

Remembering the Good Old Days: the Ottoman *Nasihatname* [Advice Letters] Literature of the 17th Century

KENAN İNAN

Karadeniz Technical University

ABSTRACT

This study analyses the Ottoman *Nasihatname* [Advice Letters] literature of the 17th century. This tradition had its roots mainly in the so-called mirror writers of the 10th century. The chapter explores the atmosphere which allowed mirror writers to produce their work. After outlining the peculiar features of this literature and its influence on the Ottomans, it concentrates on some of the texts and ideas of 17th-century mirror writers. A glossary of technical terms follows the conclusion.

Osmanlı Devleti'nde 16. yüzyıl sonlarından itibaren devletin tüm siyasi, içtimai ve iktisadi düzenini etkileyecek önemli değişiklikler meydana gelmiştir. Bu değişiklikleri yorumlayan bir kısım Osmanlı bürokratları devletin çok kısa zamanda çökebileceği ihtimalini bile dile getirmişlerdir. Osmanlı münevverleri meydana getirdikleri eserlerinde sözü edilen değişikliklerin sebepleri üzerinde fikir yürütürken bir taraftan da devletin tekrar eski günlerine dönebilmesi için tekliflerini sıralamışlardır.

Bu tespitlere göre: Osmanlı Devleti'nde yönetilenleri temsil eden Müslüman reaya yani vergi veren halk kesimi o zamana kadar sadece sultanın kulları için ayrılmış askeri sınıfa geçmeye başlamışlardı. Eski yakın doğu devlet yönetim felsefesinden ilham alarak toplumlar da değişik işleri yapan gurupların yani esnaf, asker ve tüccarların kendilerini yapması başka gurupların işine müdahale etmemesi gerektiğini belirten bu bürokratlar, Osmanlı Devleti'ndeki gelişmenin devletin geleceğini tehdit ettiğini belirtmişlerdir. Osmanlı Devleti'nin klasik döneminde 1300-1600'lü yıllar arasında uygulanan bu sistemin dışına çıkmak veya onu bozmak demek sultanın otoritesinin artık uygulanmaması ve sonuçta toprağın ekilmemesi ve ödenmesi gereken verginin ödenmemesi sonucunu doğuracaktı. Osmanlı bürokratları bu tespitleri sonucunda eski güzel günlere dönebilmek için yegâne yolun eski devlet sistemini ihya etmek olduğuna karar vermişlerdir.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE *NASIHATNAME* [ADVICE LETTERS] LITERATURE

Profound changes began to take place in the Ottoman Empire in the late 16th century, changes that eventually affected the country's entire political and social structures. These transformations were so sweeping and at times so violently disruptive that many contemporaries, native and foreign, predicted the imminent fall of the empire. This, in turn, prompted members of the Ottoman elite, particularly bureaucrats, to ponder the causes and the true nature of these revolutionary changes and to offer their formulas for recovery¹.

Throughout the Turkish Empire, and in other Islamic countries, many books were written to help sovereigns and governmental officials in their daily undertakings. İbn Mukaffa, first as a Zoroastrian then as a convert to Islam, translated many books from the *Pahlavi* language into Arabic, including the famous *Kelile ve Dimne*². His translations seem to have influenced later works within the same genre. One of the more famous examples of this impact was the *Kutadgu Bilig* [Knowledge of Prosperity], written by Yusuf Has Hacip in 1070 and presented to Karahanid Sultan³.

In his introduction to al-Ghazali's Book of Counsel for Kings, *Nasihah al-Muluk*, H.D. Isaacs describes Advice Letters literature as follows:

Books of counsel for rulers, or "mirror for princes," form a distinctive and interesting genre of classical Arabic and Persian literature. They show how complete was the synthesis achieved between the Arab-Islamic and Old Persian elements, which were the main components of medieval Muslim civilization. They make impartial use of examples attributed to Arab Caliphs and Sasanid kings, to Sufi saints and Persian sages; they Islamize Zoroastrian maxims such as 'religion and empire are brothers' and they assume rightly or wrongly a substantial identity and continuity between Sasanian and Islamic state institutions⁴.

It is clear that Sasanian Iran substantially affected the foundations of Islam rule elsewhere – enough so that one might reasonably suppose that the earliest manuals for chancery officials were modeled on Iranian versions. The activity of Iranian secretaries in the early Islamic chanceries led to the development of Persian *inşa* literature. The 14th-century Ottomans must have maintained in their palace many individuals who were acquainted with the protocol, chancery practice, and taxation system of the Mongol period in Islamic Iran and Anatolia. This was formulated in several manuals written in Persian. Persian influence was not, however, confined to the 'official' style of the Ottoman chancery, and to the literary work of those who were trained in this tradition. Thanks to royal patronage, Persian influence became all-pervasive in the literature of the Ottoman elite during the second half of the 15th century⁵.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE OTTOMAN *NASIHATNAME* [ADVICE LETTERS] LITERATURE

As far as their influence on Ottoman writers is concerned, the most important 'mirrors for princes' were perhaps the three composed during the Seljuk period: the *Kabusnama*,

written in 1082 by Keykavus bin İskender; the *Siyasetname* by Nizamülmülk (1018-1092); and the *Nasihat al-Muluk* by al-Ghazali (1058-1111)⁶. The Ottoman Sultan Murad II ordered a certain Mercimek Ahmed to make a plain Turkish translation of the *Kabusnama*⁷. The *Siyasetname* was the work of the vizier Nizamülmülk, written on the orders of Melikşah, the Seljuk Emperor. The author states in his introduction that Melikşah wanted to know about previous governments, kings, and institutions and that he wrote the book based on his more than twenty years of experience in government⁸. Different in character and purpose was the Book of Counsel for Kings by al-Ghazali who is generally regarded to be the most important religious thinker of medieval Islam. The work consists of two parts. The first is devoted to theology, and explains, as did no other books of this kind, what were the beliefs which a pious Muslim ruler ought to hold and the religious principles upon which he ought to act. The other part contains a 'Mirror for Princes', with further chapters on viziers, secretaries, magnanimity in kings, aphorisms of the sages, intelligence, and women⁹.

