

THE REPRESENTATION OF SULTAN ABDULHAMID II
IN THE EULOGIES OF EBU'L HUDA AND SHEIK ZAFIR



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BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

2025

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Thesis submitted to the
Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History

by
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Boğaziçi University

2025

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ABSTRACT

The Representation of Sultan Abdulhamid II in the Eulogies of Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir

In an age of disease and deformity, Sultan Abdulhamid II's thirty-three-year reign represented a complex attempt to navigate the Ottoman Empire through the whirlwind of late 19th-century transformation, a period that coincided with European colonial aggression and internal challenges of fiscal crisis and nationalist awakenings. Abdulhamid II's response was a "new gold dream" – a reform package based on a selective symbiosis of certain elements of Western modernity while preserving the Ottoman presence in resonance with the deep layers of Ottoman-Islamic heritage. His relationship with mystic Sufi sheiks, particularly Rufaiyya Sheik Ebu'l Huda es-Sayyadi and Shadhiliyya Sheik Zafir al-Madani, proved critical to this vision. This acquaintance served simultaneously as a strategic alliance, unofficial diplomacy, a legitimacy construction, an information network, and a relationship of personal interests. Both religious figures authored carefully prepared religio-political documents supporting the Sultan's Pan-Islamist policy, portraying him as a "philosopher king" while countering Western Orientalist narratives. Through the lens of Austin's performative language theory, these texts became acts of influence affecting imperial survival and rejuvenation. Abdulhamid II's paradoxical strategy demonstrated sophisticated rumination on statecraft; however, his governance could only delay imperial collapse.

ÖZET

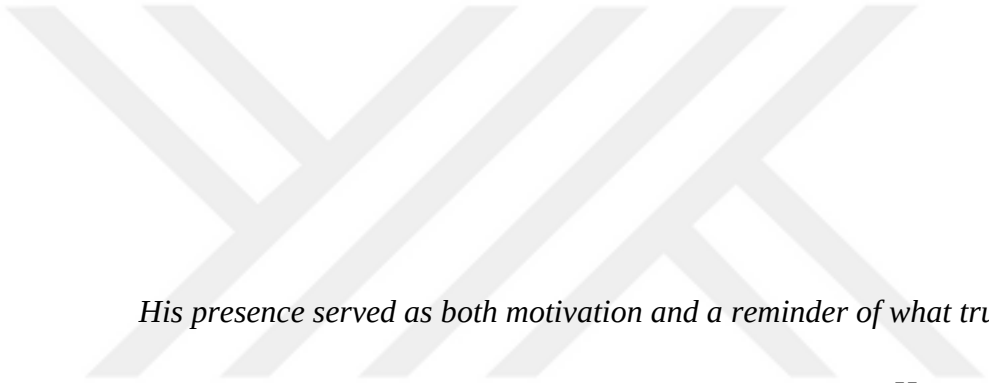
Ebu'l Huda ve Şeyh Zafir'in Methiyelerinde

Sultan II. Abdülhamid'in Temsili

Hastalık ve biçimsizliğin hüküm sürdüğü bir çağda, Sultan II. Abdülhamid'in otuz üç yıllık saltanatı, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nu 19. yüzyılın sonlarında cereyan eden değişim kasırgasından çıkarmaya yönelik kompleks bir girişimi temsil ediyordu. Bir tarafta Avrupa'nın sömürgeci saldırganlığı, diğer tarafta mali kriz ve milliyetçi uyanışlar gibi iç zorlukların hakim olduğu bu çağa II. Abdulhamid II'in yanıtı “yeni altın rüya” oldu – Osmanlı'nın varlığını korurken Batı modernitesinin bazı unsurlarının alındığı bir simbiyozla dayalı, Osmanlı-İslam mirasının derin katmanlarıyla uyum içinde bir reform paketi. Özellikle Rûfaiyye Şeyhi Ebu'l Huda es-Sayyadî ve Şaziliyye Şeyhi Zafir el-Medani gibi Sufî şeyhlerle kurduğu ilişki bu vizyon için kritik bir önem taşıdı. Bu tanışıklık aynı anda stratejik ittifak, gayri resmi diplomasi, meşruiyet inşası, bilgi ağı ve kişisel çıkar ilişkileriyle şekillendi. Her iki dini figür, onu "filozof kral" olarak tasvir ederken, Batı Oryantalizmine karşı çıkan ve Sultan'ın Pan-İslamist politikasını destekleyen özenle hazırlanmış dini-politik metinler ürettiler. J. L. Austin'in edimsel dil teorisi çerçevesinden bakıldığında, bu metinler imparatorluğun bekası ve yenilenmesini sağlayan etkin eylemlerdi. Abdülhamid'in paradoksal yönetim stratejisi, devlet idaresi üzerine sofistike bir tefekkür örneği sergilerken onun kendine özgü yönetimselliğinin başarısı, imparatorluğun çöküşünü ertelemek olabildi.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis advisor, Arzu Öztürkmen, for her patience and guidance, which played a pivotal role in my completion of this journey because this thesis is not merely an academic endeavor but a quest, a passion, perhaps an obsession that has been ignited since 2007. When I first approached Boğaziçi University in 2007 with a fervent curiosity to unravel the complexities of this remarkable period in Ottoman history, little did I know then that the interplay between the state and Sufi orders was so multifaceted, and that the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II would serve as a rich foundation for examining Sufi orders and politics. Nevertheless, life intervened, yet the questions that sparked this inquiry never ceased to beckon, compelling me to continuously ask new questions and develop new perspectives, due to the very depth of my research topic. Thus, this thesis represents not only an academic text but also a testament to my intellectual maturation as a researcher. Throughout this process, I am profoundly indebted to Ugur Dervish, whose generous commitment to reviewing this thesis in its various iterations offered invaluable insights and constructive criticism at every stage. I want to thank my friend Elif Aydınтуğ, who helped me find clarity and move forward whenever I felt overwhelmed and indecisive in my writing. Special appreciation goes to my sister, Ayşenur Cevahiroğlu, whose assistance in researching and locating obscure articles and books proved instrumental in laying the foundation for this study. I extend my gratitude to my parents, whose belief in the value of intellectual pursuit provided the moral foundation for this work. Most importantly, I acknowledge my son, Hüseyin Ali Ömür, whose understanding and support during the final stages of this thesis demonstrated a wisdom beyond his years.



*His presence served as both motivation and a reminder of what truly matters,
to my son, Hüseyin Ali Ömür.*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

SETTING THE STAGE: SUFISM AND THE LATE OTTOMAN CONTEXT

In the twilight of the 19th century, during a period of modernization and change in the Ottoman Empire, a surprising sight could often be observed in Istanbul. Sultan Abdulhamid II, renowned for his autocratic rule and efforts to modernize the Ottoman Empire, frequently sought advice not only from his ministers and military advisors but also from Sufi sheiks, individuals affiliated with the inner knowledge of Islam known as *tasavvuf* (*Sufism*).

It is well known that Abdulhamid II drew upon his relationships with Sufi sheiks in an unofficial capacity, in addition to building and maintaining relationships with legal institutions through official and unofficial meetings. These religious leaders, dressed in their distinct robes and turbans, held consultations with the most powerful man in the empire within the luxurious halls of Yıldız Palace. This remarkable alliance between worldly and spiritual authority was not an isolated occurrence; rather, it exemplifies the profound engagement that Sufi orders had with Ottoman society and political power, which still warrants detailed examination.

By the end of the 19th century, it is believed that nearly every Ottoman citizen, from the humblest peasant to the highest vizier, had some connection to a Sufi brotherhood. These mystical brotherhoods, with their diverse rules and regulations peculiar to their religious affiliations per se, were not confined to the outskirts of society but were deeply integrated into its structure, stretching from the Adriatic to the Persian Gulf. They oversaw hundreds of meeting places throughout the empire, which served as hubs for religious rituals, education, sport, culture, and

social support. As Baha Tanman states, in Istanbul alone, until their closure, there were over 500 active Sufi meeting places, with their domes and minarets dotting the skyline alongside grand mosques and palaces.¹

1.1 On *tasavvuf* and Sufism: A terminological clarification

Since my thesis analyses the representation of Sultan Abdulhamid II in the eulogies of Rufaiyya Sheik Ebu'l Huda and Shadeliyya Sheik Zafir, one of the focal points of this research can be perceived as the institutionalization of Sufism in the Ottoman Empire. This analysis requires, from the outset, a terminological clarification of the concepts of Sufism and *tasavvuf*. To begin with, *tasavvuf* does not reflect a specific practice of religion, path, or method that emerged at a particular historical moment in the world. I suggest that multiple cultural, political, social, and economic processes, as well as philosophical, mystical, and theological systems, have contributed to the development of *tasavvuf* as a spiritual discipline derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Therefore, it is hardly possible to define *tasavvuf* in a single sentence with a simple phrase. According to the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, it is stated that the number of definitions is as abundant as the number of Sufis, thereby indicating a multitude of definitions related mainly to the current spiritual state and rank of the Sufi who provides the definition. However, what is common among them is “the spiritual and inner lifestyle lived within the framework of the apparent and hidden rules of Islam.”² It should be noted that this reference to “hidden rules” reflects the Sufi

¹ M. Baha Tanman, “The Position of the Tekkes in Ottoman Cities and Urban Districts: The Istanbul Example”, *Sufism and Sufis in Ottoman Society: Sources-doctrine-rituals-turuq-architecture-literature and fine arts-modernism*, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak ed., Ankara 2005, 383.

² Reşat Öngören, “Tasavvuf”, 119-126.

emphasis on the esoteric (*batın*) dimensions of Islamic spirituality, which work in tandem with the exoteric (*zahir*) religious practices. In other words, Sufism is both an individual and communal practice of religion designed to cultivate a direct connection with God. As it evolved, it developed its own distinctive beliefs, rituals, and teachings, earning it the description of a “religion within a religion³”, or a “parallel religion⁴”. Therefore, I will prefer to accept Sufism as a path that aims for inner purification alongside external worship in this thesis.

The representation of Sultan Abdulhamid II in the eulogies of Sheik Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir illustrates how the integration of *tekke* leadership relates to the state's bureaucratic structure or the standardization of Sufi practices and teachings under state supervision in the Ottoman Empire. However, despite the reform movements that occurred both before and after the Tanzimat, which we focus on in the second chapter, when we examine the relationship with Sultan Abdulhamid II, who engaged with Sufi orders, this process of state-sponsored institutionalization ultimately culminated in the prohibition of *tekkes* in the Republican period.⁵

This entire journey of the relationship between the state and Sufi orders reflects a complex, often contentious association, leading to a history marked by violent and merciless confrontations. The narrative of Hallaj-i Mansur, who lived from 857 to 922, represents a significant turning point in the relationship between Sufism and political authority during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph Muktedir.

³ Fazlur Rahman, *İslam*, 219.

⁴ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Sufism and Sufis in Ottoman Society*, XIX.

⁵ It is significant to note that the transformation from the Ottoman state's complex relationship with Sufi orders to their complete abolition under the Republic involved several crucial developments, including the politicization of religious discourse during the late Ottoman regime's commitment to creating a secular national identity that necessitated the elimination of traditional religious intermediaries.

Hallaj's mystical teachings and his distinctive mode of expression brought him into direct conflict with the political and religious authorities of his era, culminating in his trial and execution in Baghdad. His assertion "Ane'l-Hakk" (I am the truth), intended to illustrate the unity of Allah with His servant, was construed as heretical blasphemy by numerous scholars, leading to the forfeiture of his life. This incident has been a pivotal theme in the works of renowned Sufi poets such as Mevlana and Sadi, generating multifaceted discussions within the interplay of Islam, the state, and Sufism.

Despite the admonitions from the *ulama* regarding his teachings, the allure of Sufism ultimately triumphed, paving the way for a process of equilibrium and reconciliation between Sunni Islam and Sufism during the Abbasid period. During this period, contact with various neighbouring cultures that predated Islam also had a profound impact, leading to the evolution of the aspiration of *tasavvuf* into *tarikats*, which evolved from mystical theories into a social movement within Islamic societies.⁶ Sufism, embracing specific aesthetic, literary, ritualistic, and devotional manifestations of the Islamic tradition, tracing back to the early period of Islam, began to be institutionalized within itself rather than state-imposed frameworks; thereby the previously informal master-disciple relationship evolved into more structured hierarchies within organizational frameworks known as *tarikats*, led by mystic leaders called *sheiks*. This centuries-long trajectory of formalization can be seen as the journey that both facilitated and complicated the encounter of Sufi orders with modernity, serving as a source of resilience through autonomous religious communities that operated independently of state control.

⁶ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Sufism and Sufis in Ottoman Society*, XVI-XVII.

As Sufism evolved into structured *tarikats* orders, some special dwellings started to emerge in the 9th century as gathering places for Sufis to meet, engage in dialogue, and practice rituals for the remembrance of God. Over time, these centers were referred to by various terms such as *tekke*, *dergah*, *zaviye*. By incorporating additional facilities such as libraries, classrooms, hospital wings, and guesthouses, these institutions sustained their existence through foundations and gradually expanded their functions, including education in fields of Islamic knowledge and jurisprudence, theology, and Arabic. During the Ottoman period, the sheiks of these *tarikats* refined their skills in diverse fields, including medicine, astronomy, music, and calligraphy. Sufi orders operated as schools of fine arts and hospitals, as well as centers providing service to foreigners, travellers, and patients. They adopted the culture of the places where they spread and adapted themselves to local characteristics. Thus, a single *tarikat* could exhibit different features during the same period, depending on the geographical area in which it spread. This cultural adaptability of *tarikats*, particularly during the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, facilitated the acceptance of their new rulers by local populations.⁷ Throughout history, some Sufi groups have been involved in power struggles or have even formed states, such as the Safavids; however, the vast majority of Sufis had no such interest. During the era of colonial expansion, some Sufis also assumed a political role, while some either ignored the new conditions to the best of their ability. However, some Sufi orders played an active role in the resistance to the foreign invasion.⁸

⁷ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Sufism and Sufis in Ottoman Society*, XXIII.

⁸ Knut S. Vikor, "Sufism and Colonialism", 9.

1.2 Unveiling the state-Sufi nexus: A new era for the Sultan-sheik relationship

The widespread presence of Sufi orders in Ottoman society during the 19th century raises intriguing questions. How did these mystical orders, often linked with individual religious affiliations and communal bonds, become so deeply intertwined with the state's affairs? How did Sultan Abdulhamid II, a ruler focused on consolidating power and modernizing the empire, come to rely so heavily on these Islamic figures? Why did Abdulhamid II specifically choose North African sheiks for this reconciliation? How did the publishing activities of these sheiks help shape society's perception of the Sultan, while simultaneously fostering a sense of shared identity among Muslim subjects across the vast Ottoman territories?

The exploration of Abdulhamid II's strategic engagement with Sufi networks provides a historical perspective on the complex dynamics between political authority and religious institutions, offering insight into modern state-religion relations. Resonating in many contemporary Muslim-majority countries, this relationship still affects governments that continue to grapple with the role of religious institutions in governance and society. The examination of Sufi orders and their interactions with the state during the reign of Abdulhamid II holds significant contemporary relevance, particularly within the context of Turkey. Despite being among the limited number of nations, alongside Saudi Arabia and Iran, where Sufi orders are officially proscribed, Turkey continues to witness active, albeit unofficial, Sufi practices. This enduring phenomenon is highlighted in popular culture, as exemplified by the Sufi-affiliated cultural foundations such as Kubbealtı Vakfı and the considerable influence of Naqshibandiyya presence in contemporary Turkish society, reflecting a profound cultural connection and suggesting deeper historical continuities beyond official narratives.

Therefore, illuminating the historical roots of these complex interactions offers lessons on the potential benefits and pitfalls of state engagement with religious groups. It also provides crucial historical context for contemporary discussions on global Muslim identity. In an era of globalization and transnational religious movements, the strategies employed by Abdulhamid II offer insights into the historical development of ideas that continue to shape Muslim geopolitics and inter-Muslim relations today.

Moreover, by examining the multifaceted roles of Sufi orders in Ottoman society, from spiritual guidance to social services, this research contributes to our understanding of how religious publications functioned within civil society. This historical understanding becomes particularly relevant today, as many countries grapple with questions of secularism, religious pluralism, and the role of faith-based organizations in public life, this historical analysis aims to offer insights into the complex social functions religious institutions have served beyond purely spiritual matters.

Religious publications, exemplified by those attributed to Ebu'l Huda es-Seyyadi and Sheik Zafir Al-Madani, possess the capability to impact individual conduct and societal standards profoundly. They mold moral principles, ethical understanding, and communal identity, all of which are essential components in Abdulhamid II's endeavour to uphold Ottoman unity. When evaluated within the framework of Michel Foucault's bio-power theory, these texts emerge as critical components of Abdulhamid II's power mechanism. According to Foucault anatomy and bio-politics, which emerged in the 18th century, function as "techniques of power present at every level of social body and utilized by the very diverse institutions (the family and the army, schools and the police, individual medicine and

the administration of collective bodies), operated in the sphere of economic processes, their development, and the forces working to sustain them.”⁹ In this context, the publications of Ebu’l Huda and Sheik Zafir not only present religious teachings, but also shape the daily life practices, moral preferences, and social identities of Muslim subjects, turning them into “governable subjects”. As Ferda Keskin states in his interpretation of Foucault, modern power is a mechanism that is “produced in every social relationship” and reinforces itself by creating fields of knowledge.¹⁰ Through these Sufi authorities, power regulates the social body through subject formation rather than direct coercion.

Pan-Islamist ideology should be considered as a broader power strategy within the framework of Foucault’s conceptualization of “governing the order of things¹¹”, as Foucault puts it, and macro-power analysis. Abdulhamid II’s Pan-Islamist project aims to unite diverse ethnic and cultural groups across the vast geography of the empire around a common Islamic identity by leveraging religious authority. This strategy can be evaluated in the context of Foucault’s macro-power analysis as a systematic attempt to govern not only individual subjects but also social totality and collective identities. Religious authority here functions as a homogenizing tool for the diversity within the borders of the empire and strengthens the legitimacy of the central authority by organizing the differences under a single Islamic roof. From this perspective, Pan-Islamism emerges as both an ideological discourse and a technique of governmentality aimed at maintaining the imperial order.

⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, 141.

¹⁰ Ferda Keskin, “İktidar, Hakikat ve Entelektüelin Siyasi İşlevi”, 13-28.

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, 38.

Despite official prohibitions, the enduring influence of Sufi orders in Turkey underscores how religious movements often transcend official policies. This persistence speaks to the deep cultural embeddedness of these traditions and their ability to adapt to changing circumstances, as they did during the late Ottoman period.

Understanding this historical context provides valuable insights into how religious publications and movements can influence individual cognition, social norms, and even geopolitical strategies. Furthermore, the interplay between religion and state power has never been straightforward; instead, it has been a dynamic negotiation that continues to evolve in contemporary Middle Eastern politics and society.

Alongside Foucault's analysis of power and discourse, a performance-centered approach provides another valuable lens for understanding the Sheiks' discourses. To analyze how Abdulhamid II is perceived in the texts of the two sheiks, this thesis benefited greatly from the philosopher John Langshaw Austin's 'speech act theory'. In his seminal work *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), Austin argues that language does not merely describe reality but actively reframes it through "performatives", which are utterances that constitute actions themselves rather than descriptions of actions.¹² Austin's approach that "to say something is to do

¹² To give an example, saying "yes" during a wedding ceremony does not function within the traditional true or false paradigm but instead, succeeds or fails based on whether they effectively accomplish their intended social action within appropriate contextual conditions. Austin examines all utterances in three dimensions: (1) locutionary acts, producing sounds, grammatical structure, and meanings; (2) illocutionary acts as expressions that ask questions, provide information, warnings, promises or decisions, to be considered separately from the meaning of the expression; and (3) perlocutionary act when utterances produce certain feelings, thoughts, or actions of listeners and speakers. See John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, (Clarendon Press, 1962).

something" opens a new window into understanding how social reality is constructed through the discourse of these texts.

Austin's approach offers a valuable tool for understanding the power and effects of discourse, especially in areas such as legal discourse, institutional communication, and religious practices. In this regard, it also reminds us of Foucault's arguments on discourse and power, who argues that language should be evaluated beyond mere truth conditions. For Foucault, discourse is not just about appropriateness or suitability but fundamentally about power relations. In works such as *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, he examines how institutional discourses create subjects, normalize behaviours, and exert control.¹³

In this regard, the application of Austin's notions has proven instrumental in analyzing the expressions of praise, titles, and metaphors utilized by the sheiks, as well as in examining Abdulhamid II's representation. While systematically evaluating the titles used by both sheiks, I attempted to identify points at which these overlap with the definitions of the caliphate and Sultanate of the period by categorizing the titles, epithets, and expressions of praise attributed to Abdulhamid II by the sheiks. Furthermore, to provide a historical context for the representation of the Sultan in the sheik's text, the study examines the political conditions of the period and the Ottoman Empire's international standing and influence.

1.3 Sufi orders under the pendulum of modernization and "Neo-Sufism" paradigm

The 19th century was a pivotal period during which the global balance of power underwent significant redefinition. The Ottoman Empire underwent substantial

¹³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (Vintage Books, 1977); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, (Pantheon Books, 1978).

transformations in terms of social and institutional terms, thereby seeking to reframe its relations with political and religious institutions. Sufi orders did not merely serve as the instrument of state control, but also attempted to resist both central and colonial powers, while pursuing their own existence and serving as focal institutions for social change. They are involved in this modernization process by playing dual roles, both influencing and being influenced. Thus, these Sufi orders could not be seen as either conservative or modernist, as they stood against or reconciled with change. Instead, they were active and dynamic entities that contributed to the social, cultural, and political change in the regions where they were active. The state's attitude towards them was sometimes aimed at controlling them, other times sought to leverage them. Here, one should mention the concept of "Neo-Sufism", as a growing academic literature in Islamic studies since the 1960s, because this paradigm is essential for analyzing how figures like Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir operated within a reformed Sufi context that emphasized social engagement over mystical isolation. This makes their publications not merely traditional religious texts but active instruments that directly served Abdulhamid II's Pan-Islamist objectives, thereby becoming an example of what Rahman terms "social spiritualism".

Introduced by Fazlur Rahman, the concept of Neo-Sufism was also followed by other historians, who offered new theoretical frameworks for understanding the movements of Sufi orders during the late Ottoman period. While some scholars identify Neo-Sufism as a modernist approach, others challenge the notion as being an overvalued attempt.

Neo-Sufism, a paradigm introduced by Fazlur Rahman in 1966¹⁴, was claimed to distinguish itself by increased militancy, stronger orientation towards the *sharia*, and rejection of *bida*. Rahman states:

In the middle of the 9th century, Sufism began to be taught publicly in Baghdad and elsewhere. Its enthusiasm for the masses must be explained by a variety of religious, social, and political factors. Above all, Sufism claimed to bring its adherents into direct contact with God. The appeal of this ideal was so powerful that in time Sufism became a 'religion within a religion', with its own structure of thought, practice, and organization.¹⁵

According to Rahman, the brightest period of Sufism in Western Asia occurred between the 15th and 18th centuries, coinciding with the establishment of the Ottoman Empire, where Sufism reached its zenith. During this period, scholars affiliated with Sufism sought to regulate Sufi orders by controlling excesses in their rituals and bringing them closer to the Sunni ideal through reform, in which they partially succeeded. However, the 18th century witnessed the emergence of the Salafi reform movement, which targeted popular Sufi beliefs in both the central and peripheral parts of the Islamic world. This led to some significant changes in the practices of previously established orders and catalysed the emergence of new orders, most notably the Sanusiyya in North Africa and the Muhammadiyah in India during the 19th century.¹⁶ For Rahman, Neo-Sufism is a paradigm that distinguishes itself by its rejection of the ecstatic and metaphysical aspects of traditional Sufism, thereby emphasizing strict adherence to prayer and isolation, instead prioritizing the pursuit of a connection with the spirit of the Prophet over the quest for union with God. Neo-Sufism critically examines isolative spiritualism, which is perceived as an

¹⁴ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966); Also see, Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Ankara Okulu, 2008); F. De Jong & B. Radtke eds., *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteenth Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, (Brill, 1999).

¹⁵ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 219.

¹⁶ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 238.

egoistic endeavour that seeks happiness solely for the practitioners. In contrast, it advocates for social spiritualism, fundamentally opposing the interpretation of Sufism as a path to societal detachment. Instead, it encourages active involvement in life and participation in societal development and welfare. In essence, reformed Sufis are encouraged to engage profoundly with their communities. Rahman delineates the defining characteristics of this phenomenon, indicating that reform programs were rooted in a return to the primary sources of Islam and in the elimination of unacceptable practices and beliefs.¹⁷

In his article entitled “Neo-Sufism: Reconsidered Again,” John O. Voll reviewed the writings of 19th century Western scholars, such as Louis Rinn, A. Le Chatelier, Octave Dupont, and Xavier Coppolani. He examined how these authors characterized Sufi brotherhoods as advocates of Pan-Islamism, by endeavouring to illustrate the historical links between Pan-Islamic thought and Neo-Sufism, giving reference to the works of white supremacist writer Lothrop Stoddard.¹⁸ In his book *The New World of Islam* (1921) Stoddard has suggested that the Pan-Islamism movement, which initially exhibited a fragmented character in the early 19th century, began to develop a more conscious and systematic structure by the mid-19th century, by underlining how Sufi orders influenced Pan-Islamism.¹⁹ In terms of the questions this thesis seeks to answer, it marks a remarkable point by positioning Sufi orders not as mere passive social and religious institutions, but as active participants in the political and cultural context of the era. By examining the relationship between Neo-Sufism and Pan-Islamism, particularly in terms of the capacity of Sufi orders to

¹⁷ Rahman’s designation of this paradigm, notably prevalent among the Senusiyya, as “new” has encountered some criticism within academic circles.

¹⁸ John O. Voll, 2008, “Neo-Sufism: Reconsidered Again”, 314-330.

¹⁹ Lothrop Stoddard, *The New World of Islam*, (Chapman and Hall, 1921).

counter imperialism and the significance of political activism since the mid-19th century, Voll's review provides valuable insights into *tekke*-state relations in the Ottoman Empire.

In their 1993 article "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered," historians R. Sean O'Fahey and Bernd Radtke brought a critique to Fazlur Rahman's approach. They argued that Rahman's definition of Neo-Sufism fails to recognize the historical continuity inherent in Sufism.²⁰ They contend that the novel characteristics he purports to have existed during the early periods of Sufism. O'Fahey and Radtke assert that Rahman's claim of pursuing "unity with the spirit of the Prophet instead of unity with God,"²¹ which he primarily attributes to Ibn Idris, who was an active and influential sheik among reformists in the region, remains unsubstantiated and has become a prevalent cliché. They also criticize Rahman's concept of Neo-Sufism, which largely derives its basis and information from French colonial literature, thereby lacking proper documentation. They indicate this critique with reference to Voll's interpretation, linking the activist tendencies of the orders during this period to Pan-Islamism. They argue that such sources reflect a colonialist perspective rather than objective academic inquiry. Furthermore, the authors maintain that the active involvement of Sufi orders in the social and political domains during this era emerged principally in reaction to colonial forces. Accordingly, they propose that the discourse surrounding Neo-Sufism should either be eliminated or utilized with considerable caution.

²⁰ R.S. O'Fahey & Bernd Radtke, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered", 52-87.

