs.\textsuperscript{173} On the basis of evidence from certain Sunnī sources, he thought that the Ḵızīlbāš were
no different than polytheists (\textit{mushrik}) and infidels (\textit{kāfir}). He further claimed that
killing them was a more commendable religious obligation than killing infidels, and
raiders for the faith (\textit{mujāhidūn}) were allowed to appropriate their property and women
as legitimate booty.\textsuperscript{174} He made no reference to specific beliefs of the contemporary
Ḵızīlbāš or the Safavids; instead, in order to motivate (\textit{taḥrīs}) the sultan to wage war
against them, he mostly enumerated the age-old Sunnī accusations of the Shi‘īs about
their perverted beliefs, gathered from medieval works of polemical theology.

Third, this anonymous author provided a prescription for spiritual perfection and
recognition of the saintly order of the world. Illustrated by anecdotes drawn from
hagiographies of past mystics, \textit{al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya} guided the sultan to refine his
devotion (\textit{zuhd}) and piety (\textit{taqvā}).\textsuperscript{175} While he urged the sultan to follow the Sufi path to

\textsuperscript{172} \textit{al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya}, 9a-40b.

\textsuperscript{173} \textit{al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya}, 40b-49b.

\textsuperscript{174} \textit{al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya}, 43a.

\textsuperscript{175} \textit{al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya}, 49b.
attain spiritual perfection as a way of achieving ideal rulership, he also informed the
sultan about the real government of the world, which was the order of invisible saints,
and advised him to recognize and seek help from the overarching authority of the existing
head of this order, the *quṭb*, who was also the *ghavās*.\textsuperscript{176}

Another obscure author with Sufi leanings who wrote an advice book to guide the
ruler with the teachings of Islamic mysticism was Muṣṭafā b. ‘Abdullāh. Despite
compiling a lengthy advice book on rulership, *Kitāb Sulūk al-Mulūk* (Treatise on
Wayfaring of Rulers), the author left few clues about himself.\textsuperscript{177} He completed the only
extant copy of his work in 949/1942 and dedicated it to Süleymān while he was serving
as the commander of the fortress of Çankırī.\textsuperscript{178} The autograph preserved in Topkapı
Palace was written in a fine script and did not seem to have circulated beyond the
personal library of the sultan. In his short preface, the author stated that he wrote the
book to be a guide in religion and the world for whoever reads it carefully and acts
accordingly.\textsuperscript{179} Unlike authors of other similar advice books that were presented to the
sultan, the writer avoided presenting a panegyric preface for the sultan to gain his favor,
and simply stated that he hoped the work would serve as a means to achieve God’s
forgiveness for its author. With no manifest political agenda or specific cause to support,
*Sulūk al-Mulūk* appears to have been written as a general work of advice, with the
humble intention of guiding the statesmen to the right path, a task that was a primary
responsibility of the ‘ulemā and spiritual guides in Ottoman political culture.

\textsuperscript{176} *al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya*, 54a-54b.


\textsuperscript{178} The author signed his book as Dizdār Muṣṭafā el-faḵīr fī Ḷulla Cankiri.

\textsuperscript{179} Dizdār, *Sulūk al-Mulūk*, 1b.
Although Dizdār did not mention any other work in his treatise, his main source of inspiration appears to have been Rāzī’s Mirṣād al-ʿĪbād, because the terminology, ideas and definitions in the two works display a close affinity although they were written in different languages. Dizdār’s treatise does not follow a particular structure as the work was divided into so many seemingly unrelated small chapters ranging from such topics as futuwwa and taṣawwuf to jihād and ‘aql. The first three chapters are on the caliphate, types of rulers, and justice, respectively, and the fourth chapter is on advice (maw’īza), divided into numerous sections replete with illustrative anecdotes and stories.

_Sulūk al-Mulūk_ was written one year before the anonymous _al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya_ in a region where the Safavid propaganda must have been intense. Yet Dizdār Muṣṭafā made no mention of the Ḵīzīlbaš in his work. Dizdār appears to have been a Sunnī mystic who was not interested in sectarian debates of the time. In _Sulūk al-Mulūk_, the author elaborated on a mystical vision of government and educated the ruler about the main features of Sufi tradition. Dizdār depicted a hierarchical structure of a cosmic government which is headed by the pole (ghaws), similar to the one displayed in the above anonymous treatise. But instead of subjecting the sultan to the pole, he exhorted the sultan to combine his authority (ṣaltana, khilāfa, mulk) with that of spiritual authority (wilāya).

Unlike the above two authors who appear to have been little noticed by their contemporaries, ‘Ārifī Ma'rūf Efendi (d. 1002/1593), an author of a book on the vizierate, was a high profile figure in the Ottoman learning establishment. He was a

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180 Dizdār’s ideas on the divine dispensation of rulership, for example, are exactly same as those of Rāzī’s. See Dizdār, _Sulūk al-Mulūk_, 2a; Najm-i Rāzī, _Mirṣād al-ʿĪbād_, 411-412; For an English translation, see Najm al-Din Razi, _The Path of God’s Bondsmen_, 395.
jurist by profession and a Sufi by disposition, who lived during the reigns of three sultans, Süleyman, Murad III, and Meḥmed III. Originally from Trabzon, he worked in the service of Shāh Efendi as an intern after his graduation from medrese and received his first appointment to a small medrese in Istanbul. He served as professor in several medreses and then left his teaching career while he was a professor in the prestigious Murādiye Medrese of Bursa. He started his judicial service, a better paying job with brighter prospects, with the ḳādīship of Izmir in 992/1584. After serving in Yenişehir, Amid, Damascus, and Bursa he was appointed ḳādī of Cairo in 1001/1592 where he died a year later.

In addition to his successful career in the Ottoman learning establishment and judiciary, ‘Ārifī left a good name in contemporary sources as a poet and a mystic. Along with many of his colleagues among the ‘ulemā he also pursued a spiritual path and entered the Bayrāmī order where he completed his wayfaring and received his license (icāzet). His contemporaries, Beyānī, Ḵınālīzāde Ḥasan, and ‘Aṭā’ī, all praised him for his mastery in mystical teachings and exceptional spiritual qualities. As a scholar and mystic, ‘Ārifī was better known in his time as the translator of Kāshifī’s much acclaimed biographical work on the lives of prominent Sufi saints, Rashaḥāt ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt (Beads of Dew from the Source of Life). According to Ḵınālīzāde Ḥasan, although ‘Ārifī’s Rashaḥāt was known to be a translation, it was in fact an embellished commentary. ‘Ārifī’s fame as a man of wisdom and translator of Rashaḥāt, which he dedicated to

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183 Ḵınālīzāde Hasan Çelebi, Tezkiretū ’ṣ-Ṣuwarā, 2: 600.
Murâd III, must have brought him closer to the sultan and his grand vizier. While he worked as judge, he was also counselor to Grand Vizier Çoça Sinân Pâşâ who served five different terms between 1580 and 1596. In the words of his biographer Beyâni, he was Sinân Pâşâ’s “tutor, advisor in government, and confidante in private matters.”

Similarly, Kınalızade Hasan portrayed ‘Arifî as the man who guided the Grand Vizier in all affairs and permanently occupied himself with ordering the realm.

Prior to becoming Sinân Pâşâ’s advisor in government, ‘Arifî wrote a handbook on the vizierate in 968/1560, ‘Ukûd al-Jawâhir li-Za'ha'îr al-Ahâ'îr (Precious Necklace for Matchless Treasures), a work in Arabic which he dedicated to Vizier Semiz ‘Alî Pâşâ a year before he rose to the grand vizierate. Written from a markedly Sufi perspective, ‘Ukûd al-Jawâhir is a work of exceptional quality reflecting its author’s vast command of various strands of political writing. ‘Arifî wrote the work in the mirror of princes genre and achieved a smooth synthesis of prevailing political teachings in ethics and jurisprudence. The work was organized in three chapters, embellished with Arabic poetry, parables, proverbs, stories, Quranic verses, prophetic traditions, and maxims of wisdom drawn from a diverse body of sources. The three principle subject, dealt with in the work were the semantics of the term ‘vizier’ and the juristic principals regarding the

184 See Muhammed ibn Muhammed Sherîf el-‘Abbâsî, Rasûhat-i ‘Ayn al-İayât (İstanbul: Sar Gezde Taş Destgahî, 1291/1874), 9.

185 Atâî, Hadiyûkatı-Hakaîk, 328.

186 “Vezîr-i Â’zam Sinân Pâşâ’nın hocası ve tedbîr-i umûr-i cumhûrda müsteşârî ve mahrem-i cemî’-i esrârî.” See Beyâni, Tezkiretî-i Ş-Süarâ, 162.


188 Bâbânî, Hadiyya al-‘Arifîn, 2: 466.
 vizier, a description of the vizier’s qualifications and responsibilities along with advice, and miscellaneous advice and a prayer.

By far the most celebrated author of this period who wrote on rulership was Ebū’l-Ḥayr ʿIsāmeddin Ṭāḥmed b. Muṣṭafā el-Ṭāskoprīzāde (d. 968/1561), who served mostly as a medrese professor during the reigns of Selīm I and Süleymān, and was one of the most prolific and versatile authors of his time. All written in Arabic, his works cover such diverse fields as grammar, literature, logic, Hadith, theology, biography, medicine and jurisprudence. He came from a celebrated Turkish ʿulemā family that had produced prominent professors and jurists since the early fifteenth century. Helped by his family name, he quickly rose through the ranks of the learned hierarchy and proved himself a competent professor by teaching in the most prestigious medreses, among them which Skopje, Edirne, Bursa, and finally the Şahın in Istanbul. Despite his bright prospects for advancement that might eventually have led him to the office of Şeyhülislām, he ended his career by retiring at the age of fifty-nine because of failing eyesight, while serving as judge of Istanbul, his first judicial appointment.

Unlike many other high profile ʿulemā of his time, Ṭāskoprīzāde opted to remain in the learning establishment and did not pursue high-paying judicial posts until late in his life. He was not well-connected with prominent statesmen, perhaps because he deliberately avoided being too close to rulers and governors. Testifying to his passion for teaching, in his autobiography, he enumerated not the books he compiled but the


190 Taşköprüzade, Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda, 3: 402.
books he taught in each of his teaching appointments. He was not an active participant in the literary circles of his time, nor he was considered a notable poet or prose writer. In a culture in which literature was accorded such high esteem and practically every intellectual was a poet with a high degree of poetic knowledge, his name appears rarely in biographical accounts of sixteenth-century poets. He did not take an active stance in the hotly debated controversies of this period such as the cash foundations, religious innovations, Sufi practices, or heretic views. Taşköprizade was better known to his contemporaries and later Ottomans as the author of *Shaqā‘i q al-Nu‘māniyya*, a biographical dictionary of Ottoman *ulemā* written in Arabic. The work written in his retirement when he was already blind, was translated many times into Turkish, beginning during his own lifetime. Taşköprizade wrote two works of political import, both in Arabic. The first is a short treatise titled *Risāla fi Bayān Aṣrār al-Khilāfa al-Insāniyya wa al-Salṭana al-Ma‘nawīyya* (*Treatise Explaining the Mystery of Man’s Caliphate and Spiritual Sultanate*). Written from a distinctly mystical perspective, the treatise was based on the conviction that there is a direct correlation between the government of society and the government of self, a view that found its most elaborate exposition in the writings of Ibn ‘Arabi. Although Taşköprizade did not cite any reference in his treatise, a textual

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comparison shows that his two main sources of inspiration were *Ihyā‘ al-‘Ulūm* of Ghazālī and *Zakhīrat al-Mulūk* of Hamadāni. Tāşköprızāde’s work took its title from the sixth chapter of *Zakhīrat al-Mulūk* which is *Dar Sharh-i Salṭanat-i Ma’nawī va Asrār-i Khilāfat-i Insānī.*

Tāşköprızāde wrote *Asrār al-Khilaफa* in ten sections encompassing government, ethics and piety, each corresponding to a section in *Zakhīrat al-Mulūk*. Except for the first chapter, titled *Aḥkām al-Wilāya wa al-Salṭana wa al-Imāma, Asrār al-Khilāफa* formulated political views in the form of ‘rights’ (*ḥukūk*). The remaining chapters are on the rights of the sultanate, subjects, parents, spouses, children, slaves and servants, and friends, respectively. Tāşköprızāde wrote the treatise for the ruler as a prescription for the attainment of the spiritual sultanate, or the caliphate. The main quest of the treatise was to remind the sultan of his duties in fulfilling the rights of others. The second chapter, for example, explained the rights of the sultanate versus those of the holder of this office, the sultan. The sultanate, in this view, was conceived to be an independent office with its own requirements and principles with which the sultan, as holder of this office, had to comply. The third chapter explains the rights of subjects which the sultan had to observe. When explaining the rights of others to be observed, Tāşköprızāde did not simply advise the sultan to be nice or just towards the holders of these rights but rather underscored that these rights were inalienable and must be to be strictly observed in juristic terms.

Unlike many other advice books of this period, *Asrār al-Khilāफa* did not tolerate any breaches of the religious code on the part of the ruler. It did not grant the ruler any

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prerogatives in performing religious duties and abstaining from prohibitions, and expected him to adhere to a much higher standard of piety than his subjects. In this respect, the treatise is a tacit critique of the sixteenth-century Ottoman sultanate and a call for a return to a pristine form of rulership once exercised by prophets and the rightly guided caliphs. Given the sixteenth century peculiarities of dynastic politics, şaşköprızâde seems to have prepared the treatise as a direct prescription to cure some of the ills he observed in rulership. During the reigns of Selîm I and Süleymân, şaşköprızâde witnessed various measures of oppression towards the subjects, maltreatment of household servants and slaves, execution of princes by their fathers, rebellions of princes against their fathers, fierce rivalries, and infidelities among the ruling elite. In such a context, şaşköprızâde instructed the ruler about the rights of others which he was expected to observe, respect and implement in order to achieve the spiritual sultanate, the ultimate form of rulership.

In educating the ruler with specific religious principles and historical illustrations, şaşköprızâde did not make a single reference to the legendary kings of antiquity or medieval Islam such as Alexander, Nûshinrevân, and Ḥarûn al-Rashîd, whose deeds were commonly alluded in the mainstream of political literature. Instead, şaşköprızâde presented such figures as Solomon, Moses, Joseph, and the rightly guided caliphs after the prophet with special reverence to ‘Alî, as models for ideal rulership. As a way of reflecting his overall view of rulership, in illustrating political views, şaşköprızâde preferred only prophets and the rightly guided caliphs, not lay rulers, because the former provided authoritative and binding precedents while the latter stood only for commendable and exemplary acts of rulership.
Ṭašköprizade’s second work expressing his political views was Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda wa Miṣbāḥ al-Siyāda fī Mawdūʿ āt al-‘Ulūm (The Key of Happiness and Guide to Nobility in Objects of Science), a massive compendium on the description of 355 individual sciences. As one of the most outstanding achievements of sixteenth century Ottoman culture, Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda was a product of life-long scholarship, written towards the end of Ṭašköprizade’s life. Ṭašköprizade prepared the compendium as a reference work for beginners who would like to study these sciences. While the author was content with giving a very brief introduction to many fields of study, for more established disciplines he described the subject matter in detail, explained key concepts, approaches, and theories, and provided a short bibliography of prominent works in that field. The author also evaluated the uses of each discipline and, in cases of non-religious sciences, after an objective description of the field, discussed the problematic aspects of that discipline from a religious point of view. In a way, Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda was a jurist’s guide to the study of religious and lay sciences.

In addition to the host of different sources he used to compile his compendium, Ṭašköprizade’s principle source in writing the sections on ethics, religious sciences, and Sufism was Ghazālī’s Iḥyāʿ ‘Ulūm, which had been written to revive the religious sciences. Besides the sophistication of the work and the reverence it enjoyed among the

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197 Above all, the work demonstrates the extent of scholarly interests and scientific horizons of a medrese professor, defying the prevailing idea in modern scholarship that portrayed the Ottoman ʿulemā as parochial, with interests and expertise confined to religious sciences, grammar and logic alone.
‘ulemā, for Ottoman intellectuals its author Ghazālī was the one who definitively established the compatibility of the sciences with Islam. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the compatibility of Islam and philosophy, for example, was revived in Ottoman intellectual circles and the Ghazālīan synthesis was overwhelmingly preferred. Thus *Miḥfāẓ al-Saʿāda* was not only a jurist’s view of the sciences but also a Ghazālīan explanation of them.

In addition to its portrayal of sixteenth century Ottoman conceptions of the sciences, *Miḥfāẓ al-Saʿāda* provided the most extensive treatment of disciplines and teachings pertaining to government. Scattered throughout the book, Taşköprizade’s instructions on government fall into three main categories. First, he enumerated individual disciplines that deal with different aspects of government. These included practical wisdom, ethics, government (*siyāsa*), manners of rulership (*ādāb al-Mulūk*), manners of the vizierate (*ādāb al-wizāra*), market inspection (*iḥtiṣāb*), military administration, commanding right and forbidding wrong, divinity (*‘ilm-i ilāhī*), and others. This was one of the most extensive diversifications of disciplines on rulership in the tradition of encyclopedic writings.† Second, Taşköprizade recommended books in each of these sciences, providing a fairly comprehensive list of works that were known to an Ottoman scholar writing on politics in the sixteenth century, indicative of the author’s preferred classification of sciences on government. The books he recommended on rulership also reveal that the author was familiar with major pre-Ottoman writers on government such as Māwardī, Ghazālī, Fārābī, Rāzī, Ṭūsī, Davvānī, Taşsūsī, Ibn Zafar,

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† The author refers to some 1900 works altogether.

† Compare to similar works examined by Ahmet Subhi Furat, “İslâm Edebiyatında Ansiklopedik Eserler: h. IV.-IX/m. X.-XV. asırlar,” *İslâm Tektikleri Enstitüsü Dergisi* 7 (1979): 211-231.
and others. Third, the author conveyed his own views on government. In this sense, Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda was not only an informative introduction to sciences of rulership but a refined account of correct teachings on the subject. Although there is no study showing the overall impact of Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda on later Ottoman learning, it must have guided later Ottoman authors writing and reading on government.200

iii. Ethics And Statecraft

‘Alāyī b. Muḥībbī el-Ṣīrāzī el-Ṣerīf lived during the reign of Süleymān and wrote his work in the latter part of that reign. As his toponym and scattered information in his works about his life suggest, he was from Shiraz, son of one Mīr Muʿīdī. His honorific ‘Ṣerīf’ may indicate that he belonged to a family that claimed descent from the Prophet through the Ḥasan lineage. He grew up in Konya and was initiated into the Mevlevī order where he became a Mesnevī reciter, and was capable of writing poems in three languages.201 In his works he displayed a strong mystical tendency and was particularly pretentious about his authority in such fields as geomancy, onomancy, occultism, and esoteric teachings.202 Despite his engagement and expertise in these unorthodox practices he presented himself as a staunch Sunnī who demonstrated his proficiency in the mainstream religious sciences and professed his affiliation with the mainstream

200 Although there is no evidence that Nevālī had read Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda, his translation of the pseudo-Aristotelian text, Sirr al-Asrār, appeared after it was recommended by Taṣḵūp rūżāde.

201 İpekten & İsen, Tezkirelere Göre Divan Edebiyatı İsimler Sözluğu, 26-27. A manuscript record indicates that he was in Konya in 959/1552, in the vicinity of Rumi’s tomb where he copied Ibn Kemal’s work Nigāristān. See Flügel, Arabischen, Persischen und Türkischen Handschriften, 4: 285-6.

202 ‘Alāyī bin Muḥībbī el-Ṣīrāzī el-Ṣerīf, Düstürû’l-Vüzerā, MS, SK, Yazma Bağışlar 4421/3, 70.
confession of *ehl-i sünnet ve'l-cemâ'at*.

He wrote two works on government: a long treatise on the vizierate and a longer work on rulership. He compiled *Düstürlü'l-Vüzerâ* in 966/1558 and dedicated it to Lâlâ Muştafa Pasha, Prince Selim’s tutor.\(^{203}\) ‘Alâyî informed the reader in the preface that he wrote it in Turkish because he had not come across “a new work or a useful compilation in the Turkish language regarding the vizierate, judgeship and governorship,” despite the existence of many such works in Arabic and Persian.\(^{204}\) He organized his work into three chapters, in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction is devoted to an etymological analysis of the term *wazîr* and its hermeneutical interpretations. The three chapters are on necessary traits for the vizier, exemplary stories of past viziers, and useful prayers, respectively. In the conclusion, ‘Alâyî reasserted his authority on the subject and stated that the teachings he recommended in the work were drawn from authoritative sources and were proven to be fruitful.\(^{205}\) Throughout the work he illustrated his views with stories and embellished the text with Turkish and Persian couplets and quatrains.

‘Alâyî’s second work on political theory, *Netîçetî’s-Sülûk*, is a Turkish rendering of Ghazâli’s popular work on rulership, *al-Ţibr al-Mašbûq*, better known as *Naşîha al-Mulûk*.\(^{206}\) ‘Alâyî stated that he had seen both the Persian and Arabic versions of Ghazâli’s work and chose the latter for his translation. Of the three parts of Ghazâli’s

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\(^{204}\) ‘Alâyî, *Düstürlü'l-Vüzerâ*, 3.


treatise, ‘Alāyī translated the last two parts as literally as possible while commenting extensively on the first part, at least doubling the size of the original work. This first part explained the principal tenets of the creed. In his commentary on Ghazālī’s brief presentation, ‘Alāyī updated the classical controversies and addressed current situations in Ottoman society. Although it was quite unusual for an author to write a commentary on a treatise on rulership, ‘Alāyī’s commenting on the first part of Ghazālī’s work which deals with theology puts his own work in the line of traditional commentaries on books on ‘ilm-i kalām, an area in which the Ottoman ʿulemā had particular interest. In his commentary, ‘Alāyī highlighted the principles of ehl-i sünnet while criticizing and disproving the contrary views of the Shīʿīs, the Muʿtazilīs, and Christians. In support of his views, he drew evidence from such post-Ghazālīan ʿulemā as Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī, Bayḍāwī and Davvānī all belonging to the Ashʿarī school of kalām.207 By instructing the sultan about the true creed and admonishing him to stay away from contrary views, ‘Alāyī seems to have felt the same concern as other prominent Ottoman ʿulemā who busied themselves with issuing fatwās, writing polemical treatises, and commenting on kalām books in order to face the challenges posed by heretical views and movements that gained momentum in the first half of the sixteenth century.

Another émigré from the East who wrote in a fashion similar to ‘Alāyī was Muḥaffar b. ʿOṣmān al-Barmakī, better known as Ḥızīr Mūnṣī (d. 964/1556), who fled from Azarbayjān and took refuge in the Ottoman Empire.208 The name Barmakī may suggest that he belonged to the descendants of the celebrated Abbasid vizieral family the

207 ‘Alāyī, Netiçetü’s-Sülük, 34b, 49b, 52a.

208 Except for the date of his death no information has been found so far about the author. Kātib Çelebi, Kashf al-Ẓanānī, 1: 36; Ismāʿīl Bābānī, Zayl Kashf al-Ẓanānī, 2: 464.
Bermecides, who originally came from northern Iran, a region next to where Ḥiẓir Münṣī lived. Otherwise, it may show that his place of origin was possibly Barmak in southern Iran. He wrote *Akhlāq al-Atqiyya va Šīfāt al-Asfiyya*, a long treatise on ethics that he dedicated to Süleymān. He probably wrote it for the purpose of obtaining a position in Ottoman government or at the sultan’s court, as he devoted a long section to eulogizing Süleymān, whom he called ‘the leader of the end of time’ (*ṣāḥib-qirān-i ākhīr al-zamān*).

He inserted a short résumé of his scholarly background in the preface of the book with a dramatic story of how he fled Safavid oppression for Ottoman justice. As he recounted, he used to serve in the court of the Shirwanshahs who ruled in the eastern part of Caucasia, in his words, “since the time of the Sassanids.” Although he did not display a marked anti-Shīʿī bias, he blamed Safavid aggression as the principal cause of his departure, a move he called a ‘flight’ (*hijra*). He chose flight instead of sojourn because he felt that since the arrival of Safavids the order of religion and the world (*niẓām-i dīn u dunyā*) had broken down in Shirwan. He was a Sunnī scholar, who probably lost his position because of the Safavid interference, and was possibly subjected to religious harassment.

He first fled to Georgia in 940/1533 where he stayed for nine months during which he observed that things were not getting better, because he felt harassed by infidels (*küffār*) this time and opted to go Trabzon. This was a time of turmoil in eastern Anatolia, Caucasia, Iran, and Irak, for the Ottomans and the Safavids were engaged in a

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fierce competition to secure the control of these regions. In 1533 the Ottomans waged a massive military campaign against the Safavids and occupied Tabriz in 1534. A major ally of the Ottomans was Olama Pāşā who changed his allegiance from the Safavids to the Ottomans in the region bordering the Shirwanshahs. Under these circumstances, in deciding where to go, Ḩızır Münşî must have been attracted by the successful Ottoman advance into Caucasia. Their killing of the founder of the Safavid dynasty, Junayd, had already made the Sharvanshahs natural allies of the Ottomans and an archenemy of the Safavids. At the time of Ḩızır Münşî’s flight, the reigning Shirwanshah ruler Khalîl II (r. 930-942/1524-1535), whom he probably had served, had already been reduced to a vassal by the Safavids. The Shirwanshahs were subjugated by the Safavids after Ismā‘îl I’s invasion of the country and execution of Farrukh Yasar I in 1501. Shirwanshah rule was finally ended in 1538 by Tahmasb I despite Khalîl II’s attempt to regain his dynasty with Ottoman help. During this struggle between the local dynasty and the Safavids, Ḩızır Münşî might well have played a role in forging an alliance between the Sharvanshahs and the Ottomans.

Ḩızır Münşî wrote the work in three parts, that dealt with ethical theory, moral traits and exemplary stories, respectively. The format of the book does not easily fit an established genre in ethics, and appears to be an eclectic style that reflects the stylistic features of diverse forms of writing on the subject. As he stated in the beginning, Ḩızır Münşî’s major sources in composing the first part were Ghazâlî, Tûsî, and Davvânî. In

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212 A very sophisticated political treatise called Ādāb al-Khilâfa va Asbāb al-Hisâfa was copied in 1542 for Süleyman by a certain Mahmûd bin Ahmed el-Kaysêrî. The books were written in Persian by a certain İbrâhîm b. Muhammed and dedicated to Farrukh Yasarî (r. 866-900/1462-1501), a Shirwanid ruler of Caucasia who was better known for having killed Junayd in 864/1460, the founder of the Safavid dynasty. See İbrâhîm b. Muhammed, Ādāb al-Khilâfa va Asbāb al-Hisâfa, MS, Topkâpî Sarayî, Revan 404.
the first part, Ḥızır Münşî discussed theoretical as well as practical ethics and covered the three principal areas of ethics that were examined in three separate parts by Ṭūsî, Davvānî, and Ḍīnālîzâde. Unlike his sources of inspiration, Ṭūsî and Davvānî, he presented his political views mostly in the first part of the work, while devoting the following parts mostly to individual ethical virtues. This format that gave primacy to government made Ḥkl̰q al-“Atqiyā more a political treatise than an ethical work. The only known copy of the work was written in an exquisite nesî̄h script with vowels and probably remained in the sultanic library. The work does not appear to have reached more a limited audience or had any considerable impact on the subsequent course of Ottoman political and ethical writing.

A much less well-known author, who wrote a short but dense treatise exclusively on rulership and dedicated it to Selīm I in 919/1513, was Şemseddîn Cahramî. The likely title of the work, Siyâsiya Barāya Sulṭân Selīm (Government for Sultan Selīm), does not appear in the main text and was recorded as a bibliographical note on the first folio. In his long preface that amounted to one third of the book, the author eulogized Selīm I and elaborated upon his intentions and expectations in writing the book but did not provide specific information about his personal background. He does not appear to be a notable figure of his time, for his name seems not to have caught the attention of contemporary chroniclers and biographers. His toponym suggests that he was originally from Jahram, a small town south of Shiraz in Iran. His lengthy eulogy, crafted to gain the heart of the ruler, his highlighting of the Sultan’s fight against infidels and heretics, and his appeal for his work to be accepted may suggest that he was an émigré from the East in

213 Şemseddîn Cahramî, Siyâsiya Barāya Sulṭân Selîm, MS, Topkapı Sarayi, Revan 1514.

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search of a new patron. Cahramī’s work does not appear to have reached a wider audience as its only known copy is the one written for the sultan which was preserved in the palace library.

As much as the preface of the book is a fine example of ornamented literary Persian, the main body of the book was written in compact but plain Persian using a technical language. Regardless of the author’s personal aspirations in presenting the book as a gift, Siyāsiya proves to be a very sophisticated work of political theory intended to be a practical handbook for the sultan in governance. The treatise consisted of three parts (tanbīḥ), admonition on the government of self (siyāsat-i nafs), of the retinue (siyāsat-i khāssa), and of the commons (siyāsat-i ʿāmma), respectively. The author appears to have been well-versed in political theory but did not quote a particular authority, or depend on any classical work on the subject. Cahramī displayed little concern with the juristic, theological, or spiritual aspects of rulership but instead focused on the practical rules of statecraft. The treatise made little use of poetry, Quranic verses or prophetic traditions, and did not illustrate admonitions with exemplary stories, a feature that distinguishes it from a typical advice book. The arrangement of the whole book around three layers of government appears to be borrowed from ethical works that divide ethics into three categories, a well-known division since Ṭūsī’s Akhlāq-i Nāṣīrī: as government of self (tadbīr al-nafs), of household (manzīl) and of cities (mudūn).  

Distinguishing between the government of self (siyāsa al-nafs) and the government of others (siyāsa al-ghayr) and tying the quality of government to the moral quality of the

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ruler was common in political literature as well.

As the content and format of Siyāsiya reveal, Cahramī built his political theory around three principal convictions about rulership. First, he envisioned the ruler to be in full control of government and directed his teachings toward instructing him in running affairs of state efficiently. Cahramī must have found the ideal ruler in the personality of Selīm I as he seems to have considered him in the same line as the legendary world conquerors. Writing in 1513, before Selīm’s eastern and southern campaigns, he ended his preface by praying for the extension of Selīm’s rule from China to Cairo, a wishful prophecy that partly came true only four years later by the conquest of Egypt.\(^{215}\)

Second, because he envisioned a strong sultan, Cahramī made the question of improving and preserving the sultan’s physical potency and moral purity a priority to address in his treatise, a concern that led him to prescribe specific instructions for maintaining complete health. In contrast with the prevailing admonitions, he even privileged the sultan’s health over his piety and permitted him to drink wine.\(^{216}\)

Third, he adopted an institutional perspective on rulership, in the way it was elaborated by such medieval classics as Niẓām al-Mulk’s Siyāsatnāma and Kaika’us’ Qābusnāma, and tied good government to the efficiency of its institutions as well as to the overall health of the ruler. In accordance with Ottoman practice, he divided the ruling elite (khāssa) into two categories, inner (andarūn) and outer (bīrūn).\(^{217}\) He then elaborated on the organization of the outer section that corresponded to the government

\(^{215}\) Cahramī, Siyāsiya Barāya Sulṭān Selīm, 5a.

\(^{216}\) Cahramī, Siyāsiya Barāya Sulṭān Selīm, 11b.

\(^{217}\) Cahramī, Siyāsiya Barāya Sulṭān Selīm, 17a-18b.
around ten major offices, and established principles of administering the officials working in these services.

Unlike these obscure men of learning from the East who probably wrote political treatises in expectation of winning the sultan’s favor and gaining employment, Celâlzade Muştafâ, also known as Koça Nişâncî, was one of the prominent statesmen of his time. He was a notable poet and historian who served as the chief of chancery for almost a quarter century during the reign of Süleyman and Selim II. He came from a Turkish family that produced jurists and scholars, and made an early entrance to the bureaucratic service after his graduation from medrese. Because of Celâlzade’s talent in language and excellence in prose writing, Pîrî Pashâ employed him as his secretary and his affiliation with this respected grand vizier enabled him to secure his steady ascent on the bureaucratic career ladder. While enjoying political support from Pîrî Pashâ, he received his professional training from the chief of chancery Seydî Bey, whom he regarded as his mentor. After Pîrî Pashâ’s retirement he became a secretary to Ibrâhîm Pashâ who had been appointed to the vizierate with very little experience in statecraft against the established custom. Ibrâhîm Pashâ’s ignorance of governmental affairs, made Celâlzade his confidante and indispensable assistant. Celâlzade was promoted to the position of chief of clerks which he occupied for a decade and finally became the chief of chancery in 1534 until 1557.

Celâlzade’s excellence in chancery and prose writing was attested in all contemporary accounts. He spent his career compiling numerous law books and decrees that came to be known by his name, and also composed and translated a number of works

\[218\] V. L. Ménage, “Djalâlzâde Muştafâ Çelebi”, EI²; Latîfî, Tezkiretü’ş-Şu’arâ, 529.
during his retirement years after 1557, mostly in the field of history. His best known work of history was _Tabakhati’l-Memalik_, planned as thirty volumes of which only the last volume survived, or was written at all. As perhaps the foremost expert on the Ottoman state of his time, he planned to write other volumes on Ottoman institutions, laws, and procedures, a project that probably never materialized. _Tabakhati’l-Memalik_ is a work of belles-lettres as much as a chronicle of contemporary events in which the author, in the words of his contemporary Kinalizade, sacrificed meaning (ma’nâ) in favor of pompous articulation (tumturak-i elfâz).

His chronicle of the reign of Selim I, _Selimname_, however, was a political treatise as well as a literary work of art. In _Selimname_, Celâlzâde not only described major events but interpreted them to derive lessons, make normative judgments, and infer binding principles and prescriptive precedents. He devised the work to be an illustrated manifesto demonstrating a model rulership and showing how to eliminate corruption.

Celâlzâde’s only book specifically devoted to the ethics of rulership was _Mevâhibi’l-Hallâc fi Merâtibi’l-Ahlâk_ (Gifts of God in Ranks of Morality), a massive work organized into fifty-six chapters. The book addressed statesmen, and was better known as _Enisü’s-Selahîn ve Celisü’l-Havâkîn_ (Friend of Sultans and Companion of Khakans), a handbook of ethical principles to be observed in statecraft. In addition to

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220 See Gökbilgin, “Celâl-zâde”, IA; Beyâni agrees with Kinalizâde ‘Alî and finds Celâlzâde’s prose and verse just as pompous. see Beyâni, _Tezkiretü’s-Şüurâ_, 292.


222 For a brief summary of the work see Aynî, _Türk Ahlakçılari_, 135-155.
chapters directly related to political theory such as those dealing with government
(siyāset), justice (‘adālet) and consultation (meşveret), the two longest chapters in the
Mevāhibü’l-Ḥallāk are on rulership (salties) and the vizierate (vezāret). Although it
was directed at statesmen, however, this did not prevent the book from reaching a wider
audience. The number of copies in libraries as well as testimonies from contemporaries
indicate that the work was well-received among Ottoman literati in general. In devising
the book, Celālzāde adopted a novel genre in ethics, different from that adopted in works
of ethical philosophy such as  Ḫinalizāde’s Aḥlāḵ-i ʿAlāḵī or that adopted in works in the
Sufi tradition, such as Eṣrefoğlu Rūmī’s Müzekki ’n-Nūfūs. Celālzāde made a topical
arrangement of the book around virtues paying little attention to vices. He thus included
only positive moral traits, declaring them degrees (mertebe) to be attained.

Celālzāde’s principal source of inspiration was Akhlāq-i Muḥṣini. For the most
part, Mevāhibü’l-Ḥallāk appears to have been an expanded translation of Akhlāq-i
Muḥṣini. While fully incorporating Kāshifi’s book into his work, Celālzāde rearranged
the topics, added new topics and significantly expanded each topic by adding his own
views and illustrations some of which were drawn from Ottoman history. Mevāhibü’l-
Ḥallāk then almost doubled the size of Akhlāq-i Muḥṣini which consisted of 40 brief
chapters, and neither Celālzāde nor its readers seem to have considered it a translation.

An equally celebrated statesmen and scholar of this period was Ḫinalizāde ʿAlī
Efendi who belonged to a family of scholars from Isparta, and was one of the most
revered figures of the Ottoman learning establishment in the sixteenth century. Despite
his complaints of being ignored in the early stages of his learning career, he quickly rose

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223 For comparison see Aynî, Türk Ahlâkçılıarı, 57-71, 135-154, 73-96.
to top positions in both the learning profession and judiciary, including the professorship of Süleymâniye Medrese and the military judgeship of Anatolia. After graduation from medrese he entered the service of Çivîzâde and continued to be one of his most favored students. Çivîzâde, who briefly served as Şeyhülislâm, was a leading figure among the ‘ulemâ faction critical of certain Sufi practices and government policies. Failing to obtain a teaching appointment through Çivîzâde who had fallen from favor, Kânalizâde turned to Ebû’ssu‘ûd, Çivîzâde’s critic and rival, and managed to impress the Şeyhülislâm with his competence in religious sciences, whereupon he received his first appointment as professor.\textsuperscript{224} He also forged warm relations with Rüstem Pâşâ, a two-term grand vizier and the sultan’s son-in-law, a connection he benefited greatly from until his scholarly authority was firmly established.\textsuperscript{225}

Kânalizâde, a jurist, poet and statesman, was a respected name in scholarly, literary and government circles. Besides writing poems in three languages, he established himself as a truly outstanding prose writer and gained fame through his treatises on various subjects. All biographical works of his time, describe Kânalizâde as a polymathic scholar, and an epitome of wisdom, someone who reached the peak of literary articulation. In an age of towering literary figures, Beyâni, who only gave mediocre descriptions of such figures as Bâkî and Celâlzâde, praised Kânalizâde as having “no equal in prose and no match in verse.”\textsuperscript{226} Muştafâ ‘Âlî compared his erudition in diverse sciences to that of Kemâlpâşâzâde [literally son of Erudition], perhaps the most revered

\textsuperscript{224} Kânalizâde Hasan, \textit{TezkiretüŞşuarâ}, 664.


\textsuperscript{226} “Ne neşr-i inşâda ‘adîî gelmişdür ve ne na‘m-ı eş’ârda mişîlî vâcûd bulmuşdûr.” Beyâni, \textit{TezkiretüŞşuarâ}, 182.
of all Ottoman scholars, and claimed that had Қınafızade lived longer he would have surpassed Kemâlpaşâzâde’s fame and could well have become known as Ebû’l-Kemâlât [literally father of eruditions].\textsuperscript{227} Similarly, ‘Āşîk Çelebi compared his mastery in numerous sciences, ranging from geometry to grammar, to that of the greatest figures in these respective sciences.\textsuperscript{228}

Regardless of the scholarly and artistic value of his works, Қınafızade seems to have been a very engaging person at scholarly and literary gatherings and had an electrifying effect on anybody he met dazzling them with his exceptional character, knowledge and skills. As all his biographers agreed, Қınafızade was a sage of time, an ultimate authority on all branches of learning whom his peers would consult on the most intriguing questions of their respective disciplines. Yet, excluding his short treatises and poetry, Қınafızade left only one sizable work as a proof of his vast learning, \textit{Ahlâk-i ‘Alâ’î}. The work was, by the consensus of his contemporaries as well as later readers, one of the highest achievements of Ottoman learning. Beyânî stated that it turned the works of Țüsî and Davvânî into old garments (\textit{ahlâk-i siyâb}).\textsuperscript{229} Қınafızade dedicated his work to grand vizier ‘Alî Pâşâ, and titled it after his name: \textit{Ahlâk-i ‘Alâ’î} (The Book of ‘Alî or, by allusion, Exalted Book).\textsuperscript{230} The young Muştafâ ‘Ālî, who had the privilege of having met with him witnessed how Қınafızade wrote his work:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{227} İsen, \textit{Kânîh ‘il-AhÎbd’un Tezkîrê Kîsnu}, 245-6.
  \item \textsuperscript{229} Beyânî, \textit{Tezkirezî-Şu’arâ}, 183.
  \item \textsuperscript{230} Қınafızade, ‘Alî, \textit{Ahlâk-i ‘Alâ’î}, 1: 10.
\end{itemize}
While he was a magistrate in Damascus he was busy with composing his esteemed work *Aḥlāk-i ‘Alāʾī*. He would show a great affection and friendship towards this poor soul and invite me to join his exhilarating conversation. He would especially hear a chapter from my book *Enīsū‘īl-Kulāb* which I was composing. He himself would read a chapter from his *Aḥlāk-i ‘Alāʾī* and would ask me to say if there is anything that requires interruption or opposing. He would say that the purpose of friendship is to look at the work with an enemy’s eye and point at human errors.

Essentially, the work of a given week would be presented by both of us. When there is something to oppose, a correction or a rephrasing would be considered an obligation.  

The modest and scrupulous Kīnalīzāde composed *Aḥlāk-i ‘Alāʾī* with a lofty claim that reflects the increasing self-esteem and self-confidence among Ottoman intellectuals of the period who sought to compose works comparable to what they deemed to be the towering achievements of non-Ottoman sages. In the preface, he stated that before him three previous authors had written on the same subject. The first was Nāṣir al-Dīn Ṭūsī, the author of *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*, whom he credited with renewing the foundation of philosophy after its demise. The second was Jalāl al-Dīn Davvānī, whom Kīnalīzāde praised for renewing the religious creed and embellishing the library of philosophy with his *Akhlāq-i Jālālī*. The third was Kāshīfī, who Kīnalīzāde noted did not follow philosophical inquiry (*taḥkīkāt-i ḥikemīye*) and scientific scrutiny (*teḏḏīkāt-i ‘ilmīyye*) in writing his work *Akhlāq-i Muḥsinī*. Yet he still valued *Akhlāq-i Muḥsinī* for

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its style and readability that made this work more popular than the first two. Noting that there was no such work in Turkish (zebān-i türkī-i rūmī), he decided to write the fourth book and wished that it would be more popular than the previous trio: “It is my hope that this book will be more widely received than the previous ones and become a new robe for the book of beloved wisdom, not a worn cloth.” To bring his hope to fruition Kânalızâde, despite largely depending on Davvānī’s Akhlāq-i Jâlālī for its format, designed the work to reflect the distinguishing features of the previous three works. Namely, he composed Aḥlāk-i ‘Alā’ī as a work of practical philosophy which conformed to Sunnī theology and embellished it with a literary style. As he praised Tüşî for founding the science of ethics, Davvānī for disseminating ethical teachings, and Kâshīfī for adding a literary flavor to ethics, he justified and praised his own work as refreshing the teaching of ethics, that had undergone a fallow period since the composition of the three earlier works.234

As its numerous copies in Ottoman libraries demonstrate, Aḥlāk-i ‘Alā’ī lived up to its promise and became an instant hit soon after its completion and remained the definitive work of ethics among the Ottoman literati thereafter.235 Writing almost a


234 Nâṣîr âdûna nasîr-i Tûsî
Ba’de şem’i Devvân nisbetten
Muhûşîn âdûna Hüseyn Vâ’îz
Pârî bâd idî târ u pûdî
Eyledüm tâze-ter ol càmelerî
Diîdi Aḥlâk zuhûr eyledî fen
Oldî ahlâk-i Celâlî rûşen
Yâdî kâr eyledî ahlâk-i ğâse
Cümlesî oldî çû ahlâk-ı kuhen
Zerkeﬂ-i Rûmî-zîbâyla men

century after Kınlızade, Kâtib Çelebi recorded that *Ahlâk-i ‘Alâ‘î* was superior to all other works of ethics that had been written before.\(^{236}\) There were three principal reasons why the work gained a privileged status among many other compilations on ethics and government. First, having the Ottoman audience in mind, Kınlızade adapted the teachings of ethical philosophy to the Ottoman context. He left out issues and questions that he deemed not relevant to Ottoman society and instead elaborated upon questions of particular interest for Ottoman audience. Second, he introduced the Ottoman experience into ethical philosophy by drawing his examples and illustrations from the deeds of revered Ottoman figures. This made *Ahlâk-i ‘Alâ‘î* an expression of Ottoman ideals in morality, government and social order in the field of practical philosophy. Third, he turned Tûşî’s and Davvâni’s cut-and-dry ethical philosophy into a literary masterpiece, embellishing it with poetry, and crafting to suit Ottoman taste. For the Ottoman literati, who were accustomed to reading the major achievements of Islamic culture in philosophy, literature and religious sciences in their original languages, *Ahlâk-i ‘Alâ‘î* demonstrated in the field of practical philosophy that such sophisticated works could also be written in Turkish.

Kınlızade’s older contemporary ‘Abdü’l-Mu‘ın Lütfi Pâşâ (d. 970/1562), having no respect for literary expressions of political views, wrote on rulership from a completely different perspective. He was the only grand vizier who wrote on political theory in this period. He came to Ottoman service as a child levy from the Balkans, probably from Albania, and received his education and training in the palace school. He had the opportunity to serve in a variety of offices throughout the reigns of Bâyezîd II,

Selim I, and Süleyman that enabled him to gain a unique experience in statecraft. He was appointed to the grand vizierate in 1539 as an experienced, successful, and a respected statesman who also enjoyed the distinction of being a dynastic son-in-law. During his term he undertook significant institutional, military, and financial reforms that he later bragged about but failed to forge friendly relations with palace factions that were increasingly becoming powerful in government. Thus, despite his record of excellence in government service, his grand vizierate lasted for only two years, ending with a humiliating dismissal that forced him to choose retirement.

Lütfi Paşa was the first political author who analyzed Ottoman politics and introduced contemporary conceptions of government into his works. He legitimized the Ottoman dynasty without questioning its basis, criticized corrupt practices, and proposed government reforms. His writings not only defend the Ottoman dynasty and speak for its official ideology but also introduce novel ideas to improve the condition of government and society. His way of criticizing and legitimizing Ottoman rule was unprecedented and served as a model for later authors who were to write about Ottoman political practice. Although he served as a grand vizier to Süleyman, his influence on subsequent generations of statesmen and scholars endured not, because he was a model of a grand vizier but because he was a political visionary with a critical eye.

Lütfi Paşa’s long service in a variety of government offices, both at the political center and in the provinces, including appointments on land and sea, gave him a unique experience for developing his thoughts on government. His writings cover issues ranging from the caliphate to history and jurisprudence to theology. Compared to his

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237 Gökbilgin, “Lütfi Paşa”, IA.
contemporaries he was a self-taught scholar, mostly relying on his own experiences and conclusions in attuning his views on politics. He stood out as a statesman scholar who wrote on contemporary government and politics using his own observations, a type that would be common from Muṣṭafāʾ Alī on (d. 1600).

Lütfi Pasha was one of the first authors who significantly took the Ottoman experience into consideration in political theory. He was a defender of the Ottoman dynasty, a critic of government and a political reformist at the same time. Lütfi Pasha shifted the focus of Ottoman political writing from the sultan and religion, including morality, to government and law. He criticized past and contemporary government practices which were not compatible with the law and regarded the Ottoman sultan as the highest authority to establish and apply the law. Although he is well-known in Ottoman historiography as a historian and political thinker, ironically, his ideas are little studied and his contribution to Ottoman thought is largely overlooked.

During his retreat after retirement, Lütfi Pasha devoted himself to learning and writing on history, government, jurisprudence, theology and even medicine. He wrote simple works for the general public and none of his works appears to have been acclaimed by contemporary scholars, except for those he wrote on government, his field of expertise. Despite his skills as an administrator, reformist, and scholar he seems to have suffered from an inability to forge productive social relationships. He did not even abstain from criticizing the most distinguished scholars of his time, such as Ebūʾsuʿūd, for being ignorant. He had very little esteem for his colleagues in government and the


239 İşirli, “Lutfı Paşa”, TDVİA.
scholarly community, an attitude that left him with few friends to appreciate his work.

For Lütfi Paşa, writing about such diverse fields was a way of proving the validity of his views and opposing the people who failed to appreciate his excellence.

Lütfi Paşa wrote Təvərîh-i Āl-i ʻOşmān as a general history of the Ottoman dynasty from its inception to his own day.240 He compiled the work from previously written chronicles and it is not considered as a significant source of Ottoman history except for the events he reported from his own time. Certain features of Təvərîh indicate that it was not written simply to be a contribution to historical writing but as a public statement of Lütfi Paşa’s perception and critique of Ottoman government as well as a record of his own deeds within the general framework of Ottoman history. In the preface he declared that the Ottoman dynasty was a chosen one, superior to all others that preceded it, a dynasty that produced rulers who were renewers (müceddid) of their respective ages. Throughout the work he compared the statesmen and ‘ulemā of his time to those of previous periods and showed the decline in the quality of people that occupied these positions. In recounting the events of his time, Lütfi Paşa focused on his own deeds and demonstrated how he reformed the government and instituted just practices. In Təvərîh, Lütfi Paşa, on the basis of historical evidence, aimed to display the ineptitude of the statesmen and the ‘ulemā of his time while praising the Ottoman dynasty and highlighting his own performance in government an exemplary.

Khalaş al-Umma fī Ma’rifa al-A’imma is a defense of the legitimation of the Ottoman caliphate or, more specifically, the Ottoman sultan’s right to bear the title

240 The work appeared in two different editions: Kayhan Atık, Lütfi Paşa ve Təvərîh-i Āl-i Osman (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2001); Lütfi Paşa, Təvərîh-i Āl-i ʻOşmān, ed. Āli Bey (İstanbul: Matba’a-i ‘Āmire, 1341/1925).
Lütfi Pasha wrote the treatise to oppose the twelfth century theologian Nasafi’s (d. 536/1141) statement that Qureishī descent was a condition for a legitimate caliphate. Taftāzānī’s (d. 793/1390) and al-Ījī’s (d. 756/1355) commentaries on Nasafi’s short text were well-known textbooks widely read in Ottoman medreses in theology courses. Lütfi Pasha appears to have discussed the issue with the advocates of Nasafi’s view, probably certain members of the ‘ulema who were familiar with these texts.

Except for scattered incidents, the question of the Ottoman claim for the caliphate did not seem to have caused any major controversy in this period. As the title caliphate came to be used for every independent ruler during this time the debate Lütfi Pasha addressed was already an obsolete one. He nevertheless took the issue seriously and, perhaps driven by the desire to teach the ‘ulema a lesson, he wrote the treatise in both Arabic and Persian to prove his linguistic capabilities and juristic erudition. He disproved Nasafi’s view by extensively quoting the canonical sources of the Ḥanafi school of law, thus juxtaposing the juristic views of the Ḥanafis against the theological view of the Ash’arīs.

Lütfi Pasha made a name for himself in Ottoman history not as an accomplished scholar of religious sciences or an exemplary grand vizier but as the author of Āṣafnāme, his manual for the vizierate. The work received such great acclaim that it became the most widely read treatise on political theory among the Ottoman literati. Lütfi Pasha wrote the work after 1553, more than a decade after his retirement, probably during the second term of his successor Rüstem Pasha. According to his own statement, his purpose in writing this treatise was to guide his successors in the vizierate. But the tone of his language and the content of the treatise show that it was more than a compilation of recommendations on the profession. Āṣafnāme is a record of Lütfi Pasha’s...
accomplishments during his short term in office as well as a proscriptive statement of the uncompromising rules of the vizierate in Ottoman state tradition. It was a reform treatise written by a disgruntled former grand vizier who was unhappy about, and critical of, the way the vizierate was run after his forced retirement.

Āṣafnāme was an innovative treatise in both form and content. It does not fit into any of the conventional genres of political writing. Unlike juristic and theological works, it does not take its authority from canonical religious texts, nor does it provide formal statements in its quest to conform government and rulership to religious law and creed. In contrast with works of ethics, it does not offer moral recommendations for the betterment of government. Except for being an advice book, there is no resemblance between Āṣafnāme and the so-called mirror of princes genre, the most common type of political writing in the Ottoman Empire in this period. The most distinctive features of works in the mirror for princes genre, their literary and entertaining quality, were absent in Āṣafnāme which contained no poetry. The few brief anecdotes it provided were proscriptive precedents rather than remote stories from which to draw moral lessons. With Āṣafnāme Lütfi Pasha created a new form of political writing which inspired numerous other authors to write along the same lines.

The author of one of the texts written along the same line as Āṣafnāme, was Kitāb-ı Meşālihü’l-Müslimîn ve Menâfî’l-Mü’mînîn (The Book of the Affairs of Muslims and Benefits of Believers), remains unknown. 241 Textual evidence suggests that the treatise, long believed to be a seventeenth century text, was most probably written in 1550’s, shortly after Lütfi Pasha revolutionized Ottoman political writing with his

241 Yaşar Yücel, Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilâtına Dair Kaynaklar (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1988), 49-144.
Both Āṣafnāme and Meşâliḫü’l-Müslimīn were addressed to the grand vizier and promoted the idea of law in government. Unlike Āṣafnāme, however, which had an immense impact on subsequent authors and of which there were numerous manuscript copies across Ottoman libraries, Meşâliḫü’l-Müslimīn appears to have remained unnoticed by a wider audience until modern times.

Meşâliḫü’l-Müslimīn must have been written by an experienced statesman or a civil servant, for the text indicates that its author was among the close circle of people around the sultan. The anonymous author displayed an impressive command of the current state of ruling institutions, market conditions, and social structures in the Ottoman Empire. The work was organized into fifty two chapters, ranging from the janissaries to market inspectors, and from taxation to heretics. In each chapter the author made a brief evaluation of the contemporary situation from an historical perspective, pointed to shortcomings, deficiencies and problems, and suggested reforms. The treatise provided the most detailed portrait of Ottoman institutions and the political responsibilities expected from Ottoman rulership in the sixteenth century. Along with Lütfî Pâşâ, the anonymous author discussed political questions with specific reference to the structure and dealings of the existing government, marked the beginning of the transformation of Ottoman political theory in the mid-sixteenth century. This new breed of statesmen or bureaucrat-author abandoned the conventional tendency to elaborate on abstract principles of government, ethics and jurisprudence, and instead focused on government structures, historical change, law, and policies in writing about political theory.

Lacking noticeable influence from Āṣafnāme, Meșaliḥü'l-Müslimîn appears to be the second independent text on government in this period that broke with conventional genres of political writings in both form and content. While Āṣafnâme was the first treatise that portrayed the ideal Ottoman government Meșaliḥü'l-Müslimîn was the first treatise written to reform that government. In contrast to the Āṣafnâme which urged the grand vizier to comply with the existent laws of state as the ideal way of governing, Meșaliḥü'l-Müslimîn advocated the idea that the best government could only be achieved by enacting laws in response to changing circumstances and abandoning redundant and outmoded laws. Unlike some well-known seventeenth and eighteenth century reform treatises, Meșaliḥü'l-Müslimîn never advocated a retrospective reform project, or called for a return to an idealized past by eliminating innovative practices. Rather, Meșaliḥü'l-Müslimîn’s main message was a call to reorganize government and enact up-to-date laws in order to address current needs and circumstances.

The Language of Political Thought

A linguistic picture of political texts written in this period reflects the inquisitive diversity and creative eclecticism that characterized Ottoman culture and polity during the age of Süleymân. Turkish, Persian and Arabic served as principal media of expression and had almost equal weight. There was neither a lingua franca for political writings, nor was there a sacred language for exposing political views. Besides a host of vernacular languages in use, the literary high culture of the Ottoman Empire during the
sixteenth century was trilingual, a feature that Ottoman literati were proud to exploit. Arabic and Persian writings, in both prose and poetry, continued to flourish not only in parts of the Empire where these languages were spoken but in Turkish-speaking regions as well. Yet not every author was trilingual. The Arabic-speaking men of learning were conventionally the least able to employ other languages and the most parochial in their grasp and reception of non-Arabic cultural expositions. Because of the universal acceptance of Arabic as a medium of religious sciences, a Persian-speaking man of learning would most likely be educated in reading and writing Arabic as well, unless his experience was confined to practical training in a profession that did not require knowledge of other languages. By contrast, a Turkish-speaking man of learning could most likely use both Arabic and Persian for written expression. Mastering Turkish for the native speaker of Arabic and Persian did not add much to his credentials beyond opening new opportunities for connections and advancement in the service of the Ottoman government. For a Turkish-speaking man of learning, however, his prospects in status, prestige and career advancement would be closely tied to the degree of his mastery of Arabic and Persian.

Ottoman authors could choose to write in one of the three languages, depending upon their competence or objectives. By the Süleymânic age Turkish was on a par with Arabic and Persian as a language of literature and scholarship. The use of Turkish as a written language was a challenge during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when many authors felt compelled to justify their choice of Turkish. During the course of two centuries, Turkish transformed itself from a vernacular language into the primary

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243 In histories and biographical dictionaries, one’s capability to write in three languages was commonly praised as a meritorious achievement for a man of learning.
language of cultural expression. Yet Arabic continued to be the main language of
religious sciences. Persian was still attractive for artistic expression as well as historical
writings and Sufi texts. Given their distinguishing features, not every language was
equally suitable for a given audience, genre, idea, or objective. Writing in Turkish, for
example, gave an author the potential of reaching a broader audience within the Turkish-
speaking regions of the Empire. It could also be used to expose one’s own cultural
identity and sensibilities. Arabic offered better tools and opportunities to express juristic
and theological views of rulership, especially when employed in the conventional genres
of these disciplines. An Arabic text had a broader appeal to men of learning within the
universal Muslim community and thus had a greater chance to reach beyond the linguistic
boundaries of regional audiences. As a sacred language of primary religious texts,
Arabic also implied the authority to speak for the religion. This is one reason why all the
juristic works on government and rulership that appeared in this period were written in
Arabic. Persian lacked the universal currency of Arabic or the validity of Turkish in
Ottoman learned society. But it still enjoyed an enchanting power over the imagination
of Ottoman literati as a fountain of poetic beauty and a repository of wisdom literature.

Among the political works of this period, there is virtually no single text that was
written solely in one language. To varying degrees, regardless of the primary language it
was composed in, each text was a joint product of the three languages. ‘Alāyī, for
example, who wrote his treatise on the vizierate in Turkish, quoted Arabic couplets and
aphorisms to illustrate his points and gave either Turkish or Persian translations of his
citations.244 Arabic and Persian continued to pervade texts even when they were written

244 See, for example, ‘Alāyī, Düstürü ’l-Vüzerā, 16, 22.
in plain Turkish. At the minimum, quotations from the Quran and prophetic traditions caused Arabic to be sprinkled throughout in Turkish texts. Most quotations of poetry were still in Persian. Persian chapter headings in Turkish works were not uncommon. Although ostensibly written in one language, most texts were written with the assumption that the reader had sufficient knowledge of Arabic to understand the scriptures, and adequate literary training in Persian to enjoy its poetry.

More important than the linguistic variety of political texts was the use of a specialized disciplinary or cultural language to convey political views. Whether a given author found Arabic, Persian, or Turkish more convenient for expression, each text was shaped by the use of a specific language of a given discipline or tradition, in terms of vocabulary, idioms, and the way views were formulated. There were mainly four languages that revealed modes of thinking reflected in political texts. These were juristic, sufistic, administrative, and philosophical languages. Most texts were imbued with the conventions of more than one of these languages. Identifying these languages is essential for understanding the meaning of a given text and the purpose of its author. A given language shapes a text not only by the use of a specific vocabulary, but also by the specific meanings it accorded to even the most common terms of mainstream political theory. Such widely used terms as siyāsa and maṣlaḥa, for example, had diametrically different meanings in texts written in philosophical, juristic, and administrative languages. Language in this sense does not simply refer to the different meanings that words acquired in various disciplines but also to a particular mode of reasoning and

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245 As a typical example of such a literary style Hadîdî wrote his history of the Ottoman dynasty in plain Turkish while using Persian in the section headings. See, for example, Hadîdî, Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman (1299-1523), ed. Necdet Öztürk (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basimevi, 1991).
argumentation. Without a strict typology, we can sort that these languages could be differentiated by certain distinguishing features: juristic language, for example, was by definition normative and authoritarian; administrative language was empirical, prescriptive and precedential; philosophical language was idealistic, inquisitive and analogical; and sufistic language was esoteric and symbolic.