The 15th-century Ottoman historian Tursun Bey, who entitled his principal work *Tarih-i Ebü'l-Feth* [History of the Father of Conquest], was the first historian to follow the Persian ornamented prose style when composing a book on Ottoman history¹⁰. His purpose was similarly to guide and aid the Sultan and to justify his rule. This is made evident above all in the Introduction, where he follows the usual conventions of 'Advice to Kings' literature. His use of the *Ahlak-ı Nasiri* [Nasirian Ethics] of Nasiruddin Tusi¹¹ and possible consultation of the *Çahar Makala* [Four Discourses] of Nizamuddin Arudi¹² prove his familiarity with this literary genre. Tursun Bey's employment in the palace, and his access to its library, must have drawn his attention to traditional 'mirror' literature, and his experience in the service of the ruler must have stimulated his ambition to emulate it¹³.

Certain materials were used by most of the 'mirror' writers. While some of these had Sasanian roots, the others derived from Muslim history. For example, in the first part of his book al-Ghazali stated that God had given the job of kingship as a gift and the king, in return, had to be grateful for it. If the king was not thankful, he would then be held responsible for his ingratitude on the Day of Judgment. Al-Ghazali also stated that God had selected two classes of people and given them superiority over the rest; these were the prophets and the kings. In this chapter, al-Ghazali employed the well-known *hadith* "The Sultan is God's shadow on earth". He therefore suggested that kingship had been invested by God and, for this reason, the king had to be obeyed, loved, and followed, and his authority could not be disputed. Following this al-Ghazali dwelt on an *Ayet* [Quranic verse] which was famous among the 'mirror' writers: "Obey God and obey the Prophet and those among you who hold authority". Al-Ghazali further stated that the Sultan was the figure who provided justice and forbade injustice and wickedness. He also went on to warn that where there is injustice, sovereignty will not survive¹⁴. Tursun Bey also included the *Hadis* and *Ayet* in his account when he discussed the need

to offer thanks for the existence of the Sultan. Tursun shared the view that God selected two classes of people and gave them superiority over all others¹⁵.

Another reference for 'mirror' writers was Alexander the Great, whom Tursun used as an example of the virtue of forgiveness. He normally appeared as a God-fearing and heroic Persian king who was traveling the world for knowledge with his tutor Aristotle. The 'mirrors' attributed to him many wise sayings. Another character whose sayings were commonly used was Buzurgmihr who, according to the *Kalila ve Dimna* textual tradition was Anushirwan's wise counselor. Since Anushirwan was the champion of justice, Muslim writers also conferred high rank on his vizier¹⁶. The characters the 'mirror' writers most commonly used were Caliph 'Umar (famous for his justice), Caliph 'Ali (famous for his bravery), and the Ghaznavid Sultan Mahmud (famous for his closeness to the '*ulema* [educated stratum])¹⁷.

One of the most famous examples of advice letter literature in the early modern Ottoman Empire was Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali's *Nushatü's Selatin* [Advice to the Sultans], written around 1581. In his introduction to the book, Ali explained the principles of good administration and the reasons for the collapse of a country. He focused on matters of justice, oppression, and the nature of the sultan's administration. He later gave some examples to support his criticisms and in this way drew attention to the fact that decay within the Ottoman Empire had started before he had commenced writing his book¹⁸.

17TH-CENTURY OTTOMAN *NASHATNAME* [ADVICE LETTERS] LITERATURE

The inescapable fact of general Ottoman decline amid military setbacks at the beginning of the 17th century gave rise to an atmosphere of crisis. These developments strongly influenced the self-criticism and reassessment of basic values which dominated the reform literature of this period¹⁹. Until the time of Sultan Selim III, authors of reform literature suggested that the Ottomans should return to the age of Süleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566) and thus revive the old institutions. Later Ottoman *nashatname* usually focused on more specific criticisms: the Sultan and his officials were not adept at administration, the law was not applied, the janissary corps was corrupt, viziers and other officials were usually at odds with each other, the state treasury wasted resources, the citizenry was reduced to poverty, and revolts abounded in Anatolia while the Ottoman army suffered defeats in Europe²⁰. To illustrate these complaints and the demands for change to which they gave rise I will now focus on some of the writers and their works.

GELIBOLULU MUSTAFA ALI: *NUSHATÜ'S-SELATIN* [ADVICES TO THE SULTANS]²¹

Mustafa Ali, in the introduction to his book, repeated the then-classical wisdom regarding the basic conditions for good administration and the causes for the decline

of the Empire. The former included, for example, the provision of justice, promotion based on merit, separation of powers, fair treatment for all citizens, and austerity in public spending. In the second part of his book Ali classified the specific practices that he considered to be against the Law. In his view, many individuals received senior appointments without deserving them. He further points out that while the educated class is the mainstay of the state and religion, the regulations governing their employment have not been observed. Ali places strong emphasis on the fact that a vizier's son should not be given the office of governor general, and notes that previous sultans were very careful not to do that. He moreover urges that the monetary system should be watched very carefully since money represents sovereignty. In sum, Ali suggested that in every field of government unlawful policies had to end and the old system needed to be reinforced. He added that the sultan should be personally involved in the daily undertakings of his government²².