²¹ Interestingly, this Muhammadian orientation can also be traced in the early 14th century work *Mantıku't-Tayr*, where Muhammad is portrayed as saying: "*Din benüm-durur ki cavidan-durur*" (Religion is mine and this religion is eternal). This instance demonstrates how widespread this particular theological emphasis was in early Anatolian Sufi literature. Please see, Muhammed Bedreddin Kaymaz, "Muhammad, Ummah and Collectivity in the Earliest Turkish Mesnevis in Anatolia", (M.A. thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2024).

Historian Nehemia Levtzion delivered a defence of the concept of Neo-Sufism pointing out the innovations in the organizational structures of Sufi orders. He asserted that these orders had evolved into more coherent and centralized entities, influenced significantly by structural changes that took place in the 18th century. Levtzion reiterated his position regarding the structural transformation of Neo-Sufism.²²

Similarly, Martin Van Bruinessen, in his 2009 study, outlined both the supporting and opposing arguments related to Neo-Sufism. He observed that even the most critical analyses recognized the changes within the orders, particularly in North Africa might be valuable contributions of the field, suggesting that they can help to mitigate oversimplified generalizations and unsubstantiated assumptions.

Islamic studies scholar Bruce Lawrence claims that colonialism shaped the Neo-Sufism movement, while exaggerating the influence of Wahhabism.²³ While agreeing with O’Fahey and Radtke’s criticisms, he also argues that Ibn Arabi influenced Sufi movements in the Western world at that time and today. According to him, while Neo-Sufism has shown a geographical spread from the 19th century to the 21st century, he addresses it within a geographical and temporal framework that extends to Africa, Asia, and the America. Perhaps this is the most crucial feature distinguishing it from Rahman’s argument. In short, Lawrence re-evaluates Fazlur Rahman’s views within a more comprehensive historical and geographical framework rather than rejecting them altogether. He examines the concept of Neo-Sufism in the context of colonialism, globalization and modernity, discussing the role of the printing press and modern communication technologies in the spread of

²² Nehemia Levtzion, “The Dynamic of Sufi Brotherhoods”, 109-118.

²³ Bruce Lawrence, “Sufism and Neo-Sufism”, 355-384.

Sufism, the impact of exile, migration and economic networks on the globalization of orders, and defining the 19th century as the Sufi century of Muslim Africa.

Islamic studies scholars Khalid Hussain Mir and Rafique Anjum who analysed Fazlur Rahman's theoretical approach to Neo-Sufism stated that Fazlur Rahman provides an essential framework for how orders respond to modern challenges while preserving their spiritual essence, and that he developed methodological approaches that bridge traditional Islamic teachings with contemporary needs. The authors claim that the Neo-Sufism paradigm is open to development and that this field can be created with new research. According to them, comparative studies should be conducted with other contemporary Islamic movements to understand the specificity and impact of Neo-Sufism more comprehensively.

From the historical context, Neo-Sufism reflects certain changes in sheik-disciple relations, with references to the circumstances of the period. While supporting the order's practices with arguments based on the Quran and the Sunnah, this approach aimed to integrate both official Islamic rules and the pursuit of truth. In the changing conditions of 19th century, the orders played a role in the resistance against colonialism and also contributed to social transformation.

While these movements prepared the ground for the changes that the 20th century would bring, they developed an adaptation strategy to maintain their own existence. Thanks to this, the orders were able to survive in a period of political, economic, and cultural ruptures, which could be illustrated as the 'age of disease and deformity'.

The activities of the sheiks of the order, such as Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir, who were active in the palace during the reign of Abdulhamid II, exhibit certain

elements that align with Neo-Sufi characteristics, particularly in their emphasis on social engagement and adherence to orthodox Islamic principles. However, a comprehensive evaluation of whether their overall approach fully corresponds to Rahman's Neo-Sufism paradigm would require extensive analysis of their broader corpus of writing, which extends the scope of this study. What can be observed within the confines of this research is how Sultan Abdulhamid II exploited the popularity of these sheiks in North Africa as a reflection of his "fine-tuning" process, which Selim Deringil defines as "the meticulous inculcation, indoctrination, enticing, frightening, forbidding, permitting, punishing or rewarding – all in precise doses."²⁴ Thus, while these sheiks may incorporate Neo-Sufi elements in some of their activities, their primary function appears to have been serving the imperial agenda of Pan-Islamist consolidation.

1.4 Postmodern historical approach towards the state–*tarikat* relations

Postmodern historiography has instigated substantial paradigm shifts in the examination of Sufi-state relations within the Ottoman Empire. This approach has revolutionized traditional historiography by prioritizing micro-histories, marginalized voices, and diverse perspectives, as opposed to widely grand narratives. They investigate the state's influence over Sufism not only through overt policies of prohibition or support but also through more nuanced mechanisms of control and co-existence. These include the regulations of Sufi orders, the issuance of *tarikat* permits, and the maintenance of hierarchical structures within Sufi organizations. Sufi texts are examined not only for their spiritual content, but also for the power of

²⁴ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909*, 10.

relations, social codes, and cultural references they contain. *Menakıbnames*, *silsilas*, and *icazetnames* are re-evaluated in this context. Therefore, it is crucial to examine some remarkable contributions to the field, which will help us to contextualize our attempt to reframe the state-*tarikāt* relations by addressing Sufi texts.

One of the most significant contributions of this methodology to historical surveys of state-*tarikāt* relations is its departure from the approach of viewing this encounter through the “orthodox” and “heterodox” dichotomy.

Cemal Kafadar, in his work *Between Two Worlds* underscored the existence of a more fluid religious environment in the early Ottoman period, where a strict orthodoxy-heterodoxy distinction did not exist, with the concept of “metadoxy”. The religious landscape in Anatolia during the early modern Ottoman period was complex, with indistinct boundaries between Sunnism and Shiism in the late medieval era.²⁵ Cemal Kafadar emphasizes that orthodoxy gained prominence with the establishment of a more centralized Ottoman administration. This institutionalization also led to the emergence of heterodoxy, which was adopted by certain tribes, dervishes, and the Ahi brotherhood. Particularly in response to the Safavid challenge during the late 15th and early 16th centuries, the distinctions between orthodoxy and heterodoxy within the Ottoman realm became more pronounced, aligning largely along the lines of Sunnism and Shiism. Those perceived to be on the “wrong side” of these religious conflicts were often labelled as Shiite-Alevi. According to Kafadar, this change in the period is closely related to the evolution of the Bektashiyya order over time, particularly as it began to dominate

²⁵ Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 76-77. Also, please see: Cemal Kafadar, “Janissaries and Other Riffraff of Ottoman Istanbul: Rebels without a Cause?”, *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, (Vol. 3, Nos. 1&2, 2007), 113-134.

various "heterodox" or opposing movements in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Furthermore, he asserts that the identification of legendary names such as Hacı Bektaş, Baba İlyas, Sarı Saltuk, Yunus Emre, and Ahi Evren as Shiite-Alevi during their lifetimes was a misguided attempt. In this context, he introduced the term "metadoxy" as more suitable for describing groups that were either distant from or only superficially influenced by *medrese* traditions, thereby reflecting a perspective beyond a strict adherence to established orthodoxy or heterodoxy. This contribution provides a new analytical tool for explaining the religious practices and beliefs. It provides a basis for us to evaluate the state's relations with Sufi orders that are not strictly bound by a specific official religious doctrine but still have a broad influence on the social base.

Inspired by Kafadar's concept of metadoxy, Nir Shafir generates a postmodern perspective for his studies on heresiography in the Ottoman Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries. As a historian, Shafir examined the proliferation of heresiography during the 16th century in his article titled "How to Read Heresy in the Ottoman World".²⁶ He elucidates that this tradition was employed not only against external threats but also to facilitate the process of sectarianization within Ottoman society, drawing upon his analysis of manuscript copies of these texts. This perspective is valuable for our aim to examine eulogies composed by Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir in terms of their role in the interplay between political authority and religious authority, as well as the construction of identity among people affiliated with the *tarikats* mentioned. One of the most important contributions of Shafir to the literature is his clarification of the complex dynamics among Sufi orders, both in

²⁶ Nir Shafir, "How to Read Heresy in Ottoman World", 196-231.

relation to the *ulama* and within themselves. By adopting an analytical framework that aligns with Foucault's concepts of discourse and power, Shafir investigates heresiography literature not merely as sources of religious knowledge but also as instruments of identity formation. He further exemplifies a postmodern approach by emphasizing the diversity of religious quests about Ottoman Sunnism that emerged in distinct periods and contexts.

Derin Terzioğlu, problematized the concept of "Sunnification" in her remarkable article "How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization," emphasizing that this process was not a one-way state project, but a multi-layered process shaped by social dynamics.²⁷ Terzioğlu begins with challenging, simplified narratives about Ottoman Sunnitization, criticizing not only Turkish theological scholarship that presumes Ottomans had always been *Sunni* and the Western approach that overemphasizes state power in religious transformation. While maintaining confidence in historical sources and evidence, she rejects simple causality, such as attributing Sunnitisation solely to the Ottoman-Safavid conflict. Instead, she presents a complex interplay of factors that shaped Ottoman religious identity. Although Terzioğlu's study does not directly focus on the relationship between Sufi orders and the state, it offers a compelling framework for understanding Ottoman Sunnification as a complex, multi-layered process influenced by social dynamics, rather than merely a state initiative. This perspective, which encompasses intricate interactions, enables us to evaluate *tarikāt*-state relations in a more nuanced manner, thereby contributing to the literature and reinforcing the importance of avoiding simplistic interpretations of the significant roles Sufi orders played in Ottoman religious, social,

²⁷ Derin Terzioğlu, "How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion", 301-338.

and political life. Terzioğlu's claim in her article "Sufis in the Age of State Building and Confessionalization," where she evaluates state-*tekke* relations, provides an essential analysis of the institutionalization of Sufi orders by the state. Examining the Bayramiyya order, her thesis asserts that the institutionalization of *tarikats* is a non-linear, incomplete, multi-layered, and constantly negotiated process. This approach challenges the state-centred and teleological narratives in traditional Ottoman historiography. It reveals an institutionalization process in which orders were shaped by their own dynamics, internal contradictions, and mutual interaction with the state. She states:

Neither the institutionalization nor the confessionalization of Sufism was a process that concluded in either the sixteenth or the seventeenth century. Early nineteenth-century attempts to recentralize the empire brought about important sequels to both developments.²⁸

Influenced by post-structuralist and micro-historical approaches, historian Rachida Chih's study of the contemporary Halvetiyya order in Egypt also argues that the concept of the order needs to be redefined while pointing to a problem parallel to Derin Terzioğlu's studies on early modern *Sunni* identity construction and confessionalization processes in the Ottoman Empire, the failure of the orders to become fully institutionalized. Despite strengthening the Rukaiyya and Shadiliyya orders with state support during the reign of Abdulhamid II and the efforts of the Tanzimat reforms to transform religious institutions, these orders were unable to complete a rationalization and bureaucratization process in the Weberian sense. Chih's analysis of the Halvetiyya reveals that, rather than disappearing in the face of modernity, the orders continued to exist by exhibiting flexibility. As she emphasizes, they survived as alternative forms of religiosity that focused on sheik-disciple

²⁸ Derin Terzioğlu, "Sufis in the Age of State Building and Confessionalization", 12.

relations and avoided formal institutionalization, yet remained active in social life, allowing them to maintain their functionality in the modern period. Instead of turning the orders into modern state institutions, he positioned them within the Sultan's patronage system. This is a typical example of the structure that Chic emphasizes, "centering on sheik-disciple relations and avoiding formal institutionalization". Therefore, Abdulhamid II's policy of Sufi orders, instead of turning them into subordinate institutions of the state, ensured that they retained their functionality as flexible social networks. This approach enabled the orders to both preserve their traditional character and play political and social roles in the modern period.

1.5 Pioneering studies on the state-*tarikats* relations in the Ottoman Empire

The relationship between state and *tarikats* has been a subject of academic interest throughout time, resulting in a vast body of literature comprising books, articles, theses, and various surveys, as well as incorporating different methodologies.²⁹ One of these approaches is the essentialist/traditionalist approach, which defines *tarikats* as institutionalized Sufi practices that systematize the esoteric dimensions of Islam. This view argues that religious orders represent an unchanging spiritual truth, differing only formally in accordance with historical and cultural conditions.³⁰ The

²⁹ Please see, H. Adams Gibbons, *The Foundation of Ottoman Empire: A History of the Ottomans up to the death of Beyazid I*, (The Century Co, 1916); Fuat Köprülü, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Kuruluşu*, (Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1959); Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire 1300-1650*, (ISIS Press, 1990); Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: Construction of the Ottoman State*, (California University Press, 1997).

³⁰ Please see, Mustafa Kara, *Metinlerle Osmanlılarda Tasavvuf ve Tarikatler*, (Sır Yayıncılık, 1990) and *Din, Hayat ve Sanat Açısından Tekkeler ve Zaviyeler* (Dergah Yayınları, 1999); Covering a broad timeframe from the 14th century to the 20th century, Kara's work offers essential insights into Sufi orders. However, the neglect of historical conjecture limits the book's contribution of new assumptions to the field. The traditional perspective is evident in Kara's work, as he tends to view the Ottoman state's decline and the changing position of Sufi orders through a lens that is critical of modernizing reforms and nostalgic for traditional Islamic institutions.

historicist paradigm defines *tarikats* as socio-cultural institutions that emerged, transformed, and acquired different functions in a dynamic historical process, emphasizing that religious orders served a social integration function during periods when central authority weakened, were a tool for religious-cultural spread in colonization processes, and became an element of identity politics in the modern period.³¹ Within the framework of orientalist discourse, *tarikats* are defined as mystical and mysterious structures specific to the East. While the orientalist approach generally codes the orders as one of the reasons for the stagnation and backwardness of the Islamic world, in modern approaches, orders are addressed in a more complex framework as heterodox and syncretic elements of Islam or as anti-colonial resistance centers. Finally, the postmodern historiography has transformed the understanding of the relationship between Sufism and the state, recognizing it as a complex network of power that encompasses mutual negotiation, adaptation, and resistance, rather than merely a linear dynamic characterized by patronage or oppression. This perspective highlights the fluidity inherent in the interactions among sheiks, the disciple, and the state, challenges binary classifications such as orthodox versus heterodox, and reassesses the historical significance of marginalized groups by turning back to texts themselves.

Focusing on the contributions of pioneering historians in the field, a brief literature review ranging from traditionalists to modernists, will allow us to follow a postmodern historical perspective to explore the nexus between Sufi orders and the

³¹ İsmail Kara's studies are mostly based on a methodology that combines traditional document-based historiography with social and intellectual history approaches. See, *İslamcılarının Siyasi Görüşleri* (Dergah Yayınları, 2001). It presents a thought-provoking and pessimistic view of Sultan Abdulhamid II among Islamists, challenging not only his caliphate but also his religiosity.

state. It will also help us to better understand the still-debated subject, Neo-Sufism, referring to the changes and developments within Sufi orders in response to survival issues.

Research into Ottoman Sufism began in the 1970s and continues to be a significant area of inquiry. Particularly in the 1980s, the focus shifted from broad overviews to more specific regional studies. If early scholars viewed Sufi orders primarily through their spiritual practices, later researchers have expanded the approach, capturing a broader landscape of Sufi influence in Ottoman society. These scholarly endeavours are pivotal not only for providing insights into existing inquiries but also for engendering new lines of questioning within the academic discourse, by applying archival surveys.

The emergence of these studies at a late stage can be attributed to the fact that studying and understanding *tasavvuf* was limited to literary studies rather than social and political historical studies. Historical information about the *tarikats* in the first half of the 19th century has been relatively scarce as historians have primarily focused their research on earlier periods.

Ömer Lütfi Barkan has become a foundational figure in Turkish historiography, particularly in his analysis of the development of the Sufi orders in the Ottoman Empire. Barkan's seminal study, published in 1942, not only made a ground-breaking contribution to the field but also sparked further interest and research in the field by underscoring the pivotal role of Sufi dervishes in the colonization of newly conquered lands during the formative period of the Ottoman

state³². Barkan asserts that the relationship between the Ottoman dynasty and these Sufi dervishes was characterized by warmth and pragmatism in the early era. He highlights the active involvement of Sufi dervishes in the construction of settlement centers in abandoned or conquered territories, for which they were granted *vakıfs* (financial endowments) by the Sultans³³. These *vakıfs* later evolved into elaborate structures known as *tekkes* and *zaviyes*, “the tomb of the founder being the focal point of organization, a centre of veneration to which visitations are made³⁴”, providing accommodation, sustenance, and places of worship. Barkan's focus is on the colonization process and the pivotal role of *tekkes* as agents of colonization, with dervishes as the central figures. Barkan's scholarly work is distinguished by his use of analogies; for example, he compares colonizing dervishes to American pioneers and draws parallels to 20th century communist and Masonic organizations. This methodology reflects the nationalist historiography paradigm prevalent during his era. Barkan argues that, although the state allocated land and resources to the *tekkes*, these institutions played essential roles in promoting regional stability as well as in the processes of Islamization and Turkification in the newly conquered territories. Primarily based on documents and *vakıf* records, Barkan's empirical research provides a crucial foundation for understanding the historical developments of Sufi orders, which provided a basis for Western orientalist's attention and awareness of the subject, incorporating elements of the Orientalist perspective on the topic.

³² Ömer Lütü Barkan, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda bir İskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler; İstila Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zaviyeler”, 279-386.

³³ Ömer Lütü Barkan, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda...”, 285.

³⁴ Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders of Islam*, 179.

Building on Barkan's insights, Franz Babinger asserted that dervishes held significant missionary roles and influenced all levels of society, from commoners to members of the elite. However, he employs a deterministic approach in his study by validating different *tarikats* as homogeneous structures. Therefore, Babinger's analyses can be characterized as an epitome of the Orientalist framework, approaching it from a reductionist and Eurocentric perspective.

This approach has drawn criticism from M. Fuat Köprülü, who, in his unfinished article series "Anadolu'da İslamiyet (Islam in Anatolia)"³⁵, critiques Babinger's methodology for oversimplifying and categorizing the complex religious structures of Eastern societies, a tendency typical of the Western Orientalist tradition. In his work, which adopts a historicist and sociological perspective, Köprülü examines Anatolian history within a comprehensive context. His analysis seeks to understand events within their specific circumstances and evaluates Sufi movements during the Islamization process of Anatolia through the lens of historical records. Köprülü emphasizes that Sufi movements should not be examined in isolation but rather in relation to their surrounding environments and regions. Within this framework, he investigates Sufi movements and Sufism in Anatolian cities during the Seljuk period as two distinct movements, along with their derivatives, which include *Sunni* and heterodox structures.

³⁵ He argued his themes and published his response in three articles. The first of these articles by Fuat Köprülü, "New Paths of Islamic Research" (Parts I and II), *Istanbul Darülfünun Faculty of Letters Journal*, Vol. 2, Issue. 3, 188–221. The second, "A View of the Religion of Anatolian History after the Turkish Invasion and the Sources of This History" (Parts III and VI), *Istanbul Darülfünun Faculty of Letters Journal*, Vol. 2, Issue. 4, 281–311. The third, "After the Turkish Invasion" (Part VII), *Istanbul Darülfünun Faculty of Letters Journal*, Vol. 2, Issue. 6, 457–486. These articles were also published separately at that time.

One should cite his seminal book *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar* (The First Sufis in Turkish Literature), in which he argued some of the topics from the article mentioned above, Fuat Köprülü discusses that dervish orders played significant roles as educational and religious centers within the Ottoman Empire. Particularly following the 13th century, these religious orders experienced transformations akin to those experienced by other societal institutions. With the expansion of the empire's borders, these orders emerged as pivotal establishments in the peripheries, serving diverse functions, including representing the Sultan and his sovereignty in remote regions. Notably, despite adherence to a unified framework of Islamic religious law, these orders began to manifest substantial diversity in their organizational practices and regional influence. Although this comprehensive and historical understanding, put forward by Köprülü, has been a valuable resource for many researchers studying Sufi movements and orders in the Ottoman Empire, it has not prevented the emergence of orientalist perspectives, such as those of Irene Melikoff. In contrast to earlier studies, Irene Melikoff posits that the heterodoxy of Turkish Islam can be traced back to Shamanism among nomadic communities with strong ties to their traditional beliefs³⁶, reflecting a determinist and limited framework regarding the subject.

The release of Spencer Trimingham's book *The Sufi Orders in Islam* in 1971 marked a pivotal moment in the exploration of Sufism and the Sufi orders in its era³⁷. This comprehensive work explores the doctrinal and devotional aspects of the Sufi orders, drawing on extensive information valuable from an anthropological

³⁶ Irene Melikoff, *Hacı Bektaş Efsaneden Gerçeğe*, çev. Turan Alptekin, (Cumhuriyet Kitapları, 1999).

³⁷ J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, (Oxford University Press, 1971).

standpoint. It primarily relies on the author's observations and secondary sources such as the works of orientalist researchers like E. E. Evans-Pritchard and A. Le Chatelier, rather than direct Ottoman archival documents. Nevertheless, Trimingham sheds light on the revival of Sufi orders during the reign of Abdulhamid II, and attempts to explain how the sheiks of these Sufi orders influenced Abdulhamid II's religious policies and how they played roles in Pan-Islamist movements.

The late 20th century saw a move away from viewing *tarikats* as signs of 'decline', towards understanding their complex social and cultural roles. During this time, there was a growing interest in studying the Sufi orders. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, a profound Turkish historian, have made significant contributions to the field, particularly in his studies of Ottoman Sufism, Sufi sheiks, Anatolian *tekkes* (Sufi lodges), and the heterodoxy of Islam in Turkish territories, through a historical methodology, thereby applying archival documents and focusing on relationship between the *tarikats* and social transformation. Inspired by Köprülü's discourse, Ocak expanded this perspective to encompass the social and political roles of Sufi orders. He underscores the syncretic nature of Turkish heterodoxy, highlighting the widespread acceptance of Sufi Islam among the Turkish populace³⁸. Ocak further delves into the missionary role of the dervishes and their *tarikats* in advocating for and converting individuals to Islam.

Some early studies worth to mention about the Sufi orders and the *tarikats*, such as the study by Carl W. Ernst³⁹ and Raymond Lifchez⁴⁰. Others focused on specific geographic regions of the Islamic world, like the work of F. Jong⁴¹, while

³⁸ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, "Introduction", XV- XXXV.

³⁹ Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden*, (SUNY Press, 1992).

⁴⁰ Raymond Lifchez, *The Dervish Lodge*, (University of California Press, 1992).

⁴¹ F. De Jong, *Turuq and Turuq-Linked Organizations*, (Brill, 1978).

some delved into individual Sufi orders, such as the works of Alexandre Popovic & Thierry Zarcone⁴², and Sureiya Faruqi's⁴³ particular interest in the Bektashis in Anatolia. All of these works approached their subjects as historical phenomena, with a particular emphasis on the social, cultural, and political aspects of the Sufi orders. They rejected the old view of *tarikats* as a sign of 'decline' and, instead, presented a new understanding of *tarikats*, highlighting their symbiosis and the various roles they played as instruments of Islamization, social integration, and cultural transformation, among other things.

Among them, Frederick De Jong, Professor of Islamic Languages and Cultures at Utrecht University, had a deep fascination with the multifaceted dimensions of the organization and institutionalization of Islamic mysticism. His comprehensive exploration delved into the political engagement of the leaders of Sufi orders and their members. He meticulously analysed the promulgations of the regulations for the *tarikats* and the *tekkes*, shedding light on their history and content. While focusing on the transformation of the *tarikats* in Egypt, De Jong compellingly articulated the distinct administrative arrangements that delineated the organization of Sufi orders. Referring to the 19th century as the 'age of qadam,' he illuminated the administration of the Sufi orders⁴⁴. The principle of 'qadam' manifested itself as an administrative regulation defining the rights of orders to operate exclusively in some geographical regions. Having said that, this territorial principle facilitated the integration of Sufi institutions with the state mechanism and provided a formal

⁴² Marc Gaborieau, Alexandre Popovic & Thierry Zarcone, *Naqshbandis, Cheminements et Situation Actuelle d'un Ordre Mystique Musulman*, (ISIS Press, 1990).

⁴³ See Suraia Faruqi, *Anadolu'da Bektaşilik*, (Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2003). and S. Faruqi, *Peasants, dervishes, and traders in the Ottoman Empire*, (Variorum Reprints, 1986).

⁴⁴ Frederic De Jong, *Turuq and Turuq-Linked Institutions in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, 190.

framework determining the areas of authority of the orders. This analytical framework, put forward by De Jong, is critically important in understanding the transition of Sufi orders from informal structures to formal institutions. His thought-provoking evaluations on the subject, in contrast to Trimingham's, demonstrate a deeply critical perspective, also providing a comparative perspective for understanding similar processes in different regions of the Ottoman Empire.

Research on Sufi orders has recently undergone significant development, with a historical focus on exploring the phases of *tarikats* by a notable group of historians, worth citing here; Hamid Algar, Butrus Abu-Manneh, and Martin van Bruinessen.

Hamid Algar has examined the relations between the Khalidi-Naqshbandiyya order and the state, particularly after the Tanzimat reforms. He argues that “there was no consistent pattern of royal favour” towards Sufi orders by the Ottoman rule.⁴⁵ In fact, the Khalidis were involved in several instances of protest against Ottoman rule, even under Sultan Abdulhamid II. This illustrates that Sufi orders had their own discourses and political views, and they acted accordingly. Algar illustrates that the Sufi tradition has proven to be inaccessible to law and regulation. It is essential to note that he is referring to major central orders, such as the Khalidi-Naqshbandi order, which managed to survive even after the prohibition of *tekkes* and *zaviyes* after 1925.

In the 1990s, historian Butrus Abu-Manneh has written numerous articles about the role of *Sunni*-Orthodox Islam in the Ottoman Empire from 1826 to 1876⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ Hamid Algar, “Devotional Practices of the Khalidi Naqshbandis of Ottoman Turkey,” 212.

⁴⁶ Among his articles, “The Islamic Roots of Gülhane Rescript”, *Die Welt des Islam*, New Ser., No. 34, Issue 2. (Nov., 1994), 173-203. “The Naqshbandiyya- Mujaddidiyya in the Ottoman Lands in the Early 19th Century”, *Die Welt des Islam*, New Ser., Bd. 22, Nr. 1/ 4.

In his research, he concluded that the tendency towards *Sunni*-Orthodox Islam was strengthened in Istanbul since the 18th century, particularly following the rise of Sultan Selim III in 1789. This was accompanied by an increase in the number of Sufi lodges, primarily of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order and its branches. Abu-Manneh challenges the traditional views on Ottoman modernization and reform procedures, suggesting that they are questionable and require reconsideration⁴⁷. While it has been widely accepted that Western powers mainly drove reforms and that reforms were motivated by military defeats, Abu-Manneh points to the more complex situation of the Ottoman Empire in the 18th century, which necessitated reforms. He argues that the desire to modify the army, improve the government, and address social and political motivations were all factors that led to the introduction of reforms. In his article "The Islamic Roots of Gülhane Rescript," Abu-Manneh highlights that reformists were motivated by a determination to reinstate justice, reinforce the rule of Sharia and law in the state, and end arbitrary rule and despotic governments, which were considered to be the reasons for the empire's weakness. His research on Sufi orders also sheds light on the early 19th century and makes significant contributions to the field. Additionally, Abu-Manneh's work provides a starting point for research on Sufi dervishes during the reign of Abdulhamid II, particularly in relation to the missionary activities of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiya order, which was carried to Istanbul by Muslim "missionaries" from India and had a significant

(1982), 1-36. "The Roots of the Ascendancy of Ali and Fu'ad Paşas at the Porte (1855-1871)" *Studies on Islam and The Ottoman Empire in the 19th Century (1826-1876)*, İstanbul, İSİS, 2001, 115- 124. "The Sultan and the Bureaucracy: Anti-Tanzimat Concepts of Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim Paşa" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 3, (Aug., 1990): 257-274.