Motives for Writing on Rulership

There seems to be no single phenomenon that triggered the upsurge of interest in writing on government during the age of Süleymān. But a number of developments particularly proved conducive for the rise of political writings and their spread among the Ottoman readership. The flux of eastern Sunnī scholars to the Ottoman Empire in flight from the Safavid challenge, the direct contact the Ottomans established with new cultural zones in the South and the East via conquests and trade, the rise of a wealthy class of ruling elite that valued literary production with particular hunger for manuals of statecraft, the self-perception of the Ottomans as the greatest Empire on earth, political struggles and clashes of interests among rival princes, factions and different segments of society, schools of thought and Sufi orders all provided enough stimulus for many authors to write on government, ethics, and rulership.

Besides the perceived order described in both Ottoman sources and contemporary scholarship, the ruling establishment of the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire was a complex entity. While the steady wave of institutionalization that started with the reign of Meḥmed II continued in full bloom, the Empire also incorporated the vastly different
local structures and conventions of newly conquered territories, ranging from Irak to Hungary, into its central governing apparatus with productive synergies. While the Empire’s territory doubled in the life of one generation in the early sixteenth century, Ottoman educational institutions had no difficulty in meeting the demand for new administrative and judicial positions, but instead faced a surplus of graduates by the mid-sixteenth century that caused serious tensions between the jobless population of learned men and the government.246 Because the Ottoman political culture equated philanthropy with good government and the established conventions of state did not accord full security to statesmen’s property, the Ottoman ruling elite was eager to convert their accumulated wealth to social prestige by ways of public works such as libraries, schools, hospitals, and the like. While the explosive growth of Ottoman ruling institutions, from the judiciary to administrative bureaucracy, created an ambitious class of statesmen curious about the craft of governance, an increasing number of Ottoman learned men and literati who mostly congregated around dignitaries were eager to write on the subject to improve their own prospects.

While the institutional and territorial growth of the Empire raised new issues of government with for the ruler to deal with, statesmen and men of learning, the course of dynastic politics now made political theory part of the game. Succession struggles that imperilled the internal stability of this period made the education of princes even more important than before. Because of the meddling of political factions in the administration and the palace, and due to the existence of high profile contenders who grew older as the long rule of Süleymān continued, the throne became more coveted than ever. Despite the

smooth transition of power to Süleymān and his subsequent long rule of forty six years during which he faced no serious challenge, his reign witnessed violent clashes among his sons for superiority. Until Selīm I’s rebellion against his father Bāyezīd II, struggles of succession among the contenders turned violent only after the death of the ruling sultan. As his father’s only son and heir apparent, Süleymān was among the few rulers since the inception of the Ottoman principality to succeed without a serious contender. Unfavorable candidates for the throne, his grandfather Bāyezīd II and father Selīm I had succeeded only after exhausting clashes with their brothers, internecine rivalries that temporarily divided the empire into spheres of authority and led to the formation of political factions supporting rival contenders with vested interests.

Although Süleymān inherited the rulership of the Empire intact with the sealed support and a unanimous enthusiasm of the ruling establishment, his sons drew an important lesson about how the throne was attained. At least three well-qualified contenders were jockeying to succeed, and any edge would have helped. Süleymān, a man of exceptional literary talents and a patron of scholars, assigned distinguished tutors to his princes to prepare them for the throne. At the same time, in full control of their mock courts, these princes tried to attract the best tutors, advisors, influential ‘ulemā, and poets to their side. As one might surmise, one of the most important areas of their training and counsel was political theory. In such circumstances, sixteenth-century intellectuals and tutors discovered that translations were a quick way of preparing manuals of government and princely behavior for the princes. Translations were useful for the princes and also a conspicuous way of attracting the attention of the sultan by making the works of some of the most revered saints and scholars available to the
Ottoman audience. This sharp spike in Ottoman interest in translating political works is evident, for no political work is known to have been translated and dedicated for Süleyman during his prince'ship, but while, but a generation later, numerous works were translated or composed for his contending princes.

If the political arena was torn by dynastic struggles and competition among rival political factions, intellectual life during the Süleymânic era was marked by a series of resounding clashes and disputes among scholars, Sufis, poets, and statesmen. The process of institutionalization, canonization, and law-making was accompanied by a broad-based public debate on issues concerning religion, government, and social life. The emergence and spread of various kind of public spaces such as grand mosques, medreses, Sufi lodges, marketplaces, and coffeehouses accompanied by increased mobility among the 'ulemâ, dervishes, statesmen, and merchants turned otherwise local or individual cases and issues into public discourse resonating from Syria to Bosnia. Although few of these debates directly problematized conceptions of rulership or challenged the legitimacy of the ruler, many of them found a wide audience and eager participants because of their relevance to government and social order. Heresy (zandaḵa), innovations (bid'a), cash foundations (vakf-i nuḵûd), slave property, coffee-drinking, land law, and innovative rituals were but a few issues that were publicly debated with varying intensity and relevance. The bureaucratization of the 'ulemâ and the general proximity of Ottoman men of learning to the government facilitated the perception of scholarly disputes as political matters. Further, the willingness of the proponents of particular views to convince the government to safeguard their objectives and counsel statesmen, including the ruler, to implement their propositions unavoidably
politicized issues not particularly related to government.

The social and cultural developments of this period were particularly conducive to a broad-based and diversified public discourse on issues raised by a variety of groups or different voices in society. The spread of a diverse body of Sufi orders with different teachings, rituals, ideals, and ways of life, and the increasing infatuation of Ottoman statesmen and ‘ulemā with Sufism in general created tensions in society and government. The Ottoman ruling elite were less tolerant of issues that breached mainstream juristic and theological teachings and were particularly sensitive to issues perceived to be a threat to social order, stability or the political legitimacy of the Ottoman ruler. Although the Ottoman government and the judicial administration intervened to eliminate perceived threats, such as messianic ideas, writing on political theory served as an efficient venue to demonstrate right and wrong in government and society.

While the Ottoman establishment could deal with voices of dissent among the ‘ulemā and the antinomians among the Sufi orders with relative ease, the Safavid threat, bolstered widespread sectarian opposition among Turcoman subjects of the sultan, posed a more serious challenge. The Ottoman ‘ulemā who were in disagreement on many issues among themselves were deeply concerned about the appeal of the Safavid propaganda for the general populace in Asia Minor, and were almost unanimous in their opposition to Shi‘ī confessions. Not only did the Ottoman men of learning write refutations of Shi‘ī beliefs and issue legal opinions to invalidate them, but they also articulated anti-Shi‘ī views in political treatises. The messianic cast of the Safavid ideology also compelled the apologists of the Ottoman dynasty to devise formulations of rulership to offset challenges to legitimacy, and to profile the Ottoman ruler as superior to
all others. Thus the Safavid challenge sparked a new interest in Sunnī theories of rulership, with particular attention to juristic and theological underpinnings.

Because of the official status of the Ḥanafī sect among the Ottoman ruling elite, no sectarian treatises on government were written for the statesmen. In Egypt and Syria, however, just before the overthrow of the Mamluk dynasty, there was a fierce competition among the representatives of the four major sects to persuade the ruler and statesmen of the superiority of their own sects. Despite the Ḥanafī supremacy, holdings in manuscript libraries show that even the most sectarian writings found a readership among the Ottoman audience. Concerning rulership, Ottoman scholars and the ruling elite were more interested in the general Sunnī views than the particularistic views of individual Sunnī sects. The supra identity of Sunnism was more appealing to the Ottomans than the sectarian identity of the Ḥanafī school of law.

If one reason for the supremacy of Sunnī identity was the unrivalled status of the Ḥanafī sect, another reason was the Safavid ideology which was imbued with Shiʿī views of governance. While the Ottoman scholars never felt seriously challenged by Shāfīʿī, Mālikī or Ḥanbalī jurists, both scholars and the ruling elite felt obliged to respond to the military threat posed by the Safavid State as well as the spreading Ẓīlī heresy at home. While the Shiʿī heresy was a historical relic for Mamluk scholars, its new manifestations, by the Ẓīlī was a contemporary issue for the Ottoman ʿulemā to deal with. Besides numerous refutations written by Ottoman scholars against Shiʿī beliefs, authors with an anti-Shiʿī bias incorporated their sectarian views into political theory. They elaborated on the Sunnī principles of creed, criticized Shiʿī beliefs and views of

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rulership, and exhorted the ruler to take action to promote correct beliefs and eliminate heretic views from society. Sunnī authors, such as Ḥiẓir Münši, who fled the Safavid persecution and took refuge in the Ottoman Empire, voiced their anti-Shī‘ī views with frantic zealotry in their treatises on rulership.

Whether expressed explicitly or not, a common motive that led scholars and Sufis to write on government was the task of commanding right and forbidding wrong in public life, a collective function of the community and the individual, conventionally perceived to be the domain of learned men in society. Statesmen, bureaucrats, and other literati, who wrote on rulership in advisory language acted on the power of their own experience and skills, and had to convince the reader of the truth of their proposed views although they lacked any authoritative status to gain the ear of their superiors. The ‘ulemā and the Sufis, however, were already perceived to be the inheritors of the Prophet in leading society to the right path and they acted with the authority of speaking for religion when advising on government. As a self-justifying rule of rightly-guided leadership of community reiterated in the works of all Islamic disciplines, the ruler’s consultation with learned men was promoted as a universal sign of good government. The collective responsibility felt by learned men to guide the ruler to the right path prompted individual scholars to admonish the ruler about what was right and wrong in government through consultation and writing on the subject of rulership.

Most of these learned, who wrote on rulership or political ethics, did not usually write on political philosophy or statecraft. Nor did they attempt to produce a sophisticated theory of government on juristic or theological grounds. Because few of them had any expertise in the science of government, they usually wrote on the piety of
the ruler and his observation of religious principles in government rather than elaborating on the most feasible form of government. Yet any learned men trained in Ottoman educational institutions were also taught the basic juristic principles and theological premises of rulership. Standard theological and juristic textbooks, such as *al-Mawāqif*, contained sections on the leadership of community. Therefore the learned were adequately equipped to write on rulership or further explore the science of government.

As revealed in the texts, the sixteenth-century authors had many motives to write on government, rulership, and ethics. The most conspicuous of these motives was self-interest. The majority of political texts were dedicated to rulers, princes and statesmen of high status. Gifts presented to men of high stature in the form of written works were handsomely rewarded by the recipient. This was a culture in which, histories, poems and legends praised statesmen’s protection and care of literati, with special veneration. Numerous works on subjects as diverse as jurisprudence and Sufism had titles beginning with ‘gift’ (*Tuḥfa*) because of their compilation as a present to a men of stature. Even a well-received poem could bring its author a coveted position or promotion. Depending on the taste and needs of a given dedicatee, histories, poetry, and advice books were among the most appreciated gift items. This gift and reward system resulted in the establishment of the mirror of princes genre as the preferred form of political writing in the Ottoman Empire. Few statesmen had the scholarly background to read and appreciate political works composed in the highly technical language of philosophy, jurisprudence, or theology. For that reason, works written within the strict disciplinary paradigms, such *al-Siyāsa al-Shar‘iyya* of Dede Cöngī, were usually not dedicated to any particular statesman. Instead, regardless of one’s views, political authors softened the
philosophical, juristic or theological content of their teachings and presented them along with proverbs, poetry, aphorisms, and anecdotes, turning their works into literary creations. In other words, Ottoman discourse on rulership and government took place primarily between the statesmen, including the ruler, and authors of various backgrounds.

The centralization and institutionalization of the educational system forced the ʿulemā to forge good relations with statesmen to ensure a successful career. Although the proximity of the ʿulemā to the government was almost universally condemned in the judicial tradition, the Ottoman ʿulemā was closest to political authority because of the integration of schools and the judiciary into the same official hierarchy. The accumulation of wealth in the hands of statesmen created a patronage system whereby the livelihood of Ottoman literati became closely tied to the prospects of wealthy viziers, governors, and other high bureaucrats. The public duty of commanding good and forbidding wrong already provided enough justification for the ʿulemā and the Sufis who were close to the statesmen. As the primary executers of this duty, these scholars also counseled the statesmen that the best way of governing was to ask for guidance from men of learning. Other literati such as poets formulated and canonized their own code of conduct that regulated their relationship with statesmen. Their works marketed a universal image of an ideal statesmen as one who protected men of learning and kept them within the circle of counseling in government. Thus whether or not a given statesmen had any taste in learning or literature, he invariably felt compelled to create the image that he was a patron of learning and a friend of learned men. Such a reputation then facilitated the production of political works that were dedicated to men of stature in expectation of a reward.
Besides the noble pursuit of commanding good and forbidding wrong, writing on politics became an effective instrument for advocating of a particular view of government or a proposed policy that favored or, at least, framed from within the perspective of one’s sect, social class, or individual ideals. Celâlzâde, for example, portrayed a government in which men of the pen were given priority. As a seasoned bureaucrat, he wrote about the interests and ideals of the social class to which he belonged. By contrast, Lütfi Pâşâ, who belonged to the men of sword with kâl origins, was not enthusiastic about learned men having priority in government. Instead, his proposals were more protective of the kâl class and more critical of the ‘ulemâ. The obscure author of al-‘Adliya al-Sulaymâniya passionately advocated the sultan’s submission to men of spirit in making his rule part of the cosmic government of saints. With a similar objective, Ebû’l-Façl Münşî, who dedicated his work on the ethics of rulership to Süleymân, informed the sultan in his preface that the science of ethics (‘ilm-i makârim-i akhlâq) was the reserve of Sufis (şâfiyân-i şâfî-dil va ‘ârifân-i kâmil).\(^{248}\)

\(^{248}\) Ebû’l-Façl el-Münsî, Dustûr al-Saltana, 3a.
CHAPTER TWO

DEFINING POLITICAL AUTHORITY: CONCEPTIONS OF RULERSHIP

Introduction: The Sultanate as a Political Regime

No ornament is more beautiful than the ornament of greatness (‘izzat), and no position (martaba) could be greater than the position of might (qudrat) and effectiveness (nafāż), and no adornment is better than generosity (sahā) and gratitude (shukr).¹

This poetic expression of Cahramī, an early sixteenth century author who dedicated his work to the ruling sultan Selīm I, captured the prevailing attitude toward rulership of the time that may have been found agreeable by most contemporary political writers, if not all. Cahramī’s exposition featured three rudimental aspects of his concept of rulership that represented a common tendency of the period: an acquiescent acknowledgement of rulership as ‘political power’, a glorifying plaudit to portray the position of ruler as the noblest rank among mankind, and an unremitting exhortation to the ruler to endow himself with noble moral traits. Albeit metaphorical, Cahramī’s candid sketch was perspicuous enough to differentiate between the ordinary form of rulership, depicted as a position characterized by might and effectiveness, and the superior form, pictured as an ornament formed by greatness, generosity, and gratitude. Such views that pervaded especially the prefatory sections of political treatises, in particular, attesting to their author’s goal of turning a political authority that existed by

¹ Cahramī, Siyāsiya Barāya Sultan Selīm, 13a.
virtue of a ‘power to rule’ into one tailored to the parameters of a virtuous regime, as they
viewed it.

The question of whether the investiture of the less excellent (al-mafṣūl) was
legitimate in rulership, an issue that stirred a long lasting dispute among jurists and
theologians in the medieval period, had already fallen out of favor in the political theory
of the post-Abbasid period and was hardly given any attention by Ottomans writing in the
sixteenth century.² Instead, political writers of the period occupied themselves with the
quest for turning existing political authority into the best possible form by educating the
ruler to perfect himself and to adjust his rule to what was deemed commendable from the
viewpoint of a particular author. As commonly perceived in mainstream political theory,
yany ruling sultan who successfully eliminated his actual and potential rivals, and had
enough coercive power to rule was already a legitimate ruler. But what turned his power
to rule, into a political authority for the proper exercise of that power was its
qualification, that is, its design after designation. A typical approach, from this
perspective, was first to designate the sultan as ruler with such designations as khalīfa
(vicegerent of God) and ẓill Allāh (shadow of God), and then design the rulership by
elaborating upon what these designations entailed.

With the question of legitimacy out of the way, political writings of the time then
centered on a two-fold pursuit on the subject of political authority: to inquire about the
nature of rulership, and then to establish its parameters. At the most rudimentary level,
political authority was viewed as ‘the sultanate’ which, unless specified, meant the

² For views on this question see A. K. S. Lambton, State and Government in Medieval Islam: An
Introduction to the Study of Islamic Political Thought: Jurists (Oxford, 1981), 17, 29, 74, 134; Rosenthal,
Political Thought in Medieval Islam, 32.
ordinary form of rulership, understood by most as the sheer power to rule. When modified by such qualifications as *khilâfâ*, the concept of the sultanate gained a moral and spiritual component that turned it into a superior form of rulership. With this prevailing approach, the political theory of the period was primarily moralist in its attitude, characterized by the recognition of ‘sheer power to rule’ as the legitimate basis of rulership and the setting of moral objectives for the sultanate for the proper exercise of political power within a moral framework for the benefit of the ruler and the ruled.

**Defining Rulership**

The sultanate, considered as the highest position fulfilling an existential human need, was an inclusive conception serving to define or qualify the type of political authority that best fit human needs. A rich and versatile body of designations drawn from various political entities and social formations were applied to qualify this rulership. No notable designation referring to some form of superiority or authority in various disciplines and genres seems to have been neglected. As part of a common approach to the problem, instead of developing an independent definition of political authority, Ottoman authors opted to qualify it by employing well-established concepts of leadership developed in various traditions ranging from Sufism to jurisprudence. In the process, not only was political authority envisioned through eclectic definitions, but in turn, those concepts of authority that were integrated into the picture also gained new meanings. The result was a tapestry of a theory of rulership and, in some cases, a chaotic conglomerate of concepts and tropes.
The sultanate, mostly expressed through such modifying designations as *mulk* or *khilāfa*, did not have an independent theory, developed by the Ottomans, or inherited from previous traditions. Rather, it came to be largely shaped through the appropriation of other forms of designations, developed in various traditions. These concepts came loaded with meanings they had gained in diverse traditions such as Sufism, philosophy, jurisprudence, and theology. Convinced that there can be no authority above the sultanate, some authors even adopted non-political designations of leadership to define the sultanate and ascribed them to rulers in a quest to ensure the supremacy of rulership over other forms of authority. Thus different kinds of designations, born and evolved in different intellectual traditions, such as *quṭb* and *mahdī*, were made suitable for envisioning the ruler in the sultanate.

A revealing example of this approach was the political uses of the Pole (*quṭb*). Despite the variety of interpretations about the Pole in the vast Sufi literature, a common perception was that the Pole, or rather the Pole of Poles (*quṭb al-aqṭāb* or *ghaws*), was way superior to any authority in the world. Pole, otherwise a strictly Sufi designation of status, was used in referring to the ruler of the time, pointing to the superiority of his rulership by indicating that it comprised the highest Sufi authority as well. An anonymous work, dedicated to the ruling sultan Süleyman, stated that the ruler (*khalīfa*) could be a Pole (*quṭb*) provided that he was pious (*ṣâliḥ*).  "Ārifī, a Sufi-minded author, used the term more specifically and referred to the same sultan as the Pole of time (*quṭb*).

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4 *Risāla fi ma Yalzim ʿalā al-Mulâk*, MS, SK, Esad Efendi 1845, 3.
al-waqt) in the preface of this work.⁵ These authors did not use the term in the strict Sufi sense and did not endeavor to elaborate a proof or explanation of the sultan’s being a Pole. They were content with integrating this Sufi designation to define the sultanate by alluding to the popular meaning of the concept: As Pole, the sultan was the center of the world around whom all worldly affairs revolved. More important than enabling the sultan to supersede that spiritual position was the modification of the function and the status of the sultanate to incorporate those of the Pole. Thus, what the Pole did became a noble objective for the sultan to attain by way of his sultanate.

The stock words used in political literature in relation to rulership, fall into three major categories. The first category consisted of a diverse body of descriptive designations and tropes such as sāʿis, rāʿī, zīmām-dār, and sarvar which usually referred to the leadership of the sultan in his community. The second group included such terms as ḥākim, sulṭān, malik, and pādishāh that appear to be the most widely used designations in referring to rulership. They were mostly used in political writings in a generic sense, without qualification, although they were diligently used in actual language as they denoted special meanings peculiar to certain dynasties. Other similar designations such as shāh, ḫān, and ḫākān were rarely used alone, and were mostly employed as royal titles when referring to the actual ruler. In official documents and chronicles authors are more diligent in their use of these designations mainly because of their implications of hierarchy and for the purpose of identification, rather than in reference to a different type of rulership.⁶ The third group comprised designations that originated from religious texts

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⁵ 'Ārifi, 'Uqūd al-Jawāhir, 3a.

⁶ Inalcik, “Power Relations between Russia, the Crimea, and the Ottoman Empire as Reflected in Titulature,” in Passé Turco-Tatar, Présent Soviétique: Études offertes à Alexandre Benningsen, eds.
with reference to a specific form of rulership, such as *imām* and *khalīfa*, and were used with more peculiar meanings. The main distinction between the two sets of designations was that for the former no theory was developed in any form of political writing. There was no legal, moral or philosophical elaboration as to how a ruler is entitled to be a *sultān* or a *malik*, or what these statutes. On the other hand, for such terms as *imām* and *khalīfa* there were rules that pertained, mostly elaborated in juristic and theological works. As a simple illustration to point out the difference between the two sets of designations, the term ‘sultan’ could be used in reference to non-Muslim rulers whereas the term *khalīfa* would not ordinarily be used for such occasions. Such obvious situations excluded, it was a commonplace to use all these terms as synonyms in referring to any conception of rulership, a tendency that largely accounts for the rise of a fourth set of designations. Numerous constructs based on both of the above groups of designations were crafted to couch more specific meanings: to name but few, such concepts as *salṭanat-i ma‘nawī*, *salṭanat-i șūrī*, *khilāfat-i raḥmānī* and *imāmat-i ḥaqīqī* came into wide circulation in this period.

The infusion of various intellectual traditions in the service of defining rulership in this period is illustrated by Činalızade, who provided an explanation for the appropriation of various designations and their indiscriminate uses. Using various titles interchangeably to construct what he considered to be a superior form of rulership, he made explicit at the outset that there was no difference of meaning among them:

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Lermercier-Quelquejay, G. Veinstein and S. E. Wimbush (Paris and Leuven: Éditions de L’École des Hutes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1986), 175-211; also appeared in *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire*, 369-411.

7 For an exceptional kind of usage where the author refers to the Sassanid ruler Anūshirvān’s authority as *taḥt-i ḥilāfet* (the seat of caliphate) see Celâlzade’s *Mevâhibbi‘l-Ḥallâk* 185a/b.
Now the ruler (ḥākim-i ma'ni) is the one who is distinguished by divine support and by endless divine grace so that he could manage the well-being of cities and perfect the souls of people. Philosophers call such a person absolute sovereign (ḥākim ‘ale’l-ī-šāk) and his rules the art of the sovereign (sinā‘at-i melik), the moderns (müte‘ahirūn) call him ḥalīfe and his practice Hilāfe, and the party of Shi‘a call him imām and his practice imāmet, and Plato called him regulator of the world (müdebbir-i ālem), and Aristotle calls him the civic man (insān-i medeni). ⁸

This analysis elucidates that, in Kınalızade’s view, ḥākim, ḥalīfe, and imām all referred to the same concept of rulership. In his appellation of the rules of ḥākim as sinā‘at-i melik he did not refer to the ordinary concept of melik, but rather its philosophical conception as one of the best qualified natural guides of community. Though Kınalızade skimped explanation, Ṭūsī, his main source on this subject, clarified this ambiguity by stating that by melik he referred not to “someone possessing a cavalcade, a retinue or a realm” but to “one truly deserving of rulership, even though outwardly no one pays him any attention.” ⁹ Despite the use of the most generic term, this definition depicted the ruler as the one who was qualified to lead by reason of his personal virtues. Agreeing with Ṭūsī, who originally developed this formula and with Davvānī who appropriated it without modification, ¹⁰ Kınalızade perceived no distinction among the juristic, philosophical, and Sufi ideals of rulership.

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⁸ Kınalızade ‘Alī, Aḥlāk-i ‘Alā‘ī, 3: 75. This translation is a modified adaptation of a similar passage in The Nasirean Ethics. See Ṭūsī, The Nasirean Ethics, 192.

⁹ Ṭūsī, The Nasirean Ethics, 192.

¹⁰ W. F. Thompson, transl., The Practical Philosophy of the Muhammedan People (London, 1839), 324.
Although the terms *khalīfa*, *ẓill Allāh* and *imām* could be used indiscriminately and were synonymous with less loaded terms such as sultan and *melik*, their superior and comprehensive meaning was not lost upon the authors. No author, for example, seems to have endeavored to prove that such terms as *khalīfa* or *imām* were identical with the term ‘*sulṭān*’ and the like. Authors such as Lütfi Pāşā and Enşārī, however, in an attempt to extend the meanings of such generic/bare terms, maintained that the term ‘*sulṭān*’ meant *khalīfa*, *ẓill Allāh* or *imām*. This obfuscation of the original meanings of the terms did not conceal the appearance of two hierarchical conceptions of rulership: an ordinary one, referred to by near-generic terms regarding rulership, such as sultanate and *mulk*, and a superior one, referred to by specific designations, such as *khilāfa* or *imāma*.

Even an author such as Lütfi Pāşā, who championed the idea of an absolute synonymity of all the titles applicable to rulership, occupied himself with proving that the sultan was a *khalīfa*, a conception still reflecting the general attitude that considered *khalīfa* or *khilāfa* a superior concept. He devoted his whole treatise in response to a question he was once asked as to whether it was permissible to attribute the title of *khalīfa* and *imām* to the sultans of the time, who lacked a Qureishi descent, a condition stipulated by most mainstream medieval jurists and theologians.\(^{11}\) Answering the question in the affirmative, he related that the ‘ulemā had stated that what was meant by sultan was caliph (*al-murād min al-sulṭan al-khalīfa*), pointing to a complete semantic overlap between the two designations.\(^{12}\) Lütfi Pāşā, however, was of a totally different breed among his contemporaries in his approach to rulership. When he advocated a

\(^{11}\) Lütfi Pāşā, *Khalās al-Umma*, 3.

complete synonymity among all applicable titles of rulership such as sultan, khalīfa, imām, ẓill Allāh and the like, he attempted to prove the sultan’s right to claim all those titles by the very virtue of his being the sultan. Lütfi Paşa simply plucked those concepts from their intellectual roots and reduced them to mere titles applicable to the sultan.

To a lesser extent, other authors also endeavored to equate the sultanate with better known and more prestigious positions. Ebū’l-Faţl Münši, for example, stated that rulership (pādishāhī) was the vicegerency of God (khilāfat-i Khodā), thereby equating ordinary rulership with the vicegerency of God.¹³ Using similar terms, Dizdār also pointed out that sultanate denoted a caliphal vicegerency from God (al-salṭāna khilāfa an Allāh).¹⁴ In the same vein, Enṣārī thought that walāya and salṭana were equal to khilāfa al-nubuwwa.¹⁵ The purpose of these authors, however, was in almost complete contrast to Lütfi Paşa’s: They sought not to reduce these positions to the level of the sultanate but to elevate the status of the sultanate to the level of those positions. They did not uproot these concepts as Lütфи Paşa did, but instead defined, the sultanate by using these concepts and elaborating on what they entailed. Thus, they integrated these notions with the definition of the sultanate as qualifiers with the intention of establishing moral objectives for the ordinary sultanate. More specifically, for Ebū’l-Faţl Münši and Dizdār, a sultanate was caliphate, only when it fulfilled the requirements expected from a caliphate.

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¹³ Ebū’l-Faţl Münši, Dustūr al-Salṭāna, 12b.
¹⁴ Dizdār, Sulūk al-Muliḳ, 1b.
¹⁵ Enṣārī, Tuḥfa al-Zamān, 4a-4b.
The Need for Political Authority in the Form of the Sultanate

The conception of political authority among the writers who wrote on the subject, through the reigns of Selīm I and Süleymān in the sixteenth century was largely shaped by their assumptions about human nature. As they commonly believed, human beings were created in need of political authority, which was a grace from God to mankind. Well-versed in ethical, philosophical, and Sufi accounts of human nature, these authors sought to set down the common human characteristics that required the existence of political authority. They portrayed political authority as an integral need of human existence, including one’s spiritual and material life. Only the presence of political authority could enable individuals to fulfill their human capacities.

Because political authority was considered a human existential need, political authors put more emphasis on the existence and quality of such authority than its various possible forms. The prevailing idea in all strands of political thought in the medieval period, which pervaded the writings of all Ottoman writers, was that the very existence of any political authority was more important than the type/form of political regime that authority instituted. Çinalızade, for example, well-versed in medieval political and ethical philosophy, deliberately avoided discussing alternative forms of political regimes. While doing so, he opted to follow the position of Davvānī rather than Tūsī, although he was extensively indebted to both authors in compiling his work on political ethics. In his template, later adopted by Çinalızade, Davvānī provided general categories of regimes as virtuous and unvirtuous but did not elaborate on the types of regimes which fell into these
categories as Tusi and Farabi before him had done.\textsuperscript{16} Tusi, on the other hand, who combined the hitherto distinct fields of political and ethical philosophy and created the format of ethical writing that Davvani and Kinalizade followed, had extensively discussed alternative forms of political regimes, largely deriving his views from Farabi’s detailed treatment of the variety of political systems in his \textit{al-Siyasa al-Madaniyya}.\textsuperscript{17}

While both Kinalizade and Davvani agreed with Tusi and Farabi in their pursuit to establish the distinguishing features of the virtuous city (\textit{al-madina al-\textit{fadi}la}), the former gave a negative definition of other regimes, defining them simply as non-virtuous regimes that did not require further elaboration.

The only contribution Kinalizade made on the question of types of regimes was to demonstrate the distinguishing feature of the Ottoman regime in comparison to its neighbors. He divided the errant city (\textit{medine-i dalle}) into two types: as infidel errant (\textit{dalle-i kafire}) and heretical errant (\textit{dalle-i gayri kafire}). For the former he gave the example of northern and western neighbours of the Ottomans such as the Europeans (\textit{Efrec}) and the Russians (\textit{Ras}) which were grouped as the groups (\textit{fira\c{c}}) of disbelief. He defined the latter as those who had strayed from the right path (\textit{mezhib-i faside}) and exemplified with the case of the Safavids (\textit{serfser tayfes}). He then proudly presented the Ottoman case as a virtuous regime.\textsuperscript{18} In this illustration there is no concern about the structure of political regimes which were defined and categorized solely on the basis of their moral standing and purpose of association.

\textsuperscript{16} Thompson, \textit{The Practical Philosophy of the Muhammedan People}, 365.

\textsuperscript{17} Tusi, \textit{The Nasirean Ethics}, 211-226; Richard Walzer, \textit{Al-Farabi on the Perfect State: Ab\u{a} Na\textsuperscript{\textacuted{r}} al-Farabi’\textsuperscript{s} Mab\u{a}di’} \textit{Ar\u{a} Ahl al-Madina al-\textit{Fadi}la} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 229-229.

\textsuperscript{18} Kinalizade ‘Ali, \textit{Ahl\textsuperscript{-i} Al\textsuperscript{\textacuted{r}}}, 2: 105.
Kınaļizāde and his main source of inspiration, Davvānī, agreed with both Fārābī and his close follower Ṭūsī in their assessment of political regimes on the basis of moral quality. While certainly aware of what the medieval philosophers wrote on the types of political regimes, Kınaļizāde found Davvānī’s contention of defining only the virtuous regime more appealing because, perhaps like Davvānī himself, he thought that he was living in a virtuous regime. Kınaļizāde thus, in agreement with his predecessors in political philosophy, considered the main difference among the three general categories of political regimes moral to be rather than structural. They were to be defined by and assessed on the basis of their moral/spiritual quality and objectives rather than how they were formed. What distinguished Kınaļizāde from his predecessors was his selective and pragmatic use of medieval political philosophy, and his singling out of the sultanate as the only political regime worthy of mention. While the medieval philosophers discussed alternative regimes to define the virtuous regime and highlight its superiority, the late medieval writers on rulership mainly sought ways to turn the existing political regimes into virtuous ones, displaying little concern for the alternatives.

In presenting the sultanate as the only form of government, Kınaļizāde’s account was part of a general trend among the political writers of the time. When Kınaļizāde and his contemporaries referred to the need for social organization and political association, what they specifically referred to was the sultanate. For them the sultanate was not an alternative to other forms of government, but was to be identified with world order, and seen as an alternative to chaos itself. From this perspective, the existential need for political association inherent individual human beings, and elaborated by medieval

philosophers, was reduced to an existential need for rulership, which understood as the sultanate. Thus for Ottoman authors, mankind was in need of the sultanate per se, not of some particular kind of political association. The sultanate was the only type of government by which a virtuous regime could be possible.

This universal acceptance of the sultanate as the only type/form of political regime among Ottoman authors of the time found its textbook exposition in Taşköprüzade’s Miftaḥ al-Saʿāda in which he had a separate entry for the science of government (ʿilm al-siyāsa). Following his definition, which centered around the sultanate, he provided a list of suggested books on the subject that included those of Davvānī and Tūsī, the two most widely known works on the topic among Ottoman intellectuals. In this list Taşköprüzade recommended Farābī’s somewhat less known work, Mabādī Ārā Ahl al-Madīna, in which the author elaborated on the sultanate, but did not mention his better known work, al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya, in which various types of political regimes were enumerated. For Taşköprüzade and his contemporaries, proving the existential human need for political authority was the same as justifying the existence and legitimacy of the sultanate.

Displaying no interest in the varieties of political regimes, the main question that engaged the political authors before elaborating on rulership was to prove that the existence of a political authority in the form of the sultanate was indispensable. Three complementary propositions circulated in political literature to demonstrate this inherent human need for the sultanate. Among them, the most commonly held proposition stated that human beings were social by nature (nevʿ-ī insān medenī biʿ-isher-i tabīʿ), and stressed

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the position of a ruler in society as an arbitrator. This Aristotelian axiom, commonly adopted and elaborated upon by medieval philosophers, was already a proverb widely circulating in all forms of political writing by the time of the Ottomans. Rephrasing the view of Ṭūsī, Ǧīlāzāde based his argument on the assumption that all human beings shared a common characteristic in their natures which made political organization under the arbitration of a ruler indispensable for social life. More specifically, man’s need for association and for political authority was one and the same, a view widely shared by political authors of the time. Similar to his predecessors in the philosophical tradition, Ǧīlāzāde considered that the role of the ruler in society was to lead people to perfection and happiness (tekmīl-i ḥalk ve lāẓim-i neyl-i saʿādet).

The second proposition highlights the diversity of human nature in explaining why the sultanate was necessary. Deriving his views from Ḥamadānī, Ǧāshprīzāde reached the same conclusion as Ǧīlāzāde, pointing out the indispensability of the sultanate for human existence.

Know that the natures of humans, when their dispositions were created, varied in terms of different talents and various characteristics. For this reason their reception of the lights of the manifestations of Beauty differed and, because of that difference, their aims, words, practices, beliefs, attributes and morals also differed. Thus divine wisdom necessitated the appointment of a just ruler and leader to protect the oppressed from the oppressor and apply rules, and treat people

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21 Ǧīlāzāde ‘Alī, Aḥlāk-i ʿAlāʾī, 1: 76.

22 Ǧīlāzāde ‘Alī, Aḥlāk-i ʿAlāʾī, 2: 112.

23 For similar views, which ultimately go back to Plato for whom men were different by nature, see Ḥamadānī, Zakhīrāt al-Mulūk, 225; see also ‘Abdurrahmān al-Sha‘zārī, al-Manhaj al-Maslūk fi Siyāsa al-Mulūk, ed. ‘Alī ‘Abdullāh al-Mūsā (Zarqā, Jordan: Maktaba al-Manār, 1987), 163.
equitably, so that order may last until the end of days. And the first person appointed for that position was the father of humanity, Adam.²⁴

While establishing the relationship between human nature and the need for political authority, this eloquent elaboration on the proof of rulership reveals some of the prevailing conceptions widely held at the time. First of all, Tāşköprizāde presented rulership as a result of diversity among human beings. Human beings were diverse not only in terms of congenital traits and talents but also in terms of acquired values and preferences. This condition made rulership instrumental in regulating the interaction among human beings whose beliefs and morals were diverse. The rest of his treatise points to a more important reason for the existence of rulership by portraying political authority as a spiritual guide for this diverse body of mankind.

Second, the author conceived of human nature and rulership from the standpoint of creation, considering both as a part of creation and complementary to each other. According to this, human beings were created with an inherent need for rulership and having a ruler was a part of divine providence, making this kind of political association an existential requirement. From an historical perspective, a logical extension of this conception was that rulership and the human need for it was as old as the creation of the first man on earth. In this view, divine providence and human nature both require the existence of a political regime in the form of the sultanate.

Third, the author stated that rulership started with prophethood, considering no difference between the two at the time of man’s creation on earth. In this view, the first

²⁴ Tāşköprizāde, Asrār al-Khilāfā al-Insāniya wa al-Salṭana al-Ma’nawiya, 112b.
man appeared to be the first prophet and the first ruler, pointing to the strong relationship among human nature, prophethood, and rulership. This identification of prophethood with rulership, or rather the inclusion of the latter in the former, assumed continuity between what the former prophets did and what contemporary rulers were expected to do. Thus while prophethood was conceived as a model for rulership, the rulers were put in the line of the prophets, in addition to the lineage of world rulers, and considered as inheritors of the prophetic mission.

The third proposition was the moral weakness of human beings. Enunciating this conception, Bidlîşî wrote “it is certain that the majority of human beings are weak personalities, and in regard to their dispositions (fiṭrat) and spirituality they are imperfect and light, and many improprieties become evident in their acts and conditions, and deeds. Furthermore, evil personalities are abundant among the people of our time.” Sharing this pessimistic conviction, Könaflîzade also stated that the majority of people were disposed to sensuality and voluptuousness. This negative side of human nature not only made rulership necessary but, according to Enşârî, a grace from God as well:

The ‘ulemā said that there is great wisdom in the existence of a ruler on earth and its benefits for the servants of God are abundant. Because God created all the people, save the apostles and messengers, as lacking fairness (inṣâf) [to others] but seeking justice (intîṣâf) [for themselves]. Were it not for the sultan on the earth, people would have devoured each other.

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25 Idrîs-i Bitlisî, Kanun-ı Şâhênsâhi, 87.
27 Enşârî, Tuḥfâ al-Zamân, 5b.
Enşārī highlighted two main reasons that made rulership an existential requirement for mankind. First, because of the way their natures were created, people egoistically sought justice for themselves but denied it to others. Accordingly, if justice were to be instituted equitably for all, then it was rulership that could prevent encroachments among people. Second, whether humans sought it or not, rulership existed as a grace from God, as a part of His divine providence. This of self-justifying and counter-factual argumentation to prove the need for rulership is particularly useful when addressing the ruled as it leaves no alternative but to submit to the ruler. It was one of the arguments most commonly resorted in the political theory of the post-Abbasid period as it enhanced the legitimacy of independent rulers.28

The justification of rulership as such drew inspiration from that of prophethood and was frequently hinted at in both the scriptures and various other accounts of prophethood. These were the incapacity of humans to take the right path, and divine providence that manifested itself in the form of providing guidance via prophets. When Bidlīsī declared that the position of ẓāl Allāh was the highest rank among human beings he was not referring to any just form of rulership, but only to the one which most resembled divine government. From this perspective, the purpose of political writing was to illustrate the position of rulership among mankind and advise the ruler to perform what it entailed.

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28 One of the most elaborate formulations of this argument is composed by Enşārī’s Mughal contemporary Abu-l Fazl in support of Akbar’s new vision of rulership: “If royalty did not exist, the storm of strife would never subside, nor selfish ambition disappear. Mankind, being under the burden of lawlessness and lust, would sink into the pit of destruction, would lose its prosperity, and the whole earth become a barren waste.” See Abu-l Fazl Allami, Ain-i Akbari, transl. H. Blochman and H. Jarret (Delhi, 1977-8), 2-3.
These conceptions of human nature led political authors of the time not only to advocate the existential necessity for a political authority but also to assert a particular type of political regime, which was the sultanate. For them the creation of human nature as social, diverse, and weak made political authority not a voluntary institution but an indispensable part of human life and a grace from above in the form of the sultanate, at times exercised by God-sent prophets. Once the sultanate was conceived as an integral part of mankind’s existence as a society and individual, then the form of political authority was irrelevant. As a result of this conception, one of the main quests in political theory was to elevate the moral quality of rulership to make it resemble God’s government over creation or that of the ruler-prophets over mankind.

The Status of Rulership among Mankind

The goal of improving the moral quality of rulership was to make it suitable for the status to which it was ascribed among mankind. Because these authors conceived of rulership as an existential requirement in human society, they presented the position of political authority as a status, a degree, or a rank (martaba, daraja, rutba) of high-esteem among mankind. Such laudatory remarks, pervading especially the prefatory sections of political treatises that were dedicated to the ruler, certainly served a eulogistic function. Yet, the reasons cited for the loftiness of this position portrayed a particular type of rulership that deserved to be considered as such, and furnished the ruler with a prescription to attain that status. Excluding an author such as Lütfi Pasha who displayed no interest in the moral quality of rulership, a common goal among the political authors
in this period was to promote the position of a ruler in society from a position at the top of the political hierarchy to a status among mankind by perfecting his moral and spiritual qualifications.\textsuperscript{29}

An anonymous work presented to Süleymān explicitly stated that only a particular type of rulership could warrant such high-esteem: “If the caliph is pious (sāliḥ),” it stated, “then he is the one around whom the world revolves.”\textsuperscript{30} Dizdār, Ṭāskōprižāde and Bidfisī, along similar lines, admonished the ruler against the degradation of the status of rulership caused by a failure to meet necessary qualifications. After instructing that “the realm (mamlaka) and the sultanate are perfect instruments for two opposite ends: the inculcation of commendable or reprehensible traits,” Dizdār warned that “having reprehensible traits leads to a claim for divinity as in the case of pharaoh,” a position so despicable in the Muslim tradition.\textsuperscript{31} For Ṭāskōprižāde, if the ruler followed his whims and did not show mercy toward the people then he turned into the vicar of Antichrist (Dajjāl) the cursed (nā’ib al-Dajjāl al-lā’in) and the enemy of God and vicegerent of Satan (khalīfa al-Shayṭān).\textsuperscript{32} Whether Ṭāskōprižāde considered such a ruler legitimate is not explicit in his exposition but, defying the mainstream tendency of complacency, he made no accommodation for injustice, an attitude that made him one of the most uncompromising political authors of the time.

\textsuperscript{29} For a late fifteenth century exposition of this idea by one of the pioneers in Ottoman political writing see Tursun Bey, Tūrīh-i Ebū’l-Feth, 13.

\textsuperscript{30} Risāla fī-mā Yalzim ‘alā al-Mulūk, 3.

\textsuperscript{31} Dizdār, Sulūk al-Mulūk, 4a.

\textsuperscript{32} For similar views, see Bagley’s introduction in Ghazālī, Ghazālī’s Book of Counsel for Kings, xliii; Bedr-i Dilşad, Murād-Nāme, 1: 210.
Though not as sharp as Tāsköprüzade, Bidlīsī also had a very low opinion of rulers who failed to meet the conditions that made them the shadow of God. For him, if the ruler did not endow himself with spiritual qualities and godly moral traits (akhlāq-i ilāhi) then he did not deserve to be the shadow of God. Calling such rulers sultan was as metaphorical (istiʿāra) as calling one piece the king/queen (shāh) in chess, and that was no different than making a statue or picture without a spirit.33 In this view, such a high status among mankind was earned through moral perfection combined with rulership, not simply by ascending to the top of social hierarchy. Despite the general tendency not to question the legitimacy of any ruler, the ideal for the ruler remained only being the administrator of human affairs but also the ultimate moral guide for humanity. This prevailing perspective established moral criticism as the mainstream of political discourse on rulership.

Emphasizing the instrumental quality of rulership in enabling one to attain the highest status among mankind, “the rank (martaba) of khilāfat and sulṭānī and the rank of the shadow of God,” wrote Bidlīsī, who used khilāfat, sulṭān and mulk interchangeably throughout his work, “is the most superior (afḍal) among the ranks of humans (marātib-i insānī).”34 Bidlīsī compared rulership (salṭanat or mulk) to knowledge (ʿilm) and wisdom (ḥikmat) and found rulership superior to both because the effects of rulership were more general (aʿam) and more comprehensive (ashmal).35 He predicated his argument on two Quranic verses related to rulership, 4: 54 and 2: 251. In interpreting the

33 Bitlīsī, Kanun-ı Şahensāhi, 15.
34 Bitlīsī, Kanun-ı Şahensāhi, 99.
35 Bitlīsī, Kanun-ı Şahensāhi, 32.
first, he indicated that among the graces mentioned only rulership/kingdom (mulk) was described as ‘great’ (‘aẓīm). For the second, he pointed that among the two graces leadership was mentioned ahead of wisdom. Thus Bidlīsī sanctioned the superiority of the sultanate over other forms of binding authorities among mankind on theological grounds.

Ḥīżr Mūnsī, after stating that being a ruler was an exalted (rafī‘) and unsurmountable (manī‘) rank (martaba), supported his view by indicating the specific benefits of rulership: “The order of the world (niẓam-i umūr-i ʾālam) entirely depends on his [ruler] noble existence. The rein of the majority of human beings depends on his firm opinion (ba rāy-i razīn). As necessitated by the utmost wisdom of the Knowing God, every multitude is tied to a single [authority] in order to form a community.”36 What made rulership most exalted for Ḥīżr Mūnsī was that the order of the world depended on the existence of a ruler, as necessitated by divine wisdom. Substantiating his view with a juristic opinion taken from a fourteenth century legal compendium Tātārkhaniyya,37 Lūṭʿī Pāşā similarly stated that there was no position (manzila) and rank (rutba) above that of sultan because the benefit of his justice (insāf) was universal.38 These and similar views assessed the status of rulership in society in comparison to its benefits for mankind and were based on an a priori acceptance that rulership, even in an unqualified form (salṭana), was beneficial for the people.

36 Ḥīżr Mūnsī, Akhlāq al-Atqiyya, 33b.


38 Lūṭʿī Pāşā, Khalās al-Umma, 34. This definition was already well-established in medieval political thought. See, for example, Fārābī, Ārā Ahl al-Madiṅa al-Fāṣila, ch. 8.
Excluding the eccentric Sufi view displayed in *al-'Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya* that drew a clear hierarchical line between rulership and Poleship by portraying the latter as the undisputed highest authority in the world, the depiction of the sultanate as the highest status among mankind was one of the commonly agreed upon precepts in the political theory of the period. Although not every author provided all the reasons that led him to such a conviction, there appear to have been two prevalent perceptions that seem to have predicated such a common regard of rulership: the perception of the ruler as the supreme guide of community, and as inheritor of the prophetic authority of representing God’s will on earth. In proving the supremacy of rulership among mankind, authors such as Bidlīsī and Ḥızır Münşî argued on the basis of what this status entailed. Thus, they frequently alluded to God’s government and the Prophet’s mission, in stating what rulership entailed, and presented rulership as the closest human occupation/position to that of God’s and the prophets’, which made it the most noble among mankind.

From this perspective, the purpose of political writing was to illustrate the position of rulership among mankind and advise the ruler to perform what it entailed. These convictions were not equally stressed by all who elaborated on rulership. Lütfi Pāşā, for example, who seemed indifferent to the question of the ruler’s moral guidance, preferred to prove the superiority of rulership on a different ground. For him, the very power that a political authority was endowed with was a self-fulfilling reason in proving the superiority of rulership among mankind.

The idea that the status of ruler was the highest possible position among mankind originated from the ontological views on human nature and man’s relationship with God, as elaborated, particularly, in philosophy and Sufism. In this tradition, the caliphate, as
an ontological status, was inherently the highest status man can attain after the
prophethood. Thus, attaining the status of the caliphate as a human being was not the
same thing as acquiring the position of caliphate among human beings, for it was a
spiritual realization rather than a sociological manifestation. The jurists, however, and to
some extent, theologians paid less attention to the spiritual aspect of the caliphate and
were concerned more with the sociological aspect.

Based on these perceptions, for pragmatic purposes, the common pattern of
depicting the sultanate as the highest position in the world aimed to impose a moral
responsibility on the current ruler in office to fulfill the expectations of a proper rulership.
When an author such as ‘Alāyī proclaimed that there was no better (evlā ve eclā) grace
(ni’met) than the rank (derece) of sultanate, he referred to the ideal rulership as he
portrayed it and urged the sultan to tailor his rulership to the ideal.39 This pursuit is more
visible in the accounts of Ğaşköprîzâde, Bidlîsî, and Enşârî who, after reminding the ruler
that he was endowed with the most exalted position in the world, elaborate on what such
an authority entailed. In this depiction, the high status of this office did not confer upon
the ruler a high status among mankind, nor could the ruler turn the sultanate into a high
status position by virtue of his sheer power to rule. Thus these authors depicted the
sultanate, in the sense of an office on the model of prophetic rulership, as the highest
status among mankind and when a ruler is entitled to the sultanate he earns the
opportunity to enjoy this lofty position by endowing himself with the required spiritual
and moral qualities and performing was expected.

39 ‘Alāyī, Netîcetü’s-Sülük, 92b.
God’s Government

Adopting such designations as *khalīfa* and *zill Allāh* to qualify the sultanate inevitably led many authors to derive inspiration from God’s government over His creation which was frequently alluded to as the perfect model and an authoritative source of legitimacy for rulership. Political authors, inspired by theological doctrines regarding God’s relation to the creation, inferred certain characteristics of God’s government and compared those features to man’s government in order to establish principles of ideal political authority. The most conspicuous outcome of this political reasoning was to conclude that the unity of God’s government provided an absolute model for earthly rulership in the form of the rule of a single authority in the realm. This view suggested that moral objectives could be achieved and true leadership realized only when political authority remained unpartitioned in the form of the sultanate, modeled after God’s government.

Alluding to this corollary, ‘Alāyī, for example, substantiated his view by citing ‘Alī, a close companion of the Prophet and the fourth rightly-guided caliph, who was reported to have said that rulership (*salṭanat*) does not tolerate partnership.⁴⁰ Similarly, Bidlīsī supported the same view on the basis of a proof he brought from the Quran (21: 22) which explained the wisdom behind the oneness of God by indicating that plurality in divinity would cause disorder and conflict.⁴¹ Although the verse does not give any indication that this monotheistic view should serve as a model for rulership and the

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⁴¹ Bitlīsī, *Kanun-ı Şahenshahi*, 139.
authoritative Quranic commentaries interpreted the verse as only highlighting the oneness of God, this verse became increasingly popular in political writings as a justification for the rule of a single authority. This simple logical induction that since there is only one God then there must be only one ruler in the realm was a commonly held view in the political literature of time. Such an analogy could only be meaningful in a mindset that had already established some sort of a direct relationship between God and the ruler. Identifying the ruler (sultân) as the shadow of God (sâya-i Haq) like all other contemporary writers on rulership, Bidlîsî further made a logical statement that the shadow of God must be one as is God Himself.\(^{42}\) To justify the existence of rulership, Bidlîsî and most of his contemporaries needed no further evidence than the very government of God.

Once established as the corollary of God’s government, the rule of a single man or the sultanate was then advocated as an uncompromising form of rulership. To stress the principle of unity in rulership, Bidlîsî wrote in a quatrain that a single oppressive ruler was better than a hundred just rulers in a realm.\(^{43}\) Although he only shared his contemporaries’ view, Bidlîsî’s own career seems to have turned him into an even more vigorous defender of this principle. An accomplished historian, before writing his work on rulership, Bidlîsî was well aware of the dynastic struggles that took place for the Ottoman throne and had already witnessed two of them. In most of these struggles, the contenders disputed whether the realm could be divided among themselves. As he witnessed, both Prince Cem and Prince Aḥmed, for example, asked their opponents to

\(^{42}\) Bitlîsî, *Kanun-ı Şâhenşâhi*, 139.

\(^{43}\) Bitlîsî, *Kanun-ı Şâhenşâhi*, 139.
divide the realm among themselves.\footnote{For Ahmed’s proposal see M. Çağatay Uluçay, “Yavuz Sultan Selim Nasıl Padişah Oldu?,” \textit{İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi} 7 (1954): 117-42.} At the end of all these struggles, not only was there only one successor to the throne, but the concept of unigeniture had prevailed against the idea of a partitioning rulership. Having constantly faced such challenges, Ottoman political writers like Bidlîsî capitalized on the idea that earthly rulership should be a replica of divine government and have only one ruler.

This emphasis on the unity of sovereignty was still a serious concern even for authors living in the strictly-centralized sixteenth century Ottoman Empire because almost every struggle for dynastic succession created a breeding ground for fissiparous tendencies in rulership. The Ottomans always managed to neutralize this divisive potential by unflinchingly clinging to the principal of ‘unpartitioned rulership’ established as a state tradition from the very beginning. Since its inception, the Ottoman State, which was among the negligible principalities that emerged from the ashes of the Seljuk state, frequently faced challenges to partition the rulership. Stifling the divisive effects of their own Turkic traditions rather quickly, the Ottoman rulers and political writers, from the very beginning, favored the centralized political systems of the Middle East and, accordingly, seem to have consistently pursued the idea of the rule of a single man as the best feasible form of government.\footnote{For the early history of ideas on partitioning or unifying the realm see Cemal Kafadar, \textit{Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 136-8.} Whether alluding to God’s government provided the founders with any guidance or not in this process of state formation, the unity of sovereignty became an uncompromising canon of political theory in the sixteenth century, not only more appealing on theological grounds but also historically proven to
be a more successful model in the Ottomans’ own experience. So the principle of a single ruler was not simply the only recipe for the institution of a virtuous regime but also served a practical political expediency of keeping the empire intact.

Once the unity of sovereignty was authoritatively established on the model of divine government the authors searched for other qualities of God’s rule for the perfection of earthly rulership. Among the authors who explicitly turn their attention to divine government for inspiration were Bidlīsī and Dizdār who held similar opinions on many issues and established a direct relationship between the ideal rulership and God’s rule over creation. For them rulership could be perfect only insofar as it resembled God’s government and for this reason it had to bear the same characteristics as God’s. By presenting divine government as a model to imitate, these authors elucidated the most authoritative reference for the act of rulership for all types of rulers whether they were in the service of religion or not.

Among the attributes of God that were invoked in reference to His rulership, Bidlīsī highlighted divine supremacy (rubūbiyyat) as an example for worldly rulers to imitate. In his commentary of Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam, Ḥavārī used rubūbiyya to characterize the governorship of Adam and subsequent Poles over the creation as God’s deputy.\textsuperscript{46} Although the term ‘rubūbiyya’ does not appear in the Quran or Hadith, the word Rabb, derived from the same root, is among the common names of God in both sources. Rubūbiyya, the act of being a Rabb, had been widely used in mystical theology.\textsuperscript{47} Different from other designations referring to God’s rulership such as Malik, which

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{46} Qaṣṣaṣī, \textit{Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam}, 405.
\item \textsuperscript{47} A. J. Wensinck-[T. Fahd], “Rabb,” \textit{IE}^2.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
implies possession and sovereignty, Rabb implies a relational rulership between the servant and the lord.⁴⁸ A sixteenth century lexicographer Қarahисărî (d. 987/1579) defined Rabb as possessor (malik), owner (sâhib), and master (seyid), while provided its root meaning as to feed (beslemek), to complete (tamâm itmek), to increase (ziyâde eylemek), and to accumulate (cem eylemek).⁴⁹ This lexicographic definition of the term alone clearly indicates that Rabb referred to a specific concept of rulership rather than a mere authority, pointing to the status of the ruler and the functions of rulership. Bidlîsî’s contemporary, Mekkî Efendi, defined rab as owner (sâhib) and possessor (mâlik) with the implications of subjugation (taḥakkum) and authority (salṭanat).⁵⁰ With this corollary, while referring to the unity of sovereignty, Bidlîsî also pointed to a moral high ground for political authority. Thus, as Bidlîsî argued throughout his work, an indispensable quality of rulership was its care for its the subjects and the providing guidance.

In tandem with his definition, Қarahisărî also provided an illustration for one of the derivatives of Rabb in full agreement with Bidlîsî’s usage of the term: “In current usage,” Қarahisărî pointed, ‘rabbanî’ referred to a strict observer of divine ordains.⁵¹ Bidlîsî called these scholars with such traits as godly scholars (‘ulemâ-i rabbânî). When applied to government, one of the favorite constructs Bidlîsî used to depict ideal political authority was khilâfat-i rabbânî by which he stated that rulership had to be in full

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⁴⁹ Қarahisărî, Ӧuesday b. Şemseddîn, Lugât-i Âlfertî (Istanbul: Matba’a-i İmire, 1310/1892), 333.
⁵¹ “Şol kimseki ameliyle amil olub arif billah ola rabbânî dîrler.” Қarahisărî, Ӧuesday b. Şemseddîn, Lugât-i Âlfertî, 333.
accordance with divine ordains. He defined the true rulership, which he commonly
dubbed as *khilāfat-i rahmani*, as endowing oneself with godly traits (*avšāf-i rabbānī*). In
framing worldly rulership in comparison to that of God’s, Bidlîsî further stated that what
made divine government (*rubūbiyyat*) manifest was God’s combination of two attributes:
knowledge (*‘ilm*) and prowess (*qudrat*). For him these two were the most obvious
attributes for the perfection of rulership on earth. He then stated that true rulership
(*khilāfat-i raḥmānī*) was an exemplar (*numūdar*) of God’s authority (*iqtidār-i subḥānī*)
on earth. But true rulership, called the vicegerency of the Truth (*khilāfat-i Ḥaq*), could
only take place (*ḥaqq-i khilāfa*) when the above attributes became manifest in the ruler.
In this exposition God’s government stands as a specific model for the perfection of
certain aspects of rulership.

To further elaborate these two attributes of God, Bidlîsî indicated that just rulers
were manifestations of God’s rulership and prowess because they had the majesty of
rulership while the prophets, *imāms* (the twelve *imāms*) and the *‘ulemā* were
manifestations of divine knowledge because they constantly issued commands, orders
and wisdoms. Thus the two attributes of God, prowess and knowledge, were at all times
manifested through different human agents. In verse, Bidlîsî clarified this representation:
“Rulers, manifestations of the rulership of God; the wise, mirrors of the knowledge of
God.” For him the utmost ideal and the highest rank that a ruler could attain was the
representation of these two attributes of God. “The rulers of Islam and exalted rulers are

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possessors of the rank of the knowledge (dānish) and sovereignty (iqtidār),” he stated, “and [in this respect they] are the manifestations of knowledge (‘ilm) and prowess (qudrat) of God.”

Although these two attributes could be manifest in the ruler and the ‘ulemā separately, the ideal ruler for Bidlīsī was one who combined them and made them manifest in himself.

Likewise, Dizdār underlined two divine attributes that characterized rulers: all rulers were manifestations of God’s attributes of grace (lutf) and subjection (qahr). Like Bidlīsī, he divided rulers into two kinds: rulers of the world and rulers of religion. The difference between the two rulers was whether they were conscious of God’s manifestation or not. Worldly rulers were not aware of God’s attributes of grace and supremacy that they themselves manifested. For him, they were like beautiful people whose beauty benefited others. By contrast, the rulers of religion were also manifestations of God’s two attributes but were aware of this relationship. This awareness enabled them to access the riches of the kingdom (mulk) and the treasures of the heavens (malakūt). Then they realized (iṭṭilā‘), the divine secret of ‘who knows himself knows his God’ and sat on the throne of the realm of eternity.

Establishing the relation between the ruler and God as one between the one who appoints (mustakhlif) and the appointee (khalīfa), Dizdār then stated that vicegerency (khilāfa) does not become complete (la tasiḥhu) unless the vicegerent exhibits (anmuzaj) attributes of the one he represents.

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55 Bitlīsī, Kanun-ı Şahensâhi, 24.
56 Dizdār, Sulûk al-Mulûk, 6b.
57 Dizdār, Sulûk al-Mulûk, 5a.
mercy (rahma), compassion (shafaqa), clemency (hilm), nobility (karam), munificence (jūd), and dignity (sharaf al-nafs). To complement this representation, the ruler needed to purify himself of reprehensible qualities by abstaining from immorality (akhlāq-i sayyi’a) and evil traits (ṣifāt zamīma) such as self-love (‘ujb), haughtiness (kibr), enmity (‘adāwa), and disparagement/condescension. The author avoided framing this similarity as an absolute simulacrum by labeling certain traits evil when possessed by humans, such as haughtiness, which are otherwise inherent qualities of God.

