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and His Time
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Sultan Süleymân : The Man and the Statesman

Sultan Süleymân (1520-1566) is described by his contemporaries in the East as well as in the West as a pious, compassionate, kind, generous, humane and modest man and a discreet, far-sighted, balanced, law-abiding and just ruler. Marco Minio, (1) the Venetian bailo in Istanbul in 1527, made the particular remark that he was an independent decision-maker. All these qualities correspond to those of a perfect ruler enumerated in the mediaeval mirror-for-princes literature. His most important quality is that he was just and to this effect law-abiding. He was praised as being uncompromising against all illegal, oppressive acts committed by the powerful against the powerless. Laws and regulations had to be based on the protection of the *reʿâyâ*, a powerless class, and on a just government with impartial and full administration of the laws. According to his contemporaries and to later generations, Süleymân was idealized as a promulgator of such *ḳânûn*s and as a strict administrator of his *ḳânûn*s. He succeeded in promoting such an image for himself.

Süleymân gave the impression, or created the myth of, a perfect ruler. (2) One can find in Süleymân's life acts which confirm such exalted dispositions. For example, his first deeds immediately after his accession to the throne were the execution of the governors who were hated for their irresponsible and cruel abuses against people ; and he released the deportees from Tabriz and Cairo and allowed them to return to their homes if they so wished. (3) In general, such actions were designed to demonstrate that the ruler's reign was going to be an age of justice as described in the mirror-for-princes literature. In fact, in the histories and miniature paintings dealing with Süleymân's reign, pains were taken to show him as concerned for people and for justice.

One thing for certain is that he was not like his father Selîm I or his great-grandfather Meḥmed the Conqueror, a man of impetuous nature. In describing him his contemporaries, including his wife Ḫurrem, noted his soft, sweet, understanding note in his voice. Psychologically his father's tough, forceful character might have had a negative effect on his son. His

mother Ḥafṣa, apparently a slave girl in origin, was a woman of character who always accompanied her son and had a strong influence on his life until her death in 1534. Apparently another person who had a strong spiritual influence on him was Merkez Efendi. In his youth in Manisa, Süleymân joined ecstatic rituals of this great Ḫalvetî shaykh and continued to show him a deep veneration when he became sultan. (4)

The question as far as Süleymân's personality is concerned is to what extent he was allowed to remain independent in his major political decisions ; or whether he reached his decisions, as is often claimed, under the influence of special interest groups, palace factions, or his wife Ḫurrem.

In examining these questions, we have to keep in mind that a patrimonial autocratic ruler is expected to exercise total absolute authority. As far as Ottoman sultans are concerned this fundamental principle found its expression in the practice of every public action being brought to his attention. Accordingly, every Ottoman document requiring government action ends with the formula "*bâḳî emr u fermân sulṭânımındır*," which can be translated as "the final order belongs to the Sultan." It was only in a distant campaign that the sultan empowered a commander-in-chief (*ser ʿasker*) under a special diploma to issue "imperial" orders without first consulting the sultan. Of course, in daily routine matters of administration the sultan's chanceries acted in his name without his approval for each case. For example, when small town *ḳâḍî* were to be appointed, lists were drawn up in the *ḳâḍîʿasker*'s bureau and were then submitted for the sultan's approval without discussing each individual appointment. (5) But any irregularity which later on became the subject of complaint had to be submitted to the sultan through the Imperial Council. On the other hand, it was necessary to obtain the sultan's personal approval whenever an appointment for a cadiship of a major city was in question. As for the members of the Imperial Council (*dîvân-i hümâyûn*) it was believed that good government depended on the sultan making the right choice in selecting his ministers. Thus, the sultan had to have a close personal knowledge of the persons, the current affairs and laws of the Empire, and arrive at his decisions independently. Bâyezîd II, ʿOṣmân II, Muṣṭafâ I, Ibrâhîm I, Selîm III and Murâd V were deposed or murdered on the grounds that they were incapable of making independent decisions or neglected public affairs.

Likewise, Süleymân I in his old age was in danger of being deposed by his sons whose supporters claimed that he was under the influence of ill-intentioned factions and lacked sound judgement.

Since in wielding his imperial power and giving his decisions the ruler was absolutely independent from any institutional check, any constitutional rule or individual except God, the only check on his authority according to political theoreticians was his own conscience. Therefore, to be a perfect ruler ethical qualities were required and in the treatises dealing with

political theory ethics was a central part of the theory. (6) In order to restrain tyranny particular attention is given to the most significant ethical qualities of a ruler including justice (*ʿadl*), moderation (*ḥilm*), forgiveness (*ʿafv*), generosity and kindness (*kerem*). Above all, the ruler must be conscious that his power is a favor of God and should always recognize that (*ḥamd u şukr*). Also, it was considered of utmost importance that the vizier to whom the ruler delegated his power should have the same ethical qualities in addition to absolute loyalty to his master. A ruler's sense of responsibility and wisdom or his statesmanship were judged on his appointments for this position. Ottoman memorialists and historians discussing the causes of the Ottoman « decline » underlined this point as the cornerstone of the whole political system and the precondition for good government. (7)