⁴⁷ Butrus Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th Century (1826-1876)*, 7.

impact on the relations between the Ottoman Empire and Muslim communities in the rest of the world⁴⁸.

Anthropologist Martin van Bruinessen's work, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*, stands out as one of the pivotal studies of eastern Anatolia during the Ottoman period. It offers valuable insights into the era following 1876, with a primary focus on *tarikats*-related rebellions spanning approximately a century, from the early 19th to the early 20th century⁴⁹. The author identifies movements that opposed colonial authority and others that rebelled against specific government measures or responded to general economic deterioration and oppression. His study serves to elucidate the Abdulhamid II period by providing comprehensive information about the *tekke*-state relationship of the era, as well as delineating the social and cultural roles of *tekkes* and *tarikats*.

Religious studies scholar Elizabeth Sirriyeh makes a significant contribution to the academic literature through her profound investigation of the relationship between Sufi leaders and Abdulhamid II, particularly in the execution of Sultan Hamid's caliphate policy and Pan-Islamism during the late 19th century. Utilizing a historical-analytical method, she elucidates how Abdulhamid II exerted his influence in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire through his affiliation with Ebu'l Huda es-Seyyadi, the Rufaiyya sheik, as a response to Western colonial influence in the region. Although modernists have often characterized Sheik Ebu'l Huda as a reactionary, the author's depiction of the sheik offers a more nuanced understanding of his multifaceted religio-political role, based on archival sources and the sheik's

⁴⁸ Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Naqsbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya in the Ottoman Lands in the Early 19th Century," 1-36.

⁴⁹ Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*, (Zed Books, 1992).

own writings. According to Sirriyeh, Ebu'l Huda functioned not merely as an instrument of the Sultan but also actively pursued a strategy to promote the Rufaiyya order and defend genuine Sufi Islam by enriching the discourse regarding the origins of modern Islamic movements. Although Ebu'l Huda's active role in politics brings to mind the neo-Sufism paradigm, Sirriyeh gives an obvious answer to this by illustrating Ebu'l Huda and his supporters as traditionalists, "who showed no interest in scientific and technological advances, instead mainly concerned with the defence of Sufism, especially the fold manifestations in the form of visits to shrines and praying for the intercession of *awliya*."⁵⁰

Numerous significant studies focusing on the relationship between the state and Sufi orders have been conducted by Itzhak Weissmann, who researched Islamist movements in the Middle East and South Asia. His book, *Taste of Modernity*, uncovers the fundamental tensions that the Naqshbandiyya-Halidiyya and Ekberiyya orders, prominent representatives of the reformist tradition in late Ottoman Damascus, faced in their relationship with the state.⁵¹ Weissmann's work transcends the simplistic views often found in existing literature, illustrating that Sufi thought was not merely an apolitical spiritual discipline; instead, it was a dynamic tradition that responded to social and political changes, while also forming complex interactions with state power. His employment of the conceptual framework defined by Albert Hourani, known as the "politics of notables," provides a basis to argue that religious elites in the region acted as proactive strategists rather than passive recipients in their engagement with political authority, making a crucial contribution

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defence, Rethinking, and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World*, 80.

⁵¹ Itzhak Weissmann, *Taste of Modernity*, (Brill, 2001).

to the literature. In this respect, Wiessmann's work helps us consider that even within a single order, different branches can develop various strategies in their relations with the state, ranging from cooperation to opposition. As seen in the Damascus example, it allows us to consider that Sufi orders were significant actors in the shaping of the modernization process, developing strategies to strengthen their own social base and balance their access to political authority.

Another article rejecting the traditional "modernity vs. tradition" dichotomy was written by Brian Silverstein in 2010. As a historian, Silverstein's study, "Sufism and Modernity in Turkey," offers a comprehensive analysis of the structural transformation that Ottoman Sufi orders underwent from the 19th century onward.⁵² It illustrates how these orders adapted to both state authority and local dynamics. Silverstein's ethnographic research focused on the Gümüşhanevi Naqshibandi community, detailing its transition from traditional *tekke*-based structures to organizational models based on personal loyalty and social networks. This shift occurred alongside the strengthening of central authority and the realization of bureaucracy initiated by the Tanzimat reforms. As highlighted in the article, this transformation also affected the Rufaiyya and Shadeliyya orders, particularly during the reign of Abdulhamid II. It led to a restructuring of relationships centered around personal disciple-murşid bonds, community solidarity, and the formation of informal communities, rather than relying solely on physical spaces like *tekkes*. Silverstein argues that this model's survival in the form of foundations and congregations during the Republican period, even after the bans imposed in 1925, can be attributed to the

⁵² Brian Silverstein, "Sufism and Modernity in Turkey: From the Authenticity of Experience to the Practice of Discipline", *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam*, Martin Van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell (ed.), (I. B. Tauris, 2007), 39-60. For more information, please see Brian Silverstein, *Islam and Modernity in Turkey*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

fact that these orders had learned over the previous century to function as social networks anchored in personal authority rather than traditional institutional identities. Thus, Sufism did not become a mere focal point of resistance to modernity, as noted in the book, not did it vanish completely. Instead, it adapted integrating modern administrative techniques and evolving into new forms of grounded in ethical discipline between state patronage and local authority that the Rufaiyya and Shadeliyya communities also established during Abdulhamid II's reign.

Knut S. Vikor is another historian who has made a significant contribution to the literature with his study examining the state-*tekke* relations in the context of colonialism. Vikor examines the multidimensional relationship that extends beyond the simple dichotomy of resistance and cooperation in his original article, "Sufism and Colonialism," by claiming that the state and Sufi orders developed their relations on pragmatic grounds.⁵³ In contrast, Sufi orders spread with the support of the state; the states also benefited from the social influence of the orders as a source of legitimacy. The author also posits that some *tarikats* were integrated into the colonial economy and became economic actors, as exemplified by the Muradiyya order. Others established political parties to pursue their interests as political actors, as in the case of the Hatmiyya order in Sudan. Critically evaluating colonial publications, Vikor critiques the Orientalist discourse in French reports, which categorized the orders as either obedient or rebellious, and argues that they paradoxically expanded even under pressure, thereby leveraging the means of communication that developed under colonial control. Vikor's study is valuable in that it demonstrates the pragmatic

⁵³ Knut S. Vikor, "Sufism and Colonialism", *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 212-232. For more information, Takyettin Karakaya, "Sömürgecilik Karşıtı Sufi Direniş ve Başlıca Nitelikleri", *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 31/2 (Aralık 2022), 625-638.

character of Sufi orders across a broad spectrum and offers a perspective on how these orders in the region managed to maintain their existence as both a religious and economic force, especially under the colonial powers that marked the reign of Abdulhamid II.

To understand the impact of colonial powers in the late 19th century, the perspectives of Western diplomats and travellers towards Sufi orders provide crucial information as well as a rich record of Orientalist discourse. Islamic studies scholar Harry T. Norris's study on the role of Sufi orders, such as the Bektashiyya and Mevleviyya, in constructing national identity in Albania and Bosnia, provides valuable insights into our understanding of the relationships between *tekke* and state, as well as the interplay between religion and nationalism. By examining texts and letters written by Western diplomats and travellers, Norris argues that the 'popular Sufism' at the end of the 19th century and in the early years of the 20th century, was viewed with a mystified curiosity and intense fear and suspicion by those people serving as diplomats in the territories under colonial control. What has caught my attention in the book is his utilization of the concept of "islamophobia" for the perception conducted by Western diplomats regarding Sufi brotherhoods as Muslim fanaticism. Norris comments on the letter written in 1873, from M. R. Wood, British diplomat in Tunisia, to Earl Granville, Foreign Minister of Britain at that time, and posits that "this letter is an example of the paranoia – today we may call it Islamophobia – which was aired in Whitehall circles at that time".⁵⁴

Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904) was another notable book authored by historian

⁵⁴ Harry T. Norris, *Popular Sufism in Eastern Europe: Sufi brotherhoods and the dialogue with Christianity and 'Heterodoxy'*, 11-12.

Julian Clancy-Smith in 1997.⁵⁵ Focusing on marginalized figures in North African history promises to change the way we think about the turbulent history of North Africa during 19th century, and it allegedly succeeds. Based on extensive research in the United states, France, and North Africa between 1978-1992, this work presents a meticulously documented and detailed account of using unconventional local materials, including archival sources, eulogies, correspondence from local leaders, and popular hearsay. Its interdisciplinary approach, bringing together geography, political economy, sociology, religion, and literature is its most crucial contribution to the field, proving a holistic perspective on the region. Clancy-Smith argues that there was a dynamic and enriching process between different interpretations of Islam in pre-colonial North Africa, with a delicate balance between the urban Arab scripturalist interpretations of Islam and the rural Berber mystical Sufi belief, which was ruined by Muslim reformists during colonialism. She highlights the Rahmaniyya order's resistance to French intervention, proving a rare example of female authority. Her thesis suggests not only French intervention but also the reactive policies of Abdulhamid II may have contributed to this process. In the face of a colonial threat, the Sultan adopted a more centralized and interventionist approach within the framework of Pan-Islamist policies in order not to lose the Muslim population in the region, which might have limited local Sufi autonomy.

These contributions and more will be discussed in the following chapters, drawing on diverse sources to contextualize Abdulhamid II's engagement with the Sufi orders within a broader framework, thereby enhancing our understanding of the intersection between religion and politics in the late Ottoman period.

⁵⁵ Julia Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)*, (University of California Press, 1997).

1.6 Sufism's metaphysical and social dimensions and their impact on the late Ottoman world

It is crucial to grasp the metaphysical facet of Islam, particularly in relation to the influential Sufi orders. These spiritual movements within Islam delved into esoteric aspects of religion, guided by revered Sufi leaders to help individuals forge a deeper connection with the divine. The orders also served as hubs of religious learning and knowledge, extending their influence to provide vital social services like feeding the underprivileged, offering shelter to travellers, and collaborating with local communities to foster mutual support. Through these activities, they played a pivotal role not only in preserving culture and fostering social unity within the community but also in the conversion of Turks to Islam. According to Şerif Mardin, unlike orthodox Islam, Sufi groups offered an alternative path to spiritual fulfilment, and their impact among the general populace was profound. "Sufism lived alongside and intertwined with official Islam as an alternative Islamic realm, as its negative."⁵⁶

When Central Asian Turks were converting to Islam, a complex adaptation process they had gone through, which was more than simply accepting or rejecting the features of Islam. The traditional narrative suggests an indicative story, stating that they did not readily accept the features of Islam, which did not fit their nomadic structures. This led them to champion Sufism, which was the closest to the beliefs that were mixed with Shamanism from Central Asia. However, it was a more complicated process because it had different nuances due to the regional, social, and cultural environment of people. Formulating this process as a dichotomy between heterodox Sufism, embraced by nomads, and orthodox Islam, practiced by urban

⁵⁶ Şerif Mardin, *Din ve İdeoloji*, 91.

dwellers, oversimplifies the complex and fluid religious and cultural landscape of Anatolia. It rather had multiple interpretations and coexistence, as well as conflicts, which shaped the founding periods of the Ottoman Empire. It was through this dialogue and engagement that hybridized expressions emerged, defying rigid categorization and providing a more nuanced understanding of early Ottoman religious conflicts and coexistence as a complex, multifaceted struggle. However, one should acknowledge the multiplicity of positions, the situational fluidity of religious identities, and the power dynamics. Under these circumstances, Sufism gradually began to institutionalize, never completed, and took the shape of *tarikat* with certain rules and regulations structured with a supreme spiritual leader, followed by various levels of deputies and disciples, who are connected to each other through specific rituals of acceptance under the shelter of dedicated spaces such as *tekkes* *zaviyes* or *dergahs*, served as centers of spiritual exercises, rituals, devotional techniques, as well as religious education to maintain and pass down specific texts, oral traditions and esoteric knowledge. These *tekkes* also provided hospitality and community maintenance functions, often supported through endowments and donations, thereby establishing formal relationships with political authorities, sometimes acting as intermediaries between state and society. In modern times, the supposed opposition between orthodox and heterodox forms of Islam has dissolved and evolved to the point where they mutually constitute networks of legitimacy that function as part of the legitimate state mechanisms. Thus, it gained a network, connecting people and the state to each other, pursuing an organizational model based on personal commitment and social networks rather than classical institutional structures.

Even today, this interconnectedness, fluid experiences, and rich spectrum of Islamic expressions, rather than the rigid binary of heterodox and orthodox, continue to play a profound role in our lives. The boundaries between formal Islamic doctrines and spiritual practices are continually negotiated and reformed in response to context, individual differences, and shifting power dynamics. While some codified Islamic interpretations determine the rules governing the relationship between God and people of faith, Sufi elements also come to the fore in our relationship with the world. As Pierre Hedot posits, “the practice of spiritual exercises ... not as a theoretical construct, but as a method for training people to live and to look at the world in a new way”.⁵⁷ He suggests a perspective that disrupts the dichotomy between belief and deviation and constitute alternative epistemological frameworks for individuals to navigate their existence, produce multiple ways against challenging daily problems, thereby engaging with the environment that transcend simplistic categorization and essentialist assumptions about religious identity.

In the tapestry of Turkish spiritual life, the influence of poems embodied by figures such as Yunus Emre, Pir Sultan Abdal, and Kaygusuz Abdal continues to offer profound remedies for the existential crises of modern societies, drawing on rich Sufi wisdom. Unburdened by rigid orthodoxy, their verses embody multifocal and timeless solutions that speak directly (and indirectly) to today’s challenges of alienation and materialism. The enduring appeal of Mevlana Rumi’s writings in the 13th century should be understood not as textual resources that articulate modes of sociality and selfhood but rather as providing nourishment for the souls seeking authentic connection in an increasingly fragmented world.

⁵⁷ Pierre Hedot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, 107.

In the vibrant realm of the Ottoman Empire, the mystical essence of Sufism held this powerful and independent sway over society, with diverse traditions embedded within complex power networks. From this perspective, texts addressed to Abdulhamid II, which are the subjects of this thesis, should be understood not as simple prescriptions of Sufi sheiks but as strategic discourses that reflected and constituted intricate relationships of patronage and legitimation. These texts both navigated the positioning of Sufi orders amid the Sultan's Pan-Islamic policies and modernization efforts, while also negotiating spiritual authority in response to evolving imperial power structures and colonialism.

Recognizing the significance of both hierarchical and spiritual influence of Sufi orders over communities affiliated with, Sultan Abdulhamid II strategically engaged and leveraged their influence and the authority of their leaders to consolidate his absolute rule and assert the dominance of the Ottoman state in both Anatolia and Arab territories. I contend that the Hamidian regime actively participated in mutually constitutive relationships with Sufi orders in order to generate a cohesive and loyal subject under his governance, by presenting himself as both the Caliph – exemplifying divine authority – and the Sultan – exerting temporal power.

Beyond their cultural significance, in the wake of international events involving the Ottoman Empire, including Armenian incidents in the 1890s, victory of the Ottoman Greek War in 1897 and the success of the Hejaz Railway project demonstrated a shared consciousness in the Muslim world, highlighting unity and common good, Sufi leaders played a pivotal role during Abdulhamid II's reign, effectively harnessing religious symbolism to galvanize widespread support among

Muslims across the Ottoman territories and beyond, particularly in opposition to separatist movements⁵⁸.

I have chosen to delve into the Islamic and Sufi policies of Sultan Abdulhamid II and their impact on the Islamic revivalism in the Ottoman polity of the time. While Abdulhamid II is often linked with Pan-Islamism, the influence and perspective of the Sufi orders on his politics have been largely disregarded. The historiography of Abdulhamid II has seen a shift from bipolar studies to more nuanced and multi-sided perceptions of his era. Engin Deniz Akarlı's unpublished 1976 doctoral thesis emphasized continuity over a break in the discussion of modernization, leading to a more balanced approach to understanding the reign of Abdulhamid II. As an extension of his doctoral thesis, he continued the approach in this thesis in an article titled "Friction and Discord Within the Ottoman Government Under Abdulhamid II (1876-1909)" published in the *Boğaziçi University Journal*. He considered the reign of Abdulhamid II not as a break from the Tanzimat, but as a continuation of the history of 19th century Ottoman modernization. This approach offers the opportunity to evaluate the period of Abdulhamid more complex and nuanced, rather than viewing it solely as a "despotic regime." The conflicts regarding authority and the deterioration of the authority structure in the article are part of this continuity approach.⁵⁹

In light of these works, this thesis attempts to transcend the old approach that evaluated Sufi orders as passive instruments, in examining their relationship with Abdulhamid II. It aims to challenge the narrative which suggests that Sultan

⁵⁸ Muhammed Tandoğan, *Afrika'da Sömürgecilik ve Osmanlı Siyaseti (1800-1922)*, 16.

⁵⁹ Engin Deniz Akarlı, "Friction and Discord Within the Ottoman Government under Abdulhamid II (1876-1909)", *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dergisi*, Vol.7, 1979, 3-26.

Abdulhamid II utilized Sufi orders as a crucial element of his pan-Islamic policies, effectively transforming these mystical brotherhoods into instruments of state power and social control. It argues that this narrative overlooks the Sufi order's active role. Through the examination of the writings of two prominent Sufi sheiks, particularly Sheik Muhammad Zafir and Sheik Ebu'l-Huda, this study reveals how these texts marked a significant shift in state-Sufi relations, both empowering and constraining the role of Sufi orders, as well as reframing the perspective of the Sultan in the eyes of people. This research also questions the conventional narratives of Ottoman decline and religious conservatism, demonstrating how mystical traditions, political pragmatism, and modernization efforts in the late Ottoman Empire experienced a complex interplay of actors through ongoing process of accommodation, resistance, and strategic alignment.

In this respect, the thesis encompasses two primary objectives. The first aim is to give a short review of the historical journey of the Sufi orders since the foundation of the Ottoman Empire, in order to better understand the dynamics experienced during the late 19th century. The second goal is to conduct a detailed analysis of the writings of Sheik Muhammad Zafir and Sheik Ebu'l-Huda in order to discern the representation of Sultan Abdulhamid in their eulogies.

The second chapter provides an in-depth exploration of how Sufi orders were impacted by the significant reforms of Sultan Mahmud II and the implementation of bureaucratization for modernization, with a particular emphasis on the effects of 19th century reforms such as the Tanzimat, thereby examining the administration of the pious foundations and the extent of the *tekkes'* influence, with specific reference to regulatory establishments.

The third chapter delves into how Abdulhamid II strategically utilized the Sufi orders in his political endeavours in order to promote unity among his Muslim community in the face of European imperialism in remote land of the empire, where increasing British and French tried to transplant Abdulhamid II's caliphal and temporal power, which he sought to consolidate through Pan-Islamism as a way of his governmentality.

The forth chapter evaluates the identities and personalities of sheiks Muhammad Zafir and Ebu'l-Huda to assess their significance in Abdulhamid II's reign and how their characters influenced their writings.

The fifth chapter is dedicated to analysis of Ottoman-era eulogies through J. L. Austin's Speech Theory which reveals how Sufi Sheiks Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir employed language not merely to describe political reality but to actively deconstruct and construct it, by carefully selected religious terminology, Quranic citations, and metaphors they deployed in order to legitimize the Sultan's authority by positioning obedience to him within a sacred frameworks, thereby allowing these texts effectively mediate imperial authority to Arab populations through trusted religious figures who transformed cultural and religious adherence into demonstrations of political loyalty during a period when Abdulhamid II was emphasizing his caliphal authority.

CHAPTER 2

THE RESILIENCE OF THE SUFI ORDERS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The existing body of research on the Sufi orders in the Ottoman world reveals the resilience of Sufi orders within the context of the Ottoman Empire. This research primarily focuses on the historical context of Sufism and Sufi orders, as well as the interplay between religion and politics, highlighting their diverse cultural and social contributions, as well as their flexibility and adaptability. This literature also shows the multifaceted relationship between Sufi orders and the Ottoman Empire.

Scholars have contributed to a nuanced understanding of the role and influence of Sufi orders within the Ottoman Empire. They focus on the historical, political, and cultural significance of Sufi orders within the Ottoman Empire. Framing their analysis within the context of the interplay between Sufism and state authority, they illustrate how these mystical orders crossed challenges, contributed to social cohesion, and influenced the broader narrative of Islamic civilization in the empire. Their works contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the resilience and adaptability of Sufi orders during a transformative period in Ottoman history.

2.1 A brief summary of the historical evolution of Sufi orders in the Ottoman Empire

In their analysis of Islamic civilization, W. Barthold and Fuad Köprülü link Anatolian Sufism to the Central Asian Turkic tribes' worldview and shamanistic beliefs. Sunni supremacy evolved in time as tribes settled and moved toward a unified interpretation of Islam. However, both settled and nomadic communities identified themselves with diverse versions of Islam, which led to several religious

orders to emerge and get integrated into the Ottoman social structure.⁶⁰ The Ottoman Empire emerged in the 13th century in a political atmosphere where Sufi orders had already established a particular influence. According to John Curry, the Mongol destruction of the Abbasids paved the way for the multiplicity of political rulers in Anatolia, including powerful Sufi orders that flourished after the Seljuks' decline.⁶¹ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak exemplifies this intricate dynamic by exemplifying the *Vefai* order, containing both orthodox and heterodox elements – those that diverge from traditional Sunni beliefs, such as the participation of men and women in rituals together in Ebu'l Vefa's teachings.⁶² One of the prominent figures of this order was Sheik Edibali, who served as a local administrator in the Bilecik region and issued respected legal *fetvas*. Various historical accounts tell us that Sheik Edebali and his Sufi connections played a pivotal role in the foundation myth of the Ottoman Empire.⁶³

As the Ottomans emerged as a frontier principality, they inherited an environment dominated by powerful Sufi leaders. Ottoman rulers relied on charismatic Sufi sheiks, known as *abdals*, with nomadic lifestyles. Rıza Yıldırım reminds us that these Sufis played crucial roles during the Ottoman expansion in Anatolia and the Balkans.⁶⁴ Yıldırım also notes that military victories provided Sufi leaders with granted private property and allowed them to establish more lodges in

⁶⁰ W. Barthold ve M. Fuad Köprülü, *İslam Medeniyeti Tarihi*, 187-192.

⁶¹ John J. Curry, "Sufism in the Ottoman Empire," 399.

⁶² Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, "Türkiye Selçuklular Döneminde ve Sonrasında Vefai Tarikatı (Vefaiyye), Türkiye Popüler Tasavvuf Tarihine Farklı Bir Yaklaşım," 111-154.

⁶³ See Halil İnalcık, "How to Read Ashik Pasha-Zade's History", 139-156; Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 132.

⁶⁴ Rıza Yıldırım, "Dervishes, Waqfs and Conquest: Notes on Early Ottoman Expansion in Thrace," 23-40.

newly annexed territories.⁶⁵ However, the relation between sheiks and the Ottoman authorities has not always been peaceful. The dynamics between the Sufi orders and the Ottoman authorities evolved over time, as religious orders could support or become involved in claims to the throne, thereby increasing their social and political power.⁶⁶ Cemal al-Halveti, for example, was commissioned by the Sultan to pray for those suffering from the plague. His tragic death led his branch of the Halvetiyya order to become firmly established in the capital.⁶⁷ One should also mention the emergence of the Kadızadeli movement in the 17th century, aiming at purifying Islam and targeting ‘heretical’ practices among Sufi orders. The Kadızadellis gained power during the reigns of IV Murad, Sultan Ibrahim, and IV Mehmed, striving to remove customs that diverged from the Qur'an and Sunnah.⁶⁸ The 17th century and beyond saw crucial changes in the Ottoman Sufi environment, with the emergence of new Sufi groups, including the Naqshibendiyya order, which increased its power beginning with the 18th century.⁶⁹

2.2 Institutional developments of Sufi orders in the 19th century

By the 19th century, prominent Sufi orders in the Ottoman world included the Naqshbandiyya, Kadiriyya, Rufaiyya, Bektasiyye, Halvetiyye, and others, each with distinct doctrines and practices. The administration of these orders evolved,

⁶⁵ Rıza Yıldırım, “Dervishes, Waqfs and Conquest: Notes on Early Ottoman Expansion in Thrace,” 24-25.

⁶⁶ Hasan Karataş, “The City as Historical Actor: The Urbanization and Ottomanization of the Halveti Sufi Order by the City of Amasya in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries,” 117-118.

⁶⁷ Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, *Türkiye’de Mezhepler ve Tarikatler*, 206.

⁶⁸ Şerif Mardin, *Türkiye’de Din ve Siyaset Makaleler 3*, 117-118.

⁶⁹ Ahmet Nezih Galitekin, ed. *Osmanlı Kaynaklarına Göre İstanbul Cami, Tekke, Medrese, Türbe, Hamam, Kütüphane, Matbaa, Mahalle ve Selatin İmaretleri*, 187-207.

reflecting their growing importance and public recognition.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the activities of Sufi orders were often depicted as eccentricities of Muslim culture or linked to political events such as rebellions. However, Sufi culture represents a significant component of Ottoman Muslim life, necessitating a thorough examination of its social and organizational conditions.

19th century witnessed important reform initiatives directed at Sufi orders. Particularly, Mahmud II's decision to abolish the Janissary corps had a profound impact on Sufi practices and organizational structures. Mahmud II's reforms began with military modernization and a more equitable taxation system, addressing corruption and inefficiencies in tax collection. His efforts aimed to curtail the influence of provincial elites and establish a more centralized governance structure. The abolition of the Janissaries in 1826 laid the groundwork for significant military and administrative reforms, heralding the Tanzimat era.⁷¹ His reforms also targeted the influence of religious powers, particularly within the *tekkes*. He issued edicts aimed at restructuring Sufi orders and enhancing state oversight, which transformed the authority of sheiks and redefined the status of Sufi orders within the state framework. These reforms included requirements for official diplomas for sheiks, bans on disobedient Sufis, and the closure of certain orders.⁷²

The decline in income levels among *tekkes* drove changes that decreased the visibility and influence of religious orders. The imposition of identity cards and special attire for dervishes aimed to standardize practices and enhance state control over religious groups. The administrative reforms facilitated a more regulated

⁷⁰ Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Empire 1700-1922*, (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁷¹ Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu, "Yenileşme Dönemi Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilatı," 561-576.

⁷² Mustafa Kara, "Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Tasavvuf ve Tarikatler," 982.

relationship between the state and Sufi orders, with significant implications for their social and political roles.⁷³

2.3 The Tanzimat era and the attempted bureaucratization of Sufism

The historical evolution of Sufi orders in the Ottoman Empire illustrates a dynamic interplay of independence and state control. Exploring the historical journey of the Mevleviyya order, Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı states that “Mevleviyya has been virtually a state institution since the 17th century.”⁷⁴ His comment highlights how certain Sufi orders had long functioned as integral components of Ottoman governance rather than merely autonomous religious organizations. One can mention here, Islamic philosopher Fazlur Rahman’s concept of “religion within religion,” implying the development of institutionalized religious structures that operate parallel to, and often in conjunction with, state authority.⁷⁵ In fact, the Mevleviyya order’s quasi-governmental status demonstrates that the multidimensional bonds between the state and *tarikats* were not a product of the 19th century reforms but rather represented the formalization and systemization of relationships that had evolved organically over centuries. This historical continuity explains why Ottoman administrative reforms could never fully bureaucratize or eliminate Sufi orders. Instead, they were attempting to regulate institutions that had already become embedded within the fabric of imperial governance itself.