Bidlīsī and Dizdār elaborated on this divine model as a benchmark to make a distinction between ordinary and superior forms of rulership. While ordinary rulers were manifestations of certain aspects of God’s government, only the true rulers, endowed with godly traits, could fully manifest and consciously represent Him on earth. Two aspects of God’s government, the unity of sovereignty and His attributes relevant to rulership, were depicted as two indispensable characteristics of an ideal rulership to constitute an imitable model for rulers in the world. According to this conception, God’s government was not only alluded to as a binding though a remote model for imitation, but as an absolute, overarching authority of which earthly rulership could be a part. As shown below, this ontological-representative relationship between God’s government and earthly rulership becomes more obvious on questions of God’s shadow, God’s vicegerency and the Pole as supreme authority on Earth.
No appellative better illustrated the corollary between God’s government and the sultan’s rulership than the designation of the ruler as ‘shadow of God’ (:\ligth, s\ahas\il\i\). Political writings of the period extensively used this metaphoric designation more than any other qualifier for rulership. Besides indiscriminate uses of the metaphor as an honorific designation in various forms of writing such as official documents and chronicles, in political theory it was mostly used in a specific sense to distinguish between superior and ordinary forms of rulership. Unlike other titles such as khalif\a, \im\am\ and sul\tan, \ligth was rarely used individually but was mostly added to other titles as an attribute of rulership, (i.e. al-sultan \ligth), one of its distinctive features.

For an author such as L\uf\a P\as\a who was not concerned with distinguishing between superior and inferior forms of rulership, \ligth was only one of the titles that any ruler could claim the right to bear. L\uf\a P\as\a indiscriminately used many different kinds of titles and designations that denoted some form of political authority and saw no legal or conventional inappropriateness to attributing them to the ruler. In this view, the very existence of rulership and the status of the ruler in relation to his subjects made him the shadow of God over his creation, regardless of how the ruler practiced rulership. Thus, being the shadow of God did not impose on rulership any additional characteristic to modify it.

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59 L\uf\i\ P\as\, Khal\as al-Umma, 29-34.
However, a more typical approach, shared by such authors as Қınalızәde and Ҭәskөрөзәde, assessed rulership on the basis of the moral and religious qualifications of the ruler and promoted Ӡил Ӿлә as a rank that could be achieved only by meeting certain qualifications, an approach which focused on the parameters of being the shadow of God that the ruler should be aware of. But the question for the ruler was not whether he was entitled to be designated as the shadow of God but to what degree his rulership conformed to such designation. As all authors writing on this subject agreed, even in the most rudimentary form of rulership, characterized by the sheer power to rule, the ruler could still enjoy the condition of being Ӡил Ӿлә for resembling God’s government in such traits as the unity of authority, might, and majesty. The quest then was to turn one’s rulership into a mirror image, a true shadow of God, as far as humanly possible by endowing the ruler with all the godly traits applicable to earthly rulership. In this sense, Ӡил Ӿлә was envisioned to be a spiritual achievement for the ruler, an endless pursuit of perfection.

Conceiving rulership as being God’s shadow was largely based on a logical inference dictated by the semantic field of the metaphor itself, and interpreted mostly on the basis of mystical teachings about man’s relation to God. Unlike the most prestigious title хәлифә, the term Ӡил Ӿлә does not appear in the Quran. The evidential basis of the term came from certain well-known prophetic traditions that were referred to in almost all political writings of the time. The Prophet’s praise of rulers as Ӡил Ӿлә had certainly made it a popular designation among political writers since the early writings on political theory. In almost all cases, Ӡил Ӿлә was used in reference to the prophetic traditions which designated the ruler as the shadow of God. The most widely quoted tradition on
the subject, circulating in different variants, was the one that portrayed the ruler as the shadow of God and advised all believers to pay him unconditional loyalty, regardless of the quality of his rulership. Without much elaboration, authors commonly quoted this tradition to substantiate the prevailing view that, on the basis of prophetic authority, any sultan was by definition ẓill Allāh and, thanks to this position, they deserved loyalty from his subjects. Once being the shadow of God was established as a property of the sultanate, authors who aspired to draw a spiritually sophisticated picture of rulership resorted to a logical analysis inspired by the concept of imām.

Ṭaşköprüzāde, for example, who drew a parallel between these two esteemed designations, thought that a ruler could not deserve to be called ẓill Allāh or God’s vicegerency (al-khalīfa al- raḥmānī) unless he met certain conditions such as following the path of justice. No less perfectionist than Ṭaşköprüzāde, Bidlīsī also appeared uncompromising in his depiction of ẓill Allāh as the highest rank in rulership, a rank reserved to such rulers whose rulership resembled God’s government. Only the kind of rulership which he dubbed khilāfat-i raḥmānī or salṭanat-i ma’navī could be considered as being the shadow of God. What earned a ruler this status was his being endowed with certain moral traits and spiritual perfection. Bidlīsī then gave a very specific prescription for achieving moral perfection to attain the lofty status of being God’s shadow: “Know that moral principles (uṣūl-i akhlāq) and noble traits (malakāt-i karīma) that are stipulated for the realization (taḥaqquq) of khilāfat-i raḥmānī and required to deserve the

60 See, for example, Bitlīsî, Kanun-i Şahenşahî, 133; Birgivî, Zukhr al-Mulûk, 99a; Lütфи Pâşâ, Khalâs al-Umma, 7; Enşârî, Tuḥfa al-Zamân, 6b.

61 Ṭaşköprüzāde, Aşrâr al-Khilâfa, 116b; Râzî and Hamadânî, whose works were known to Ṭaşköprüzāde also opposed the recognition of an oppressor ruler as ẓill Allāh. See Ann K. S. Lambton, “The Theory of Kingship in the Naṣīḥat ul-Mulûk of Ghazâlî,” The Islamic Quarterly 1 (1954): 47-55.
designation to be the shadow of God (zelliyat-i yazdānī) are confined to four principals..." Those principals were none other than the four cardinal virtues of justice, courage, temperance, and wisdom which he elaborated upon in considerable detail.

Bidlīšī’s and Ṭašköprızāde’s equation of zill Allāh with khalīfat Allāh and their depiction of both as a superior form of rulership was a commonly held view among the political writers of the period. Providing lexical proof for this conceptual overlap, Ḵarāhsarī stated that the two terms were synonymous (zell Allāh: ey, imām). In accordance with this linguistic exposition, referring to zill Allāh, “this means khalīfa as well,” stated Dīzār, “because the shadow (zill) is the vicegerent of the shadow-caster (muẓill).” Considering these conditions similar to and above that of the rudimentary sultanate, Ḵanalizāde advised the ruler to become both imām and zill Allāh at the same time. Both designations highlighted the bond between the ruler and God as well as the similarity between his rulership and God’s government. It was only through being zill Allāh and khilāfat Allāh that a simulacrum of God’s government could best be established on earth.

Unlike the juristic and theological reluctance to apply the term khalīfa to sultan-rulers, there were no rules pertaining to the use of zill Allāh which enabled the term to become the most widely utilized designation in the quest for illustrating the superior form of sultanate. Besides, the term zill Allāh was more easily suited to the condition of the post-Abbasid rulers because it was, in both the accepted prophetic tradition and historical

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62 Bitlīšī, Kanun-i Şahensāhi, 57.
63 Ḵarāhsarī, Lugāt-ı Afaqār, 515.
64 Dīzār, Sūlūk al-Mulūk, 2a.
experience, configured exclusively to designate the sultan-rulers. Even without the use of the term *khalīfa*, *ẓill Allāh* implied most of what *khalīfa* implied in terms of the molding of rulership after the model of God’s government. Because *khilāfa* came to be used interchangeably with sultan/sultanate, the meaning of this concept became more distinctive and its qualifying significance became more important for the authors. Without necessitating further elaboration or definition, the term itself, with the power of its metaphoric quality, implied the type of rulership a given author intended to portray.

**Prophethood as Rulership**

To exemplify God’s government with a tangible humanly model, it was common in the political literature of this period to present the political component of prophethood (*nubuwwa*) as an exemplary form of rulership to imitate. Such authors as Ṭāşḵopřīzāde, Ḥīẓir Mūnsī, and Dizdār highlighted certain aspects of prophethood as ‘political’ arguing that besides being a role model for all individuals, prophethood had features that rulers alone should imitate. By establishing a theoretical relationship as well as historical continuity between prophethood and rulership, they probed into the nature of prophethood to identify and distinguish its features which could serve to guide the ruler in his craft.

What this approach revealed was that, in their view, not all prophets (*nabī, rašīl*) were commissioned with rulership and only those who possessed political authority were models for rulers. Although such views on the relationship between rulership and prophethood were inspired by the accounts of medieval philosophers on the issue, this
careful distinction, between ruler-prophets and prophets as religious guides/lawgivers, clearly diverged from the prevailing notions of prophethood in medieval political philosophy. According to the theory of prophethood constructed by Fārābī and elaborated by Avicenna, who made it the central point of his political philosophy, a prophet (nabī) was conceived as an indisputable ruler of his community. They identified the philosopher-ruler with the prophet and saw no distinction between political rulership and spiritual guidance of the community.66 Davvānī, however, whom the Ottomans knew better, had already modified this view, before the sixteenth century Ottoman authors wrote on the subject, by distinguishing between prophetic-lawgiver and ruler.67 Along the same lines, for many Ottoman authors, such as Enṣārī, nubuwwa and salṭana were two different missions, and the sultans inherited the prophets’ mission only on matters related to rulership.

To explain why certain prophets were granted sovereignty (salṭanat), Ḥızir Münṣī stated that “among the prophets some were rulers (pādīshāhān) and they conquered countries and gathered armies” and then he added “an army without wealth can not be gathered and wealth without an army can not be protected.”68 Sharing a similar view, Tāskoprızāde explained the rulership of prophets in the case of Moses: “God combined prophethood (nubuwwa) and the sultanate for Moses after the demise of the Pharaoh. Then God ordered the army of the Israelites to attack Jericho and fight the Amalekites to

66 For views on rulership and prophethood in political philosophy see Rosenthal, Political Thought in Medieval Islam, 128, 140, 144; For a juristic exposition of such views see Lambton, State and Government in Medieval Islam, 59.

67 Rosenthal, Political Thought in Medieval Islam, 217.

68 Ḥızir Münṣī, Akhlāq al-Atqiya, 27a.
free the divided (*mugaddad*) country from their hands.\(^{69}\) In both views, the features of these distinguishing ruler-prophets from others were wealth and the army they possessed, as well as the use of these assets for conquest. Projecting the example of these and other ruler-prophets, Ťaškoprızāde and Ḥīzir Münși displayed a common view among the authors of this period which held that ‘political power’, enhanced by wealth and military might, was the single most distinguishing feature of rulership.

In agreement with the conception of prophethood exposed by Ťaškoprızāde and Ḥīzir Münși, Dizdār recapitulated the views of the thirteenth century Sufi Najm al-Dīn Rāzī expressed in his popular book of sufism *Mirṣād al-ʿĪbād*, and emphasized the necessity of the ruler having coercive power to perform certain functions with which certain prophets were commissioned.\(^{70}\) Since prophets were already designated as guides and leaders of their communities in law, morality and religion, this depiction of the sultanate reduced it to the capability of exercising coercive power. To illustrate this point, “Solomon asked for sovereignty (*mulk*) for this reason...”, Dizdār wrote, “[because] when the power of the sultanate and the majesty of kingdom (*shawk al-mamlaka*) unite with the power of prophethood (*nubuwwa*) it becomes more effective in destroying enemies.”\(^{71}\) What Dizdār’s reading of the history of prophets underlined was the conception that prophethood did not inherently entail coercive power/political authority. A prophet who was sent by God to guide his community on all matters was not a ruler by virtue of prophethood, unless he was specifically given political authority.


\(^{70}\) Najm al-Dīn Razi, *The Path of God’s Bondsmen*, 399-400.

\(^{71}\) Dizdār, *Suluk al-Muluk*, 3b.
Thus the whole argument, developed by its author to prove that ruler-prophets may well serve as a tangible model for rulership, is perhaps more telling for its underlying conception that prophethood and the sultanate are distinct authorities, if not totally independent from each other.

Further emphasizing the political aspects of prophethood and the possession of political authority as separate from other prophetic missions, Dizdār then explained how certain prophets had multiple authorities/roles: “The position of ṣalṭana united with the position of walāya and nubuwwa so as to do justice among the subjects, and uphold the right of the religious path, and preserve the religious ordinances (mu‘āmalat al-shar‘iyya), and reach to the world of certainty (‘ālam al-yaqīn), just as mulk and khilāfa united, in the case of David, Solomon and Joseph, with the rank of nubuwwa.”72 In the first part of this statement, he portrayed sovereignty (ṣalṭana), spiritual authority (walāya) and prophethood (nubuwwa) as three authoritative but separate missions that could exceptionally be combined by a select number of chosen people. In the second part, Dizdār seem to have replaced the word ṣalṭana with mulk, and walāya with khilāfa which may indicate that he conceived the caliphate not as a synonym of ṣalṭana, as was common at the time, but of walāya as a spiritual authority, in accordance with other Sufi interpretations of authority held by authors of this period.

Although Taşköprizade’s exposition is rather vague in illustrating the triple authorities/natures that certain ruler-prophets enjoyed it is more instructive than Dizdār’s on the question of inheriting these roles:

72 Dizdār, Sulūk al-Mulūk, 3a.
When Muḥammed, the noblest of prophets, peace be upon him, was bestowed religion (dīn), power (mulk) and sovereignty (salties), he was the only human being who combined them. With him, God also perfected religion and sealed/ended the string of messengers (nabiyīn). After him the ʿulemā, as inheritors to messengers, followed. They found the right way and through the ʿulemā the people found the right way. Then came the just sultans because the salvation of the world depended on them, just as the salvation of the afterlife depended on the ʿulemā. Then followed those pious ones [Sufis] other than the ʿulemā (allazīna aṣlahī anfusahum) who reformed their souls. Those who digressed from those groups are but a herd of cattle.  

What seems to be certain in this ambiguous depiction is that the mission of prophets could be fully inherited through these three groups, or three missions: knowledge of religion, political authority, and spiritual guidance. Although the statement made clear that no other single person could succeed the Prophet in combining all three missions, it also elucidated that succession to the Prophet entailed rulership, religion, and spirituality. Despite Ūskopřžade’s overlooking of the question of whether these three authorities could be combined by any one succeeding individual it does not against the general spirit of his exposition as well as other authors’ view on the subject that, ideally, these missions should be combined in the personality of one successor. It was commonly believed that such qualified successors were lacking throughout most of the history of succession to the prophet, so the author was making an historical rather than a theoretical point in alluding to, quite pessimistically, to that succession, for he and shared a despair common among the ʿulemā that such succession in its fullness had come to an end with the era of patristic caliphate. Thus rather than underscoring the impossibility of

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73 Ūskopřžade, Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda, 3: 449.
succeeding the last prophet in all his authorities, the statement establishes those authorities as moral objectives to achieve which would turn an ordinary sultanate into a superior one, a similitude of prophetic rulership.

Prophethood conceived as such served as an authoritative source of inspiration as well as a perfect model particularly for authors who clearly distinguished between material and spiritual forms of rulership. In an attempt to present role models, they first presented prophethood as a related profession by highlighting certain ruler-prophets as rulers. This theological conviction, bolstered by an accompanying historical imagination, put ordinary rulers in the same line as the ruler-prophets, the noblest of human beings in both the prevailing dogma and popular culture.

From this perspective, all worldly rulers were perceived to have shared a similar task as the prophets who were granted the same sort of sovereignty to complement their prophethood. The message to ordinary rulers was then to complement their sovereignty with what was lacking in their rulership, the spiritual component of prophethood. For all prophet-rulers had perfected both their material and spiritual authorities, each authority assisting the other. It was precisely because of their combination of these two authorities that they came to be designated as vicegerent of God (imām) or shadow of God on earth (ẓill Allāh). Thus what many authors envisioned by these and similar designations was rulership modeled after prophethood. That made the ultimate goal of rulership the combining of material authority/coercive power with spiritual.
When turned into a caliphate a sultanate then was the type of rulership inspired by God’s government and modeled after the rulership of ruler-prophets. This perception, however, brings two questions to the fore, which some authors of the period, most notably, Bidlīsī, sought to answer in some detail. First, what did the caliphate mean specifically and, second, how could a sultanate turn into a caliphate? The term khalīfa or its seat khilāfa, enjoying a powerful Quranic sanction for being used in God’s word as a praiseworthy condition or mission, assumed a myriad of totally different or nuanced meanings in various intellectual, cultural, and political traditions in Islam. Depending on the author and the context in which they were used, a variety of meanings of the term could be observed in the eclectic political literature of the Ottomans where in many cases these meanings, derived from different traditions, were conflated to serve the author’s argument.

Despite this variegation, the discourse on rulership with regard to the caliphate centered on two principal meanings of the term: individual human condition as vicegerency of God and political authority over the community, both originating from the Quran. Unlike many other political concepts that had little or no Quranic sanction and were subjected to a more independent examination in political theory the caliphate compelled authors to do the job of Quranic exegete. This focus on the Quranic interpretation of this concept drove the historical-juristic view of the caliphate almost totally out of discussion. Except for eulogies glorifying the Ottoman ruler as the ruler

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74 For the former meaning see Quran 6: 165, 10: 14, 10: 73, 35: 39; For the latter meaning see Quran 2: 30, 38: 26.
above all others or epithets of superiority such as the caliph on the face of the earth
(خلافة الریوی زمین), the caliphate as universal leadership of the Muslim community, as
attested in classical juristic theory, did not even remotely resonate in the political
literature of this period.

The dual conception of the caliphate as vicegerency and rulership was embedded
in any use of the term in political theory of the period that presented it as a Quranic
designation and a superior form of sultanate. From an individual believer’s perspective,
the caliphate was a human condition on earth which created a bond between the servant
and God while opening an unlimited opportunity to reach a high status among the created
by gaining proximity to the Creator. From a ruler’s perspective, the caliphate was a
representation of God on earth along with a political power conferred by the highest
authority. This made the caliph both subject to God and a ruler over God’s community
and being a caliph referred to both a man’s perfection and political rulership at the same
time.

Shaping the views of the authors of this period on the definition and acquisition of
the caliphate were two well-known Quranic verses that served as the most authoritative
references. The first verse (2: 30), which describes the designation of man in the person
of the prophet Adam, as Khalīfa on earth, was mostly presented as a proof of man’s
distinctive nature and mission on earth. For authors, such as Bidlīsī, who probed into
the relationship between man’s nature and rulership, this verse proved that God created
man with the potential to act as God’s vicegerent on earth and made him responsible for
doing so, thus portraying the caliphate as a high spiritual status and a moral objective for

75 See, for example, Bitlīsī, Kanun-ı Şahenshahi, 11; Dizdār, Sulūk al-Mulūk, 5a.
Every man, the attainment of which becomes a duty. Better suiting to the self image of Ottoman rulers in this period and more commonly used in political texts, the second verse (37: 26), which states Prophet David’s designation as khalīfa, specifically referred to David’s appointment as a ruler over his community and ordered him to rule with justice. During the wedding of the Grand Vizier Ibrāhīm Pāşā, Sūleyman the Lawgiver was reported to have held a debate among the leading scholars of his time as to the true meaning of the caliphate as illustrated in the case of Prophet David’s depiction as such in the Quran. For authors such as Kınalızade and Enşārī who were content with showing the synonymity of the sultanate with the caliphate, as well as others, like Bidlīsī and Dizdār, who attempted to highlight it as a form of superior sultanate, this verse provided unquestionable proof that khilāfa was rulership, turning its receiver into a ruler.

The Quran is explicit in its exposition that it was man among other creatures who was chosen and who chose to be God’s vicegerent on earth, a belief that meant every individual in principle was given a choice and had the capacity to achieve this status. This vicegerency did not necessarily materialize itself as a political act but could more commonly take place through a spiritual bond between man and God. For all political authors who wrote about the caliphate of a ruler, the starting point was man’s caliphate on earth and the ruler’s status as caliph was always described within the context of man’s relation to God. In conceiving the caliphate of rulers, this perspective led authors such as Bidlīsī and Dizdār to establish a direct corollary between the worldly rulership and God’s

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76 See, for example, Enşārī, Tulfa al-Zamān, 8b; Bidlīsī 12; Dizdār, Sulūk al-Mulāk, 2b; Ebū’l-Fażl Mūnṣī, Dustūr al-Saltāna, 12a; Kınalızade ‘Alī, Ahlāk-i ‘Alā’ī, 3:114.

government, whereby the oneness of the vicegerency of God received a particular emphasis. This universalistic view supported and was itself bolstered by the vision of the historical caliphate that ideally recognized a single authority over the Muslim community. But despite the depiction of such a rulership as the similitude of God’s government, this did not change the fact that the caliphate was above all conceived of as a spiritual bond between God and man. The outcome of such a vision of the caliphate was the acceptance of a single caliph-ruler on earth along with individual caliphs among the believers.

Because this designation was not an exclusive one and allowed both the ruler and the subject to achieve the status of God’s vicegerency on earth it appeared to be an egalitarian one. It was precisely this convoluted picture of the term that made it an attainable status for the Ottoman ruler and facilitated its widespread adoption while, paradoxically, allowing any subjects to attain the same position, depriving the ruler of any exclusive claim to this lofty designation. Namely, attaining God’s caliphate on earth required the fulfillment of the same objective criteria for both ruler and subject. This paradoxical situation made the caliphate less determinative for securing rulership and facilitated its perception as more of a moral sophistication than the exercise of actual political authority, a view that only reiterated the conception of the sultanate as the real power in rulership.

This ambiguity in conceiving of the caliphate as political authority was by no means peculiar to the Ottoman period but was caused by a variety of interpretations of relevant religious texts and further complicated by historical practice. As a result, perhaps since the earliest history of Islam, in both political theory and the experience of
Muslim communities, there always remained legitimate ways for people other than the actual ruler to claim political authority. Inspired by theories of the caliphate, it was quite possible for someone to claim a more comprehensive and superior authority than the ruler in office by assuming such titles as mahdi or khalifa, a kind of challenge that took place in numerous instances throughout Islamic history, including the Ottoman era. Thus, in the face of the possibility that even powerless contenders for political authority could make a claim to the highest status of the caliphate, most notably the non-conformist mystics in the Seljukid and Ottoman lands in Asia Minor and the Balkans, it was categorically out of question for the Ottoman sultan not to assume this title. In searching for the timing and reasons for the Ottoman rulers’ adoption of the title caliph one may find more clues by looking at the internal political challenges they faced and the intellectual manifestations of rulership that forced the sultans to portray themselves as khalifa, rather than external challenges and the endemic competition for the universal leadership of the Muslim community.

Thus khilafa as vicegerency of God and the highest rank in the world among mankind constituted a common moral/spiritual high ground that conferred authority upon those who attained it, an authority where the claims of rulers intersected with those of spiritual leaders. Some political writings that depicted the status of Pole (qufb, qufb al-aqtâb or ghaws) as the highest authority in the world, for example, recognized rulers as sultans to the extent that their authority was limited to the government of human affairs in the visible world. They reserved the title of khalifa for the Pole, as the real head of all creation and the true representative of God on earth by virtue of his spiritual perfection.
and ascendance. From this perspective, rulers of the visible world were inferior to the all-encompassing authority of the Pole whose identity was in principle secret, and was known by only a select number of his agents. It was only when the Pole made himself manifest and claimed his authority that this inherent conflict rose to the surface to pose a real threat against the authority of a ruler. A common compromise, however, was that the believers of the ruler-Pole theory did not carry this spiritual conviction into the material sphere and were content to accept that the Pole was the de facto ruler of the world although the people, including the ruler, had no knowledge of it. Into the bargain, as a dynastic tradition since its inception, whether motivated by sincerity or pragmatic purposes, Ottoman rulers were especially careful to please spiritual leaders around them, allowing the members of Sufi orders to interpret the ruler’s relation to their order in their own way, while this policy portrayed an image of the sultan in the public eye as graceful and allied with the friends of God. In any case, as a traditional dynastic policy, it was a wise and effective undertaking to disperse any doubts surrounding one’s authority.

As best illustrated in the accounts of Bidlīsī, Dizdār, and Țāsköprızāde, in their quest to qualify the sultanate and set moral objectives for the ruler based on their interpretation of the above verses for most authors treated khilāfa as be both a common status granted to mankind and a specific position conferred on a chosen ruler. This

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78 Al-ʿAdliyya al-Sulaymāniyya, 6b.

79 Such ideas in the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire verify Hodgson’s view that considers the spread of the Sufi concept of khalīfa and quṭb as a part of a general development in the Islamic world, along with the rise of Sufi orders as characteristic institutions of later medieval period. See Marshal G. S. Hodgson, Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History, ed. with int. and conc. E. Burke III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 184-188.

exclusive reinterpretation of the caliphate was in complete logical agreement with the prevailing view in political literature that considered rulership, in any form whatsoever, as a grace from God granted to a chosen person. On the other hand, the same authors also considered *khilāfa* a superior rank in rulership, an exalted goal within reach of the ruler’s human capacity and a noble ideal which the ruler should strive to achieve. Yet these two views were not poles apart as they may seem. Such views on the caliphate looked confounding because the term ‘*khalīfa’* had two distinct meanings as political authority and spiritual perfection in accordance with the two principal Quranic depictions of the term. In the first view, *khilāfa* was used as a complete synonym for *sallānat* to mean political authority whereas in the latter, the term meant the sense of moral perfection that would enable the sultan to transform his sultanate into a superior form of rulership. The main purpose of the authors was to set the caliphate as a moral objective for the sultan even when they used the term simply to mean political authority. It was also a reminder that a political authority called a caliphate needed to be qualified as such to deserve this appellation. The caliphate, construed as moral perfection, of course, had no effect on the allocation and exercise of political power.

Bidlisī, who built his whole political theory around the concept of *khilāfa*, summarized it as an individual endeavor, a view that prevailed among his contemporaries. His starting premise stated upfront that man became the locus of *khilāfa* by virtue of his nature that was made of two substances: one in the angelic world/sphere and the other in the material world/sphere (*ālam-i jismānī*). His superior substance was at the level of angels and his inferior substance was at the level of beasts. Man’s

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combination of these two substances made him unique among the creation, and it was this unity in man which constituted the locus (masnad) of khilāfa. In addition, man was created noble and, thanks to this nobility, was chosen to be God’s vicegerent. This noble status of man was due to the fact that God created Man in His own image. Man’s creation in God’s image, and his relatedness to God through his spirit, created a bond between God and Man in the form of vicegerency. Probing further into man’s nature and to his potential to become a caliph of God, Bidlīsī stated that man’s spirit belonged to the realm of elegance (laṭāfat) and nobility (sharafat) whereas his body belonged to the realm of creation (kavn) and sedition (faṣād). The reason for man’s ennoblement with khilāfa was his spiritual substance. Thus the attribution of rulership (salṭanat) and shadow of God (ẓill-i Subḥānī) to the material body was metaphorical. It was man’s spirit which served as the substance to accommodate these designations.82

Bidlīsī gave a practical recipe for the attainment of khilāfa by rulers: For him, khilāfat-i raḥmānī meant the endowment of a servant with godly (rabbānī) attributes and perfections (kamālāt), the perfection of the soul with praiseworthy faculties, [ensuring the] order of the seen world, and [establishing] connections (raḥṭ) between the visible world (kishvar-i shahādat) and the world of the unseen (‘ālam-i rūḥānī).83 The concept of khilāfa as such was shaped more by the Sufi tradition than the juristic theory or philosophy. This individualistic view of the caliphate suggests no structural change in the way political power was exercised could turn the sultanate into the caliphate. There is no difference between the conditions expected from a ruler or from a subject to attain this

82 Bitlisî, Kanun-ı Şahenşâhi, 156.
83 Bitlisî, Kanun-ı Şahenşâhi, 13.
status. That is to say, even a ruler, already endowed with political power, needed to go through the same process as an ordinary believer to be entitled to this designation for which there was no objective measure. When set as a moral objective for the ruler in political theory, the caliphate then meant the solidification of one’s sovereignty with spiritual perfection as exemplified by the ruler-prophets. Only in this way, could an ordinary ruler acquire a superior status and become a guide for the community.

Prophet’s Successor or God’s Vicegerent

To further cloud its intended meaning, when used without being qualified, besides its synonymous meaning of sultanate, the term *khilāfa* could, in a strictly political sense, refer to two different conceptions of rulership in Ottoman political thought, or both: vicegerency of God (*imām*) as discussed above, or succession to the Prophet (*khalīfat-i Rasūl Allāh*), that is, the historical caliphate. Although these two principal meanings may not be mutually exclusive, identifying in which sense the term was used is still crucial for understanding the author’s argument. All political authors of the period commonly used the term *imām* without any reservation, and displayed little interest in the long standing debate about whether the ruler could be designated as such.\(^4\) Few authors specifically designated the ruler as *khalīfat-i Rasūl Allāh*; even when they did, their interest was limited to proving the permissibility of attributing such a title to the ruler. Given that the prevailing tendency was to use *imām* rather than *khalīfat-i Rasūl Allāh*, when the term *khilāfa* was used alone it is more likely that it meant the ruler’s vicegerency of God on

\(^4\) For views on the permissibility of using this designation see Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, 46, 48, 86-7, 142, 186.
earth rather than his succession to the political authority of the Prophet. This prevalent equivocalism, perhaps demanded by the very nature of the term, seems to have impelled some authors to be meticulous in their use of the term, and this led to a variety of specific usages formulated by redefinitions or new constructs of the term which created such colorful concepts as al-khilāfa al-haqīqī, al-khilāfa al-ma’na’wī, al-khilāfa al-raḥmānī and the like.

Few authors, however, specifically used the term in the sense of succession to the prophet and instead problematized the differences among the term’s principal meanings. Among them was ‘Alāyī, who translated Ghazālī’s Naṣīḥa al-Mulūk into Turkish and wrote a commentary on the first chapter. Explaining the meaning of the well-known prophetic tradition that limited the caliphate to thirty years after the Prophet and foretold the beginning of the reign of rulers (mūlūk) thereafter, he made a distinction between the caliphate of the first four caliphs and the subsequent rulers, designating the former as the perfect and true caliphate (ḥilāfet-i kāmile and ḥakīkiyye). He stated that attributing such titles as ḥalife and ḥalife-i Reṣūlullāh to rulers after the four rightly guided caliphs was permissible and did not contradict the designation of the era of the rightly guided caliphs as the true caliphate. A conventional explanation in juristic theory, sanctioned by the above prophetic tradition, was to divide the political continuity after the death of the prophet into two periods, the caliphate and the sultanate respectively. Not able to overturn this canonized perception of history, yet convinced that the sultanate could be conceived of as caliphate, ‘Alāyī modified the prevailing view and reconstructed the historical continuity as starting with the ‘true caliphate’ followed by the ‘caliphate’.

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85 ‘Alāyī, Neticetü’s-Süluk, 87b.
Agreeing with ‘Alāyī’s view that equates the sultanate with the caliphate, Enṣārī went a step further and used the term *sulṭān* in a relational construct together with God, in the way *khalīfa* was used. Thus designating the ruler as *sulṭān Allāh* on earth, he stated that the ruler succeeded the prophetic rulership (*khilāfat-i nubuwwa*) in such functions as reforming the people (*islāḥ-i khalq*), calling the people to please God, upholding their religion, and arranging their sustenance.\(^{86}\) Leadership over the affairs of Muslims was a prophetic position and the sultan succeeded the prophets by being in that position. The ruler could succeed in that mission because God made him the pivot of religious law (*madār-i aḥkām-i sharʿiyā*) and the authority over all their affairs (*marjiʿ al-anām fī jamīʿ aḥvālihim*). Without a direct reference to the last Prophet, Enṣārī characterized the office of ruler as a succession to the prophetic mission and held the ruler responsible for the same functions as prophets. Despite envisioning the ruler in the line of prophet-rulers, Enṣārī did not use either of the terms *imām* or *khalīfat Rasūl Allāh* which may suggest his reluctance to use them.

Whether Enṣārī’s was a principled objection against attributing such titles to rulers, in spite of juristic and theological controversies, both designations were widely used in medieval political theory and practice, and the distinction between them largely lost its status as a problem in subsequent periods. The problem was usually posed as a question of titulature in juristic and theological literature and framed as whether it was permissible to attribute the title *imām*, in the sense of vicegerency of God, to caliphs. Hidden behind the controversy over titulature, however, was the underlying concern regarding the very definition of rulership over the community. In this regard, what

occupied and divided the leaders of the early Muslim community during the formative period of its political structures, breeding one of the long-lasting controversies in medieval political thought, was the question whether the caliphate was the vicegerency of God or succession to the Prophet. In contrast with the general uneasiness about dealing with this issue displayed by the early men of distinction among the Muslim community, later generations increasingly proved more receptive or indifferent to this designation.

By the sixteenth century, while some authors still displayed some awareness of this medieval controversy, they mostly wrote with well-established convictions rather than engaging in a debate about the permissibility of ascribing these designations to contemporary rulers. Despite the juristic and theological reservations against the permissibility of such a designation as *imām*, of which the interpretations were strictly historical and logical respectively, authors who based their theory of rulership on this concept found Quranic evidence in full support of their views on the basis of their own commentary on relevant verses. Their interpretation displayed the *imām* not as a harmful innovation inserted into the religious creed but a perfectly legitimate Quranic concept. Moreover, because it was a more comprehensive term, helped by its equivocal nature, *imām* by definition always implied the historical caliphate. From this perspective, the last Prophet was after all a vicegerent of God in the line of other prophet-rulers who came before him.

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Since the late Abbasid period, the use of *khalīfat-i Rasūl Allāh* gradually disappeared from political literature while the designation *imām* came to be used more and more frequently. To point to the increasing reception of this controversial title, Rosenthal stated that “in the later Abbasid period the designation *khalīfat* Allah for the caliph has gained wide currency,” “in marked distinction from the insistence of earlier periods that the caliph was only the *khalīfa* of the Prophet.”\(^89\) By the time Ottoman writers were contemplating how to characterize rulership in the sixteenth century, the prevailing view conceiving of rulership as the vicegerency of God with a vaguely-implied reference to succession to the Prophet, was already well-established in political thought. Attempts by ‘Alāyī and Lūṭfī Pāshā to prove the permissibility of attributing the title *khalīfat-i Rasūl Allāh* to rulers indicate that the general mood of the time was not entirely in favor of this title while no such concern was displayed about the use of *imām*.

When the controversy was in full bloom in medieval Islam, the ruler whose appellation of *imām* was questioned was already a universally acclaimed caliph, a successor to the Prophet, the mainstream political and juristic view. It may seem ironic that *imām* gained a wider currency at a time when post-Abbasid rulers’ claim to the title caliph was controversial in political theory and disputable among rival dynasties. However, the use of this title seemed to have fundamentally resolved one of the enduring questions of legitimacy for the independent rulers who came to rule most of the Islamic world following the decentralization of the Abbasid Empire. The classical juristic theory of the caliphate, developed from the ninth through the eleventh centuries, had centered on the conception of the caliphate as successor to the Prophet, a theory that was still in full

\(^89\) Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, 37.
effect in the authoritarian juristic texts by the time the Ottomans had started to identify themselves as caliphs in the fifteenth century. Best suited to the legitimacy needs of the Abbasid caliphs, the theory of an historical caliphate was hardly applicable to post-Abbasid dynastic rulers without modification, and was largely ignored in the advice literature which came to dominate the field of political writing in this period. Thus the conundrum of assuming the caliphate without meeting its requirements seems to have been evaded with the adoption of the title imām accompanied by an indifference to the historical caliphate.

Although the medieval history of the term needs to be further examined before coming to a conclusion about whether this constituted a universal trend in the Islamic world, it seems safe to assume that the Ottomans had more in common with most of the post-Abbasid dynasties than with the Abbasids. This affinity seems to have led the Ottomans to adopt imām more easily, not just as an innovation to fit their conception of rulership, but also as a continuation of an historical practice, a product of a political experience similar to theirs. Therefore it is no surprise that the most influential works on Ottoman political theory, such as Naṣīḥa al-Salāfīn, Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī and Mīrṣād al-ʿĪbād, were those written after the decentralization of the Abbasid Empire.90

Considering the way the Ottoman writers made use of the term in their accounts on rulership, it appears that the increasing perception of the sultan as imām was related more to the design of rulership than the desire to add one more title to an ever increasing sultanic titulature. Thus it was not merely a matter of appellation but of designation as

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well. By shifting the source of a ruler’s legitimacy from the successor of the Prophet to
the vicegerency of God, political writers bypassed a rigid set of conditions established by
jurists and theologians for a legitimate caliph. According to juristic and theological
theories, to be a successor of the Prophet a ruler needed more than certain personal
qualifications suited to the office; at least in principle, he also needed the approval of the
community of believers who were given an important hand in installing a successor. In
the case of the vicegerency of God, however, the ruler was thought to have gained this
status through his spiritual ascension and/or by the grace of God. The relevant rules and
guidelines for imām were not drawn from juristic theory or its main source of injunctions,
the hadīth literature, but to a large extent directly from the Quran.

Once the ruler was conceived as the vicegerent of God rather than the successor
of the Prophet in political literature, God Himself, more than the Prophet, became the
primary model for a ruler. Most political authors referred only to God’s government as
an authoritative model, and paid little attention to the government of the Prophet and the
rightly guided caliphs. Based on the examination of human nature and the search for
ways to improve the quality of rulership, this approach relied on theosophical inquiry as
the principal mode of political reasoning to conceive rulership rather than the Prophet’s
life (siyar) and jurisprudence. The depiction of pre-Muhammedan prophets as
vicegerents of God on earth in the light of Quranic evidence made them role models for
rulership. This was in contrast to the juristic theory that centers in the life of the last
Prophet and his immediate successors. Thus, based on Quranic references, Adam and
David, because of their appointment as God’s vicegerents on earth, and Solomon, who

91 For views on investiture see Rosenthal, Political Thought in Medieval Islam, 21-62.
was granted rulership, came to be the ruler-prophets, most commonly alluded to as models for a ruler.

The common conviction that proper succession to the Prophet had ended with the era of the rightly guided caliphs, expressed by Țašköprîzâde above and others in the mainstream ʻulemâ tradition, must have accounted in part for the shift of emphasis from khalîfat-i Rasûl Allâh to ʻimâm. The latter, however, by no means displaced the former but established a more continuous lineage of rulership. By adopting ʻimâm the ruler was conceived to have succeeded the ruler-prophets in their mission of being the vicegerents of God on earth, commissioned with rulership. Unlike the rigorous conditions prescribed to qualify as khalîfat-i Rasûl Allâh, assuming the position of ʻimâm was easier to support theoretically and easier to justify in historical imagination, despite the theological complications it brought up.

With the title ʻimâm, the ruler could still enjoy the prestige and legitimacy conferred by the equivocal term khalîfa, while eschewing the obligation to meet the conditions set for khalîfat-i Rasûl Allâh. The designation ʻimâm was relatively free of legal injunctions. It was also a vague concept, and this made it more suitable for elaboration and adaptation. This vagueness and openness to interpretation made the use of this title more appealing for political writers, for it provided the ruler and political writers with more freedom to elaborate on the nature of rulership. Besides the practical benefits of embracing such a title and the historical experience of post-Abbasid dynasties that facilitated its adoption, the purpose of most Ottoman political writers in envisioning the ruler as ʻimâm was to differentiate between ordinary and superior forms of rulership and establish the vicegerency of God as a moral objective for the sultanate.
Rulership as Mystical Experience

When not referring to the historical caliphate, *khalīfa* was conceived to be a spiritual condition of man rather than an exclusive property of political leadership. Such a conception deprived the ruler of being the only one to be accorded with this designation in the political theory of this period. While the ruler could have a claim on this designation and was exhorted to attain this status by almost all political writers, in principle, any qualified person viewed to have reached spiritual perfection could also enjoy this status with or without a claim on political leadership. Accounts of the concept of *khalīfa/khilāfa* make no noticeable distinction between the ruler’s designation as such and any man’s attainment of such a condition. When the term was used in the same sense as the sultanate, the ruler’s claim and right to the title were stressed. But when the term was used as a qualifier in referring to the superior form of sultanate, then the set of conditions prescribed for the ruler were no different than those set forth for the inculcation of any universal man in Sufism, Ethics, or political philosophy.

The concept of the caliphate served as a suitable venue through which Sufi ideas of leadership were infused into mainstream political theory. Many leading scholars of the time who extensively elaborated on the caliphate, such as Ṭāsköprizāde and Bidlīsī, both high-ranking jurists by profession, adopted more a Sufi approach to rulership than any other tradition of political writing. Sufi teachings to inculcate the perfect man, accompanied with the prevailing moralist tendency among political writers, many of whom were affiliated with Sufi orders, provided these authors with ready-made prescriptions to apply in envisioning a superior form of rulership by educating the ruler.
This flood of Sufi teachings into the mainstream of political theory certainly made it much easier for certain Sufi-minded authors, such as ‘Ārifī, Dizdār and the anonymous author of al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymānīyya, to insert their idiosyncratic Sufi ideas into their advice books intended to educate the ruler. Guided by an esoteric interpretation of leadership among mankind they did not view rulership with respect to its position in a sociological hierarchy but in relation to the spiritual realm. Common to diverse currents of Sufism was the belief that friends of God (awliya), in addition to their spiritual powers, were endowed with worldly powers and were organized in a hierarchical order in governing the world. They were responsible for the order of the world, and for guiding human beings, though their presence not necessarily manifest. The Sufi view of prophethood, that highlighted walāya as the most salient nature of prophethood, enabled these authors to conceive of the government of the world and the inheritance of the prophetic mission as a mystical experience.

Advocating such views, al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymānīyya was dedicated to Süleymān to instruct him about the requirements of rulership. The work designed a concept of rulership by simply importing certain strictly Sufi conceptions of hierarchy among mankind and the government of the world where the ultimate authority rested in the most perfect of living human beings. In the very beginning of the treatise the author elucidated the hierarchical relation between the ruler on earth and the real wielder of sovereign power: “The truth of the Pole/axis (ghavs) is that he is the khalīfa on earth and it is he

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92 One of the earliest and most authoritative accounts on saintly hierarchy forming the government of the whole universe was that of al-Hujwiri (d. 1072 or 1077): “... those who have power to loose and to bind (ahl al-bāl wa al-‘aqd) and are officers to the Divine court there are three hundred, called Akhyār, and four, called Āwīd, and three, called Nuqabā, and one, called Quf or Ghaṭh. All these know one another and cannot act save by mutual consent.” See al-Hujwiri, The Kashf al-Mahjub, 214.
who is the manager (*mudabbir*) and administrator (*mutaṣarrif*) in the world. As for the rulers in appearance (*pādishāhān-i ẓākhīr*), they are the receivers (*maẓhar*) and instruments (*maṣdār*) of his commands (*aṭkām*).” For being the real ruler of the whole world, because of the very nature of authority that defied any corporeal constrictions, the power of the Pole was not delimited by any geographical or institutional constrictions, making his sovereignty absolute over all human affairs.

This vision of rulership that tied the temporal government to the universal government of the Pole over God’s creation was cosmic not territorial. Thus it was totally different than the visions elaborated in religious sciences or in books of statecraft. As any typical Sufi doctrine would indicate, Poleship entailed a complete union between the position and the personality of its receiver. More specifically, from such a Sufi perspective, the most comprehensive and the ultimate authority in the world was granted by God to a person who attained -or was granted by God- spiritual perfection. The most conspicuous outcome of such a depiction of rulership was that even if the ruler combined the sultanate and caliphate, in the way he was advised to advance his sultanate to a higher level, there was still the Pole above him. Thus for this Sufi-minded author even an ideal ruler by the contemporary standards envisioned in political literature could not enjoy the highest rank and authority among mankind for they belonged exclusively to the Pole.

Although the Sufi theory looks like an outward challenge to the sultanate, its justifying premises are in full agreement with mainstream political theory. When the inherent human need for authority and guidance for happiness and perfection is granted, then a perfect man (*insān-i kāmil, quṭb*) had to have the most claim on that status and task.

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93 Al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya, 6b.
to lead humanity. Besides, al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya’s construction of hierarchy among the friends of God, adopted from more elaborate Sufi accounts on the subject, was very similar to that of the structure of actual governments of the time.\textsuperscript{94} He divided the saintly government into eight hierarchical divisions and stated that the gavs, being the Pole of Poles (quṭb al-aqṭab), was the head of that order. The treatise then defined the ghavs as the vicegerent of the earth (khālīfat al-ʿarz). In this hierarchy, the rest of the friends of God were like the statesmen (umarā) and viziers to the ghavs. Explaining the relation between the rulers and the saintly order, he stated that the gavs and the friends of God under his command were the ones who help rulers. After clarifying the hierarchy of authority among humans, the author then advised the ruler to constantly seek help from the spirits (bāṭin) of these friends of God.

Although the position of Pole was conceived as superior to that of a ruler, according to the political views displayed in other mainstream works of the time, the Pole in fact performed the same function as an ideal ruler was expected to perform, a conception that still points to the high position of rulership among mankind.\textsuperscript{95} The superiority of the ghavs was defined through political imagery, by reducing the acting sultan to the manifestation of the Pole who was depicted as the de facto ruler. Insofar as the temporal realm was considered, the position of rulership among mankind was not

\textsuperscript{94} Al-ʻAdliyya al-Sulaymāniyya, 52a-54b; Dizdār, Sulūk al-Mulūk, 7a.

\textsuperscript{95} A contemporary example of this conception was the case of Hamza Bāli, who revolted against the Ottoman authority and subsequently executed along with his followers. He was recognized by his Melāmī followers as the Pole of the time and thus superior to any authority in the world. According to the official documents published by Tayyīb Okić, Hamza Bāli’s followers recognized him as ruler along with his viziers, sheikulislam and other appointed officials; see Okić, “Quelques documents inédits concernant les Hamzawites,” in Proceedings of the Twenty-Second Congress of Orientalists, Held in Istanbul, September 15th to 22nd, 1951, ed. Z. V. Togan (Istanbul: Osman Yağış Matbaası, 1957), 2: 279-286; Ocak, “Din ve Düşünce,” in Osmanlı Devleti ve Medeniyeti Tarihi, vol. 2, ed. E. İhsanoğlu (Istanbul: IRCICA, 1998), 109-158.
compromised so long as the Pole made himself known when he interfered with the affairs of sultanate. Although the authority of the Pole was superior and more comprehensive, the world was still divided into temporal and spiritual realms and the Pole was positioned in the latter. Actual rulership on earth became instrumental to the Pole’s overall sovereignty over the world as the wielder of real power. Thus presenting the Pole’s government as a higher authority served the same purpose as using God’s government and prophethood as an example: they both provided the ruler with a source of inspiration and a binding model to mold his rulership to perfection.96

Although silent on the question of the relation between the ruler and the Pole, Dizdār exposed similar views about the position of the Pole (quṭb) on earth. He interpreted the Quranic verse regarding the appointment of Adam on earth as khalīfa as a reference to the position of the Pole and accordingly considered the Pole as a successor to the first man and prophet. Pointing that the terms quṭb and ghaws both refer to the same person, on the basis of evidence from the Quran and prophetic traditions, Dizdār was content with proving the existence and the high position of the Pole on earth as the seat of God’s sight/illumination (naẓar Allāh).97

Whether or not the anonymous author of al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya or Dizdār directly read Ibn ‘Arabī cannot be established with certainty. However, their views on Poleship as well as the distinctly Sufi leanings of Ṭaṣkoprīzāde, ‘Ārifi, and Bidlīsī all

96 Among the diverse expositions of the cosmic government of the Pole there was a strong tendency to express its structure with reference to worldly government. Dāvūd el-Kayserī, for example, in his treatise al-Tawhīd wa al-Nībuwwa equated the imāmayn, the two assistants of the Pole in government, to the viziers of a sultan. See Dāvūd al-Qaṣṣārī, Rasāʾil-i Qaṣṣārī bā Ḥavāšī-i Muḥammad Rižā Qumshāhī, ed. Sayyed Jalāʾ al-Dīn Aṣhtīyānī (Tehran: Muʿāssasa-i Pizhūhishī-ī Hikmat va Falsafa-ī Īrān, 1381 [2002 or 2003]), 27.

97 Dizdār, Sulūk al-Mulūk, 7a.
bear the stamp of Ibn ‘Arabī’s esoteric teachings on rulership.\textsuperscript{98} Displaying the general
trend that formed in the late Abbasid period, Ibn ‘Arabī was as formal as any other jurist
or theologian, such as Māwardī, Ghazālī or Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, on the theory of
imāmate while reformulating strikingly different, but not necessarily conflicting, views in
addressing different audiences. In \textit{Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya}, Ibn ‘Arabī developed a theory
of rulership indicating that Poleship (\textit{quṭbiyya}) and the caliphate (\textit{khilāfa}) were identical,
meaning that the real caliphate resides in the Pole. According to him, the external
wielders of worldly power, whether they were aware of it or not, were only his deputies
(\textit{nuwwāb}), for “the \textit{quṭb} (pole) is the real head of the community of his epoch (\textit{sayyid al-
jamā‘a fī zamānihi}).”\textsuperscript{99} \textit{Futūḥāt}, \textit{Fuṣūş}, \textit{Tadbīrāt} and other works of Ibn ‘Arabī, who
was also known as Şeyh-i Ekber (Grand Master), were widely read among the Ottoman
\textit{‘ulemā} and Sufis.\textsuperscript{100} \textit{al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya} expounded the same conception of
rulership as Ibn ‘Arabī only with an exclusive and emphatic language, paying no
attention to the formal aspects of imāmate as formulated in the juristic and theological
literature.

The ideas propounded in \textit{al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya} and the language used to
phrase them were completely intelligible to the Ottomans of the Süleymānic age,
regardless of their level of education or kind of affiliation. The anonymous author of the


\textsuperscript{99} Chodkiewicz, “The Esoteric Foundations.”

treatise simply alluded to the cosmic order of the invisible saints, commonly known as *rijāl al-ghayb* or *rijāl Allāh*, and exorted the Ottoman ruler to fit his rule to theirs. In order to achieve ideal government in the world the ruler had to recognize the superior authority of the invisible saints and seek their assistance in government. Although perceptions may vary and terminology may differ, the existence of an invisible order of saints with supernatural powers was a widely shared belief in Ottoman culture. In this regard, despite its vivid juxtapositioning of current Ottoman rulership with that of the invisible saints, there was nothing objectionable in *al-ʻAdliyya al-Sulaymāniyya* for the Ottoman ruling elite. As long as those saints were not identified and did not challenge the worldly authority of the Ottoman sultan, these perceptions constituted a common property between the ruler and the ruled.

The Ottoman state itself was born into a society where Sufis and perceived saints were as powerful as worldly rulers. *Abdāls*, for example, who were perceived to represent a very high status in the saintly order, were very visible in early Ottoman frontier society as powerful saints. From the very beginning, Ottoman rulers and their apologists were consistent in creating a popular image that the Ottoman dynasty was assisted by saints, or even associated with the invisible order of the saints. Even a top jurist in the sixteenth century, Şeyhülislām Kemālpāşāzāde, perceived no oddity in believing legends that show the close association of the Ottoman dynasty with the *rijāl al-ghayb*. He stated in the first volume of his history of the Ottoman dynasty that the rise

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101 Like many other Sufi groups, Abdāls had history of uneven relationships with the Ottoman authority, ranging from open rebellions to alliances in campaigns. For a brief history of Abdāls in Ottoman society with relation to other marginal Sufi groups see Ahmet T. Karamustaфа, *God’s Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200-1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 70-78; for an overview of Abdāls see M. F. Köprülü, “Abdal”, *Türk Halk Edebiyat Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türk yat Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1935), 1: 27-56; H. J. Kissling, “Abdāl”, *EH*; S. Uludağ, “Abdal”, *TDVI A*. 198
of the Ottomans was not an accident of history but the materialization of what had been
decided in the spiritual realm. As he reported, an anonymous saint from the order of
invisible saints (rijāl al-ghayb) that govern the affairs of the world informed Kümrāl
Bābā in advance that the time to rise for holy war for somebody called ‘Oṣmān had
arrived.102 The anonymous saint strictly ordered Kümrāl Bābā to join the company of
‘Oṣmān and never leave him during his raids because he was assured of victory and
because he was the receiver of God’s assistance (mu’ayyad min ‘ind Allāh). The story
denoted the close association of the Ottoman dynasty with the order of invisible saints
which was manifested in actuality by the support and loyalty Sufis showed to Ottoman
rulers.

Besides spread of the culture of saints among the common people as well as the
ruling elite, the order of invisible saints was part of the central teaching of many of the
mainstream Sufi orders in the Ottoman Empire. Although the origins of the idea could be
 traced by some scholars to the very teachings of the Prophet, the first elaborate
expositions about the order of saints commissioned by God to rule the material and
spiritual worlds seem to have appeared in the revelations of the ascetic Sufis of the ninth
and tenth centuries.103 Ottoman men of learning, including the Sufis and the ‘ulemā,
mostly received their education in the order of saints through the writings of Ibn ‘Arabī,
who gave the most detailed and striking images of the order, and from commentaries on
his works. Although rarely alluding to the government of worldly rulers, Ibn ‘Arabī
created such a cosmological imagery in which the whole creation, the material and the

103 Ahmet Ögke, “Bir Tasavvuf Terimi Olarak Ricālü’l-Gayb –İbn Arabī’nin Görüşleri,” Tasavvuf 5
spiritual worlds alike, was under the rule of a strictly hierarchical order of saints, all commissioned by God, and all having specific functions and powers.  

Ibn ‘Arabī’s sixteenth century student, Yiğitbâşî Velî (d. 1505), a near contemporary of Bidlîsî, wrote two separate treatises, both titled Ṭabaḳātī’l-Evliyâ (Degrees of Saints), on the invisible saints, relying on Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings. He lived in Manisa and was the initiator of the Aḥmediyye branch of the Ḥalvetiye order, an order with particular attachment to Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings. In his exposition, at the top of the saintly hierarchy (riḳālıūlāh) were the Poles (aḳṭāb) who have full authority at all times concerning everything. Then came the Helpers (gavs) who were of two kinds: one possessed full internal (bāṭn) and external (ẓāhir) authority, that the Prophet, Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uṣmān, ‘Alī, and other rightly guided caliphs were endowed with, while the other had only internal authority, that Hasan-i Baṣrī, Ḥabīb-i ‘Acemī, Bāyezīd-i Bistāmī, and other saints attained. He further stated that the majority of the Poles were of the second kind, lacking external authority. He thus envisioned that the very historical caliphate, the universal leadership of the Muslim community that emerged after the death of the Prophet, had begun with the Poleship. Given that all Sufi orders traced their lineages to either Abū Bakr or ‘Alī, such a belief by definition turned sheikhs into inheritors of the historical caliphate.

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104 Although Ibn ‘Arabī describes the order or alludes to various aspects of it in many of his writings, for the most widely known and comprehensive exposition of it see Ibn ‘Arabī, Futūḥât al-Makkiyya, 266-294.


106 For his life and place in Ottoman Sufism see Ögke, Ahmed Şemseddin-i Marmaravi, 36-63.

107 In his longer treatise he identifies quṭb as ghaws while in the shorter one he appears to present them as two different degrees of sainthood. See Ögke, Ahmed Şemseddin-i Marmaravi, 571, 574.
The perception of the Pole as the ultimate authority over all creation was well-entrenched in Ottoman Sufism. In the mainstream Sufi orders, the engagement with the perceived order of invisible saints was usually limited to the spiritual realm, and was mostly a contemplative matter and a spiritual experience. In heterodox Sufism, especially among groups which had a strained relationship with Ottoman rule, the universal authority of the Pole was frequently associated with real personalities, posing a challenge for the Ottoman sultan. Among numerous examples, a late fifteenth century Sufi sheikh, Otmān Bābā, was glorified as a Pole in his hagiography which was written by one of his disciples. He was perceived as God’s caliph (ḥalīfetullāh) on earth, the Pole of Poles (ḳūfūbū’l-aḵtāb) and the universal man (insān-ı kāmil). As reported by Küçük Abdāl, the author of his hagiography, he openly defied the authority of Meḥmed II and invited all to recognize his universal authority. Although the identification of the Pole with the living head of a Sufi order was a common perception across many diverse strands of Ottoman Sufism, it was one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the Bayrāmiyye-i Melāmetiyye order. It was common for the Melāmetiğ to perceive their sheikhs as Poles, full manifestations of God’s attributes, and appointed by God as His caliphs on earth to oversee the affairs of this world. Especially in the sixteenth century a number of high profile Melāmeti sheikhs, who were perceived to be Poles by their

108 İnalçık, “Dervish and Sultan: An Analysis of the Otman Baba Vilayetnämesi,” in The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire, 19-37.

109 Ocak, Osmanlı Toplumunda Zindıklar ve Müllhidler (15.-17. Yüzyıllar), (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), 251-313; Also see Ongören, Osmanlılar’da Tasavvuf, 155-185; For a comprehensive treatment of the Melāmetiğ order and thought see Abdülbaki Gölpmehr, Melāmilik ve Melāmiler (İstanbul: Gri Yayın, 1992).

followers, came into direct conflict with the Ottoman authority and were executed on charges of heresy. In trials of these unruly sheikhs, they were not accused of claiming Poleship but of using that authority to publicly prescribe a new interpretation of Islam that was deemed to be incompatible with the mainstream creed and practice.

In the sixteenth century, just as the rank of caliphate was not considered an exclusive preserve of the ruler, Poleship was not confined to the mystics as well. Along with elaborations on the Pole’s role in the government of the material world in a variety of Sufi writings, exceptional rulers could also have the rank of Poleship attribute to them. In such a context of complex and overlapping imageries of the caliphate and Poleship, Süleymān’s depiction as a Pole by the apologists of the dynasty did not seem to have struck contemporaries as out of the ordinary. Such a depiction of course was incompatible with those which invited the sultan to recognize the authority of Poles whose governance was not ostentatious. If one reason for portraying the sultan as Pole was the fusion of mystic and temporal imageries of governance, another was the practical necessity of counterbalancing claims of Poleship among the unruly Sufi groups.

The introduction of the idea of the Pole into mainstream political theory, at least in the works under consideration which were dedicated to the ruling sultan, did not aim at

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112 For records of those trials see the appendix in Ocak, Osmanlı Toplumunda Zindıklar ve Mülhidler, 354-375.

113 ‘Ārifī, ‘Uqūd al-Jawāhir, 3a; For more elaborate views expounded by ‘Ārifī’s contemporaries, such as Mevlâna ‘Īsâ, see Fleischer, “The Lawgiver as Messiah”; Fleischer, “Seer to the Sultan.”
challenging the authority of the ruler by establishing an alternative. Rather, with the goal of educating the ruler about the higher levels of rulership, authors referred to the position of the Pole and illustrated his rulership to provide a moral check and an example for the ruler. In this way, the type of rulership that the Pole exercised, and the way he attained such a position, provided a moral exemplar for the sultan. By depicting the Pole as the undisputed leader of the world, Sufi writers instructed the ruler to act in accordance with the religious instructions of their tradition. Unlike the sultanate, Poleship was decided on purely moral grounds. One could attain that highest position on the earth only by virtue of spiritual perfection. From this perspective, the superior form of sultanate appeared to be the one which turned into a manifestation of the Pole’s rulership and that status could only be achieved through the ruler’s spiritual perfection.