THE ANONYMOUS *HIRZÜ'L- MÜLÜK* [SPELLS OF THE SULTANS]

It is not known who wrote this pamphlet. Still, it is clear that the text was presented to the Ottoman Sultan Murad III. It consists of four parts. In the opening segment the author explains that a sultan should represent the values of soundness, justice, prosperity, and religiosity. The future of the Empire depended on good soldiers who needed land and money. However, many parts of the country were the personal property of commanders and viziers. This meant that the sultan could not award his soldiers the necessary fiefs. Thus, according to the author of this work, when a sultan succeeded to the throne he would do well to investigate the situation of the viziers and the commanders, and then carefully choose the right people for these ranks.

The second part of the book is devoted to further examination of the situation of the viziers. Here the writer argues that to merit being appointed as a *Vezir-i Âzam* [the Grand Vizier] a person had to be honest, just, and religious, and not be covetous. The third section of the pamphlet reviews the situation of the governor generals, commanders, and soldiers. Here the writer suggests that the governor-general should check the situation of the judges in his province and tell them to keep an eye upon those who behave unjustly toward the people. The governor general had to be very careful about the distribution of small and large fiefs. The author goes on to lament that in these times no one showed any respect for the viziers and chiefs and that everyone wanted to have money and rank without deserving either. Thus, he suggests that the sultan should personally appoint respected people to be governor generals and chiefs as these matters were too important to be left in the hands of the Grand Vizier. The final part deals with the heads of the religious orders and the descendants of the Prophet. Here the writer first explores the ranks of the educated in society. He adds that during the rule of Mehmed the Conqueror the educated classes were very important²³. However, in time

the situation changed. Senior positions were distributed not in relation to competence or hierarchy but through bribes from people who later on became judges. Thus was the system corrupted. Sometimes the children of the judges become judges themselves, which only worsened the situation. In short the writer of the pamphlet defends the ideas that bribery (whose expansion threatened the proper collection of tax revenue) had to be prevented and all governmental endeavors carried out with justice. And that all of the above depended on the personal involvement in governance of the Sultan²⁴.

HASAN KÂFÎ EL-AKHISARÎ: *USÛLÜ'L-HIKEM FI NIZÂMI'L-ÂLEM* [THE PRINCIPLES OF WISDOM FOR THE ORDER OF THE WORLD]

This work opens with the author explaining his reasons for writing, namely, his perception of the many disorders afflicting the Ottoman Empire in the years 1595-96. According to Kafi the causes of these disorders were numerous: injustice in not awarding senior ranks to those who deserved them, absence of consultation due to the fact that rulers were ashamed to talk with clever people, along with the failure to recruit soldiers of caliber because the rank and file no longer feared their commanders²⁵.

In his introduction Kafi explains the basis for order in the world. His theory describes a society made up of four classes [*erkan-ı erbaa*], and argues that each person should belong to one of these orders and should carry out the duties expected to members of that particular group. This was the basis of social order. If people did the work of groups other than their own then social order could easily be threatened.

Kafi divided his books into four 'essences.' In the first he talks about the factors which should regulate the sultanate. The first is justice, the second is giving jobs to those who deserve them, the third is that the sultan should appoint a clever vizier for himself, and the fourth requires the sultan to show respect toward learned and wise men. In the second essence Kafi explains that the sultan and the viziers, rather than acting on their own opinions, should permanently consult the learned and wise men. In the third essence Kafi turns his attention to a different subject. Here he argues that in the Ottoman army new weapons invented in western countries should replace traditional weapons. Kafi's views regarding the army and its weapons was one of the principal differences between him and the other *nasihatname* writers²⁶. This divergence possibly derived from his living in Bosnia on the Ottoman frontier. In the fourth essence the author argues that victory can be reached with the help of God and the help of God can be obtained by being close to God. Thus, soldiers should be close to God and resist from bad habits such as frequenting coffee shops²⁷. In his conclusion Kafi discusses the subject of social peace. He adds that war involved enormous pain and suffering, but that peace brings prosperity. Therefore breaking the peace was not lawful²⁸.

VEYSI: *HABNÂME* [THE BOOK OF DREAMS]

Veysi composed this book in 1608 and presented it to Sultan Ahmed I. The author was a poet and a *kadi* [judge] who believed that there was much corruption in the Ottoman Empire. He found an interesting way to explain his ideas to the Sultan. According to his explanation while Veysi was thinking about the disorders of his time, he also imagined how to tell the Sultan about the truth of the situation and what could be done about it. When contemplating these matters one day he had a dream in which he met an assembly governed by Alexander the Great who was accompanied by the previous Ottoman sultans. In the meanwhile the current Sultan, Ahmed the first, also joined the assembly and began to talk to Alexander. The subject of their conversation was the reasons for a country's collapse. While discussing this Sultan Ahmed complained that disorders had increased during his reign. Alexander answered him with the observation that disorder and corruption had existed since the day humans were created. Using Alexander as his spokesman, so to speak, Veysi outlined his opinions concerning the reasons for the collapse of good government. He located the sultans at the heart of the universe. Since any failure of the heart affected the rest of the body, corruption on the part of the sultans resulted in disorder throughout the country. Preventing these disturbances meant requiring rulers to govern with mercy: otherwise the situation of the people would merely worsen. Veysi went on to argue that to have order the law must be observed, senior ranks must be given to those who deserved them, and the rank of judge had to be conferred on men who knew the law. By doing so he tried to enlighten the Sultan about how a country collapses and what could be done to prevent this outcome²⁹.

THE ANONYMOUS *KITÂB-I MÜSTETÂB* [THE BEAUTIFUL BOOK]

This book was composed to explain and suggest solutions to the various forms of corruption which were present in Ottoman government and society in the early 17th century. In the introduction the unknown author claims that changing conditions had brought disorder to the world and that this negatively affected the people of the Ottoman Empire. He then offers advice to the rulers about how to solve these problems. The book concentrates on the rulers, the system of *timar* and *kul* (military recruitment and rewards), and how the main principles which protected the Ottoman Empire had been corrupted. According to Yaşar Yücel, the book opened the way for the later pamphlet by Koçi Bey, examined in the following section³⁰.