The transformation of the relationship between the state and *tarikats* during the Tanzimat era (1839-1876) leads us to question the conventional narratives,

⁷³ Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*, 211.

⁷⁴ Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, *Mevlana’dan Sonra Mevlevilik*, 248.

⁷⁵ Fazlur Rahman, *İslam*, 219.

illustrating this era as a linear progress toward secularization. Drawing on the foundational work of scholars such as İlber Ortaylı, Butrus Abu Manneh, Spencer Trimingham, Christoph Neumann, and Şerif Mardin, one can illustrate how the Ottoman Empire's approach to Sufi orders has been incorporated into the expanding bureaucratic apparatus of the state, rather than the elimination of traditional religious authority.

Before the Tanzimat reforms, the Ottoman Empire experienced changes primarily driven by the visionary guidance of the Sultan. The Tanzimat reforms emerged as a groundbreaking force, representing structural, fundamental, and profound transformations compared to earlier ones, which were limited by the life span of the Sultans or the reformists. This pivotal era marked the shift of power from traditional ruling classes to a vibrant bureaucratic system, thereby ending the struggle between the *Bab-ı Ali* and *Divan-ı Humayun*. It reorganized the administration with a renewed sense of purpose at both the center and in the provinces, bringing the Ottoman state back. They were the regulations of “fine-tuning” of the administration of the Ottoman Empire. Selim Deringil asserts:

Concepts such as the legal equality of Muslim and non-Muslim, the rule of law, the state's guarantee to safeguard the lives, property and honor of its subjects, and above all the very fact that the state was publicly undertaking the honor these premises, were a new departure.⁷⁶

Yet, the very first sentence of the edict's emphasis on religion was evident, positing “it is evident that countries not governed by Şeriat cannot prevail.”⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains; Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876- 1909*, 9.

⁷⁷ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains; Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876- 1909*, 10.

This positioning, frequently interpreted as a contradiction, is not exclusive to the Ottoman Empire. The concept of confessionalization from above and the gradual nature of Ottoman sunnitization demonstrates that political authority consistently worked within Islamic frameworks rather than departing from them, even during periods of significant reform, as illustrated by Derin Terzioğlu.⁷⁸ The notion of sharia referenced here predominantly underscores Sunni Islam. The existence and gradual expansion of heterodox and heretical beliefs, as well as increasing numbers of conversions to Christianity, within the Ottoman realm compelled the state to adapt its legitimacy on an official level. The emphasis on the pre-eminence of sharia suggests that, despite the reforms' radical nature, the political authority was either hesitant or unwilling to distance itself entirely from the established framework of Islamic legitimacy. While the concepts of legal equality, the supremacy of law, and the state's commitment to protection, as articulated by Deringil, indeed constituted a novel paradigm in Ottoman political thought, the insistence on sharia stemmed from a necessity to root the legitimacy of these innovations within traditional Islamic precepts, thereby aiming to mitigate social resistance. It should be noted here that the sharia referred to here is none other than the Sunni Islam. This integration of *ulamas* and influential figures affiliated with Naqshibandiyya ideals into the Gülhane Edict exemplifies a broader historical pattern in Ottoman governance, as Derin Terzioğlu shows that "the consolidation of the Ottoman learned establishment as an integral part of the imperial apparatus" was crucial to sunnization, demonstrating how political authority absorbed and worked through religious institutions rather than

⁷⁸ Derin Terzioğlu, "How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion", 301-338.

bypassing them.⁷⁹ Terzioğlu argues that even in the 17th century, a period marked by significant transformation, there were extensive debates surrounding the process of Sunnification. These discussions engaged a variety of stakeholders, including not only the ulama but also Sufi sheiks and clergymen. Consequently, it is more appropriate to conceptualize these changes as a multifaceted process rather than a singular state-driven initiative. Terzioğlu states that the Ottoman administrative system inherently distributed religious authority, a situation that at times surpassed the control of the state. In this context, it becomes evident that these decisions were not made unilaterally by state authorities; rather, the state was compelled to collaborate with religious institutions to uphold Islamic legitimacy.

One of the driving forces of the Tanzimat was its ability to harness external influences, fostering a collective recognition of the need for modern regulations to govern the state and unify society. Mustafa Reşit Pasha recognized the transformative power of “civilization”, asserting that political, economic, and administrative reforms were crucial for the Ottoman state to stand firm against Western powers and reach the heights of contemporary civilization. While modernization and Westernization are often seen as synonymous, the focus of this thesis will be on modernization – a culture-neutral evolution that steered the Ottoman reform movement.⁸⁰ The term “modernization” is the most appropriate choice because the Ottoman reform movement centered on modernization, as the drive for reform was widely embraced across and demanded by Ottoman society, and the

⁷⁹ Derin Terzioğlu, “How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion”, 321-322.

⁸⁰ Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Modernization and Social Change*, 7.

reform process was not merely a form of “westernization” that risked alienating “traditional lines”.⁸¹

According to historian Butrus Abu-Manneh, another factor in grounding the Tanzimat and Islahat Edicts in Sunni Islamic principles was the involvement of the Naqshibendiyya order.⁸² Abu-Manneh argues that when Sultan Abdulmecid ascended to the throne, both the Palace and the Porte were under the influence of orthodox Islam, which provided eligible grounds for the Naqshibandiyya-Mujahiddiye order’s affiliation with significant political figures in the Palace and the Porte and maintained close connections with the Sultan. Notable individuals included Adile Sultan, Abdulmecid’s sister, Eyyubi Abdullah Efendi, the Qur’an reciter in the Palace, Mustafa Izzet, the Palace muezzin (the one who calls Muslims to prayer); and even the Valide Sultan, who was affected by the teachings of the Naqshibandiyya order, as the order encouraged adherence to sharia principles. Therefore, it can be argued that the Naqshibandiyya order sought to gain influence and prosperity through its sheiks and murids, aiming to ensure the supremacy of sharia within the state and thus promote justice and righteousness in the actions of state bureaucrats. In this context, during the preparation and declaration of the edict, the emphasis on protecting life, honor, and property also reflected the commands of Sufi Islam. Through promoting justice and the protection of honor and property, the Gulhane Edict emanated the ideals of Sufi Islam. It emphasized that justice ensured

⁸¹ Jen Hanssen, Thomas Philip, and Stefan Weber, eds, “Introduction: Towards a New Urban Paradigm”, 4.

⁸² Butrus Abu-Manneh, “The Islamic Roots of Gulhane Rescript,” *Die Welt Des Islam* 34, no. 2 (Nov 1994).

security, security fosters prosperity, and prosperity is essential for loyalty and devotion between the ruler and the community.⁸³ As Abu-Manneh posits as follows:

In this way, the Tanzimat Edict, infused with Sufi thought, reached out to the Ottoman populace with the intention of preserving the empire's legacy, and is seen as a prerequisite for loyalty and devotion to the ruler and the community.⁸⁴

In other words, the Tanzimat Edict was designed not only as an administrative and legal form but also as a comprehensive legitimacy project nourished by Islamic values aiming to rebuild the Ottoman social order.

Although the Tanzimat reforms initially did not focus on the *tekkes* and Sufi orders, the regulations introduced after 1850 posed further challenges for the social and economic fabrics of daily and political life for Sufi orders within the Ottoman realm. Due to the state's efforts to exert greater control over the orders and their endowments, the revenues that supported the dervishes, primarily derived from tithe income, were appropriated by the state treasury. Furthermore, the government abolished the incomes of the dervishes and their lodges until they were officially registered with state authorities and become recognized as legitimate entities. Unrecognized *tarikats* were disbanded, and their members were prohibited from establishing their own *tekkes*.

The consolidation of power and control by the state and bureaucracy aimed to prevent the *tekkes* and *tarikats* from acting independently, which could potentially disrupt the equilibrium of authority in modernizing state bureaucracy. Additionally, the Tanzimat and preceding reforms restricted Sufi orders from forming independent organizations, mandating their affiliation with a higher-ranking official to maintain a

⁸³ Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Islamic...", 196.

⁸⁴ Butrus Abu Manneh, "The Islamic...", 188.

balance of power among them. Consequently, certain dervish families found themselves without a source of income. When these families petitioned the state regarding their financial difficulties, they were granted a monthly salary sufficient for their sustenance. Such petitions exemplify the imbalanced power dynamics between the center and the periphery, underscoring the state's authoritative position. As İlber Ortaylı argues, the government provided assistance to those in need only on the condition that they acknowledged the supremacy of the state.⁸⁵ In this context, these petitions can be regarded as textual representations of the voices of peripheral subjects, reflecting the authoritative undertones of the Tanzimat state.

A notable case from 1855 involves the family of Hüseyin Efendi, a sheik of the Naqshibandiyya order, who encountered severe financial hardship following his death due to the absence of an inheritance. After his demise, the income associated with the sheik was reclaimed by the treasury in accordance with the Tanzimat Edict. Subsequently, his family submitted a petition for support and received a monthly compensation of 100 kurush.⁸⁶ This case illustrates the “responsible” and “protective” regulatory approach characteristics of a state undergoing modernization.

The government adopted a clear policy toward the *tekkes* and dervishes, asserting direct control over their revenue streams. Dervishes became salaried state officials, and *tekkes* engaged directly with *Meclis-i Vala* in 1839. This body played a pivotal role in addressing the basic needs, food supply, and financial aid for Sufi orders. In his analysis of how the relationship between the state and the *tekkes* was characterized, İlber Ortaylı asserts “the state provided patronage and advisement,

⁸⁵ İlber Ortaylı, “Tarikatler ve Tanzimat Dönemi Osmanlı Yönetimi”, 286.

⁸⁶ BOA/A.}MKT..UM../232/7/ 02.Şaban.1272 (April 11, 1856).

while *tekkes* foisted on the state”⁸⁷. Ortaylı claims a reciprocally pragmatic relationship between these two entities; the state offered protection and utilized the *tekkes* to bolster its reputation, while the *tekkes* preserved a significant standing in society to some extent.

In a significant decree issued in 1840, it was declared that revenues of the dervish lodges would no longer be managed independently; rather, they would be regulated and collected by state officials appointed by the government.⁸⁸

Furthermore, the Ottoman state made a decisive move regarding all *tekkes* and *zaviyes* by implementing legislation for local administration aligned with the principles of the Tanzimat. This legislation addressed the management of lands, arable fields, and villages designated for the support of all *tekkes* and *zaviyes*.

All lands, cultivated fields, and villages documented in the Defter-i Hakani and associated with Dersiyeh fees for education purposes – previously allocated by former Sultans to support the poor and dervishes of all *tekkes* and *zaviyes* – within the province governed by the Tanzimat administration shall not be managed independently. Rather, in alignment with other Evkaf properties, Zeamet fiefs, and Mukataat shares that are integrated with state lands, these entities will be administered by local officials.⁸⁹

This decree perfectly reflects the fundamental characteristic of the Tanzimat mind, as analysed by Niyazi Berkes. Berkes emphasizes that the Tanzimat regime was “an extension of such a regime with a change, such as restricting the authority of the ruler, but, the source of authority was not the governed itself.”⁹⁰ This decree also reveals this structure as the institutionalization of the reform process that began during the reign of Mahmud II, the central *tekke* takes control of the financial revenues of the *tekkes* and *zaviyes* that previously operated autonomously. As Berkes

⁸⁷ İlber Ortaylı, “Tarikatler ve Tanzimat Dönemi Osmanlı Yönetimi”, 285.

⁸⁸ John Robert Barnes, *An Introduction to Religious Foundations in the Ottoman Empire*, 92.

⁸⁹ BOA/C..EV../538/27168/ 29.Cemaziyelevvel.1256 (August 29, 1840).

⁹⁰ Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye’de Çağdaşlaşma*, 172.

states, the process of excluding Sheik-ul-Islam from government administration and planning boards from the Mahmud II period deepened further with this decree. The expressions “the province governed by the Tanzimat administration” and “to be governed by local authorities” are a concrete implementation of the centralization policy of the Tanzimat bureaucracy, as emphasized by Berkes.⁹¹

As previously noted, the Tanzimat reforms abolished the supplementary donations that provincial governors had traditionally provided to the dervishes. For instance, the income of Halvetiyya Sheik Huseyin Efendi from the Halvetiyya Order in Yozgat Kaza was eliminated due to the regulations established by the Tanzimat, which rescinded the profits allocated to provincial governors. Nonetheless, the same decree allocated an additional 30 kurush to the monthly salary of each dervish, funded directly by the state.⁹² It is important to highlight that these salaries were disbursed by the treasury, rather than being sourced from the provincial governor or the revenue generated by the Vali.

Another decree addresses the redistribution of resources during the Ramadan for the *tekkes* and Sufi orders under the Tanzimat reforms. This was exemplified by regulations established for the Siroz Mevlevihanesi in 1842. The decree states that the previous allocations of eight okka of coffee, forty okka of oil and honey, and six bushels of rice, which were designated for the Mevlevi *tekke* during the holy month, have been terminated following the implementation of the Tanzimat. In place of these provisions, it has been announced that a monetary compensation will be granted to the dervishes.⁹³

⁹¹ Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye’de Çağdaşlaşma*, 174.

⁹² BOA/C..EV../321/16327/ 20.Ramazan.1257 (November 06, 1841).

⁹³ BOA/C..EV../505/25521/ 05.Cemaziyelevvel.1258 (June 12, 1842).

Meclis-i Vala, as the preeminent governing body of the empire, exercised stringent control over the *tekkes* and *tarikats*. This institution was responsible for appointing sheiks to various *tekkes* and provided advisory support regarding dervish appointments. The financial backing and oversight demonstrated the state's intention to diminish the power of the *tekkes* and limit their autonomy within society. An edict issued in 1860 by the *Meclis-i Vala* mandated that all guests residing in the *tekke* be officially recorded to prevent vagrants, disguised as dervishes or students, from misappropriating the facilities of the *tekke*.⁹⁴ İlber Ortaylı asserts that the majority of *tekkes* and dervishes were subjected to hierarchical supervision through financial assistance, thereby enabling the state to monitor the activities of lodge members. This framework ensured that the members operated within their customary and political roles, including their social leadership, with the explicit approval of the state.⁹⁵

Hence, it can be argued that a functional relationship developed between the state and the Sufi orders, resulting in organizational continuity and a stable position for central authority due to the state's involvement in the welfare of the *tarikats*.

The final significant development of the 19th century, marked as the culmination of the reforms instituted by Sultan Mahmud II and the Tanzimat, was the establishment of the *Meclis-i Mesayih* (the Council of Sheiks) in 1866. This institution was created to centralize the oversight of Sufi orders' activities and was a direct result of efforts to reform the operations of the sheiks. However, despite these bureaucratic attempts, the *tarikats* resisted full rationalization in the Weberian sense. The personal charisma of sheiks, the informal networks of spiritual authority, and the

⁹⁴ BOA/MVL..MKT../114/53/ 03.Şaban.1276 (February 26, 1860).

⁹⁵ İlber Ortaylı, "Tarikatler ve Tanzimat Dönemi Osmanlı Yönetimi", 286.

mystical core of Sufi practice remained largely intact, operating parallel to, rather than fully integrated within, the state's bureaucratic framework. The primary objective of the Council was to administer and supervise all *tarikats* within the Ottoman Empire. It implemented vital measures aimed at fostering within the Sufi orders. The Council not only reformed the appointment processes within the *tekkes*, but it also laid the groundwork for the politicization of these institutions. It is essential to note that one of the most significant impacts of the Council, which operated as a governmental entity under the supervision of the sheik-ul-Islam and *muftis*, was the revocation of privileges and exemptions previously held by all *tekkes*.

The analysis of Great Edicts of Tanzimat, enacted in 1839 and 1856, along with various supplementary regulations issued by the Porte, constitutes a multifaceted process of transformation and integration. Rather than seeking to eliminate Sufi orders outright, the reforms adopted a strategy focused on their control and incorporation into the expanding bureaucratic framework of the state, such as the elevation of sheiks to the status of salaried civil servants, and the establishment of centralized oversight mechanisms, exemplified by the formation of the *Meclis-i Meşayih* in 1866. Nevertheless, the Sufi orders did not undergo complete rationalization; the enduring personal charisma of the sheiks and the persistence of informal networks of Sufi authority remained significant, establishing a functional balance between institutional governance and traditional religious practices.

CHAPTER 3

NEW GOLD DREAM OF SULTAN ABDULHAMID II:

REFORM, RELIGION AND IMPERIAL IDENTITY

Scholarly literature on Sultan Abdulhamid II is vast, as he is often seen as the most important and controversial figure of the late Ottoman era. Given his authoritarian policies, pan-Islamism, and modernization strategies, he has been either praised or condemned by different circles and authors. Debates over his legacy continue, while many new publications prevail.⁹⁶

To explore this complex legacy, one should perhaps start to contextualize Abdulhamid II as a persona raised in the Tanzimat era. Born in 1842, he entered a historical context in which the Tanzimat Edict had already been approved and enacted by his father, Sultan Abdulmecid I. The repercussions of this reform movement began to resonate throughout the empire. Abdulhamid II was raised in an environment where he had the chance to observe the transformative effects of reform movements on Ottoman society. Notably, he was not initially perceived as the most likely heir to the Ottoman throne; therefore, this situation may have allowed him to cultivate a heightened awareness of his surroundings and an approach to events from multiple perspectives. This state of uncertainty contributed to his development of a

⁹⁶ Among many others, see François Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, (Homer Kitabevi, 2006); Benjamin Fortna, “The Reign of Abdülhamid II”, *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, Vol.4, (Cambridge University Press, 2008); Stanford Shaw, “Sultan Abdülhamid II: Last Man of the Tanzimat”, *Tanzimat’ın 150. Yıldönümü Uluslararası Sempozyumu (Bildiriler)*, (Milli Kütüphane, 1989); Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe, New Approaches to European History*, (Cambridge University Press, 2002); Gökhan Çetinsaya, “II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Kuzey Irak’da Tarikat, Aşiret ve Siyaset”, *Divan İlmi Araştırmalar*, No. 7, 1999; Nadir Özbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Sosyal Devlet: Siyaset, İktidar ve Meşruiyet*, (İletişim, 2002); Bayram Kodaman, *Şark Meselesi Işığında Sultan II. Abdülhamid’in Doğu Anadolu Politikası*, (Orkun, 1983); İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, (Hil Yayınları, 1983).

cautious and pragmatic leadership style, traits that were likely reflected in his governance once he ascended to the throne.

When Sultan Abdulhamid II ascended to the throne in 1876, inheriting an unstable political environment, a foreign debt crisis exacerbated by the moratorium declared in 1875, threats of an impending war with Russia, and the unfinished modernization efforts of the Tanzimat. He implies in his memoirs that measures ought to be implemented gradually. He acknowledged:

The decline of the Ottoman Empire can be attributed to the consequences of its extensive territorial expansion. The amalgamation of diverse nations has resulted in considerable administrative challenges. Contrary to the belief that implementing severe measures will lead to improvement, such actions are likely to precipitate the empire's demise.⁹⁷

Contrary to prevalent stereotypes, he did not aspire to establish an autocratic regime upon his accession to the throne. Instead, he demonstrated a willingness to engage in a remarkable transformation story for the integration into the global economy and the reconstruction of the state structure.

When Abdulhamid II abdicated the parliament, whether owing to his assumed intentions of establishing an absolutist regime or not, the first to abandon him were his contemporary Ottoman intellectuals. Bitterly disappointed that their dreams of transition to a decentralized rule of the state were dashed. They stopped supporting Abdulhamid II's rule, one that could hardly be called a tyrant, busy as he was trying to protect his vast plot of land from being appropriated by the Western powers for the transplantation of their own interests. He hardly made up his mind as to what he wanted, following his grandfather Mahmud II and his "new gold dream:" Taking gradual actions to reform the empire. A choice that seems to him the only

⁹⁷ Abdülhamid II, *Siyasi Hatıratım*, 100.

way to stipulate the rejuvenation of the empire, by creating a state structure that would go beyond the classical power parameters of the empire and adapt to the modern world order. In line with this goal, he adopted a progressive approach that emphasized the traditional Ottoman-Islamic identity on one hand, while also seeking to incorporate the technical and scientific advances of the West on the other. This seemingly contradictory synthesis actually reflected a strategic rumination necessary for the empire, considering the context of the period. He seems to believe that these reforms would primarily benefit future generations, as they heavily rely on educational advancements.

3.1 Establishment of modern educational institutions

Sultan Hamid advocated for innovation within the branches of the state and the necessity for well-educated officers. In alignment with this vision, he established new educational institutions and formalized the education system through imperial edicts. Engin Deniz Akarlı posits that “the state was more important to him than the religion”⁹⁸. This state-centered approach was clearly reflected in his educational policies. The 19th century reforms fundamentally transformed the ‘reaya’ into subjects irrespective of their religion, language, or ethnicity. This transformation entailed a complex reconfiguration of privileges and restrictions, whereby some citizens’ advantages were diminished, while others faced increased state oversight regarding their activities. The primary challenge for the Ottoman administration became the necessity of securing the loyalty of not a simply citizens but of this newly constituted citizenry, who are responsible to the state. According to Francois

⁹⁸ Engin Deniz Akarlı, “The Problems of External Pressures, Power Struggles, and Budgetary Deficits in Ottoman Politics Under Abdulhamid II (1876-1909): Origins and Solutions”, 61.

Georgeon, “One of the objectives of state schools was to cultivate skilled administrators who not only possessed a thorough understanding of contemporary issues but also demonstrated unwavering loyalty to their state and the Sultan-caliph.”⁹⁹ This was the challenge of Abdulhamid II, to turn Ottoman subjects into subjects with genuine allegiance to the Ottoman state.

According to Benjamin Fortna, “Abdulhamid II’s policy in education, as in so many areas, was to retain important elements of the European-inspired Tanzimat agenda, but to integrate these elements with those derived from the state’s Islamic and Ottoman traditions.”¹⁰⁰ Sultan Hamid decisively transformed the landscape of education in the Ottoman Empire by adopting and promoting modern educational institutions, because he needed loyal subjects. Although the Ministry of Public Education had been founded in 1857, “the Hamidian period, on the other hand, witnessed the rise of *ibtidaiye* (primary schools), and *idadiye* (high schools), while *rüşdiye* (secondary schools), though continuing to exist, increasingly became obsolete” as stated by Akşin Somel¹⁰¹. According Somel, the Regulation of Public Schools only became effective from 1880 onward at the provincial level.

Abdulhamid II’s interest in art is evident from the 40,000-piece archive currently housed in the Yıldız Palace Library’s Photograph Collection. Another example, after arriving in Istanbul in 1892, Fausto Zonaro’s meticulous work and

⁹⁹ François Georgeon, *Sultan Abdilhamid*, 350.

¹⁰⁰ Benjamin Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, Education, and The State in The Late Ottoman Empire*, 176.

¹⁰¹ Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire 1839-1908, Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline*, 8. Akşin Somel also states that when it was established, the Ministry of Public Education was not merely an administrative institution for regulating and directing public education; it also functioned as a bureaucratic body for supervising cultural activities, and gradually evolved into a state censorship agency during the reign of Abdulhamid II.

efforts were rewarded by Abdulhamid II with the Fourth Degree of the Mecidiye Order and appointed as the palace painter.¹⁰² The Sultan's interest and value in art and education were combined in the foundation of *Mekteb-i Sanayi-i Nefise-i Şahane* (School of Fine Arts) in 1882.¹⁰³ These initiatives exemplify Abdulhamid II's recognition that cultural and artistic development was integral to his broader modernization agenda.

His comprehensive educational framework effectively reached urban centers as well as provincial towns, marking the most significant educational reform in Ottoman history and laying the essential groundwork for modern Turkish education. Central to this transformation was Sultan Abdulhamid II's remarkable initiative of establishing *Aşiret Mektepleri* (Tribal Schools) to educate children from influential tribal families, particularly in the Arab provinces, brought to Istanbul.¹⁰⁴ As Selim Deringil states the Sultan's characterization of eastern Anatolian tribal behaviour as resembling that of "savage tribes in America" as he reportedly expressed to a European ambassador. This reflects his administration's broader civilizing mission aimed at transforming these communities into loyal Ottoman citizens.¹⁰⁵ The Sultan himself once told a European ambassador that in eastern Anatolia there were tribes 'whose comportment is similar to savage tribes in America'. The ultimate aim, of course, was to transform them into reliable members of fundamental elements. Beyond this innovative approach to regional integration, his vision for a centralized

¹⁰² Akile Çelik, "Sultan Abdülhamid'in Ressamı Fausto Zonaro ve Son Halife Abdülmecid Efendi'ye Gönderdiği Kartpostallar", 96.

¹⁰³ Fatma Ürekli, "Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi", 93-97.

¹⁰⁴ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains; Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876- 1909*, 101-104.

¹⁰⁵ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains; Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876- 1909*, 41.

education system was realized through the creation of education directorates in provincial centers. This strategic move not only cultivated loyalty among potential tribal leaders but also effectively integrated peripheral regions into the broader state framework. Equally significant was Abdulhamid II's establishment of professional and technical education. He established key institutions, including the *Mülkiye Mektebi* (School of Civil Service) and *Hukuk Mektebi* (School of Law), which produced a skilled cadre of bureaucrats and specialists necessary for a modern state apparatus. He also restructured military education, establishing *Harbiye* (War Academy) to produce officers familiar with modern warfare tactics. These institutional innovations collectively transformed the Ottoman educational landscape, creating a comprehensive system that would influence Turkish educational policy well into the republican era.

This period also saw an attempt at foreign language instruction, particularly French, in secondary and higher education. The Galatasaray experiment marked an effort to restructure the way the Ottoman state treated its various groups.¹⁰⁶ Here Muslim and non-Muslim students shared the same environment where they learned, exercised, dined, and resided together. "From the perspective of the Ottoman state, the justification for mixed education centered on the assumption that communal education would foster a common allegiance to the Ottoman state."¹⁰⁷ This initiative underscores the Sultan's keen recognition that the survival of the Ottoman Empire depended on cultivating indigenous expertise in areas previously dominated by Europeans. In his commitment to modern education, Sultan Hamid also ensured the

¹⁰⁶ Benjamin Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, Education, and the State in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 102.

¹⁰⁷ Benjamin Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, Education, and the State in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 103.

reinforcement of traditional values through the curriculum. He was determined to mitigate European influence both technically and ideologically. Similarly, as Benjamin Fortna points out, the essential prompt behind such actions, particularly controls, is a critical attempt to answer the challenges posed by Western competitors, “in the eyes of observant Ottoman statesman, the foreigners were ‘working behind the curtain of education.’”¹⁰⁸ Fortna argues that although it is evident that Ottoman educational initiatives were integrated into a broader strategy of enhancing state power, the government was simultaneously establishing numerous novel connections with its subjects and proto-citizens.¹⁰⁹ Through these initiatives, Abdulhamid II sought to create a generation of Ottomans who were both technically competent and ideologically loyal.

Sultan Hamid recognized that promoting prosperity would cultivate loyalty among his subjects. In pursuit of a strengthened empire, he also initiated a series of reforms across economic, administrative, and religious domains to enhance the welfare of provincial populations. As François Georgeon posits:

On the one hand, he attempts to modernize the empire, develop the economy, construct railways, establish schools, and reform the army. He sought to implement this comprehensive modernization policy outside the tutelage of the great powers¹¹⁰

It is crucial to note that Abdulhamid II made a clear distinction between his role as the Sultan and the broader concept of the state. This distinction emerged in the early 18th century, emphasizing the continuity of the state. He systematically and meticulously defined each component of the empire, addressing both internal and

¹⁰⁸ Benjamin Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, Education, and the State in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 90.