Conceived as such, Poleship appeared to be a third model of inspiration in political theory besides God’s government, the absolute model. Prophetic rulership was its most perfect human similitude. None of these models were presented to be entirely imitable but as authoritative sources of inspiration. Illustrating Poleship in this way basically served the same purpose as holding up divine government or prophethood as models for rulership. The promotion of this conception in political theory was also expedient for establishing the legitimacy of rulership for Sufi-oriented subjects, and thus served a practical cause as well. In Ottoman society, the Sufi affiliation was perhaps at its highest popularity in the history of Islam. In most, if not all, of the Sufi organizations in Ottoman lands, in one form or another, the existence and authority of a seen or unseen perfect man was acknowledged. In many Sufi orders, there could be by definition no higher authority on earth than the Pole, whether his identity was explicit or not. Thus it
was only natural that the Sufi writers exposed one of their most fundamental Sufi beliefs when they wrote on political theory. From this Sufi perspective, good rulership was one enacted with the acknowledgement of the superior authority of the Pole.

**The Rulership of Temporal and Spiritual Realms**

What the conception of Poleship as rulership dramatically displayed in *al-ʿAdliyya al-Sulaymāniyya* was the depiction of true rulership attained by spiritual perfection and the existence of such a superior authority regardless of the sultanate. The logical inference for the reader was then that two distinct authorities, spiritual and temporal, could exist at the same time. Although the idea of Poleship was expressed only by few, the main idea underlying this conception was by no means a marginal view among the political writers of the period. With no reference to Poleship, Bidlīsī, for example, portrayed two different types of rulership pertaining to temporal (*kishvar-i shahādat, mulk-i ʿūrat*) and spiritual realms (*kishvar-i maʿnī*), with distinct authorities. For Bidlīsī the world is never deprived of two authorities ruling in their distinct spheres who work to perfect individuals (*takmil-i nufūs*) in form and spirit (*ṣūrat yā maʿnī*). Because “the divine favor necessitated that among the caliphs of human beings and the sultans of the world one has to be instituted in one of these two positions of caliphate (*maqām-i khilāfat* [temporal or spiritual]).”

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Prophets (anbiyā), friends of God (avliyā), and the men of God (ahlullāh) are sovereign governors (vālī-i mustavī) and rulers (pādishāh) in the kingdom of existence (mulk-i vucūd). A group of rulers (mulūk u sālāfīn) from among the people of the appearance (ṣūrat) are in charge of justice (maʿdilat) by way of rulership (jihāndārī).  

In this elaborate exposition Bidlīsī divided the government of mankind into two distinct realms, each ruled by appropriate authorities, with particular requirements to fulfill. He also pointed out that the administration of the two realms was ordained by divine providence. When considered together with his view about the human need for rulership, it appears that mankind needed two authorities, one to administer the material, and the spiritual worlds. These authorities, however, were not equal to each other and the one pertaining to the spiritual realm was superior to the one belonging to the temporal realm:

At times the external vicegerency (khilāfat-i sūrī) and exoteric rulership (salṭanat-i zāhirī) happen to be in accordance with the prophetic law (sharīʿat-i nabāvī) and the path of the spiritual viceregents (ʿāyīn-i khulāfā-i maʿnāvī). Such people (maẓharī) could be named as both the vicegerent of God (khilāfat-i ḥaq) and the commander of the faithful. And it is necessary to listen to and obey their prohibitions and commands.  

At times the spiritual viceregency (khilāfat-i maʿnāvī) and real leadership (imāmat-i ḥaqīqī) materialize in the personality of one person. But because these do not become manifest as a temporal power (tamshiyat-i davlat-i sūrī) probably most people deny or harass that receiver of

115 Bitlīsī, Kanun-i Şahensāhî, 21.
116 Bitlīsī, Kanun-i Şahensāhî, 22.
perfection (mażhar-i kamāl). Dervish-like and poor-looking friends of God and the prophets have reported that although they were poor and powerless, with divine guidance and direction, they were commissioned for divine vicegerency (khilāfat-i raḥmānī).  

Here the ruler of the external realm could be the vicegerent of God only by following the real vicegerents of God, thus indicating the superiority of the latter. One form of rulership was imperfect for governing all the affairs of humans, meeting all their needs and exercising God’s will in the world.

The rulers of the spiritual realm (salātīn-i kishvar-i maʿānī): Although they were not authorized to give orders and apply prohibitions in the temporal realm (mulk-i ẓarat), they attained leadership (sarvarī) in the spiritual realm (ʿālam-i maʾnī) by virtue of their endowment with human perfection (kamālāt-i bashārī). Because they combined the perfection of knowledge and practice in themselves, they deserved to be leaders to be followed among mankind. They are called the rulers of the spiritual realm.

Any one type was then by definition imperfect and ideal rulership was the one that combined these two forms:

It is proven that divine vicegerency (khilāfat-i raḥmānī) consists of endowing the fortunate person himself with, to the extent humanly possible, divine (rabbānī) traits and perfections, and perfecting himself with praiseworthy human faculties (malakāt-i ḥamīda-i insānī) to give order to the temporal world (jiḥat-i niẓām-i ʿālam-i jisnānī), and attaching this temporal realm (kishvar-i shahādat) to the spiritual world (ʿālam-i rūḥānī). If that receiver of perfection (mażhar-i kamāl),

117 Bitlisī, Kanun-i Şāhensāhī, 22.

118 Bitlisī, Kanun-i Şāhensāhī, 14.
in this passing world (dar dâr-i dûnyâ-i sarî’ al-intiqâl), possesses grandeur and majesty on a throne of leadership, then he is called the sultan of the temporal and spiritual [realms] (sulţân-i şârat va ma’nî) such as the rulers (salâfîn), prophets (anbiyâ), friends of God (awliyâ), the rightly guided caliphs, and the guiding Imâms (a’îma-i hudâ). 119

Since only a limited number of individuals were endowed with such powers, in practice, the rulers of the material and the spiritual worlds were separate and imperfect, performing only one aspect of the rulership, but nevertheless functioning as complementary to each other. As such, rulership was split into two parts, run by two authorities. When combined, the government of the two realms was but two aspects of the same rulership which could be conducted by one ideal ruler endowed with two authorities or by two separate rulers in their respective spheres.

Bidlîsî’s conception agreed with that of al-‘Adliyyâ al-Sulaymâniyya in the sense that there was a spiritual realm distinct from the temporal realm, and that a separate and superior authority pertaining to the former existed regardless of the latter. This was a common observation that the two authors shared and informed the ruler of the temporal realm. In seeking to turn the rudimentary sultanate into one qualified with spiritual powers, al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymâniyya simply advised the ruler to submit his rulership to the authority of the Pole and remained silent on the issue of whether the ruler had the capacity to combine these two authorities. Although Bidlîsî might not have disagreed with him on this advice, the ideal ruler for him was the one who combined those two authorities. From this perspective, the temporal and spiritual realms or pertaining authorities appear as two aspects of the same rulership, attainable by the ruler. It was

119 Bitlîsî, Kanun-i Şâhensâhî, 13-14.
precisely this goal to which Ţaşköprîzâde fully subscribed as well:

Know that just as the exoteric sultanate (al-salṭana al-şūriyya) requires a vizier, a deputy (nā‘ib), a judge (qādi) and the like, similarly, the spiritual sultanate (al-salṭana al-ma‘naviyya) requires the knowledge of its conditions (ma‘rifat al-wāliha) such as the administration of realm and its protection from enemies.¹²⁰

After drawing this parallel, Ţaşköprîzâde devoted the rest of his treatise to the explanation of what the spiritual sultanate entailed and how the ruler could achieve it. This line of reasoning was followed by other contemporaries as well in differentiating between the two types of rulership: Ebû’l-Fazl Mûnṣî, for example, while compiling his work based on that of Najm al-Dîn Râzî’s Mirṣâd al-‘Ibâd on mystical philosophy, made his account more readable and instructive for a royal reader mainly by restructuring the work by inserting guiding chapter headings. Telling a similar story to that of Bidlîsî, the four consecutive chapters of his work flowed as follows:

First Chapter, on the description of rulership and temporal government (salṭanat wa ḥukûmat-i şûrî)…; Second Chapter, on the description of the conditions of rulers (mulûk va salârîn)…; Third Chapter, on the explanation of spiritual vicegerency (khilâfat-i ma‘navî) and the secrets of the vicegerency of man, and the condition of spiritual government (kayfiyat-i siyâsat-i rûḥânî)…; Fourth Chapter, on the wayfaring of messengers (anbiyâ) and prophets (rusûl) who were adorned with the temporal and spiritual vicegerencies (khilâfat-i şûrî va ma‘navî araste bûd-and)…¹²¹

¹²⁰ Ţaşköprîzâde, Asrîr al-Khilâfa, 89a; compare this to a similar passage in Hamadânî, Zakhîrat al-Mulûk, 295.
Although constructed differently and expressed in more elaborate terms, the concept of rulership conceived of by Bīdīsī, Tāshköprizade, and Ebū’l-Fažl Münši also distinguished between its ordinary and superior forms. By temporal rulership they meant the ordinary kind referred to by others simply as the sultanate, pādishahī or mulk; they preferred to use khilāfa or ẓill Allāh to define the superior form of rulership. But given that these designations about rulership came to be used indiscriminately and synonymously in this period, they preferred to further qualify these terms to depict the superior form of rulership. As a result, the distinction between the terms sulṭān and khalīfa that Dizdār made, for example, was same as the one Bīdīsī made between khilāfat-i ṣūrī and khilāfat-i ma’navī. Despite Bīdīsī’s omission of Poleship, his distinction between temporal and spiritual rulership appears to be a reformulation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s conception of cosmic government as expounded in his Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya.

There are those for whom authority is manifest and who hold the exterior caliphate just as by virtue of their spiritual degree they hold the interior caliphate. Such was the case of Abū Bakr, of ‘Umar, of ‘Uthmān, and of ‘Alī, of Ḥasan and of Mu’āwiya b. Yazīd, of ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and of Mutawakkel. Others only hold an interior caliphate and have no exteriorly-manifested authority: such is the case of Ahmād b. Hārūn al-Rashīd al-Sabṭī or of Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī and the majority of the Poles.\footnote{Ebu’l-Fažl Münšt, Dustûr al-Salṭana, 11a, 16a, 24a, 33b.}


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Such a mystical conception of the caliphate, which originated from the mystical philosophy of Ibn ‘Arabī, found a much greater echo among Ottoman writers on rulership than in the juristic or theological formulations. The distinction between material and spiritual forms of rulership characterized the political teachings of Bīdīsī, Dīzār, Ṭāskoprızāde, Ebū’l-Fażl Mūnṣī, and al-‘Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya while influencing a host of other authors in their perceptions of rulership. Regardless of whether these authors were affiliated with any Sufi order, they employ a distinctly Sufi language in expressing their views of political authority. More specifically, as far as their political views are concerned, in the broadest sense, they all belonged to the school of Ibn ‘Arabī’s mystic philosophy. Although Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers had always been very influential in the Ottoman culture of learning and Sufi orders, his fame and authority on mystic teachings solidified after the conquest of Arab lands by Selīm I in 1516-7. Interpretations of his writings to extract prophesies that foretold the rise of the Ottomans turned him into a dynastic patron saint.123 The believed discovery of his grave by Selīm I and the construction of a tomb over it established an unbreakable fraternity between Ibn ‘Arabī and the Ottoman ruling elite.

Despite the controversies about his teachings, thanks to his immense popularity, Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings, particularly al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya and al-Fuṣūs al-Ḥikam, reached a wide circulation among Ottoman men of learning, including the ‘ulemā and the Sufis.124 Besides his own writings, the works and commentaries of his immediate and distant disciples, such as Čonevī, Dāvūd el-Čayserī, Mollā Fenārī, Hamadānī, and Şeyḫ

123 Fleischer, “Seer to the Sultan: Haydar-i Remmal and Sultan Süleyman.”

124 For the influence, dissemination, and reception of these works among Ottoman men of learning see M. E. Kılıç, “Fusūsü’l-Hikem”, TDVİA.
Bâlî, also enjoyed a wide circulation among the Ottomans. Ottoman authors writing on government during the age of Süleymān were already familiar with mystic interpretations of the caliphate, rulership and cosmic government of the saints through Ibn ‘Arabî’s own writings. But it was mostly his disciples who introduced the esoteric and complex teachings of Ibn ‘Arabî’s mystical philosophy into the mainstream of political theory and made them applicable to contemporary notions of rulership.

Equally influential in the introduction of Sufi teachings into mainstream political theory was Najm al-Dîn Râzî, a younger contemporary of Ibn ‘Arabî, whose works were loaded with mystical conceptions of the caliphate and rulership. Although his views were strikingly similar to those of Ibn ‘Arabî, there is no evidence that he ever met with Ibn ‘Arabî or read his works. In Mirşâd al-‘Ibâd, a popular work read among Ottoman learned men in its Persian version as well as in Turkish translations, Râzî equated the sultanate with the caliphate and attributed to it the same status as prophethood. He divided rulers into two categories: the rulers of world (mulûk-i dunyâ), who showed God’s attributes in appearance (şîrat) without being aware of it, and the rulers of religion (mulûk-i dîn), who received God’s attributes and manifested them. Elsewhere, he characterized the two types of rulers as rulers of appearance (pâdishâhîn-i şîrat) and true rulers (pâdishâhîn-i ḥaqqî), two designations widely used by Ottoman authors.

In Manârât al-Sâ’îrîn, Râzî established a sophisticated theory of the caliphate which displayed a close affinity with Bidlîsî’s views as expressed in Qânûn-i

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125 For the spread of Ibn ‘Arabî’s teachings see William C. Chittick, “The School of Ibn ‘Arabî.”

126 Râzî, Mirşâd al-‘Ibâd, 411, 416; for English see Razi, The Path of God’s Bondsmen, 395.

127 Râzî, Mirşâd al-‘Ibâd, 412-3; for English see Razi, The Path of God’s Bondsmen, 396.

128 Râzî, Mirşâd al-‘Ibâd, 234; for English see Najm al-Din Razi, The Path of God’s Bondsmen, 242.
Rāzī conceived of the caliphate with reference to the historical caliphate by referring to the well-known prophetic tradition which prophesized that the caliphate would last thirty years after the death of the prophet and be followed by a period of other rulers. For him, the caliphate was part of man’s very existence. God made man his caliph because He created him as qualified for the caliphate (makhṣūs bi al-khilāfa), combining in him both earthly (‘arḍ) and heavenly (malakūt) attributes. He defined the truth of the caliphate (‘aqīqa al-khilāfa) as governorship (taṣarruf) in the world (mulk) and in the heavens (malakūt) as God’s deputy (bi niyāba al-Ḥaq). “Because God owns and governs the world (mulk), which is the earth (dunyā), the exterior part (zāhir) of existence (kavn) and everything in it as well as the heavens (malakūt), which is the afterlife (ākhira), the inner part (bāṭin) of existence (kavn),” Rāzī stated, “the caliph must be endowed with tools (ālāt) of both the world (mulkīyyāt) and the heavens (malakūtiyyāt) in order to govern the world and the heavens as God’s deputy.” The universe of created things (mukavvanāt) that the caliph was commissioned to govern consisted of two realms, the realm of spirit (rūḥāniyyāt) and the realm of material bodies (jismāniyyāt). Rāzī then explained that caliphs are grouped in three layers (tabaqāt al-...
khulāfā): The first group carries out the caliphate only by utilizing their bodily tools; the second by fully using their bodily tools and some heavenly tools as well; and the third group fully uses both bodily and heavenly tools. This third group consist of prophets and saints who belong to the highest status of the caliphate because they have achieved a mirror image of God in His attributes.135

Unlike those of Rāzī, Dāvūd el-Ḵayṣerī’s works were not quoted by authors who wrote on rulership during the Süleymānic age but they were among the best known texts on Ibn ‘Arabī’s mystical philosophy among Ottoman learned men. He was the first professor of the first Ottoman medrese built by Orhān, and the prototype of an Ottoman scholar who was trained in language, jurisprudence, and theology but was also well-versed in Sufism. The introduction he wrote for his commentary on Ibn ‘Arabī’s Fuṣūṣ received particular acclaim from later Ottoman students of Sufism.136 For making the dense and intricate formulations of al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya and Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam more legible for the Ottoman reader, both his commentaries and treatises played an important role in the dissemination of Ibn ‘Arabī’s vision of the caliphate and rulership in Ottoman realms. In his treatise al-Tawḥīd wa al-Nubūwya wa al-Wilāya, he divided the sharī‘a into its esoteric (bāṭin) and exoteric (ẓāhir) parts, and stated that both parts had their caliphs (khalā‘if). All of these caliphs were subject to the authority of the caliph who had knowledge of both the esoteric and exoteric parts.137 For Ḵayṣerī, God made the caliphate an ontological requisite because every one of His attributes needs to have a

136 Meedī, Hadaiku‘-Ṣīrāk, 27.
receiver in order to be manifest just as his name Merciful (raḥmān) requires the existence of one who shows mercy (rāḥim) and one who receives mercy (marḥūm).  

The very foundation of Ibn ʿArabī’s mystical philosophy exposed in Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam as well as Ḵayṣerī’s commentary was the concept of the caliphate, a comprehensive concept that explained the creation of mankind, man’s mission on earth, and the purpose of man’s existence as well as man’s relationship with God and the whole creation. *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* created such a powerful and vivid imagery of man’s status as God’s caliph that the disciples of Ibn ʿArabī could easily translate his mystical teachings into a political theory explaining the meaning and the nature of rulership. In commenting on the caliphate of the universal man (*insān al-kāmil*), Ḵayṣerī explained that every human being had a share (*naṣīb*) from the caliphate, by which the sultan governs his realm, a father governs his family and an individual governs himself, making every human being a caliph in his own right.  

As for the true caliphate (*khilāfat-i ḥaqīqī*), which represents the reality of Muḥammad (*ḥaqīqat-i Muḥammadī*), Ḵayṣerī depicted it as the absolute deputyship of God, without excess or deficiency (*ziyāda or nuqṣān*) in manifesting all His attributes.  

Such a caliphate, dubbed the grand caliphate (*khilāfat-i ʿumān*) or great caliphate (*khilāfat-i kubrā*), that rules both the exterior (*ẓāhir*) and interior (*bāṭīn*) halves of creation, never ceases to exist.  

In response to a more mundane problem of the caliphate, Ḵayṣerī dealt with the question of whether the coexistence of two caliphs at the same time was permissible, a

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138 ʿAshṭiyānī, Rasāʿīl-i Qaṣṣarī, 37.
139 Qaṣṣarī, Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam, 402.
140 Qaṣṣarī, Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam, 127-8, 961.
141 Qaṣṣarī, Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam, 128, 402, 962.
question that busied medieval jurists. ־Kayseri subscribed to the minority view among jurists who ruled that one of the caliphs had to be executed because the caliphate, representing the unity of the Muslim community, does not tolerate dual leadership. ־But ־Kayseri objected to the dual caliphate for a different reason, justifying the execution of the second caliph by alluding to the mystical interpretation of the caliphate. ־He first divided the caliphate into two kinds, as the caliphs of the exterior (zähir) and the caliphs of the interior (bātin), and stated that the caliph of the interior has always been appointed by God. ־As for the caliphate of the exterior, there could be only one directly appointed caliph because, by definition, the caliph is a full manifestation of God’s attributes including his oneness. ־Having two exterior caliphs would imply that there were two deities to manifest.־142 ־A sixteenth century commentator of Fireš al-Ḥikam, Şeyh Bālī Efendi of the Ḥalveti order, one of the most celebrated mystics of the age of Süleymān and a staunch supporter of official policies of the Ottoman government, explained the problem in the same way as ־Kayseri.־143

If ־Ottoman men of learning were exposed to mystical teachings on rulership in the works of Rāzî and ־Kayseri as a part of their overall mystical philosophy that centered on the relationship between man and God, Hamadānî’s Zakhīrat al-Mulāk introduced sufistic teachings about the caliphate into a theory of rulership. ־By dividing rulership into two parts, external rulership (salṭanat-i urtles) and spiritual rulership (salṭanat-i ma’navī), Hamadānî devoted his work to the perfection of the latter without which the former cannot be perfected. ־For him, although the realm of man’s body (mamlakat-i

־142 Qaṣṣa’rī, Sharḥ-i Fireš al-Ḥikam, 963-4.
־143 Şeyh Bālī Efendi, Sharḥ-i Fireš al-Ḥikam (İstanbul: Dersa’ ādet, 1309 [1891 or 1892], 306-7.
vujūd-i insānī) is a microcosm (ʾālam-i ʿaghib) in appearance, in reality it is a macrocosm (jihān-i kubrā) and just like rulership of the material world, its government requires a strict set of principles. In this macrocosm the spirit is the caliph and the heart is its seat whereas the intellect is the vizier and its seat is the brain.\footnote{Hamadānī, Zakhīrat al-Mulūk, 289-295; for comparison see a similar passage in Qaṣṣārī, Sharh Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam, 340.}

**Conclusion: Designing the Regime of the Sultanate**

Using such terms as sultanate, pādishāhī, riyāsa, khilāfa, imāma, ḥiṣnīyya and others, political writers of the period threaded their concept of rulership with already well-established notions which had been refined in various traditions, as the very origins of the above terms implied. The prevailing mode of political reasoning on the subject was either to project one’s ideal of leadership into political theory, as in the case of al-ʿAdliyya al-Sulaymāniyya, or to apply notions of leadership provided by established traditions in envisioning the rulership of one’s ideal, as in the case of Lütfi Pāşā. In either case, the theory of rulership in this period appears to have been an act of customization and reformulation rather than an independent formulation of leadership. Thus the conception of rulership could only be understood by going to the roots and origins of the concepts and theories which were appropriated from various traditions to define one’s notion of rulership. Although this approach yielded some piecemeal theories of rulership, as in the case of ʿĀrifi, it did not fetter the hands of political visionaries, such as Bihārī, in composing genuinely designed theories of rulership.
Whether a piecemeal compilation of political principles or a coherent design of rulership, all political treatises portrayed two levels of rulership both depending on the personality of the ruler. When authors such as Lütfi Pasha and al-’Adliyya al-Sulaymāniyya, who remained on the fringes of the theoretical spectrum on rulership, are excluded, it appears that political writers cast their designs of rulership in order to furnish the ruler with a manual of what a true leadership entailed and admonish him about the consequences of failing to meet the expectations that came from having such an authority. The result of this quest was to establish an idealistic type of sultanate which authors defined through a variety of designations and whose opposites they depicted as its degraded forms. This ideal sultanate was formed through the moral and spiritual perfection of the ruler following the examples set by the ruler-prophets after the model of God’s government. The quality of the sultanate was judged not on the basis of what the ruler did, but rather on the basis of who/how he was in terms of his moral and spiritual qualifications. Such a conception of rulership led Ḥayalla, a master poet of his time, to portray Suleyman as a saint:145

He is governor of people and shadow of God

Indeed, he is an absolute friend of God

Without question, political writers were equally attentive to providing rulers with principles of good government which would make their government beneficial for the

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145 Vâli-i halk ve saye-i Hâkîdur
Fi’l-Ḥâkîka velîyy-i mutlağdur
Duşâkînêda Taşlicah Yaḥyya, Şâh ü Gedâ (Istanbul: Matba’a-i Tatyos Divitçîyân, 1284/1867), 19.
community and be in accord with their idealistic conceptions, regardless of the moral condition of the ruler. But, as one of the most basic premises of political reasoning, it was believed without doubt that good government rested on good personality, thus the assumption that once a ruler attained moral and spiritual perfection, then his government would necessarily be a good one. Because of this prevailing moralist tendency, perhaps dictated by the strong Sufi background of most authors including the bureaucrats, the quest for instructing an ideal ruler in the political theory of the period far outweighed (perhaps equally important) the search for formulating the practical tools of good government.

These moralist authors expressed their designs of ideal rulership via various designations they adopted or created which fall into two major categories. One way was to designate sultanate as *khilāfa*, *imāma*, *zilliyya* and the like and elaborate on what these designations entail. In this view, such designations were used to build one’s conception of an ideal rulership. When all these designations were considered to be synonymous with the sultanate, some authors opted to not differentiate between the sultanate and others but resorted to a second way by pointing to the two contradictory levels of the same designations. The outcome was such qualified designations as *salṭanat-i ma'navī*, *imāmat-i ḥaqīqī* or *khilāfat-i raḥmānī*. All these designations had their peculiar meanings and nuances depending on the author who used them to build his idealistic form of rulership. All, however, were employed to construct some aspect of a spiritually defined superior form of rulership.

In envisioning the ideal form of rulership, the starting point of these moralist authors was not social structures or legal principles but their perceptions of human nature.
In this quest, the political sphere appears as a field of activity in which the human potential for perfection could be put to work. The political regime, in turn, was the function that made mankind’s ascension to perfection possible. In this way, the authors designed a political regime that best served inherent human needs and that had the most potential to lead mankind to perfection. The two undisputable models corresponding to such leadership were God’s government of His creation as a source of inspiration, and prophethood as an historical practice. While the former inspired thinkers to consider for the unity of rulership, the latter gave them a sense of historical continuity in this profession, beginning with the first man and prophet-ruler.
CHAPTER THREE

CONCEIVING OF THE OTTOMAN SULTAN

The Sultanate as Grace from God

With divine wisdom, God entrusted one of his secrets to a bird called Humā. If Humā’s shadow falls upon someone (‘abd), with God’s might, he becomes a ruler (sulṭān). How God chooses someone with His perfect favor and makes him a ruler and makes him fortunate by granting the caliphate (khilāfa) is known only by Him. The Prophet called him shadow of God (ẓill Allāh).

God conferred upon him miraculous powers (karāmāt), glory (‘izz) and honor (sharaf).1

Dizdār Muṣṭafā, an obscure fortress commander, began his treatise on the spiritual journey of rulers by stating that the sultanate is a caliphate from God and God bestows it on whomever he wishes among his servants. The fortunate person turns into God’s shadow upon receiving the Humā’s shadow.2 Dizdār’s figurative description of divine providence evokes a vivid imagery that shaped perceptions of rulership among the ruling elite in the Ottoman Empire. Although Humā and ẓill Allāh seem to have originated from the pre-Islamic Iranian and Assyrian mythologies respectively, they were among the images most commonly alluded to in the political culture of the Ottoman Empire.3

1 Dizdār, Sulūk al-Mulūk, 2a-2b.

2 Dizdār seems to have adopted this idea of symbolizing God’s grace with Humā from Najm al-Dīn Rāzī who began the fifth chapter of his work on Sufism, Sulūk al-Mulūk, along similar lines. See Najm-i Rāzī, Mirṣād ol-‘Ībād, 411; for an English translation see Razi, The Path of God’s Bondmen, 395.

Hümâyûn, which meant august, fortunate, and royal in Ottoman usage, served as an official attribute of anything connected with the sultan, with the implication that the sultan was the recipient of Humâ’s shadow. Whether Humâ had occupied any place in popular cosmological beliefs during the age of Süleymân, Ottoman and Persian poetry were already rich repositories of imageries characterized by Humâ.

If an obscure fortress commander’s usage of the Humâ imagery to characterize God’s grace might seem idiosyncratic, Şeyhülislâm Kemâlpâşâzâde’s report on the origins of the Ottoman dynasty shows how firmly established this belief was in the Ottoman imagination. Exceptionally well-versed in poetry and history, Kemâlpâşâzâde, in his history of the house of ‘Osmân, narrated that a certain saint called Kûmrâl Bâbâ had witnessed Humâ casting its shadow on ‘Osmân. A man from the order of invisible saints, who unexpectedly appeared before Kûmrâl Bâbâ, informed him that it was the time of ‘Osmân’s rise to glory whom he characterized as “the owner of crown and throne” (sâhib-i tâc u taft). The anonymous saint further ordered him to meet with ‘Osmân, who was then a mere tribal chief, and told him to watch for Humâ as his sign of recognition. Upon seeing ‘Osmân with Humâ’s shadow over him, exactly as foretold by the anonymous saint, Kûmrâl Bâbâ approached ‘Osmân and gave him the good news from the order of invisible saints that he had received his auspicious turn to rule (baft ve devlet).

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4 For uses of Hümâyûn in Ottoman administration and its origins see Tahsin Yazıcı, “Hümâyûn”, TDVİA; Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, “Hümâyûn”, in Osmani Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü, (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basimevi, 1983).

5 For Hûmâ symbolism in Ottoman poetry see İskender Pala, Ansiklopedik Divân Şiiri Sözlüğü (Ankara: Akçağ Basım Yayıım Pazarlama, 1995), 262; Ahmet Talât Onay, Eski Türk Edebiyatında Mazmunlar (İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1996), 276.

Inalcık, in his landmark article on Ottoman succession, traced the origins of this idea to the steppe traditions of Turco-Mongol states where each member of the dynasty was believed to have an equal right to succeed to the throne. Despite certain tendencies that prevailed from time to time, there was no established tradition or law determining the mode of succession in Turkic dynasties, including the Ottoman Empire. Totemic beliefs and mythologies that shaped perceptions of rulership among the Turco-Mongol tribes usually tied the beginnings of dynastic genealogies to a deity. A conspicuous prerogative of the recipient of divine dispensation to rule in Central Asian states was the possession of kut (fortune), a Turkish concept that gained its significance in steppe traditions. With the islamization of Turko-Mongol dynasties, Arabic and Persian terminology of divine legitimation came into use. Especially after the decentralization of the Abbasid caliphate in the eleventh century such concepts as farr (effulgance) and ḥāli’ (fortune) came into wider circulation among the independent dynasties as principle means of legitimation. The term dawla, which came into wide circulation with the rise of the Abbasids in the eighth century and evolved to mean ‘state’ form the sixteenth century onwards, preserved its original meaning as ‘fortunate turn’ until modern times, a meaning closely associated with pre-Islamic conceptions of divine grace or light.

While it was only natural for these upstart dynasties to employ means of legitimation drawn from their own Turkish, Mongol or Persian cultures, the use of such

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imageries as divine appointment also served to compensate for their deficiencies in legitimizing their authority on the basis of juristic and theological principles. For example, Süleymān’s contemporary, Mughal ruler Akbar, sought to legitimize his rule by resorting to the ancient Iranian concept of *farr-e īzādī* (divine glory). More importantly, ancient imageries of legitimation and the divine connection of rulers were in full bloom with the rise of the Safavids whose means of legitimation and claims of superiority were of crucial interest to the Ottomans. The employment of such pre-Islamic imageries of kingship by high profile jurists and Sufis further diluted any concern about their legitimate usage by Muslim rulers. Ghazālī, for example, whose writings enjoyed an almost a canonical status among the Ottomans, privileged the ruler for receiving divine light: “God gave him (the king) kingship and the divine light.” Pointing to philosophical expositions of the idea, Ghazālī notes Aristotle’s claim that kings owe their greatness to divine effulgence.

While used by the mainstream ‘ulemā without much reservation, the imagery of divine light is at times indistinguishably fused with mystical perceptions of divine light and manifestations of God’s attributes. The whole philosophy of illumination,

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systematized by the twelfth century mystical philosopher Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191), for example, was imbued with the concept of light that emanated from God. Suhrawardī, who explicitly referred to such terms as *khvarnah* (divine glory) and divine light, was well-aware of ancient imageries of divine light, and simply considered them earlier expositions of his illuminationist philosophy. Thus by the time of the Ottomans, a versatile set of images, motifs, and metaphors denoting the divine connection of rulership was in use.

Such imagery had a defining effect in shaping the perceptions of Ottoman political authors as to how rulership was attained. Imbued with this imagery was the grace theory of rulership according to which the leadership of a community was determined by God alone. Because living political traditions interacted with theological and juristic views on rulership expounded in authoritarian texts of Islamic tradition, the ‘grace theory’ of rulership was enmeshed with the common Islamic idea that everything acquired by man was God’s *ni’ma* (beneficence). Such a conception of grace also implied that God makes a deliberate choice in allocating His grace. This theory not only prevailed in political theory but also pervaded conceptions of rulership and its attainment among the ruling elite. Disputes and arguments used by contenders during the fierce clashes for succession that filled the political scene of this period show that, although princes firmly clung to all the necessary material means of succession, they all expected the outcome to emanate solely from God; at least this is what the rhetoric expressed.

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14 For continuities between the ancient notions of divine dispensation and those of Islamic dynasties see Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, 89-100; Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, 17-34.
Prince Aḥmed recognized, after losing the throne to his brother Selīm I, God’s bestowal of rulership did not mean a passive reception:

Since Adam till the end of the world it has been an ancient custom for the progeny of rulers to pursue their turn in rulership. Accordingly, you pursued my father’s sultanate which I sought after as well. However, in accordance with “I wish, you wish, but nothing happens except for what He wishes,” God’s will chose you and you attained the sultanate.¹⁵

Faced with the failing health of his father Bāyezīd II, who was losing control of the government as a result, Prince Aḥmed had already persuaded the sultan to abdicate in his favor. Under the pressure of a cohort of dignitaries who tied their prospects to Aḥmed’s succession, “I had no potency to continue reigning,” the ruling sultan reportedly stated, so “I pass the sultanate to my son Ahmed according to my own will.”¹⁶ But such an arrangement did not sound appropriate to the other two candidates, Șorkūd and Selīm, who opposed the decision by taking advantage of the prevailing belief in political culture that rulership was granted by God, not conferred by the ruler in office. Encountering strong resistance and tempestuous negotiations, the sultan and his dignitaries were forced to agree that there would be no heir apparent as long as Bāyezīd was alive, leaving the field of competition open for contenders.¹⁷ Prince Selīm obtained a formal agreement


¹⁶ Celâl-zâde, Selîm-nâme, 85.

¹⁷ Bidlîsî, Selim Şah-nâme, 91.
from the sultan who stated that “the sultan would not determine his successor during his reign but this matter shall be determined by will of God.”\textsuperscript{18} After a series of successful skirmishes and negotiations, Prince Selim, who managed to secure the support of the Janissaries, overcame Ahmed’s forces and left Bayezid II no choice but to abdicate in Selim’s favor. Bayezid II’s dignitaries who conspired in favor of Ahmed consoled the defeated prince by saying that “it appeared that the matter of rulership could not be determined by an alliance between you and us but by God’s will.”\textsuperscript{19}

Because of the prevailing idea that rulership was attained by divine dispensation, no author seems to have been interested in developing a theory of succession. Instead, they were content with providing instructions for aspirants to become worthy of God’s grace. Given that God’s favor was by definition unconditional and unpredictable, Ottomans were especially careful to train all princes equally, assigning them instructors in learning and trainers in statecraft.\textsuperscript{20} As Mehmed II, Bayezid II, and Suleymân did, however, the reigning sultan could seek to affect the outcome of competition for succession by appointing their favorite prince to the governorship of a city that was close to the capital in order to ensure his speedy takeover of the throne upon the ruler’s death. The sultan might also support the prince of his choice through various means without ostensibly alienating other candidates. But lessons from the cases of Bayezid II and Selim I, who succeeded against the wishes of their fathers, taught that the successor was often the disfavored prince. Even Selim II, who succeeded thanks to the direct

\textsuperscript{18} Uluçay, “Yavuz Sultan Selim nasıl Padişah oldu (I),” \textit{Tarih Dergisi} 6 (1954): 53-90.

\textsuperscript{19} Celâl-zâde, \textit{Selim-nâme}, 93.

involvement of Süleyman, was not the primary choice of his father but owed his succession to the execution of his brothers who were accused of open rebellion against the ruling sultan.\(^\text{21}\) In a political culture where God was believed to have the final word in attaining rulership, competition among the princes had more justification than interference by the reigning sultan in an effort to appoint his successor. As described by Bidlīsī, regardless of the circumstances, persons who were born with an auspicious destiny were assured of success:

In the world of causes (‘ālam-i ‘ilal va asbāb), in accordance with God’s wisdom, the condition of the heavens influences the outcome of good and evil, and benefit and loss. One’s condition changes very little from what has been set by his star of felicity. No doubt, rulers (ṣāhib-i nash‘at-i khilāfat va sulṭānī), who were born into this world under an auspicious constellation (fāli‘-i khujasta), with their fortunate arrival, continue to rule and succeed as well as gain status and glory. Favorable fortune (baḥt-i Musā‘id) and assistant destiny (davlat-i mu‘āzid) are among the divine gifts (‘aṭīya-i vahbī) foretold by an auspicious constellation (fāli‘-i sa‘d). For this reason, fortunate persons (khujasta fāli‘ān) always attain their sublime objectives as they wish with no effort, because of divine dispensation. Any effort they would exert to reach their objective would suit their destiny. This auspicious constellation and glorious fortune is a divine gift (mavhibat-i ghaybī), not an acquired gain (‘aṭīyā-i kashbī).\(^\text{22}\)

Because the sultanate was commonly believed to be a grace from God, the ensuing logical question for any political thinker was whether grace was conferred upon a

\(^{21}\) For an extensive treatment of the rivalry between the two princes, Bayezid and Selīm, during the reign of Süleyman see Şerafettin Turan, Kanuni Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları, 2nd ed. (Ankara: Bilgi Yaynevi, 1997).

\(^{22}\) Bitlisi, Kanuni Şahensahi, 38.
specific individual predestined to rule or upon someone who deserved to be designated as such by having acquired certain qualifications and conditions. Despite contrary views, the prevalent view was that no personal qualification was needed to receive God’s grace. This acquiescent idea of divine appointment ended political theory’s quest for a legal means of appointing a ruler and in particular facilitated the rise of moralist writings. It implied that the community had no leverage to choose the best candidate for rulership. Medieval juristic theory, constructed on the canonical premise that choosing a ruler was incumbent upon the community, had centered on elaborating the conditions and qualifications for a candidate’s eligibility for the office. Once the best candidate took office, there would have been much less concern about educating the ruler in office because he was already endowed with commendable traits and the necessary background. But the idea of divine appointment, which took precedence in the popular imagination of the post-Abbasid period at the expense of the juristic view of the medieval age, necessitated that the ruler in office needed to be instructed about good rulership. Since the divinely designated ruler could in theory be anyone who was chosen by God for unknown reasons, his sultanate needed to be improved through instruction and education. Thus the moral approach to rulership became the prevalent mode of writing on government in all genres and disciplines of political thought including juristic works.

Because most political works addressed the current ruler in office, political writers understandably paid little attention to the question of prescribing the rules of king-making. Medieval juristic and theological discourse that extensively entertained this question was only remotely echoed during the age of Süleymân. The only author who specifically wrote on the subject was Lütfi Pāşā who adopted a strictly juristic
position in order to refute a theological view that put the legitimacy of the Ottoman ruler into question.\textsuperscript{23} Other authors focused on what rulership entailed rather than what was needed to become a ruler. Nevertheless, many authors preferred to describe how rulership was attained in order to elucidate what it entailed because their views about how one becomes a ruler were indicative of what type of rulership they envisioned. When rulership was established as a grace from God, then a ruler’s governance was perceived to be his return of God’s favor for which he needed to be educated.

Despite the primacy of the grace theory, it was not the only extant conception of what determined rulership. There seem to be three main views in the political literature of the period as to how one becomes a ruler. Depending on the author, a ruler may have acquired his position thanks to grace from God (\textit{ni’met-i vehbi}), by merit (\textit{istiḥkāk}), by subjection (\textit{kahr}) or through a combination of these causes. Grace theory was by far the most widely held view while merit theory was often presented as complementary to the former in order to justify divine providence and make God’s choice intelligible to humans. Merit theory, unlike its medieval counterpart in jurisprudence and theology that focused on one’s legal qualification for the position, only focused on one’s moral fitness for the office. Subjection theory was inherently compatible with grace theory since the latter did not address the practical considerations of becoming a ruler, and by definition accepted all rulers as legitimate whether they achieved their position by merit or by force.

These three theories on the attainment of rulership prevailed because they provided the most suitable explanations for the type of political authority envisioned by the mainstream political writers of the age of Süleyman. As outlined in the first part of

\textsuperscript{23} See Lütfi Paşâ, \textit{Khalâs al- Ủyma}.  

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this study, rulership in the form of the sultanate was conceived to be ‘sheer power to rule’ and was modeled on divine government, prophethood and sainthood, presenting the prophet-rulers as its most definitive role models. As formulated in a couplet by Celâlzâde, such a conception left little room for speculating about the objective qualities necessary for rulership but instead implied that the question of leadership was decided in the spiritual realm:

Indeed the sultanate is God-given
Ennobling and excellence in glory²⁴

The principal proponent of grace theory was Bidlîsî who devoted a long section of his work to the question of how one becomes a ruler and examined it in a theological framework. “The greatest of God’s graces (mavâhib) and the noblest of divine beneficences (ni’methâ), a virtue which Man is proud of before the heavens and angels,” he stated, “is the beneficence of divine vicegerency (khilâfat-i raḥmânî) and the grace of authority (mavhibat-i iqtidâr) to regulate the affairs of people by way of divine commands and prohibitions.”²⁵ As a proof from the Quran, Bidlîsî mentioned the appointment of Abraham as the leader of his community (imâm) and the granting of sovereignty (mulk) to him and David.²⁶ These and many other Quranic verses present

²⁴ Hususa saltanat bir mevhibetdir
Şeref-efzâ vü âli-menkabetdir
Celâl-zâde, Selim-nâme, 89.

²⁵ Bitlîsî, Kanun-ı Şâhenşâhi, 31.

²⁶ For Abraham’s designation as leader see Quran 2: 124; For the grant of sovereignty to Abraham and David see Quran 4: 54 and 2: 251.
mulk, in the sense of rulership, as a grace from God granted to a person of His choice with no prior condition. Although there is no indication that this applies to non-prophet rulers as well, Bidlîsî, like all contemporary political authors, thought that God’s message in these verses extends to all kinds of authority. Such a view on the attainment of rulership completely agrees with a well-known verse commonly referred to by other political authors which states that God grants rulership (mulk) to whomever he wants.27

In conformity with the general Islamic view, Bidlîsî first of all considered anything that benefits Man as beneficence from God. Authors who never dealt with the question of divine providence in rulership, such as Lütfî Pâşâ, might well have regarded rulership as beneficence from God in this most general sense, without ruling out mundane conditions and causes. Bidlîsî, however, proposed divine providence as the only cause of attaining rulership and left no room for further reasons. Before characterizing rulership (khilâfat, shâhenshâhi) as a kind of divine beneficence (mavhibat, ‘aṭiyya, ni‘mat), he elucidated two types of benefits: those bestowed by God (vahbî) and those earned by man (kasbî).28 Benefits such as beauty (ḥusn u jamāl) and success (davlat u iqbal) which man’s will and effort have no role in bringing about are called bestowed while those such as learning arts and crafts (san‘at u hirfat) and subsequently accumulating wealth through trade, which man’s efforts (sa‘y u ghayrat) influence, are called earned. In his view, bestowed benefits never perish as a result of external causes even if all one’s enemies unite. In full agreement with Bidlîsî’s view, Kemâlpâşâzâde explained the enthronement of ‘Oşmân, the founder of the Ottoman dynasty, as a result of divine providence:

28 Bitlîsî, Kanun-ı Şâhensâhi, 29.
When the forgiven Ertuğrul died there were two candidates to take his place and lead his noble tribe. One was his brother Dündär, a talented commander, and the other was Emīr ‘Oşmān, whose occupation was to engage in conquest day and night. Unavoidably, a conflict and disagreement took place between the two for some time. After divisions among the followers and companions they finally agreed on ‘Oşmān by consensus. Although it was Dündär who became the leader of his people because of his seniority in age and status ‘Oşmān gained the hearts of people by his commendable policy and moral rectitude. Sovereignty was his destined fortune (naşib). In the invisible world, when the world’s property was divided among groups of rulers (ümerā) as well as all the poor and the rich, ‘Oşmān was given that lot [sovereignty]. In the meeting of eternity (bezm-i ezel), when nobles and commoners as well as governors and subjects got drunken with the wine of e-lest, ‘Oşmān was served the cup of leadership (serverlik). The belt of happiness was destined for his waist, and the crown of state was assigned to his head.

In agreement with this prevailing tendency in this period, Kınlîzâde, the most philosophical-minded of the sixteenth century political authors, gave currency to grace theory as well. On the question of the necessary qualifications for rulership, which are nearly identical in all accounts of this period, Kınlîzâde chose to present them in the way revised by Davvânî, not the way originally formulated by Tūsî. While Tūsî had said “the seeker after kingly rule (tālib-i mulk) must strive to unite seven qualities” Davvânî later modified this to “philosophers predicate five qualities as desirable in a prince

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29 In the Muslim tradition the meeting was believed to have taken place between God and the souls of people before they were created. God asked mankind “am I not your lord? (a-last-tu bi-rabbi-kum?)” and the people responded affirmatively creating a compact to observe after the creation. It was also believed that mankind’s destiny was set in this meeting. The metaphor ‘wine of e-lest’ in Kemâlpâşâzâde’s usage refers to this meeting and God’s question. See Quran 172: 7.


31 Tūsî, The Nasirean Ethics, 227.
(pādishāh),” a modification adopted almost verbatim by Činalızade. However slight the difference may seem, it points to a substantial shift in the perception of how one becomes a ruler. While Ţūsī enumerated seven qualifications for a ‘candidate’ to become a ruler, this view is completely lost to Davvānī and Činalızade who present these qualifications as those recommended for the ‘ruler’ to possess. Unlike Ţūsī, both Davvānī and Činalızade begin the section on “government of the realm and the manners of kings” with laudatory remarks on rulership, stating that it is God’s greatest gift conferred upon man. At the other end of the spectrum was the subjection theory whose principal exponent was Lütfi Pāşā. He never formulated a consistent set of necessary qualifications for a ruler but instead gathered legal opinions from a variety of sources that served his conception of rulership. As a result, in his search for the minimum set of requirements for becoming a ruler, he refined those quotations into varying numbers of necessary qualifications, ranging from elaborate ones to simple ones. What he consistently stated in his whole discussion about the requirements of rulership was that there was ultimately only one indispensable qualification for a legitimate ruler and that was the possession or acquisition of adequate power in order to exert one’s control over a realm.

32 Thompson, *The Practical Philosophy of the Muhammedan People*, 382.


Unlike Bidlīsī, for whom man was no more than a passive receiver of divine favor, Lütfi Paşā drew the profile of a ruler in full charge of his actions who could make or unmake his fate. In one of his elaborate expositions, “if one possesses the mentioned conditions such as subjugation (ghalaba), domination (qahr), institution of religion with justice (iqāma al-dīn bi al-‘adl), commanding the good and forbidding the wrong, leadership over the public (riyāsa al-‘āmma),” Lütfi Paşā stated, “then he becomes the sultan and deserves to be called as imām, khalīfa and vālī.” Using more definitive language, he repeatedly stated throughout his treatise that one becomes a ruler by meeting only two conditions: procuring allegiance (mubāya’a ma’ah) and subjugating (ghalaba) or subduing (qahr), or having the ability to exert one’s power (an yunaffidha ḥukmahu). As a jurist by profession, Bidlīsī may not have objected to these practical requirements for the acquisition of rulership but what makes Lütfi Paşā different is that he never explicitly stated that any of these qualifications were granted by God without man’s independent efforts.

Yet nowhere did Lütfi Paşā exclusively refute the grace or merit theory, and his main purpose was confined to proving the legitimacy of the ruling sultan on juristic grounds. He was no stranger to the other two views as he also asserted elsewhere that the sultanate was specifically granted to the Ottoman sultans, who deserved it by merit. But his intention to provide a legal proof for the legitimacy of the Ottoman sultan obliged Lütfi Paşā to adopt a legal perspective that was lacking in Kınalızade or Bidlīsī who

36 Lütfi Paşā, Khalās al-Umma, 8.
37 Lütfi Paşā, Khalās al-Umma, 9, 10, 17.
38 Lütfi Paşa, Tevârih, 4-7.
approached the subject primarily from philosophical and mystical perspectives respectively, despite their occasional use of juristic vocabulary such as permissible (jāʾiz), obligatory (wâjib) and the like. In order to establish the legal basis of Ottoman rulership, allegiance by subjects and the capability of exerting control were really the two undisputable qualities of the ruling Ottoman sultan that could be drawn from the canonical juristic compendiums of the Ḥanafī School.\textsuperscript{39}

The merit theory, which appeared to be the third notable view on rulership, did not receive any specific elaboration, despite its influence in shaping visions on Ottoman rulership. As shown in the section below on “the Ottoman ruler,” as expected, any author who referred to the Ottoman dynasty agreed that the Ottoman ruler deserved his position by merit, besides other legitimizing factors and qualifications. But no author ventured to elaborate on the necessary conditions that one needed to possess in order to qualify to succeed to the throne by merit. Yet personal merits and virtues were one of the most extensively treated subjects of political writing in this period. However, well-suited to the conception of the ‘sultanate as a grace from God’ that was modeled on prophetic rulership, instead of promoting personal merit as a legitimizing condition, all these authors opted to elaborate on such merits as a prescription to improve the quality of rulership. Thus the question of merit was treated as a moral issue for the perfection of one’s government rather than as a legal or a philosophical issue for the legitimation of one’s authority.

Exposing his firm belief that rulership was a grace from God, that the “sultanate and government (ḥūkūmet) are divine blessings (ʿaṭīyye-i rabbānī) and a gift from God

\textsuperscript{39} Imber, \textit{Ebu’s-su’ud}, 65-67.
(hediyeye-i ilahi),” Kinalizade stated, “that God blesses his noble position with this crown.”40 Despite this statement, he related an instructive story from the Ottoman experience of succession which attributed a determining role to merit in qualifying to be a ruler.41 As told by Zatti, when Zatti was young, he once eulogized Prince Korkud who appointed him as his confidante (nedim). In one of their excursions for entertainment at sea, he observed that Korkud treated one of his confidants despicably, making him an object of amusement. Zatti then realized that Prince Korkud was not worthy of the sultanate and promptly quit his entourage, a decision that was eventually vindicated: “Indeed, his [Korkud’s] star of felicity melted away and the throne of the Ottoman sultanate flew away from him.”42 Kinalizade told the story in relation to the subject of governing the people (ehl-i medine) according to their merits (istihkak) and abilities (istidad). Zatti was frustrated with Korkud’s behavior because he used a learned person as an object of amusement which, in his mind, made the Prince unworthy for the Ottoman throne, for it showed a lack of the administrative ability required to qualify for rulership.

Whether the story was authentic or not, the message Kinalizade intended to convey was that although rulership was attained only by God’s grace, one needed to be qualified by merit in order to receive that grace. Kinalizade’s subscription to both the grace and merit theories at the same time suggests that his conception of rulership as a grace from God was quite different from that of Bidlisi and Kemalpashazade. For Kinalizade God granted rulership as a grace only to a worthy one thus leaving the venue

40 Kinalizade ‘Ali, Abla-i ’Ala’t, 2: 114.
open for a candidate to strive to receive that grace. Whether Kemâlpâşâzâde may have agreed with this notion, he does not seem to leave any leeway for such an event by explicitly stating that the individual had no role in attracting divine grace.

The lights of leadership (riyâsat) were illuminating his face. His words were loaded with the secrets of governance (esrâr-i siyâset). His nature was a mine and source of sagacity, and a manifestation and a meeting place of virtuous traits. Because it was his destined fortune to rule, rulership and governance were settled on him.\(^43\)

A syncretic view of succession that combined the above three perceptions is illustrated by Celâlzâde’s relating of a telling story in his book of ethics about how rulership was granted by God:\(^44\) God sent a letter to David by Gabriel and ordered David to have it read by his sons, instructing him that only the one who could read it would succeed (hîlâfer) him. No one but Solomon, the smallest son of David and the least likely, read the letter even without opening it, and thus qualified to succeed in rulership. David then appointed Solomon as his successor and ordered the scholars (‘ulemâ) of the Sons of Israel to ask questions of Solomon to test him. Upon Solomon’s successful responses to all questions they too decided that he deserved rulership (hîlâfer). The moral of the story was that God granted rulership without a prior qualification because He granted it to someone who seemed to be the least likely person. Nevertheless, the one who received God’s grace also happened to be the most meritorious, as necessitated by God’s wisdom. The story was crafted to combine the three views about becoming a ruler.


\(^{44}\) Celâlzâde, Mevâhibû l-Ḥallâk, 219b.
that prevailed in this period: rulership was granted as a grace from God, Solomon then inherited the position and the means from his father to secure his authority, and he also met the criteria that would make his rule legitimate in the eyes of the ruled. Thus, from a metaphysical point of view, he was appointed by God without a prior condition, met the legal/moral qualifications, and deserved the throne by merit while possessing the material means to subjugate his people.

Whether others were aware of this story or not, its moral could not be objected to by any of the authors discussed. Although they displayed different views in their works, these views were compatible. It is a typical feature of the eclectic political thought of this period for authors to hold different but compatible views on how one became a ruler, even Lütfi Pasha and Bidlisî, whose views on rulership appeared to be diametrically opposed, for Lütfi Pasha’s depiction of how Ottoman sultans attained their position in his history fully condoned what Bidlisî advocated.

One reason these authors gave different accounts in their works despite the general conformity of their ideas is because they addressed different audiences. Bidlisî wrote his advice book for the ruler, whose rule was already legitimate by all accounts, and his intention was to educate the ruler about the principles of good government. In doing so, he dealt with the question of the origins of political authority from the perspective of the ruler and made him indebted to God. He envisioned rulership on the model of God’s government and considered it prophetic-rulership. As its exemplar, he sought to profile a ruler who was commissioned to rule in the way ruler-prophets were. According to this view, the position granted to the ruler as a grace from God was a specific kind of rulership with peculiar obligations, not any kind of political authority.
Thus Bidlīsī was not concerned with proving to the ruled how a legitimate rulership was instituted, a concern which forced Lütfi Pāşā to write his treatise on the Ottoman caliphate. In his polemical treatise, Khalâṣ al-Umma, Lütfi Pāşā spoke against those skeptical of the legitimacy of the Ottoman sultan, and instructed the reader on the legal strictures regarding a legitimate rulership. As he recounted, the skeptics advocated a theological view of the caliphate succinctly formulated by Nasafī in his popular treatise on the Islamic creed, a view which did not grant the title caliphate to a ruler who lacked Qureishi descent. Thus Lütfi Pāşā was forced to counterbalance that argument by remaining within the confines of Islamic disciplines, for mystical, philosophical, or cultural perceptions and imageries were useless against a theological argument. He then resorted to the mainstream views of post-Abbasid Ḥanafī jurisprudence and claimed that the theological formula of Nasafī had long been invalidated by leading jurists.

The Nature of the Ruler

The prevailing perception of rulership as a grace from God, regardless of the personal merit of its recipient, did not grant the ruler the freedom to rule as he wished but instead created a contract between the ruler and God. Once rulership was conferred on a human being, then his governance became a part of God’s overall government of His creation and the ruler was required to rule in accordance with God’s wishes in order to remain God’s favor. Such a government, above all, depended on the moral perfection and piety of the ruler who was expected to implement justice, and apply God’s law on earth in accordance with his personality. Thus improving the personal qualities of the
ruler, who attained rulership not by meeting certain conditions but thanks to God’s sheer favor, constituted one of the central questions of political theory during the age of Süleyman. As examined in the second chapter, it was common to conceive of rulership as an existential requirement necessitated by human nature which was thought to be in need of guidance by a superior authority. In envisioning the ideal ruler who could provide the necessary guidance and the means to respond to the needs of human nature, mainstream political writers focused on the morality of the ruler more than on the structures and principles of rulership. They conceived rulership just as they conceived of the ideal ruler, by examining human nature. In this quest, the ruler’s character and traits received more emphasis than his formal/juristic qualifications for the position.

There were two principal views on a ruler’s morality. The first was the juristic view primarily voiced by Birgivî, Lütfi Pâşâ and Dede Čōngî, who preferred to express their views in a discipline that had fallen out of favor as a medium for expressing political theory in this period. By contrast, jurists such as Bîddîsî, Čînalîzâde, Čaşkîprîzâde, or Kemâlpâşazâde totally abandoned the juristic mode of reasoning in political writing but displayed a more mystical and philosophical approach to the question of rulership. The juristic view, which traditionally centered on the problems of legitimacy and necessary qualifications for rulership, was concerned with moral issues only to a limited extent. By the sixteenth century, the juristic theory had become quite complacent about rulership and to a large extent had expelled moral and legal requirements for rulership from political theory, and viewed rulership only through very broad categories. In the prevailing juristic view, the ruler was usually characterized as either an oppressor (ţâlim) or a just (‘âdîl) man while neither of these had any effect on the design of rulership. The
jurists were more concerned about the application of law than designing a morally ideal rulership because, according to an established juristic view, the ruler, especially in the post-Abbasid period, was not expected to morally guide the community but only to apply the law. As long as the religious law was applied, the juristic view had little to say on the design of rulership. This was one reason why many authors who were jurists by training and profession wrote their political works in genres other than jurisprudence.

According to the moralist-philosophical view by which the ruler was conceived to be a moral guide for the community, his morality became the most important aspect of rulership. Works written on rulership from this perspective focused on the personality of the ruler, inculcating the idea that the best ruler was morally the most perfect one. However, authors writing on the ethics of rulership faced a challenging practical situation. They were all aware that well established political conventions left them little room to interfere in shaping the practice of rulership in their times. However elaborate they might be in designing ideal rulership, they knew that there was always a greater possibility that a less worthy person might succeed to the throne. The main pursuit of moralist political theory then became how to turn the ruler in office into a worthy one.

For a political writer concerned with how to turn a rulership into a superior one by educating the personality of the ruler, the most fundamental issue was whether the character of the ruler, or that of any human being, could be changed. In juristic political theory what mattered were a man’s actions rather than his personality. That was why juristic theory focused on a man’s actions while moral theory focused on a man’s personality. Moral theorists attributed greater power to man’s personality in the outcome of his actions. As a result of this, views on the mutability of man’s nature seem to have
created the deepest divide in political theory between Bidlīsī and all other authors on rulership in the sixteenth century. At the root of this disagreement was one of the perennial questions of moral theory: whether human nature was set by birth or shaped by experience. Ḥızīr Münşī defined character in his work on political ethics as follows:45

Ethics (akhlāq) consists of entire faculties ... and its creation (fiḥrat) and place in the man’s nature (jibillat). Scholars of this science [ethics] defined character (khulq) as follows: character is a faculty/quality (malaka) from which human acts come about easily without thinking (raviyyat). Namely, character is a natural disposition (khāsiyyat) that enables the occurrence of ease in acts necessitated by the self, without reflection (tafakkur) and deliberation (tadabbur). If an action comes about not with ease and without thinking but with effort (takalluf) and thinking (tafakkur), then it cannot be called natural character (khulq-i fiḥrat) but could be called manner (takhalluq).46

This definition of disposition was almost identical with the one provided by Ҡınalızāde and suits the general framework of most other writers on political ethics who did not define the term.47 Their main goal was to endow the ruler with noble traits by changing his disposition for the better. Many of them were well-aware of the dispute among the scholars of ethics about the mutability of disposition and felt it necessary to express their view before elaborating on the traits necessary for the ruler. Bidlīsī, who stood up against the mainstream view, staunchly defended the idea that disposition was part of one’s nature and was therefore immutable: he asserted that “changing one’s nature

45 This definition is very similar to that of Ṭūsī’s; see Ṭūsī, The Nasirean Ethics, 74; it also agrees with the more elaborate encyclopedic definition given by Jurjānī in his Ta‘rīfāt, 106.

46 Ḥızīr Münşī, Akhlāq al-Atqiyā, 12a-b.

47 Қınalızāde ATEGORY, Aḥlāk-i ATEGORY, 1: 53.
(taghyīr-i fiṭrat) through training and effort is not possible (maqdūr nīst).”48 The prevailing view in political theory, however, most explicitly voiced by Ҫınalızāde and Ḥızır Münṣī, was in line with the overall mainstream conviction that disposition can change with instructions and training.49 For the advocates of both views, it was essential to educate and convince the ruler about the most fundamental quality of disposition in order to make their ethical teaching effective for him.

Ḥızır Münṣī resorted to a very assertive language in proving that disposition can change. Such an approach first of all deprived the ruler of any excuse for failing to endow himself with noble traits that were deemed to be the basis of good government. Second, whether the ruler possessed a noble disposition or not, Ḥızır Münṣī made him believe that his disposition was always vulnerable to change for the worse or for the better. Thus he encouraged the ruler to believe that the noblest and most difficult traits such as courage (ṣḥacāʿat) are within the reach of human endeavor. This made moral education and guidance an essential component of rulership, a noble task that Ḥızır Münṣī and similar authors thought they were performing. Finally, Ḥızır Münṣī reminded the ruler that striving to change people’s dispositions was part of the obligations expected from rulership, first by posing as a moral role model and then by undertaking policies to improve the moral quality of subjects. Such a conception of rulership was part of the virtuous regime, highlighted as the ideal form of association by philosophers, in which the members unite for the attainment of virtues which would lead to ultimate happiness.