Let us first have a quick glance at the Ottoman governmental system before discussing Süleymân's administrative capacity. The Ottoman central government or "Imperial Council" had four ministerial positions which were autonomous vis-a-vis each other. (8) As the supreme minister the grand vizier was the absolute deputy of the sultan and the general supervisor of the administration. However, his particular area of responsibility consisted of general political affairs (*beglik*) or anything concerning the sultan's authority. He was assisted by viziers ranked according to their seniority in the position. The second position and in practice the most important one after the vizirial post was the Finance ministry or *başdefterdâr*. Thirdly, the administration of the *Şarîʿa* was the exclusive responsibility of the two *ḳâḍîʿasker* of Rumelia and Anatolia who supervised the *ḳâḍî*s of Rumelia and Anatolia respectively. The fourth minister *nişâncı*, the head of the imperial chancery was responsible for all legal titles, in particular those concerning landholding, *tîmâr*s as well as for the formulation of the state laws, *ḳânûn*. These four ministers were all autonomous in their respective departments but the grand vizier's overall supervision as the absolute deputy of the sultan provided unity in the government and a system of checks and balances. The grand vizier's attempt to interfere in *nişâncı*'s jurisdiction, for example, was prevented by the rule that any change in the registers of landholding and *tîmâr*s had to be made directly by the *nişâncı*. However, the *nişâncı*'s note had to be approved by the viziers who placed their signature under the note. On the other hand, since the grand vizier's attempt to influence the religious appointments might "politicize" the religious institutions and impair the *Şarîʿa* and justice, the appointment and dismissal of the *ḳâḍî* were the exclusive responsibility of the *ḳâḍîʿasker*s (later of the *Şeyḫ ül-islâm*) and were determined strictly on the basis of knowledge in religious sciences. The *ʿulemâ*' tried to reduce to a minimum the risk of interference from the political authorities including the sultan's by codifying and obtaining the sultan's approval for laws regulating the appointment and dismissal of the *ḳâḍî*. Süleymân's attempt to bring Bâḳî, "the sultan of the poets" for whom he had a great admiration to the position of *ḳâḍîʿasker* with total disregard for the existing regulations

caused a strong reaction from the *'ulemâ'*. Of course, unlike other areas in which the sultan's authority was final the *Şarî'a* and its administration were an exception enjoying absolute independence as far as religion was concerned. It is interesting to note that in order to transcend the *ḳâḍî'askers*, Süleymân granted a special favor and place in the administration to *şeyḫ ül-islâm* Ebû's-Su'ûd.

The normal appointment procedure of ministers to the Imperial Council followed the general rule applied to all appointments, namely, the testimony of good service and recommendation by an immediate superior. (9) Thus, for the appointment of a vizier or *defterdâr*, the grand vizier's recommendation to the sultan and/or direct consultation was required. Although the principle of merit (*ehliyyet*), career service and seniority (*istiḥḳâḳ*) were always mentioned as necessary requirements, consideration was also given to loyalty, family ties and clientship (*intisâb*) in the Ottoman patrimonial system. The rise and fall of a man or family were determined above all by loyalty to the sultan. To the credit of Süleymân, it should be recognized that, in general, he did not dismiss the rule of service and seniority solely in favor of personal loyalty. In this period the career line of a vizier was in descending order, the governorship of Rumelia or Egypt, the office of *ḳapıaġa* (head of the Palace pages) or the commander of the Janissary or the governorship of Anatolia. The sultan always had the option of promoting or inviting a man to occupy one of the alternative posts at each level.

Since Bâyezîd II was in fear of Cem's return with the support of his partisans in the realm he selected his grand viziers from among the *ḳapıaġa*s, title of the chief eunuch of the imperial palace, the most powerful and trusted man among his servants. (10) In their palace service at the beginning of their careers almost all of the commanders and governors were under the authority of the white eunuch *ḳapıaġa*. At the beginning of his sultanate, Süleymân followed the same practice but in a more personal way. (11) Disregarding the well established rule which required that the senior vizier, second in rank in the Imperial Council, then Aḥmed Pasha had to be appointed grand vizier, Süleymân made « Frenk » Ibrâhîm, the chief of the imperial private room (*ḥâṣṣ oda başı*) and his intimate friend since the days of his governorship in Manisa, a grand vizier. The choice caused a major crisis in the Empire and resulted in Aḥmed's rebellion in Egypt where he had been sent as governor. Afterwards, Süleymân respected the rule but still his grand viziers included one eunuch, Ḫâdim Süleymân (1541-1544) and two of his grand viziers belonged to the imperial family by marriage, Luṭfî (1539-1541), husband of Süleymân's aunt, and Rüstem, husband of Mihrumâh, Süleymân's daughter from Ḫurrem.

It appears that Ḥafṣa, Süleymân's mother, was a steady supporter of the grand vizier Ibrâhîm so that Ḫurrem could not openly challenge him. But after Ḥafṣa's death in 1534, Ḫurrem appears to have played a fundamental role in influencing Süleymân in the selection of his grand viziers and some of his governors, thus creating a powerful faction loyal to herself. Because of her strong involvement in state politics historians consider her the first in "Sultanate of the Seraglio ladies." But as will be discussed later, Ḫurrem assumed such a powerful position through influence over her husband, while other sultanas exercised power directly as the mother of the sultan who came to the throne in minority. It is believed that Süleymân's order for Ibrâhîm Pasha's execution was given under pressure from Ḫurrem who hated him because she believed he was favoring prince Muṣṭafâ from another woman. In Ibrâhîm's execution, however, the pressure on Süleymân came actually from the partisans of Iskender Çelebi (see *infra*) who spread all kinds of calumnies against the grand vizier including his so-called ambition to share the sultanate with Süleymân. Ḫurrem appears to have exploited this propaganda and influenced Süleymân to sacrifice his old friend Ibrâhîm after thirteen years of distinguished service in the grand vizirate.

On the other hand, in selecting his grand viziers Süleymân seems to consider also their usefulness for the Empire's problems and policies at the time. With his knowledge and connections "Frenk" Ibrâhîm Pasha proved to be the right man for Süleymân's active policy in the West during the years 1523-1533.