¹⁰⁹ Benjamin Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, Education, and the State in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 21.

¹¹⁰ François Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 18.

external political challenges. The Sultan sought to implement policies that would prevent foreign intervention in the empire's internal affairs, resulting in reforms that were predominantly oriented toward bolstering the state's financial and political authority.

Internally, Sultan Abdulhamid II enacted the first Constitution in 1876, which aimed to legitimize his authority by establishing a parliamentary government. This constitution introduced the principle of the separation of powers within the state mechanism. While it secured the Sultanate and affirmed the supreme caliphate of Islam, it unexpectedly preserved the Sultan's independence, declaring that he would be accountable solely to himself. Consequently, Sultan Hamid maintained a level of power comparable to that of his predecessors, who governed without a constitution. The concept of Ottomanism, which encapsulated the notion of equality as articulated in the *Tabiyet Nizamnamesi* (Citizenship Regulation) in 1869, became the official policy intended to mitigate separatist sentiments among Ottoman subjects.¹¹¹ The terminology evolved from "subject" to "citizen". Although principles of equality before the law were introduced and the supremacy of Muslims was revoked, Islam remained enshrined as the official religion of the empire. Various initiatives were undertaken to enhance the execution, legislation, and judiciary functions of the empire. Efforts were made to reform the financial system, resulting in the establishment of the Chamber of Deputies, which was responsible for approving a new budget to repay debts owed to foreign bondholders. This step became necessary as European powers had exerted control over Ottoman finances, contributing to the Empire's characterization as "the Sick Man of Europe". This terminology was first

¹¹¹ Gülşen Ulukaya, "1869 Osmanlı Tabiiyet Kanunu ve Büyük Devletlerin bu Kanuna Bakışı", 139.

employed by Emperor Nikolai for Turkey during his conversation with British ambassador Sir Hamilton Seymour in 1853.¹¹² In December 1881, a decree was issued to consolidate public debt and establish the Ottoman Public Debt Administration, which served as the authority for collecting designated revenues derived from monopolies on tobacco and salt, as well as various taxation sources. The Administration utilized these revenues to alleviate the indebtedness owed to European bondholders, thereby facilitating improved tax collection and an increase in state revenue. According to Edhem Eldem, “unpopular as it may have understandably been among Ottoman circles and in subsequent Turkish historiography, there is no denying that the establishment of the Administration of the Ottoman Public Debt was a success. Its success lay first and foremost in the fact that it effectively and efficiently solved the crisis of 1875 by restoring Ottoman creditworthiness on the international markets, making it possible once again for the Empire to resort to foreign loans.”¹¹³ Eldem clearly argues that, from the perspective of the Imperial Ottoman Bank, the resolution of the crisis and the establishment of the Public Debt had a transformative impact. This shift empowered the bank to focus its resources on long-desired commercial and investment activities. As a result, the Ottoman market rapidly integrated into the international economy, albeit under the terms set by European markets. The stability offered by the Public Debt positioned the Ottoman economy to enter a period of growth that, while dependent, proved to be notably successful.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)*, 68-69.

¹¹³ Edhem Eldem, “Ottoman Financial Integration with Europe: Foreign Loans, the Ottoman Bank and the Ottoman Public Debt”, 442.

¹¹⁴ Edhem Eldem, “Ottoman Financial Integration with Europe: Foreign Loans, the Ottoman Bank and the Ottoman Public Debt”, 431-445.

The establishment of Ziraat Bank in 1888 was another pivotal initiative aimed at improving state revenues by providing loans to Ottoman farmers under favorable conditions, thereby diminishing their dependence on usurers and enhancing agricultural productivity. This implied the idea that a prosperous population leads to a more prosperous state.¹¹⁵ Donald Quaterts posits that, “The agricultural-reform programs launched by the Hamidian government were efforts to create a more productive and profitable agriculture, one directed toward the export markets.¹¹⁶” To promote agriculture, agricultural schools were founded in which model farms were established and provided tax relief to farmers.

These efforts reveal that Abdulhamid II’s administration employed a combination of strategies to cultivate domestic capital, particularly through the establishment of the Hamidiye *Ticaret Mektebi-i Alisi* (The School of Commerce) in 1883 as a prominent higher institution to train necessary and equipped manpower, both for Muslim and non-Muslim subjects, in the disciplines of business, trade, and accounting.¹¹⁷

Economic enhancements also promoted the development of transportation infrastructure, resulting in a significant expansion of railroad mileage. Abdulhamid II sought to integrate the Ottoman Empire into a broader global economy through a series of important projects such as the Hejaz and the Baghdad Railways, and The Public Debt Administration, adaptation efforts of economic modernization principles and utilization of modern fiscal tools of the time, such as bond issuance, the banking

¹¹⁵ Donald Quatert, “Dilemma of Development: The Agricultural Bank and Agricultural Reform in Ottoman Turkey, 1888-1908”, 227.

¹¹⁶ Donald Quatert, “Dilemma of Development: The Agricultural Bank and Agricultural Reform in Ottoman Turkey, 1888-1908”, 211.

¹¹⁷ Ahmet Sakil, “Servet-i Fünun Mecmuası’nda Yayımlanan Ticaret Mektebi Yazıları Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme”, 323.

system, and international loans.¹¹⁸ These initiatives served as a crucial tool for executing the Sultan's Pan-Islamic policies, as well. The construction of the Hejaz Railway is notably emblematic of this initiative, as its construction began after Ziraat Bank had released 100,000 liras to cover the initial cost.¹¹⁹ Abdulhamid II immediately issued a call for financial support from his Muslim subjects, emphasizing that the Hejaz Railway would not only connect the central territories of the empire to Mecca, but also show the power of Islam and solidarity among Muslims to the entire world. Murat Özyüksel also posits that "In order to have no foreign control on this 'sacred line', foreign capital had to be shunned. The caliph donated 50,000 liras, a considerable amount of money, for the promotion of the donation campaign. The newspapers of the period explained that the Sultan's huge donation had mobilized the Islamic world and given momentum to the campaign."¹²⁰

Ankara Railway was constructed by a consortium founded in the second half of 1890, led by Deutsche Bank. A short while after Deutsche Bank had received the Konya concession, the French received the Beirut-Damascus-Aleppo Railway concession.¹²¹ There was a very profound reason behind this collaboration between the Ottomans and Germans. Sultan Abdulhamid II expressed his personal sympathy towards the Germans by saying, "With the aim of weakening my sovereignty, Britain is spreading the idea of the nation within Islamic countries. Without realizing it,

¹¹⁸ Edhem Eldem, "Ottoman Financial Integration with Europe: Foreign Loans, the Ottoman Bank and the Ottoman Public Debt", 431-445.

¹¹⁹ Murat Özyüksel, *The Hejaz Railway and the Ottoman Empire: Modernity, Industrialisation and Ottoman Decline*, 69.

¹²⁰ Murat Özyüksel, *The Hejaz Railway and the Ottoman Empire: Modernity, Industrialisation and Ottoman Decline*, 70.

¹²¹ Murat Özyüksel, *The Berlin-Baghdad Railway and the Ottoman Empire: Industrialization, Imperial Germany and the Middle East: Industrialization, Imperial Germany and the Middle East*, 28-37.

Egyptian patriots serve British interests, and weaken the power of Islam and the prestige of the caliphate.”¹²² From this point of view, Germany was the only European power that never made territorial claims on Ottoman lands, and there was the absence of Muslim lands among the colonies of the German Empire, so far.¹²³ This perception led to the signing of the Baghdad Railway with German capital in 1902.

Ironically, the reforms and modernization attempts that Abdulhamid II implemented to stabilize the empire would later become his most prominent dilemma. The schools, which instructed military and civilian bureaucrats in particular, contributed to the emergence of a new elite class that accused his regime of being autocratic. The opposition that molded against him in domestic politics emerged from that very class. The expansion of communication networks allowed dissident ideas to penetrate the most remote corners of the empire as well as the homes of Muslims outside the empire's borders.

This new class comprised *adem-i merkeziyetçiler* who advocated for decentralized governance, intellectuals who sought British support to overthrow the regime, and even a religious faction that criticized Abdulhamid II's modernization efforts, complaining that he was undermining the influence of the *ulama*. Another notable group stood out as Freemasonry. Although Abdulhamid II did not openly oppose Freemasonry, which he permitted on the condition that they did not engage in politics, their activities were always subject to control and surveillance. This situation paved the way for the Masons to support the Union and Progress Party

¹²² Sultan Abdülhamit, *Siyasi Hatırlarım*, 147.

¹²³ Murat Özyüksel, *The Berlin-Baghdad Railway and the Ottoman Empire: Industrialization, Imperial Germany and the Middle East: Industrialization, Imperial Germany and the Middle East*, 19.

pragmatically. In particular, foreign lodges, which enjoyed immunity thanks to the capitulations, provided secure meeting places, communication networks, and the opportunity to escape abroad or find shelter in exile for the members of the CUP.¹²⁴

Another opposition dynamic that developed during the reign of Abdulhamid II emerged in the Arab provinces. Following his abrogation of the Parliament, he sent ten Arab deputies back to their respective homelands. Among these, Yusuf Ziya, who was sent back to Syria “complained about the arbitrary action taken against him and the other deputies in a letter that he wrote to the grand vizier and former president of Parliament, Ahmed Vefik Pasha. He sent a copy of the letter to the *Levant Herald* with a postscript: ‘As you can see half of the [implicated] including myself are Arabs,’ suggesting that the action taken had something to do with their ethnic affiliation.”¹²⁵ Abdulhamid II prorogued Parliament to eliminate political opposition to his rule. It is improbable that he felt intimidated by the threat of separatism in the Arab provinces.¹²⁶ However, the dynamics he feared or foresaw soon came true, and cultural and political transformations began to take place in key regions such as Syria, the Hejaz, and Iraq. The cultural awakening and political awareness that developed among Arab intellectuals started to manifest themselves in injunctions such as the recognition of Arabic as the official language in the Arab

¹²⁴ Azmi Özcan, “Masonluk”, 95-99. For more information, please see; Orhan Koloğlu, *Abdulhamid ve Masonlar*, (Gür Yayınları, 1999); Paul Dumont, *Osmanlıcılık, Ulusçu Akımlar ve Masonluk*, (Yapı Kredi Yayınları 2020); Hamid Algar, “An Introduction to the History of Freemasonry in Iran”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol . 6 No.3, (October 1970), 276-296; Elie Kedourie, “Young Turks, Freemasons and Jews”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 7 (1), 1971, 89-104.

¹²⁵ Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks Ottomanism Arabism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire 1908-1918*, 27.

¹²⁶ Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks Ottomanism Arabism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire 1908-1918*, 28.

provinces, the granting of administrative autonomy, and the end of discrimination against Arabs.

Similarly, nationalist ideas began to sprout in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, particularly in regions with a dense Kurdish population. The rebellion launched by Sheik Ubeydullah in 1880 aimed to establish an autonomous Kurdistan and became the leading movement of the Kurdish opposition.¹²⁷ While Abdulhamid II responded to this separatist movement with the Hamidiye Regiments, the clashes between the Kurds were intensified and not only sowed the seeds of tribal conflicts that would last for decades but also irreversibly damaged Kurdish-Armenian relations and deepened the circle of violence in the region.

Sultan Abdulhamid II also faced numerous international challenges during his reign. Continuing his engagements at the Istanbul Conference, he announced the establishment of the First Constitutional Regime through the promulgation of the *Kanun-i Esasi* on December 23, 1876. The ongoing diplomatic issue known as “The Eastern Question” emerged as a significant concern for Western powers in global politics,¹²⁸ where Ottoman representatives were excluded from preliminary discussions regarding the empire’s future. The conference, convened in December 1876, included representatives from six prominent European states: The United Kingdom, France, Italy, Germany, Austria, and Russia. The outcomes of the

¹²⁷ Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and The Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925*, 1.

¹²⁸ The Eastern Question continues to represent a critical diplomatic issue that has persisted since the 19th century, centered on the fate of the territories under Ottoman control should the empire disintegrate due to weakening relations with Europe. In this context, the Ottoman Empire served as a balancing force among the European powers; consequently, any internal developments within the empire precipitated tensions in European politics, with individual states seeking to capitalize on the political instability to expand their own influence. For further information: A. L. Macfie, *The Eastern Question 1774- 1923*, (Longman 1996); M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question: 1774-1923: A study in International Relations*, (Macmillan, 1966).

conference and the conduct of British delegates led to a re-evaluation of Abdulhamid II's foreign policy. The historically cooperative relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the British government deteriorated into one of mistrust. Abdulhamid II rejected the stringent terms imposed on the Ottoman government, asserting that they were fundamentally incompatible with Ottoman independence and sovereignty. Subsequently, a new protocol was announced in April 1877, although the Ottomans continued to resist European plans for domination.

Notably, Sultan Hamid had expressed confidence in British support, as evidenced in his discussions with Sir Henry Layard, the British ambassador in Istanbul, who had assured him of assistance in the event of a war with Russia, a situation that appeared improbable. However, on April 24, 1877, Russia declared war against the Ottoman Empire, receiving support from Germany and Austria-Hungary. Anticipating British intervention, the Ottoman Empire found itself isolated and fought for nine months, exceeding the expected duration, yet ultimately suffered a catastrophic defeat, facing anaemic economic and political troubles.

The empire was not only deprived of the anticipated financial support from Britain but also had to rely entirely on its own resources throughout the conflict. The defeat in the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78) resulted in a significant weakening of the state, which faced severe economic and political challenges. The Russian army advanced to the outskirts of the Ottoman capital and was halted at Yesilkoy with the signing of the San Stefano Treaty on March 3, 1878. Consequently, the Ottomans acknowledged the independence of Serbia, Romania, and Montenegro, as well as the autonomy of Bulgaria. Furthermore, Russia assumed control over the Balkans and Eastern Anatolia. In response to the growing influence of Russia, European powers convened an international conference in Berlin in July 1878.

Sultan Abdulhamid II was resolute in his commitment to safeguarding the state from any circumstances that might result in foreign domination. However, the loss of territories precipitated a radical change in the empire's demographic composition.¹²⁹ The emergence of independence movements in the Balkans, specifically in Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria, had significant ramifications. Notably, this resulted in the general loss of the affluent population and led to the migration of Muslim residents within the remaining Ottoman territories. For instance, during the period from 1770 to 1874, there was a substantial influx of Tatars from the newly annexed Russian Crimea into Ottoman Bessarabia and Dobruja. The direct result of territorial losses was an increase in the proportion of the Muslim population, as residents of lost regions migrated and settled in the Ottoman Empire. Since the Russians arrived in Yesilkoy, the empire welcomed the immigration of the Rumelian people, who were fleeing the war. This development led to a 72 percent Muslim majority being settled in the territories of the Ottoman Empire, as reported in the first reliable census carried out between 1881 and 1893.¹³⁰

3.2 The center and the province under Abdulhamid II's reign

One of the significant political themes during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II pertained to the administration of the provinces. Prior to his rule, the standardization of provincial governance was achieved through the Vilayet Laws of 1864 and 1867. The Ottoman government sought to exert direct and stringent control over the Arab regions for various vital political and economic motivations. Notably, Damascus and

¹²⁹ Immigration was the leading factors to help the emergence of the Pan-Islamic policy within the reign of Abdulhamid II.

¹³⁰ Donald Quataert, *The Age of Reforms, 1812-1914*, Vol 2, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, 782.

Aleppo served as international trade centers, while Syria functioned as a geographic buffer against potential incursions from Egypt. To facilitate effective provincial administration and ensure loyalty to the central authority, Istanbul dispatched some of its most esteemed governors to the Arab provinces.¹³¹ With the promulgation of the Constitution during Sultan Abdulhamid II's reign, the legislative framework of the empire underwent significant restructuring, culminating in the establishment of two legislative bodies: The *Meclis-i Mebusan* (Lower Chamber) and the *Meclis-i Ayan* (Upper Chamber). These chambers were granted the freedom to articulate their views and cast votes, while their members enjoyed immunity from arrest. All deputies were required to possess proficiency in Ottoman Turkish for communication. The *Meclis-i Ayan* is particularly pertinent for illustrating the provincial administration and peripheral dynamics of the empire. The deputies of the *Meclis-i Ayan* were appointed directly by the Sultan and were expected to represent the interests of the entire nation, rather than solely their constituencies; candidacy necessitated initial residency within the relevant district. This parliamentary structure represented the apex of the Tanzimat reform efforts aimed at integrating the provincial periphery into the state apparatus.¹³² It is important to note that, in contrast to the Tanzimat era, where loyalty to the state was paramount, the Hamidian regime demanded unwavering personal loyalty from its officials. Bureaucrats under Sultan Abdulhamid II were required to pledge their allegiance directly to him, making this personal loyalty a fundamental criterion for civil service positions. Abdulhamid II

¹³¹ Cevdet Pasha was assigned with the responsibility of execution of 1864 Vilayet Law in Aleppo. For further information see, S. Shaw and E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, (Cambridge University Press, 1976-77).

¹³² Jens Hanssen, *Empire in the City; Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 70.

firmly asserted this point in meetings with key appointees, reinforcing that he granted their appointments and that they were answerable solely to him.¹³³ The echoes of this approach can be clearly seen in Sultan Hamid's vision for an efficient administration of the empire, which he sought to achieve through a modern bureaucracy led by a group of skilled technocrats. To realize this vision, Sultan Hamid established a new bureaucratic institution called the Royal Academy of Administration. This academy trained various bureaucrats and technocrats, including provincial governors and customs officials.¹³⁴

Under Sultan Hamid's governance, the nature of center-periphery relations underwent a transformation, particularly following his decision to dissolve the parliament. The deputies from Jerusalem, Aleppo, Beirut, and Tripoli frequently embodied oppressive elements in the parliament.¹³⁵ This can be interpreted as a response from the central authorities to the increasing influence of the provincial peripheries. In the wake of the parliament's dissolution, Sultan Abdulhamid II ceremonially elevated the status of the Arab provinces, integrating their prominent figures into his personalized political framework, as evidenced by their prominent roles in imperial ceremonies.¹³⁶ He swiftly cultivated personal networks by bestowing prestigious positions within the state apparatus. For instance, Abdulkadir el-Kudsi, an Arabic deputy from Aleppo, entered the Sultan's service and was subsequently appointed as second secretary following the parliament's abrogation.¹³⁷

¹³³ Tahsin Paşa, *Ahdülhamid Yıldız Hatıraları*, 6.

¹³⁴ Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of Late Ottoman History*, 125.

¹³⁵ Abdu-l Latif Tibawi, "Greater Syria, 1876-1890: Divided Loyalties – Ottoman, Muslim or Arab?", 9-10.

¹³⁶ Kemal Karpat, "The Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789-1908", 271.

¹³⁷ Robert Devereux, *First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 247.

Furthermore, governors of the Arab provinces were awarded higher salaries compared to their Anatolian and European counterparts.¹³⁸ These notables amassed considerable wealth through their influential positions in waqf administration, public works, and concessions.¹³⁹ Two sheiks of the Rufaiyya and Medeniyya orders, Ebu'l Huda es-Seyyadi and Sheik Zafir al-Madani became the Sultan's advisers; in return for promoting the Sultan's policy, their orders were granted various privileges.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, after Sultan Abdulhamid II dissolved the parliament in the spring of 1878, as Hasan Kayalı states, "ten deputies regarded as dangerous were ordered to leave Istanbul for their hometowns" and "none of them were charged with a specific offense". According to Hasan Kayalı, "in any case, Abdulhamid could hardly be accused of anti-Arab bias".¹⁴¹ Abdulhamid II's methodology eclipsed that of his predecessors, as he perpetuated Ottoman supremacy in Arab regions. He further enhanced communication networks through the establishment of a telegraph system and the development of railway transportation.

The world of Islam was dominated by the cultural supremacy of Christian imperialist powers. Missionaries were present everywhere, particularly in Arab provinces, where they called people to Christianity by exploiting the Ottoman Empire's lack of social services, such as health and education. Between 1880-1882, enrolment in foreign schools increased by over 50 percent.¹⁴² Initially, the Ottoman Empire permitted these activities, viewing them as indirectly contributing to the

¹³⁸ Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, Vol. 8, 331.

¹³⁹ Jens Hanssen, *Empire in the City; Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 73.

¹⁴⁰ Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of Late Ottoman History*, 55.

¹⁴¹ Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks Ottomanism Arabism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire 1908-1918*, 27.

¹⁴² Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire Transjordan, 1850-1921*, 137.

region's 'civilizing' aims. However, the Empire soon realized that allowing the promotion of Christianity among Muslims and permitting conversions could jeopardize its legitimacy in the long run, especially given the ongoing political policy of Pan-Islamism.

New Ottoman schools were established with the clear intention of ensuring that Muslim children were not allowed to attend missionary schools. The state took decisive action by closing foreign schools that disobeyed these regulations.¹⁴³ Under Sultan Abdulhamid II, the Ottoman state school system, as mentioned before, rapidly expanded, aiming to provide modern education on par with European missionary schools' curricula, with this network stretching into Transjordan by the 1880s.¹⁴⁴

During his reign, the Ottoman government effectively promoted a strong Muslim identity, significantly restoring religious institutions. An impressive 32.86% of Abdulhamid II's charitable acts were directed to mosques, with 11.49% allocated to *tekkes* and *zaviyes*, while *mektebs* received 8.21% and *medreses* 1.87%.¹⁴⁵ The intertwined nature of education, justice, learning, rites of passage, beliefs, and practices meant that religious identity was far from a private matter; it was a collective construct shaped by societal expectations. This approach ensured that education and religious indoctrination reinforced a clear distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims, leaving no room for non-belief, heretics or heterodox schools. In other words, there was no room for any other school from the Sunni Islam.

¹⁴³ Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire Transjordan, 1850-1921*, 143.

¹⁴⁴ Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire Transjordan, 1850-1921*, 154.

¹⁴⁵ Nadir Özbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyal Devlet*, 185.

The success of this comprehensive approach to religious identity was reinforced by influential Ottoman intellectuals who championed the Sultan's policies. Ahmet Midhat was a prominent Ottoman intellectual, writer, journalist, and publisher, widely recognized for founding *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, a pivotal publication during Abdulhamid II's reign. He confidently championed the Sultan's policies through numerous articles and occupied various official positions. As one of the Sultan's trusted advisors, Midhat viewed the Hamidian regime as a system that provided freedoms within well-defined legal boundaries. He assertively distinguished between autocracy and Islamic despotism, arguing that while Sultan Hamid enforced Islamic principles of justice within a framework of legal autocracy, he established an authoritarian regime that he believed was fundamentally different from absolute rule.¹⁴⁶

Additionally, the identity concept of Ottomanism thrived under Sultan Abdulhamid II's leadership. He skilfully employed patriotic discourse to forge direct connections between the empire's leadership and its subjects, eliminating the need for intermediaries. The medals distributed during this period were a clear reflection of this strategy. Although there were occasions when the Sultan struggled to connect directly with his subjects, he adeptly formed alliances with Sufi orders in the provinces, reaching out to Arab populations through the sentiments of Sufism. By forging friendships with prominent Arab Sufi leaders, he effectively implemented his Pan-Islamism policy with remarkable success.

Another field that he successfully implemented was the legal reforms, which were less extensive than his educational initiatives but still served the empire.

¹⁴⁶ Ahmet Mithat Efendi, "Hürriyet-i Kanuniye", *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, July 4, 1878. "İstibdad", *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, July 3, 1878.

Despite having begun before his reign, the completion and implementation of the *Mecelle* (the Ottoman Civil Code) continued under his reign. He expanded commercial laws and courts to facilitate trade and economic development, and continued to implement the Ottoman Land Code of 1858, addressing rights and land registration throughout the empire. His reign saw efforts to standardize provincial legal administration and maintain the system of mixed courts that had jurisdiction over cases involving foreign nationals, though he attempted to limit their scope as part of his efforts to reassert Ottoman sovereignty.

3.3 Pan-Islamism as performative policy: The caliphate and imperial legitimacy

This section examines the role of Pan-Islamism during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II as a multifaceted phenomenon that functioned both as a religious ideology and as a strategic instrument of foreign policy. More specifically, this analysis will explore how Pan-Islamism functioned as a political performance, as identified by performance studies; a series of enacted behaviors designed to create rather than reflect imperial legitimacy.

The emergence of Pan-Islamism as a defining characteristic of Abdulhamid II's reign represented a fundamental shift in Ottoman political strategy. As Francois Georgeon stated, it was “policy that significantly distinguished the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II from the Tanzimat era was Pan-Islamism.”¹⁴⁷ This political initiative aimed to unify Muslims worldwide under a single religious authority, fostering a collective Islamic identity. Traditionally, scholarship has approached Pan-Islamism through the frameworks of political ideology, diplomatic strategy, and religious

¹⁴⁷ Francois Georgeon, “II.Abdülhamid ve İslam”, 47.

revival. However, this study proposes analysing Sultan Abdulhamid II's Pan-Islamic policies through the lens of performance studies, as conceptualized by Richard Schechner. According to Schechner, “any action that is framed, presented, highlighted, or displayed is a performance,”¹⁴⁸ offering a framework that reveals how political authority in the modern era increasingly operates through performative legitimation rather than solely through traditional modes of governance. This performative approach allows us to examine Pan-Islamism not merely as an abstract ideological concept, but as a series of carefully orchestrated political performances designed to create and maintain imperial authority in an era of unprecedented challenges.

Before delving into the causes and developments of Pan-Islamism during the reign of Abdulhamid II, it is vital to examine the existing literature and its implications. Numerous works, often contradictory, address Pan-Islamism as a political ideology, asserting its emergence in the late 1870s and its promotion by Sultan Abdulhamid II. This literature can be categorized into two distinct phases. The first phase comprises studies conducted by European scholars in the early 20th century, including influential figures such as C.H. Becker, A. Vambery, Von Eckardt, K. Vollers, Arnold Toynbee, and Dwinght E. Lee. These scholars established the foundational discussions on Pan-Islamism. The second phase, which gained momentum in the late 20th century, particularly after the 1980s, features scholars who critically engage with the earlier works while exploring archival documents. Prominent scholars in this phase include Nikki Keddie, Azmi Özcan,

¹⁴⁸ Richard Schechner, "What is Performance Studies?", 2.

Metin Hülagu, Jacob M. Landau, Tufan Buzpınar, and Gökhan Çetinsaya, who have made vital contributions to this field.

In the vast literature on Pan-Islamism¹⁴⁹, Orientalist Carl Heinrich C.H. Becker stands out with his detailed analysis, asserting that the movement seeks to unify all Muslims globally and create an Islamic empire.¹⁵⁰ He identifies this aspiration as a fundamental tendency within Islamic thought. Becker convincingly argues that during Abdulhamid II's reign, Pan-Islamism evolved into a reaction against the rising power of the West, shifting from an initiative designed to promote harmony among Muslims against European influence to a mere assertive stance. He skilfully distinguishes between "Pan-Islamist thought," which resides at the core of every Muslim's belief system, and "Pan-Islamism", which has developed into a distinct and actionable movement. Becker also underscores the pivotal role of religious orders in cultivating the Pan-Islamist ideology, asserting that they not only nurture Islamic ideals but also actively contribute to the movement through their local impact.