48 “Taghyīr-i fitrat be tarbiyat ve sa’y maḳdūr nīst ve tadbīr be muḳtaẓā’i ṭabar’ ve jibillat bī ṣabḵ-i qābiliyyat muyasar na.” Bitlîsî, Kanun-i Şāhensāhî, 43.

49 The prominent view among philophers, mystics, and ethics writers was that human nature was mutable. Jurjānī, a thirteenth century polymath, explained this view with a sense of certainty in his encyclopedia of concepts. See Ali Ḥūrghānī, Kitāb al-Ta’rīfāt (A Book of Definitions), ed. Gustav Flügel (Beirut: Libraire du Liban, 1985), 106.
For Ḥızır Münşî, intelligent people, religious law (sharʾ) and words of the wise as well as the seasoned philosophers all agreed, without doubt, that disposition can change (khulq mumkin al-taghayyur ast). He presented his view as a summary of the accounts of Ghazālī, Ṭūsī, and Davvānī, three of the most influential scholars of political ethics for Ottoman intellectuals in this period.\(^{50}\) To illustrate his point he gave several cases of changing one’s disposition: among them were an ignorant (jāhil) person who by frequenting gatherings of scholars, tended to acquire knowledge (‘ilm); a rebel (‘āṣī) who gave up committing sins and repented because of listening to advice and admonition; and a cowardly and fearful person who became brave by going through battlefields and staying in places of danger and fear. Besides being examples, all these changes of disposition, namely acquisition of knowledge, being courageous and avoiding sins, were among the most frequent admonitions directed to the ruler in political literature. Despite his firm belief in the changeability of disposition in principle, Ḥızır Münşî thought that peoples’ natures (ṭibā’) and temperaments constrained their ability to change their dispositions.\(^{51}\) Such an admission of a deeper essence in Man’s nature that may dictate the degree of change in disposition brought Ḥızır Münşî a bit closer to Bidlīsî’s position, which denied any possibility of personal edification and moral transformation.

Although his general view agreed with that of Ḥızır Münşî, Kınalızâde was not certain about the mutability of human disposition and felt it necessary to discuss all available views that were presented by his major sources, Ṭūsî and Davvānī. As a result, Kınalızâde summarized and evaluated three alternative views on the subject: First that

\(^{50}\) Ḥızır Münşî, Akhlâq al-Atqiyya, 13a.

\(^{51}\) Ḥızır Münşî, Akhlâq al-Atqiyya, 12a-b.
disposition was natural and thus impossible to alter in any way; second, that disposition consisted of two parts, one mutable and the other not; and third, that disposition was not natural and therefore mutable, a view singled out by Čınaľızāde as the right one, and the one held by the majority of ancient and modern philosophers:

A majority of philosophers thought that the human soul was not naturally disposed to good or evil but capable of both and fit to follow any direction. It is possible to change all dispositions because no disposition is [conditioned] by nature. Then why would changing it be impossible? If it was by nature and impossible to change and convert then the laws and regulations instituted by prophets, and the principles of education and government that scholars are united to apply would have been absurd.52

Thus what Ėlızır Münşi asserted to be a unanimous view of philosophers and scholars was given as the majority view by Čınaľızāde, in accordance with Tūsī and Davvānī who, despite their convictions about the mutability of human nature, pointed to major disagreements on the subject and the difficulty of singling out the truth.53 At the bottom of the controversy, as commonly stated, was the question of how man’s nature was formed. No writer on political ethics in this period seems to have had any objection to the idea that all acquired habits were alterable. They also commonly believed that human nature itself was not alterable. Thus the subject of dispute was whether man’s nature was inherently disposed to good or evil and whether a certain kind of disposition


53 Davvānī, Akhlāq-i Jalālī, 19-43; Thompson, The Practical Philosophy of the Muhammedan People, 12-51; Tūsī, The Nasirean Ethics 74-77; for an analysis of Davvānī’s views on the mutability of human nature see Harun Anay, Celâlettin Devvâni: Hayatı, Eserleri, Ahlâk ve Siyaset Düşüncesi (PhD diss., Istanbul University, 1994).
was dictated by one’s nature, which man had no power to change. On this point, Kınlîzâde was equally as confounded as Tūsī and Davvânî by Galen’s views, a respected ancient authority, who stated that man’s nature was of three kinds: good, bad and those who are capable of both, the last constituting the majority. Despite their general conviction that disposition was not shaped by nature, none of them refuted Galen but were content to indicate that even if Galen’s view were taken for granted, that still proved that the natures of most people were alterable. Although Kınlîzâde believed, in principle, that human nature was alterable, on empirical evidence, he agreed with Tūsī and Davvânî, that altering every kind of nature might not be possible.54

The discussion of disposition was important because, whether they discussed the theoretical side of the subject or not, all authors writing on political ethics in this period commonly believed that a ruler needed a particular kind of disposition and one of the fundamental objectives of advice books was to inculcate the necessary disposition in a ruler. It was assumed that this disposition should be shaped by the moral ideals commonly dubbed aḥlāk-i kerîme. Unlike the juristic approach which emphasized right and wrong as well as obligations in terms of constrictions and commands, the moralist approach emphasized the acquisition of such a disposition which would lead the ruler to doing right and abstaining from wrong by nature. For these authors, such a disposition was necessary because first, they thought that good government depended on the good disposition of ruler and second, they envisioned the ruler as a moral guide and model for the community.

Both 杞nalizade and 侻zir Munsii remained within the confines of ethical philosophy. Despite their use of scriptural evidence, they mainly argued through philosophical concepts. For 杞nalizade, for example, the whole relevance of ethical philosophy and religious guidance was at stake and he felt it necessary to prove that human disposition can be changed in order to save ethical teachings and prophetic laws from being reduced to irrelevance. Bidlisii, however, adopted a quite different approach because of his focus on the relevance of man’s nature to rulership. His main pursuit was to prove that, much like the rulership that one received from God by way of grace, one’s noble character (akhlāq-i karīma) was a grace from God as well. Thus instead of reasoning by considering philosophical views about man’s nature, he approached the issue from the perspective of God’s grace to man. He developed his arguments through theological concepts such as acquisition (kasb) and will (irāda). From a strictly dualistic perspective, he thought that man’s qualifications and possessions are either acquired or natural and his disposition in this duality fell into the category of natural. Bidlisii granted Man no power at all to alter his disposition because that would mean working against the will of God.

For Bidlisii the beauty (husn) and ugliness (qubh) of Man’s character (akhlāq-i insānī) were a preordained grace from God, because happiness (Sa‘ādat) or misery (shakāvat) are innate (fiṭrī) and congenital (nasabī). People have different characters because of the way they were created. He was also well-aware of the perennial debate about the mutability of Man’s nature and clarified his position in his answer to the same textbook question which had been asked by 杞nalizade, 侻zir Munsii and many before them:
On this subject there is disagreement among the philosophers (arbāb-i ḥikmat) whether altering disposition (tabdīl-i akhlāq) is practicable (muyassar) and possible (maqādīr) or whether it is fixed (muqarrar) and predestined (muqaddar), because disposition (akhlāq) for the most part originates from concupiscible (shahvat) and irascible (ghazāb) faculties, and these corporal faculties (quva-yi cismānī) are bound up with the complexion of creation (mizāj-i ʿunṣūr) that was mixed (muḥammār) with the creation of Man (fiṭrat-i basharī) since the beginning. Therefore nobody can alter the complexion of creation (mizāj-i khilqat) to another type, and natural faculties (quvā-yi tabʾī) and human or animal souls (arvāh-i nafsānī ve ḥayvānī) cannot be put into a different condition (fāvr).55

Bidlīsī clearly favored the first view that considered human nature as immutable as outlined by Kınāfīzāde. Despite sounding unyielding on this position, Bidlīsī also tried not to compromise the very reason for writing on ethics by attributing a limited role to human agency in changing one’s nature. This limited change could be possible because of the structure of Man’s nature which potentially (bi al-quvva) comprises all virtues and vices. Here Bidlīsī’s mystical orientation came into play and he recognized only the capability of a master who can change an initiate’s nature. Thus an average individual was still not given any power in changing his own nature. For him, the people who were capable of altering man’s nature were dubbed spiritual doctors (tabībān-i rūḥānī)56 who were prophets (anbiyā), friends of God (avliyā) and righteous spiritual masters (murshidān-i ḥaqqānī). These spiritual doctors bring the potential virtues into action while suppressing potential vices through legal (sharʾ) and governmental (siyāsī)

55 Bitlīsī, Kanun-ı Şâhensâhi, 41-42.

56 Ethics was usually referred to by ethical writers as spiritual medicine (fābb-i rūḥānī) which implies that that philosophers of ethics were spiritual doctors. Bidlīsī, however, does not include philosophers among the doctors of spirit.
prohibitions (*māniʿa*), thus instituting training for perfection. The ones who possess pure hearts are much more eligible than those with ugly natures.  

Despite the possibility of improvement through spiritual training under the guidance of a spiritual doctor, Bidlīsī still thought that this would not change the original state of one’s nature. For him, changing creation (*taghyīr-i fitr*) through training (*tarbiyat*) and effort (*saʿy*) was not possible (*maqdūr nīst*) unless the person was suitable by his nature (*tabʿ*) and creation (*jibillat*). Although the manifestations (*āsār*) of one’s nature could be increased or decreased by training, changing or converting the fundamentals of one’s nature would be beyond the capability of humans.  

This negative view on the mutability of human character did not prevent Bidlīsī from prescribing morality as the most important component of rulership:

> Good character (*akhlāq-i jibillī*) is the foundation of rulership (*khilāfat*) and world-conquering (*jihandārī*) and in regard to the continuity of government it is similar to the parts and elements of a body. When the fortunate come into being, good habits and beautiful character are seen in their works and their deeds denote their sound creation and righteous natures.

Believing in the immutability of human character and writing a work of ethics may look paradoxical. But what Bidlīsī aimed at was to write a moral code of behavior to follow whether one was inherently good or evil natured. He did not believe or aspire to change human nature by ethical teachings, for that was a futile undertaking. However,

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57 Bitlisī, *Kanun-ı Şâhensâhi*, 41-42.
58 Bitlisī, *Kanun-ı Şâhensâhi*, 43.
regardless of the quality of one’s predisposition there was an objective morality to follow. In this regard, an evil-natured person could not change his nature but could still be moral by observing the code of behavior Bidlīsī prescribed.

Given that Bidlīsī also believed that rulership was an exclusive grace from God without any prior condition of worthiness, he thought it equally possible for someone with moral integrity, or someone with an immoral character, to become a ruler. As he stated, a ruler who was gifted with a good nature was a great benefit for the ruled while a ruler with a weak nature was harmful to state and society. Therefore, by definition, a morally perfect ruler was a guide for the community the way prophets were and deserved to be caliph, for he had the capacity to combine material and spiritual rulships. As for the rulers of a weak nature, they fall into the category of material rulers only, and are not worthy of the caliphate. In order to be eligible for the superior kind of rulership, these rulers need to pursue a strict spiritual training to keep the vices of their nature under control and put the virtues of their creation to work. For this, they would need a spiritual doctor.

Moral Dimensions of Rulership

The emphasis on the moral traits of the ruler was well-warranted because the main quest of political writing was to educate the sultan to turn his rulship into a virtuous one. Ethics became the mainframe of political writing because since Fārābī, the best polity was defined as al-madīna al-fāḍīla, and many ethical works examined human

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60 Bitlīsī, Kanun-ı Şahenşahı, 45.
character using the dichotomy of virtues versus vices. The ruler and the regime were evaluated according to the same criteria and qualified through similar concepts. Best exemplified in Fārābī’s works, and extensively adopted by later writers of political ethics, this construction characterized non-virtuous regimes as fāṣiq, dālla, jāhila, fāsida and the like, i.e. according to vices which are adopted from human moral qualities. Even in juristic theory, as indicated above, the most common distinction between types of rulerships was primarily a moral one, between the ẓālim (oppressor) and the ʿādil (just).

In principal, the ruler was not prescribed an exclusive code of ethical conduct that was substantially different from that for the general public. However, as revealed by Bidlîsî, the ruler was expected to possess higher standards of morality: “Because rulers are above (fāʾiq ve mustavlî) their subjects (zīrdastân) in appearance (šūrat),” he pointed, “they should be above their followers (ittibāʾ o ishyāʾī) in spirit (maʾnī) as well.” Since the ruler was envisioned to be a moral guide for the community, he was expected to reach moral perfection in noble traits (malakāt-i karīma). Because rulership was designed on following the model of prophetic-rulership as a guide for the community, the ruler was, above all, envisioned to be a moral person. In addition, one of the well-established convictions about the function of rulership in society was that “people follow their rulers” (al-nās ʿalā dīn mulūkīhim). The canonical status of this ancient maxim in political teachings further led authors to envision the ruler as a moral role model for the ruled.

In order to meet the expectations of a superior rulership, the kind of morality

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61 Some pre-Ottoman ethical writers drew a sharp line between the ruler’s morality and that of the general public. Among them was Jāḥiz (d. 255/868-9) who stated that “rulers’ morality is not like the morality of people, and there is no common thing between the two.” Samīḥ Rughaym, Mawsūʿa Muṣṭalḥāšt al-ʿUlam al-Ijtimāʾīyya wa al-Siyāsīyya fī al-Fikr al-ʿArabī wa ʿIslāmī (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān Nāshirūn, 2000), 42.

62 Bitlîsî, Kanun-i Şahensâhi, 91.
prescribed for the ruler was usually dubbed a noble character (akhlāq-i karīma) or divine morality (akhlāq Allāh). The former was a general term for a morally perfect human being envisioned in the writings of ethical tradition. The latter, however, was used in a more specific sense to denote the type of morality the ruler should have as God’s viceregent on the earth. What is described under divine morality is not different from descriptions of a noble character and this term seems to be emphasized because of the general tendency to depict rulership on the model of divine government. The term is used for both the ruler and any human being, similar to the use of imām. But the message was, unmistakably, that the ruler needed to be endowed with God’s moral attributes as his vicegerent on earth and as a moral guide to the ruled. In order to deserve to be called imām (God’s vicegerent), one needed to resemble Him through akhlāq Allāh.

The use of divine morality as a ruler-specific prescription is more visible in the accounts of Bidlīsī and Dizdār. Bidlīsī stated that although a perfect manifestation (jibillat-i mażhar-i kāmilī) was a result of one’s creation (fiṭrat), it is incumbent on the ruler to endow himself with the requirement of “takhllaqū bi akhlāq Allāh.” Dizdār did not present divine morality as a requirement for rulership, but made the latter a means to attain a high moral status: “Realm (mamlaka) and rulership (salṭana) are suitable (ṣāliḥa) for the attainment of commendable traits until the ruler reaches a position (maqām) where he is endowed with (mutakhallaqan) divine morality, as mentioned in the statement ‘endow yourselves with divine morality’, and is characterized


64 Bitlisī, Kamun-i Şāhensāhi, 26, 74.
by divine attributes (ṣifāt-i rubūbiyya).”

If the ruler did not follow this path, then rulership might be a means to lead the ruler to despicable traits, to the extent of claiming divinity (rubūbiyya) as in the case of Pharaoh. In this way, Dizdār presented rulership as a suitable means for attaining two opposite sets of traits, a view inspired by the two major types of regimes constructed in political philosophy as voiced by Činalızāde. After dividing regimes into virtuous and unvirtuous along the same lines as Tūsī and Davvānī, Činalızāde states that the purpose of ruling in the former case was to attain divine morality (akhlāq Allāh), while in the latter it was domination dictated by the concupiscent soul (nafs-i ammāra).

When divine morality or noble character referred to a ruler’s morality, they usually entailed such traits as generosity (sahā), forgiveness (‘afv), and nobleness (karam) which were deemed more important for rulership than other personal traits, not only because of their obvious benefits for the community but also because these traits were regarded as the most similar to God’s attributes. But a more or less standard description of a noble character was one which comprised the platonic cardinal virtues of wisdom (ḥikmat), continence (‘iffat), courage (shacā’at), and justice (‘adl).

Since Miskawayh’s construction of his ethical theory around these four virtues, this perception of man’s moral character came to pervade all strands of moral teachings including

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65 Dizdār, Sulūk al-Mulūk, 4a.


67 See Bitlîsî, Kanun-i Şahensâhi, 26, 74; Dizdār, Sulūk al-Mulūk, 4a; Činalızāde ‘Alī, Aḥlāk-i ‘Alā’ī, 2: 112.

68 See Bitlîsî, Kanun-i Şahensâhi, 58-66; Cahramî 14a-14b; Celâlzhâde, Mevâhibü’l-Ḥallâk, 276; Ḥızır Münşî, Akhlâq al-Atâyû, 14a-20a; Činalızâde ‘Alī, Aḥlāk-i ‘Alā’ī, 1: 53-75; Ṭaşkoprîzâde, Miftâḥ al-Saʿāda, 1: 406.
political and Sufi ethics. Some authors, such as Ḥiṣṣir Mūnṣī and Bīdīsī, built their whole theory of personal ethics on this construction and defined these traits, emphasizing their relevance to good rulership. Following the mainstream approach popularized by Miskawayh, they thought that these virtues comprised all other virtues and were sufficient to lead one to moral perfection. When discussing the branches of each virtue, they highlighted the traits the ruler needed most in rulership and illustrated these principles with cases from government. Despite this emphasis on the traits that the ruler needed most, the basic framework of morality was no different than the one prescribed for the common people.

Ideally there was no difference between religion and ethics. It was commonly believed that the origin of all ethical teachings was revelation via prophets who were followed by philosophers and scholars. In Bīdīsī’s words, religion (qānūn-i šarī‘at) was a comprehensive regulation (‘ašl-i kullī) that covered all ethical virtues (makārim-i akhlāq) and all human orders (manāzīm). By contrast, there was a clear distinction between the commands and prohibitions prescribed by religion with consequences, and moral principles with no legal consequences. The moralist writers were more concerned about the ruler’s compromising the basic tenets of morality than breaching certain religious restrictions or ignoring prescriptions. A common conviction was that rulership lasts despite disbelief, but does not continue with oppression.

Personal morality of the ruler was an indispensable part of moral teaching regarding the ethics of rulership, considered by the moralists as the foundation of good

69 Bitlīsī, Kanun-i Şahenşâhi, 103.

70 “al-mulku yābqī ma‘a al-kufr we lā yābqī ma‘a al-ẓulm.” See, for example, Risālā fī-mā Yalzīm ‘alā al-Mulâk, 13.
government. For many of these moralists the ultimate aim was public morality which was given precedence over personal morality. Although there was no clear-cut formal distinction between personal and public morality, some of the authors pointed to the different stages of moral responsibility of the ruler towards God, himself and the ruled.\footnote{Celâlzâde, \textit{Mevâhibû l-Ḫallâk}, 117a-118b; Dizdâr, \textit{Sulûk al-Mulûk}, 9a.} Personal morality of the ruler was as much a part of political theory as public morality. But authors were more conscious of the latter because of its effects and were more complacent about personal breaches of the code of behavior.

Although the ruler did not have a special code of morality other than the expectation that he be an example of moral rectitude, thanks to his sovereign status, some authors granted him certain prerogatives especially in areas that may not have affected the quality of government. These prerogatives included some special characteristics peculiar to the common images of rulership and certain common breaches of established ethical norms and religious rules. For the former, certain vices or lack of certain virtues were considered normal for the ruler while being regarded, in principle, as reprehensible, such as majesty and splendor. Ottoman chroniclers, for example, who rarely criticized their rulers, were much more complacent about the moral condition of rulers and usually attributed the cause of their immorality to other factors.

As for the common breaches of established norms, wine-drinking had been given special attention in the advice literature. Despite strict legal prohibitions against it, drinking does not seem to have been a rare event among Ottoman rulers and the elite in general.\footnote{Ottoman chronicles are replete with stories of drinking rulers and other statesmen. See for example, Lütfi Paşa, \textit{Tevâriḥ}, 45.} The general tendency was not to tolerate this misconduct in rulership and
many authors devoted long sections to explaining the prohibition of drinking by

describing its harmful effects on the body and government. The section on drinking
alcohol in Тūsī, for example, was completely omitted in Кіналізәde, who followed
Dаввәn on this matter and instead reasserted the prohibition on drinking alcohol.
Bidліsі, although he advised the ruler to abstain from drinking, did not use prohibitive
language but instead showed complacency. In case the ruler could not avoid drinking
alcohol, Bidліsі then advised him to drink grape wine which he singled out as the most
beneficial one for the body. For Bidліsі it was not wine-drinking but drunkenness
which was morally reprehensible, a view shared by Cahramі who not only permitted
wine-drinking but also provided a moral ground for such a perceived breach of the
religious code: “Even if wine is prohibited by religious law,” he stated, “it is regarded as
permissible by custom.” Both Bidліsі and Cahramі displayed more concern about the
adverse effects of wine-drinking on the body and judgment which would hinder the
ruler’s ability to govern properly. In this regard, they seem to follow the same pursuits
as Ниzәm al-Mulk and Тūsі, who, while being complacent about wine-drinking,
attempted to place it in a moral framework by establishing the manners of drinking, in
order to minimize the adverse effects of drinking on government and courtly life.

74 Кіналізәde ‘Alі, Aḥlāk-і ‘Alā’ī, 1: 93, 2: 46
75 Bitліsі, Kanun-і Şәhәnsәhі, 148-50.
76 “Va shәrәb aghәr-ча shar’an ḥәrәm-est ‘ammә ‘orfan jәyiz dәshәt-e.” Cahramі, Siyәsiya Barәyә
Suәәn Selim, 11b.
77 In contrast with this view, one anonymous author who addressed Сүләмәn, strongly reproved drinking
78 See Ниzәm al-Mulk, The Book of Government: or, Rules for Kings, transl. Hubert Darke (London;
Insofar as human qualifications are considered, the ruler, in the political theory of this period, was an ordinary human being. To meet the expectations for a superior rulership, the ruler needed to act within the moral framework drawn for government but did not have to possess exclusive and superior qualities. Although some authors highlighted different qualities for the ruler and envisioned a distinct type of ruler, none of them required the ruler to possess certain qualifications exclusive for rulership. So the main quest of political and ethical writing was to endow the ruler with moral qualities in order to turn his rulership into a superior one. Since all authors thought that human nature could undergo at least limited improvement by training and guidance, any type of person, whether already endowed with virtues or not, could attain a superior rulership. Thus the next subsequent question was what type of disposition, virtues or acts a ruler needed for moral perfection and to turn his rulership into a complete one. At this point, the personal quest of the ruler for moral perfection completely overlapped with the quest for a superior rulership. Since the morality of the ruler was deemed to be the basis of good government, the ruler’s personality became a part of political theory.

Ṭāsköprüzâde, for example, writing under the influence of Hamadânî, a thirteenth century Sufi writer on political ethics, envisioned an austere ruler with the qualities of an ascetic. He thought of the ruler as an inheritor of prophetic rulership and expected him to possess the same qualities as the prophets. The role models in his exposition were Joseph, Moses, Solomon, Muḥammad, and the rightly-guided caliphs who ruled the same way. There is nothing in his advice about the glory and grandeur of rulership. Instead he points to the discrepancy between the material wealth that these model rulers controlled

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and their personal abstention from everything which that material wealth might imply, such as luxury and extravagance. He did not teach the ruler rules for running the government, but moral principles to observe while ruling, such as altruism and generosity.

The profile of the ruler he described stood in stark contrast to the contemporary rulership practiced in the Ottoman Empire and posed an implicit critique of Süleymān’s reign. Tāşköprizade did not attribute to the ruler any special privilege and only expected him to have the same moral qualities expected of anyone pursuing of moral perfection. In fact all this advice which Tāşköprizade directed to the sultan was set forth by Ghazālī in his *Iḥyā ’Ulam* for the average believer. Thus, an important concern of ethical writers displayed by Tāşköprizade was to persuade the ruler that he did not have the prerogative of not endowing himself with the same moral traits expected of average human beings. As a result, the ruler’s morality would be subject to the same criteria, only with a higher standard.

The moralist writers on rulership faced a paradox when arranging prescriptions for the moral perfection of the ruler. On the one hand, they readily supplied manuals for moral training to inculcate the kind of morality which they thought an ideal ruler should possess as a moral guide for the community. On the other, they were well-aware of some of the common breaches of the moral code of rulership. Yet there was no institutional check on the moral misbehavior of the ruler and the only way to address it was to inculcate a sense of responsibility, and persuade the ruler about right and wrong as well as educate him to acquire a strong personality equipped with moral integrity. One of the principal instruments of persuasion was that immorality led to losing one’s rulership.
Because rulership was depicted to be a grace from God, an idea commonly embraced by the ruler in office for purposes of legitimacy, God’s grace was thought to depend on good government. Thus, while no condition was necessary for the acquisition of rulership, there was a rigid set of conditions to keep it. This was one of the most persuasive ways to teach morality, well-suited to the political realities of the period. If the ruler could be convinced that he attained rulership by God’s grace it was easier to make him believe that he could lose it by the turn of God’s favor, should he not govern as expected.

Despite the instrumental use of this argument in enforcing just government, it was not merely a rhetorical device of persuasion but a sincere belief which sprang from the prevailing notions regarding cosmology imbued with theology and mythology. Two illustrative stories reported by Celâlzâde, a punctiliously legal-minded person who spent his career in drafting numerous law codes during the reign of Süleymân, shows the influence of this belief in Ottoman political culture in molding perceptions regarding the relationship between proper conduct in rulership and God’s grace. King Qubâd, when he witnessed that the cow’s milk dried up because of his intention to unjustly tax the subjects for their milk, was instructed by villagers that “when kings tend to stretch their hands to the property of their subjects with abusive intentions then God lifts His bounty.”

In the second story, the non-Muslim king of Nubia taught the last Umayyad caliph Marwân ibn ‘Abd Allâh, who had just lost his throne to the Abbasids and took refuge in Nubia, that because the Umayyads committed sins, God took back their sovereignty and bestowed it upon the Abbasids.

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Since these scholars felt that the ruled in general had no power over the process of succession to rulership, they were not concerned with the moral quality of the succeeding candidate. In principle, even the least moral person could succeed, and that created no legitimacy problem in these moralist writings. However, a commonly advocated moral teaching instructed that whoever succeeded needed to comply with the requirements of rulership. Such a conception made morality not a requirement for succession or legitimation, but for staying in office and enjoying God’s grace.

Envisioning the Ottoman Sultan

If asked, who is Sultan Süleyman? Is he the leader (imām) of time or not? Then we answer as follows: No doubt, he is the leader of time. He is also the defender of the religious law (sharī’a). So are his deputies (nāʾib) and governors (vālī). The scholars of time assist him. So do the sultans of the Arab, the Turk, the Kurd and the Persian. He has many cities under his control as we mentioned. The definition of leader applies to him. Namely, he is the deputy (qāʾim maqām) of the Prophet in upholding the religion. Thus it is incumbent upon the whole community (umma) to obey him.82

As exemplified in this passage by Lütfi Pasha, there was no doubt in the minds of political authors writing in this period about the legitimacy of the ruler in office and his relative stance among contemporary rulers. Lütfi Pasha and many others who took into consideration the Ottoman experience in formulating their conceptions of rulership advocated the uniqueness of Ottoman rulership by elaborating on the distinguishing

82 Lütfi Pasha, Khalâṣ al-Umma, 42.
features of the Ottoman dynasty. Without invoking any of the legitimating qualifications for a universal leadership elaborated by medieval jurists and theologians, Lütfi Pasha declared the ruling sultan to be the universal head of the Muslim community. Since the title “defender of the religious law” could be claimed by any ruler, Lütfi Pasha’s argument basically promoted the political might of the Ottoman ruler as the only legitimizing quality of the Ottoman sultan over all others. He thus depicted Süleyman as an inheritor of the historical caliphate and the Prophet’s successor, as somebody whose authority extended over all of the Muslim community. Lütfi Pasha adopted this way of reasoning about the supremacy of the Ottoman sultan from the official Ottoman usage of time where defending the religion, having control over the majority of the Muslim community and having a deputyship to the Prophet were enumerated as principal distinguishing features of Ottoman rule in royal decrees, formal letters, treaties, and dynastic histories. Long before Lütfi Pasha wrote his work, for example, Kemalpasha begins his history of the Ottoman dynasty with a section titled “On aspects of the superiority of the noble Ottoman sultans and the degree of their virtue and aspects of the imperfectness of other Sultans.”

As elaborated in political and historical works of the time, there were three principal reasons that led authors to believe in the uniqueness of the Ottoman dynasty. The first was a distinctive Ottoman identity, accompanied by a sense of superiority, that emerged in this period enabling political writers to extrapolate this idea of distinction to political theory. The sixteenth century was the age when poets, historians, and scholars explicitly expressed their pride in their history, dynasty, language, arts, land, society, and

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83 Ibn Kemal, Tevârih, 1: 16.
institutions. The **Al-i 'Osmān**, the Ottoman dynasty, was perceived to be an indispensable part of this overall identity which led many authors to attribute special qualities to this lineage, and express their pride in their identity by elaborating upon the superiority of this lineage over others. In the Ottoman historical imagination of the period, the Ottoman dynasty was not only one of the several possible dynasties that happened to rule such as the contemporary Safavids or the former Mamluks. Instead, the dynasty was the cause of the formation of this land and society into a distinct state, whose history was inseparable from the history of the Ottoman dynasty.

This distinctive identity was largely confined to Asia Minor and the Balkans, excluding the newly incorporated Arabic speaking lands until the reinvention of Ottoman identity that was common to all Ottoman lands in the age of nationalism during the nineteenth century. This sense of identity did not extend to all parts of the empire; for example, it did not replace identities of the Arabic speaking Fertile Crescent. It was elitist, and mainly shared by the ruling class of the empire, owing its sociological basis to the very existence of the Ottoman dynasty. This identity found its most explicit expression in the newly emerging genres in Ottoman literature of the time, particularly biographical dictionaries and universal histories. Among them, Taşköprızade’s *Shaqā‘ iq al Nu‘māniyya*, the first of its kind to give brief biographies of notable Ottoman scholars and Sufi masters, included only people who belonged to the cultural and political milieu of Asia Minor and the Balkans, leaving out scholars who lived and produced in Arabic-speaking lands. Similarly, the first dictionary of poets by Sehī (d. 1548) applied the same

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criteria as Taşköprizade and surveyed only poets of the original Ottoman lands. Both works were divided into sections according to the reigns of the Ottoman sultans, pointing toward the close association of this cultural identity with the history of the Ottoman dynasty. What preceded these biographical dictionaries in their approach, and perhaps served as models, was the first generation of great Ottoman histories commissioned by Bayezid II. The histories of Bidlisī and Kemâlpâşâzade were divided into chapters corresponding to the reigns of Ottoman sultans.

The second reason that contributed to the rise of a sense of uniqueness was the feeling of triumphalism that shaped the self-perception of the Ottoman elite in the age of Süleyman. As displayed in the official correspondence of this period, the men of letters saw no equals in the East or the West. In royal decrees, letters, and eulogistic writings it became customary to enumerate the many provinces that the Ottoman sultan ruled from Basra to Budapest. To authors writing in the sixteenth century, the Ottoman experience seemed uniquely successful by all accounts, comparable to the universal empires of the ancient and medieval worlds. The Ottoman ruler came to be regarded in the same category as Alexander and Chengiz. The Ottoman lineage, which had always suffered from a sense of inferiority compared to the Chengizid or the Qureishi descents, now

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86 For the content and description of these works see Franz Babinger, Osmanlı Tarih Yazarları ve Eserleri, transl. Coşkun Üçok (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1992), 51-55, 68-71; Fleischer, Bureaucrat and Intellectual, 235-252.

87 For Mustafâ ‘Ali’s placement of the Ottoman Empire within the context of universal world history see Fleischer, Bureaucrat and Intellectual, 235-252.
established itself as a self-promoting lineage as noble as that of the Chengizids.\footnote{For the genealogy-consciousness of this period see Colin Imber, “The Ottoman Dynastic Myth,” \textit{Turcica} 19 (1987): 7-27; Barbara Flemming, “The Political Genealogies in the Sixteenth Century,” \textit{Journal of Ottoman Studies} 7-8 (1988): 198-220.} Despite increasing criticisms from scholars and statesmen about the malpractices in government, the Ottoman elite of the period not only took pride in their imperial expansion but in their state-building as well, particularly the military and the learning establishments.\footnote{Fleischer, “From Şehzade Korkud to Mustafa Âli: Cultural Origins of the Ottoman \textit{Nasihatname},” (paper presented at Third International Congress on the Economic and Social History of Turkey, Princeton, 1983).}

The third reason for his feeling of uniqueness was the rivalry among the prominent Muslim dynasties of the period, mainly between the Ottomans and the Safavids. Despite limited physical contact and geographical barriers, the Sa’dids of Morocco, the Mughals of India, and the Shaybanids of Central Asia also posed challenges to the supremacy of the Ottoman ruler.\footnote{See, for example, A. El Moudden, “The Idea of the Caliphate between Moroccans and Ottomans: Political and Symbolical Stakes in the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} century-Maghrib,” \textit{Studia Islamica} 82 (1995): 103-113.} The Ottomans, however, never pursued a systematic policy to establish themselves as the universal leaders of the Muslim community in the way the Abbasids did, and there was no project to revive the pre-Mongol caliphate, at least until the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Ottomans claimed to be the leader of all Muslims and superior to other dynasties for waging war against the infidels and defending the realm of Islam. This was a legitimizing idea for the expansionist policies of the Ottoman state on all fronts in this period, a necessary ingredient of Ottoman policies not only against other Muslim dynasties but against the Habsburgs as well. No other Muslim dynasty could come close to the political might of the Ottoman state at the time of Süleymân. Despite this
unrivalled power, and because of the discontinuity in the universal leadership of the Muslim community, the Ottoman dynasty never enjoyed the same leadership as the Abbasids over that community. However pragmatic the Ottomans might have been in their claims for universal leadership, they needed to respond to counter-claims that might have challenged their status and affected their policies. Thus the Ottomans felt obliged to consistently use their distinctive qualities that were lacking in other dynasties, such as being the custodians of holy cities and defenders of the faith against the infidels and the heretics.

There was no question that in the minds of all political authors under consideration the Ottoman ruler was perfectly legitimate and, except for Qureishi descent, all other philosophical and juristic qualifications could be easily attributed to him. In a further quest for the Ottoman ruler’s attributes of superiority, four notable ideas were voiced by different authors. First, the Ottoman dynasty was depicted as a lineage chosen by God, prophesized in both the Quran and prophetic traditions. The principal exponent of this view was Lütfi Paşa who stressed in both his Tevārīḫ and Khalās that the house of ʿOsmān was commissioned by God to serve a specific purpose. For him, many members of the house of ʿOsmān were renewers (mujaddid) of religion, an exceptionally lofty position, rarely attributed to rulers.\(^\text{91}\) Whether Lütfi Paşa was aware or not, his older contemporary Rūzbihān Khunji (d. 928/1521) had already profiled the Shaybānī Khān (d. 916/1510) as a renewer of religion as well.\(^\text{92}\) Besides being a sign of

\(^\text{91}\) The characterization of the ruler as ‘renewer of religion’ was also used by former rivals of the Ottomans, particularly the Aqquyunlus. See John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire*, revised and expanded ed. (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 1999), 104-106; See Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 281; For the term mujaddid see E. van Donzel, “Mudhaddid,” *EI*.

uniqueness, the designation of the ruler as ‘renewer of religion’ was part of the post-
Abbasid and post-Mongol pursuit of bolstering dynastic legitimacy for the newly rising
states in the Islamic world with universalist ambitions.⁹³ Lütfi Pasha based his argument
on a well-known prophetic tradition that indicates the coming of a renewer of religion at
the beginning of every century:

Perhaps the person sent by God does not have to be a scholar (‘ālim). Perhaps at times he could
be a scholar, at times a caliph, at times a leader (muḥaddem) or a ruler (melik) who is followed.
And it happens sometimes that at one time he [renewer] may be a ḥalif and melik and ēmīr, and
God does not appoint a scholar or else to this position. It is necessary that a person’s word is
welcome (maḵbulu’l-kavāl) and people turn to his word and refrain from what he prohibited and do
what he commanded, whoever he is.⁹⁴

As portrayed by Lütfi Pasha, since its rise as a political entity three centuries before
his time, the house of ‘Osmân yielded a lineage that produced all three renewers sent by
God: who were ‘Osmân I, Meḥmed I and Selim I.⁹⁵ This portrayal alone points to the
uniqueness of the Ottoman dynasty, making it the only one which produced three
renewers, implying that it was the chosen lineage to serve God’s religion. Lütfi Pasha
does not elaborate on the deeds of these sultans as renewers and was content with
indicating that they renewed and renovated (iḥyā) the religion for their respective ages.

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⁹³ For the universalist tendencies of the sixteenth century see Fleischer, “The Lawgiver as Messiah.”
⁹⁴ Lütfi Pasha, Khalās al-Umma, 41.
⁹⁵ Lütfi Pasha, Tevârih, 6-11. Other renewers after the Prophet were ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, Mu’tasim, Muḥtadīr,
Malikshāh, and Ghazān Khān respectively.
Ebū’l-Faẓl Meḥmed, writing about a decade after Lütfi Pāšā, depicted only Selim I as one of the chosen but elaborated more on his deeds that earned him the title. In his preface to his father Bidlīsī’s history of the reign of Selim I, Selimşahnâme, like Lütfi Pāšā, he cited the famous prophetic tradition about the coming of renewers but extracted the precise evidence about the renewership of Selim I from Quranic verse 21: 105-6 which indicates that only the good among His servants would inherit the land. From this prognostic verse he unearthed a prophecy by calculating the numerical value of the word z-k-r and obtained 920/1514, the year in which the Ottomans defeated the Safavids and eliminated the greatest threat in the perception of many contemporaries. As renewer of the laws of religion, Selim I was perceived to have saved the land from the heretics (the Safavids), ended seditious disorder (fitne), and reinstituted the right religion. For Ebū’l-Faẓl Meḥmed, this chronographic evidence proved that the Ottoman wars against the Safavids were not only justified on religious grounds but were also sanctioned and foretold by God.

The second feature of Ottoman uniqueness was the immaculateness of the progeny of ʿOṣmān since the very beginning, a view voiced by many with great pride. Čınalizâde praised the Ottoman lineage, for all the rulers prior to his age were pure in their belief and belonged to the party of tradition and community (ehl-i sünnet veʾl-cemâʾat). Given that the right creed was among the most important aspects of rulership for the writers of this period, such an impeccable record in dynastic history, as portrayed

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96 Bidlīsī, Selim Şah-nâme, 63.
97 İdrīs-i Bidlīsī, Selim Şah-Nâme, 63.
98 Čınalizâde ʿAlī, Aḥlāk-i ʿAlāʾī, 2: 94.
by Čınalızade, attributed to Ottoman rulership a degree of superiority over others who failed to produce such rightly-guided lineages. Čınalızade’s book of ethics was a philosophical treatise with few illustrations about the ideals of morality and social life and this was one of several remarks where he offered the Ottoman example as a textbook case. Lütfi Paşâ, who was the opposite of Čınalızade in character and scholarly interests, was in full agreement with him here. In his history of the dynasty which he wrote with quite a critical eye, he depicted the Ottoman lineage not only as one of the ideal cases in history but, from a comparative perspective, demonstrated that it was the most immaculate of all past dynasties:

After the era of the rightly-guided caliphs ended, no people emerged who were worthy as the Ottoman people (‘Osmannî ndefesi) of crown and throne, whose creed was pure and prophetic, and who were adorned with generosity, morality, the law of past rulers (kânûn-ı selâfîn) and the regulation of noble rulers (javâkîn). Each one of the other peoples (javâ if) that came to be rulers from among the community of Islam were accused of a defect: Some of the Umayyads were Kharîjites. And even some of the Abbasids were known to be Mu’tazilites (ı’ tizâl) and Shiites (rafî). And the majority of the Banû Lays, the Buyids and the Fatimids were known to be Karamitas, namely heretics (zende ka) and apostates (ilhâd).99

Under the shadow of a well-established tradition of glorifying the Ottoman dynasty in chronicles and poetry, few rulers ever received any kind of criticism from the Ottoman literati and historians writing about their history in this period. Even these criticisms were usually directed to the sultan’s entourage, and mostly confined to

99 Lütfi Paşâ, Tevârih, 5.
administrative matters or personal excesses rather than their upholding the right religion. A prevailing image of the Ottoman dynasty in this period was that all Ottoman rulers succeeded by divine grace and ruled by divine guidance as well as by merit while they were at times misled by their officials.

Accompanying the idea of immaculateness was the perception of perfection accomplished by the Ottoman dynasty. For many authors the Ottomans achieved many ideal features that could be expected of rulership by turning political ideals into reality. Among them, Kemâlpâşâzâde thought that rulership had reached its ultimate form with the Ottomans: “this matter of rulership (emâret), which consists of extending and applying the laws of leadership (kavânîn-i şâhi) and the principles of rulership among all the distinguished and common people, got perfected in their [the Ottoman dynasty] dignity (shân).” In comparing the Ottomans to other Muslim dynasties, Kemâlpâşâzâde further stated that all other dynasties except the Ottomans, were unrightfully confiscating property, exacting onerous and unfair levies because they lacked sufficient resources to run their government, pointing to a sharp distinction between the Ottomans and others: “If these unrightful revenues were lifted then the total sum of all their revenues combined would not even equal the market taxes (bâc) and

100 Lütfi Paşa, for example, enumerated certain perceived corrupt practices which were believed to have started with the reign of Bâyezîd I which were commonly referred to in most reform treatises written afterwards. These were bribery, wine-drinking causing negligence in state affairs, and sultans’ falling under the influence of their wives. As a starting cause, Lütfi Paşa pointed to the introduction of Persians and Karamanîds, two archrivals of Ottomans, into government service. Thus he related corruption to an external factor rather than Ottoman practice itself. Similarly, he stated that Bâyezîd I was accustomed to wine drinking by his Wallachian wife while he had been a decent man before. This stress on the external factors for the beginning of corruption in Ottoman government was a common diagnosis in many later works indicating decline where, for example, the corruption of the Jannissary corps was explained by the entrance of. See Lütfi Paşa, Tevârih, 43-47. For the corruption of the Janissary corps see Göriceli Koçi Bey, Koçi Bey Risâlesi, ed. Yılmaz Kurt (Ankara: Ecdad Yayınları 1994), 55-59.

tributes (harāc) taken from non-Muslims in the Rūm. Because the Rūm is prosperous (ma'mūr) while other places are not.”

Kemâlpâşâzâde’s declaration of the Rūm as prosperous points to an ideal commonly highlighted in political literature as one of the noblest goals of rulership. The term ma'mūr, or its verbal noun ‘imāret in political theory usually denoted a state of an utmost achievement in materializing social ideals, as a result of a successful human endeavor led by political leadership. It was, for example, one of the indispensable components of an ideal polity displayed in the circle of justice. No less utopian than Kemâlpâşâzâde, Kınaflızâde confidently declared that, thanks to Süleymân, all cities in the realm of the Ottomans were virtuous cities (medine-i fâzîla). The perfect state of political association in the philosophical tradition since Fārābī was the virtuous city upon which all subsequent philosophical-minded scholars based their political theory, and such a depiction points to an unmatched achievement that clearly distinguishes the Ottoman dynasty from all others. Before Kınaflızâde, however, his main source of inspiration, Davvânî, had already declared Aqquyunlu cities as virtuous cities as well, evidence that the Ottomans were not alone in their self-perception of having reached the end stage of perfection.

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103 See also Karahisârî, 2: 83

104 See ‘Ārifî, ‘Uqâd al-Jawâhir, 6a; Ḥüzir Münşî, Akhlâq al-Atqiyâ, 27a.


106 Davvânî, Akhlâq-i Jalâli, 252; this statement is omitted in Thompson’s translation; see Thompson, The Practical Philosophy of the Muhammadan People, 366.
The third unique feature of the Ottomans was waging war against the infidels and spreading the word of God. In this respect, the Ottomans were among the few political entities located at the frontier of the abode of Islam in a constant fight for expansion and defense. From the very beginning, this gave the Ottomans a privileged position among the Muslim dynasties as successful defenders of the abode of Islam. The Ottomans too were fully conscious of their position and always displayed their ghazā activity as a part of their distinguishing identity. For Kemâlp Şâzâde the Ottoman dynasty was superior to other Muslim dynasties who acquired their leadership by overcoming one another. Unlike these dynasties, the Ottomans “opened the abode of war, the Rûm [for conquest], killed many infidels, consumed only the gain of their own raids and the fruit of their pikes.”\textsuperscript{107} As for the Ottoman conquests in the East and the South, in Kemâlp Şâzâde’s view, they were obliged by religious law to conquer these Muslim dynasties for defensive purposes because they always posed hurdles in the way of waging ghazā against the infidels.\textsuperscript{108} Thus, the Ottomans founded their state in a land which they added to the abode of Islam, without challenging the authority of any other legitimately established Muslim dynasty which gave them an exclusive claim over that entity.

Such perceptions created an image of a dynasty that was chosen and immaculate which materialized the ideals of political theory, and had proven to be irreplaceable. In explaining why the Ottoman sultans did not engage in conquering the whole world while they possessed all the means to do so, Kemâlp Şâzâde stated that no one could be found to replace them in the whole realm even temporarily:

\textsuperscript{107} İbn Kemal, \textit{Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman}, 1: 17.
\textsuperscript{108} İbn Kemal, \textit{Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman}, 1: 25.
Such a campaign would have been feasible only if somebody could have been found to replace him on the throne as his deputy, at a time when the ruler sets out, whom the notables (ḫavās) and the commons (ʿavān) would obey in such a way that people would think that their rulers had not left them. It is known that, according to the strict customs (ʿāyīn-i metinleri) and true/manifest laws (kavānīn-i mübīnleri) of the noble sultans of the house of ʿOsmān, may God perpetuate their days, whether free or slave, nobody emerged who could manage to be followed by all (maḥdūm ʿil-kūl). This ancient law (kānūn-ı ḳadīm) and the sound custom are causes of the continuity of order (istimrār-ı niẓām) and the stability of the arrangement of the affairs of the majority (istiḳrār-ı intizām-ı umūr-ı cumhūr). This is because of the effects of their [sultans’] good government in strengthening and corroborating the knots of the rules of leadership and government.109

For Kemâlpâşâzâde the irreplaceability of the Ottoman sultan was required by the very laws and customs that distinguished the Ottoman state from others. Such a system did not allow the formation of even temporary loyalties to anybody other than the sultan himself. Such a belief allowed Lütfi Pâşa to attest that “one cannot find someone who resembles the Ottoman sultan in the mentioned traits in such a way that people (nās) unite in agreeing that he deserves the complete rulership (al-salṭāna al-kāmila) and caliphate in times of sedition (fitna).” Lütfi Pâşa further explained this feature of the Ottoman polity in more explicit terms:

Certainly the majority of the people of our time are his freedmen, and his father’s freedmen, and his grandfather’s freedmen, and sons of their freedmen, and sons of the sons of their freedmen. It is impossible for this people (ṭāʾifā) to unite in paying loyalty to somebody else for no one else is


110 Lütfi Pâşa, Khalâs al-ʿUmma, 45.
given victory (*nuṣra*) except for the Ottomans because the Ottomans are immaculate in upholding the religion, in justice (*inšāf*), and in holy war (*jihād*).111

With these exclusive arguments Kınalızade, Kemâlpaşâzâde, and Lütfi Pâşâ portrayed a political regime which was inseparable from the Ottoman dynasty, a view which other authors who pointed to the unique features of the Ottoman dynasty must have found agreeable. Despite attributing more prestigious titles such as ‘renewer’ to certain sultans, in all these accounts of the uniqueness of the Ottoman dynasty, the emphasis is on the lineage or the house rather than individual sultans. Thus, all these attributes, whether acquired or granted by God, were thought to be the common property of the Ottoman lineage passed from one ruler to another. This conception granted the Ottoman lineage an exclusive right and privilege to rule the Ottoman state. These authors who advocated the uniqueness of the Ottoman dynasty thought that the Ottoman lineage was not only chosen by God to rule but also that the individual members of this lineage had proven by their achievements that they were worthy of such an exclusive right to rule. This perception of predestination and historical triumphalism created such an image that only a ruler from the house of ‘Oşmân had an exclusive right and capability to rule over the people of the Rûm.

111 Lütfi Pâşâ, *Khalâs al-Umma*, 44.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE VIZIERATE AND THE OTTOMAN GOVERNMENT

Whether jurists or Sufis, political writers of the age of Süleyman all concurred that the vizierate constituted the most important component of the sultanate aside from the position of the sultan himself. In addition to general works on rulership which contain lengthy descriptions of the vizieral function in a sultanate and the prerequisite qualities of a vizier, there were nearly as many exclusive works about the vizier as about the sultan.\(^1\) There were three principle reasons that made Ottoman learned men show interest in the question of the vizierate. First, by the sixteenth century, the Ottoman sultan had already delegated much of the day-to-day affairs of state to officials and had withdrawn from active government, increasingly establishing a procedural relationship between himself and the government.\(^2\) Second, the Ottoman vizierate had turned into a powerful patronage institute by this time. Because of their wealth, status, and the need for preserving a good name, both grand viziers and low ranking viziers patronized a significant number of learned men and literati many of whom dedicated literary works to

\(^1\) ‘Alā‘ī’s Dūstūrū ‘l-Vūzarā, ‘Ārifī’s ‘Uqūd al-Jawāhir, Lütфи Pāšā’s Āṣūfīname, Semerkanlı’s ˇ Laṭā ˇ if al-Afkār and the anonymous Meşālihū ‘l-Mūslimīn were among the principal works on the vizierate.

their patrons, including those on the vizierate. Third, despite the fact that all the viziers in this period already had government experience at various stages of their service, candidates or new appointees still needed to be educated about the intricacies and dangers of the vizierate.

In diverse strands of Ottoman political theory, the vizier was commonly considered the pillar of rulership (rukn al-saltana) upon whose existence rulership depended, and/or the axis of the state (quṭb al-dawla wa madārihā) around which the state revolved. The image of the sultanate constructed in this way consisted of two main components, the vizier and the sultan. No division of labor was envisioned between the vizier or the sultan, or between the vizier and other officials. The vizier was depicted like a sultan over the subjects, assuming the highest political authority after the sultan, and also like a servant more powerless than a subject before the sultan. The office of the vizierate was defined only in relation to the sultanate and the vizier was conceived only in relation to the sultan. This personal relationship between the sultan and vizier was in agreement with the Ottoman practice in government whereby viziers were reappointed to

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3 Ottoman biographical dictionaries of the sixteenth century are replete with cases of poets, men of learning and even the mystics dedicating works to the ruler, viziers and high ranking statesmen in expectation of gaining their favor. ‘Ārifī, ‘Alāyī, and Semekeândī, for example, all dedicated their works to viziers. Maintaining a good name with the help of poets and the ‘ulema was particular important for the viziers whose prospects were closely tied to their reputation among the ruling elite. Because of this interdependency between statesmen and men of the pen, Ottoman viziers of this century supported a large number of learned men in a variety of ways and in return received a diverse body of writings. It is hard to find any collection of poetry which does not contain a number of panegyric poems in praise of statesmen.

4 A conspicuous exception was İbrāhīm Pāşā, who was appointed straight from the palace service to the grand vizierate at the age of twenty-five, with no experience in government affairs. Such a vizier would certainly need more guidance in the vizierate than those who rose to the position gradually. At the early stage of his vizierate he was almost totally dependent on the secretarial service of Celâlzade, one of the prominent experts on government and political theory. For Celâlzade’s work in the service of İbrāhīm Pāşā, see Uzunçarşılı, Merkez ve Bahriye Teşkilâtı, 128.

5 See, for example, Celâlzade, Mevâhibü'l-Ḥallâk, 209a.
their positions after each dynastic succession to reestablish the bond between the two. In mainstream political literature, the vizier was typically portrayed as the embodiment of the sultan’s governance of his subjects. In Celâlzâde’s illustration, the vizier was the sultan’s eye, ear, and hand, the person through whom the sultan ran his sultanate.6

The two most common metaphors used to refer to the status of the vizierate were that of a pillar (rukn) and axis (quṭb) of the sultanate around which it revolved. The sultan and the vizier together constituted the overall image of the sultanate, as well as its actual constitution. The office of the vizierate was never conceived independently and was defined only in relation to the sultanate; the vizier was thought of only in conjunction with the sultan. In the political imagery of this period, the vizierate was as legitimate and indispensable for the sultanate as the sultan himself. This conception of the vizierate, its inseparability from the sultanate and its pivotal status in political structure, mirrored actual practice during this period. As might be expected, functions of the vizierate constituted the basis of Ottoman government and accordingly received as much emphasis in political theory as those of the sultan, if not more. Thus the definition and functions of the vizierate as well as the relationship of the vizier to the sultan and the government constituted major questions of the political discourse of this period related to the vizierate.

When writing on the vizierate, Ottoman learned men of the period had already inherited a political tradition, in both practice and written literature, that profiled the vizier as the sultan’s chief assistant in government, who had specific functions. The Ottoman vizierate of this period, however, was a sophisticated institution with unique

6 Celâlzâde, Mevâhibûʾ-i-Ḥallâḳ, 197a.
features, characterized by genuine conventions and a distinct history of its own.\(^7\) The very development of the Ottoman vizierate and its differentiation from its medieval counterparts rendered even the most canonical theories of the vizierate hard to prescribe for Ottoman viziers. Compared to some thirty general works on rulership translated, there is no single work on the vizierate translated in this period. Thus challenged by the current state of the vizierate, authors who wrote on the position found it the most suitable venue for expressing their novel ideas and observations because, unlike the position of the sultan, the vizierate was a competitive office, and the vizier was more receptive to guidance from below. Because the vizier was the de facto ruler of all of the state apparatus, visions for ideal rulership were closely connected with the vizieral function in the sultanate.

The large body of political writings that dealt with the question of the subject, by consensus, elevated the status of the vizier to the top position in the state and portrayed a political regime that could not be envisioned without the vizierate. The eleventh century author Ṭurtūshī, whose \textit{Sirāj al-Mulūk} was translated in this period into Turkish and cited by Taşköprızade as a suggested reading on the subject of the etiquette of viziers, had already depicted the status of the vizier as the third position in the social hierarchy, after

\(^7\) Although there is no detailed monograph on the subject, Aydın Taneri’s study of the early Ottoman vizierate serves as a brief introduction. See Aydın Taneri, \textit{Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Kuruluş Dönemininde Vezîr-i A’zamlık (1299-1453)} (İzmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1997); A more recent study is Halil İnalcık’s \textit{EI\(^2\) article “Wazir”}. Despite its conciseness, it is the only general account of the Ottoman vizierate, including a chronological survey of major milestones in the history of the institution as well as its theoretical features. See Halil İnalcık, “Wazîr”, \textit{EI\(^2\)}; among the sizable number of biographical studies on individual grand viziers Stavrides’ work on Mahmûd Pâşâ (d. 1474) is the only one that deals with the theory and practice of the vizierate in Ottoman government. See Theocharis Stavrides, \textit{The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pâşâ Angelović} (1453-1474) (Leiden: Brill, 2001); the most informative account of the functions of the grand vizierate is given in Uzunçarşılı, \textit{Osmanlı Devletinin Merkez ve Bayriye Teşkilatı}, 111-177.

Such views on the vizierate were expressed through four principal types of writings. First, there were works on ethics and rulership in general such as the Celâlzâde’s \textit{Mevâhibû’l-Ḥallâk} and Қînafîzâde’s \textit{Aḥlâk-ı ‘Alâ’ī}. These works displayed the least interest in institutional features of the vizierate and instead focused on the moral behavior and personal traits of the vizier. Second, there were works on educating the sultan about government, such as Dizdâr’s \textit{Sulûk al-Mulûk} and Enşârî’s \textit{Tuhfa al-Zamân}. The main objective in these works was proving the necessity of the vizierate along with describing its functions in a sultanate, and determining how to pick the right vizier. Third, there were works exclusively written on the vizierate such as ‘Alâyî’s \textit{Düstûrû’l-Vûzerâ} and ‘Ārifî’s \textit{Uqûd al-Jawâhir}. These works addressed the current vizier in office and thus ignored the broader question of picking the right vizier. Written from the perspective of the vizier, the purpose of these works was to educate the vizier about the intricacies of the position. Finally, there were treatises that focused on the institutional aspects of the vizierate of which Lütfî Pâşâ’s \textit{Āṣafnâme} and the anonymous \textit{Meṣâliḥû’l-Mûlûk} were the sole examples. Although addressed to the vizier, these works displayed the most elaborate exposition of the specifically Ottoman theory of government with a focus on principal offices, procedure, and law from a constitutionalist perspective.
Political treatises written in the mirrors for princes genre, including those on the vizierate, made extensive use of actual historical cases in embellishing the theoretical views they presented. They showed a conspicuous tendency to make use of the extensive literature available on the subject and select historical cases from the perceived golden ages of past empires, including the case of the Ottoman Empire. This attitude, however, did not lead political writers to adapt a simplistic approach and present only the well-known and most respected cases as theoretical models to imitate. Rather, authors could find suitable cases to deliver their messages only in certain political structures where the vizierate most closely resembled its position in the sixteenth century Ottoman government. Besides the obsessive use of historical examples from the Greek, Sassanid, Abbasid, and Seljukid vizierates, exemplary references to the Ottoman vizierate were usually drawn from early sixteenth century experience, most notably from the terms of Pîrî Pâşâ and İbrâhîm Pâşâ. Little interest was displayed in taking examples from the Ottoman vizierate of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

When the general works on rulership and works that exclusively on the vizierate are considered together, there seem to be two distinct approaches formed during this period. The first and dominant one was to elaborate a theory of the vizierate by capitalizing on pre-Ottoman literature on the vizierate with little direct reference to the Ottoman practice. ‘Alâyî, who dedicated his work to a prospective grand vizier, Lâlâ Muştafâ Pâşâ, compiled the most comprehensive of such treatises.\(^9\) Such authors still reasoned within the confines of the classical paradigm of the vizierate which idealized certain ancient and medieval models in the personality of archetypical viziers that served

in past empires. These works shared a moralist attitude towards the vizierate and focused on the duties of the vizier with respect to the sultan. Their departure point was the inherited and well-designed theories of the vizierate with the purpose of applying the ideal types created in that literature to the Ottoman case. While the medieval endeavor to institute the best possible candidate to lead the community lost its appeal and relevance in this period, it was replaced by a quest for the best possible vizier because of the primacy of the vizierate in rulership. Reflecting the perception of his time, Bostân, a chief military judge in the reign of Süleymân, advised that it was incumbent upon the sultan to dismiss a vizier whose integrity and judgment were questionable.  

The second approach was to elaborate on the vizierate by taking the Ottoman experience as the only source of reference, an approach which became increasingly popular in later centuries and largely supplanted the classical views of the vizierate. Authors who adopted this approach sought their ideals within their own government practice instead of the politics of the distant past. Instead of engaging in a philosophical discussion of the ideal vizierate, they studied their own history and observed Ottoman institutions to discover the proven principles of government that made Ottoman government unique and successful.

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10 Bostân most probably targeted his archenemy Rüstem Paşa and indirectly urged the sultan to dismiss him. Rüstem Paşa never liked Bostân and on several occasions managed to arrange for his ouster from his position on charges of corruption. Bostân was cleared after each of these accusations were investigated and restored to his position. Yurdaydın, “Bostan’ın Süleymannâmesi.”