Ibrâhîm's reverses began in the Iranian campaign in the years 1533-1535. Because of the vital logistical problems during the long eastern campaign, Süleymân gave his Finance minister, Iskender Çelebi, additional responsibilities which unavoidably brought him into conflict with the grand vizier Ibrâhîm, commander-in-chief with extraordinary powers (*ser'asker*). Evidently, this particular arrangement brought these two rival office-holders to open confrontation. In the end, the commander-in-chief obtained from Süleymân the fatal order for the execution of his rival. But Iskender had a large number of loyal clients and supporters in the administration who ultimately brought ruin to the powerful *ser'asker*.

The viziership of the eunuch Süleymân Pasha was evidently based upon his extraordinary service in Ottoman Egypt, his success in expelling the Portuguese from the Red Sea and Arabia, and in firmly establishing Ottoman rule in Yemen and Aden during his long governorship of Egypt. When in 1541 he brought this old timer into the position of grand vizier, Sultan Süleymân was preparing for his epoch-making campaign against the Habsburgs in Hungary. Then, Ḫurrem's favorite, Rüstem, her daughter Mihrumâh's husband, became the candidate for the grand vizirate by first becoming the second vizier in the Imperial Council, he succeeded him three years later.

Rüstem, twice grand vizier in the periods 1544-1553 and 1555-1561, together with his ambitious and authoritative wife Mihrumâh and his

mother-in-law Ḫurrem, formed an inner circle in the government which evidently influenced the sultan's decisions particularly in issues concerning the succession and the future of the sultanate. In her plans to secure the Ottoman throne for her own sons, Ḫurrem and her son-in-law Rüstem were accused of putting pressure on Süleymân to execute his eldest surviving son, Muṣṭafâ. At that critical point when Süleymân was faced with open protest from the army and negative public opinion following the murder of Muṣṭafâ, Süleymân was forced to replace his son-in-law in the position of grand vizirate with Ḳara Aḥmed Pasha, a war hero and favorite of the army. But within two years under pressure from the inner circle under Ḫurrem, Ḳara Aḥmed was eliminated and Rüstem resumed the grand vizirate, keeping the office until his death in 1561. Süleymân's reputation suffered from these schemes as illustrated by public opinion, but no one could deny or challenge his absolute authority whether or not it was used by a faction which included his wife, daughter and son-in-law.

Although hated by bureaucrats for being too liberal and unscrupulously enterprising in his finance policies, and disliked by the populace at large for becoming an active instrument in a government with the intrigues and influence of the harem, Rüstem's extraordinary achievements in the empire's economy and finances under his grand vizirate have been obscured in historiography. Rüstem was the first grand vizier who succeeded in establishing a favorable peace with the Habsburgs including Emperor Charles V in 1547. The spectacular expansion of the agrarian economy and the growing surplus of revenue from this sector, as well as the revival of European and Indian trade and the settlement of the Mendes Marrano-Jewish banking family in Istanbul, all occurred during Rüstem's grand vizirate. He was particularly concerned with the protection and expansion of the empire's trade. Without the great expansion of state finances during his two grand vizirates in the period 1544-1553 and 1555-1561, Süleymân's costly imperial campaigns and great construction works such as the Süleymâniye complex (1550-1557), the water works in Istanbul, Mecca, and Jerusalem, bedestans and markets in various cities coupled with an extraordinary urban growth and urbanization would not have been possible. Süleymân must have duly appreciated his son-in-law's achievements. Of course, in addition to the legendary wealth he and his wife Mihrumâh left behind, a great number of charitable and public buildings they built should be added to this picture of prosperity. In fact, in the Ottoman patrimonial society the empire and its finances appear to have been viewed as part of the imperial household.

In imitation of the sultan's vast palace-household, members of the Imperial Council created large households. (12) The wealth and power of a vizier or a *defterdâr* are measured by the number of his clients, slave pages (richly dressed and well-trained, the pages of Ibrâhîm, Iskender Çelebi, Ḫâdim Süleymân, Ḳara Aḥmed, and particularly Rüstem are said to have

exceeded one thousand). As a result of the Ottoman patronage system, trained slaves had access to high offices under the protection of their masters, thus forming strong factions within the government to retain power.

Rivalries between such factions are the key to understanding the Ottoman home politics and power struggles. The sultan's success depended on his wisdom and skill in supervising the various factions and in seeing that the empire's — or his own — interests were best served under such a system. Besides not infrequently, such groups of slaves trained by the sultan's former slaves were incorporated into the imperial household when their patron's services were terminated. The sultan alone as the only person not being of slave origin had the *walâ'*, inheritance right, over the property of his *ḳul*s. It is often asserted that unlike European patrimonialism, it was this system that secured Ottoman centralist autocracy and prevented the rise of a feudal aristocracy. (13) In judging Süleymân's position, wisdom and acts, we have to keep in mind this basic traditional system in which he lived and endeavored to live up to.

The "arbitrary" decisions of Süleymân must be interpreted within the evolution of the Ottoman patrimonial autocracy. The logic of patrimonialism demanded that the *pâdişâh*'s will should be absolute and above all subject to no restrictions including traditions, customs and laws. While Süleymân was conscious of, and publicly displayed his respect for *ḳânûn*s, hence his Turkish title *Ḳânûnî* Law-maker or Law-abiding, it was under him that Ottoman patrimonial absolutism found its ultimate form. The memorialists of the seventeenth century would deplore its deterioration under his successors. (14) If, with such an unlimited power, they argued, the sultan let any other person or group influence his decisions that would lead to an absolutely arbitrary, irresponsible rule. And the memorialists criticizing Süleymân's successors insisted exactly on this point. Some of them even believed that Süleymân himself opened the way by acting under the influence of women. (15) As a matter of fact, Süleymân's drama appeared to have resulted from this contradictory position. While as a perfect ruler, *pâdişâh*, autocrat, he should, on the one hand, be absolutely independent and unrestricted in his decisions, he should, on the other hand, act within the objective traditions and rules of the empire to achieve the ideal of a just ruler. When Süleymân decided to act against his son Bâyezîd he argued that he was obeying the sacred tradition and belief that it was God and only God, that decides who would assume the supreme authority after him. (16) At the same time, he believed that he could not allow anyone, including his own son, to interfere with his decisions and impair the integrity of the imperial power. Before Süleymân the same issues had dramatically emerged when Bâyezîd II had to face his son's ambition to succeed him.