Arminius Vambery¹⁵¹, a Hungarian Orientalist, definitively states that Pan-Islamism highlights the Muslim community's mobilization for a political and religious jihad against non-believers. He emphasizes that Pan-Islamism reflects a

¹⁴⁹ C. H. Becker, "Panislamismus", 231-51 (reprinted from *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, VII [1904], 169-92); Nikki R. Keddie, "Pan-Islam as Proto-Nationalism", *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Mar., 1969), 17-28; Arminius Vambery, "Pan-Islamism", *Nineteenth Century*, LX (Oct., 1906), 547-58; Edward G. Browne, "Pan-Islamism", *Lectures on the History of the Nineteenth Century*, Ed. F. Kirkpatrick, Cambridge, 1902, 306-30; Von Eckardt, "Pan-Islamism and the Islamic Mission", *Deutsche Rundschau*, Vol. XCVIII, (1899); K. Vollers, "On Pan-Islamism", *Preussische Jahrbücher*, Vol. CXVII, (July 1904); Dwinght E. Lee, "The Origins of Panislamism", *American Historical Review*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Jan., 1942), 278-287; Arnold Toynbee, "The Ineffectiveness of Panislamism"; C. H. Becker, "Islampolitik", *Die Welt des Islams*, Bd. 3, H. 2 (Aug. 15, 1915), 101-120.

¹⁵⁰ C. H. Becker, "Panislamismus", 231-51.

¹⁵¹ Arminius Vambery, "Pan-Islamism", 547-58.

historic unity among Muslims that thrived during the time of the Prophet Muhammad. However, following the Prophet's death, the Islamic world divided, leading various groups to disregard one another. The resurgence of Pan-Islamism in response to Europe's growing dominance and the transformative conditions of modern transportation is a crucial phenomenon. Vambéry asserts that this modern expression of Pan-Islamism emerged when Muslims recognized the threats posed by European advancements, positioning it as a necessary resistance against European efforts to modernize and civilize Muslim territories in Asia.

Nikki Keddie¹⁵², in her influential study from 1969, compellingly describes Pan-Islamism as a significant reaction to Western imperialism. She argues that it represents a pivotal transition from Islamic to nationalist loyalties, coining the term “nationalism before nationalism” to label its proto-nationalist nature. While many commonly perceive Pan-Islamism as a unifying force for all believers against non-Islamic entities and a loyalty to a single caliph, Keddie confidently asserts that it aligns more closely with modern national movements than with earlier Islamic sentiments. She rightfully credits Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani as a key ideologist behind Pan-Islamism, highlighting his focus on traditional Islamic ties alongside anti-imperialism and proto-nationalism.

Azmi Özcan presents a compelling case in his crucial work, where he meticulously examined Ottoman, English, Indian, and Pakistani archives, evaluating letters, official documents, and other vital sources. His research reveals that Indian Muslims have always been deeply invested in the fate of the caliphate and the Ottoman Empire. While they did not adopt an overtly aggressive stance towards

¹⁵² Nikki R. Keddie, “Pan-Islam as Proto-Nationalism”, 17-28.

Britain, their pursuit of independence, supported by Pan-Islamist policies, was unwavering. Pan-Islamism, therefore, played a critical role in fostering and enhancing nationalist sentiments within Indian society. Özcan convincingly argues that Pan-Islamism began during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II, gaining momentum following territorial losses in the Russo-Ottoman War, the French occupation of Tunisia in 1881, and the British invasion of Egypt in 1882. These pivotal events propelled Sultan Abdulhamid II to pursue unification among Islamic nations in Asia and Africa, aiming to maintain the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and to resist European colonial encroachments.¹⁵³ Accordingly, Özcan asserts that Pan-Islamism became an official state policy during Sultan Abdulhamid II's reign, representing a determined strategy to preserve Muslim unity against external threats.

Gökhan Çetinsaya highlights a defining aspect of Sultan Abdulhamid II's regime from 1876 to 1908, his profound emphasis on Islam and Muslim solidarity, unified through the powerful notion of Pan-Islamism. This ideology served as a beacon of hope, promoting a religious propaganda that aimed to unite Muslim subjects beyond the borders of the Ottoman Empire. In this sense, Pan-Islamism emerged as a collective sentiment among Muslims in their courageous stand against Western imperialism, infused with a spirit of nationalism that transcended ethnic divisions under the unifying shelter of Islam. Çetinsaya defines these sentiments as cultural, embracing a shared identity rather than merely a political agenda, different from the 20th century concept of nationalism.

Metin Hülagu acknowledges that Pan-Islamism became an official policy during Sultan Abdulhamid II's reign, aimed at fostering *ittihad-ı İslam* (Unity of

¹⁵³ Azmi Özcan, *Panislamizm, Osmanlı Devleti, Hindistan Müslümanları, İngiltere (1877-1914)*, 35.

Islam). However, he traces its roots even further back, demonstrating that the seeds of this movement were sown before Abdulhamid II's time.¹⁵⁴ Jacob Landau reinforces this, revealing that Pan-Islamist activism was emerging in the 19th century, with reactions from the West to the Islamic resurgence already taking shape.¹⁵⁵ He emphasizes the political and economic dimensions of Pan-Islamism, rather than a religious standpoint, positioning Abdulhamid II and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani as pivotal figures in this quest for unity. Most significantly, Landau argues that the Ottoman state sought to guide the Muslim world toward a political union, embracing "a response had (at least, initially) a character of religious anti-imperialism".¹⁵⁶

There is a shared understanding among scholars about the effectiveness of Pan-Islamism as a rallying cry against European adversaries, yet some contend it was an ambitious dream. K. Vollers¹⁵⁷ argues that, contrary to the threat that Pan-Islamism was seen as by other European powers, the Ottoman Empire had a unique opportunity to unite the Islamic world under Ottoman leadership thanks to its religious legitimacy and geopolitical position through the caliphate. According to Vollers, Abdulhamid II's Pan-Islam policy was not merely defensive rhetoric but a practical strategy to strengthen the empire economically, militarily, and politically through Islamic solidarity.

Upon closer examination of these studies, we come up with an outcome that the aftermath of the 1877-78 Russo-Ottoman War marks the first powerful

¹⁵⁴ Metin Hülagü, *Pan-İslamist Faaliyetler*, (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1994); please also see Metin Hülagü, *İngiliz Gizli Belgelerine Göre Milli Mücadelede İslamcılık ve Turancılık, İslam Birliği ve Mustafa Kemal*, (Beyan Yayınları, 2008).

¹⁵⁵ Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization*, (Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹⁵⁶ Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization*, 9.

¹⁵⁷ K. Vollers, "On Pan-Islamism", *Preussische Jahrbücher*, Vol. CXVII, (July 1904).

expression of Pan-Islamism. This concept emerged from a European perspective, indicating a belief that Muslims could not generate their own unity, echoing the Eurocentric notion towards Muslims, cultivating the belief that Muslims lacked the capacity to generate solidarity and ideological background. Therefore, they modelled the European notion of Pan-Slavism. Edward G. Browne¹⁵⁸ asserts that no Arabic term directly or linguistically corresponds to Pan-Islamism, underscoring it as a modern political response to Western imperialism, championed by Abdulhamid II to inspire solidarity among Muslims worldwide. In essence, Pan-Islamism transformed into a compelling political concept during Sultan Hamid's reign, serving as a diplomatic instrument to strengthen his control over the Empire. The Sultan's memoirs reflect a vision of utilizing religion as a tool for governance. After the initial years of his reign, Abdulhamid II dedicated himself to establishing a powerful autocratic rule while continuing the transformative Tanzimat reforms, striving tirelessly to rejuvenate the Empire.

Şükrü Hanioglu¹⁵⁹, on the other hand, argues that Abdulhamid II effectively used Islam to legitimize his rule. he mentions significant challenges, as certain members of the *ulama* openly opposed his authority and advocated for reforms. While influential figures like sheik Zafir al-Madani championed Pan-Islamism with Abdulhamid II as the caliph, the dissent within the *ulama* indicated that Pan-Islamism was interpreted in diverse ways and was often employed as a political tool. The presence of both supporters and opponents of Abdulhamid II suggests that Pan-Islamism was not a monolithic ideology but instead a complex set of ideas that different groups interpreted differently.

¹⁵⁸ Edward G. Browne, "Pan-Islamism", 2.

¹⁵⁹ Şükrü Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, (Oxford University Press, 1995)).

While these scholarly contributions have established valuable foundations for understanding Pan-Islamism, they have predominantly focused on its ideological content and political outcomes. What remains less examined is how Pan-Islamic policies functioned as what Schechner terms 'performances', the actions that do not merely reflect political reality but actively create it. As Schechner observes, performance studies examine 'the behaviour' of political phenomena, asking 'how, when, and by whom' they were created and 'how they interact with those who view' them, rather than treating them as static ideological constructs.¹⁶⁰

To understand how Pan-Islamism functioned as a performative political strategy during Abdulhamid II's reign, it is essential first to examine the historical evolution of the caliphate institution itself. The transformation of the caliphal role from its early Islamic foundations to its Ottoman appropriation reveals a gradual shift from purely religious authority toward what can be understood as performative political legitimization.

The origins of Pan-Islamism can be traced back to the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, which marked a pivotal moment as the Ottoman caliph began asserting religious authority over Muslims in regions where political dominion had been relinquished. In the aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878, with limited support from Western powers, the Ottoman Empire sought legitimacy within the Islamic world. Pan-Islamism thus served a dual purpose: It aimed to unify the subjects of the empire through a caliphate policy domestically, while simultaneously advocating for global Muslim solidarity in the realm of foreign affairs.

¹⁶⁰ Richard Schechner, "What is Performance Studies?", 3.

Primarily, Pan-Islamism emerged as a political movement during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, designed to revive Islamic identity and harness the unifying potential of ideology among the global Muslim population. Ideologically, Pan-Islamism can be interpreted as a revival of traditional values or a return to the esteemed qualities of Islamic customs, while politically, it functioned as a counter-movement against European pressures and interventions that sought to modernize the Ottoman Empire and influence internal politics. The term “Pan-Islamism” was first introduced during the Treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca,¹⁶¹ which was signed between the Ottoman Empire and Russia in 1774. In this respect, confronted with the potential loss of territories that predominantly housed Muslim populations, the Sublime Porte revitalized the caliphate, asserting its right to protect Muslims living under Christian rule.

What is a caliphate? The caliphate is a term used to refer to the position of the ruler who became the head of the Islamic state after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632. The term originates from the root "halaf" in Arabic, meaning “successor, deputy, who came later.”¹⁶² After Hz. Muhammad’s demise, he did not designate a successor, leaving the prospect to the Muslim community to depict their leaders. Hz. Abu Bakr was chosen as the first caliph of Islam, followed by Hz. Omar, Hz. Osman, and finally, Hz. Ali, “four rightly guided caliphs”.¹⁶³ During the

¹⁶¹ The Treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca, concluded at the end of the Russo-Ottoman War, established the autonomy of Crimea. Through this treaty, Russia was permitted to establish embassies in selected locations and granted a protectorate over Orthodox Christians. For the Ottoman Empire, this treaty has been regarded as a political failure, as it resulted in a significant loss of international prestige. Although the Empire did not suffer extensive territorial losses, it compromised its historical dominance over the Black Sea.

¹⁶² Süleyman Uludağ, “Halife”, 299-300.

¹⁶³ The title of the caliph was born as a highly political and worldly designation for the head of the Muslim state. While the caliph did not have to be a scholar, he was bound to uphold God’s law in the world. However, the position carried a strong religious character, as it

Umayyad period (661-750), the center of Islam shifted from Medina to Damascus, where Muawiyah began to use the title of caliph. When the Abbasids (750-1258) came onto the stage of history and deposed the Umayyads, they continued to use the title of Muslim head of state without any legitimacy problem.¹⁶⁴ However, as Islam spread, the movements opposing the central authority emerged along with the rise of independent Muslim states – such as the Andalusian Umayyad State (756-1031), the Fatimids (909-1171), the Ghaznavids (923-1086) and the Seljuks (1037-1194) – a legitimacy issue arose in many geographies that we today call Spain, Morocco, Tunisia, Iran, Egypt, Syria, Afghanistan and Anatolia. “The idea of the caliph as successor to the Prophet, with all its intrinsic spiritual trappings, died out within a few centuries of the Prophet’s death. As a result, any Muslim ruler could use the appellation in a secular context with the obvious proviso that he rules according to Islamic law.”¹⁶⁵

implied a direct link to the Prophet Muhammad, be it the leader of the Muslim community. He was known as the *amir al-mu'minin* (commander of the faithful), which encompassed both political and military authority, referring to his worldly and pragmatic power. Throughout history, this inherent meaning continued to be utilized to meet a rational need; should there be a Muslim society, they also required a head of state. Please see Sir Thomas W. Arnold, “The Caliphate”, 39-40.

¹⁶⁴ Al-Mawardi (972-1058) stands as a pivotal figure of Islamic political thought who crafted his work *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyah* during the period of decline for the Abbasid caliphate. In his seminal text, he boldly defined how he both centralized religious and worldly authorities in the hands of the caliph, declaring that “The caliphate is the proxy of the Prophet in protecting religion and the world.” Then, he unequivocally made it clear that society has a fundamental duty to obey and support the caliph, listing his authority and responsibilities in 10 distinct points and emphasizing his central position. At a time when the prestige and power of the caliphate withered, the caliph's worldly duties were gradually forgotten, becoming more confined to the religious sphere. Al-Mawardi aimed to demonstrate to the entire society, more importantly, to the local dynasties holding power, that the caliphate was not merely a religious institution but also a critical state administrative apparatus. Please see Ahmet Güner, “Mawardi’nin Hilafet Kuramının Tarihsel Arka Planına Bir Bakış (II)”, 239-241.

¹⁶⁵ Saad Omar Khan, “The ‘Caliphate Question’: British Views and Policy toward Pan-Islamic Politics and the End of the Ottoman Caliphate”, 4.

The Ottoman appropriation of the caliphate title represented a pivotal moment in Islamic political history. Until the end of the Abbasid era, the caliph and the head of state were always held in the same hand. This changed dramatically when the Mongols obliterated the Abbasid State and captured Baghdad in 1258. The caliph sought refuge in Cairo, which was under the control of the Mamluks at the time. Lacking legitimacy in the Islamic world, the Mamluks, who were made up of slave soldiers, embraced the caliph and offered him protection, which in turn solidified their status as the legitimate guardians of the Haramain and the caliphate.

This period in history marks the division of the caliphate and Sultanate into two distinct entities, a situation that prevailed until Yavuz Sultan Selim's decisive campaign in Egypt in 1516. By conquering Egypt, Yavuz not only reunited the caliphate and Sultanate under a unified sovereignty but also set the stage for this rift to endure until the eighteenth century. The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca established the precedent that the Ottoman Sultan retained religious authority over Muslims in territories that had been lost politically, thereby transforming the caliphate from a ceremonial institution into an active tool of transnational Islamic leadership.

This reiteration transformed the caliphate from a largely ceremonial institution into what performance studies would recognize as an active political performance. A 'framed, presented, highlighted' assertion of authority that transcended geographical boundaries. This performative pattern established at Küçük Kaynarca would reach its culmination during Abdulhamid II's reign through various manifestations: The ceremonial distribution of gifts and financial aid to distant *tekkes* and *zaviyes*, the strategic elevation of Arab Sufi leaders like Ebu'l Huda es-Seyyadi and Sheik Zafir al-Madani to prominent court positions, and the symbolic construction of the Hejaz Railway as a demonstration of Pan-Islamic solidarity.

The Tanzimat period introduced a significant innovation in the conceptualization of Ottoman leadership that would later inform Pan-Islamist ideology. Another dimension of the Caliph emerged in the Tanzimat. In order to rescue the Ottoman Empire, which was a multicultural and multi-belonging structure, from disintegration, the intelligentsia of the Tanzimat period pleaded that the loyalty of non-Muslim subjects had to be gained. For this reason, a dual definition was made in the Tanzimat, as the Ottoman Sultan was positioned to be the leader of all Ottoman subjects, non-Muslim and Muslim, as the Caliph, to be the leader of all Muslims. Thus, a structure emerged in which the Sultanate and the caliphate were divided into two in the same person. However, the 19th-century Ottoman losses in the Balkans resulted in a newfound interest in fostering the recognition of the Sultan's role as the supreme caliph.¹⁶⁶

Simultaneously, as European Christian states exerted pressure on the Ottoman Empire, the importance of the discourse that the Sultan was the Caliph of all Muslims on earth increased. This dual identity would become essential in Abdulhamid II's later attempts to balance domestic integration with international Islamic leadership.

European recognition of the caliphate's political potential transformed it from a largely symbolic institution into a tool of international relations. From the late 18th century onward, England recognized the unquestionable force of the caliphate institution in international politics. Initially, the British capitalized on the Ottoman caliphate's leverage to strengthen their dominance in India. However, by the 1870s, they shifted their policies towards an understanding that this Muslim population

¹⁶⁶ Sir Thomas W. Arnold, *The Caliphate*, 174.

could be mobilized against them. The discourse was amplified in the British media following George Percy Badger's pivotal report on the Ottoman caliphate, submitted to the Ministry in 1873.¹⁶⁷ Some writers aggressively questioned the legitimacy of the Ottoman caliphate, while others staunchly defended it.

In an article appeared in the newspaper *Times* in 1877, the author George Birdwood writes that “Let the Sultan of Turkey drop their spiritual office, relegate it to the Sherif of Mecca, and become the husbands, each, of one wife at a time, and the Eastern Question will be on the road to solution”.¹⁶⁸ This contribution alone speaks volumes about the mix of orientalist perspective and colonial assumptions implying that the Eastern Question, a diplomatic issue concerning the decline of Ottoman power and resulting in the geopolitical vacuum in the Middle East be it appropriated by the Western powers, could only be resolved through relatively superficial, cultural, and institutional changes rather than addressing the complex geopolitical, economic, and historical factors that were actually at play.

England's ambition to exert influence in Arabia took center stage, particularly with plans to establish an alternative caliphate through the Sharif of Mecca. These discussions deeply unsettled Sultan Hamid, highlighting serious concerns about the Ottoman dynasty's capacity to maintain this crucial title.

¹⁶⁷ Azmi Özcan, “İngiltere’de Hilafet Tartışmaları”, 49-71.

¹⁶⁸ George Birdwood, *Times*, October 10, 1877. Being a former Indian bureaucrat to England, Birdwood published numerous contributions in *Times* underscoring the fabricated nature of the Ottoman Caliphate by arguing that the Sultan's caliphate was not authentic and that Indian Muslims should be informed about the illegitimacy and heretical pretention of it. He strictly suggested that the Sharif of Mecca should be assigned the title of caliph immediately, which would ensure Britain's political interests in the East would be guaranteed in the long run. See, *Times*, June 12, June 25, July 9, October 10, October 15, October 18, 1877.

The concept of the Caliph holding both temporal power and spiritual authority over all Muslims dominated the rise of Pan-Islamic propaganda disseminated by Sultan Abdulhamid II. The emphasis that his one word would mobilize all Muslims would also be the essence of Abdulhamid's caliphate policy because the bluff of the caliphate would provide the manipulation he needed for the Sultan, who was losing power economically, militarily, and politically. The impact that the caliphate would create on the entire Islamic world and the benefits it would provide in this context would be invaluable to his strategies. These Western anxieties would inadvertently validate Abdulhamid II's strategic use of Pan-Islamism as a diplomatic weapon.

The conceptual distinction between the caliphate policy and Pan-Islamism reveals the sophisticated nature of Abdulhamid II's political strategy. Hence, it is important to recognize that Pan-Islamism transcended a mere political endeavour aimed at fostering Islamic unity. It also served as both an internal and external diplomatic strategy and as a reaction to the increasing Western supremacy and imperialism prevalent in the 19th century. In the context of Abdulhamid II's reign, with which Pan-Islamism is predominantly associated, its complexities become increasingly apparent. Notably, while the concepts of Pan-Islamism and the implementation of the caliphate policy, often perceived as synonymous with Abdulhamid II's leadership, are interconnected, they differ fundamentally.¹⁶⁹ The caliphate policy primarily targeted Ottoman citizens within the empire's borders, whereas Pan-Islamism sought to engage all Muslims on a global scale. Thus, Pan-Islamism can also be regarded as a diplomatic tactic in international relations aimed

¹⁶⁹ C. H. Becker, "Panislamismus", 29. Becker points out this idea as an essential intention of Pan-Islamism.

at prolonging the existence of the empire. This multifaceted approach enabled the Sultan to address both domestic legitimacy and international positioning simultaneously.

The historical context of Abdulhamid II's accession to power provides crucial insight into why Pan-Islamism became such an attractive policy option. Upon ascending to the throne during a critically challenging period for the Ottoman Empire, Abdulhamid II encountered numerous internal and external dilemmas. These challenges included economic deterioration, demands from ethnic minorities for increased autonomy and self-determination, as well as European pressure characterized by a strategy of divide and rule. Among these issues, the devastating Russo-Ottoman War represented a particularly pivotal event, resulting in a significant increase in the Muslim population and the loss of two-fifths of Ottoman territories located in the Balkans.¹⁷⁰ These converging crises created the perfect conditions for the emergence of Pan-Islamism as both an ideological framework and a practical political strategy.

Contemporary European observers clearly understood this connection between Ottoman territorial losses and the turn toward Pan-Islamism. An anonymous article, which appeared in the *Times* newspaper on January 19, 1882, describes the political situation of the Ottoman Empire after the Treaty of San Stefano and the conditions that paved the way for Pan-Islamism policies, stating:

When France was crushed in 1871 by Germany, the protection of the Western Powers naturally lost much of its efficacy, and some of the Pashas considered it prudent to make a rapprochement with Russia; but none of them ever thought of seeking support in the Muslim world, and the great mass of the people continued to look to England as the chief protector of the Empire. It was not until the Russian Government had displayed its real policy in the Treaty of San Stefano and the Congress of Berlin had shown Turkey had no

¹⁷⁰ Donald Quataert, *The Age of Reforms...*, 782.

longer any Christian protector. It was not until then that the Turks began to feel that they had nothing to hope from Christendom. The ground was thus prepared for Pan-Islamist theories.¹⁷¹

The Ottoman Empire's loss of support from Western powers is suggested as a factor that steered the state's foreign policy toward unity in the Islamic world. Indeed, both the economic and social difficulties within the empire and the cultural and diplomatic problems encountered outside its borders, as well as the outcomes of the Russo-Ottoman War, led the Ottomans to seek alternative sources of legitimacy and power. The emphasis on the Caliphate, which had been utilized as only a symbolic status until that period, was the most effective solution to meet this need. Because the power that the Caliphate would provide could impact the entire Islamic world, Sultan Abdulhamid II, aware of the strategic implication of this influence, could respond to the demand for a redeemer for Muslims who had come under the rule of the West and the Christian world in particular as a result of territorial losses, ensure his political legitimacy and advance his leadership agility. This was also his most critical and risky bluff. Knowing that he did not have the power to defend himself against a possible Western attack, Abdulhamid II put forward the Muslim unity gathered under his caliphate to deter Europe from such an intervention. Indeed, this policy was successful. It may not have saved the Ottoman Empire from disintegration, but it did prolong its life.¹⁷²

The association of Pan-Islamism with Abdulhamid II is grounded in a range of significant developments, practices, and policies established between 1876 and 1908. Pan-Islamism embodies the principle of unifying religious and political

¹⁷¹ *Times*, January 19, 1882.

¹⁷² Historically, the need for such a unity was highlighted during the Crusades and the Mongol Invasions in the 13th century, ushering the Ottoman sultans to place a greater emphasis on the spiritual significance of the Caliphate.

authority. In the wake of the Russo-Ottoman War, which severely weakened his political power, Abdulhamid II effectively harnessed religious sentiments to reinforce his legitimacy and authority. He achieved this by leveraging the printing press, enhancing transportation networks, and engaging with influential spiritual leaders and institutions, particularly Sufi orders. While religious orders are primarily civil society organizations rather than overtly political entities, they wield considerable influence over local interests related to religion and governance, particularly within the context of the Ottoman Empire. The idealization of Pan-Islamism is particularly evident in the discourse of neo-Sufi orders, which advocate for the equality of all Muslims and the revival of unity among the global Muslim community, reminiscent of the time of the Prophet. These groups not only highlight the distinctions between Islam and non-believers but also foster a strong sense of unity among Muslims. This analysis demonstrates how Pan-Islamism emerged as a rational response to the failure of traditional diplomatic alignments.

In this respect, Pan-Islamism, as conceptualized by Sultan Abdulhamid II, represented a strategic approach to establishing a cohesive identity within a transnational community, aligning with Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities". This framework posits that a nation is a socially constructed entity that individuals perceive themselves as part of. Sultan Abdulhamid II sought to create a nation unified by the collective sentiment of Islam. Thus, Pan-Islamism can be viewed as an endeavour to cultivate an "imagined Islamic community" on a global scale. Anderson asserts that inherent limitations and sovereignty characterize an imagined political community; it possesses definable borders and operates independently of external authority. This perspective is reflective of Sultan Abdulhamid II's objectives with his Pan-Islamist policy. The Sultan aimed to instil

in Muslims the awareness of their interconnectedness through shared faith, thereby transcending geographic boundaries and diminishing the influence of political authorities outside Ottoman Islamic governance. Anderson's framework of a collective sentiment, devoid of centralized political power, parallels the Sultan's efforts to unite individuals under his leadership and within his caliphate.

Contemporary scholarship provides crucial insights into the performative mechanisms through which this 'imagined Islamic community' was constructed. Itzhak Weismann's analysis reveals that Abdulhamid II "devised a new kind of politics which combined elite-cooptation and populism", wherein "religion, however, was not an essential component in this strategy. As other 'modern', ideologies suggested themselves, Abdulhamid had no scruples to add them to his symbolic 'tool kit'."¹⁷³ This assessment aligns with Schechner's understanding that performance functions as "a major site of knowledge and power,"¹⁷⁴ revealing how Pan-Islamism operated not as genuine religious conviction but as a carefully constructed political performance designed to maintain imperial authority in an era of unprecedented challenges.

This collective identity was fostered through shared Islamic beliefs and daily practices, which served to connect individuals. To realize this vision, the politics of *ittihad-ı Islam* were pursued, accompanied by actions to ensure their efficacy. Sufi orders, particularly Sufi sheiks, were assigned the critical role of mobilizing the populace to adhere to Sultan Abdulhamid II's leadership and to uphold the esteemed Ottoman rule within his caliphate. It is crucial to recognize that this approach was

¹⁷³ Itzhak Weissmann, "Abū l-Hudā l-Şayyādī and the Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism", 591.

¹⁷⁴ Richard Schechner, "What is Performance Studies?", 8.

not intended as a proactive policy to incite a global Islamic revolt against imperialism.

In this respect, the eulogies composed by Sufi sheiks, particularly those of Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir, represent the culmination of this performative strategy. These texts functioned not merely as religious literature, but as what Schechner terms 'performances' that actively created rather than simply reflected political reality. Through their writings, these spiritual intermediaries became co-authors of the 'imagined Islamic community' that Abdulhamid II sought to construct. The eulogies served as performative acts that transformed abstract caliphal authority into embodied, lived experience for Muslims across the empire and beyond.

As Weismann's analysis reveals, religion functioned as part of Abdulhamid II's 'symbolic tool kit' rather than as an essential component of governance. The sheiks' literary contributions exemplify this instrumental approach. Their eulogies were carefully orchestrated performances designed to mystify imperial authority while simultaneously making it accessible to diverse Muslim populations. In this context, the texts produced by Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir emerge not as spontaneous expressions of religious devotion, but as sophisticated performative technologies that helped sustain the Ottoman Empire's final attempt at Pan-Islamic legitimacy.