11 Among the sizable literature of political writings of this sort only a few were published. See, for example, Walter L. Wright, Ottoman Statecraft: The Books of Counsel for Vezirs and Governors of Sari Mehmed Pasha, the Defterdar (London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935; Elhac Ahmed Ali Paşa, [n.t.] ed. and trans. into French by Bistra A. Cvetkova as Traite de Politique Ottoman (Sofia: Bibliothèque Nationale, Cyrille et Méthode, 1972).
Regardless of the approach or the genre of writing in the political literature of the time, rulership without the vizierate was out of the question. The non-Ottoman corpus of political writings usually portrayed the vizierate as an auxiliary function of rulership and profiled an ideal vizier as being wise, experienced, and able, someone who was no more than a chief assistant of the ruler in government. While fully subscribing to this conventional vision, the Ottoman men of learning who wrote on the vizierate increasingly perceived the vizier as the head of government rather than a personal assistant to the sultan. In accordance with Ottoman practice, the vizier, in this view, appeared to be more a representative of the government than the sultan’s right hand. In contrast to the conventional wisdom, the specific administrative functions of the vizierate received more attention than his personal service to the sultan. Such a conception of the vizierate was one of the most distinguishing features of sixteenth-century Ottoman political theory and practice in comparison to medieval notions of rulership.

**Justification of the Vizierate and Prophetic Models**

At the time when early-sixteenth century authors were writing on the subject, the Ottoman vizierate was already an indispensable part of the state structure based on established customs and promulgated laws. Yet, in keeping with the prevailing attitude towards rulership, a common approach to the question of the vizierate was first to justify

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12 Mehmed II’s law code defined the grand vizier as the sultan’s absolute deputy and his rank as the highest among other officials. Although there is no reference to Mehmed II’s code in the sources studied in this study, the formal status of the grand vizier in practice was no different than the one profiled in the code. For the law code see Abdültkadir Özcan, “Fâtih’în Teşkilât Kanunnamesi ve Nizam-ı Âlem İçin Kardeş Katli Meselesi,” *Tarih Dergisi* 23 (1982): 7-56.
its indispensability in a political regime. Although this concern for justification may seem irrelevant because of the Ottoman vizierate was inseparable from the political regime, there seem to be two principal reasons that led political authors to prove the necessity of the vizier in rulership. First, despite its solid foundations in Ottoman state tradition, the vizierate was still a precarious position in Muslim dynasties, displaying a great deal of variety from one polity to another. Further, in a pre-modern polity where the ‘state’ had not yet taken its perceivable form in theory or practice, the vizieral function was not a definite one and could well be ignored or replaced by the service of other dignitaries of government or the members of the sultan’s household. Although it was contemporary to Ottoman traditions, and had inherited sophisticated notions of the vizierate in both theory and practice, the Safavid experience never saw the vizierate develop into a concrete, well-defined function.  

Second, in

13 In the sixteenth century Safavid government, although a high standing official with the title vizier still existed, the position of the vakil (regent) was closer to the definitions of vizier in political theory as well as Ottoman practice. These offices were sometimes combined and at times stood apart, a condition that caused frictions among the principal offices and function of the Safavid government. Willem Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2001). 6-11, 23-28.

14 The number of viziers in central administration, for example, which was only several in the fifteenth century, and seems to have been around four in the first half of the sixteenth century, increased to more than ten by the end of the century and continued to increase in subsequent centuries. An accompanying development was the conferment of the title vizier upon a number of provincial governors as well, a development that irretrievably disconnected the vizieral function from the sultan’s personal service. For a brief history of the development of the Ottoman vizierate showing the number and types of officials who assumed the title vizier, see Uzunçarşı, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Merkez ve Bahriye Teşkilatı*, 186-213; Seventeenth-century reformist Koçi Beg, for example, who was an ardent advocate of what he perceived to be the fundamental law of the Ottoman state, opposed the practice of conferring the title vizier upon such officials as defterdar (treasurer) and nisanci (chancellor) because it blurred the lines between administrative functions and made the work of these officials difficult to check. For Koçi Beg’s treatise proposing to remove such perceived malpractices see Rhoads Murphey, “The Velüyyuddin Telhis: Notes on the Sources and Interpretations between Koçi Bey and Contemporary Writers of Advice to Kings,” *Türk Tarih Kurumu Belleten* 43 (1973): 547-571.
political writings, justifying the position of the vizier in rulership was part of a design for an ideal vizierate. In proving why a sultan needed a vizier in rulership, a given author was simultaneously establishing what the vizierate was about and what functions and services a vizier should perform in government.

Whether dedicated to the ruler or the vizier, a typical treatise or a section on the vizierate started with religious, rational, and empirical arguments to prove the necessity of the sultan’s appointing a vizier, without attributing any specific function to the vizier in government, other than executing what the sultan was expected to do. Reasons given for the necessity of the sultan, however, were quite different than those enumerated for the vizier. In the case of the sultan, it was a commonplace argument that the need for a ruler was inherent in humanity on the basis of religious, social, and psychological evidence. By contrast, in the case of the vizier, although the need was still considered to be inherent in humanity, it was the need for every human being to have an assistant to undertake challenging tasks, and that human being was none other than the sultan himself.\textsuperscript{15} Authors sharing this perspective did not define the vizierate through political functions but as a service to the sultan in rulership. Thus the vizierate was conceived to be essential to the sultanate not because of an inherent need on the part of the subjects, but because of a practical need on the part of the sultan.

According to this view, the adoption of a vizier by the sultan was above all a religious obligation prescribed by the Quran and exemplified by the Prophet. Because the Prophet’s life contained little evidence suggestive of a vizierate by any account, authors turned their attention to some of his traditions which might indicate that he

himself adopted viziers and made the vizierate an exemplary role in government. In one
tradition, the Prophet’s companion ‘Alī was depicted as his vizier. Although ‘Alāyī did
not quote this tradition, in his treatise on the vizierate he extensively quoted the words
and deeds of ‘Alī in demonstrating exemplary conduct of viziers. In another tradition, the
Prophet stated that he had two viziers in the heavens, Gabriel and Michael, and two
viziers on earth, ‘Umar and Abū Bakr.16 Finally, the most famous prophetic tradition
concerning the vizierate stated that if God wishes good for a sultan He bestows upon him
a good vizier.17 Considering the service of ‘Alī, ‘Umar, and Abū Bakr in materializing
Muḥammed’s prophetic mission, the basic message inherent in these traditions was that
the well-being of rulership was bound up with adopting a good vizier, a message made
explicit in the third tradition.

These prophetic traditions created a sense of historical continuity for the vizierate
from the time of the Prophet to the Ottoman state and promoted an image of the vizierate
as an integral part of prophetic rulership. Yet, despite the unquestionable authority of
Prophetic traditions in political reasoning, Ottoman authors of the time used the evidence
extracted from the Prophet’s practice only for the purpose of proving the indispensability
and prominence of the vizierate in rulership. They were not eager to profile ‘Alī, ‘Umar,
or Abū Bakr as ideal models of the vizierate because these companions were better
known in historical memory as successors to the Prophet than viziers during his lifetime.
Even in works replete with historical illustrations, authors could only relate a few
exemplary stories from any of the would-be models from the time of the Prophet.

16 Celâl-zâde, Selîm-nâme, 19; Mevlânâ Seyfî, Rısâletü ’l-Vüzerâ, 16b.

17 ‘Alāyî, Düstürû ’l-Vüzerâ, 17; Celâlzâde, Mevâhibû ’l-Ḥallâk, 197b-198a; Dizdâr, Sulâk al-Mulûk, 12a;
The most authoritative justification for the vizierate was drawn from the Quranic story of Moses and his brother Aaron. In this commonly quoted verse, Moses asks God to make his brother Aaron a vizier for him (Quran 20: 29). Because it is mentioned in the Quran, in almost all accounts of the vizierate, it worked as unquestionable evidence that adopting a vizier was religiously sanctified, if not prescribed as an obligation. The main conclusion drawn from the interpretation of the verse was that rulership could not be exercised by the sultan alone. The moral of this Quranic story was that since Moses displayed a need for a vizier to carry out prophethood, it was inconceivable to think of the sultan as more competent in rulership than a prophet, for rulership was thought to be modeled on prophethood. However, historical narratives on the lives of these two prophets related stories more about their prophetic missions than, about how Aaron exercised his vizierate. Thus neither the companions of the Prophet nor Aaron served as exemplary cases applicable to the Ottoman vizierate in practice.

These prophetic examples did not provide historical models for the Ottoman vizier but religious justification for the adoption of a vizier in rulership. Therefore the practice of prophets was more instructive for the sultan than for the vizier. The same was true for Joseph, a prophet who was believed to have served as the Pharaoh’s vizier in Egypt. The vizierate of Joseph received very little elaboration because of his unique

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20 ‘Alâyî, *Düstürî ‘l-Vüzerâ*, 5; this line of reasoning was popular in pre-Ottoman writings on rulership as well. See, for example, Ghazâlî, *Ghazâlî’s Book of Counsel for Kings*, 107.
condition of serving a non-Muslim ruler.\textsuperscript{21} He was also better known as a prophet-ruler than a vizier in historical memory as well as political theory.\textsuperscript{22}

A penultimate model of the vizierate was that of Asaph, an epitome of wisdom, who was believed to have served as Solomon’s vizier. Unlike other prophetic examples, Solomon’s kingdom provided a tangible model for combining prophethood and rulership, and that made Solomon and Asaph the most popular characters of prophetic rulership in sixteenth-century Ottoman political theory of the time. Among prophetic models for the vizierate, only Asaph was specifically highlighted as an ideal vizier. The Solomon-Asaph model was more widely alluded to in practice because there were ample stories available in histories, Quranic commentaries, and works of literature. Further, the Solomon-Asaph model became more appealing for both the author and the audience because the prophet bore the same name as Süleymān the Lawgiver, and was made king on earth by God according to the Quran. His best known characteristics were the possession of supernatural powers, glory, and magnificence which were, sometimes metaphorically, attributed to the ruling Ottoman sultan as well.

While the image of Solomon pervaded the Ottoman imagination, in political works, histories, and poetry alike, as the ultimate role model for the ruling Süleymān, his vizier Asaph was the most frequently alluded-to ancient model for a perfect vizier in

\textsuperscript{21} Among the sources under consideration only one treatise exclusively refers to Joseph’s vizierate. See Mevlānā Seyft, \textit{Risāletü’l-Vüzerā}, 16b; Tāşköprızāde explains Joseph’s entrance to government service under Pharoah’s rulership without characterizing it as viziership. See Tāşköprızāde, \textit{Mişāḥ al-Saʿāda}, 3: 383.

\textsuperscript{22} For Tāşköprızāde Joseph was among the ruler-prophers who combined sainthood (\textit{walāya}) and rulership (\textit{salāta}). See Tāşköprızāde, \textit{Asrār al-Khilāfa}, 92a; similarly, for Dizdār, Joseph was a prophet who combined rulership (\textit{mulk}) with the caliphate (\textit{khillāfa}). See Dizdār, \textit{Sulāk al-Mulūk}, 3a.
political writings. Although the name Asaph does not appear in the Quran, it was widely believed that there were implicit references. Ebū’ssu’ūd, for example, in his much acclaimed Quranic commentary stated that the person praised in the Quran with the expression “One who had the knowledge of the book” (27: 40) could be Prophet Solomon’s vizier Asaph b. Berehyā. In this well-known Quranic story, Asaph had the capability of bringing the throne of Shiba to Prophet Solomon in the twinkling of an eye, faster than the Jinnies in the presence of the Prophet. Quranic commentaries that identified Solomon’s helper as the Vizier Asaph inculcated the image of Asaph as a man possessing supernatural powers because of his esoteric knowledge.

Lütfi Paşā, the grand vizier of Süleymān, named his treatise Āṣafnāme (the book of Asaph), invoking the Solomon-Asaph relationship while implying that the treatise was written with Asaph’s wisdom. In a similar vein, in praise of the Grand Vizier İbrāhīm Paşā, whom he accompanied to Egypt, Celâlzâde addressed Süleymān in the preface of the law code of Egypt in this way: “you are Solomon and only Asaph suits you.” In the sixteenth century, Āṣaf-ı zaman (Asaph of our time) was among the most prestigious honorific titles of a statesmen while being Āṣaf-naźîr (Asaph like) was a commonly used accolade in literature, chronicles and official documents alike, a trend that became more

23 For images of Asaph in Ottoman culture, see Ömer Faruk Harman, “Āṣaf b. Berahyā”, TDVİA; For Asaph symbolism in Ottoman poetry, see Ahmet Talay Onay, Eski Türk Edebiyatında Mazmunlar (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1996), 106-7; İskender Pala, Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü (Ankara: Açağ Basım Yayımları, 1995), 47-8.

24 “It is said that he is Āṣaf b. Berehyā Prophet Solomon’s vizier, or a man who knows God’s greatest name and responds with it when asked, or prophet Khîdr, or Gabriel, or a ruler with divine support, or Solomon himself.” Ebū’s-su’ūd, Irshād al-‘Aql, 4: 263.

25 “Süleyman’ın sana Āṣaf yaraşur.” Akgündüz, Osmanlı Kanunnameleri, 6: 95.
popular in subsequent centuries.\textsuperscript{26} As a physical reflection of this image of the vizierate, the residence of the Ottoman grand vizier was metaphorically referred to as \textit{Bāb-i Āṣafī} in both political theory and official documents from the late sixteenth century onwards. Such hyperbolic appellations bestowed on the vizier and the vizierate were not crafted as embroidery but were designed as prescriptive epithets. These epithets inculcated a normative image of the vizier as a learned and able man who resembles Asaph in character and talents. But even the case of Asaph did not serve as a historical model from which specific functions and principles of the vizierate could be drawn. Rather, it was the personality of Asaph himself, as depicted in histories and imagined in poetry, that provided a role model for the Ottoman vizier.

\textbf{Semantics of the Vizierate}

Whether the authoritative model was Asaph, Aaron, or ‘Alī in any given text, the Ottoman intellectuals conceived of the vizierate as part of prophetic rulership. However, prophetic examples were adduced only to establish the vizierate as a religious requirement but not to define it. The meaning of the vizierate was drawn not from an interpretation of these Prophetic stories but from an etymological analysis of the term ‘vizier’ as it appeared in the Quran. Thus explaining what the vizierate entailed by employing the linguistic tools of Quranic exegesis found widespread appeal in political

\textsuperscript{26} Nabi’s (d. 1123/1712) couplet speaks for this trend while expounding the prevailing image of the vizierate in Ottoman culture that had been formed since the sixteenth century:

\begin{quote}
Gör Süleymân gibi peygamber-i âli-şânın
Devleti olmuş idi Āṣaf ile müstahkem
\end{quote}

İskender Pala, \textit{Ansiklopedik Divân Şiirî Sözluğu}, 48.
The analysis was typical of Quranic commentaries such as those of Zamakhsharī and Bayḍawī that stressed the grammatical explanation of the text. It was commonly agreed that the term could possibly be derived from three roots: \textit{wizr}, \textit{azr} and \textit{wazr} or, for some authors, from the form \textit{muwāzara}. Following the exegetical tradition, probable meanings of ‘vizier’ were traced through different uses of the root verb in the Quran and, in some cases, from literature. This approach not only made the adoption of the vizierate a Quranic injunction but also defined its functions through Quranic interpretation.

This hermeneutical approach to the vizierate, namely, formulating a theory of the vizierate by analyzing the etymology of the term vizier and interpreting its probable meanings, was particularly appealing to Ottoman men of learning for several reasons: First, the Ottomans had enthusiastically embraced the medieval corpus on lexicography, grammar, logic, and literary arts, and continued the humanistic tradition of interpreting and commenting on classical texts of religion and ancient culture. A typical graduate of Ottoman learning institutions was already well-equipped with the basic humanistic tools of philology, grammar, logic, and rhetoric allowing him to interpret intricate texts of various disciplines and literature. Second, the reign of Süleyman witnessed a spreading interest in philology among Ottoman men of learning. With the rise of Ottoman Turkish as a sophisticated imperial and scholarly language, men of learning grew more diligent in

their use of the language. Concerned scholars, such as Kemalpaşazâde and Ebû’ssu‘ûd, seem to have been preoccupied with fighting against common mistakes committed in both spoken and written language, and wrote treatises to demonstrate the right usages of words and expressions. Third, writers who analyzed the term ‘vizier’ took advantage of the authority conferred by the language itself. Finding the true meaning of ‘vizier’, a word believed to be of Arabic origin and mentioned in the Quran, was equal to establishing the most authoritative meaning of the term with the aim of extracting God’s instructions on the subject. Thus, explaining the meaning of the term ‘vizier’ on the basis of its Quranic usage was same as an exegetic interpretation of God’s word.

It was only natural then for an author who wrote on the vizierate to consult the authoritative commentaries of Quran and Arabic lexicons in seeking an explanation of meaning and the functions of the vizierate in rulership. A comparison of such accounts on the vizierate with relevant explanations in contemporary lexicons and Quranic commentaries reveals the close connection between the two. Mid-sixteenth century lexicographer Aḥterī gave a detailed etymological explanation of the term by exploring its three possible roots, a common undertaking in major medieval lexicons. For him the first probable root was *wizr* which denoted such meanings as sin, wrongdoing, burden, and weight. Second, the word may have been derived from *wazr*, meaning a shelter.

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refuge, citadel, and fortress. On the basis of these root meanings, he defined the term vizierate (wizāra) as assistance (muʿāvenet itmek) and support (kaqvvet virmek). He then proposed three distinct but complementary meanings for the term vizier (wazīr). If derived from wizr, then it signified somebody who bears the burden of the ruler. If derived from wazr, then it meant the refuge of people (baḵan siġınacağı) as helper (muʿīn) and supporter (naşır). Finally, if derived from azr, then it meant strengthener (kaqvvet virici) and regulator (aḵām virici).29

Sharing the same mode of reasoning, Ebū’ssuʿūd, who did not address the political meaning of the term, attributed similar connotations to the term in his explanation of the above verse in his Quranic commentary, which was largely a grammatical analysis of the text of the Quran.30 After stating that vizier meant an assistant in bearing a burden, he then briefly stated that according to the three possible roots of the term, vizr meant weight (saql) and refuge (malja), wazr meant refuge, and azr meant strength (quwwa).31 Such a signification was later highlighted in modern historiography as the standard meaning of the vizierate. In his study of Ottoman government in the time of Süleymān, by quoting from Hammer, Lybyer thought that “the word vizier means burden-bearer, the idea being that an official so designated lifted from


30 As stated by Aydemir, the two major sources of this commentary were Zamakhsharī’s Kashshāf and Baydawī’s Anwār al-Tanzil, two very popular works among the Ottoman scholars, well-known for their philological exegesis of Quran. For him, this emphasis on the grammar of the text was one of the most distinguishing features of Ebū’s-suʿūd’s commentary. For a detailed account of the sources and the method of Ebussuud’s commentary see Aydemir, Büyük Türk Bilgini Şeyhülislam Ebussuud Efendi ve Tefsirdeki Metodu, 89, 170-191.

the shoulders of the sovereign the burden of state, and bore it upon his own shoulders.”

Relying on this linguistic evidence, authors writing on the vizierate determined what these metaphorical meanings may correspond to in actual rulership. The meaning of the first root, wizr, thought to be weight (saql), was interpreted to indicate that the vizier carries the burden of the sultan or sultanate. For Celâlzâde, this weight was the government of the country, pointing to the political nature of the relationship between the sultan and the vizier. For ‘Alâyî, who envisioned a more personal relationship between the two, the weight symbolized the sins and responsibilities of the sultan. While Celâlzâde did not mention the second root, wazr, which meant refuge (malja), other authors interpreted it as somebody whose advice and assistance the sultan seeks in government. In addition to these meanings, ‘Alâyî pointed out that it also denoted the sultan’s delegation of the affairs of his kingdom. For Celâlzâde and Semerkanî, the third root, azr, meant one’s back, symbolizing the vizier’s support for the sultan. However, thought that it meant power, whereas for ‘Alâyî, who presented it as muwâzara, it meant mutual help.


33 “Ba’zîlar vizden me’hzudr dirler sa’ldur, vezîr ni’al-i memlekete mu’ammeldür dimekdir.” Celâlzâde, Mevâhibü’l-Handâk, 209b.

34 “Öyle olcek ma’nâsi budurki pâdişâhın günûhunu ve yükünü boynuna alub cemi’ mu’UNETini çeker.” ‘Alâyî, Düstürü’l-Vüzerâ, 5.


36 “ma’nâsi budur ki pâdişâh änun re’yile i’tišâm idub cemi’ umûrini âna tefvîz ider.” ‘Alâyî, Düstürü’l-Vüzerâ, 5.

37 Celâlzâde, Mevâhibü’l-Handâk, 209b; Semerkanî, Laṭî’îf al-Afkâr, 3b.

In disagreement with the better known meanings drawn from commentaries and lexicons, Bostân, who served as chief military judge during the reign of Süleymân, thought that the etymological root of wazîr was wîzr, the plural being awzâr, which meant an instrument of war or a weapon. He then pictured the vizier as “the ruler’s sword, and the right and left sides of the dynasty, through whom protection and subjection as well as loosening and tying become possible.” Writing within the context of Süleymân’s military campaigns, Bostân emphasized the military function of the vizierate more than other authors. In terms of his general perception of the vizier with respect to the ruler he is in line with other authors who primarily envisioned the vizier as personal aide to the sultan.

The Body Metaphor: The Vizier as Intellect in Rulership

The etymological analysis favored by Ottoman authors brought about a theory of the vizierate which portrayed the vizier as the one who relieved the sultan of his burden, acted as consultant, and carried out the sultan’s government work as summarized in Tâşköprizâde’s account:

The vizierate is among the basic elements of the sultanate: “And give me a Minister from my family, Aaron, my brother” (Quran 20: 29-30). If any sultan could have dispensed with viziers it would have been Mûsâ b. Kaûmullâh who was more worthy of not needing them. Then he explained the wisdom: “Add to my strength through him, and make him share my task” (Quran 20: 31-32). This verse points out that the function of the vizierate is to solidify the foundations of

39 Yurdaydın, “Bostan’ın Süleymannâmesi.”
the realm. Because the sultan is unable to carry out all tasks, he commissions the vizier, and if the vizier possesses praiseworthy traits then he performs. “That we may celebrate Thy praise without stint, and remember Thee without stint” (Quran 20: 33-34). This verse indicates that the affairs of this world and the other are ordered through meeting with scholars, the pious, and men of arts and knowledge. The noblest rulers need a vizier just as the bravest man needs a weapon, the fastest horse needs a giddap, the sharpest sword needs a blade.40

The concept of the vizierate put forward in these accounts implied that the very existence of the vizier was the direct result of the sultan’s inability to govern all by himself and his need, therefore, to delegate some of his powers to a deputy. No specific function was assigned to the vizier, and the political role of the vizier was subject to change in accordance with the sultan’s ability to govern or willingness to self-rule. Therefore, the vizier’s role was limited by the number of tasks delegated to him. Because the vizier was envisioned to be the ruler’s personal assistant in rulership he was not accorded an independent authority or any definite political function to perform. His status in government totally depended on his personal relationship with the ruler. Yet, relying on the probable and metaphoric meanings of the term ‘vizier’ made the theory of the vizierate broad in scope and flexible in application.

Once the indispensability of the vizierate was established on the basis of Quranic evidence, the status of the vizier was illustrated in the popular body metaphor that depicted the sultan as the spirit (rūḥ) or heart (qalb) of the body and the vizier as the intellect (‘aql or nafs al-nāţqa). The metaphor pointed to the sultan as the source of life

40 Taşkoprızade, Miftah al-Saad, 1: 414.
for the body while making the vizier its actual governor. The metaphor was used to describe the structure of a human being in the same way it was employed to explain government. As elaborated by Bidlīșī, in political theories that envisioned a parallel between the government of the self and that of the community, the formal government of the ruler also entailed the government of his self:

In the realm of man’s body spirit is in the position of leadership (sarvarī va sulṭānī). In the visible and invisible world, the intelligence (hūsh va khirad) is in the position of the vizier of the sacred domain and the realm of man. The realm of existence requires a legislator (muqannin va murattib) for order (niżam). What a nice grace is intelligence, how bad is the affliction of ignorance. The religion and the realm (mulk) of a ruler whose reign is closer to intelligence (zekā) and knowledge (‘ilm) would certainly be in agreement with the will of God. The intelligent vizier is a trustworthy deputy (amīn-i mu’tamad) and a learned man (dānā-i khabīr) informed of the good and the bad, in regulations (nazm-i maṣūlīh), divine laws (ḵūkm-i ilāhī) and the control of the realm (rabṭ-i zabṭ-i mamlakat ve sāhī). Because in the realm of man’s body, concupiscent powers (quvā-i nafṣānī) lead the king of the heart (sulṭān-i dil) to the whims of the animal soul and sensual desires, if the reins of controlling the realm are not given to an intelligent vizier (vazīr-i āqil-i šā‘ib-rāy) and affairs to the little administrator in the realm of life, then signs of weakness arise.

41 While the basic idea remained same different terms were used, mostly in addition to rūḥ and ‘aql. The sultan, for example, was characterized by the heart (kalb) and the vizier by reason (al-nafṣ al-nāfiqa). Further, the seat of the spirit (rūḥ) was the heart (kalb) whereas the seat of the intellect (‘aql) was the brain (dimāgh). In some sources the sultan might individually be likened to intellect with respect to the body. But whenever the relation between the sultan and vizier is described it is always expressed as rūḥ versus ‘aql. For examples, see Enṣārī, Tuhfā al-Zamān, 5b; Bitlīsī, Kanun-i Şahenşâhi, 50; Celalzade, Mevāhibū l-Ḥallāk, 162a, 241a-242a, 319a; Knaflizade ‘Alī, Aḥlāk-i ‘Alā‘ī, 1: 155; Risālāt fi-mā Yalzim ‘alā al-Mula‘ik, 4; Taškopperzade, Asrār al-Khilāfa, 89a-90a; Taškopperzade, Miftāh al-Sa‘āda, 3: 320.

42 Bitlīsī, Kanun-i Şahenşâhi, 51.
In Bidlî’s account, a representative depiction of other similar views on the subject, the vizier and intellect as well as the sultan and spirit were used as synonyms. While the moral theory widely made use of the sultan-vizier metaphor particularly in the Sufi tradition, the spirit-intellect metaphor received equal appeal in political theory. As indicated in some of the well-known dream interpretations (tā‘bīrānāme, ta‘bīrāti‘l-vāka‘āti) in Sufism, seeing the ruler in one’s dream, for example, was usually interpreted as one’s capability of ruling his body whereas seeing the vizier and other high officials was a sign of one’s perfection in reasoning. Yiğitbâşî Velî (d. 1505), a prominent Hâlvetî sheikh of the reign of Bâyezîd II, instructed the initiate that seeing the ruler (sulṭān) in a dream denotes the governance of his spirit (rūḥ) whereas seeing a vizier points to the proximity of his spirit (rūḥ) or soul (nafs) to meditation (‘aql-i ma‘ād).

The political imagery of sultan-vizier and the body imagery of spirit-intellect served to explain one another in political and moral teachings. The use of these constructs to define each other shows that each was considered a truism in its respective sphere. Namely, when an author such as Tâşköprüzâde explained man’s self-government by alluding to the formal government he already assumed that the reader had a clear picture of that structure in mind to make his object of analysis more meaningful: “Know that just as material authority (al-salṭana al-ṣāriyya) requires a vizier, a deputy, a scribe, a functionary, a judge and others, likewise, spiritual authority (al-salṭana al-ma‘nawiyya)

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43 Hasan Avni Yüksel, Türk İslâm Tasavvuf Geleneginde Rüya (İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1996), 203; for further examples of similar dream interpretations by Kurt Muhammed Efendi (d. 960/1552) and Karabâş-i Velî (d. 1097/1685) see Mustafa Tatçî and Halil Çeltik, Türk Edebiyatında Tasavvufî Rüyâ Tâbirnâmeleri (Ankara: Akçağ, 1995), 10, 24.

44 Ahmet Ögke, Ahmed Şemseddîn-i Marmaravi, 495-6.
entails the knowledge of its condition, namely the government of its realm (tadabbur-i mamlakatihi).”

Depending on the context, the use of the body metaphor for government, or vice versa, ranges from simply explaining a single function to establishing a complete parallelism between two complex structures. ‘Ārifī, for example, began his treatise on the vizierate with a brief description of the human being as a microcosm (al-‘ālam al-saghir) which contained the macrocosm (al-‘ālam al-kabir). He then characterized the heart as man’s most noble part which he called the ruler (malik) without even resorting to an analogy. Semerḵandī, in his encyclopedic compendium, offered the structure of government as a reference point to explain the wonders of man’s creation. Following suit, he perceived the spirit (nafs) in the body to be like a governor (wālī and mutaṣarrij) of a realm and a city (mamlaka and madīna) as having body parts and faculties as its servants. The heart was the center of this city and the seat of intellect. Intellect was the compassionate vizier who counseled, and wrath (ghaṣab) was the hypocritical vizier who was ostensibly a counselor but in fact an enemy. He then continued to draw similarities between the imaginative faculty and the treasurer, the tongue and the interpreter, the five senses and spies, and the like. Envisioning more than a simple corollary between government offices and man’s faculties, Semerḵandī thought that man functions just like a regular government: “these senses come together and form the collective sense (al-ḥis al-mushtarak) which becomes the post-master who passes senses to the treasurer, and the

45 “i’lam anna al-saltana al-sūriyya kamā tahtāj ilā ważīr wa nā’ib wa kātib wa ‘āmil wa qādī wa amsalāhum, kazālika al-saltana al-ma’nawīyya fa lā bud min ma’rifāti aḥvālīhā kay tadabburī mamlakatihi wa lā tahrubu ‘an hucūm al a’dā.’” Tāšḵūpīzāde, Aṣrār al-Khilāfa, 89a; compare this view to that of Hamadānī, Zakhīrat al-Mulūk, 291.

treasurer preserves them for the use of spirit (nafs) at the time of necessity in its government of the realm (tadbīr-i mamlakatihi).”47

These allegorical relationships between the vizier and intellect and between the sultan and spirit were well known and extensively used in pre-Ottoman writings of many sorts. Fārābī, for example, whose teachings in Ārā Ahl al-Madīna seem to have impacted later Sufi writers on politics, frequently used body imagery in explaining the ideal political structure.48 Similarly, the body metaphor was a favorite analogy used by Ghazālī in his moral and political writings that captivated Ottoman intellectuals. In Ḥyā-i ‘Ulūm al-Dīn, one of the major sources of Ṭaškoprızāde’s Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda, Ghazālī likened human body first to a realm (mamlaka) and then to a city (madīna). In the realm, he pictured the soul (nafs) as ruler (malik) and likened the rational faculty (al-quwwa al-aqliyya) to an intelligent vizier and a counselor, whereas in the city he likened intellect to a ruler (malik) without mentioning the spirit or the vizier.49 Inspired by Ghazālī, Ṭaškoprızāde equated the heart (qalb) and spirit (rūḥ) with the ruler in the realm and city of the human body, while equating intellect with the vizier.50 This formulation of Ghazālī was adopted almost in verbatim by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209), one of the most revered authorities in Islamic disciplines among the Ottoman ‘ulemā, in his little-known book of ethics, Kitāb al-Nafs wa al-Rūḥ (The Book of Soul and Spirit).51 Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, whose teachings found a widespread following in Ottoman Sufism, depicted

47 Semerşandlı, Laṭṭā‘if al-Afkār, 89a.
48 Fārābī likened the ruler (ra‘s) to the heart (qalb) in the body. See Fārābī, Ārā Ahl al-Madīna, 116.
49 Ghazālī, Ḥyā‘ al-Ulūm, 3: 10-11.
50 Ṭaškoprızāde, Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda, 3: 320.
51 Masumi, Razī, 156-157.
the vizier as the intellect in relation to the ruler, even without referring to the body metaphor.\textsuperscript{52}

But what seems to have struck the Ottoman intellectuals most during the reign of Süleymān was the definitive reformulation of Ibn ‘Arabī who developed this construct into an elaborate moral and political teaching in his \textit{Tadbīrāt al-Ilāhiyya fī Iṣlāḥ al-Mamlakat al-Insāniyya (Divine Governance of the Human Kingdom)}.\textsuperscript{53} Ibn ‘Arabī wrote \textit{Tadbīrāt al-Ilāhiyya} with inspiration from \textit{Sirr al-Asrār}, a pseudo-Aristotelian text that proved to be one of the most influential texts on Islamic political theory. Ibn ‘Arabī applied the political imagery constructed in \textit{Sirr al-Asrār} to the self-government of the human being. The end product was a full-fledged advice book for an individual who wished to attain spiritual perfection, as well as for a statesmen who needed guidance in statecraft. The book was based on the premise that there was a perfect overlap between government of self and of society which made the book equally appealing for both mystics and statesmen.

\textit{al-Tadbīrāt al-Ilāhiyya} accomplished such a synthesis that the theory of worldly rulership and the theory of spiritual training for the individual became inseparable. In line with traditional Sufi views, Ibn ‘Arabī conceived of man as a microcosm of the universe, who functioned according to the same principles that were in effect in human society as well as in heavens. He could explain human faculties with respect to social functions, where human faculties, limbs, virtues, vices, and the principles of achieving

\textsuperscript{52} Rāzī, \textit{Mīrṣād al-‘Ībād}, 450.

perfection all have counterparts in society. According to the political imagery in *al-Tadbīrāt al-Ilāhiyya* the human spirit (*rūḥ*) is not simply a ruler but the caliph (*khalīfa*) in the body, figuring as the viceregent of God.\(^{54}\) The seat of the spirit-caliph in the body is the heart (*qalb*) which functions as the main connection between God and man.\(^{55}\) This is why the heart and rulership are the most crucial parts of human body and society respectively. “If the ruler is good, so are the subjects,” ran a popular motto used in political literature, which owed its validity to such a conception.\(^{56}\) Improving the quality of the health and well-being of heart and rulership respectively became the centerpiece of spiritual training in Sufism and education about rulership in political theory.\(^{57}\) As envisioned by Ibn ‘Arabī, the second most important part of a human being was the intellect (*‘aql*), seated in the brain (*dimāgh*), that served the same function as a vizier in government, or vice versa.\(^{58}\) This body imagery was further elaborated by Hamadānī, Ibn ‘Arabī’s distant disciple, whose work was well-received by sixteenth-century Ottoman men of learning. Using the same metaphors, he explained that external government

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\(^{57}\) Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, for example, a fourteenth-century philosopher, voiced this pursuit as follows: “The relationship of the king to the world is like the relation of the heart to the human body in the sense that whenever the heart is healthy, the human body is healthy. If –God forbid- some corruption occurs in it, corruption will spread to the entire body, as the Prophet has said: “There is a bit of meat in the body. If it is healthy, the body is healthy; if it is rotten, the body is rotten. This is the heart.” Likewise, when the king practices justice, equity, and good government, and is occupied with improving the condition of his subjects, his reign brings peace, verdure, low prices, abundant harvests of plants and animals, and an increasing population. If -God forbid- he is occupied in a contrary manner, the condition of the state will be the opposite. John Walbridge, “The Political Thought of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī,” in C. E. Butterworth, ed. *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard Middle Eastern Monographs, 1992), pp. 345-379.

(ṣaltanat-i ṣūrī) and spiritual government (ṣaltanat-i ma‘nāvī) both work according to the same structure and principles pertaining to man’s self-government.\textsuperscript{59}

Using the body metaphor to explain government was not an innovation of Muslim mystics but had been in wide circulation in political thought since antiquity, well before Ibn ‘ArABI’s work appeared. However, this analogy was mostly limited to the physical human body with organic imagery being used as a metaphor in explaining the hierarchical structure of government and the relationship among its organs. With Ibn ‘ArABI’s work, the human being as a complex structure consisting of body and spirit became the object of analogy. As in other books on morality that reflected this view, the idea that the government of self and the rulership of a realm require the same set of principles became the prevailing mode of political thinking in sixteenth-century Ottoman thought. Whether through a direct reading of his works or the works of his various followers, the influence of Ibn ‘ArABI’s teachings formulated in \textit{al-Tadbīrāt al-Ilāhiyya} were evident in the mainstream political writings of the Ottomans, particularly in the works of Ṭā所提供之, Bidlīsī, and ‘Ārifī, who displayed a distinctly Sufī tendency in conceiving of rulership.

In various such constructions, one of the main concerns in the teachings of Sufis, or political theories written from a Sufī perspective, was to ensure that the human being was governed by spirit (rūḥ) or the tranquil soul (al-nafs al-mutma‘īnna), not by the animal soul (nafs). An early sixteenth century admirer of Ibn ‘ArABI, Yiğitbäşi Velî, in his treatise on spiritual wayfaring, explained the role of spirit and intellect during the lowest degree of the initiate, the state of the concupiscient soul (al-nafs al-ammāra): “In

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{59} Hamadānī, \textit{Zakhīrat al-Mulūk}, 289-334.}
this state, the spirit (nafs) is the ruler (sulṭān) and governor (ḥākim) whereas the intellect is its vizier... and everything that was created by wrath and lust are the highway robbers (ḥarāmi) and governors (beğlerbeyi) of the animal soul." 

Although the body metaphor was widely used by political writers of different affiliations, Sufi-minded authors were particularly inclined to formulate a theory of rulership on the basis of their analysis of human nature. For them, the human being and society were both in need of government, structured in similar ways, and required the same principles to function. While these Sufis drew inspiration from the governments of the material world in designing a training program for initiates, when they wrote on rulership, they drew inspiration from their perceptions of human nature. Just as the very existence of rulership was justified on the basis of an inherent human need for political authority, ideal rulership was designed on the model of an ideal human being. For them, principles of government prescribed for the ruler in political theory were not much different from principles of spiritual training given by a sheikh to an initiate.

The Mystique of the Sultanate: The Vizier as Keeper of Secrets

In formulating their views on government, the Ottoman authors of this period used the spirit-intellect metaphor to underscore two basic features of the vizierate: the association of the vizier with the sultan and the position of the vizier as governor of the

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60 Yiğitbaşı further explained the relationship between the spirit and intellect as follows: “intellect invites spirit many times but whenever spirit comes intellect rejects it, and the spirit goes back to its post. Finally, because of noticing the noble deeds, miracles and signs of the spirit intellect pays homage to the spirit and becomes his vizier. It then leaves the realm of darkness and become governor to the world of the heart, subjugates the animal spirit and eliminates the vices of the animal soul.” Ögke, Ahmed Şemseddin-i Marmaravi, 550-1.
realm. First, the metaphor depicted the closeness of the vizier to the sultan by portraying the two agents as two components of the same entity. The vizier was not only the highest official in government but also the closest confidant of the sultan. In fact, some accounts clearly pointed to the position of the vizier as highest after the sultan in society because of his closeness to the sultan and because the vizier had been exposed to the secrets of rulership (esrār-i salṭanat). In one of the rare anecdotes Lütfi Pāşā related, Selīm I made clear to his dignitaries that the political hierarchy in government should be in accordance with the degree of a given official’s exposure and access to the secrets of rulership: Upon a dispute between a scribe (kātib) and palace envoy (çāvūş) over superiority in rank, Selīm ruled that scribes were superior to envoys because they “serve the secrets of rulership (esrār-i salṭanat) while envoys serve external affairs.”

An ardent admirer of Selīm I, Celâlzâde entertained the same idea in Mevâhibü’l-Ḥallāk, and advocated the prominence of men of the pen in government because of their knowledge of the secrets of rulership. In both political theory and practice, a successful management of secrets was considered to be one of the most essential functions for the health of government. The chancellor in the Mamluk government, for example, which developed parallel offices to those in Ottoman state, was called kātib-i sir (secretary of secret). Such perceptions highlighted secrecy as one of the most emphasized traits of an ideal vizier who was strictly advised not to share or expose these secrets.

62 Celâlzâde, Mevâhibü’l-Ḥallāk, 197b.
63 Uzunçarşı, Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilatın Medhalı, 365.
64 See, for example, ‘Alâyi, Düstürü ’l-Vüzerâ, 13-14; Celâlzâde, Mevâhibü’l-Ḥallāk, 208a-209a.
In explaining the most important attributes of the vizier, Celâlzâde stated that “keeping secrets (kitmân-i esrâr) is the foundation of all other conditions and the origin of all morals.” Chronicles and political treatises composed since the sixteenth century that increasingly referred to Ottoman experience in government are replete with the exemplary behaviors of past viziers who served the state by adhering to the principle of secrecy. Lütfi Pâşâ, for example, who had great esteem for his predecessor in the vizierate, Pîrî Pâşâ, related that the grand vizier once almost dismissed Mesîh Pâşâ, a vizier of lesser rank, because he had inquired about Pîrî Pâşâ’s conversation with the sultan. By way of advice, he stated that the grand vizier should not tell his conversation to outsiders, not even to other viziers. In a polity such as the Ottoman state, secrecy in government was an indispensable virtue for any statesmen, and its practical benefits were proven in numerous cases reported by Ottoman historians and advice writers.

However, ‘secrets’ (esrâr) did not simply refer to confidential affairs of state or undisclosable information about the sultan but to the mystique of rulership as well. In this sense, secrecy or mystery was a part of the very conception of rulership. The sultanate, according to the prevailing view, was not an authority wholly conceivable by the ruled but was a complex structure with mystical ties to the divine. Just as there were certain issues which could not be rationalized and formulated about God and man’s relationship to Him, the sultanate had a mystical component that could not be grasped by the ordinary mind. Such a conception of rulership was inherently elitist, granting only to

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65 Celâlzâde, Mevâhibû’l-Ḥullûk, 209a.
the sultan, the vizier and, perhaps a select number of people who attained spiritual perfection, knowledge about the secrets of the sultanate. According to this view, the ruler was a man of secrets, a mysterious figure whose secrets were not to be revealed. Celâlzâde, for example, advised the vizier not to inquire about the secrets of the sultanate because he defined rulers as those “whose secrets are confidential”. In his chronicle about Selîm I’s life and deeds, Celâlzâde praised the sultan’s reign by stressing that “secrets of the sultanate (esrâr-i sultanat) and modes of the caliphate (etvâr-i hilâfet) were preserved and observed to the utmost degree.” In referring to the deliberations of the imperial council, he further stated that nobody had access to these secrets except for the grand vizier, the chancellor, and the secretary of the council.

What Celâlzâde referred to as ‘secrets’ were both the mystery of rulership as well as confidential government affairs. According to him, rulership, for example, stood with the chancery which was the greatest and the most exalted among the powers of the sultanate, because they contained the secrets of the sultanate. Some of his contemporaries were more explicit in picturing the mystery of the sultanate: Semerêndî, for example, who wrote an encyclopedic work for the education of Grand Vizier İbrâhîm Pãşã, titled his work Latâ’if al-Afkâr wa Kâshif al-Asrâr (Fine Thoughts and Revealers of Secrets). Along the same line, Taşköprizâde titled his work on political morality Risâlã fî Bayân Asrâr al-Khilafla al-Insâniyya wa al-Salutation al-Ma’nawîyya (Treatise on Explaining the Secret of Man’s Caliphate and Spiritual Sultanate). Similarly, Ebû’l-Faţl

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70 Celâlzâde, Mevâhibû’l-Ḥallâk, 210a.
Münşî named the third chapter of his *Dustûr al-Saltanat* as “Dar Sharh-i Khilâfat-i Ma’navî va Asrâr-i Khilâfat-i Insânî va Kayfiyat-i Siyâsat-i Râhânî” (On Explaining the Spiritual Caliphate and Secrets of Man’s Caliphate and the Nature of Spiritual Government). All these authors explained a great deal about what they deemed to be the mystery of the sultanate and made it a part of their overall teaching on government. In many cases, however, given the very nature of the phenomenon they addressed, there was always an element of unrevealed mystery about the sultanate.

Especially in the works of Sufi-minded authors, the conventional wisdom that advised secrecy for practical consideration in order to preserve the proper functioning of government fused with the mystical teachings that viewed worldly rulership within the context of a universal government of God’s deputies. Ārifî, for example, in addressing the vizier, pointed out that the question of the sultanate is a secret among the secrets of divine government (*sîr min asrâr al-rubûbiyya*). For being the receivers of God’s favor in attaining rulership and divine light thereafter, rulers were usually believed to be recipients of God’s inspiration. Such a perception prompted many advisors to urge the viziers not to contradict the sultan’s opinion unless it was obviously false or against the shari’â because the sultan might have been led to think that way by divine inspiration. Furthermore, apologists of the dynasty were usually eager to credit the sultan’s reception of divine inspiration when his decision led to a particular success, whether in the battlefield or in government. Kemâlpâşazâde, for example, accorded credit to all Ottoman sultans for knowing by divine inspiration (*ilhâm-i rabbâni*) that servants should

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71 Ebûl-Fażl, *Dustûr al-Saltanat*, 24b.

72 Ārifî, *‘Uqûd al-Jawâhir*, 4b.
be educated in such a way that they would not be able to assume the authority of the ruler even when appointed by the sultan as his deputy.\(^{73}\)

The second feature of the vizierate that the spirit-intellect metaphor entailed was the elevation of the status of the vizier to governorship of the realm while making the sultan the realm’s life-giver and connection to the divine. Thinking along the same lines as Ibn ‘Arabi, Taşköprizâde stated “just as the sultan needs a governor (mudabbir) and wise (‘âqil) vizier, there is a vizier for the spirit in his realm as well which is the intellect, and for the vizier a palace is founded at the highest point of the realm of the body so he can stay and govern the affairs of subjects (umûr al-ra’âyâ), and this is the brain (dimâgh).”\(^{74}\) Explaining the function of the intellect in the body and the vizierate in the state, Taşköprizâde further showed how the vizier-intellect governs with respect to the sultan-spirit: “All affairs are presented to the noble vizier which is the intellect. The intellect presents them to the ruler (melik) which is the spirit. The spirit makes these deeds a means to approach God...”\(^{75}\) As envisioned by Taşköprizâde, the vizier governed the realm in the service of the sultan whose rulership was a service to God.\(^{76}\)


\(^{74}\) Taşköprizâde, *Asr al-Khilâfa*, 89b.

\(^{75}\) Taşköprizâde, *Asr al-Khilâfa*, 90a.

Assigning such a pivotal role to the vizier in the make-up of rulership ultimately led to a rational perception of the vizierate in government. Since the sultan was perceived to be the spirit of the realm, there was always an element of mystery surrounding the ruler which related him more to the divine than to the actual government. In Ṭašköprîzâde’s depiction “the spirit is a secret among the divine secrets whose seat in the body is heart, as told by the people of truth (muḥaqiqîn).”\(^{77}\) The popular proverb “the ruler is inspired” (al-sulṭân malhûm), was frequently remembered referring to the ruler’s right decisions or those which went against established wisdom.\(^{78}\) Celâlzâde turned the proverb into a couplet in praise of Selîm I:

> The sultan’s heart is the glass of God’s revelation
> Whatever occurs to him is inspired by God\(^{79}\)

Unlike the sultan, however, there was no mystery about the vizierate or its functions in rulership, a feature that made the vizierate an object of scrutiny in writing on statecraft. Authors who gave up writing on the qualifications of the sultan were quite diligent and demanding in elaborating on those of the vizier, a man upon whose skills the government of the realm depended. Among them, ‘Āriff maintained that the mental faculties of the vizier were superior to those of the sultan:

\(^{77}\) Ṭašköprîzâde, Asrâr al-Khilâfa, 89a.


\(^{79}\) Hâtûrî şahîn tecelli câmûdîr
Her ne kim yerûnsa Hâk ilhamûdîr
Celâl-zâde, Selîm-nâme, 113.
Philosophers said, Whoever thought that the ruler’s (*malik*) intelligence [astuteness] (*fiṭna*) is superior to that of the vizier is mistaken. Then they explained the reason and said, The intelligence of the vizier is sharper (*athqab*) than that of rulers because rulers only contemplate governing their subjects, nothing else. But the viziers contemplate both governing the rulers and the subjects.  

Ārifī’s comparison of the mental qualifications expected from the sultan and the vizier testifies to the vizierate’s central place in the sultanate. In ‘Ārifī’s view, the classical philosophic ideal of the philosopher king found its practical alternative: it was not the sultan, but his vizier. In other words, the government took its wisdom from the vizier, not from the sultan. What looks striking in this view was that the sultan himself was regarded as subject to government which poses the most challenging duty to the vizier. Because of this dual responsibility of the vizier, authors writing on the vizierate were heedful in explaining the vizier’s relation to the sultan. The vizier governed the sultan by standing against his injustices and encouraging him to do commendable deeds for his own sake. In Lütfi Pâşâ’s words, “the grand vizier should prevent the sultan from leaning towards accumulation of wealth (*meyl-i mâl*) and from gaining sin in such a way.”

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80 Ārifī, ‘*Uqūd al-Jawāhir*, 5a.


Except for Lütfi Paşa and the anonymous author of *Meşāliḥü ’l-Müslimîn*, who totally focused on the existing government and discussed the vizierate without any reference to pre-Ottoman political theory, the main purpose of writing on the vizierate was to establish the main functions of this office in a sultanate and to delineate the moral framework required for the office holder. Despite having different perspectives and views, all these authors addressed the governing elite as a target audience, a fact that makes the Ottoman vizierate an important component of analysis in examining views on the rulership. Whether approached from a conventional moralist stand, like ‘Alāyî’s *Düstür’ü Vâzerâ* or from a reformist paradigm, such as Lütfî Paşa’s *Āṣafnâme*, the function of the vizierate in governance was perceived to be more important than that of the sultan.

Although the sultan always remained the embodiment of rulership in diverse strands of Ottoman political thought, starting with the reign of Meḥmed II, the center of government shifted from the sultan to the vizier. That is why Lütfî Paşa wrote his political treatise as a handbook of the vizierate in which he described the duties of the vizier, most of which are described as sultanic duties in previous works of politics. The sultan became a more distant ruling figure whose image was more important than his personality. In the case of the vizier, however, it was his personality that mattered most. This is one reason why the Ottoman Empire had more than two hundred grand viziers as opposed to three dozen sultans. Partly due to the search for the best vizier and partly because of the sacrificing viziers for sultans’ failures, the vizierate changed hands.
frequently in order to sustain the image of the sultan as just and able. Showing his awareness of this fact, Weber noted that “because of his exalted charismatic qualities such a ruler needs a person who can take over responsibility for the acts of government, especially for failures and unpopular measures.”

Select authors, whose focus was the vizier’s assistance to the sultan rather than his service in government, elaborated on the role of the vizier in rulership by emphasizing his responsibilities towards the sultan. Celâlzade, for example, in the beginning of his chapter on the vizierate mentioned that he would write on four aspects of the vizierate - although he wrote on only the first two- which defined the vizier’s relationship to God and the sultan. Envisioning a more institutional relationship between the two, Lütfi Paşa stated that the vizier “should not hesitate to tell the truth (hâk söz) to the sultan” and “should tell the sultan what is necessary in religion and government (dîn ve devlet) without delay.” By contrast, Celâlzade was much more cautious: “[the vizier] should watch for the most convenient time in presenting a petition because asking the king is like the wish prayer and prayers are accepted when performed in a timely manner. If there is a sign of distress on the ruler’s auspicious face then the vizier should refrain from petitioning.” The main difference between Lütfi Paşa and Celâlzade is that for the


84 “Vezâretin şerâ’iti çoktur. Vezîr-i kâmilin dört aşlı ri’âyeti lazâmdır: Evvel, ri’âyet-i cenâb i Hâch; İkinci, ri’âyet-i hükûk-u pâdişâh; Üçüncü şart, kendî nefsi aâhvâlini ri’âyet; Dördüncü ri’âyet-i ra’iyyetdir.” Celâlzade, Mevâhibü’l-Ḥallâk, 201a.


The former vizier was the head of government with a well-delineated sphere of responsibility while for the latter the vizier was a personal aide to the sultan.

Authors like Celâlzâde, ‘Alâyî, and ‘Ârifî, who emphasized the personal aspects of the vizierate, did not really write about the vizierate per se but rather about what the vizier was expected to do with respect to the sultan. Their main objective was to keep the sultan’s image immaculate and this had to be done primarily by the vizier. These authors agreed that there should be a complete harmony between the sultan and the vizier for the health of government, a condition which could only be secured by absolute loyalty on the part of the vizier, unless the sultan’s wish stood in contradiction to God’s will. They advised the vizier not to object to the sultan because whether the sultan’s judgment was right or wrong, the right thing for the vizier to do was to yield in all situations. The bond between the vizier and the sultan was perceived to be created by love (mulhabbet) and fidelity (sadâkat) rather than required obedience (iţâ‘at). The established wisdom of the ethics literature taught the Ottomans that a relationship based on love ensured a stronger bond of obedience. According to this view, the ideal vizier needed to constantly remain in a humble mood, never mention his service to the sultan, and never expect favors in return for his service. He should not aspire to obtain things which the sultan

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88 Celâlzâde strictly instructs the vizier to prefer pleasing God to pleasing the sultan. See Celâlzâde, Mevâhibü’l-Ḥallâḵ, 205a.
89 Celâlzâde relates a telling story to illustrate his contention that the vizier should absolutely submit to the sultan’s every judgment. Upon corruption in his government, a sultan decides to jail his two viziers to find out who has evil intentions. The good vizier never complains and still praises the sultan whereas the bad vizier resents and curses the sultan. The sultan hears the conversation between the two viziers and discovers the innocence of the good vizier. The obvious moral of the story was that whether the sultan was right or wrong in his decision the vizier had no right to be resentful. See Mevâhibü’l-Ḥallâḵ, 142b.
90 ‘Alâyî, Düstûrü’l-Vüzerâ, 15, 16.
91 ‘Alâyî, Düstûrü’l-Vüzerâ, 16; Celâlzâde, Mevâhibü’l-Ḥallâḵ, 208b.
possessed and must be content with what was bestowed on him. Both in the presence and absence of the sultan the vizier’s task was to mention the sultan’s virtues and decency, while punishing and dissociating himself from whoever does otherwise. Writing after the execution of the grand vizier İbrâhîm Paşâ, who was believed to have incurred the sultan’s wrath by imitating his grandeur, these authors were careful to delineate the confines of vizieral authority with respect to the sultan.

Although İbâhîm Paşâ and many others were usually believed to have been killed for their wrongdoings, an ideal vizier was profiled as willing to give his life in the service of the sultan. This sacrificial relationship was further extended to the point of arguing that the vizier should be willing to dispense with his own life in order to preserve the sultan’s image. ‘Alâyî, for example, thought that the vizier should regard the sultan’s fame (şân) and chastity (‘ırz) as superior to his own and that of his retinue’s. He should attribute all his blessings in life to the sultan and all the afflictions to himself.92

‘Alâyî’s teaching that extolled the vizier’s sacrifice of himself for the sake sultan became more evident in his description of generosity (sehâ) which he considered as one of the most important moral qualities of the vizier.93 Unlike his contemporaries who wrote on the subject, ‘Alâyî’ presented generosity as sacrificing one’s life (bezl-i nefs) rather than giving away property. In all three illustrations, the main characters sacrifice their lives for others out of their generosity. Such a vision of rulership entailed that sacrificing one’s life was part of the vizier’s service in rulership. However extreme it may seem, this conception of the vizierate became firmly entrenched in Ottoman political

92 ‘Alâyî, Düstûrü ’l-Vûzerâ, 16.
93 ‘Alâyî, Düstûrü ’l-Vûzerâ, 24-30.
culture, especially after the advent of conscripted servants of the sultan (küls) in government. At least in rhetoric, it was commonplace for the viziers of this period to openly state their willingness to sacrifice their lives in the service of sultan in expressing their gratitude.

Despite the perils of the vizierate and the sacrificial nature of the vizier’s service, political authors were obliged to be more diligent in describing the manners of the viziers and principles of his service because of the prominence of the vizierate in rulership. As they observed in the actual practice of the Ottoman state, the work of the vizier was more essential to government, and carried more responsibilities, than that of the sultan.

Similarly, the vizier’s governance was more important in maintaining the well-being of rulership than that of the sultan’s. For this reason, authors were quite strict in their description of the vizierate and did not give the same latitude to viziers that they granted to sultans in government. Since the vizier was perceived to be the sultan’s absolute vicegerent in rulership he had to govern well despite the shortcomings of the sultan. Regardless of his good will, in the eyes of public, the sultan was judged by the quality of his government which totally depended on the work of the vizier. Ironically, as the vizierate gained prominence in government, the position of the vizier became more precarious because the sultan was by definition immune to charges while the full responsibility of government tested on the shoulders of the grand vizier.

Given the established conventions and realities of succession, the sultan could not be required to be moral, educated, and talented at the same time, although this was desirable. But, excluding Āṣafnâme and Meşâlîhü ’l-Müslîmîn, which displayed the least interest in the personal traits of the vizier, all these qualifications were deemed to be
indispensable for the vizier in political theory. In mainstream views of rulership, practices that compromise certain moral and religious standards were usually considered tolerable for the sultan whereas such breaches were rarely considered acceptable for the vizier, except in situations where the vizier was simply following the sultan’s orders. The practical reason behind this double standard was that, in reality, there was no established means or procedure for replacing a corrupt sultan with a moral one. However, it was both possible and relatively easy to replace the grand vizier in office with a less or more perfect one at the sultan’s will. This character of Ottoman rulership required the vizier, first and foremost, to please the sultan while maintaining a good government.

As one of the finest expositions of such a vision of viziership in the political theory of this period, Celâlzâde gave two illustrations to present his higher expectations of the vizier with respect to the sultan.\(^4\) Regarding Solomon’s legendary Kingdom, he related that it was once deliberated in a ruler’s court whether the miracle (kerâmet) was the prophet Solomon’s or his Vizier Asaph’s. The attendees answered that the miracle (kerâmet) was Asaph’s. The real miracle (mu’cize) of Solomon was his having a vizier such as Asaph. In this illustration, the credit for the glory of the kingdom was given to the vizier while the king was credited with making the right appointment. However, while the use of the terms kerâmet (saintly miracle) and mu’cize (prophetic miracle) indicates the hierarchy between the vizier and the prophet king, it also indicates that the final credit was given to the king because of the difficulty of finding a vizier with the necessary qualities expressed by the term mu’cize. For the same reason, many stories about past sultans were related to show how selective they were in their quest for the

\(^4\) Celâlzâde, *Mevâhibü’l-Ḥallâḳ*, 225a-228b.
right vizier and how difficult it was to find one. Celâlzâde related another story in which the Abbasid caliph Sulaymân b. ‘Abd al-Malik was boasting that his kingdom was comparable to that of Prophet Solomon’s. His companions, however, objected to his greed by stating that his kingdom lacked the most important element of Prophet Solomon’s: a vizier such as Asaph.95

This view was further supported by a prophetic tradition widely quoted in political texts: “When Allah has a good purpose for a ruler, He appoints for him a sincere minister who reminds him if he forgets and helps him if he remembers; but when Allah has a different purpose from that for him, He appoints for him an evil minister who does not remind him if he forgets and does not help him if he remembers.”96 Except for the prophetic experiences mentioned in the Quran and the Sunna, this tradition, mentioned in almost all sources, is the only religious text which describes the functions of the vizier and his relationship to the sultan. It first of all tied the sultan’s well being to the quality of his vizier and, secondly, made clear that having a good vizier meant God’s favor towards the sultan. The sultan was depicted as needing help and reminding, two needs that commonly constituted the basic components for the justification of a vizierate in a sultanate. Although it was difficult to determine whether this religious interpretation or the historical practice came first, in this period, the vizier in political theory was depicted as the performer of these two principal functions. The vizier’s reminding included consultation as well as commanding right and forbidding wrong, two fundamental tenets of Islamic political theory.

95 Celâlzâde, Mevâhibû l-İllâhî, 228b-232a.

96 See, for example, ‘Alâyi, Dûstûrû l-Vüzerâ, 5; Semerkandî, Lâtâ’îf al-Afkâr, 3a; Seyfî, Risâletü l-Vüzerâ, 15b; Dizdar, Sulûk al-Mulûk, 12b, 31a; Risâlu fî mâ Yalzîm ‘alâ al-Mulûk, 11.
Like the sultan’s religious life, the vizier’s political duties were regarded as his most rewarding acts of worship. Thus his just conduct, forgiveness, and compassion towards the subjects, his directing the sultan to the right path and relating the complaints of the oppressed to the sultan were all regarded as acts of worship. However, while religious practice was only advised to the sultan as a free time activity, it was regarded as a necessary obligation for the vizier. Rituals and prayers which were not discussed in the case of the sultan were prescribed to be performed in the case of the vizier. The vizier had to be wise, pious, and virtuous. Even the nawāfil, recommended but not required prayers, were presented to be practiced by the vizier while the sultan was discouraged from performing the same prayers, and instead encouraged to focus on the affairs of his subjects. ‘Alāyī explained the wisdom behind this teaching by citing [Fakhr al-Dīn?] Rāzī who stated that governors have to be more pious than the people underneath them.