The author believed that corruption in the Ottoman Empire had started during the reign of Murad III (1574-1595)³¹. Until that time rulers had observed law and justice. However, beginning in this reign bureaucrats began to think about their own benefit rather than law and justice. The work also analysed the state of the treasury. It argued that the number of paid soldiers had risen sharply, that illegal appointments and dismissals of government officers abounded, and that administrative corruption had be-

come widespread. The main manifestation of this was bribery. Another problem was corruption in the *timar* system. While in the past these fiefs had been granted to those who showed bravery and sacrifice in war, now they were awarded before the army went to war. Not surprisingly, the author goes on to suggest that the main reason for military failure was corruption within this system of payments. Recovery could be assured by returning to long established laws, and sovereignty could survive by turning to its three pillars of support: the people, the treasury, and the army. In short, the main thesis of this text was that the Ottomans suffered from administrative weakness. If the sultan appointed a wise grand vizier many problems would be solved³².

KOÇI BEY AND HIS *RİSALE* [PAMPHLET]

One of the most famous examples of these traditional reform projects is the well-known 'Pamphlet' of Koçi Bey³³. While a description of the golden age of the Ottoman Empire, the text also focuses on corruption in traditional Ottoman institutions, and presents proposals for solving this and other problems. Bey's pamphlet sheds important light on the atmosphere of the Sultanate of Murad IV (1623-1640), to whom the author was very close³⁴. However, it is not obvious to what extent Koçi Bey's pamphlet influenced Murad IV's reform policies³⁵.

According to Bey, until the time of Suleiman the Magnificent the sultans were personally involved in all kinds of governmental undertakings. Even Suleiman the Magnificent listened to the *Divan-ı Hümayun* [Council of State] in order to learn what was going on in the Empire³⁶. In ancient times the governors were chosen from among the ranks of janissaries, and did not mix with *reaya* [the ruled] and *esnaf* [the guilds]. In addition, no one was dismissed from office without a reason and rulers governed wisely. Bey goes on to point out that previously the janissaries were stationed in Istanbul while the holders of fiefs resided outside the capital, on their properties. That is to say, each individual was in his proper place. Thus, Bey's view of the ideal Ottoman Empire depicted the sultan as personally involved with running the state, government officers as unafraid of being dismissed from their offices, the *kul* and *timar* system applied without concessions, and the *erkan-ı erbaa* or four orders living together in harmony.

Thereafter, and as with *Kitâb-i Müstetâb* [The Beautiful Book], Koçi Bey draws attention to the situation of the grand vizier. Until 1574, he says, the grand vizier had full authority and independence. However, at that point some people close to the sultan began to interfere with government business, which resulted in the grand viziers granting them concessions. Bey then denounced the corruption of the educated class, which began to act according to the wishes of their patrons, especially after the unjust dismissal of *şeyhülislam* [dignitary responsible for all kind of religious affairs] Sunullah Efendi in 1603. He also argued that after 1582 government posts were given to those did not deserve them. *Timar* and *zeamet*, which were supposed to be given to warriors, began to be sold, while the warriors' social

and economic situation worsened. In fact, a closer look at the later pamphlets of Koçi Bey shows that he actually argued that corruption in the Ottoman Empire started as early as the time of Suleiman the Magnificent. In his view Suleiman's abolition of the tradition of sultans' attendance at the Council of State opened the way for violations of *kanûn-ı kadîm*, or traditional Islamic law. By making appointments against tradition and indulging in unnecessary spending for the sake of glory, state spending rose to such a level that the salaries of the janissaries were not paid, which led them to begin to oppress the people.

After establishing all these facts, Bey outlined a path to recovery based on administrative reforms. He urged that the fief system return to its earlier form of organization, and that the unlawful distribution of fiefs and pious foundations be abolished and given instead to the deserving. Koçi Bey warned against all actions contrary to *kanûn-ı kadîm*, and stressed in particular on the need for proper appointments and independence on the part of the Grand Vizier³⁷.

VELİYÜDDİN TELHİSLERİ [THE ABSTRACTS OF VELİYÜDDİN]

The Bayezid Library in Istanbul houses ten *telhis* or summary reports in a journal discovered by Rhoads Murphey³⁸. These abstracts, which examine the disorders in the Ottoman Empire, were written by an unknown author believed to be Koçi Bey, given that three of the *telhis* also appear in Koçi Bey's pamphlet. These so-called *telhis* of Veliyüddin focus in particular on corruption among the upper class and within the *timar* system. They also make several suggestions about how the imperial system could be reformed³⁹.

These reports make clear that the author had hopes for recovery because the sultan at that time, Murad IV, had acted against bribery. The main suggestions in the *telhis* were that the number of viziers should not exceed four; that the grand Vizier should act according to *kanûn-ı kadîm*; the Sultan should preside directly over the Council of the State; that appointments should not be changed without a reason; that unlawfully established religious foundations and fiefs should be returned to the government and distributed to those who deserved them; and that the Ottoman currency should be supervised very closely⁴⁰.

KANÛNNÂME-İ SULTÂNÎ Lİ AZİZ EFENDİ [AZİZ EFENDİ'S LAW BOOK OF THE SULTAN]

We know next to nothing about the author of this text, apart from his name. He may have been a member of the *Kalemiyye* [bureaucracy] or a *Divan Katibi* [Secretary of the Council of State]. It does appear, however, that he was very close to Sultan Murad IV because, as Murphey points out, the author makes his criticisms without any fear of official reprisals. The book consists of an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. In the introduction Aziz Efendi addresses the figure of the sultan, saying that if God looks on the people of a country with mercy, He enlightens the heart of the sultan of that country. As a result the sultan behaves with justice, and the country becomes prosper-

ous and wins superiority over its enemies. However, if God looks at that country with anger, then its situation will worsen. In other words, the author invokes the will of God to explain the different fates of nations.