In all periods, the Middle Eastern rulers had private counselors called *nadîm*, *muṣâḥib* or *muḳarreb*. They were chosen by rulers from among

experienced statesmen, bureaucrats, *'ulemâ'* or palace favorites. As the intimate and most trusted companion a *nadîm* or *muṣâḥib* sometimes acquired unusual influence and power and became a real manipulator of state affairs behind the ruler. (17) As they were not responsible in any way, *muṣâḥib* were always blamed for the bad course of state affairs. Persons who became distinguished by being intimate advisors to Süleymân appear to have been either personalities such as *şeyḫ ül-islâm*, the head of the *'ulemâ'*, Ebû's Su'ûd and *nişâncı* Celâlzâde Muṣṭafâ, the head of the Ottoman bureaucracy, both responsible for the basic organizational changes and legislation under Süleymân, or his close family members in the Palace, his mother Ḥafṣa, his wife Ḫurrem or his daughter Mihrumâh.

* * *

Here I will discuss the case of Ḫurrem's influence which is believed to have been responsible for Süleymân's most dramatic decisions. It is claimed that Ḫurrem managed to dominate Süleymân's heart so completely that he could not resist fulfilling her desires and becoming an instrument of her plans. As a matter of fact, I believe we do have proof of his deep love for Ḫurrem (for the poem he wrote for her see *infra*).

In one of the early letters possibly written in 1526 to Süleymân, (18) Ḫurrem Ḫaṣṣeki Sulṭân writes these touching words to her husband :

> "O my Joseph face, my sugar talk, graceful, sensitive Sultan, the one who knows how it is to be away from her sweetheart should read the *sûre* of Joseph [XII]. When your noble letter had been read your slaves Mîr Meḥmed, your son, and Mihrumâh, your daughter began to weep. Their tears overwhelmed me as if there is something to mourn about in the family. Your son Mîr Meḥmed, your daughter, Mihrumâh, Selîm Khan and 'Abdullah send you their greetings and rub their faces to the dust of your feet. And now you inquire about why I am hurt by Ibrâhîm Pasha. You will hear about it when God willing my meeting with you will be granted to me. For the moment tell Pasha our greetings. We hope they accept."

Here in this letter Ḫurrem's subtle psychological approach to soften her husband's heart is too obvious. Next her mentioning Ibrâhîm Pasha must not be accidental.

In another letter she wrote (19) these words : "I wish that you should follow nobody's suggestions and not to forget your old servants." She asked his continuous favor for Rüstem Pasha for her sake and his daughter Mihrumâh. She usually expresses her admiration for Süleymân's graceful stature and sweet talk. Sometimes, in a special context, she allows herself to express passionate feelings as follows : "I swear by God I am burning

day and night by the fire of your longing. My only wish in this world is you." (20)

Incidentally, it becomes clear from the letters that Ḫurrem and her husband believe in the supernatural powers of the holy men and seek their blessing. She informs him that one of these holy men predicted that the sultan should not have gone to campaign in that particular year (21) (the year of the siege of Vienna in 1529 or the Iranian campaign in 1534). These words were actually written in a high style by Ḫurrem's private lady-secretary and all the expressions used may not belong to Ḫurrem herself. But obviously the secretary put in an elegant style the feelings and expressions of the Ḫâṣṣekî. What was Süleymân's response to Ḫurrem's display of love and affection ? I cannot find a better answer to it than these verses of passionate love which can be written only by a man in deep love (see the text at the Appendix).

Notes

(1) "Relazione," dated 1527, in E. Albèri, *Relazioni degli ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, 3rd series, Florence, 1839, III, p. 113 ; for western descriptions of Sultan Süleymân see A.H. Lybyer, *The Government of the Ottoman Empire in the Time of Suleiman the Magnificent*, New York, Russel and Russel, 1966. Index : Suleiman the Magnificent, p. 347.

(2) A good compilation of this literature can be found in Ḳınalı-zâde 'Alâ' al-Dîn 'Alî, *Aḫlâḳ-i 'Alâ'î*, 3 vols, Bulak, 1248 H, the work is written in 972/1564 ; a lesser known work of this type is Aḥmed b. Ḥusâm al-Dîn Amâsî, *Mi'rât al-Mulûk*, Süleymâniye Library, Âşir efendi n° 419, and 1890 ; see in particular the praises of the sultan by Celâl-zâde Muṣṭafâ, *Ṭabaḳat al-Mamâlik ve Derecât al-Masâlik*, ed. Petra Kappert, Wiesbaden, 1981, text 6a-10b.

(3) See Celâl-zâde, *op. cit.*, 26b-28b.

(4) Tahsin Yazıcı, "Fetihten sonra Istanbul'da Ilk Halveti Şeyhleri...," *Istanbul Enstitüsü Dergisi*, II, 1956, p. 87-113, believes that Merkez Efendi's relations with Sultan Süleymân are of legendary character and no definitive proof has been established.

(5) See H. Inalcık, "The *Rüznâmče* Registers of the *Kadıasker* of Rumeli as preserved in the Istanbul *Müftülük* Archives," *Turcica*, XX, 1988, p. 261-275.

(6) See references given in note 2, and *Excursus* at the end of this paper.