Thus the vizier’s piety and moral rectitude were considered to be the fundamental requisites for the proper function of the vizierate in rulership. Even Lütfi Paşâ, who promoted the idea of kânûn to govern the vizier’s relationship to the sultan, ruled that “the vizier should do everything for the sake of God.” Moralist authors such as ‘Ārifī and ‘Ālāyī prescribed a religious and moral code of conduct for the vizier not only because they perceived it to be a prerequisite of good government but also to allow the vizier a degree of latitude in government. Besides Ottoman law and well-established conventions of government, religion was the most powerful check on the sultan’s power

97 See, for example, ‘Alāyī, Düstûrû’l-Vüzerâ, 29.
98 ‘Alāyī, Düstûrû’l-Vüzerâ, 28.
which could limit the vizier’s absolute subjection to whims of the sultan and instead allow the vizier to govern the state with the shield of security provided by religion.

Driven by that objective, Celâlzâde enumerated five conditions for the proper functioning of the vizierate. Although four of them concerned the vizier’s relationship to the sultan and only one of them strictly pertained to the relationship between the vizier and God, Celâlzâde emphatically stressed that the vizier’s service to God, his pleasing of God, fear of God and hopes of God had to be superior to his corresponding acts towards the sultan. Even the observation of courtly manners in the presence of the sultan, over-emphasized by Celâlzâde, could be given up for a religious observance. For him, if prayer time arrives while the vizier was still in the sultan’s presence, leaving the court for prayer even without the permission of sultan was a commendable behavior. In promoting religiosity as a required qualification for the vizier, Celâlzâde made religious observance both a standard of government and an instrument for keeping the sultan in check.

**Riding the Lion: The Perils of the Vizierate**

While expressing their idealistic expectations of a vizier, political writers on the vizierate were well-aware that this was an inherently dangerous job. Possession of the necessary skills and endowment with the required traits did not seem sufficient for the vizier to strictly observe the religion, to represent the sultan as his deputy, justly serve the needs of subjects, and run the government efficiently all at the same time. A common metaphor depicting this challenging task in political literature was that being a vizier was

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\(^{100}\) Celâlzâde, *Mevâhibû ’l-Ḥallâk*, 205a-206a.
the same as riding a lion (wazīr al-sulṭān ka rākib al-asad). In the face of such daunting challenges, some political authors prescribed the means of attaining divine help for the vizier in order to achieve the goals of the vizierate. A readily available source of spiritual exercises and rituals for that purpose were occult sciences and prayer books. For final sections of their books on the vizierate, both ‘Alāyī and ‘Ārifī compiled the most necessary prayers and talismans from such sources and prepared specific instructions for their use in achieving one’s objectives in the vizierate. In these sections, they enumerated a number of prayers, organized according to different times and occasions, which the vizier was advised to perform. It was common in contemporary texts on government to advise the vizier to seek divine help by praying. In the works of ‘Alāyī and ‘Ārifī, who prescribed vizier-specific prayers, seeking divine support turned into an integral part of the theory of the vizierate.

Prayers in ‘Alāyī, for example, included those for achieving victory, getting rid of enemies, avoiding dangers, being protected from afflictions, attaining goals, being persuasive in speech, finding relief from sadness, managing life with ease, acquiring a livelihood, enjoying a long life, and many others. Both ‘Alāyī and ‘Ārifī displayed a manifest Sufi tendency and recommended these prayers on the authority of their spiritual training. While ‘Ārifī stated that he related his selections from the Sufi masters with esoteric knowledge (mashāyikh al-‘ārifīn) ‘Alāyī claimed to have compiled his set of prayers from sources whose authority in spirituality was undisputed. There is a

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102 ‘Alāyī, Düstürü‘l-Vüzerā, 49-63.
marked difference, however, between the two authors’ ways of presenting these prayers. In addition to providing specific incantations geared for different purposes, ‘Ārifī also elaborated on the use and function of prayers in man’s life. Rather than offering ready formulas for achieving success and avoiding failures, ‘Ārifī’s purpose was to instruct the vizier about the benefits of prayers in attaining spiritual perfection. Besides the instrumental value of these prayers in achieving one’s goals, ‘Ārifī’s recommendations also serve as a remembrance of God (zikr), a required exercise for spiritual training in mystical orders.

Unlike ‘Ārifī, ‘Alāyī was less interested in the mystical training of the vizier than in endowing him with the spiritual and talismanic means for success. He presented himself as a seasoned scholar of esoteric teachings and cabalistic sciences.104 While ‘Ārifī was content with providing plain prayers and brief instructions, ‘Alāyī’s prayers were associated with cabalistic practices and talismans, supplemented with erudite formulae and elaborate charts reminiscent of the methods of Khurufism.105 Although ‘Alāyī ensured the vizier that these prescriptions were tested (mücerrebdür) to bring about the intended results, at the end of his treatise he instructed that these prayers were only a means and could work only if God wills: “If God’s will corresponds to a matter, it would certainly take place as intended when such things as amulets (garāyim ve tamāyim) are used. If God’s will does not favor the occurrence of that matter none of the mantic methods and talismans (ḥavāṣ ve ṭlismāt) or any effort and struggle (sa’y ve ictihād) could make it happen. Because, at some point, an error or a failure would afflict

104 ‘Alāyī, Düstürü'l-Vüzerâ, 70-1.
and nullify that matter and prevent its coming into being.”¹⁰⁶ This statement of ‘Alāyī sounds more fatalistic than that of Bidlīsī who divided man’s acquisitions and achievements into two categories: those acquired by man (kasbī) versus those granted by God (vahbī).¹⁰⁷

While devising these esoteric means of success ‘Alāyī had Vizier Lālā Muṣṭafā Pāšā in mind, to whom he dedicated his book. Such charms were exactly what Muṣṭafā Pāšā needed to gain the favor of his patron, Prince Selīm II, to steer clear of the plots directed against him and make his efforts fruitful in achieving his life-long objective of becoming grand vizier.¹⁰⁸ Unlike ‘Alāyī, ‘Ārifī dedicated his work to Semiz ‘Alī Pāšā, a relatively less controversial figure in the history of Ottoman vizierate.¹⁰⁹ However, ‘Ārifī was better known as counselor to Sinān Pāšā, the archrival of Muṣṭafā Pāšā for the top position in government, who was disgraced four times and came to the grand vizierate five times.¹¹⁰ It is not a surprise then, that the two authors who added prayer sections in their works on the vizierate were counselors to two viziers whose fame came more from the political intrigues they were engaged in than their deeds in government. Equally significant was the fact that these two ambitious viziers who constantly risked their lives for advancement in government adopted people known for their mastery in spiritual powers and mystical teachings. Concerning the vizier’s relationship with the sultan, ‘Alāyī offered this charm for the enchantment of hearts (tesḥūrī ’l-ḵulūb):

¹⁰⁶ ‘Alāyī, Düstūrī ’l-Vüzerā, 70.
¹⁰⁷ ‘Alāyī, Düstūrī ’l-Vüzerā, 66.
¹⁰⁸ For a brief biography of this grand vizier, see Bekir Kütükoğlu, “Lala Mustafa Paşa”, ĪA.
¹⁰⁹ For a brief biography of this grand vizier, see Tayyip Gökbilgin, “Semiz Ali Paşa”, ĪA.
¹¹⁰ For a brief biography of this grand vizier, see Uzunçarşılı, Osmanlı Tarihi, 3/2: 340-2.
If you wish to enchant the hearts of sultans and statesmen (ūmerā) and other people, in order to achieve this, you should recite the following Quranic verses fifty seven thousand two hundred times in a hundred and twenty days which makes four hundred seventy times a day, and you will see its effects the following day. The people of distinction [with esoteric knowledge] (javāṣ) of our day further stated that in case someone is dismissed (ma’zūl) from a position (cāh ve mansāb) and suspicious (mütevehhīm) of the sultan, if that person wishes to acquire high esteem in the regard of all people then he should continue reciting these verses so that rulers (mülük-i ışrāf) and notables (ekābir-i etrāf) would all submit to him and obey him (mu’ī ve fermān-dār ola).\textsuperscript{111}

In addition to the prayers offered for the vizier’s personal gains, ‘Alāyī recommended prayers for vanquishing enemies of the sultan as well. But these prayers were directed against external enemies, and were to be performed on the battlefield. Unlike the vizier, however, the sultan did not receive a specific recipe from the political writers for attaining divine help in ruling the realm, except for general advice to perform the common prayers which were recommended to any ordinary believer. One obvious reason for this omission was that the sultan in the mid-sixteenth century was above dynastic politics and did not have to worry about being executed, dismissed, or having his commands defied. But more than the sultan’s unrivalled power, it was the prevailing sultanic image in political theory that rendered such instructions dispensable. According to the common view, the sultan was, by definition, the one who was selected by God, received divine support and was spiritually connected to the realm of the divine. Succored by God (mū’eyyed min ‘indillāh), for example, was one of the common laudatory titles of the ruler in this period. He was not only divine support personified but

\textsuperscript{111} ‘Alāyī, \textit{Düstūr-ı-Vüzerā}, 52, 57, 59.
also a dispenser of such support, an intermediary whose prayers could bring divine favor to others. The Grand Admiral Ḥayreddīn Pāşā, for example, a man who rose to this position from being a pirate thanks to his outstanding skills and unflinching resolve, regarded his reception of the sultan’s prayer (pādişāh duʿāsi) as a great privilege and insurance for success.\footnote{112} 

Besides acting on his own initiative in addressing the needs of the vizierate of his time, by inserting such unconventional teachings into the theory of the vizierate ʿAlāyī must have been reflecting the contemporary mood among the political elite as well as the spread of occult practices in Ottoman culture. As Fleischer demonstrated, in the early sixteenth century, in applying for scribal jobs, the candidates could present their training in the science of letters (ʿilm-i ʾḥurūf) and divine names (ʿilm-i esmāʾ) as necessary skills for the position.\footnote{113} During the reign of Süleymān, eschatological expectations, messianic interpretations, and astrological predictions were more visible than ever which indicates an increased awareness of the divine connection with earthly life. In such an atmosphere, mantic teachings that found a warm reception among the ruling elite did not seem to have faced any resistance in getting insinuated into mainstream political theory.

The insertion of such mantic teachings into political theory yielded an unconventional form of writing even within the advice literature that consisted of a divergent body of works, and two features of the underlining political culture seem to


\footnote{113}Fleischer, “Between the Lines: Realities of Scribal Life in the Sixteenth Century.” In Studies in Ottoman History in Honour of Professor V. L. Ménage, eds. C. Heywood and C. Imber (İstanbul: ISIS Press, 1994), 45-62.
have conveniently predicated this innovative approach in political reasoning. First, the overarching influence of the Solomon-Asaph imagery in envisioning the Ottoman vizier entailed that the vizier should be a man of strong spirituality and esoteric knowledge. In popular perception, imbued with the legends and religious convictions then in circulation, Asaph was a man of secret knowledge and extraordinary powers who was capable of bringing Shiba’s throne in the blink of an eye from Yemen to Jerusalem. As Ebū’s-su‘ūd implied in his commentary on the Quranic story of Solomon, because of his exceptional traits, Asaph could be compared to other legendary characters with superhuman powers such as jinns (jinnies) or Khūḍr.114

Second, Sufism in its diverse forms was an inseparable part of the Ottoman high culture of the period, and its influence on political reasoning was no less than that of jurisprudence, theology, or philosophy. As a matter of course, political authors of a marked Sufi background conveyed their mystic perceptions and teachings into political theory. Because Sufism was a form of piety and system of thought more open to occultist and mantic teachings than any other Islamic tradition, esoterica, divination, and conjuration made their way into the political theory of the Sufis.

Besides the cultural atmosphere informed by esotericism and the increasing influence of Sufism in shaping perceptions of rulership in the realm of actual government practice, this was a time when intermediary agents became involved in the equation of dynastic politics between the vizier and the sultan, particularly palace dignitaries and the sultan’s wife, daughters, and sisters.115 The sultan’s gradual withdrawal from active

114 Ebū’s-su‘ūd, Irshād al-‘Aql, 4: 262-265.

government since the time of Mehmed II not only brought about the rise of the Grand Vizier as the chief executive in government, but also tempted the sultan’s relatives and servants to exert influence on government in competition or alliance with the Grand Vizier and other high officials. Short-lived factions and shifting alliances between the sultan’s entourage and high officials were instrumental in the operation of government. Added to this equation was the strengthening tendency of dynastic women marrying statesmen, resulting in the rise of a series of vizier bridegrooms. Among the nine grand viziers of Süleyman’s reign, for example, five of them acquired the status of ‘dāmād’ by being son-in-laws of the Ottoman dynasty.\(^\text{116}\)

The grand viziers who had both the shortest and longest terms in office were sons-in-laws and owed their tenure in office largely to their wives. Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha served two times for a total of fourteen years despite his unpopularity among the Janissaries, a party whose satisfaction was crucial for the survival of the grand vizier.\(^\text{117}\) Rüstem Pasha was able to remain in power thanks to his wife Mihrimah’s and mother-in-law Hürrem’s unremitting support. A less lucky grand vizier, Lütfi Pasha, who philosophically objected to the interference of intermediaries in government matters, lost his position when his wife complained to her brother Süleyman after quarreling with her husband.\(^\text{118}\) Although Rüstem Pasha succeeded in the practice of maintaining a nepotistic vizierate, it was Lütfi Pasha’s vision of an independent vizier that became a motto in the

\(^{116}\) These were İbrâhîm Pasha (1523-36), Lütfi Pasha (1539-41), Rüstem Pasha (1544-53 and 1955-61), Ahmed Pasha (1553-55) and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha (1565-79). Yılmaz Öztuna, Devletler ve Hânedanlar: Türkiye (1074-1990), vol. 2 (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1989), 2: 942.


\(^{118}\) Tayyip Gökbilgin, “Lütfi Paşa”, İA.
political rhetoric of subsequent political advisors. But such cases as that of Lütfi Pasha convinced ‘Alâyi and ‘Arîfî that the grand vizier needed talismanic help in running the vizierate. ‘Alâyi prescribed a specific charm that would make the vizier’s word effective in the presence of the sultan and protect him against any harm that his words might incur.\textsuperscript{119} The prayer was designed to address a real need in dynastic politics where it was a common complaint of grand viziers that the sultan usually favored the wishes of other palace people at the expense of the vizier’s judgments.

More important than making the vizier’s word effective was the question of ensuring the vizier’s safety in the web of dynastic intrigues for which ‘Alâyi and ‘Arîfî prescribed several prayers. One prayer, offered by ‘Alâyi, was said to protect the vizier in the sultan’s presence.\textsuperscript{120} Another prayer, prescribed by both authors, was to be performed whenever the vizier grew afraid of the sultan.\textsuperscript{121} The psychology that brought such prayers into political theory manifests itself in the case of Pîrî Pasha, who occupied a prominent place in the memory of later generations as one of the most capable and respected viziers. He is reported to have asked to be executed by Sultan Selim, because he believed that, sooner or later, the sultan would have him killed anyway, and he no longer wanted to live in constant fear of death.\textsuperscript{122} Despite the wit of the story, Pîrî Pasha’s anxiety was very much real for he already had witnessed the summary executions of three of his predecessors, Muṣṭafâ Pasha, Ahmed Pasha and Yûnus Pasha, privileging him as the

\textsuperscript{119} ‘Alâyi, Düstürî’l-Vüzerâ, 56.

\textsuperscript{120} ‘Alâyi, Düstürî’l-Vüzerâ, 57.

\textsuperscript{121} ‘Arîfî, ‘Uqûd al-Jawâhir, 27a; ‘Alâyi, Düstürî’l-Vüzerâ, 52.

only surviving grand vizier from the reign of Selīm I.123 Showing how such an execution anxiety was ingrained in the Ottoman political psyche, a late sixteenth century bureaucrat and historian Muṣṭafā ‘Ālī reported an account from Celâlzâde who witnessed that the statesmen during the reign of Selīm I would curse their adversaries by saying that “may God make you a vizier to Sultan Selīm.”124 An anonymous poet’s couplet captures the remnant of contemporary trepidation about Selīm I and the risk of being his vizier in Ottoman political culture:

A rival cannot avoid death
Even if he becomes a vizier to Selīm125

More than Pîrî Pâşâ’s anxiety or Selīm’s execution of three grand viziers, it was Îbrâhîm Pâşâ’s secret execution that most struck contemporaries. After his execution, the Ottoman chronicles replaced his privileged title of Maḳbūl (Favored) with one that denoted his tragic end Maḳṭūl (Executed), and later sources commonly referred to him as Îbrâhîm the Executed. His death served as a telling case examined in later works of political theory and chronicles in order to draw lessons about the vizierate and government. One immediate lesson learned by his successors was to forge strong

123 Koca Muṣṭafâ Pâşâ (1511-12), Dukâkinoğlu Dāmâd Aḥmed Pâşâ (1514-15) and Yûnûs Pâşâ (1517), were executed. Ḥâdîm Sinâîn Pâşâ (1516-17) was killed on the battlefield. See Öztuna, Devletler ve Hânedanlar, 942.


125 Rakibin ölmesine çare yoktur
Meğer vezir ola Sultan Selime

Uzunçarşılı, Saray Teşkilâtı, 84.
relations with the dignitaries of the palace who were believed to have managed İbrâhîm Pâşâ’s execution. Ottoman political writers and chroniclers were by no means strangers to executions but they were still surprised by the sudden and unreasonable execution of the Sultan’s grand vizier and closest friend. Despite apologetic attempts to prove that İbrâhîm Pâşâ’s falling out of favor was the result of his own greed and cruelty, the real reason for his execution apparently remained a mystery and an object of curiosity for later Ottomans. Seventeenth century biographer ‘Aṭā’ī, for example, reported that Süleymân dismissed two military judges from office on the way back from the siege of Corfu in 1537 just because they were curious as to why the sultan had İbrâhîm Pâşâ executed.\(^\text{126}\)

Firmly entrenched in the contemporary psyche, the memory of this incident was still fresh at the time when ‘Alāyî and ‘Ārifî compiled their works on the vizierate. Muḥyî-i Gûlşenî (d. 1015/1606), their younger contemporary, who shared their sufistic world view, gave a vivid demonstration of the role of supernatural powers in the political prospects of statesmen. In his hagiography of İbrâhîm-i Gûlşenî, Muḥyî reported that İbrâhîm-i Gûlşenî had told the then low-ranking palace official Rüstem Pâşâ that he would become a grand vizier, and had him appointed to this position by his prayers. İbrâhîm-i Gûlşenî, a popular Ḥalvetî sheikh and a founder of its Gûlşenîyye branch, who had a strained relationship with İbrâhîm Pâşâ but enjoyed high esteem among his adversaries, rewarded Rüstem Pâşâ with the highest rank in the Empire for his unflinching belief in the sheikh’s miraculous powers.\(^\text{127}\) Moreover, as told by Muḥyî,


while İbrāhīm Pāşā was busy devising various intrigues to inflict death upon the sheikh, İbrāhīm-i Gûlsênî managed to have him executed with his spiritual powers. At the time, Süleymān was already forewarned by his geomancer that a person with the name İbrāhīm was preparing to take over his throne. According to Muḥyī, Süleymān executed İbrāhīm Pāşā because, after witnessing the miracles and spiritual powers of the sheikh İbrāhīm-i Gûlsênî, he realized that the İbrāhīm prognosticated by his geomancer must be İbrāhīm the grand vizier who had already manifested signs of coveting his throne.

More than two decades after the tragedy of İbrāhīm Pāşā, ‘Alāyī wrote his Düstūr ’l-Vûzerâ for Lâlâ Muṣṭâfâ Pāşâ and ‘Ārifī wrote his ’Uqūd al-Jawāhir for Grand Vizier Semiz ‘Alî Pāşâ, including prayer sections in their works as a prescription for execution anxiety and spiritual ammunition for standing firm in running the vizierate. As a specific remedy to recuperate the psychology of the vizier, characterized by anxiety and insecurity, ‘Alāyī further provided the vizier with prayers that would lead to a long life. Although ‘Ārifī did not gear his prayers toward such a conspicuous purpose, he nevertheless did not neglect to wish for a long life for Semiz ‘Alî Pāşâ in a laudatory poem that ended his treatise.

Contrary to the two authors’ efforts to provide the grand vizier with relief from anxiety, the fear of execution was among the most efficient tools in the hands of the sultan to make his officials work properly. In addition to the common wisdom in

128 Muḥyī-yi Gûlsênî, Menâḳib-i İbrâhîm-i Gûlsênî, 406, 430.
129 Muḥyī-yi Gûlsênî, Menâḳib-i İbrâhîm-i Gûlsênî, 398.
130 ‘Alāyī, Düstūr ’l-Vûzerâ, 50.
Ottoman government practice, works that addressed the sultan on rulership promoted the idea that he should keep his officials in fear and should not tolerate abuses. Despite holding the highest office in the Empire and being the most powerful authority after the sultan, sixteenth-century political culture made the vizier more vulnerable to executions and dismissals, and less immune to abuses than other officials or subjects. In such a context, the inculcating of fear in the hearts of officials was considered a way to ensure of effective rulership. In response, authors who were concerned with the well-being of the viziers to whom they dedicated their works advised them to rely on spiritual means in order to get psychological relief, gain a sense of security, overcome obstacles in life, and achieve their objectives.

Besides the specific reasons behind their prescription, the objectives that these prayers and talismans were designed and prescribed to achieve also reveal the type of vizier envisioned in these texts. According to these accounts, two prominent features that were expected from the vizierate become clear. First, the vizier, above all, had to possess spiritual strength in order to face the challenges demanded by this position. Praying was not only an instrument for success but was a part of the spiritual training and piety necessary to forge the type of personality expected from a vizier. As the vizier was asked not to compromise religion, to tell the sultan the truth and prefer God’s will to that of the Sultan’s, only a man of strong spiritual training could undertake such a daring task. Considering that religion was promoted to be a benchmark of good rulership and an effective check on the use of power, the piety of the vizier was deemed crucial in observing the high standards of government in accordance with religion and prevailing conceptions of justice. Second, since applying justice, observing religion, and efficient
government all depended on the vizier’s capabilities, these prayers were designed to make the vizier a useful deputy to the sultan and an efficient governor at the same time. Because the vizier, being the intellect in government, had to govern both the subjects and the sultan, these prayers were designed to facilitate his task and strengthen his position vis-à-vis his rivals, the subjects and the sultan. Given the endemic insecurity of viziers in Ottoman political culture, these prayers were designed to enhance the vizier’s spirituality and provide him with an auxiliary means to overcome challenges at a time when there was no other means to secure his safety.

By comparison, such a vision of the vizierate was in marked contrast with what Lütfi Paşa had envisioned. While ‘Alâyî and ‘Ârifî resorted to prayers to secure the vizier’s safety and make him an efficient executive, in Āṣafnâme, Lütfi Paşa prescribed certain protective measures for the vizier and other statesmen. He advised, for example, that “the grand vizier should appoint an intelligent and able commander and scribe to oversee the military corps. Unless the corps are under control there is no comfort for the grand vizier.”

As fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Ottoman history taught, securing the alliance and loyalty of the corps was one of the most crucial prerequisites of an efficient and safe vizierate. Failing to gain the favor of the janissaries cost many Ottoman viziers as well as dynastic heirs their lives. Advising the grand vizier to appoint the janissary commander also indicates that Lütfi Paşa recognized the vizierate as the sole authority after the sultan. In Ottoman practice, despite the grand vizier’s top authority over the government, certain powers such as the appointment of janissary commanders and

defterdârs were left exclusively in the hands of the sultan. Thus Lütfi Pașa, instead of offering enchantments or prayers as Alâyî and Ārifî did, proposed practical measures that could strengthen the position of the vizier in government.

The Pen Beats the Sword: The Ottoman Vizierate in Crisis

The fundamental principle of regulating property and governing the military is to delegate the vizierate to men of the pen, people of sound judgment and wisdom. These are endowed with knowledge, wisdom, justness, and the commendable traits of who are noble and pure spirited.

[They are required to be as such] Because their vices would have comprehensive and continuous consequences. The sultan needs a deputy (nâ‘ib u khalîfa) who has both knowledge and good morals, dispenses justice, and is experienced in judgment and affairs. Major affairs and positions should be delegated to him. If he succeeds in these tasks then he becomes trustworthy in the position of vizierate. Otherwise the realm could not be entrusted to a vicious ignorant. The people, who are entrusted by God, could not be entrusted to someone who is not trustworthy.133

With this advice, Bîdîsî instructed the sultan to appoint the vizier from among men of the pen, a social group to which he himself belonged. By implication, he opposed the appointment of the vizier from among men of the sword. He had a higher esteem for the learned community and he was a staunch proponent of the advancement of learned people in government ranks. In his vision of ideal government, a bureaucracy composed of learned men should have primacy over the military. He was convinced that a vizier chosen from among men of the pen would not only be morally superior but would also be more capable of running the government efficiently, in comparison to a vizier from a

133 Bitlisî, Kanun-ı Şâhenşâhi, 128.
military background. Thus in running the government, including the bureaucracy and the military, scholarly skills would make one a better vizier than military abilities.

In promoting the idea of the supremacy of men of the pen over men of the sword and of choosing the vizier from among the former, Bidlīsī was speaking for a school of thought that prevailed in the Süleymānic age. ‘Alāyī, who devoted the second chapter of his treatise to the lives of past viziers, finds himself in full agreement with Bidlīsī, extolling such exemplary viziers as Khālid Barmakī, Yahyā b. Barmak, and Nizām al-Mulk, and Abū ‘Abbād as learned men, patrons of learning and the arts.134 In the writings of ‘Alāyī and his contemporaries, the military abilities of past viziers received much less attention than their intellectual capabilities and accomplishments in civilian aspects of government. In demonstrating the indispensability of a learned vizier in government ‘Alāyī portrayed a picture in which a bad vizier appeared warlike and ignorant, the opposite of a good vizier:

Anūshirvān the Just stated: The bad vizier is the one who instigates the sultan to make wars and encourages him to fight when a solution is possible, thus spending wealth for arms and getting people killed and causing misery for their souls. He also stated that the ruler whose vizier is ignorant looks like a cloud that appears and shows off but does not produce thunder or rain.135

Celâlzade was a wholehearted subscriber to the vision of the vizierate outlined by Bidlīsī and ‘Alāyī. He knew of the works and deeds of Bidlīsī whom he admired and praised in verse. Although it is not certain whether he read Bidlīsī’s Qānūn-i

135 ‘Alāyī, Dūstūr ‘l-Vüzerā, 16.
Shâhenshâhî and Selîmshâhnâme, his depiction of the reign of Selîm I in his Selînnâme fully agrees with that of Bidlîsî whose ideas he certainly shared in envisioning the Ottoman government:

The sword and the pen are twins, the reed pen and dagger are partners in government. In proving the case, both are strong evidence. In bringing about the desired outcome, both are righteous forerunners. Without them, there is no order in the realm. However, benefits of the pen are greater. The blessed pen is the enlightening sun of the realm in the daylight, and its illuminating moon in eliminating the dark. The pen can find a sword, but the sword cannot find a pen. The task of the sword is destruction, destitution and injustice. The benefit of the pen is prosperity, flourishing, and affluence. Until that time [the reign of Bâyezîd II] the well-being of the Ottoman land was the work of a few Asaph-like viziers (vezîr-i Âşaf-nażîr) and enchanting chancellors (debîr-i bî nażîr-i sihr-tesbîr).

Celâl-zâde reached that judgment in his Selînnâme after he examined the chaotic political turbulence of the final years of Bâyezîd II’s reign. As a firm believer in the pivotal role of the vizierate in government, he was convinced that the corruption in the institution of the vizierate and the promotion of unworthy people to the ranks of the vizierate were the root causes of the overall crisis that hit the reign of Bâyezîd II. Because Bâyezîd II abandoned the well-established conventions of promotion in Ottoman government he let ignorant viziers, who did not belong to men of the pen, fill the viziereal ranks for much of his reign. Because these viziers, most of whom were the sultan’s personal servants, were uneducated and did not know the principles of government, they instituted completely arbitrary practices contrary to established

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136 Celâl-zâde, Selîm-nâme, 55.
conventions, leading to widespread injustices and failures. For Celâlzâde, this crisis of the state during the reign of Bâyezîd II was nothing but a crisis of the vizierate.

As a historian, the lesson he drew from the reign of Bâyezîd II was that the vizier should belong to men of the pen, a lesson that substantiated the views he advocated in his book on political ethics. Like Bidlîsî, he considered viziers as belonging to men of the pen within the perceived fourfold scheme of Ottoman polity. In *Mevâhibü’l-Ḥallâḳ*, he started the chapter on the vizierate by first praising the pen and then profiling a vizier whose prominent trait was the skillful use of his intellectual and bureaucratic skills. In one telling illustration, he likened the famous Jâfar Barmak, a vizier well-known for his eloquence and legal erudition at the court of the Abbasid Caliph Hârûn al-Rashîd, to Solomon’s vizier Asaph. Celâlzâde then described Jâfar as a scribe (*kâtib*) and instructed the reader that the Persians called *kâtib* a vizier: “what is meant by this vizierate is the ruler’s scribe, for the Persians call the scribe vizier.”138 This conception of the vizierate displayed in *Mevâhibü’l-Ḥallâḳ* was inspired by his position as chief of the chancery.

In interpreting the famous quotation in which Caliph Ma’mûn enumerated the qualities he expected from an ideal vizier, Celâlzâde stressed the importance and functions of a scribe in the sultanate.139 Celâlzâde used Ma’mûn’s portrayal, which was used by Mâwardî to illustrate the vizier of delegation (*wâzîr al-tafwîd*), to show the qualifications and services that could be brought by a learned man into government

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137 For an elaborate exposition of this fourfold division of society as men of the sword, men of the pen, artisans and merchants, and men of agriculture and husbandry, see Kmalizade, *Aḍlāk-i ’Ala’î*, 3: 6-7; For pre-Ottoman debates on men of the pen and men of the sword see Louise Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 168-173.

138 For Ja’far b. Barmak see D. Sourdel, “Baramika”, *EI*.

service. This illustration was particularly appealing for Celâlzâde because it highlighted the most exalted qualifications of a learned vizier and did not include skills that could be gained from a military background. The ideal vizier profiled in Selîmname and Mevâhibî’l-Ḥallâk was none other than the debîr (secretary).

Despite his never explicitly stating that the debîr should rise to the vizierate, when explaining the qualifications expected from a vizier, Celâlzâde always presented the debîr as the perfect model. A master in belles-lettres, he wrote on the vizierate in an equivocal language in which the debîr and the vizier were simultaneously explained. Having favored the Persian tradition of the vizierate which mostly consisted of bureaucratic and scribal functions, Celâlzâde did not make a legal or administrative differentiation of the vizierate. He placed much more importance on the literary qualities of a vizier than his military and administrative qualities and he considered the vizier only a high-ranking man of the pen. Therefore most of the stories he related to illustrate the vizierate were about the pen and literary excellence. Indifferent to juristic formulations, he did not distinguish among kinds of viziers; nor was he concerned with

140 “It has been related that al-Ma’mûn, may God have mercy on him, wrote on the subject of choosing a minister: “I have sought for my affairs a man in whom all virtues are combined. He is chaste and upright, cultured by the arts and chiseled by experience; a man to trust with secrets and rely on in weighty matters, who knows when to be prudently silent, talks only when well informed, and is perceptive enough to capture the slightest gesture and the most indirect allusion. In addition, he is distinguished by the assertiveness of rulers, the composure of sages, the modesty of the learned, and the intelligence of jurists. That man is grateful for favor, patient when affronted, never exchanging today’s gain for tomorrow’s loss, and he wins the hearts of men with his charming speech and eloquence.” After Mâwardî’s inclusion of this story in the section on the vizierate in his Ordinances it was widely quoted in political treatises as a comprehensive and definitive illustration of the traits expected from an ideal vizier. See Mâwardî, Ordinances, 23.

141 Although the Ottoman government had offices corresponding to those performed by debîr in Eastern Islamic states it was not a part of the official terminology to characterize any Ottoman office. But its meaning and the function a debîr performs were well known to Ottoman officials. For a brief history of the term and the office of debîr in non-Ottoman dynasties see Sadi S. Kucur, “Debîr”, TDVİA.

142 In his study of the vizierate in early Muslim states, Hamit Alaslan noted that the institution originated from the scribal service under the Umayyads and the Abbasids. See Alaslan, “İslâm Devletlerinde Vezirlik Müessesesine Bir Bakiş.”
the authority and hierarchy of the vizierate.

In addition to their own scholarly convictions about political ideals, these proponents of the prominence of men of the pen in government were also advocating the primacy of the social group to which they belonged. Despite the absence of any sharp lines of distinction among various identities and social affiliations, Celâlzâde and Bidlîşî displayed a bias favoring the bureaucrats, the ʿulemâ and the Muslim-born elements in government service over against the military, the devşirme, and the palace personnel. When they praised they usually highlighted such qualities as nobility, scholarly knowledge, secretarial skills, and piety whereas they pointed to ignorance, impiety, and ignobility in their denunciations.

When promoting the idea of a learned vizier, these authors were aware of the tension between the social groups vying high positions in government. Given that there was no division of labor between the viziers in central government, and in light of the constant tension between viziers coming from these two career tracks, Celâlzâde’s proposal seems a viable solution. An endemic feature of the Ottoman vizierate since its obscure origins was the constant competition between men of the pen and men of the sword for vizieral ranks in government. Despite exceptions and breaches of established conventions, career tracks for the military and the bureaucrats were distinguished and predictable, until they reached the level of the vizierate. The position of the vizierate was not only accessible through the bureaucracy and the military but also open to virtually any member of the ruling establishment, including the palace personnel and the ʿulemâ.

Conventionally, the sultan was more at ease to interfering in the promotions for the vizierate than the religious establishment. Despite the institutionalization of the
vizierate and its differentiation from previous Islamic polities, the vizierate was still considered an institution strictly tied to the sultan. Moreover, because the vizierate lacked a division of labor, this rank was open to any candidate, with no special qualifications required. Thus for a candidate who lacked professional skills but gained the favor of the sultan it was easier and more desirable to get a vizieral position or a governorship than to be appointed to a bureaucratic position such as chief of the chancery or treasurer. This character of the vizierate made it equally accessible to any aspiring candidate and made it a battleground for various factions competing for high positions. Lastly, the vizierate was not just a high position in government but a social status granted by the sultan. Once conferred, the title Pāşā, which is also accorded to the highest ranking military officials, was kept for life by the recipient.

At the time when Celâlzâde and Bidlîsî were writing, the supremacy of men of the sword or the devşirme in the Ottoman vizierate was already well-established. Before the conquest of Constantinople, among the twelve grand viziers eleven were from the ʿulemā and only one came from the military.143 Showing the early origins of competition and the policy of seeking a balance of power, most viziers of lesser rank were from the military.144 The primacy of men of the pen in the vizierate of the early Ottoman Empire was a continuation of pre-Ottoman models of the vizierate, particularly those of the Ilkhānids and the Seljukids where the vizier was a man of the pen and the vizierate was limited to the government of the bureaucracy.145 In this early Ottoman model, the vizier

143 Taneri, Vezîr-i Aʿzamlık, 51, 129.

144 Taneri, Vezîr-i Aʿzamlık, 54.

as head of the bureaucracy and the *beglerbeg* as head of the military were independent from each other in their respective spheres of authority. With the appointment of Ḥalīl Ḥayreddīn, with the title of Pāṣā, to the office in 1364, the vizier became the head of both the bureaucracy and the military, and the vizierate began to gain its truly Ottoman character.\(^{146}\) This combination of two previously distinct powers in the vizierate made this position the highest career objective for the military, bureaucracy, and the religious establishment. Competition was suppressed in favor of the military and the *deşhirme* class after the execution of Ḥalīl Pāṣā in 1453 by Meḥmed II, ending a period characterized by the supremacy of men of the pen in government.

The ascendance of Pīrī Pāṣā to the vizierate was enthusiastic ally acclaimed by both Bidlīsī and Celâlzāde. Celâlzāde had more reason than Bidlīsī to portray Pīrī Pāṣā as an ideal vizier because he entered the government service as a protegē of the Grand Vizier.\(^{147}\) Pīrī Pāṣā came from a prominent ‘ulemā family and rose to the vizierate from the rank of treasurer (*defterdār*). Starting with Lüflī Pāṣā’s Āṣafnāme, his image as a model grand vizier became a common motif in Ottoman reformist literature in which his piety, knowledge, training, nobility, relation with the sultan, and exemplary deeds in government were praised. His appointment to the grand vizierate, however, was an aberration in the pattern of vizieral appointments started by Meḥmed II, caused by Selīm I’s distrust of the viziers from military and *deşirme* backgrounds. Upon Pīrī Pāṣā’s forced resignation in 1523, men of the sword and the *deşirme* once again monopolized the grand vizierate but the competition between the two groups continued. Against this

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\(^{146}\) Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 1: 501.

backdrop, Bidlīsī came up with a viable solution to accommodate the conflicting interests of both men of the pen and men of the sword:

The sultan certainly needs two kinds of viziers: One responsible for property (mülk u mâl), the other responsible for the military (sipâh u ricâl). These viziers should be endowed with qualities and traits congruent with the group they are responsible for in order to rightly know the conditions of those who obey them, meet their needs, and ease their affairs properly, so that shortage of income, hardship in life and misery would not spread among the military, and enemies would not contemplate victory against the realm because of weakness, factionalism, and misery in the military. The vizier [of military] should occupy himself with protecting the military, preparations for war, increasing the signs of victory, and conquering lands. In the same vein, the vizier of property should occupy himself with provisioning soldiers on the battlefield, preparing military equipment, building, serving, and enriching lands. Security and order depend on the military, and the strength of the military depends on the abundance of property.  

In this outline, without invoking Ottoman practice, Bidlīsī envisioned a dual vizierate by assigning a vizier for each of the two principle components of government, men of the sword and men of the pen. Despite its idiosyncratic appearance, this novel vision for the Ottoman government had precedents in certain previous polities such as those of the Buyids, Kharazmshahs and Ilkhans. Bidlīsī, himself a well-versed historian and an immigrant from Persia, was familiar with the state tradition as well as the literary culture inherited from those dynasties that once ruled Persia. Before taking refuge in the Ottoman Empire in 1501, he worked as a scribe and tutor for princes in the

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148 Bitlīsī, Kanun-i Şâhenşâhi, 125-6.

149 Lambton, “Wâzîr,” EI².
court of the Aqquyunlu dynasty that succeeded the Ilkhans in Eastern Asia Minor and Persia. Shortly after the battle of Çaldırán, the Safavid ruler Ismā‘īl also experimented with the idea of a dual vizierate by appointing two regents (vakīl), one for the bureaucracy and the other for the military, a project that soon failed because by the opposition Қизилбāş who traditionally regarded the military power as their reserve. In proposing a dual vizierate, Bidlīsī mainly drew inspiration from the pre-Safavid state tradition of Persia with which he was more familiar.

Despite its historical precedents, the dual vizierate was an alien concept in political theory for no other Ottoman author seems to have been aware of it. Whether Bidlīsī borrowed this model from a previous work on the vizierate, he certainly had in mind the well-known conception of the body politic in four parts, consisting of men of sword, men of the pen, artisans and merchants, and men of agriculture and husbandry. The first two components of this body politic formed the ruling class, and Ottoman practice as well as ideals were roughly in accordance with this model. In the broadest sense, men of the pen, in Ottoman polity, corresponded to the religious establishment and the bureaucracy. Believing that each estate require different skills and training, one administrative and the other military, Bidlīsī thought that assigning the proper vizier to each of these estates was indispensable for the proper conduct of rulership.

The ruler’s helpers are two: One is men of the sword and one is men of the pen. Conquest, security, elimination of harm and enmity of enemies depend on men of the sword as the following verse points out “we have made the iron, wherein is great violence and advantages to men” (Quran 57: 25). Preservation of sultanic laws (kavānin-i pādishahī), writing letters, delivering messages, governmental affairs.

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150 Abdulkadir Özcan, “İdris-i Bitlisî,” TDVİA.
151 Floor, Safavid Government Institutions, 10.
carrying out orders and judgments depend on men of the pen as referred by God “who taught
(them to write) with the pen” (Quran 96: 4).152

Unlike Celâlzade and ‘Alâyî, however, Bidlîsî did not assign the vizierate a
pivotal function in government. He wrote on the vizierate only in relation to the
government of the military, and paid little attention to the vizier’s relationship to the
sultan or his subjects. He was a staunch believer in the idea of a strong sultan (pâdîshâh-i
nâfîz al-farmân) as the most fundamental requisition of ideal rulership.153 His vision of
an ideal ruler who combined both the temporal and spiritual realms of rulership left little
room for the vizierate. But more than his mystical convictions, command of history and
training in political theory, it was Bidlîsî’s unique experience in government service that
led him to formulate a dual design of the vizierate. In his Selîmshâhnâme, written
towards the end of his and Selîm I’s lives, he displayed an overall dissatisfaction with the
viziers whom he had observed during his service in government. The only vizier he
praised from the reign of Selîm I, for example, was Pîrî Pâşâ, towards whom he had a
marked bias because they both came from a scholarly background, and were men of the
pen. But even Pîrî Pâşâ, who epitomized the Ottoman vizierate in the assessment of
many later political treaties, did not appear as a great vizier in Bidlîsî’s account. He
received praise because he gained the sultan’s confidence and restored the prestige of the
vizierate after a series of tragedies that led to the execution of several viziers. As a
dynastic historian, Bidlîsî found the sultan’s judgment correct in ordering these
executions and blamed the viziers for being incapable and untrustworthy.

152 Bitlîsî, Kanun-i Şâhensâhi, 123.
153 Bitlîsî, Kanun-i Şâhensâhi, 123.
As a sincere admirer of Selīm I and a believer in his exceptional qualities, Bidlīsī developed a very low opinion of the vizierate overall. Unlike his predecessors Meḥmed II and Bāyeẓīd II, Selīm I was the kind of sultan who enjoyed governing his realm all by himself, to the extent that was humanly possible. Ottoman chronicles are replete with testimonies that he spent most of his days and nights in deliberating affairs of state. He even attended the meetings of the imperial council, a practice that had been largely abandoned since the time of Meḥmed II. Ruling the realm in this way left little space for the vizierate to function independently during the reign of Selīm I. In fact, some of the viziers who incurred the sultan’s wrath were victims of their own previous experience as viziers during the lax reign of Bāyeẓīd II.

Thus the condition of the vizierate had drastically changed with the enthronement of Selīm I, whose unique experience in succession taught him to run the realm differently than his father. It was Selīm I’s own view of the vizierate that had a profound effect on Bidlīsī’s perception of the Ottoman vizierate. Such an experience led Bidlīsī to undermine the role of the vizierate in government as well. In the Selīmshāhnāme, despite his overall sanction of consultation as an indispensable principle of government, he severely criticized the viziers who displayed views contrary to those of the sultan in consultative meetings. Believing that the sultan was inspired, the ideal vizier appeared in Bidlīsī’s depiction as one who successfully executes orders rather than providing alternative views and taking an active part in decision-making. In Selīm I’s succession and subsequent reign he observed that the primacy of viziers in government led to corruption while the primacy of a strong and engaging sultan led to order and success.

154 Bidlīsī, Selīm Şah-nāme, 199-201.
Unlike his contemporaries, Bidlîsî had a concept of ideal rulership that rested on the direct government of a strong sultan rather than government by delegation. Bidlîsî’s contemporary Kemâlpâşâzâde captured the image of a strong sultan in a long elegy he composed upon the death of Selîm I:

> With pure thoughts and Asaph’s judgment
> He was in no need of a vizier or a counselor\(^{155}\)

As related by Bidlîsî, as well as Celâlzâde, who portrayed a similar picture, the vizierate’s loss of prestige was a result of a deep distrust between Bâyezîd II’s viziers and Selîm I, while the latter was still a prince. Because Selîm I was the youngest of competing princes, the viziers in office conspired against him and Prince Ҫorküd, in order to secure the succession of their elder brother Aḥmed.\(^{156}\) Selîm I finally succeeded to the throne by foiling a number of plots and winning a series of battles against the shifting alliances formed by his father, brothers, and the viziers. As a better student of Ottoman history, he succeeded because he secured the support of the Janissaries that always proved to be more definitive in winning succession struggles than resorting to intrigues orchestrated by viziers and other officials. Selîm I succeeded as the least likely candidate by defeating a powerful alliance and dethroning his father, for the first and only time in Ottoman history. This made him believe in his own skills and capabilities to rule

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\(^{155}\) Hem şaff-ärâyidi hem Âşaf-rây
Ne vezîr isteridi vu ne müşîr

the realm and undertake daunting tasks. Experiencing such conspiracies and intrigues, whose central actors were viziers, convinced him not to rely on viziers and made him a sceptic about the real intentions of his own viziers. His unique experience in succession must have, at least partly, bred the vigor and self reliance of his unprecedented zeal for conquest, his cruelty against his viziers and other officials, and his unconventional and harsh measures in government.

The Juristic Conception of the Vizierate: Decoding the Spectacular and Confounding Vizierate of İbrāhīm Pāşā

The brief period of a strong and controlling sultan ended with the early death of Selīm I in 1520. A year later, the period of learned viziers came to an end with Pīrī Pāşā’s resignation. Pīrī Pāşā was succeeded by İbrāhīm Pāşā, whose appointment took place against everything Bidlīsī and Celâlzāde advocated. Although he received the best education available for a āl, he did not belong to the men of pen or possess the literary and scholarly skills Bidlīsī and Celâlzade expected from a vizier. He rose to the vizierate at a young age thanks to his closeness to Süleymān as the sultan’s page and childhood friend. What struck his contemporaries most was his endowment with unprecedented powers. The vision of the vizierate advocated by Bidlīsī and Celâlzāde, who reasoned within the Persianate tradition which emphasized the vizier’s literary skills and conceived of him as the head of bureaucracy, did not accommodate the type of vizierate İbrāhīm Pāşā represented. Thus a different conception of the vizierate was

157 Jenkins, Ibrahim Pasha, 22.
called for in order to explain İbrāhīm Paşâ’s vizierate. Semerkandî, a jurist who
dedicated his work to İbrāhīm Paşâ, started his treatise with a juristic formulation of the
vizierate:

The vizierate has two parts: The first part is the vizier of delegation. This is the one upon whom
the sultan confers authority to govern the realm (tadbīr al-mamlaka) and delegates the execution
of its affairs in accordance with his opinion and reasoning (nazarihi wa ijtihādī). Permission
alone from the sultan does not suffice for the installation of this governorship. Contract (‘aqd) and
pronouncement (taṣrīḥ) are required, stating “I appointed you as my deputy and delegated the
vizierate to you.” The vizierate of delegation does not take effect just because the vizier has
cupidity and possesses power to exert authority and exercise control over appointments,
dismissals, rewards, preventions, diminutions, and augmentations, in accordance with his
decisions. The second part is the vizier of execution. This is the one whom the sultan makes an
intermediary between himself and the people. Permission alone from the sultan suffices for this
appointment. He is required to be trustworthy, righteous, abstemious, and free from whims. It is
not permissible for him to go beyond what is commanded, to oversee the secular court, to appoint
trustees, to institute ministers, or to use the treasury. It is not permissible for him to be an
unbeliever, contrary to the opinion of MAWARDI.158

Semerkandî, adopted this division of the vizierate into tafwīd and tanfīz branches
from MAWARDI, whose view acquired a canonical status in juristic political theory and was
widely referred to in political works of different sorts.159 Like Semerkandî, ‘Ārifî, a jurist

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158 Semerkandî, Laṭā‘if al-Afkār, 4a.

159 MAWARDI, Ordinances, 23-31; An older contemporary of Semerkandî, Ruzbihān Khunjī, who wrote a
comprehensive juristic manual of rulership for Muhammed Shaybānī, explained the vizierate within the
MAWARDI paradigm as well. See FAZL ALLĀH b. RŪZBIHĀN KHNJĪ, Sulūk al-Mulūk, ed. MUHAMMAD ‘ALĪ

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and a mystic, despite the overall mystical and moral cast of his treatment of the subject, started his treatise by first explaining the classical juristic formulation of the vizierate.\textsuperscript{160} In this profile, the \textit{wazīr al-tafwīd} appeared to be the one to whom the sultan delegated all governmental authority. \textit{Wizāra al-tanfīz}, however, was an intermediary between the sultan and his subjects. He did not have to be publicly known and the sultan’s permission was sufficient for his appointment. He had authority only over what was delegated to him. In order to differentiate between the vizier and the \textit{safīr}, ‘Ārifī further added that if he had some discretion over the matter for which he was appointed, then it was more appropriate to call him the vizier; otherwise, it was better to call him a \textit{safīr}.

Echoing their attitude towards the sultanate, few Ottoman authors writing on government displayed any interest in the juristic conception of the vizierate. Even Țăsköprızade, who devoted a separate chapter to the science of the manners of viziers in his \textit{Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda}, did not mention legal aspects of the vizierate. The books he recommended on this subject were not juristic works but moralistic advice books on rulership and the vizierate.\textsuperscript{161} The prevailing attitude among writers on the vizierate was to remain indifferent to the types of vizierate elaborated in the juristic literature or the institutional features developed in Ottoman government. A well-established convention

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\textsuperscript{160} “The \textit{wazīr al-tafwīd} is the one whom the sultan authorized to govern affairs of state through his opinion and authority in accordance with his discretion. The permissibility of this vizierate could not be denied as God stated in the story of Moses: “And give me a Minister from my family, Aaron, my brother. Add to my strength through him, and make him share my task” (20: 29-32). If that is permissible in prophethood it should be more so in rulership, because the ruler is responsible for all the affairs of the community and he cannot undertake all of this without making the delegated vizier his deputy. It is more reasonable for the ruler to seek assistance from the vizier than carrying out the task alone because, in this way, he would be more distant from errors and most protected from corruption. The author of Ordinances of Government mentioned the conditions necessary for the vizierate.” See ‘ Ārifī, \textit{Uqūd al-Jawāḥir}, 3b.
\end{flushright}

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\textsuperscript{161} In addition to two general works on rulership, Ghazālī’s \textit{Naṣīḥa al-Mulūk} and Tūrūshi’s \textit{Sirāj al-Mulūk}, Țăsköprızade recommended \textit{Kitāb al-‘Ishāra fi Adab al-Wizāra} without mentioning its author who was probably Ibn al-Khatīb (d. 1374). Țăsköprızade, \textit{Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda}, 1: 414.
\end{flushright}
in these texts was to refer to the vizier in a generic sense as the sultan’s deputy in
government, a person who might correspond to the grand vizier in the actual Ottoman
government of the time. Such prominent authors as Bidlīsī, Ṭāskopřizade, and Celâlzade,
for example, as well as other accounts from the period, did not distinguish between the
tafwiד and tanfיז forms of the vizierate but nevertheless employed the term tafwiד when
referring to appointments to the vizierate or to delegation of powers.162 The longest text
on the vizierate in this period, Düstûr’ül-Vüzerā of ‘Alāyī, for example, despite being
dedicated to the Vizier Muṣṭafā Pāšā as a prescriptive manual, did not address legal or
administrative aspects of the vizierate. Thus, by making only scattered references to
juristic and administrative aspects of the position, political authors conceived of the
vizierate in the broadest sense while focusing on the personal qualifications and moral
traits required for the office.

The Māwardīan scheme, although well established in juristic literature, seems not
to have found the same clear and sound application in actual government, and the
Ottomans were no exception.163 The term ‘tafwיו’d’ probably lost its legal meaning as
absolute delegation in the way it was used by Māwardī, and came to mean simply the
delegation of powers at a vizier’s discretion. The Ottoman government in practice was
not organized according to a juristic framework of the vizierate. Despite the tendency of
modern historians to perceive the Ottoman vizierate within the framework of juristic

162 Bitlīsī, Kanun-i Şahensâhi, 128; ‘Alāyī, Düstûr’ül-Vüzarā, 5; Celâlzade, Mevâhibû’l-Ḥallâk, 144b,
228b-232a; Ibn Kemal, Tevârih, 1: 194; Mevlânâ Seyfî, Risâletü’l-Vızâre, 26b; Ṭâskopřizade, Mişâḥ al-
Sa’āda, 1: 414; Latîfî, Tezkiretü’ş-Şuara, 310.

163 With no proof about contemporary terminology, on the basis of the government functions viziers
performed, Khosla noted that in the Mughal Empire the viziers belonged to the second category of the
Māwardīan scheme, the vizierate of execution (wizârâ al-tanfיז). See Khosla, Mughal Kingship, 39-40.
formulas, official documents and political works rarely allude such juristic formulas.\textsuperscript{164} The law code composed by the seventeenth-century chancellor Tevkî‘î was among the few known documents that made a clear reference to the juristic designation in defining the Ottoman grand vizierate.\textsuperscript{165} Ottoman intellectuals, jurists, bureaucrats, and mystics alike, were either indifferent to the Māwardîan paradigm or equivocal in their writings.

Despite their adoption of the juristic distinction, even Semerkandî and ‘Ārifî did not specify the type of vizierate they conceived. Both authors were content with a brief description of the juristic conception of the vizierate and left it to their readers to decide which type of vizierate they were entitled to. Semerkandî crafted an unusually lofty eulogy for İbrâhîm Pâşâ but did not call him a vizier of delegation.\textsuperscript{166} At the time Semerkandî wrote his treatise, İbrâhîm Pâşâ had been in the grand vizierate for five years and probably had already been granted the title \textit{ser’asker} (commander in chief).\textsuperscript{167} ‘Ārifî could not identify his patron as a vizier of delegation because he wrote his treatise in 1560, the year before ‘Alî Pâşâ (d. 1565) was appointed to the grand vizierate. Unlike Semerkandî, however, in illustrating the vizierate of delegation he described how İbrâhîm Pâşâ was once appointed \textit{wazîr al-tafwîdî} by the sultan despite his limited authority on certain issues.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{165} Tevkî‘î ‘Abdurrahmân, “Kânûnnâme,” \textit{Millî Tettebular Mecmuası} 3 (1331): 497-544.
\item \textsuperscript{166} Semerkandî, \textit{Laṭâ‘if al-Afkâr}, 2a.
\item \textsuperscript{167} Semerkandî wrote the work in the same year as İbrâhîm Pâşâ’s appointment as \textit{ser’asker}. But it is not certain whether he wrote it before or after this unusual conferral.
\end{itemize}
It is said that our exalted ruler (imāmunā al-aʿzām sulṭān al-ʿālam), may his caliphate last forever, once appointed İbrāhīm Pāşā as the vizier of delegation (wizāra al-tawīf) with some limitations on certain issues who then continued in this way and achieved commendable deeds.\(^{168}\)

İbrāhīm Pāşā’s identification as such shows that ‘Ārifī did not consider Rüstem Pāşā, the grand vizier in office when he wrote his book, to be a vizier of delegation. Despite the ambiguity of their views, ‘Ārifī and Semerḳandī were the only authors to deal with the juristic formulation of the vizierate while İbrāhīm Pāşā was the only grand vizier whose term in the vizierate was labeled as a vizierate of delegation. No grand vizier seems to have startled subsequent Ottoman chroniclers more than İbrāhīm Pāşā, not even Köprülü Meḥmed Pāşā, who came to the vizierate with a contract granting full authority over all government affairs.\(^{169}\) His unusual appointment, the extraordinary powers he enjoyed, and his abrupt execution created a mysterious aura around his term in the vizierate that continued to attract the curiosity of both Ottoman and European historians and literati alike. This enigmatic term of İbrāhīm Pāşā, while perceived by most contemporaries as simply startling, could only be explained by resorting to the juristic conception of the vizierate by ‘Ārifī.

Whether it was an aberration or a harbinger of a new era, and irrespective of its idiosyncrasies and the widespread stir it caused among the Ottoman ruling elite, İbrāhīm Pāşā’s term seem to have a major impact on the course of the Ottoman vizierate as well as the conceptions of the vizierate among the statesmen and the men of learning who

\(^{168}\) ‘Ārifī, ‘Uqūd al-Jawāhir, 3b-4b.


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wrote on the subject. The very appointment of İbrâhîm Pâşâ to the grand vizierate led to a controversy among both his contemporaries and later men of learning as to whether it was a righteous decision on the part of the sultan, and whether it was compatible with Ottoman state tradition and established teachings of government. A contemporary apologist of the Ottoman dynasty, Mevlânâ ‘İsâ interpreted the term of İbrâhîm Pâşâ as a time of corruption and then hailed his execution as the beginning of a new era.\(^{170}\) The person who felt most offended by İbrâhîm Pâşâ’s promotion was Aḥmed Pâşâ, who was next in line for the grand vizierate.\(^{171}\) In revenge, he requested the governorship of Egypt and declared his independence once he consolidated his power there, a rebellion later suppressed by the Ottoman army headed by İbrâhîm Pâşâ. Ḥadîdî, a contemporary of İbrâhîm Pâşâ who composed his versed-history in 1530, mentioned no justification for his appointment other than the sultan’s divine guidance:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{When the sultan’s heart received God’s revelation} \\
\text{He [İbrâhîm] came to the sultan’s mind} \\
\text{The sultan appointed him to the grand vizierate at that very moment} \\
\text{And made him governor of the province of Rumeli as well}^{172}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{170}\) Flemming, “Public Opinion under Sultan Süleymân,” in Süleymân the Second and his Time.


\(^{172}\) İrub kalbine ilhami İlah’un 
O geldi hâtrına pâdişâhun 
Vezîr-i a’zam itdi ani ol ân 
Hem itdi müläk-i Rûm’a mîr-i mîrân

Hadîdî, Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman, 444.
What made İbrâhîm Pâşâ’s appointment particularly extraordinary was his replacement of Pîrî Pâşâ, whose term was commonly presented as the epitome of the ideal vizierate by later political authors and historians. The oddity of this appointment continued to haunt the writings of later political authors who compared İbrâhîm Pâşâ to Pîrî Pâşâ in order to draw historical lessons for government. A century after the incident, Koçi Beg, for instance, severely criticized Süleymân’s elevation of İbrâhîm Pâşâ from silâhdâr (keeper of the sword) to grand vizier, passing over other viziers waiting in line. For him, this was the most conspicuous violation of the principle of seniority in administration that led to the beginning of Ottoman decline (ıḥtilâl). Koçi Beg was uncompromising on this principle because he considered the seniority principle a cornerstone of Ottoman law and thought of the kânûn-i kadîm as immutable. On the contrary, writing a few decades before Koçi Beg, Muṣṭafâ ‘Ālî had a more rational view of government and did not accept the kânûn-i kadîm at face value. He was a staunch advocate of meritocracy in government, who constantly advised in his lifetime that people of exceptional talents should be promoted regardless of their position. Instead of a blind defense of seniority, he advocated the selection of wise men and the employment of philosophers in government service: “no one should raise objections saying “this is not the old custom (kânûn-i kadîm).”

Muṣṭafâ ‘Ālî regarded İbrâhîm Pâşâ as a praiseworthy vizier whereas Koçi Beg despised him for being negligent and opening the door for corruption. To prove his...
point, Muṣṭafā ‘Alī resorted to history and the practices of past sultans where he mentioned, for example, how Selîm I appointed Pîrî Meḥmed as defterdâr (chief of treasury) from nowhere; the sultan had simply met him during his hunting ride and recognized his wisdom.\textsuperscript{176} Long before Muṣṭafâ ‘Alī, Lütfî Pâşâ, who served under Selîm I, had praised the promotion of Pîrî Meḥmed from chief of the treasury to the grand vizierate because of his excellent qualifications.\textsuperscript{177} Koçî Beg, however, read history differently and described the reign of Selîm I as an exemplar of the strict observance of the seniority principle where nobody could become a [grand] vizier without passing through each ascending step of government service and gaining experience.\textsuperscript{178} According to him, the sultan’s appointment of his favorites to higher positions was a violation of the established path of promotion regulated either by law or custom within ruling institutions. For Koçî Beg and many other reformist bureaucrats of later centuries, the undeserved promotion of İbrâhîm Pâşâ to the grand vizierate was a stain on the record of Süleymân’s otherwise commendable achievements.