Thus, the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II demonstrates how political authority in the modern era increasingly requires performative legitimation. The convergence of Sufi mysticism, Pan-Islamic ideology, and imperial propaganda created a unique form of governance that, while ultimately unable to prevent the empire's dissolution, pioneered modes of political performance that would echo throughout the 20th century Middle East.

3.4 Sufi orders and Pan-Islamism: Managing peripheries through religious authority

In the final quarter of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire faced significant challenges to its territorial integrity and influence in North Africa, including Tripoli and Benghazi, as well as adjacent areas such as Egypt. This period was characterized by escalating pressures stemming from European imperialism, which sought to expand colonial interests in the region, coupled with the complex interplay of local socio-political dynamics. Historically regarded as the most loyal province of the Ottoman Empire, Tripoli encountered burgeoning Italian interests and occupation intentions during the latter part of the 19th century. Cairo, on the other hand, was under British occupation and emerged as a crucial hub for the Young Turks and Arab dissidents, functioning as a site for refuge, organizational activities, and the dissemination of publications. And Tunis was taken under French power in 1881.

In response to these multifaceted challenges Sultan Abdulhamid II employed a range of strategies aimed at preserving and reinforcing the empire's diminishing authority in these pivotal territories. In this respect, Pan-Islamism assumed a critical role as a unifying ideology in social and political contexts. To augment his influence and prestige within the Islamic world, the Sultan extended invitations to numerous dervishes and *ulamas* from diverse regions globally. This systematic cultivation of religious networks demonstrates what anthropologist Richard Schechner describes as the transformation of political relationships into performative encounters. Rather than relying solely on administrative commands, Abdulhamid II created what performance studies would recognize as 'framed, presented, highlighted' interactions that elevated routine diplomatic contact into ceremonial displays of imperial

authority.¹⁷⁵ He welcomed a significant number of Arab individuals from various territories and appointed them to high-ranking positions, such as secretaries and delegates.¹⁷⁶ Additionally, Sultan Abdulhamid II disseminated religious texts and *Qur'ans* to the broader Muslim community as a demonstration of his patronage and devotion. Sultan Abdulhamid II notably emphasized the titles “Sultan Caliph” and “Emir-ul Muminin” in reference to himself¹⁷⁷, marking substantial steps in the implementation of his Pan-Islamist policies.

He exhibited a particular inclination toward *tarikats* and religious mysticism, fostering intimate relationships with the leaders of Sufi orders. The Yıldız Palace emerged as a pivotal destination for individuals invited from African and Middle Eastern regions. Abdulhamid II sought counsel from these sheiks regarding his peripheral policies in order to retain their loyalty. Ebu'l Huda es-Seyyadi, the leader of the Rufaiyya order, had the opportunity to personally engage with the Sultan and was appointed to the esteemed rank of Rumeli Kazasakerliği in 1885, which is one step below the position of sheik-ul-Islam.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, sources suggest that the Sultan was affiliated with the Shadeliyya order and extended his hospitality to Sheik Muhammad Zafir at his place.¹⁷⁹ He awarded various ranks to the family members of Sheik Zafir in Istanbul, officially assigning them to government institutions. The state confidently took responsibility for covering their educational expenses and related costs. This initiative included Sheik Zafir's family members Abdüsselam

¹⁷⁵ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 2.

¹⁷⁶ For detailed information please see, Tufan Buzpınar, *Abdulhamid II, Islam and Arabs, The Cases of Syria and the Hijaz, 1878- 1882*, (Ph.D. Thesis, Manchester University, 1991); Engin Deniz Akarlı, “Abdulhamid's Islamic Policy in the Arab Provinces”, *Türk Arap İlişkileri; Geçmişte Bugün ve Gelecekte*, (Ankara, 1979), 44-60.

¹⁷⁷ These titles and more will be discussed in Chapter 4 as our central theme.

¹⁷⁸ Azmi Özcan, “EbülHuda”, 390.

¹⁷⁹ Ayşe Osmanoğlu, *Babam Sultan Abdulhamid*, 25.

Zafir, Ömer Zafir, Mahmut Zafir, and Ebubekir Zafir Efendi in the Tribal Schools.¹⁸⁰

The Sultan aimed to foster sentiments inclined toward the Ottoman identity and advocate for his caliphate.¹⁸¹ These appointments reveal the performative nature of imperial authority during this period. By elevating provincial religious figures to positions of prominence within the palace hierarchy, the Sultan was not merely managing personnel but orchestrating what Schechner calls 'the interplay of efficiency, productivity, activity, and entertainment' that characterizes modern political performance.¹⁸² The efficiency of the method for controlling the Muslim population in the empire is enhanced by the sustainability of the system, which provides tangible rewards in return for loyalty, fosters activity through visible appointments and promotions, and entertains by creating an impressive impression in the eyes of the public. The visible success of figures like Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir served as powerful demonstrations to Muslim populations across the empire that loyalty to the Ottoman caliphate could yield tangible rewards.

In this personal networking strategy, Sultan Abdulhamid II also established significant relations with Neo-Sufi orders, recognizing the emerging political and religious dynamics of the period. In response to colonial expansion in North Africa and to the corrupt authoritarianism of Sufism, a significant change observed in the Sufi thought and method in the 18th century. These reformist Sufi trends had been observed as a kind of Sufi revival movement by H. A. R. Gibb, stating that “the most striking of these newer developments was the formation of reformist missionary

¹⁸⁰ Tufan Buzpınar, *Hilafet ve Saltanat*, 182.

¹⁸¹ The forthcoming chapter will provide a comprehensive discussion of both Sufi sheiks, emphasizing their conceptualization of Sultan Abdulhamid II in their writings, particularly in relation to the Pan-Islamic foundations of the endeavor to construct an "imagined Islamic community" under the Ottoman dynasty.

¹⁸² Richard Schechner, “What is Performance Studies?”, 8.

congregations on a strict orthodox basis, but organized on the lines of the Sufi *tarikats*.¹⁸³ According to John O. Voll, these Neo-Sufi brotherhoods have been identified as adherents of Pan-Islamism, referring to the work of Lothrop Stoddard, who was the author of the book *World of Islam* in 1921, as an American historian and eulogist. Stoddard argued in his book that Pan-Islamism had been uncoordinated at the beginning of the 19th century but gained self-consciousness and became systematic in the middle of the 19th century after it collaborated with these major reformist Sufi brotherhoods.¹⁸⁴ What made them reformist was their “rejection the idea of a union with God and postulated instead a union with the spirit of the Prophet Mohammad as the only possible and legitimate goal for the Sufi”¹⁸⁵, as illustrated by Fazlur Rahman. Another characteristic of neo-Sufism was the elimination of antinomian trends, condemnation of heresies, and religious innovations.¹⁸⁶

This reformist orientation of neo-Sufism likely drew the attention of Sultan Abdulhamid II, as he sought to consolidate his Pan-Islamic policies and expand Ottoman influence within the region. Since they expressed strong objections to the colonial administrations imposed by imperialist powers in their areas, they were actively and influentially involved in organizing their societies. Abdulhamid II's engagement with these reformist movements illustrates how political authority adapts to changing circumstances through performative strategies. Rather than attempting to control these orders through direct administrative means, the Sultan recognized their potential as what performance studies would term 'networks' that

¹⁸³ Gibb, H. A. R., *Mohammedanism, An Historical Survey*, 130-131.

¹⁸⁴ John O. Voll, “Neo-Sufism: Reconsidered Again”, 316.

¹⁸⁵ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 206.

¹⁸⁶ Yousef Bennaji and Ghulam Shams-ur-Rehman, “Neo-Sufism: A Case Study of the Sanusiyah Order of North Africa and Sahara”, *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. XXXII, No. 1, (2011), 59-60.

could extend Ottoman influence through shared spiritual and political commitments. This approach reflects Weismann's observation that the Sultan operated through a 'symbolic tool kit' that could incorporate diverse ideological elements as circumstances required.¹⁸⁷

A prominent example of Neo-Sufi movement is the Sanusi Order, founded by Muhammad bin Ali al-Sanusi (1787-1859) and rooted in the reformist tradition of Ahmad Ibn Idris. Spanning from North Africa to the Hijaz, the relationship between the Sanusi order and the Ottoman central authority could be characterized by pragmatic cooperation. According to Dina Le Gall, “From the Ottoman perspective, the Sanusiyya was an enigma. As a young, Cyrenaica-based Orthodox revivalist brotherhood, it could have become an ally or instrument in an Ottoman-inspired Pan-Islamic campaign, or a partner or agent in ruling an isolated and unfamiliar province.”¹⁸⁸ In other words, the Sanusi maintained a degree of autonomy while the Ottomans sought to fortify their influence within the region.

The Senusiyya movement played a significant role in promoting religious education and social cohesion within their communities by establishing *tekkes* where adherents were educated in the tenets of Islam. As Fazlur Rahman states, in addition to spiritual instruction, the Senusis also prioritized military training, equipping members with weaponry and combat skills. This initiative was complemented by encouragement in agricultural practices and the arts, reflecting a holistic approach to community development. The Senusis had found his supporters mainly on the battlefield against the domination of European nations in the region, and played vital

¹⁸⁷ Itzhak Weissmann, “Abū l-Hudā l-Şayyādī and the Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism”, 591.

¹⁸⁸ Michel Le Gall, “The Ottoman Government and The Senusiyya: A Reappraisal”, 92.

role in the integration of separate geographical units and development of national cohesion among the Bedouin tribes of the region until the establishment of Libyan federal state in 1951 by the proclaimed King of Libya, Idris the grandson of the founder of the *tarik*at, Sayyad Muhammed.¹⁸⁹

During the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II, Senusiyya aimed to foster peace within the Trablusgarb desert while simultaneously establishing a militant organization to safeguard their opposition, initially focused on French colonial incursions, later extending to confrontations with Italian and British forces in Egypt. As cited by Le Gall, there are archival records of Senusi appealing for military support to the Ottoman during the Ottoman-Russian War, which has been interpreted as “a ploy to test the order’s military footing”¹⁹⁰.

Furthermore, it is notable that the Senusiyya’s stance towards Ottoman sovereignty was characterized by a lack of recognition, as highlighted by Rahman. He claims that Sultan Hamid closely monitored the activities of the Senusis, demonstrating a strategic approach to regional dynamics. In an attempt to establish a balanced relationship, he extended gifts to the sheik, motivated by his rapport with Sheik Zafir. According to Kemal Karpat, the Senusi movement, upon realizing the Ottoman Empire’s capacity to encounter French colonial ambitions in the Sahara and North Africa, sought to establish closer ties with Abdulhamid II. In response, Abdulhamid II strategically opted to leverage the Senussis’ influence in the region to bolster Ottoman interests.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Yousef Bennaji and Ghulam Shams-ur-Rehman, “Neo-Sufism: A Case Study of the Sanusiyah Order of North Africa and Sahara”, 65.

¹⁹⁰ Michel Le Gall, “The Ottoman Government and The Senusiyya: A Reappraisal”, 93.

¹⁹¹ Kemal Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, 46.

The *Times* newspaper published an article on March 22, 1900, analyzing Sultan Abdulhamid II's strategic initiatives aimed at expanding Ottoman influence in Africa. The article reported that the Sultan dispatched special delegations to the Wadat region, successfully securing the recognition of local rulers regarding the supremacy of the Ottoman caliphate. Furthermore, it emphasizes that the Turkish flag had been raised in territories far removed from the Ottoman heartland, highlighting the diplomatic achievements of the Sultan's policies. The article also noted the recognition of the Ottoman Sultan's title of caliphate by Hakim Rabbah, the ruler of Chad, underscoring the Ottomans' diplomatic success in the African continent. This achievement was attributed to the alliance formed with the Senusis, who sought to liberate themselves from Christian colonial domination and rallied in support of both the Ottoman Empire and the principles of Pan-Islamism.¹⁹² Thus, this article serves as a significant scholarly resource that illustrates the perceptions and apprehensions of the European press at the time regarding the Ottoman Empire's diplomatic activities and geopolitical strategies in Africa. In addition, the Senusi example and the existence of many other Neo-Sufi reformist Sufi movements, which deserve to be investigated, illustrate the complexities of political alliances and their strategic preference of forming privileged alliances with Sheik Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir in navigating these challenges.

In Ottoman politics, the integration of Islamic themes into governmental policies and the support of Sufi orders as instruments of social control were long-standing practices. However, Sultan Abdulhamid II advanced this approach by positioning Pan-Islamism as a dominant political ideology, akin to state doctrine. It is

¹⁹² *The Times*, "Panislamism in Africa", March 22, 1900.

important to recognize that he adeptly employed intermediaries to facilitate direct communication with his subjects, a method frequently obstructed by the stringent bureaucracy imposed by the Tanzimat reforms. Consequently, the Sufi orders emerged as vital mechanisms for establishing a connection with his subjects and cultivating their emotional and mental allegiance. Ultimately, Abdulhamid II sought to instil loyalty to his personal authority rather than to the empire itself. As Weismann notes, the Sultan's approach represented 'a new kind of politics which combined elite-cooptation and populism' that extended far beyond traditional diplomatic channels. The recognition of Ottoman caliphal authority by distant African rulers, as reported in *The Times*, demonstrates how performative politics could create political realities that transcended the empire's actual military or economic reach.¹⁹³

Sultan Abdulhamid II recognized the importance of public opinion during his reign and sought to leverage it to reinforce his absolute authority. His rule relied on three foundational principles: First, the mystification of politics, second, the depiction of the ruler as the singular embodiment of political authority; and third, the mystification of the ruler characterized by strategic visibility.¹⁹⁴ These principles align remarkably with performance studies' understanding of how political authority operates in the modern era. Schechner's observation that performance studies examines 'questions of embodiment, action, behavior, and agency' provides insight into how Abdulhamid II's strategic invisibility functioned as a form of political performance. By limiting his public appearances to carefully choreographed religious

¹⁹³ Itzhak Weissmann, "Abū l-Hudā l-Şayyādī and the Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism", *Arabica* 54, March 10, 2007.

¹⁹⁴ Cengiz Kırılı, *The Struggle over the Space: Coffeehouses of Ottoman İstanbul 1780-1845*, Ph.D Thesis (unpublished, 2001).

ceremonies, the Sultan transformed his rare visibility into powerful performative moments that enhanced rather than diminished his authority.

In contrast to Mahmud II, Sultan Hamid chose to cultivate a certain level of invisibility in his governance and constructed his legitimacy on this approach. Michel Foucault posits that public opinion can only emerge when it is discursively constructed, serving as an epistemological framework that categorizes perceptions and conceptualizations.¹⁹⁵ Consequently, Abdulhamid II emerges as an enigmatic figure, predominantly perceived through the writings that chronicled his reign and character.

It has been suggested that, as noted in the works of Sheik Zafir and Ebu'l Huda, the Sultan commissioned Sufi sheiks to compose eulogies extolling his virtues and governance, thereby generating a favourable and almost reverential public image.¹⁹⁶ These commissioned texts represent a crucial performative approach in Abdulhamid II's political strategy. The eulogies functioned as what Schechner describes as performances that “do not ‘read’ an action” but rather create new political realities through their very existence.¹⁹⁷ In other words, in the traditional approach, these texts are seen as propaganda tools that reflect the Sultan's power, reading existing authority. However, the performative tune approach sees them as performative tools that actually construct political reality at the moment these eulogies are written and circulated. They serve a performative function, not only defining the authority of the Sultan but also actively producing and reinforcing it. By

¹⁹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, (Pantheon Books, 1972).

¹⁹⁶ According to Butrus Abu- Manneh, the sheikh Ebu'l-Huda and the sheikh Zafir were both asked to write texts during their Sufi activities, 140 and 150. See Ebu'l-Huda's biography in Tuwairani, pp. 41ff; and Muhammed Zafir, *al-Nur al-Şati* (Istanbul, A.H. 1301), the title page.

¹⁹⁷ Richard Schechner, “What is Performance Studies?”, 3.

transforming abstract caliphal authority into literary celebration, these works helped construct what Weismann identifies as the Sultan's comprehensive 'symbolic tool kit', a collection of performative instruments designed to maintain imperial legitimacy across diverse Muslim populations.

The phenomenon of public opinion was initially identified during the rule of Mahmud II and was subsequently adopted and expanded upon by his successors. The strategies implemented during the Tanzimat reform period further facilitated the understanding and cultivation of public opinion within Ottoman society. While Sultan Mahmud II endeavoured to re-establish the loyalty of both his Muslim and non-Muslim subjects, Abdulhamid II appeared to primarily focus on the Muslim community of the Ottoman Empire, aiming to foster a compassionate and nurturing image of the Sultan among all Muslim subjects. He exhibited a reluctance to engage in public ceremonies, attending only the *Cuma Selamlığı* (the Sultan's procession to the mosque for the Friday prayer) and the *Bayram Namazı* (the morning prayer on the first day of a religious feast). Rather than cultivating direct personal relationships with his subjects, he frequently distributed medals as tokens¹⁹⁸ of allegiance and financed the construction of public buildings, as well as the establishment of new schools, particularly *tekkes* and *zaviyes*.

In this context, the Sultan endeavoured to engage with his most remote subjects through the association with Sufi sheiks. Gumushanevi¹⁹⁹ was one such

¹⁹⁸ For a comprehensive work on the medals please see, Edhem Eldem, *Pride and Privilege: A History of Ottoman Orders, Medals and Decorations* (Ottoman Bank Archives & Research Center, 2004).

¹⁹⁹ Sheik Ahmed Ziyaeddin Gumushanevi was a Naqshibandi sheik, who came from the canal of Mevlana Halid. He was born in 1813 in Gumushane, where he gained his name. He was a writer, religious teacher, sheik and the author of a very important book, *Ramuz El-Hadis*, which was considered as the last and the great edifice of knowledge of the Hadith. For the biography of Gumushanevi, please see, Fevzi Efendi, *Hadiyetu'l-Halidin fi Menakib*

sheik who frequently visited the Sultan for amicable discussions. This relationship prompted Hamid Algar to assert that Gumushanevi was a close confidant of Sultan Abdulhamid II.²⁰⁰ The connection between the sheik and the Sultan was further solidified by Gumushanevi's initiative to organize his students to resist the Russian forces during the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877.²⁰¹

The Sultan strategically employed a comprehensive network of gifts for special occasions (ihsan). As presented in the accompanying table, the *tekkes* received 11% of the Sultan's budget designated for pious foundations and charitable initiatives.²⁰² Abdulhamid II systematically allocated this budget to all *tekkes* functioning under Ottoman rule, including those situated in Africa and the Middle East, without regard for the specific *tarikats*. This comprehensive gift distribution system exemplifies what performance studies recognizes as the material dimension of political performance. The Sultan's systematic allocation of resources created tangible networks of obligation and gratitude that extended far beyond the empire's administrative reach. These gifts functioned as performative acts that transformed abstract imperial authority into concrete relationships, demonstrating how political power in the modern era requires constant re-enactment through symbolic exchanges rather than relying solely on traditional hierarchical structures.

Kutb el-Arifin, (Istanbul, 1313/1895); İrfan Gündüz, *Gümüşhanevi Ahmed Ziyaeddin, Hayatı, Eserleri, Tarikat Anlayışı ve Halidiyye Tarikatı*, (Istanbul, 1984); T. Zarcone, "Remarques sur le rôle sociopolitique et la filiation historique des Şeyh Nakşbendi dans la Turquie contemporaine", *Naqshbandis*, (Istanbul-Paris, 1990), pp. 416-420; *Ahmed Ziyaeddin Gümüşhanevi- Sempozyum Bildirileri*, (Istanbul, 1992).

²⁰⁰ Butrus Abu-Manneh, "Shaykh Ahmed Ziya'uddin El-Gumushanevi and The Ziya'l-Khalidi Sub-Order", 156.

²⁰¹ Hamid Algar, *Nakşibendilik*, 48.

²⁰² Nadir Özbek, *Osmanlı...*, 162.

For instance, in 1303 AH (1886 CE), Abdulhamid II commissioned the restoration of the order of Seyyid Abdülkadir-i Geylani in Medina.²⁰³ Additionally, the Mevlevis received their share of these allocations; in 1305 (1888), the Mevlevi *tekke* in İzmit underwent renovation funded by the Ottoman state, with an edict instructing the provision of all necessary support for the restoration efforts.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, Sultan Abdulhamid II prioritized engagement with smaller religious orders that were geographically distant from the center, thereby enhancing the Sultan's presence in these areas. He financed the restoration of the tomb of the Rufaiyya pir in Basra, located in Northern Iraq, in 1304 (1886), which prompted the nakib of Basra to convey his gratitude to the Sultan.²⁰⁵

As previously mentioned, it was essential during Abdulhamid II's reign not only to distribute gifts to dervishes but also to facilitate the restoration of religious structures, such as *tekkes* and mosques. The Sultan's initiatives aimed to extend this system into the most remote regions of the empire by empowering influential local figures, including aghas, notables, and imams within the Muslim community. In particular, Abdulhamid II emphasized the significance of the *tarikats* in the Arabian Peninsula to counteract counterfeit religious organizations, such as false mezhebs, and to address nationalist and separatist movements.

The Sultan held comprehensive authority over all religious institutions, as established by the first constitution of the empire in 1876 (*Kanun-i Esasi*). This control was of paramount importance, particularly as many individuals, including some of his closest relatives, were affiliated with Sufi orders. For instance, Mehmet

²⁰³ BOA/İ..DH../996/78698/ 28.Şevval.1303 (August 02,1886).

²⁰⁴ BOA/DH..MKT../1517/89/ 20.Şevval.1305 (July 01,1888).

²⁰⁵ BOA/Y..MTV../26/48/ 12.Şaban.1304 (May 03,1887).

Resad, the heir apparent, was a member of Mevlevi *tekke*, and his close ties to the leading sheik could have threatened the Sultan's rule. To mitigate this risk, the *tariqas* were placed under stringent supervision to ensure their unwavering loyalty to the Sultan. Consequently, rather than attempting to suppress the *tekkes*, the Sultan strategically chose to leverage them in order to disseminate his authority throughout the empire. This approach represents a significant divergence from the practices of his predecessors; Sultan Hamid incorporated various power groups within this state mechanism to maintain direct control, whereas Mahmud II prioritized the elimination of competing power structures to fortify his governance.

In the administration of the *tekkes*, Abdulhamid II continues the regulatory framework established by Mahmud II and encapsulated in the Tanzimat edict. Archive documents reveal that *Evkaf-ı Humayun* remained the institution responsible for the financial oversight of the *tekkes*. A relevant example includes Bişr-i Tayzade Ali Efendi, a sheik from the Shadeliyya order, who sought to dedicate his house and garden in Beirut to a charitable foundation.²⁰⁶ In this instance, the palace assigned representatives to manage the proceedings requested by *Evkaf-ı Humayun*.²⁰⁷

Sultan Abdulhamid II sought to empower the *Hazine-i Hassa Nezareti* (The Ministry of the Sultan's Privy Purse)²⁰⁸ and the *Emlak-ı Seniyye İdaresi* (The

²⁰⁶ BOA/DH..MKT../82/1869/ 15.Safer.1309 (September 21,1891).

²⁰⁷ BOA/DH..MKT../1880/38/ 16.Rebiyülevvel.1309 (October 21, 1891).

²⁰⁸ At the beginning of the 17th century, the institution of Finance had been separated from the Sultan's 'door', and the personal expenditures of the Sultan had been separated from the state costs. This was the process through the establishment of the *Ceyb-i Humayun*. Throughout the efforts towards bureaucratization, the resources of the *Ceyb-i Humayun* were transferred to the central Treasury. Its name had been changed to the *Hazine-i Hassa* in 1840. Moreover, this institution had been turned into a ministry in 1850 in the name of the *Hazine-i Hassa Nezareti*, which was responsible to deal with the whole incomes of the palace. For detailed information, please see, Arzu Terzi-Tozduman, "Hazine-i Hassa", *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, (İstanbul, 1998); Cemil Koçak, *Abdülhamid'in Mirası*, (İstanbul, 1990).

Administration of the Imperial Terrains and Farms) with financial authority to facilitate the distribution of gifts and appropriations. During his reign, the *Emlak-ı Seniyye İdaresi*, which specifically managed the lands and farms belonging to the Sultanate, evolved into an institution that focused on the Sultan's private properties.²⁰⁹ This transformation was driven by Abdulhamid II's desire to assert direct control over these institutions, enabling them to embody his character. He financed his philanthropic activities, which served to enhance his visibility within society, through these state branches.

Sultan Hamid implemented strict controls over the publishing activities of various orders, as well. An official edict was issued to enhance surveillance on the distribution of books and pamphlets associated with the *tarikats* and sharia.²¹⁰ After three years, a book written and published by Ebu'l Huda es-Seyyadi was identified and subsequently banned.²¹¹ This regulation demonstrated the rigorous oversight of Sufi orders, which could significantly influence public opinion and perception. Not only were the books distributed in the Middle East monitored, but those sent to sheiks in Istanbul were also scrutinized and delivered only if deemed non-threatening to the empire's interests. For instance, a pamphlet sent to Ebu'l Huda from Egypt was confiscated by the postal office for examination. After being deemed innocuous, the pamphlet was returned to the sheik.²¹²

Abdulhamid II recognized that the Sufi orders served as effective missionary institutions in the regions where they were present. According to Trimingham, during the 19th century, the *tarikats* acknowledged the necessity for reform and

²⁰⁹ Nadir Özbek, *Osmanlı...*, 127.

²¹⁰ BOA/Y..MTV../27/13/ 23.Şevval.1304 (July 14, 1887).

²¹¹ BOA/Y..PRK..MŞ../2/73/ 05.Recep.1307 (February 25, 1890).

²¹² BOA/MF..MKT../172/54/ 06.Zilhicce.1310 (June 25, 1896).

adapted their influence by expanding their numbers in revival of Sufism.²¹³ The evidence of gift distribution, strategic appointments, and carefully monitored publications illustrates how Sufi networks became vehicles for what Weismann describes as the Sultan's 'elite-cooptation and populism.' Rather than simply co-opting existing religious structures, Abdulhamid II created new forms of political performance that blurred the boundaries between spiritual authority and imperial legitimacy. This approach established a model of governance that relied on performative relationships rather than bureaucratic hierarchy, demonstrating the adaptive capacity of traditional Islamic institutions to serve modern political objectives in an era of imperial crisis.

²¹³ Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 105. This is also the application of ne-Sufism into the intellectual ground of the Sufi orders.

CHAPTER 4

PATRONAGE AND POLITICS: SHEIKS IN YILDIZ

The late Ottoman Empire, under the rule of Sultan Abdulhamid II, was a remarkable period of transformation and challenge. Confronted with European colonialism, internal strife, and the urgent need for modernization, the Sultan embraced various strategies to strengthen his power and preserve the empire's integrity. This chapter explores the influential roles of two religious figures in the Sultan's court: Sheikh Muhammad Zafir al-Madani and Ebu'l Huda Es-Seyyadi. Their remarkable impact, deep connection with the Sultan, and their significant presence within the Ottoman state reflect the inspiring interplay of religion and politics during this crucial juncture in history.