(7) It must be kept in mind that the analysis and advice of the memorialists such as Muṣṭafâ 'Âlî, the author of *Kitâb-i Muṣṭeṭâb*, and their followers on rulership and statecraft are totally based on the well-defined pragmatic maxims from Indo-Persian origin, see H. Inalcık, "Kutadgu Bilig'de Türk ve Iran Siyaset Nazariye ve Gelenekleri," in *Reşid Rahmati Arat Için*, Ankara, Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1966, p. 259-271 ; also Yûsuf Ḫâṣṣ Ḥâcib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory* (*Kutadgu Bilig*), *A Turco-Islamic Mirror for Princes*, trans. R. Dankoff, Chicago-London, The University of Chicago Press, 1983, in particular Introduction, p. 1-35 ; while Iranian tradition was conveyed in its entirety in certain Islamic advice books the best example of which is Niẓam al-Mulk's *Siyâsetnâme*, in others it is mixed with ideas from Greek political theory. Ibn Abî Randaḳa al-Ṭarṭûşî, *Sirâc al-Mulûk*, written in 1122, is an example of the latter ; also see, *The Nasirean Ethics* by Naşîr al-Dîn Tûsî, trans. G.M. Wickens, London, G. Allen and Unwin, 1964. What actually the Ottoman memorialists did was to interpret the facts in terms of these ideas, or it can be said without exaggeration that the mind of the Ottoman bureaucrats was shaped by this tradition and could not interpret the state affairs without this framework, see B. Lewis, "Ottoman Observers of Ottoman Decline," *Islamic Studies*, I, 1962, p. 71-87 ; see *Excursus* at the end of this paper.

(8) For a brief description of the Ottoman system of government see H. Inalcık, *The Ottoman Empire : The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973 ; reprint New Rochelle, D. Karatzas, 1989, p. 89-104.

(9) See H. Inalcık, "Osmanlı Bürokrasisinde Akl̂âm ve Muâmelât," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, I, 1980, p. 1-2.

(10) H. Reindl, *Männer um Bâyezîd, Eine prosopographische Studie über die Epoche Sultan Bâyezîds II (1481-1512)*, Berlin, 1983 ; some of his viziers came from among the *kul*s who nonetheless were married with the sultan's daughters.

(11) There exists no critical study of Ottoman historiography for the reign of Süleymân. Besides the fact that, in general, Ottoman chroniclers presented and interpreted it in terms of an idealized pattern coming from the traditional concepts summarized in the mirror-for-princes literature, factual affiliations and patronage strongly influenced them. The following discussions are based on works of general character and are tentative.

(12) See "*Ghul*âm" (H. Inalcık), in *EI*^{2} ; M. Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1983 ; A.H. Lybyer, *op. cit.*, p. 45-61.

(13) However, as expected in any patrimonial state, in Ottoman society too, there was a strong tendency to establish hereditary powerful families with freehold rights on land, thus insuring a hereditary estate for the family. It is to be noted that in such a case the landowner is simply a gatherer of the revenue as absentee lord. It is an exception that the landowner gets involved in production activities by investing capital and employing sharecroppers and/or wage labor on such land. Besides such freehold lands were almost always converted to religious endowments (*wakf*). Memorialists admit that through sultanic grants of the state owned lands cultivated by villagers as freehold properties (*temlik*) to influencial dignitaries such hereditary estates were created, and thereby the state lost large amounts of such lands for private interests at the expense of the *mîrî* (state owned) lands and consequently, the extent of the lands to be bestowed to *sipâhî*s diminished. Süleymân's son-in-law Rüstem is given as an example of such « usurpation » of state lands [*Koçi Bey Risalesi*, A.K. Aksüt, ed., Istanbul, 1939 (cité *infra* Koçi), p. 63]. Koçi Bey strongly urges the sultan that such *temlik*s and *wakf*s be restored to their original status in order to strenghten the provincial army of *sipâhî*s. Actually in the past such forceful and conquering sultans as Bâyezîd I and Mehmed II introduced such revolutionary « abrogations » (*nesh*). Even converted to *wakf* such lands remain under the control of the family through hereditary trusteeship (*mütevellîlik*). The title of *çelebi* meaning lord or gentleman borne by the heirs of the owners of *temlik* lands or founders of *wakf*s is an expression of the claim to a hereditary distinction although it can never be an indication of the existence of a true Ottoman aristocracy as sometimes suggested (see V. Mutafčieva, *Agrarian Relations in the Ottoman Empire in the 15th and 16th centuries*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1988, in particular p. 137-197).

(14) See *Excursus* at the end of this paper.

(15) See the *Excursus*.

(16) Süleymân's versified letter was first published in *Osmanlı Tarih ve Edebiyat Mecmuası*, p. 1-2 ; reproduced by Ş. Turan, *Şehzâde Bayezid Vak'ası*, Ankara, 1961, p. 209.

(17) The *muṣâḥib* of Bâyezid II were *'ulemâ'* : the physician Mawlânâ Ḳuṭb al-Dîn Aḥmed of Kirmân who after the assassination of the Timurid Abû Sa'îd had come to Edirne, and Mawlânâ 'Atâ' ullâh of Kirmân (*Heşt Bihişt*, MS, *TSMK*, Hazine n° 1655, vol. 643). Before he became grand vizier Ibrâhîm Pasha was referred to in a document as a *muḳarreb* of Süleymân ("Ibrâhim Paşa" (T. Gökbilgin), *Islâm Ansiklopedisi*, V-2, p. 909).

(18) Ç. Uluçay, *Osmanlı Sultanlarına Aşk Mektupları*, Istanbul, 1950, Letter I.

(19) *Ibid.*, Letter V, probably written in 1549.