The first part focuses on the old laws regarding viziers. The author notes that while formerly sultans had appointed only four viziers, now the number had increased to more than ten, which led to unnecessary spending. The second section deals with the situation of the paid janissary guards. Here too the author argues that the number of janissaries had risen enormously. When Murad III succeeded to the throne in 1574 there were some 36,400 janissaries; at the time of writing, however, their numbers had risen to more than 100,000. As a result the quality of janissaries had declined. In the third part the author examines Kurdish commanders and their valuable services to the state. He also noted their weaknesses, and made suggestions for improving their efficiency. The fourth part centers on the increase in the number of false descendants of the Prophet and how this could be prevented. The author also added an appendage to this section which stressed the importance of keeping state secrets. In the end Aziz Efendi's work had two main proposals to make: that the treasury income be made more stable, and that the Ottoman army should strive to recover its former strength⁴¹.

THE ANONYMOUS *KITÂBU MESÂLIHI'L-MÜSLİMÎN VE MENÂFI'I'L-MÜMINÎN* [THE BOOK OF DOINGS OF THE MUSLIMS AND THE BENEFITS OF THE BELIEVERS]

The author of this book is unknown, although according to Yaşar Yücel, it was most probably written in 1639-40 and presented to the Grand Vizier Kemankeş Kara Mustafa Pasha⁴². It deals with many subjects, some of which are not to be found in the other contemporary writers of similar advice literature. The main divergence from other such texts was that the author not only did not counsel adherence to traditional *kanûn-ı kadîm*, but rather he openly criticized it. The unknown writer argues on numerous occasions that the old laws could be changed because they were not religious obligations. While he did not call for a wholesale dismissal of the old laws, he did advocate changing those which were no longer needed. The theoretical outline of his ideas resembled that of the other contemporary advice letter writers. For example, he argued that each class in society should occupy its own appropriate place. He also focused on the *narh* or official price system⁴³, and suggested that prices and quality standards should be checked by an experienced *muhtesib* [market official]⁴⁴. In his view, government officers should be experienced, qualified, and decent. His complaints dwelt on the social damage caused by widespread bribery, and the injustice of the oppressive tax burden on villagers⁴⁵. He clearly looked to the government to initiate administrative and disciplinary reforms. Especially important among them were the investigation of provincial governors and the prevention of unjust behavior⁴⁶.

KATIP ÇELEBİ: *DÜSTURÜ'L-AMEL LI-ISLAHİ'L-HALEL* [THE PRINCIPLES OF ACTIONS TO IMPROVE SHORTCOMINGS]

Katip Çelebi was a widely-known, well educated Ottoman⁴⁷. In 1652 he attended the Council of State called to find a solution to the budget deficit. This occasion provided the opportunity to compose his pamphlet, which consisted of an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction outlines his ideas concerning government and society. The main body then addressed relations between rulers and ruled, and the situation of the military and the treasury. In the conclusion he suggests possible solutions to these problems⁴⁸.

Katip Çelebi was a reformer who had traditionalist views and occupied an important place among his contemporaries. In general he supported old Eastern-Islamic philosophy. However, his views also contained traces of the ideas of Ibn Khaldun – the famous historian's biological approach to social philosophy is especially notable in the social and historical framework of the *Düstur*⁴⁹ – as well as those of the medieval Islamic philosopher Farabi [Alpharabius]⁵⁰. Katip Çelebi wrote that a human being's natural life consisted of three stages: that of improvisation, that of standstill, and that of decay. In his view, the length of each term reflected the strength of the body. He then applied this analogy to governments. For example, in the past many governments collapsed within a short period. However, the Ottoman Empire, had survived thanks to its robust structure.

Katip Çelebi repeats the idea of *daire-i adliye* [circle of justice] and endorses the traditional social hierarchy of *erkân-ı erbaa*, or four orders. Like the other writers, he also mentions the heavy tax burden on the people, and urges awarding senior positions to those who deserve them. He suggests that government income should be distributed equally and points out that unnecessary spending in governmental circles could be prevented. His conclusion evokes various solutions to the problem of corruption in the government, including the exercise of strong leadership from above, piety on the part of the sultan, placing the army under the command of patriotic generals, and general agreement on policies, including preventing unnecessary spending⁵¹.

HEZARFAN HÜSEYİN EFENDİ: *TELHİSÜ'L-BEYAN Fİ KAVANİN-İ AL-İ OSMAN* [THE SUMMARY OF THE EXPLANATION IN THE LAWS OF THE EXALTED OTTOMANS]

Another writer who addressed contemporary change and the problems the Ottomans faced in the 17th century was Hezarfan Hüseyin Efendi. He spent almost all his life studying in Istanbul, where he came into contact with foreign scholars and founded a large library. He knew Greek and Hebrew and wrote on Sufism and medicine. However, his most famous works included a world history called *Tenkîh-i Tevârih-i Mülûk* [A Pruning of the Histories of the Sultans] and a mirror for princes called *Telhisül-Beyan fî Kavanin-i Al-i Osman*. The work consists of thirteen parts in which the author explains his find-

ings, observations, and ideas on decay and corruption in the Ottoman Empire. At the same time the author quoted widely from earlier mirror and advice letter writers⁵².

It is possible that Hüseyin Efendi was a follower of İbn Khaldun like Katip Çelebi. He expounded his more theoretical ideas concerning the Ottoman Empire's government and social structure in the final section of *Tenkib-i Tevârih-i Mülûk*. Therein he argued that it was not necessary that every society collapse after a period of decline. However, he warned, those which did not observe justice would cease to exist. In *Telhisü'l-Beyan* he outlined the reasons for the decline in governance. His main advice consisted of the following points: that officials should not reveal government secrets to their close friends; that sultans should appoint a wise man as grand vizier and then trust him, and should moreover follow the law when appointing and dismissing officials; that the educated class should be respected as in earlier times; that the *Kanun-ı Kadim* should be followed; that the ruled should not be promoted up into the ruling class; and that unnecessary spending should stop immediately. Hazerfan ends by advising the sultan to find good people and confer governmental office on them⁵³.