Except for his rivals in government, İbrâhîm Pâşâ’s contemporaries who witnessed his term in the vizierate usually did not dispute his qualifications for the vizierate but had difficulty comprehending of the extraordinary status he attained. One of his successors in the vizierate, Lütfî Pâşâ, who wrote a history of the Ottoman dynasty, remained largely silent on the term of İbrâhîm Pâşâ and simply stated that “tongues cannot duly describe his vizierate.”\textsuperscript{179} One of the chief admirers of İbrâhîm Pâşâ, Laṭîfî,


\textsuperscript{177} Kütükoğlu, “Lütfî Paşa \textasciiacute{\textauml{a}}safnâmesi.”

\textsuperscript{178} Koçî Bey, 82-83.

\textsuperscript{179} Lütfî Paşa, \textit{Tevârih}, 252.
the poet and writer of a biographical dictionary, noted that “the high esteem and honor he enjoyed would have been impossible or even strange for his predecessors or successors to have attained.”

In praise of İbrâhîm Pâşâ, Laṭîfî further stated that no vizier could match him in justice, nobility and generosity.

Even Celâlzâde, whose model vizier was Pîrî Pâşâ, portrayed İbrâhîm Pâşâ as a well-trained servant of the sultan who had been in service since his childhood and praised his talents as suitable for the vizierate.

More than the question of his worthiness for the vizierate or the way he was appointed, it was the way İbrâhîm Pâşâ ran the vizierate that confused his contemporaries most, his adversaries and supporters alike. The above Laṭîfî who felt a particular attachment to İbrâhîm Pâşâ for his generous patronage of poets, composed two separate treatises, Enîsû’l-Fuṣahâ (Companion of Orators) and Evsâf-i İbrâhîm Pâşâ (Character of İbrâhîm Pâşâ) in praise of his traits and deeds, and portrayed him as a model vizier for his successors. According to him, İbrâhîm Pâşâ radiated such an aura of authority that his every word was taken as a strict command by statesmen, and because of his proximity to the sultan nobody could object to his opinions. Thus for Laṭîfî, despite the

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180 Sevgi, Lâtîfî’nin İki Risâlesi, 16.


182 Celâlzâde Muştafa, Tabakât ül-Memâlik, 110b-111a.

extraordinary powers vested in him by Süleyman, İbrahim Paşa’s authority was really solidified by his close friendship with the sultan. As in the case of his exchange with the Hungarian ambassador, İbrahim Paşa himself was well aware of his power and showed no modesty in expressing it:

It is I who govern this vast Empire. What I do is done; I have all the power, all offices, all the rule. What I wish to give is given and cannot be taken away; what I do not give is not confirmed by any one. If ever the great Sultan wishes to give, or has given anything, if I do not please it is not carried out. All is in my hands, peace, war, treasure.\(^{184}\)

Whether İbrahim Paşa’s flaunting was crafted to impress the ambassador or reflected his self-perception, the image he built among the contemporaries was exactly the same as the one he boasted of. In Latifi’s report he was the sole authority on all affairs of government, including appointments, promotions, and dismissals.\(^ {185}\) Because of his extensive authority, in his eulogy of İbrahim Paşa, Latifi addressed him with such epithets as şah-rütbet (as noble as a ruler) and melik-şân (as famed as a ruler), implying that his exceptional status could only be compared to that of a ruler.\(^ {186}\) An anonymous chronicler of the reign of Süleyman, who seems to have witnessed İbrahim Paşa’s term, captured the popular perception of the grand vizier:

\(^{184}\) Jenkins, *Ibrahim Pasha*, 82.

\(^{185}\) Latifi, *Tezkiretü’ş-Šu’arâ*, 326.

The sultan had a young servant (küll) from Manisa called İbrahim as his confidante, spirited and famed, whom he adopted as his grand vizier. No government decision could take place without the vizier’s order, to the extent that he would confer governorships upon whomever he wished without the knowledge of the sultan. He exerted pressure on other viziers and governors. He controlled the military by appointing his men. Because of his excessive arrogance, he announced in Istanbul that he was commander sultan (ser’asker sulṭān). He built many buildings including the palaces and the mansion in the hippodrome where he resided.187

İbrahim Pasha’s ruler-like behavior was noted by almost all contemporary observers and later historians and was cited as the primary reason for his unexpected execution in 1536.188 Muḥyī-ı Gûlşênî, an initiate of İbrahim Pasha’s archenemy İbrahim-i Gûlşênî, called him a rebel (fâği ve bâği), a juristic term that denotes somebody who rose against a legitimate authority an act, which justifies their execution.189 One of the chief military judges of the reign of Süleyman, Bostan Efendi, noted in his chronicle that İbrahim Pasha grew increasingly arrogant because of the sultanic favors he received to the extent that he called himself commander sultan (serleşker sulṭān), a self-designation which prompted Süleyman to execute him.190 Writing from the comfort of historical distance, İbrahim Pasha’s 18th century biographer, ‘Ōşmânzâde Tâ’ıb, described him outright as an ill-intended grand vizier who pursued rulership for himself (sevdâ-yi salṭanat).191

187 Azamat, Anonim Tevârîh, 143-44.
188 See, for example, Hasan Bey-zâde, Hasan Bey-zâde Târîhi, 2: 114.
189 Muḥyī-ı Gûlşênî, Menâkıb-i İbrahim-i Gûlşênî, 431.
191 ‘Ōşmânzâde Tâ’ıb, Ḥaddîkatü ’l-Vüzerâ, 24-25.
Whether İbrāhīm Pāşā pursued such a dreamy ambition of rulership, he was certainly vested with exceptional powers which might have created the impression that he was acting just like a ruler. First of all, no other vizier before him had received the kind of investiture from the sultan that elaborated on the extent of the authority conferred. Second, five years after his appointment to the grand vizierate, the sultan bestowed on him the title of commander-in-chief (ser‘asker). In the sultanic decree of investiture, which was composed by Celâlzâde, İbrâhîm Pāşā was authorized to act with full power over all the sultan’s prerogatives, including capital punishments, appointments to high positions, and dismissals. Further, İbrâhîm Pāşā’s word was equated with the word of the sultan and Süleymân asked all his subjects and statesmen to fully obey his commands. In fact, İbrâhîm Pāşā’s boasting before the Hungarian ambassador of his sultan-like image among his contemporaries was no more than a reflection of what was actually stated in his decree of investiture. As recorded by Celâlzâde in his history, the sultan ordered him to compose the decree with the following statement:

By God’s will the corners of our kingdom is extending and there is no end to the necessities for the well-being of believers. It is not convenient for me to deal with every matter personally, so bring me a decree to appoint İbrâhîm Pāşā as ser‘asker in order to carry out the affairs of religion and state.\(^{192}\)

In addition, İbrâhîm Pāşā was also appointed governor of Rumelia which was unusual for a grand vizier. But governorship of Rumelia was the most prestigious military rank in the Empire and İbrâhîm Pāşā who rose to the grand vizierate at the age of

\(^{192}\) Celâlzâde Muşţafâ, \emph{Tabakât ül-Memâlik}, 179b-180a.
twenty-five directly from palace service was in need of such a military rank in order to solidify his position as commander in chief. His double rank, i.e. grand vizier and governor of Rumelia, was emphatically noted by his contemporaries and later chroniclers. İbrâhîm Paşâ’s privileged status was better illustrated in the code of inscriptio which was crafted by his former secretary Celâlzâde. The code, which was composed from current examples in use, listed two separate inscriptios for the grand vizierate, those of Pîrî Paşâ and İbrâhîm Paşâ. Pîrî Paşâ’s inscriptio was not much different than what was in use for other contemporary grand viziers. İbrâhîm Paşâ’s, however, was specially crafted and was markedly loftier than Pîrî Paşâ’s, with titles not usually attributed to a grand vizier. According to this manual of chancery, İbrâhîm Paşâ was to be addressed in official communiqués as “founder of the foundations of the precious state” (müessis-ü erkâni ’d-devleti ’l-gâliye) and “succored by God” (el-mü’eyyed bi te’yidi ’l-Meliki ’l-a’lā), two titles used for the Ottoman ruler as well.\(^{194}\)

There is no explicit indication in sources that İbrâhîm Paşâ was appointed as a vizier of delegation. However, whether Süleymân or İbrâhîm Paşâ were aware of it or not, from the juristic point of view, the way İbrâhîm Paşâ was appointed and the authority he was vested with all perfectly cohere with the concept of the vizier of delegation as elaborated by Mâwardî. The vizierate of İbrâhîm Paşâ was a clear aberration in the practice of Ottoman governance as well as political thought, an aberration which was simply perceived as extraordinary by most contemporaries or as a vizierate of delegation by some who tried to make sense of it.

\(^{193}\) See, for example, Hasan Bey-zâde, Hasan Bey-zâde Târîhi, 2: 38.

\(^{194}\) Akgündüz, Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri, 4: 433.
What makes case of İbrāhīm Pāşā truly extraordinary was that it was not simply a result of a change in the course of the Ottoman vizierate or perceptions about the function of a vizier in government but, as Fleischer pointed out, part of an overall change in the conception of rulership. In Fleischer’s analysis, Süleymān and İbrāhīm undertook a joint enterprise to create a universal sovereignty imbued with messianic ambitions. This was at once a sacral and mysterious vision of universal governance whereby the sultan was conceived to be ʿāhib-ḵarān (Master of the Conjunction or World Conqueror), while the grand vizier was envisioned to be his alter ego, assuming his powers for the government of worldly affairs with a status equivalent to that of an ordinary ruler.\(^{195}\)

**The Theory of the Ottoman Vizierate**

While most Ottoman political writers from Bidlīsī to ʿAlāyī continued to contemplate the vizierate within the parameters of traditional political theory, two statesmen, Lütfi Pāşā and the anonymous author of Mešāliḥīʾl-Mūslīmīn, displayed a diametrically different approach to government. Āṣafnāme and Mešāliḥīʾl-Mūslīmīn appeared to be no less than a revolution in the form of political writing, representing a clear break with conventional genres and views on the vizierate as well as rulership in general. The most distinctive feature of Āṣafnāme and Mešāliḥīʾl-Mūslīmīn is their indifference to the type of ideal vizierate portrayed in mainstream political theory. Instead, actual Ottoman practice constituted their sole inspiration in formulating views on the vizierate and government. Neither of these works developed a comprehensive theory

\(^{195}\) Fleischer, “The Lawgiver as Messiah.”
of the vizierate itself but instead elaborated on the authority, responsibilities, and functions of the grand vizier with respect to the actual state of government in the mid-sixteenth century.

The necessity for the vizierate in rulership, a question commonly dealt with in political theory, was irrelevant because writing directly about the existing vizierate – whose legitimacy and status in Ottoman polity were assured – was out of question. Thus, of the many works that dealt with the question of the vizierate only Meşâliḫī ’l-Muṣlimīn and Āṣafnāme avoided any effort to demonstrate the necessity of the vizierate in rulership. The classical theory, which focused on the ruler in government, had already established the vizierate as an integral part of rulership. Following conventional wisdom, because the Ottoman government was their only model of reference, for these two authors, the possibility of dispensing with the vizier was out of the question and the place of the vizierate in government was no less essential than that of the ruler. In terms of their specific views about the vizierate, they owed very little to the classical theories simply because there was not much in conventional political works which they could use to explain the institutional and legal aspects of the vizierate. If the general perception of the vizier in conventional wisdom was as the sultan’s alter ego, for Lütfi Paşa and the anonymous author, the vizier was the government personified.

With the Āṣafnāme, Lütfi Paşa laid down the foundation of a new discipline in which a number of treatises on Ottoman government were written from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. The main elements of this new enterprise were the use of an administrative language that avoided abstract or literary concepts and embellishments, the incorporation of state registers and quantitative data in political analysis, reliance on
the observation of contemporary political conditions, promotion of the idea of state law, and taking the institution of government as the object of analysis. Āṣafnāme contained neither the entertaining and literary features that mirrors for princes offered nor the prescriptive format of theological and juridical works. Lütfi Pâşâ’s arguments were driven solely by his observation and criticism of Ottoman government. He presented historical and contemporary developments to show the sources of corruption and the need for reform. He observed the government of his time from a historical perspective and made comparisons with the recent Ottoman past. In this respect, he was the first Ottoman political author who significantly took the Ottoman experience into account in envisioning rulership. Other contemporaries, such as Čınalizada and Celâlzâde, did not use the Ottoman experience as the sole reference for a model government. Instead, they mainly conveyed non-Ottoman ideals of government only to supplement them with illustrations from Ottoman history.

By the time Lütfi Pâşâ and the anonymous author of Meşalihi l-Müslûmîn were writing their handbooks for the vizierate, the Ottomans already had gained long experience with the institution which could roughly be divided into three distinct phases. In the first phase, which lasted from the early fourteenth century to the mid-fifteenth century, while the Ottoman state was still competing against rival principalities in Asia Minor, the vizierate served as an intermediary between local social structures and the dynasty as well as between the ruler and the ruled. The early Ottoman state was not an exclusively dynastic enterprise of the House of ʿOsmān, but a collective endeavor that successfully managed the dynamics of the frontier society to forge a symbiotic relationship between independent power structures such as tribes, Sufi orders, raider
bands, learning institutions, and professional organizations. While the leadership was an unquestionable preserve of the Ottoman dynasty, the military and the civil administration remained open to the advancement of local structures into government ranks. Within such state formation, when viewed from bottom to top, the vizierate functioned as an extension of local power structures and worked as the highest government position that the people of these structures could achieve.

The Ottoman vizierate started from obscure origins in the early fourteenth century with no clearly defined functions, and developed in response to the governmental needs of the rapidly growing Ottoman principality.\(^{196}\) Inspired by pre-Ottoman structures of the vizierate, particularly those of the Seljuks, the vizier in the early Ottoman principality seem to be the sultan’s confidante in rulership and assistant in bureaucratic matters. As necessitated by the expanding governing apparatus of the principality, the number of viziers steadily increased and the vizierate turned into a hierarchical structure headed by the grand vizier. With the appointment of a second vizier to the rulers council (dīvān), Sināneddīn Yūsuf Pāšā (s. 1360-1364) became the first among other viziers, gaining a status which corresponded to the position of grand vizier, and towards the end of the reign of Murād II (r. 1420-1451) there were five viziers serving at one time.\(^{197}\) The number of viziers continued to increase and by the mid-sixteenth century there were thirty some officials with the title vizier. The solidification of the vizierate as the highest office next to that of the ruler took place when Çandarlī Kara Ḥalīl was given the title of

\(^{196}\) For the early Ottoman vizierate and its origins, in addition to Taneri’s *Vezîr-i A’zamlı* and Inalcık’s “Wazir”, see Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs*, 37-73; Uzuncaşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 1: 246, 303-307.

\(^{197}\) Taneri, 59-60; Uzuncaşılı thought that the first grand vizier was Çandarlızade ‘Alî (s. 1387-1406) who became the first vizier after the promotion of Timurtas to the vizierate. See Uzuncaşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 1: 246. Neither of these historians name their sources.
Beglerbeg (commander in chief), thus becoming the head of the military and the bureaucracy at the same time.\textsuperscript{198} Although established as the chief office in government, the Ottoman vizierate before the fall of Constantinople was still an institution that bore the basic features of a frontier principality.

A major breakthrough in the history of the Ottoman vizierate that permanently changed the course of its development was the term and execution of Çandarlı Ḥayreddīn Pāşā (s. 1440-1453). With the full confidence of Murād II who appointed him, he ran the vizierate with extraordinary powers despite the grievances of the fledging group of statesmen of kūl origin. He successfully managed, for example, the return of Murād II to the throne after he twice abdicated in favor of his teenaged prince Meḥmed II. Çandarlı’s term represented the peak in the ascendancy of the ‘īlmiyye (learning establishment) in Ottoman government at a time when the ‘īlmiyye was not yet fully institutionalized and incorporated into the state apparatus. He was the fourth grand vizier from the same family within about half a century, a family whose wealth, prestige and power could only be surpassed by the Ottoman dynasty. Further, he was a Muslim-born Turk who possessed strong ties with the society. Socially, he was more connected to the society than to the Ottoman dynasty at a time when the state was still closely integrated with society. Independent but influential social structures, such as learning institutions (medreses) and professional organizations (aḥās), were still the main sources of high ranking statesmen. Many viziers who served in the fourteenth century came from aḥā families. Showing the prestige of prominent families in government, Murād II, for example, at one time appointed three brothers to the ranks of the vizierate at once, as a

\textsuperscript{198} Uzunçarşılı, Osmanlı Tarihi, 1: 245.
tribute to their father, the celebrated commander and vizier Timurtaş Pasha. When these statesmen were dismissed from their official positions they could still survive and exert influence within their social milieus. Similarly, established extended families of raiders whose livelihood did not depend on pensions were still providing high commanders for Ottoman armies, some rising to the ranks of vizierate.

Heralding the beginning of the second phase in the history of the Ottoman vizierate, Çandarlı’s execution symbolized the end of a state molded by the dynamics of a frontier society and signaled the formation of imperial structures. Along with Çandarlı’s tragic end, the influence of old families in government soon vanished. As envisioned by Mehmed II, the Ottoman state came to be exclusively run by professional corps trained by the state or its affiliate institutions. This meant the beginning of an era in which the sultan’s küls, mostly recruited through the system of child levy (devşirme), prevailed in government. Despite the downgrading of the social status of grand viziers, their sphere of authority expanded while their functions became more clearly delineated. With extensive institutionalization and law-making, Mehmed II was not only distance from the state as supreme ruler, but was also distance the state from society. During the early vizierate (roughly 1300-1453), eleven of the twelve grand viziers came from the learning profession. The change in the career track for the vizierate after Çandarlı was so drastic that among the twenty four grand viziers who came to power

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199 Inalcık, “Mehmet II”, İA.

200 Stavrides, The Sultan of Vezirs, 68.

201 Stavrides concluded that the kul ascendancy in the vizierate and Mehmed II’s centralist policies reduced the power of kul viziers in theory while increasing it in practice, creating a seemingly paradoxical situation. He pointed out that while the kul status of the grand vizier made him fully dependent on the sultan, the sultan’s withdrawal from government enabled him to assume more administrative functions. See Stavrides, The Sultan of Vezirs, 69-90.
until the end of Süleymān’s reign only three were men of the pen; the rest were the sultan’s conscripted servants trained in the palace. While there was only one Albanian versus twelve Turks among the grand viziers that served before 1453, there were only three Turks among twenty four grand viziers who served until the end of Süleymān’s reign. No two grand viziers from the same family came to power in this period.

These conditions were particularly conducive to the creation of an ideal vizier as envisioned in mainstream Ottoman political theory, somebody to whom the sultan could entrust all the affairs of state with full confidence. Cut off from their families, assimilated, and acculturated, levied corps of devşirmes were the fittest to bring this political vision to fruition. Most of them served long years in the personal service of the sultan. Their capacity to serve, moral rectitude, fidelity, and abilities were all tested and well known in the sultan’s extended household. Their prospects were identical with those of the sultans, their patrons, and masters, and they could have little vested interest in society outside the state mechanism. Unlike the generation of Çandarlı, the kūl viziers could hardly have had any status in society if they had remained outside the government apparatus. Although the kūls succeeded in assuming a near monopoly on vizieral and military ranks, their ascendancy turned the vizierate into the most precarious position in government.202 As mentioned above, there were only twelve grand viziers who served during the century that preceded the fall of Constantinople while the number was twenty four in the following century. On average, two viziers served per sultan in the first period with an average length of term in office of more than ten years, whereas it was six viziers per sultan in the subsequent period with an average term of approximately five years in

202 Mehmet II executed three of his grand viziers while there had been no execution in the preceding century. See Stavrides, The Sultan of Vezirs, 69.
office. While no grand vizier is known to have been executed by the ruling sultan before the fall of Constantinople, ten suffered this fate in the following period until the end of Süleyman’s reign.

This new phase in the history of the vizierate manifested itself most conspicuously with the appointment of İbrahim Paşâ to the grand vizierate. If Çandarlı’s term symbolized the power of the ‘ulemâ in government, İbrahim Paşâ’s term showed that the kâls had acquired much greater power. Against all established conventions, İbrahim Paşâ was promoted to the grand vizierate from a low-ranking palace position because of his proximity to the sultan. This appointment caused the first open rebellion of an Ottoman vizier. Because İbrahim Paşâ had been the sultan’s childhood crony and servant, Süleyman granted him such powers and extravagances that no previous grand vizier had enjoyed. While his unconventional promotion incurred some criticism from conservative voices who were uneasy about any breach of traditions, İbrahim Paşâ’s extraordinary powers mostly made others surprised and envious. Writing after his execution, many of his contemporaries criticized him for moral decay and for coveting the sultanate while praising him for his achievements made possible by his authority.

Unlike that of Çandarlı, İbrahim Paşâ’s execution did not bring about any noticeable

203 These are only approximate numbers, not exact statistics, calculated to demonstrate the change between the two periods. Despite the obscure beginnings of the vizierate, for practical purposes, the time frame for the first period is determined as 1326-1453, given that the history of the Ottoman vizierate is usually considered to start with the reign of Orhan (r. 1326-1362). For the beginnings of Ottoman vizierate see Taneri, Vezîr-i A’zamlı, 48; Uzunçarşılı, Osmanlı Tarihi, 1: 303; Uzunçarşılı, “Osmanlılarda İlk Vezirlere Dair Mütalaa,” Belleten 3 (1939): 99-109; Uzunçarşılı, “Alaeddin Paşa”, İA.

204 In chronological order, these were Çandarlı Halîl Hayreddîn (d. 857/1453), Mahmûd (d. 879/1474), Rûm Mehmed (d. 875/1470), Karàmâni Mehmed (d. 886/1481), Gedik Ahmed (d. 887/1482), Koçâ Muṣṭafâ (d. 918/1512), Dûkâkinoğlu Ahmed (d. 921/1515), Yûnus (d. 923/1517), İbrahim (d. 942/1536), Kara Ahmed (d. 962/1533).

205 As noted above, Ahmed Paşâ, a high ranking vizier of devşîrme origins, resented the promotion of İbrahim Paşâ and declared independence in Egypt.
change in the career track of the vizierate. Despite his fall out of the sultan’s favor, his term in the vizierate remained better known for its achievements than failures in Ottoman memory and the amount of authority he exercised continued to inspire his successors as well as political authors. More important than İbrâhîm Pâşâ’s personal stamp on the vizierate, his term revealed how the Ottoman vizierate had evolved since the term of Çandarlı. With the memory of the Ahmed Pâşâ incident still fresh, along with the criticisms voiced by his contemporaries, the potential threat posed by the accumulation of unprecedented powers in the hands of İbrâhîm Pâşâ seems to have prompted the sultan to preemptively execute his beloved grand vizier.

There is no major turning point to mark the beginning of the third phase in the history of the Ottoman vizierate, which was a result of a wave of extensive institutionalization and law-making that intensified with the reign of Meḥmed II. Its basic features were fully at work during the brief term of Lütfî Pâşâ and were certainly in effect when Āṣafnâme and Meşâliḥü ’l-Müslîmîn were written. The most distinctive aspect of the mid-sixteenth century vizierate was that its functions were encoded in promulgated sultanic laws as well as well-established conventions of the state.206 By delegating his powers and affairs of state to the grand vizier, the sultan became a remote figure in government who ceased to deal with the daily routine of government.207

206 The grand vizierate was first defined in the law code of Meḥmed II which appears to have been prepared towards the end of his reign. There was no other law code that directly dealt with the vizierate until the seventeenth century but numerous other law codes and sultanic decrees reveal that the functions of the vizierate and the sphere of authority of the grand vizier were well-established in this period. For the code of Meḥmed see Abdulkadir Özcan, “Fâṭih’in Teşkilât Kanunnamesi ve Nizam-i Âlem İçin Kardeş Katli Meselesi,” Tarih Dergisi 23 (1982): 7-56. Also published in Fatih Sultan Meḥmed: Kanunnâme-i Âl-i Osman (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2003).

207 Lybyer observed that the Ottoman vizierate reached its climax in terms of its vested authority during the reign of Süleymân. See Lybyer, The government of the Ottoman Empire, 164-5.
relationship between the grand vizier and the sultan was much more rationalized than before and gained something of a degree of procedural basis.\textsuperscript{208}

A major difference between a mid-fifteenth-century grand vizier and his mid-sixteenth century counterpart was that the former was delegated the sultan’s authority with no clearly defined functions or boundaries. He was entrusted with affairs of state solely on the basis of the confidence of the sultan and with the expectation that he would manage the government with respect to abstract notions of justice, general principles of government and common wisdom. In addition to the above expectations, the sixteenth-century grand vizier was responsible for running the state by observing the promulgated laws and established conventions of state. The grand vizier’s personal service to the sultan ceased to define the vizierate.\textsuperscript{209} Thus the distancing of the grand vizier from the sultan and his obligation to observe specific laws of state in government led grand viziers to develop loyalty to the state itself in addition to the reigning ruler. It was especially grand viziers such as Lütfi Pasha who had a vexed relationship with the sultan who felt


\textsuperscript{209} A conspicuous indication of the connection of the vizierate to the sultan’s personal service was the vizier’s duties towards the sultan himself or his family. Until the late sixteenth century, the administration of dynastic foundations was one of the primary responsibilities of the grand vizier. Because of the gradual formalization of the vizier’s relationship to the sultan, the institutionalization of the vizierate and the vizier’s association more with government work than palace service, the grand vizier’s responsibility was transferred to the head of the sultan’s harem (dâr’î s-su‘ûde âğası) who resided in the palace. For the administrative duties of the head of the harem, see Uzuncaşılı, Saray Teşkilatı, 177-183, 176; Taneri points out that the grand vizier was the overseer of sultanic foundations during the early vizierate as well. For the vizier’s administration of sultanic foundations, see Taneri, Vezîr-i A‘zamîk, 86.
more connected to the state than to the ruling sultan.

The complete association of the vizierate with the government and its distancing from the ruler during the age of kül viziers seems contradictory, if not paradoxical. The dynastic preference for granting the vizierate to the sultan’s palace-grown servants was in line with applying pre-Ottoman ideals of the vizierate in political theory, namely, appointing somebody who grew up in complete submission to the sultan, who had been trained to perform the best personal service for the sultan, and was to sacrifice himself for the master, and who possessed the secrets of dynasty. Such a person was now profiled in political works as an ideal vizier. Appointing grand viziers from the dynastic household facilitated the sultan’s safe withdrawal from daily government through a coalescence of the sultan’s and the vizier’s interests. This policy was further extended to marrying viziers to sultans’ sisters and daughters. Four of the nine grand viziers of Süleymān, for example, and nine of the twenty four grand viziers between Çandarlı’s execution and the end of Süleymān’s reign were dynastic son-in-laws. This matrimonial policy not only enhanced the viziers’ role in hands-on government but further tied their interests to those of the dynasty.

Against this backdrop, the very institutionalization of the Ottoman state and the establishment of the kānūn as the fundamental law of government facilitated the sultan’s withdrawal from government and the rise of the vizier as the chief executive in government. Despite the inherent vulnerability of grand viziers in this age of the küls and the increasing factionalism among the ruling elite, thanks to institutional adjustments and legal measures that characterized this period, Süleymān’s reign was a stable period for
grand viziers, at least in comparison to the reigns of Mehmed II and Selim I. Including the terms of Pir Pasha and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, whose service extended beyond Suleyman’s reign, only seven grand viziers took office in this period in sixty two years, each providing about seven years of service on average. It was this unique experience in government that Lutfi Pasha and many others after him integrated into political theory that led to the fundamental shift in the theory of the vizierate. For Lutfi Pasha and his followers, model viziers, sultans, and dynasties were not in the distant past but to be sought in Ottoman experience.

There seem to be two principal reasons that led Lutfi Pasha and the anonymous author of Meşalihi’l-Muslinin to break with the conventional teachings about the vizierate and promote the actual Ottoman vizierate as their primary model. First, by the mid-sixteenth century, the Ottoman empire was comparable to the much acclaimed past empires in every respect, from its architecture to geographical extension which led them to think that the Ottoman government was a proven and successful model, no less perfect than the others. This perception was explicitly stated in the great historical works of the sixteenth century. Although the Ottoman Empire was still the most powerful Muslim dynasty in the fifteenth century, major chronicles of this century did not yet include the Ottoman Empire in the imperial hall of fame. But in the sixteenth century most historians were proud to discuss the superiority of the Ottoman dynasty over all others.

Second, Lutfi Pasha, and many later authors of the same line of thought, were of kull origin. They were raised in the palace school and taught to serve the sultan with absolute loyalty. They were educated about the superiority of the Ottoman dynasty. For

Lybyer, The government of the Ottoman Empire, 166-7.
both psychological and educational reasons, the Ottoman dynasty was the perfect one-if not only one- to serve. The deşhirme viziers and authors were the most ‘Ottoman’ of the Ottoman writers. Unlike the viziers of ‘ulemā origin, who possessed a universally recognized identity within the larger Muslim community for being scholars of Islamic sciences, the deşhirme had no overlapping political identity other than simply being an Ottoman or, more specifically, a servant of the sultan. While statesmen of ‘ulemā origin were already deeply immersed in the tradition of Islamic learning before their employment in government institutions, the deşhirme learned religion and tradition along with their practical training in the service of the Ottoman sultan.

In contrast to the usual approach in political literature, Lütfi Pāşā did not pay any attention to the vizier’s personal service to the sultan, a subject he probably knew better than any other aspect of viziership. At the time when he wrote, appointments to the vizierate from outside the palace service were rare. Instructions for dealing with the sultan were necessary for candidates for vizierate who came from other professions and had never experienced such service, but not for the viziers who were already sultan’s ḵūls. Lütfi Pāşā, like İbrāhīm Pāşā before or Rüstem Pāşā after, was by profession an expert in handling personal relations with the sultan. Even if he attributed any value to the vizier’s personal service to the sultan, writing in the age of ḵūl viziers, Lütfi Pāşā must have felt it unnecessary to explain those manners that were well known by his likely successors.

Lütfi Pāşā’s de-emphasizing of the involvement of the sultan in actual government and promoting of the idea of government by law led him to further stress the status of the grand vizier and other officials in government. He conceived of the
government as a relatively autonomous institution presided over by the grand vizier and portrayed the grand vizier more as a head of government rather than the sultan’s hand in government. In this way, he granted the grand vizier a considerable degree of autonomy. While portraying the ruler as the legitimizing foundation of Ottoman law and government, at the same time, he pushed the sultan completely outside the realm of actual government. The government was then made into an object of political analysis carried out primarily through a focus on the legality of government procedures. As the lynchpin of his analysis, Lütfi Pasha envisioned the grand vizier as the governor of the Ottoman state, and presented Ottoman law as his authoritative guide.

Lütfi Pasha’s introduction of the term šadr-i aʿzam into political theory reveals his conception of the vizierate. Although it is not certain when the term šadr-i aʿzam appeared in administrative usage, it seems to have gained currency in political theory after Lütfi Pasha’s use.211 The concept of šadr-i aʿzam did not introduce anything novel to the institution of the grand vizierate in the Ottoman Empire, but came to signify the current state of the office which had already changed from the classical vizierate to an independent head of government. For authors who defined the vizierate through philological exploration, the term ‘vizier’ lacked independent meaning. It was only meaningful in reference to the sultan and, in that context, it implied the vizier’s dependence on the sultan and his inferiority in relation to superior authority. The term šadr-i aʿzam, however, connoted a sense of superiority and independence. Vezir-i aʿzam literally meant ‘chief deputy’ while šadr-i aʿzam meant ‘chief official’. This linguistic shift from one term to another points to a conceptual shift in the vizierate underlying its

211 Metin Kunt, “Şadr-i Aʿzam,” EI². 372
evolution from a personal service to the sultan to an executive position in government as
the head of the divân, the highest governing body in the Empire. The terms vezîr and
vezîr-i aʿżam, however, remained in circulation in both administration usage and political
theory, while a more institutionalized relationship between the vizier and the sultan
eventually prevailed with the prevalence of the term şadr-i aʿżam in practice and theory.
Thus with the replacement of the term vezîr-i aʿżam by şadr-i aʿżam, the conception of
the vizierate was dissociated from what the term vezîr implied by its semantic
connotations as elaborated in philological analyses.

Meşâliḥüʾl-Müslîmîn portrayed a conception of the vizierate similar to the one
depicted in Āṣafnâme, that contrasted markedly with all other contemporary accounts on
the subject. Despite their promotion of the role of the vizierate in the sultanate, such
authors as Celâlzâde, ‘Alâyî, ‘Ārifî, and Bîdîsî never went beyond conceiving of the
vizierate as the sultan’s assistant. Meşâliḥüʾl-Müslîmîn, however, focuses on the
institution and functions of the vizierate in the Ottoman State, with completely
disregarding the vizier’s relationship to the sultan. The sultan as a ruler is completely
absent from this account and the vizier appears as the sole governor of all government
affairs. Meşâliḥüʾl-Müslîmîn was designed to be a reform project containing specific
recommendations and prescriptions to solve political, military, and social problems, and
to make government a more efficient institution. The author instructed the vizier that his
fundamental responsibility was the proper working of the state mechanism, the welfare of
subjects, and enacting laws to regulate government practice and interactions within the
society. In this regard, Meşâliḥüʾl-Müslîmîn represent a total departure from the rest of
mainstream writings on government.

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The anonymous author’s proposals in this text were much more than recuperative advice. Although it was a reformist treatise, unlike ʿAsafnāme, Mēṣāliḥāʾ-l-Mūslimīn was not written in response to a perceived decline of government institutions, nor did it call for a return to a better past. Instead it advocated radical changes in law and government and considered the vizier as capable of initiating those changes. The addressee in this reform treatise, as in Lūṭfī Pāşā’s ʿAsafnāme, was the grand vizier rather than the sultan. In this newly forming conception of government the grand vizier was assigned a leading role in reforming the state.

Just as Mēṣāliḥāʾ-l-Mūslimīn assigned strictly political functions to the vizierate it also discouraged the vizier from engaging in traditional activities such as charities. This idea represents a stark break from the conventional wisdom on the vizierate as well as rulership in general. In conventional teachings, a statesmen’s record in charity and benevolence was considered to be a yardstick of good government, and both the sultan and the vizier were emphatically instructed to engage in charitable acts, to give away their wealth to the needy. Dispensing wealth to subjects and meeting their needs was also an insurance policy, or even part of a legitimate rule, in order to maintain the loyalty of subjects, as expounded in the aphorism “man is the slave of favor” (al-insān ‘abīd al-iḥsān). Building infrastructure for the welfare of society (‘imāret, maʾmūrluḳ), in the form of mosques, hospitals, hospices, public kitchens, and the like, depended on the charitable foundations mostly established by the ruling elite. Thus building public works and charities was part of the proper etiquette of rulership and whether or not a given ruler or a vizier practiced charity or not, they felt compelled by the prevailing political culture to build as much as they could afford in order to sustain the favorable image that
bolstered their legitimacy. But according to Meşâliḫü’l-Müslimîn such conduct of
government was no longer necessary:

As long as the proposals of this treatise are implemented, the grand vizier does not need to build
any charity. There are plenty of people who build charities, but formerly no grand vizier thought
of the kind of charity which does not require money. Instead, in accordance with the law, they
occupied themselves with hearing complaints. In our time, the grand vizier is already inclined
toward charities and it is already known that no former grand vizier can match him in this respect.
These commendable works [proposals] could only be carried out during his [grand vizier] time,
otherwise they will be wasted, and this book will be left in a corner only to decay.²¹²

Almost all viziers left behind a number of charities, not because they were all
philanthropists but because this was required by the political culture. For the grand
vizier, initiating public services was also a way of proving his character to the sultan as a
benevolent servant who was spending what he received from the sultan for the needs of
his subjects rather than hoarding it for himself. According to conventional wisdom and
state practice, it was the ruler’s and the vizier’s benevolence that benefited the public.
Most major public works were the result of the charitable acts of a few wealthy
statesmen, the ruler, and their relatives. But against this tidal tradition, Meşâliḫü’l-
Müslimîn recurrently stated that finding solutions to endemic social problems, annulling
outmoded laws, and promulgating beneficial kânūns were much more important actions

than building charities.

Such a view further depersonalized both the vizierate and the government in general, by promoting ‘service’ above ‘favor’. It is not surprising to find that Lütfi Pașa, who was in full agreement with this new vision of the vizierate, was among the grand viziers with the poorest record in public works. According to the prevailing view inculcated in traditional mirrors for princes, the ruler’s or his servant’s service to subjects was primarily an act of favor (ihšān). That was why conventional teachings on rulership had focused on the personality of the ruler with the aim of inculcating virtue and piety in him, who would then dispense justice and show generosity towards his people because of his good character as well as his expectation of a reward in the afterlife.

Meşâliḫü’l-Müslimîn further gave currency to the idea that the vizier’s success was to be measured through his work in government and service to the public. The anonymous author appears to have been well aware of the importance of the image of the vizier in Ottoman polity. However, he stated that the vizier should build a good name for himself not through charities but through good government. Inherent in this advice was the idea that the vizier needed to build popular support for himself by providing solutions to the current problems of various social sectors, not simply by maintaining the favor of the sultan. After each policy recommendation the author ensured the vizier that he would receive exceptional acclaim and well-wishing prayers from those who would benefit from the vizier’s policies, including the military, the ‘ulemâ, the bureaucracy, palace guards, and certain other sections of society.

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The author wove his treatise in such a way that if all of his recommendations were implemented the vizier would be the most acclaimed person in the eyes of the ruling class and the society at large. In traditional Ottoman polity however, viziers totally depended on the favor of the sultan to sustain their power. They were out of power when out of favor unless in exceptional circumstances, they managed to garner strong support from the military, ‘ilmîyye, or the palace. Especially in an age of ḳūl viziers, when most viziers were coming from the palace service with strong social and, in some cases, matrimonial ties to the dynasty, a vizier’s career was very much tied to his favorable image in the presence of the sultan. In this period, viziers such as İbrâhîm Pâşâ and Rüstem Pâşâ, the two longest serving viziers of the reign of Süleymân, were dynastic favorites. That made Meşâlihü ’l-Müslimîn’s perspective all the more revolutionary. No single advice was given to obtain the favor of the sultan but all recommendations were geared toward gathering public support based on providing solutions to social problems.

The central message of Āṣafnâme and Meşâlihü ’l-Müslimîn was that the Ottoman state and society were governed by law. Lütfî Pâşâ viewed the government from an entirely legal perspective which would become a popular approach among seventeenth-century reformists. He made law the primary, if not the only, yardstick in evaluating the rules and operation of government. Unlike other purveyors of political advice, he was not concerned with whether a particular political practice was compatible with religion or the ruler’s interest. He focused instead on government practices which he deemed unlawful and regarded them as examples of corruption to be reformed. He neither defined law nor elaborated on law-making, but severely criticized any breach of law and advised all officials, including the sultan, to act according to law. His main objective was
not to elaborate on Ottoman law *per se* but to make government act lawfully. For him any government practice which was not compatible with law was blatantly corrupt.

Instead of abstract principles for measuring the quality of government, such as morality and religion, he envisioned law to be a specific point of reference and made it the sole measurement for the quality of government. In his conception, government had, and should have, a set of laws to operate within which should not be violated. This conception was quite different from the conventional view which gave the government wide latitude as long as it acted in accordance with religion, served the will of the ruler, and protected the interests of subjects. But for Lütfi Pasha, government was an institution with its own rules, defined as laws, and only through observing these laws could the government act properly.

Lütfi Pasha’s legal perspective enabled him to present the Ottoman government as an institution capable of operating on the basis of law. He depicted the sultan as a legitimate and legitimizing authority at the head of government and society. He discussed the actual operation of the Ottoman government with little reference to the sultan’s involvement. Therefore, he offered a theoretical formulation for the sixteenth-century condition of the Ottoman government, which was increasingly regarded as a separate entity, relatively independent of the sultan’s direct involvement, with set practices, rules and well-defined offices. In this century, as sultans withdrew from actual government, the Ottoman bureaucracy, military, and education were institutionalized around fairly well-codified principles. These institutions evolved from being simply instruments of the sultan’s governing of his subjects, to administrative bodies with set regulations. Although the sultan still, in theory, had absolute authority to make or break
the government, any interference by the sultan in the internal procedures of these institutions was criticized and regarded as not right.

*Kânün*, as perceived by Lütfi Pasha, was much more specific and functional than was previously conceived. As perceived by his contemporaries, such as Bidlisi and Kinâlizada, *kânün* usually referred to any law without a specific application whereby laws of nature or religion might equally be referred to as *kânün*. In Lütfi Pasha’s view, *kânün* referred to existing laws of government with exclusive political meaning. One area in his conception of law which shows that he did not make a complete break with tradition was *kânün-i kadim* (literally ancient law), the perceived fundamental law of the Ottoman state. He took *kânün* for granted as it was, without envisioning any change. He seems to have conceived that the Ottoman government had a universally applicable set of rules much like the laws of nature. Thus he attributed a mythical/natural power to law and he thought that as long as that law was applied, government should continue to function ideally.

Lütfi Pasha presented *kânün* as binding for everyone, from the sultan to his subjects. He depicted Sultan Selim, whom he regarded as the greatest of the Ottoman sultans, as a law-abiding sultan. He related an incident whereby *kâdî’askers* and *beglerbegs* had a dispute over priority in state protocol upon which the *kâdî’askers* formally requested that they supersede all *beglerbegs* except for those of Rumeli and Anatolia.214 When the issue was brought to the attention of Sultan Selim, he ruled that the *kânün* supported the view of the *beglerbegs* and he was not able to alter that *kânün*. In another illustration, Lütfi Pasha proposed an internal system of checking the

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enforcement of government decisions. Although he promoted the position of the grand vizier in government, he also made a proposal to ensure that the vizier acted within the limits of law. He stated that in case the vizier, by mistake, ordered something contrary to law, the *re’isü’l-küttāb* and *deFTER EMİNi* should not enforce this decision and should return it to the vizier.215 Showing the proximity of political theory to government practice that characterized Lütfi Pasha’s writings, a law code, probably composed during or soon after his term in the vizierate, ruled that if the treasurer compromises law this will lead to his punishment and dismissal:

Treasurers should know that they shall not issue to governors anything against the law or never start anything against the law. If something against the law is presented by the governor then he should try to eliminate it to the extent of his power. If he cannot prevent the governor, then he should write the case up in detail and dispatch it to my noble threshold. If the treasurer accedes and does not report, or makes a false report, this will lead to his punishment and dismissal.216

In *Âsafnâme*, Lütfi Pasha presented himself as a staunch advocate of a strong vizier who governs by observing the existing law, and displayed a conservative attitude towards Ottoman law without envisioning any change. While completely in accord with Lütfi Pasha as regards the idea of government by law, the anonymous author of *Meşâlihî l-Müslimîn* had a different vision about law-making and the vizier’s relationship to the law.


Unlike Lütfi Pasha, the anonymous author did not think that the Ottoman law was immutable. For him Ottoman law was a human creation, a set of rules enacted by Ottoman statesmen. He proposed the changing of certain laws because he thought that they were unjust, redundant and were established by incompetent viziers of the reign of Baysid II. Whether this author was aware of it or not, Bidlisi and Celalzade had also had a very low opinion of Baysid II’s viziers, accusing them of corruption and instituting harmful practices. Celalzade, for example, characterized those viziers as incompetent servants of the sultan who were promoted because of the sultan’s misjudgments, and had instituted a “novel order and a new law” which had disastrous consequences.217 “They say it is an ancient custom (‘ädet-i kadim),” the author of Mevlihi’l-Mislimin stated, but “they never reveal whether it was an intelligent vizier who established this custom, or an illiterate man such as Karagöz Pasha or Hersekza (d. 1517).”218

In Lütfi Pasha’s perception, however, there was a mystifying aura surrounding Ottoman law. It consisted of a body of fundamental rules of the Ottoman state, rules which in effect were crafted by the collective wisdom and experience of the Ottomans, and were therefore binding forever. Without questioning its binding status, Mevlihi’l-Mislimin demystified Ottoman law and strongly criticized the view which considered it as immutable:

217 Celal-zade, Selim-Name, 55-58.

“Although it is a law, the founder of this law was either Hersek-oğlu or Karagöz Pasha who were both illiterate. Should the intelligent and knowledgeable statesmen of our time follow them? Thanks to God, this matter is neither a religious obligation or a commendation so that its abandonment would incur a great sin.”

Unlike Lütfi Pasha who strictly instructed the vizier not to compromise the kânün, Meşâlihü’l-Müslimîn educated the vizier that kânûns were passed in response to current needs in government society. According to the anonymous author, because conditions had changed since the establishment of Ottoman laws which he proposed to annul, the argument that those laws were inherited had no relevance. He stated that every matter had to be dealt with in accordance with the circumstances of its time: “There is no use in saying that they were in effect since earlier. Those times are not same as this time. By then there was no corruption as ours. Every matter has to be dealt with according to the exigencies of its time.”

From the sixteenth century onwards, Ottoman intellectuals and statesmen had an

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219 “Eğerci kânûndur, lâkin bu asl kânûnu koyanlar ya Hersek-oğlu ve yâhud Karagöz Paşadur ki bir solp ümmî ademler imi’s, lâzîmmîdîr ki şimdiki zamanın akîl ve danâ hâkimleri mutasîl hemâm anlarun yoluna giderler. Bi-hamdi’lîlî bu husûs ne sünnetdûr ve ne farzdûr ki terk itmekle ulu günâh hâs ola.” Meşâlihü’l-Müslîmîn, 111.

220 Given that Meşâlihü’l-Müslîmîn was most likely written during the 1550’s it is probable that its author was a contemporary of the grand vizier Rüstem Paşa. Although there is no evidence that Meşâlihü’l-Müslîmîn was written for Rüstem Paşa his attitude towards the Ottoman law resembles the proposals of Meşâlihü’l-Müslîmîn. Rüstem Paşa, who made his mark in Ottoman administration with his strict financial measures, was particularly unpopular among the Jannissaries, and was accused of annulling the kânûn codes promulgated during the reign of Bayezid II, something the anonymous author of the Meşâlihü’l-Müslîmîn advocated. For Rüstem Paşa’s policies see Mehmet Tayyip Gökbilgin, “Rüstem Paşa ve Hakkndaki İthamlar,” İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi 8 (1956): 11-50.

221 “Evvelden olgelmemişdir dimek fâ’ide virmez, ol zaman bu zaman’a uymaz. Ol zaman’a bu fesâdlar yoğımız, şimdî halk bir yozdan dahi olmuşdur, her husûs zamanına göre olmak evlädur.” Meşâlihü’l-Müslîmîn, 102.
increasing awareness of the changing conditions which required changes in state institutions. With Ibn Khaldun’s gaining currency in the seventeenth century this idea seem to be have been more widely employed by intellectuals in their analysis of social and political changes. This consciousness led to a more rational approach to politics which paved the way for the idea that political principles and law should be adapted to changing conditions in order to respond to current needs. Thus ڭانٖن, Sharī‘a, tradition and the state structure were regarded not as immutable absolutes but instead entities that could and should adapt to contemporary situations. Thus the idea of adaptive change (taghayyur) gained a degree of authority in legitimizing novel ideas and principles. It was mostly reiterated by the reform-minded in their effort to make changes by proving that their time was different than the one in which a given principle was first proposed.

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CONCLUSION

For all the right reasons, the age of Süleymān is best known in historical memory, modern scholarship, and today’s popular imagination for its spectacular achievements in arts, literature, learning, territorial expansion, diplomacy, law-making, and institutionalization, achievements that clearly towered over the intellectual history of this period. While benefiting from being the most extensively studied period of Ottoman history, except for a handful of studies that focused on few outstanding figures, the context of the above developments in the field of ideas has remained little known. With this observation as point of departure, this study set out to explore the field of political thought, focusing on the conceptions of rulership that prevailed among the Ottoman ruling elite, the very people responsible for the much acclaimed achievements of this period. The outcome of this undertaking showed that this period witnessed a paradigmatic turning point in the course of Ottoman political thought, a definitive development that appears to be no less important than any other aspect of the Süleymānic age in its originality and future effects. Among the findings of this study, the major developments that came about in the field of political thought in the age of Süleymān can be summarized as follows:

The most conspicuous development of this period was the emergence of a diversified corpus of works on government and rulership across various genres and disciplines. Juristic, philosophical, ethical, sufistic, and theological views were expressed in the conventions of their respective disciplines or in the synthetic genre of mirrors for princes. The number of works alone indicates the existence of diversified interests
among the Ottoman reading populace in subjects concerning rulership. The number of copies made of these works as well as the copies of non-Ottoman works in circulation show that this interest was broad-based.

Accompanying this surge in circulation of political works was a broadening of the field of political thought. Increased contact of Ottoman men of learning with the non-Ottoman body of political writings led them to deal with issues and questions that had not appeared in pre-sixteenth century Ottoman political literature. *Al-siyāsa al-sharʿiyya*, for example, a field which developed during the Mamluk period, came to the attention of Ottoman scholars only towards the middle of the sixteenth century, after the conquest of Egypt. Similarly, *bayt al-māl* or public treasury, a topic not included in previous Ottoman political writings, became an important issue in this period, largely because of the influence of the Mamluk tradition of political writing. Besides, the Ottoman experience in government posed new questions to address in political literature. *Kańūn*, for example, in the sense of law, had never made its way into political theory before this period, because no pre-Ottoman polity had such a highly developed legal system characterized by *kańūn*.

This broadening of the spectrum in political writings did not bring all conventional issues of previous political corpus into the Ottoman context. On the contrary, except for a few issues, most of the common questions that had busied pre-Ottoman authors on rulership did not resonate among the Ottoman audience and were disregarded. Qualifications for the universal leadership of the Muslim community, for example, a topic that pervaded the mainstream political works written by jurists, was not revived in this period, even though the Ottoman sultan always implied his superiority
over all other rulers in the world of Islam. Thus the Ottoman inheritance of a rich tradition of political writings involved as many discontinuities as continuities.

While inheriting a vast literature of political works from diverse parts of the Islamic world as many other facets of the Ottoman cultural landscape, the broader field of political thought in this period was exposed more to influences from the Turkic and Persian East than from the Arab South. For practical reasons, Ottoman authors found political teachings formulated in the East more applicable because of the affinity of the Ottoman political system with its Eastern counterparts. This influence was facilitated by a constant influx of scholars, bureaucrats, and literati from the East to the Ottoman realm for various reasons, who carried Eastern political ideals and conventions along with them. Besides, because of the infatuation of Ottomans with Persian literature, they were better able to follow scholarly works written in the East than any other part of the Islamic world.

Although the Ottoman authors of this period wrote on a variety of subjects in different genres, the overall discourse on rulership was dominated by a Sufistic language. Few texts were written in a strictly juristic, administrative, or philosophical language, while the majority of works written in these fields reflect the Sufi mode of thinking on rulership. Besides the mystics who wrote on government, the majority of the scholars writing on the subject was either themselves affiliated with a Sufi order or was well-versed in Sufi teachings. More works on government were written, read, and translated reflecting a Sufi perspective than any other point of view. In general, whether political, ethical, or simply pietistic, the advice literature in circulation that reflected the Sufi view was dominated by either Persian works or their derivatives. The ritualistic terminology
of Ottoman Sufism was largely Persian because of the popularity of Persian works on the subject as well as the dissemination of Sufi orders that originated in the East. The Sufi world view that captivated Ottoman intellectuals naturally shaped the mode of thinking and the language of Ottoman authors writing on rulership. Sufi poetry, most notably that of Sa‘dī, Attār, and Rūmī, was imbued with teachings on rulership reformulated as repositories of Sufi wisdom on government.

Although political works appeared in any one of the three languages of Ottoman high culture, the Turkish language established itself as the primary language of political discourse in this period. Although the combined number of works compiled in Arabic and Persian was still much higher than those in Turkish, only Turkish texts reached a wide circulation. A large number of translations made in this period demonstrated a broad interest in reading about subjects in Turkish while further spreading Turkish as the medium of political discourse. The availability of a large number of classical works on rulership in Turkish certainly facilitated the use of Turkish to write on the subject. The spread of Turkish texts on rulership and the upsurge of interest in reading on the subject were two developments that fed each other. In terms of terminological richness, conceptual sophistication, literary, and artistic potentialities, Turkish became a more convenient language for expressing political views. For Ottoman men of learning who were well-versed in Turkish, Persian, and Arabic traditions of political writing, the Turkish language of the age of Süleymān had the greatest potential for expressing the specific vocabulary and motifs brought to life in all these languages.

During this period, Ottoman authors continued to write on government with the moralist tendency they had inherited, a tendency that had dominated political discourse
since the rise of independent rulers in the Islamic world against the overarching rule of
the Abbasid Caliphate in the eleventh century. During the high Caliphate of the ninth and
tenth centuries, the basic quest of juristic political thought was to establish principles of
government and prescribe a strict set of conditions to determine the candidate best
qualified to lead the community. The scope of theological writing was usually limited to
the obligations of the Muslim community regarding the instatement of the imāmate and
the required qualifications for universal leadership. Philosophical works mostly dealt
with defining the best form of human association along with the qualifications of its
leader. Regardless of disciplinary interests and priorities, the dominating theme of
political discourse was defining the best qualified candidate to lead the Muslim
community. The goal of this quest was to instate the best qualified candidate to the
leadership of the community to ensure the best government. For this reason, political
theory in this period centered on the personal qualifications of the universal leader and
largely disregarded the institutional aspects of government.

With the collapse of the central caliphate and the rise of independent rulers the
discrepancy between classical juristic theory and political practice increased, a
development that placed moralism at the center of political discourse, a trend mostly
expressed in mirrors for princes. This fledgling breed of political literature, which
ultimately originated from the writings of Ibn al-Muqaffā in the eighth century but was
overshadowed by the juristic discourse, shifted the focus from the qualifications of the
universal caliph to the moral recuperation of the ruler in office, and from the
uncompromising but abstract shari‘ī principles of governance to specific instructions to
ensure just and efficient administration. Because instating the best qualified candidate to
the universal leadership of the Muslim community remained an unrealized utopia, the
moralist tendency that aimed to turn the ruler in office into the best possible one found
widespread appeal among statesmen, jurists, philosophers, and Sufis alike. Despite this
shift of focus towards specific principles of government, the belief that the best
government could only be ensured by the best of people remained in effect, guiding
political authors who prepared elaborate prescriptions to educate the ruler in office on
morality, piety, and governance.

The historical caliphate as the universal leadership of the Muslim community with
the claim that it succeeded the succeeding the position of the Prophet had already lost its
appeal in both practice and theory by the time of Süleymān. However, at a rhetorical
level, the depiction of the Ottoman ruler as a legitimate caliph and the successor to the
Prophet’s authority continued to be expressed in poetry, histories, and communiqués.
Besides its use as mere laudation, the historical caliphate was invoked mostly to dispel
doubts about the legitimacy of the Ottoman ruler or to solidify his position against
challenges from home or abroad. Ottoman rulers of this period certainly considered
themselves rulers in the line of prophets and caliphs. The Ottoman ruler then by
definition was elevated to the rank of a prophet’s successor in the political theory of this
period. However, there was no deliberate policy to reinstate the Ottoman sultan as the
universal head of the Muslim community by subjugating independent rulers in the
Islamic world. Nor there was any systematic political theory to define the historical
caliphate in this period. In fact, the principal term that defined the historical caliphate as
the successor of the Prophet (khalīfa al-Rasūl Allāh) was rarely used. Yet the caliphate
remained one of the most defining designations in use during this period. The
predominant concept of the caliphate, however, was the one defined by mystics, not by jurists. The defining designation for this concept of the caliphate was God’s vicegerent (*khalīfa Allāh*). This status of the caliphate could be attained not through a contract with, or subjection of, the Muslim community but through learning, piety, morality, and spiritual perfection.

Guided by the moralist-pietist tendency, one of the common pursuits of Ottoman authors in this period was to improve the quality of rulership while totally disregarding its form. Ideal rulership was to be achieved not by finding the best form of political authority but by improving the moral quality of ruler and his aides in government. These authors recognized only two types of rulership that were defined on the basis of the moral, pietistic, and spiritual condition of the ruler. The defining element in characterizing a reign was not its institutional sophistication but the human agent at the top of it. At the basest level, the ordinary or rudimentary type of rulership was characterized by the mere acquisition of the sufficient power to rule. At the highest level stood superior or real rulership that was characterized by the personal achievements of the ruler in the domains of morality, spirituality, and piety. The false rulership which was perceived as worldly, material, and temporal was most commonly dubbed *ṣūrī* and was regarded as an imperfect form of rulership which should be turned into a superior one. Real rulership, characterized by such designations as *ma‘nawī*, *raḥmānī*, *ḥaqqī*, *rabbānī*, was presented as being one which combined the rulership of both the material and spiritual realms in the personal perfection of the ruler. Authors with these convictions did not pay much attention to the institutional features of government or the principles of governance but simply extended the teachings of ethics, piety, and sufism into the realm
of rulership. With their focus on the human agent as the benchmark of superior government, there was no big difference between reforming an individual initiate and the ruler in power.

While the Ottomans continued to draw inspiration from the practice of past rulers and scholars of government, by the middle of the sixteenth century, Ottoman experience in government was definitively established as an autonomous ideal in political theory. By comparison, Ottoman learned men and statesmen perceived their own achievements in state building to be a par with the greatest accomplishments of the past that filled their imaginations from histories, epics and legends. They felt more confident in portraying Ottoman institutions, conventions, and deeds as the penultimate objective of ideal rulership. While still greatly revering such past idols as Nūshinrevān, Ardashir, Alexander, Maʿmūn and others, they illustrated their teachings more and more with anecdotes and aphorisms attributed to the past Ottoman sultans, statesmen, scholars, and Sufis.

A common belief regarding the existing political authority and its reception by a particular individual was that it was a grace from God (niʿmet). It was a grace for mankind for which all should be grateful, since without political authority chaos and anarchy would prevail in the world, and people of different dispositions, interests and talents would be unable to cooperate. It was a grace for the ruler because it placed him at the highest position among mankind, in the line of the prophets and the rightly-guided caliphs, and offered him the opportunity to become the governor of both the material and the spiritual realms at the same time.
Although voiced only but a few, the belief in the uniqueness of the Ottoman dynasty made its way into the mainstream of political thinking. Mythology regarding the origins of the Ottoman state, esoteric interpretations of religious texts, and prophesies of the great men of spirit provided ample evidence for authors who perceived the Ottoman dynasty as a chosen one. Further, the triumphalist mood of the age, invigorated by seemingly incessant victories, made these authors see achievements in the arts, architecture, literature, and government as further signs of Ottoman exceptionalism.

The ruler-centric tradition of political theory faded away in this period in favor of the vizier-centric vision of government. The very Ottoman experience in government made the vizierate the main battlefield of clashing visions of ideal rulership. Such developments as the withdrawal of the sultan from actual government, the rise of kânûn as the definitive law of government, institutionalization of government functions, the establishment of procedures of conduct, and the emergence of the vizierate as the highest office in the Empire with extensive powers, brought the vizierate into the focus of political theory. Political authors had much more freedom in profiling an ideal vizier than the ruler. Further, with few exceptions, anything they could hope from the ruler could be done thorough the vizier. The personality of the ruler, which had been the focus of pre-Ottoman moralist tendency, lost its importance. The personality and capabilities of the vizier were more important than those of the ruler for the establishment of good government.

Of these fundamental changes that took place in political reasoning, perhaps the most conspicuous was the introduction of the state and law into the political theory as objects of analysis. Although the sixteenth century concepts of devlet and kânûn had not
yet gained their philosophical definitions as ‘state’ and ‘law’, respectively, they were nevertheless more far-reaching than their medieval connotations and much closer to modern perceptions. Due to the unique transformation in government and society, the Ottoman Empire went through after the fall of Constantinople, a new perception of governing developed, and for the first time in the history of Middle Eastern polities, state and law became the primary objects of political analysis in the writings of bureaucrat-statesmen authors. In contrast with conventional teachings on governance, concepts of state and law came to occupy the central themes of subsequent political writings until they gained their modern meanings in the nineteenth century.


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