(20) *Ibid.*, Letter IV.

(21) *Ibid.*, Letter V.

APPENDIX

Süleymân's *ġazel* for Ḫurrem

Turkish text

Celîs-i ḫalvetim varım ḥabîbim mâh-i tâbânım
Enisim maḥremim varım güzeller şâhı sulṭânım

Ḥayâtım ḥâṣılım 'ömr-i şarâb-i kevṣerim 'adnim
Bahârım behcetim rûzum nigârım verd-i ḫandânım

Neş âṭım 'işretim bezm-i çerâġım neyyirim şem'im
Turunc u nâr u nârencim benim şem'-i şebistânım

Nebâtım sükkerim gencim cihân içinde bî-rencim
'Azîzim Yûsufum varım gönül Mıṣrında key ḫânım

Stanbûlum Karâmânım diyâr-i Kayṣar-i Rûmum
Badaḫşânım vü Ḳıpçâġım ve Baġdâd u Ḫorâsanım

Saçı târım kaşı yayım gözü pür-fitne bimârım
Ölürsem boynuna ḳanım meded hey nâ-müselmânım

Kapunda çünki meddâḥım seni medḥ iderim dâyim
Yürek pür-ġam gözüm pür-nem Muḥibbî'yim ḫoş-ḥâlim

My intimate companion, my everything, my love, my shining moon,
My close, confident friend, my everything, O queen of beauties, my master
My life, my support of life, the divine wine giving me eternal life,
My springtime, source of all joys, my day, my idol, my smiling rose
My enjoyment, my drinking partner, the source of light in my company, my bright star, the light of my night
My bitter and sweet orange, my pomegranate, my candle of dark nights
The green of my garden, my sweet sugar, my treasure, my love who cares nothing in this world
My master of Egypt, my Joseph, my everything, the queen of my heart's realm
My Stanbul, my Karaman, my land of the Roman Ceasars,
My Badahshan, my Kıpçak, my Baghdad and Khorasan
O my love of black hair with bowlike eyebrows, with languorous perfidious eyes
If I die you are my killer, O merciless, infidel woman
Since I am a hired eulogist at your gate my work is to praise you all the time,
Though my heart is full of grief, my eyes in tears this Muḥibbî is happy with his life.

EXCURSUS

Why Süleymân's Reign was Considered a "Golden Age"

In order to illustrate the concept of "ideal government" as understood by the Ottoman bureaucrats it is important to examine the concepts of the memorialists in their analysis of the Ottoman "decline." Memorialists scrutinized the changes following the reign of Süleymân I "which caused a deterioration (*iḫtilâl*) in good order of the world and an outrage with the subjects, both unprivileged and privileged." They also gave advice on how to restore the good order of the things which had prevailed under him. The author of *Kitâb-i Musteṭâb* (cité *infra K. Musteṭâb*) (Y. Yücel, ed., *Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilâtına dair Kaynaklar*, Ankara, *TTK*, 1988), addressing himself to Sultan 'Oṣmân II upon his accession to the throne in 1620, detects the start of the "deterioration" from the reign of Murâd III (1574-1595). In this period of disastrous wars, monetary disorders, financial chaos, chronic rebellions among the military at the capital and depredations by the unemployed Anatolian mercenaries, known as *celâlî* in the provinces, everybody recalled the period under Süleymân as a "Golden Age." It was Selânikî Muṣṭafâ (d.c. 1600) a Finance secretary at the Porte, who in his history provides a particularly vivid picture of the profound deterioration of the classical Ottoman regime after Süleymân I. Along with him, Muṣṭafâ 'Âlî (d. 1600), also a bureaucrat and sharp critic of his time (see C.H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire, The Historian Mustafa Âli, 1541-1600*, Princeton, PUP, 1986) views the regulations of Süleymân's time as the embodiment of an ideal order and he gives "advice" on how to resurrect the rules which in the eyes of an Ottoman bureaucrat were the established principles of good government (see in particular his *Nuṣḥat al Salâṭîn* (text published and trans. by A. Tietze, *Muṣṭafâ 'Âlî's Counsel for Sultans of 1581*, I-II, Vienna, ÖAW, 1979-1982). It appears that the genre of advice-to-rulers literature, written mostly by bureaucrats, became particularly popular during the period of crisis 1580-1656. Their authors, obviously, hoped to attract the attention of the sultan and ultimately to become a counsellor, *muṣâḥib*. This is quite clear in the *Nuṣḥa* of Muṣṭafâ 'Âlî. Some of these individuals appear to have become *muṣâḥib*, such as Ḳoçi Beg and most probably the author of *Kitâb-i Musteṭâb* (*op. cit.*, XVI, note 9 : for an analysis of the memorials see B. Lewis, *art. cit.*, p. 71-87 ; K. Röhrborn, *Untersuchungen zur osmanischen Verwaltungsgeschichte*, Berlin, 1973. Three little known memorials, *Kitâb-i Musteṭâb* (written in 1620), *Kitâbu Meṣâliḥi'l Muslimîn ve Menâfi'i'l-Mu'minîn* (before 1644), and *Ḥirzul-Mulûk*, presented to Murâd IV, are published by Y. Yücel, *Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilâtına dair kaynakları*, *op. cit.*

Evidently, the criticisms and advice found in the memorials and the idea of a "Golden Age" under Süleymân were widely held among the ruling elite. A view on Süleymân's justice under law is expressed in a "Rescript of Justice" by Meḥmed III in 1595 (H. Inalcık, "Adâletnâmeler," *Belgeler*, II, 1965, p. 105) as follows :

> "Under the late Sultan Süleymân ḫan — may God put him in the highest of paradises — lawcodes were drawn up and placed at the *ḳâḍî* courts in every city and town ; and since the distinguished judges of that time acted in accordance with its provisions, no one suffered any injustice and all affairs and cases were dealt with in the appropriate way ; so our subjects, both privileged and underprivileged, who are placed by God in our custody, were living a good life. But then because that lawcode has been forgotten all kinds of unjust innovations came up...".