It is interesting to note that the author of *Kitab-ı Mustatâb*, as well as Koçi Bey and other contemporary observers, spoke of great numbers of peasants abandoning their lands because of their desire to become soldiers. These observers blamed the decline of the economy on this exodus from the countryside. Specifically, the state's demand for more and more mercenaries forced peasants to abandon their homes and land. It can be argued that the fall in production and the eventual breakdown of social order in Anatolia was the direct result of this process, rather than of increased economic deterioration or population pressure. The Ottoman writers of *kapıkulu* origin, Koçi Bey among them, were right in identifying as the crucial problem of this period the attempt by the *reaya* [taxpayers] to join the Janissary corps and, through it, the entire *kapıkulu* organization, including the Palace⁵⁴.

CONCLUSION

These bureaucrats, when diagnosing contemporary social problems, argued that the Muslim tax-paying subjects of the Sultan were invading "the military institutions", which, as direct instruments of the sultan's power, had until then been reserved strictly for his *kuls*, or slaves specially trained for this purpose. That these well-meaning bureaucrats considered this a threat reflects the influence of age-old notions of Persian statecraft, and above all its fundamental belief that the well-being of the state and society depended primarily on the strict separation of the different estates and on keeping the masses in their proper place. The persistence of this ancient ideal of Near-Eastern statecraft helps explain their concern that the *reâyâ's* displacing the *kuls* meant that on the one hand the sultans' authority could no longer be maintained, and on the other hand lands would lay idle and taxes go unpaid. They further believed that the causes of this

change were to be sought primarily in the fact that beginning with Süleyman I (1520-1566) and particularly under his successors, the sultan's authority was weakened, and that bribery and corruption became so widespread that it was impossible to maintain and enforce the constitutional laws of the Empire⁵⁵.

With hindsight one can see that these writers who, as functionaries of the government, were in a position to observe matters first-hand, were generally accurate in their findings. They were far less perceptive regarding the causes and future effects of the changes they identified. One reason for this gap between observation and interpretation is the strength of the influence on them of traditional notions of Oriental statecraft. As the literature surveyed in this chapter shows, their primary concern was to preserve and restore old regulations and institutions, to which they attributed the past greatness and the prosperity of the Empire⁵⁶. Only a small minority among them saw that the Empire's present and future depended on finding innovative solutions to problems old and new.

NOTES

- ¹ H. İnalçık, *Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1700*, in *Studies in Ottoman Social and Economic History*, London 1985, p. 283.
- ² *Kelile ve Dimne* is a story book of Indian origin which aimed to give ethical advice to the sultans. The book consists of stories and fables along with advice letters literature. The book's name was taken from two jackals who were the heroes of the book. In the book "Kelile", exemplifies "goodness and honesty", while "Dimne" represents "wrongdoing and falsity". For detailed information see C. Brockelmann, *Kelile ve Dimne*, in *İA*, vol. 6, Eskişehir 1997, pp. 552-558.
- ³ M. Öz, *Osmanlı'da "Çözülme" ve Gelenekçi Yorumcuları*, İstanbul 1997, pp. 14-15.
- ⁴ H.D. Isaacs (ed.), *Ghazali's Book of Counsel for Kings (Nasihat al-Muluk)*, London 1964, p. ix.
- ⁵ K. İnan, *A Summary and Analysis of the Tarih-i Ebül-Feth (History of the Conqueror) of Tursun Bey (1488)*, unpublished PhD Thesis, Manchester 1993, pp. 29-31.
- ⁶ Isaacs, *Ghazali's Book of Counsel for Kings* cit., p. xiii.
- ⁷ Keykavus, *Kabusname*, trans. M. Ahmet, İstanbul, 1966, p. 3.
- ⁸ Nizamülmülk, *Siyasetname (Siyerü'l-müluk)*, trans. N. Bayburtlugil, İstanbul 1981, p. 25.
- ⁹ Isaacs, *Ghazali's Book of Counsel* cit., p. xv.
- ¹⁰ For detailed information about Tursun Bey's life and his book *Tarih-i Ebül-Feth* see H. İnalçık, *Tursun Beg, Historian of Mehmed the Conqueror's Time*, in "Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes", 1977, 69, pp. 55-71.
- ¹¹ The famous philosopher and astronomer was born in Tus in 597 and died in Baghdad in 672. Tusi mentioned in the introduction to his book that he wrote it at the wish of the ruler of Kuhistan, Nasreddin Abdalrahim b. Ebi Mansur. He named it after his sponsor. See C. Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, London 1879, vol. II, p. 441. For detailed information about Tusi's life and writings, see R. Strothmann, "Tusi", *EI (first edition)*, vol. VIII, 980-982, and N. Tusi, *The Nasirean Ethics*, trans. G.M. Wickens, London 1964.
- ¹² Ahmed b. Omar b. Ali of Samarqand, whose nom de plume was Nizami as well as Arudi [the prosodist] flourished in the 12th century and appears to have spent most of his life in Khorasan and Transoxiana. He was a poet and courtier, but when the occasion arose he also practiced astrology and medicine. It