As we have shown before ("The *Rūznāmče* Registers...," *art. cit.*) most of the complaints connected with the *ḳâḍîs*, which were found in the works by the

memorialists, were actually formulated in the official state papers issued by the bureaucrats prior to the "decline" period. References in the memorials to Süleymân's reign are not always favorable (*K. Musteṭâb*, p. 17, 25, 28, 36, 37 ; but Koçi p. 61-64, rather critical). The author of *K. Musteṭâb* criticized him for allowing Rüstem to be too zealous in filling the sultan's treasury, because this meant, he said, overtaxation and injustice, and ultimately the ruin of agricultural resources (*K. Musteṭâb*, p. 20-21 ; Koçi, p. 21, 63). According to Koçi Beg (p. 63-64), Süleymân himself was responsible for the neglect and deterioration of certain institutions which were fundamental for the good order in the state affairs. Firstly, he said, Süleymân abolished the rule of sultan's being present at the meetings of the imperial council. Second, he violated the rule of seniority by appointing his favorite page Ibrâhîm grand vizier. Third, he brought his son-in-law Rüstem to grand vizirate and allowed him to appropriate large areas of state lands as freehold properties. Fourth, he permitted Rüstem to extend the farming out method to the revenues of the state lands assigned to the central treasury, which resulted in their ruin. Fifth, Süleymân was the first sultan introducing conspicuous spending and extravagance. He added that although these did not show their bad effects in his own time they became responsible for the subsequent "deterioration" (*iḫtilâl, taġayyur*).

All of the memorialist criticisms boil down to one point : fundamental institutions of the classical Ottoman regime, which attained their ultimate form under the great reign of Süleymân, in particular the *ġulâm* system (see "ghulām", *art. cit)* under which slaves were trained as loyal instruments of the sultan's absolute centralist power, began to disintegrate within thirty or forty years after his death.

The ills of the age after Süleymân I and Selîm II, the chronic deficit in the state budget (*K. Musteṭâb*, p. 4, 9, 11, 14, 18 ; Koçi, p. 32), the defeats and loss of the provinces in the east to Shah 'Abbâs were all attributed by memorialists to the abandonment of the classical Ottoman *ḳul* or *ġulâm* system (*K. Musteṭâb*, p. 8-9). There occurred a structural change in the military organization with an extraordinary growth in the Janissary army from 12 thousand under Süleymân to 35-40 thousand by the end of the sixteenth century (*K. Musteṭâb*, p. 7, 16, 37 ; Koçi, p. 27-29, 44-46). They were spread all over the empire and were involved in mercantile occupations ; escapism from military service prevailed and their commander had an unusual influence with the sultan (*K. Musteṭâb*, p. 16). While the increase entailed a financial crisis, the additional numbers were of no use. Since it was generally believed that corruption and disregard for the old rules in the corps of Janissaries were the real cause of the military failure in the campaigns against Shah 'Abbâs, Aḥmed I (1595-1617) ordered a special memorial *(risâle)* to be written on the old regulations of the corps. Accordingly, a *ḳawânîn-i Yeniçeriyân* (facsimile publication with a Russian summary and analysis by I.Y. Petrosyan, under the title *Mebde'-i Ḳânûn, Yeniçeri Ocaġı Târiḫi*, Moscow, Academy of Sciences, 1987, Series of monuments in Oriental Languages n° 79, fol. 1b-2a) was compiled by a veteran of the corps to restore the old order of the corps. The author described the original rules and the diversions and corruptions which had set in over time (see for example, 18b-19a, 23b-24a, 37b-39a, 58b, 72a-74b, 83b, 109a).

The deterioration of the *ġulâm* system is explained by the failure of the grand viziers and *ḳapıaġa*, who were the two highest authorities after the sultan in the Ottoman state organization. The first, they observe, was responsible for order among those servants outside the palace and the second, for the palace servants. They were required to see that their organizations functioned in accordance with the established regulations and the *ḳul*s of the Porte, Janissaries, cavalry divisions and other regiments as well as *sipâhî*s enjoying *tîmâr*s in the provinces come from the *ġulâm* system. People from *re'âyâ* origin should strictly be barred from their ranks.

The *tîmâr*-holding *sipâhî* troops in the provinces which were the backbone

of the Ottoman army under Süleymân also lost their importance because most *tîmâr*s were taken from the active *sipâhî*s and given to retinue, and even to "the dogs" of the viziers and powerful men (*K. Mustetâb*, p. 15 ; Koçi, p. 24, 31, 38-39, 47, 53, 67-68). The bulk of the fighting army, they argue, now consisted of people of *re'âyâ* origin, "mostly Turks, Kurds, Gypsies or *sipâhî*s of *celâlî* origin" who obtained *tîmâr*s or salaries (*'ulûfe*) through bribes (*K. Mustetâb*, p. 4, 16 ; Koçi, p. 31). Under Süleymân and even before, *K. Mustetâb* asserts (p. 39), no one outside of the active *sipâhî*s was bestowed with *tîmâr* or *zi'âmet*. The pashas and governors met all the expenses of their large retinues from their own resources. As was also the case in the sultan's palace, memorialists stress the abandonment of the *ġulâm* system in pashas' retinue, too. In the past, they say, each vizier could maintain seven or eight hundred slaves who were disciplined and well-trained for military service without any servant in their retinue receiving government benefice, *tîmâr* or *zi'âmet*.