- is by virtue of the *Chahar Maqala* that Nizami-i Arudi of Samarqand deserves his place among the famous writers of Persia. This work also includes the only contemporary information about Omar Khayyam and the earliest known account of Firdausi, and many of its anecdotes derive from his personal involvement in the events recorded. For this reason this text is one of the most valuable sources for the period between 1152 and 1157. See E.G. Browne, *Revised Translation of the Chahar Maqala (Four Discourses) of Nizami-i Arudi of Samarqand*, London 1921, pp. 10-12.
- ¹³ H.M. Tulum, *Tursun Bey: Tarih-i Ebül-Feth*, İstanbul 1977, pp. 10-30.
- ¹⁴ Isaacs, *Ghazali's Book of Counsel* cit., p. 45.
- ¹⁵ Tursun Bey, *Tarih* cit., pp. 14-16.
- ¹⁶ Anushirwan Khusraw I was regarded as the greatest Sasanian king on account of his justice and generosity. He carried out tax reforms, making the system more equitable and effective, as well as retaining Zoroastrianism as the state religion and repressing heresy. On the other hand, he showed tolerance toward the Nestorian and Monophysite Christians and Jews. See Ghazali's *Book of Counsel* cit., p. 179.
- ¹⁷ İnan, *A Summary and Analysis of the Tarih-i Ebül-Feth* cit., pp. 99-100.
- ¹⁸ Öz, *Osmanlı'da "Çözülme"* cit., pp. 54-55.
- ¹⁹ R. Murphey, *The Velîyuddin Telhis: Notes on the Sources and Interrelations between Koçi Bey and Contemporary Writers of Advice to Kings*, in "Belleten", 1979, 48 (171), p. 555.
- ²⁰ A. Uğur, *Osmanlı Siyasetnameleri*, Kayseri 1992, p. 10.
- ²¹ For detailed information on Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali's life and works see *Ali Bibliyografyası*, ed. Atsız, İstanbul 1968; C.H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in The Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali, 1541-1600*, Princeton 1986; J. Schmidt, *Mustafa Ali's Kunhül Abbar and its Preface According to the Leiden Manuscript*, İstanbul 1987.
- ²² Öz, *Osmanlı'da "Çözülme"* cit., pp. 54-59.
- ²³ For detailed information on Mehmed II's life and reign see S. Tansel, *Osmanlı Kaynaklarına Göre Fatih Sultan Mehmed'in Siyasi ve Askeri Faaliyeti*, Ankara 1999; H. İnalçık, *The Policy of Mehmed II toward the Greek Population of Istanbul and the Byzantine Buildings of the City, Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23-25, Washington, 1969-1970, pp. 231-249; Id., *Mehmed the Conqueror (1432-1481) and His Time*, in "Speculum", 1960, 35, pp. 408-427; Id., *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar*, İstanbul 1954; C. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire 1300-1481*, İstanbul 1980.
- ²⁴ Öz, *Osmanlı'da "Çözülme"* cit., pp. 59-63.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.
- ²⁶ See İnalçık, *Military and Fiscal Transformation* cit., pp. 288-297; D. Petrovic, *Firearms in the Balkans on the Eve of and after the Ottoman Conquests of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, in V.J. Parry, M.E. Yapp (eds.), *War, Technology, and Society in the Middle East*, London 1975, pp. 164-194.
- ²⁷ Coffee was brought to the Ottoman Empire in the 1540s by ship. At the beginning it was forbidden by religion, and fatwas were declared against it. Consumers liked it anyway and many coffee shops opened in İstanbul. After 1592 it was officially declared that it was not forbidden by religion. However, in 1633 Sultan Murad IV once again banned coffee drinking in public and all the coffee shops in İstanbul were destroyed. Regarding coffee and coffee shops in the Ottoman Empire see Katip Çelebi, *Mizanül-Hakk fi İhtiyari'l Ahakk*, ed. O.Ş. Gökçay, İstanbul 1980, pp. 48-51.
- ²⁸ Öz, *Osmanlı'da "Çözülme"* cit., pp. 63-66.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-68.
- ³⁰ For a full account of the Kitab-ı Müstetab see Y. Yücel, *Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilatına Dair Kaynaklar*, Ankara 1988, pp. 1-41.
- ³¹ For political events during the time of Sultan Murad III see İ. Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, Ankara 1983, vol. III, pp. 42-114.

- ³² Öz, *Osmanlı'da "Çözülme"* cit., pp. 69-72.
- ³³ For a complete account of Koçi Bey's pamphlet see Y. Kurt, *Koçi Bey Risalesi*, Ankara 1994.
- ³⁴ For political events of the time of Sultan Murad IV see Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. III, pp. 148-208, as well as K. Su (ed.), *Tarih-i Gilmani*, Istanbul 1976.
- ³⁵ Öz, *Osmanlı'da "Çözülme"* cit., p. 24.
- ³⁶ For Ottoman Divan-ı Hümayun, its origins, members, and organization see İ. Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Merkez ve Bahriye Teşkilatı*, Ankara 1988.
- ³⁷ Öz, *Osmanlı'da "Çözülme"* cit., pp. 72-76.
- ³⁸ Murphey, *The Velîyüddin Telbis* cit., pp. 547-548.
- ³⁹ Öz, *Osmanlı'da "Çözülme"* cit., pp. 76-78.
- ⁴⁰ For detailed information on the financial situation of the 17th-century Ottoman Empire see Ş. Pamuk, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Paranın Tarihi*, Istanbul 1999; H. İnalcık, D. Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, Cambridge 1994.
- ⁴¹ Öz, *Osmanlı'da "Çözülme"* cit., pp. 79-84.
- ⁴² For a complete account of *Kitâbu Mesâlibi'l-Müslimîn ve Menâfi'i'l-Müminîn* see Yücel, *Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilatına Dair* cit., pp. 49-131.
- ⁴³ For detailed information on the Ottoman *Narh* system see M.S. Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi ve 1640 Tarihli Narh Defteri*, Istanbul 1983.
- ⁴⁴ For the rank of *muhtesib* and his duties see R. Levy, *Muhtesib*, in "İ.A.", Vol. 8, Eskişehir 1997, pp. 532-533. See also Y. Yücel, S. Pulaha, *I. Selim Kanunnamesi*, Ankara 1995.
- ⁴⁵ For an example of the consequences of the heavy and unjust taxation of Ottoman villagers in the 17th century see K. İnan, *Trabzon'da Yönetici Yönetilen İlişkileri (1643-1656)*, in "The Journal of Ottoman Studies", 2004, 23, pp. 23-60.
- ⁴⁶ Öz, *Osmanlı'da "Çözülme"* cit., pp. 85-88.
- ⁴⁷ For detailed information on the life and works of Kâtip Çelebi see O.Ş. Gökyay, *Kâtip Çelebi, Hayatı-Şahsiyeti-Eserleri*, Ankara 1957, pp. 3-90.
- ⁴⁸ Öz, *Osmanlı'da "Çözülme"* cit., p. 27.
- ⁴⁹ For detailed information about Ibn Khaldun's life and views see Ibn Haldun, *Mukaddime I*, ed. S. Uludağ, Istanbul 1982. The standard English version is Ibn Khaldûn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. F. Rosenthal, abridged and ed. N.J. Dawood, Princeton 1967.
- ⁵⁰ For information on Farabi's understanding of government see B. Bayraklı, *Farabi'de Devlet Felsefesi*, Istanbul 1983.
- ⁵¹ Öz, *Osmanlı'da "Çözülme"* cit., pp. 88-91.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-94.
- ⁵⁴ İnalcık, *Military and Fiscal Transformation* cit., pp. 297-298.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 283-284.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cook M.A., *Population Pressure in Rural Anatolia 1450-1600*, London 1972.
- Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Nesayihü'l-Vüzera ve'l-Ümera*, ed. H.R. Uğural, Ankara 1969.
- Düzdağ M.E., *Şeyhülislam Ebussu'ud Efendi'nin Fetvalarına Göre Kanuni Devrinde Osmanlı Hayatı*, İstanbul 1998.
- Findley C.V., *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922*, Princeton 1980.
- Findley C.V., *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History*, Princeton 1989.
- Gibb H.A.R., Bowen H., *Islamic Society and the West, Islamic Society in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford 1950-57, 2 vols.
- İnalçık H., *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Toplum ve Ekonomi*, İstanbul 1993.
- Id., *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600*, London 1973.
- Karpat K.H., *Osmanlı'da Değişim, Modernleşme ve Uluslaşma*, trans. D. Özdemir, Ankara 2006.
- Kunt İ.M., *Sancaktan Eyalete, 1550-1650 Arasında Osmanlı Ümerası ve İl İdaresi*, İstanbul 1978.
- Ortaylı İ., *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İktisadi ve Sosyal Değişim Makaleler I*, Ankara 2000.
- Özdemir H., *Osmanlı Devletinde Bürokrasi*, İstanbul 2001.
- Pakalın M.Z., *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, İstanbul 1993, 3 vols.
- Repp R.C., *The Mufti of Istanbul, A Study in the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy*, Oxford 1986.
- Tabakoğlu A., *Gerileme Dönemine Girereken Osmanlı Maliyesi*, İstanbul 1985.
- Uzunçarşılı İ.H., *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları Acemi Ocağı ve Yeniçeri Ocağı*, Ankara 1988, vol. I.
- Id., *Osmanlı Devleti'nin İlmiye Teşkilatı*, Ankara 1988.
- Id., *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Saray Teşkilatı*, Ankara 1988.
- Varlık M.Ç., *Ottoman Institutions of the 16th Century and Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent: The Ottoman Empire in the Reign of Suleiman the Magnificent*, İstanbul 1988, vol. I, pp. 15-110.
- Woodhead C.M., *From Scribe to Litterateur: The career of a sixteenth-century Ottoman Katib*, in "Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies", 1982, 9, 1, pp. 55-74.

GLOSSARY

Ayet : Verses of the Quran.

Daire-i adliye: Circle of justice. Name of the philosophy of social order and administration in the Ottoman Empire. According to this construct, peace in the world can only be obtained through justice, the world is a garden surrounded by government, law regulates the government, law is protected by sovereignty, in order to protect sovereignty one has to have a large army, feeding the army requires wealth, access to wealth depends on people living in peace and abundance, and this depends on just administration.

Divan Katibi: Secretary of the Council of State.

Divan-ı Hümayun: Council of State.

Erkan-ı erbaa: Four classes, representing the four social orders of the Ottoman Empire: commanders, learned men, members of guilds and traders, and farmers.

Esnaf: Guilds.

Hadith: Record of a saying or action of the Prophet Muhammad, handed down by his companions as a tradition; the study of the tradition of the words and deeds of the Prophet.

Inşa: Elegance of style, especially in letter writing.

Kadi: Judge of Islamic canon law.

Kalemiyye: Bureaucrats of the Ottoman Empire.

Kanun-ı kadim: Old established Ottoman Law, or more broadly, all kinds of Ottoman tradition.

Kanûnnâme: Law code, book of laws.

Kul: Janissary.

Mudjerredân: Unmarried men.

Muhtesib: Superintendent of police charged with examining weights, measures, and provisions.

Narb: Officially fixed price.

Pablavi: Middle Iranian language.

Reâyâ: Taxpaying subjects of the Ottoman Empire.

Risale: Pamphlet.

Sancak: Subdivision of a province.

Şeyhülislam: Dignitary responsible for all matters connected with canon law, religious schools, and the like. He came immediately after the Grand Vizier in precedence.

Telbis: A summary or abstract; condensed report drawn up at the Porte for submission to the Sultan.

Timar: Small military fief.

Ulema: Doctors of Muslim theology; learned men.

Vezir-i Âzam: The Grand Vizier.

Zeamet: Large fief.