There was indeed a shortage of *tîmâr*s which resulted in thousands of candidates who had obtained the sultan's order (*eli-emirlü*) and had to wait for a vacancy. This became a critical issue for the Ottoman Empire, especially when the conquests stopped in Europe and Shah 'Abbâs expelled Ottoman soldiers from the newly established provinces in Azerbaidjan. Under Süleymân prebends candidates were given *tîmâr*s in the conquered lands. Modern historians are surprised to find that most of the *tîmâr*-holders in Hungary were from Bosnia and in the *Ẓulḳadriye* province they were from Ḳaraman. Shrinkage in the number of *tîmâr*s was explained by memorialists as being a consequence of the greed of the grandees. Archival documents substantiate the claim that there was indeed widespread seizure of *tîmâr*s by men in power for their own clients during this period. In fact, without the favor of a patron or a bribe, it was practically impossible to get a *tîmâr* in spite of one having all the necessary documents (see Muṣṭafâ 'Âlî's experience in Aleppo, H. Inalcık, "Adâletnâmeler," *art. cit.*, p. 118). Thence, the bitter attacks by memorialists against favoritism and bribery (*K. Mustetâb*, p. 3-4 ; Koçi, p. 31, 73-74 ; for the same situation in the small town judgeships see H. Inalcık, "The *Rūznâmče* Registers...," *art. cit.*). This example shows that memorialists underline the real historical issues, but they attempt to explain them within the traditional ethical and political precepts without fully considering the diverse realities and conditions under Süleymân and his successors.

As far as the sultan himself was concerned memorialists stress (*K. Mustetâb*, p. 17, 36 ; Koçi, p. 20-21, 63) that it is of crucial importance that he remain independent in his decisions and in supervising state affairs. The sultan himself should lead his armies in campaigns as Süleymân did with the imperial armies on thirteen occasions in his lifetime (*K. Mustetâb*, p. 17, 36). The reason for this was that when the grand vizier acts as the commander-in-chief of the army, he is inclined to misuse his authority, dismissing men of rank under him for the sake of bribery and replacing them with his own men (*K. Mustetâb*, p. 3 ; Koçi, p. 50). According to memorialists the basic fact leading to disregard of the regulations, laws and established practices was the disintegration and weakening of sultanic power and control. When they insist on the sultan being personally involved with government appointments, and the application of laws, and not permitting anyone to interfere with his decisions, they touch at the heart of the question.

The disregard in appointments and promotions for the experience and skills acquired through long service (*ḫidmet ve istiḥḳâḳ*) and giving priority to clientship (*intisâb*) and bribery (*ruşvet*) was stressed as one of the main causes of deterioration. Under Murâd III the sale of services from the grand vizier down to provincial governors became the rule. Bribery or the practice of the sale of offices is attributed originally to Rüstem, grand vizier of Süleymân. Memorialists argue (*K. Mustetâb*, p. 7-8 ; Koçi, p. 21, 31, 59-60, 73-74) that it was through bribery that military and administrative positions, previously the exclusive privilege of the *ḳul*s, now became available to anyone who could pay, and consequently, the *ḳul-ġulâm* system collapsed. "Now there is no one," the author of *K. Mustetâb* asserts (p. 8),

"among benefice-holders, *sancaḳbeg*s or *beglerbeg*s who had obtained his office through service in the battle-field." Now viziers are "like greyhounds chasing in the streets for bribe money those people having business with the government" (*K. Mustetâb*, p. 29). Although repulsive for the old guard, the sale of offices should be viewed in light of the conditions that the Ottoman Empire was undergoing in the seventeenth century (see H. Inalcık, "Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1700," *Archivum Ottomanicum*, VI, 1980, p. 283-337).

Actually, compared to Süleymân's time, general conditions had changed to such an extent that the adjustments and innovations in meeting the emerging needs had become a necessity. The changes under the impact of the new war technology in Central Europe and the Mediterranean, and the widespread use of money in the market and public finances, as well as devaluation and inflation had superseded the rigid Ottoman regulations of the classical age. The logic of the memorialists was that since great things were accomplished under Süleymân, restoring the regulations under him would produce the same positive results. A scrutiny of the sources reveals that Ottoman society under Süleymân was not immune to the same faults as those found in the period of "decline". In earlier times, one also witnesses the military's involvement in mercantile pursuits, the abuse of authority by officials, exactions and bribery, etc. Some of the Ottoman writers (C.H. Fleischer, "Royal Authority, Dynastic Cyclism and Ibn Khaldûnism in sixteenth-century Ottoman Letters," *Journal of Asian and African studies*, XVIII, 1983, p. 198-220) following the cyclical theory of states believed that the Ottoman centralist imperial system attained its most accomplished form under Süleymân the Magnificent, so decline was inevitable after him. It was his neglect and extravagance, materialism, greed and above all the disregard for justice and the laws by dignitaries that are the principal arguments used to explain the deterioration and reverses in the affairs of the empire. The old *circle of justice* maxim dating back to the Indo-Iranian advice literature which says that there is no power without troops, no troops without revenue, no revenue without the productive classes (*re'âyâ*) and no *re'âyâ* without justice, constitutes the basic logic and philosophy in their argumentation (circle of justice mentioned by *K. Mustetâb*, p. 18 ; Koçi, p. 50). As an example of Süleymân's dutifulness and his concern for justice, the protection of the peasantry is emphasized (*K. Mustetâb*, p. 20-21, 25, 28 ; Koçi, p. 47-48, 104-105, 121-122). Now because of the plunder of the undisciplined soldiery, the memorialists say, the peasants are fleeing and abandoning their land uncultivated. Under Süleymân, *K. Mustetâb* tells us (p. 17, 25), no one dared to pick up even a single fruit hanging outside the backyard of a peasant.