4.1 Sheikh Muhammad Zafir al-Madani in the court of Abdulhamid II

Sheikh Zafir was born in the town of Misrata, located approximately 200 kilometres east of Tripoli, in the month of Sha'ban 1244 (February 1829), as the son of Muhammad B. Hasan B. Hamza Zafir, the founder of the Sadiliyya-Madaniyya order. Muhammad Hasan al-Madani, was a Shadiliyya sheik who founded a distinct branch known as Madaniyya during the 1820s. Sheikh Zafir was born during this period and received a comprehensive religious education under the guidance of his father in Medina before relocating to North Africa, where his father lived and presided over the *tarikah*. Following the death of his father, Zafir assumed the role of sheik of the Shadiliyya-Madaniyya, systematically enhancing the order and facilitating its expansion into Syria, Lebanon, and Libya. During the 1860s, Sheikh Zafir gained considerable popularity and influence initially permeating Tripoli,

Tunisia, and Fezzan, and later extending to Egypt, Syria, and Hejaz, ultimately reaching Istanbul in the 1870s.²¹⁴

In Tripoli, he established a close friendship with Mahmud Nedim Pasha²¹⁵, who served as the *Vali* (governor) of Tripoli from 1860 to 1867. Upon Mahmud Nedim's appointment as Grand Vizier in 1871, he invited Zafir to Istanbul, where Zafir had the opportunity to meet the young *şehzade* (Sultan's son) Abdulhamid. This relationship with Vali Mahmud Nedim Pasha provided a prospect for Sheik to connect with the Ottoman elite and promote the interests of the *tarikât*. After the ascension of Abdulhamid II to the throne on August 31, 1876, Sheik Zafir came to Istanbul at his invitation and permanently settled in Istanbul until his death in 1903.²¹⁶ Sheik Zafir increasingly interacted with the Sultan and became influential in shaping the religious viewpoints held by the Sultan, establishing himself as a trusted advisor, becoming a man of trust. It is commonly asserted that this association contributed to the Sultan's affiliation with the Shadiliyya order. The primary source for this claim is the recollections of his daughter, Ayşe Osmanoglu, who asserted that Sultan Abdulhamid II developed ties with the Shadiliyya order.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Veliddin Yeken, *El-Ma'lum ve'l-Mechul*, (Kahire 1909), 169-177; Zeki M. Mücahid, *el-Alamü'ş-Şarkiyye*, II, (Beyrut 1994), 125-27; J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, (Oxford University Press 1971), 113, 126; M. Salim Güven, "Ebu'l-Hasan Şazili ve Şaziliyye", (PhD. Disst. Marmara University, 1999); Kamil Büyüker, *Şeyh Muhammed Zafir Efendi ve Ertuğrul Tekkesi*, (İstanbul 2004); Tufan Buzpınar, *Hilafet ve Saltanat*, (Alfa 2014), 171-190; Tufan Buzpınar, *Abdülhamid II, Islam and Arabs: The cases of Syria and Hijaz 1878-1882*, (Ph.D. Thesis, Manchester University: Unpublished, 1991), 92-94.

²¹⁵ Mahmud Nedim Pasha was the son of Mahmud Necib Pasha who has been the governor of Damascus and Baghdad. Mahmud Nedim was born in 1818 and a well educated Ottoman elite, who came to be the governor of Tripoli in 1860 with his own demand. After serving 7 years in Tripoli, he came to Istanbul and became a member of Meclis-i Vala in 1867. After being Deavi Nazırı, and later on Bahriya Nazırı, he was appointed as the Sadrazam twice in 1871 and 1876 respectively. For detailed information, please see, İbnülemin, *Sadrzamlar*, Vol I, 259- 314; *Son Osmanlılar*, Vol. IV, 336037; H. Davison, "Mahmud Nedim Pasha", *EI*, Vol. VI, 68-69.

²¹⁶ Azmi Özcan, "Muhammed Zafir (Şeyh)," 225-26.

²¹⁷ Ayşe Osmanoglu, *Babam Sultan Abdülhamid: Hatıralarım*, 25.

Hüseyin Vassaf, an expert on the biographies of sheiks, records the second one. According to him Sultan Abdulhamid II had joined Sheik Zafir's order during the sheik's first visit to Istanbul and would often discreetly visit the palace where the sheik resided near Unkapanı. Furthermore, some sources indicate that the sheik made predictions regarding Abdulhamid II's rise to power and expressed significant insights about his reign.²¹⁸

Sheik Zafir was esteemed by both the Sultan and notable figures within the Palace. Many individuals, including several palace residents, held him in high regard, perceiving him as a sincere and devout sheik, a principled individual whose interactions were distinguished by transparency and a genuine lack of ulterior motives.²¹⁹ His commitment to religious piety gradually garnered the respect of palace officials.

The close relationship with the royal palace rendered significant material benefits to both Sheik Zafir and his family, as well as to the *tekke*. These advantages can be categorized into three main areas: Financial assistance for the sheik and his family; governmental positions and meetings for the relatives and associates of the sheik; various monetary grants and restoration projects for the Shadiliyya *tekke*. The Sultan himself initiated the construction of a *tekke* and mosque for the Shadiliyya order at his residence.²²⁰ Initially, the Sultan planned to construct a *tekke* and *harem* chamber; however, upon determining that the State's financial resources were insufficient, he opted to fund the project through personal benefaction. Sheik Zafir assumed the dual roles of sheik and imam (prayer leader) of the *tekke* and mosque.

²¹⁸ Hüseyin Vassaf, *Sefine-i Enbiya*, 308.

²¹⁹ Ayşe Osmanoğlu, *Babam Sultan...*, 25.

²²⁰ BOA/Y..PRK.ASK../38/69/ 29.Cemaziyelevvel.1304 (February 18, 1887).

The *tekke* was constructed at a cost of 2000 gold coins near Yıldız Palace in Beşiktaş. The origin of the name, Ertuğrul Tekke, is intriguing, with a couple of compelling accounts shedding light on its historical significance. One explanation posits that Abdulhamid II chose this name to honour Ertuğrul Gazi, a revered ancestor of the Ottoman dynasty. Alternatively, it may reflect the legacy of the soldiers of the Ertuğrul Alayı (Ertuğrul Regiment) from Domanic, who were tasked with guarding Yıldız Palace and performed their prayers in this very mosque.²²¹ As Hakan Karateke remarks, “the Ottoman state and the Ottoman dynasty were very much interdependent. If one were to perish, the other would as well”²²², with reference to Fuad Pasha, one of the influential proponents of the 19th century Ottoman modernization. This interdependence between the state and the dynasty constitutes a vital phenomenon recognized by Sultan Abdulhamid II. Therefore, driven by his allegiance to his ancestors and his ultimate objective to safeguard the Ottoman dynastic legacy, the initial interpretation appears to be the most appropriate. A construction inscription dated 1305/1887, located above the Sultan’s gate to the south, confirms that Abdulhamid II specifically commissioned this mosque for the Shadiliyya order. The inscription, authored by Ahmed Muhtar Efendi, articulates the purpose of the structure with eloquence:

Emiru’l- mü’minin Abdülhamid Han Hûda-agah
Tarik-i Hak-resan-ı Şazeliyye yaptı bu dergah
Muhakkak ruh-ı pak-i Şazeli kurb-ı ilahiyyede
Bekacü-yı kemal-i şevket u icab eder her-gah
Güher-i tarihinin nazm eyledi sadık kulu Muhtar
Bu dergahdır tecelligah-ı feyz-i sırr-ı illallah 1305

²²¹ Reşat Ekrem Koçu, “Ertuğrul Cami ve Tekkesi”, 5232.

²²² Hakan T. Karateke, “Who is the Next Ottoman Sultan?”, *Ottoman Reform and Muslim Regeneration*, Itzhak Wiessmann & Fruma Zachs, I. B. Tauris, 2005, 37.

The inscription not only underscores the Sultan's title as caliph but also aligns perfectly with his policies as caliph. There is some debate regarding the exact dates of the *tekke*. While Baha Tanman suggests a completion in 1887, he does not cite a source. Meanwhile, Afife Batur argues for 1888 based on foundation records. Regardless, it is clear that the appointments of mosque and *tekke* officials, including Sheik Zafir, occurred in 1887.²²³

On the upper floor of the Shadiliyya Tekkesi, eight rooms are dedicated to the Sheik, alongside a hall and a gallery for ministers. Additionally, the harem and *selamlık* sections of the sheik's residence comprise 24 rooms, bringing the total to 33, including the sheik's room. The investment for these rooms totalled 47589 kurush. Researches indicate that many rooms were designated for Sheik Zafir in the dervish lodge, suggesting he remained there until a suitable mansion was constructed for him.²²⁴

By the order of Sultan Abdulhamid II, a large two-story wooden mansion featuring 18 rooms and four halls was erected near Ertuğrul Tekke Mosque at an unspecified date. Sheik Zafir resided in this mansion with Nur-i Gar hanım, whom he married from the palace, prompting the construction of a second stone mansion with a garden adjacent to the first, where his second wife, Deblic Hanım, and her children lived.²²⁵

Ertuğrul Tekke Mosque held three significant implications for the order. First, the establishment of a central *tekke* in Istanbul conveyed a critical message to

²²³ Baha Tanman, "Ertuğrul Tekkesi", 196; Afife Batur, 108; BOA/Y..PRK..ŞH../2/65/ 24.Şaban.1304 (May 15,1887).

²²⁴ Neslihan Ağdaş Kaya, *Payitaht'ta Bir Şazeli: Şeyh Zafir ve Ertuğrul Tekkesi*, 116; BOA/HH..D../14851/ 27.Ramazan.1305 (June 08, 1888).

²²⁵ Neslihan Ağdaş Kaya, *Payitaht'ta Bir Şazeli: Şeyh Zafir ve Ertuğrul Tekkesi*, 116.

Tunisia regarding Istanbul's status as the focal point for the Shadiliyya order and affirmed the Sultan's protective role over the *tarikāt*, given that his personal benefactions funded the construction. Second, the *tekke* served a political function by affirming the Sultan as the preeminent authority in the Islamic world, thereby supporting Abdulhamid II's claim as the caliph of all Muslims, a position endorsed by Sheik Zafir. Notably, Şeyh Zafir hosted travellers, merchants, and clergymen coming from North Africa to visit the Sultan in Ertuğrul Tekkesi.²²⁶ Kuzey Afrika'dan İstanbul'a gelen seyyah, tüccar ya da din adamlarını bu tekkede ağırlıyordu. Lastly, the architectural distinctiveness further contributed to its significance.

Additionally, the Zafir Türbesi (Tomb) was built specifically for the sheik. Designed by the renowned Italian architect Raimondo D'Aranco, this tomb complex was commissioned by the Sultan following the sheik's death in 1903. This decisive action reflected the Sultan's deep respect for the sheik and resonated with his Pan-Islamic policies. The tomb exemplifies Abdulhamid II's adept balancing act between modernization and traditional values, hallmarks of his rule in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century. His political strategies aimed to reinforce the caliphate and strengthen ties with the Islamic world, making it essential to maintain this delicate equilibrium. Thus, the decision to engage an Italian architect for the structure carried both political and cultural weight.

Art historian Afife Batur asserts that the architectural language of the tomb encapsulates the intricate and multi-faceted nature of Ottoman modernization. It transforms the political and cultural tensions of the period into a cohesive

²²⁶ Butrus Abu Manneh, "Sultan Abdulhamid II and Shaikh Abulhuda Al-Sayyadi", 139.

architectural form, embracing modern Western architectural movements while honouring Islamic and Ottoman identities. D'Aranco, invited by the Sultan to assist with reconstruction efforts following the great earthquake in Istanbul in 1894, served as the chief architect of the palace.²²⁷ Renowned for pioneering the Art Nouveau style within Ottoman architecture, his work reflects a profound respect for Ottoman architectural traditions and a skilful blend of local elements with his innovative approach. This cultural sensitivity reached its zenith in Sheik Zafir's tomb, standing as a testament to a richly layered historical narrative.²²⁸

The Shadiliyya order became what Francois Georgeon described as “a Muslim *tarikat* belonging to a la mode: An exact symbol of the Sultanate”.²²⁹ This observation highlights the close association between the Sultan and the *tarikat*, suggesting that the Sultan strategically used the *tarikat* to bolster his own image and authority. What does this mean? The Sultan placed special importance on the Shadiliyya order and the *tekke*. The Sultan's participation in Friday prayers in Ertuğrul Tekke, his conduct of Friday greeting ceremonies there, and his invitations to Zafir on special religious occasions all serve as powerful examples of this respect and honour.²³⁰

There are also some documents which show the Sultan's financial help to the *tekke*. One of these relate to the celebration of Mirac Kandili, which commemorated

²²⁷ For more information: Afife Batur, *Raimondo D'Aronco: İstanbul'daki Yapıtları ve Mimarlık Üzerine*, (Bigart Yayınları, 2005); Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century*, (University of California Press, 1993); Carlo Cresti, *Osmanlı Döneminde İstanbul'da İtalyan İzi*, (Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2007).

²²⁸ Can, Cengiz. "İstanbul'da 19. Yüzyıl ü Batılı ve Levanten Mimarların Yapıları ve Koruma Sorunları", (PhD. Disst. Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi, 1993).

²²⁹ Francois Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 153.

²³⁰ Tufan Buzpınar, *Hilafet ve Saltanat*, 181-82.

the Prophet Muhammad's miraculous journey to heaven on the Receb, 26 in 1307 (1890), where the expenses for the *mevlid* were to be covered by the palace, specifically from the *Hazine-i Hassa*.²³¹ Another document shows how the relationship between the Yıldız Palace and sheik Zafir grew closer within a year. Within a year, the relationship between the Yıldız Palace and sheik Zafir grew closer. Apparently, the office of Sheik-ul-Islam invited Sheik Zafir to read the Legend of Miraç in his *tekke*.²³² This was a significant honour, as leading a religious ceremony funded by the palace reflected the Sultan's commitment to the religious sentiments of his subjects. It showcased the Sultan as the protector and sponsor of the faith. The ceremony can be seen as a presentation from the palace to the people, given that the Sultan himself had financed it. There is a notable political stance between these two documents. In the first, Sultan Abdulhamid II covered the costs of the *tekke* directly from his treasury. However, in the second document, it was not the Sultan or the palace that made the request, but rather the office of Sheik-ul-Islam that approached Sheik Zafir. This shift implies that Abdulhamid II aimed to highlight his political distance from the sheik while maintaining a personal affinity with the order in general.

The Sultan not only attended to the personal needs of Sheik Zafir but also ensured that his family received material benefits. In 1876, Sheik Zafir was granted a salary by imperial command.²³³ His son, Hüseyin Zafir Bey, who served as a member of the *Meclis-i Emanet* (the government office responsible for the receipt and disbursement of government funds), was similarly awarded a salary from the

²³¹ BOA/Y..PRK..HH../22/64/ 25.Recep.1307 (March 17,1890).

²³² BOA/Y..PRK..MŞ../3/18/ 29.Recep.1308 (March 14,1891).

²³³ BOA/İ..DH../734/60192/ 07.Şevval.1293 (October 31,1876).

Maliye (the Ministry of Finance). Furthermore, family members were presented with gifts and *atiyyes* (bounties bestowed by the Sultan on special occasions, such as the accession to the throne or the birth of a prince). Notably, unlike the Rufais, the Ottoman Empire did not exempt the Shadilis from mandatory military service. The Rufais, along with the Kadiris and Rumis,²³⁴ were granted such exemptions because they were classified as *sadat* (descendants of the Prophet), who were accorded respect comparable to that of the prince. The Sheik submitted a letter to the palace requesting inclusion among the *sadat* in hopes of receiving a similar exemption;²³⁵ however, it appears that the Sultan did not respond favourably to this appeal. Additionally, the family of Sheik Zafir, particularly his immediate relatives, was afforded protection by the Ottoman state. His brother, Sheik Hamza, received the honorary title of *Harameyn Payesi* (judge of Mecca and Medina), which was subsequently elevated by one grade in 1309.²³⁶

These documents indicate that Sultan Abdulhamid II approached his dealings with the sheiks and their relatives with deliberation, ensuring that they were not denied gifts and official honors. Indeed, both the Rufais and Shadilis garnered the Sultan's particular interest and care, as he fostered closer relationships with them in contrast to the Mevlevis and Kadiris during the same historical period.

The initial significance of this companionship was marked by European colonial expansions and the existence of Sufi reformist movements in North Africa. The Sultan's support for the sheik and his order served a strategic purpose in preserving Ottoman influence in North Africa. A pivotal factor in this point was

²³⁴ BOA/DH..MKT../1358/79/ 03.Zilkadde.1303 (August 06,1886).

²³⁵ BOA/Y..A..HUS../160/67/ 20.Rebiülevvel.1296 (March 14,1879).

²³⁶ BOA/Y..PRK..BŞK../23/57/ 27.Muharrem.1309 (September 02,1891).

France's invasion of Tunisia in May 1881. Sheik Zafir possessed extensive knowledge of the region, maintained deep connections therein, and hailed from a locality adjacent to it. This context undoubtedly heightened the interest of the French authorities about the Sheik Zafir and Shadhiliyya orders. His brother, Sheik Hamza, was implicated in questionable activities,²³⁷ which led to scepticism from the French government regarding both brothers. French authorities, apprehensive that the Sheiks might leverage their influence against them, closely monitored his activities. An investigation was conducted into Sheik Hamza and Sheik Zafir, based on the assumption that they may have acted in concert. Monsieur Lonjevil, the chief interpreter at the French Embassy, reported having observed Sheik Zafir and his brother discussing matters pertaining to Tunisia. He asserted that their discussions were not politically motivated but rather centered on issues affecting their religious order and its followers. The French ambassador acknowledged and commended their apolitical stance in his report.²³⁸ In the aftermath of the invasion, Sheik Zafir's brother Hamza had been dispatched to Tripoli, where he collaborated with local administrators, several of them were close relatives.

Sheik Zafir also maintained correspondence with Tunisia. His friend, Tunuslu Hayreddin Pasha²³⁹, kept him apprised of local issues, particularly regarding the

²³⁷ BOA/Y..A..HUS../172/5/ 10.Muharrem.1300 (November 21,1882)

²³⁸ BOA/Y..EE../103/19/ 03.Rebiülevvel.1300 (January 12, 1883).

²³⁹ Hayreddin Pasha of Tunusian (? – 1890) was one of the leading representatives of reformists in Tunisia, who believed that the re-arrangement of the administration of Tunisia with the regulation of the central rule, re-payment of external debts, agricultural reforms and judicial collocations were among the basic needs of Tunisia. He was a follower of Shadhiliyya order, which generated close relations with Sheikh Zafir. After 4 months of his journey to Istanbul, he was appointed as the Grand Vizier by Sultan Abdulhamid. When he wanted to call the parliament back, he fell into opposition with the palace and resigned. However, he took place in special commissions and proposed his ideas on the reform need of the Ottoman rule. He wanted to provide the supremacy of justice and equality for the betterments of lives of the state, the community and the individual. His main aim was the modernization within the boundaries of Islam. For detailed information please look at:

governance of Vali Mustafa Pasha. Tufan Buzpınar records that when Sultan Abdulhamid II asked for a recommendation for a trusted advisor during the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War (known also as 93 *Harbi*), Sheik Zafir gave the name of Hayreddin Pasha. Upon this recommendation, the Sultan invited Hayreddin Pasha to Istanbul. Over time, Pasha gained the trust of the Sultan and rose to the rank of Grand Vizier, playing a significant role in establishing contacts with Istanbul during the occupations of Tunisia and Egypt, as well as in matters related to North Africa in general.²⁴⁰

It is an undeniable fact that the Ottoman Empire played a crucial role in monitoring and taking precautionary measures during the history of African colonialism. As interest in exploring the inner regions of Africa intensified in the 19th century, numerous Geographical Societies and Institutes were established in the West; The Ottoman Empire remained vigilant against these colonial ambitions of European states by implementing measures to protect the territorial integrity of its controlled lands.²⁴¹ Alexander Schölch, a German scholar, addresses another incident in his book. Following the British occupation of Egypt, communications from the Ottoman capital to Urabi Pasha were transmitted through Sheik Zafir, as evidenced by a letter sent to Urabi Pasha on behalf of Sultan Abdulhamid II by Sheik Zafir.²⁴²

Sheik Zafir became one of the key advisors for the central authority on these critical issues. In a document sent to him in 1892, which involved France, England,

İbnülemin, *Sadrazamlar*, II, 895-960; İ.H. Danişmend, Vol IV, 316 and 638; A. Çetin, *Tunuslu Hayreddin Paşa*, (Ankara, 1988); A. Çetin, “Hayreddin Paşa, Tunuslu”, *DİA*, Vol XVII, 57-60.

²⁴⁰ Tufan Buzpınar, “Şeyh Muhammed Zafir ve Sultan Abdülhamid ile İlişkiler”, 217.

²⁴¹ Ahmet Kavas, “Afrika’da Sömürgeciliğin XIX. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısına Kadar Kurulamamasında Osmanlı Devleti’nin Rolü”, 103-105.

²⁴² Alexander Schölch, *Egypt for the Egyptians*, 244.

Germany, Italy, and Zanzibar, the document underscored the imperative to safeguard the integrity of Tripoli and Fezzan, prioritizing the interests of the Caliphate and the Sultanate.²⁴³

To preserve his influence in North Africa, Sultan Abdulhamid II sustained his connections with the Shadilis, and the contributions of Sheik Zafir in this context were likely considerable.²⁴⁴ Sheik Zafir played a pivotal role in organizing aid from Indian Muslims to the Ottoman Empire during the 1877-78 Russo-Ottoman War.²⁴⁵ During the onset of the Ottoman-Russia War, Sheik Zafir played a pivotal role in organizing aid from Indian Muslims to the Ottoman Empire, thereby establishing an unofficial connection between the two entities. This support facilitated the transfer of financial resources and the dispatch of delegations via the Bombay Bank.²⁴⁶ In reciprocation for this assistance, the Ottoman Empire conferred medals and decrees upon Indian Muslims. In a correspondence addressed to Sheik Zafir regarding these honors, the Prime Minister of Bhopal, Muhammad Cemaleddin, articulated his loyalty to Sultan Abdulhamid II, and conveyed his commitment to serving both the Islamic world and the Sultan.²⁴⁷

This letter constitutes a significant historical document that illustrates the practical application of Pan-Islamic policies. Sheik Zafir's mediation was particularly consequential for Muslim communities under British colonial rule, as it facilitated the creation of an alternative communication network. Additionally, the

²⁴³ BOA/YEE../122/3/L..4/3/ 29.Recep.1309 (March 02,1892).

²⁴⁴ Tufan Buzpınar, *Hilafet ve Saltanat*, 185.

²⁴⁵ Hür Mahmut Yücer, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf*, 705-706.

²⁴⁶ *Hayat ve Tarih Mecmuası*, "1876-77 Türk-Rus Savaşı'nda Pakistan'ın Türklere Yardımı", December 1965, Vol. 2, Number 11, 19.

²⁴⁷ *Hayat ve Tarih Mecmuası*, "1876-77 Türk-Rus Savaşı'nda Pakistan'ın Türklere Yardımı", December 1965, Vol. 2, Number 11, 20.

letter serves as an illustration of soft power in the contemporary sense, contextualized within the principle of reciprocity. The Prime Minister's reference to his "glorious majesty", along with his emphasis on loyalty, underscores the recognition of Sultan Abdulhamid II's religious and political authority as the caliph within the Islamic world. This correspondence not only reveals the complexity of Sultan Hamid's policy of Pan-Islamism but also documents the active engagement of local actors in the formulation and execution of this policy.

Furthermore, Sheik Zafir became a pivotal figure in providing military assistance to the administration of Sultan Abdulhamid II in North Africa, analogous to the Hamidiye Regiments, which were established to suppress the Armenian uprisings intensified following the War of 93. This initiative was an integral component of Sultan Hamid's broader strategy regarding North Africa. Zafir's involvement as an intermediary in this endeavour, alongside his religious spheres, resonates with the practices of neo-Sufi movements within the region. A practical reason for this comparison is that Zafir may have also collaborated with the Sanusis, although this requires a deeper investigation. However, beyond his religious identity, Zafir's active engagement in both political affairs and in fieldwork when popular independence was at stake provides ground for this analogy.

In conclusion, Sheik Zafir's multifaceted role exemplifies the pragmatic adaptation of Sufi networks to the political realities of the late Ottoman period. His ability to seamlessly transition between religious authority, diplomatic mediation, and military organization demonstrates how Neo-Sufi movements evolved beyond traditional spiritual functions to become active agents in Pan-Islamic resistance against European colonialism. Through his networks in North Africa and his written endeavors, Sheik Zafir emphasized Abdulhamid II's caliphate, portraying him as a

just ruler who adhered to Sharia and prioritized the welfare of Muslims. This transformation of Sufi leadership from contemplative to activist represents a defining characteristic of the Neo-Sufi phenomenon during Sultan Abdulhamid II's reign, which warrants further and deeper investigation.

4.2 Sheik Ebu'l Huda es-Seyyadi's role in Ottoman state and society

Sheik Ebu'l Huda as-Seyyadi was born in 1850 in the village of Han-ı Seyhun in the Maara Numan region of Aleppo, Syria, to the trader father Hasan Vadi. His family had strong connections to the Rufaiyya order, and his father was engaged in commercial activities linked to various order networks in cities like Hama, Aleppo, and Maara.²⁴⁸ These early relationships would become crucial for Ebu'l Huda's future career. Whose real name was Muhammed b. Hasan Vadi Al-Sayyidi, Ebu'l Huda was a nickname and he took the surname al-Sayyadi, derived from a local Rufaiyya sheik Ahmad al-Sayyad after he affiliated with the Rufaiyya order at a young age.²⁴⁹

A pivotal moment in Ebu'l Huda's life transpired in 1867 when his family was exiled from Khan Sayhun as a result of escalating hostilities between the Qadiriyya in Hama and Rufaiyya in the region.²⁵⁰ This exile was necessitated by the conflict, which posed a threat to their established trade networks. Following their relocation to Damascus, Ebu'l Huda reencountered Amin al-Gundi, who facilitated his introduction to more reformist circles. He subsequently established connections with a group of *ulama* surrounding Abd al-Qadir al-Ghazairi. This intellectual circle

²⁴⁸ Thomas Eich, "The Forgotten Salafi - Abu l-Huda as-Sayyadi", 65.

²⁴⁹ Abu Manneh, "Sultan Abdulhamid II and the Sheikh Abulhuda es-Seyyadi", 132-133.

²⁵⁰ Thomas Eich, "The Forgotten Salafi - Abu l-Huda as-Sayyadi", 67.

emerged in the aftermath of Abd al-Qadir's efforts to mobilize resistance against the French occupation of Algeria in the 1830s, after which he settled in Damascus in 1855.²⁵¹

Although there is limited information regarding his early life prior to relocating to Istanbul, Azmi Özcan details that Ebu'l Huda adopted the title "seyyadi", after he aligned himself with Sheik Ahmed ed-Seyyadi, who was a descendant of Sheik Ahmed er-Rufai – the founder of the Rufaiyya order.²⁵² On that matter, Butrus Abu Manneh states:

In spite of several authentic sources to the contrary, Ebu'l Huda claimed, moreover, that Rifa'i was a descendant of the prophet, thus attributing to himself the same lineage, perhaps as a means to strengthen his claim to the shrine and in general to gain for himself and his family prominence in their locality.²⁵³

After assuming this title, Sheik Ebu'l Huda was recognized as a seyyid and appointed *nakibuleşraf* in Aleppo (the chief representative of the descendants of the Prophet) in his first visit to Istanbul during the reign of Sultan Abdulaziz in 1873.²⁵⁴

During the 1870s, he made three visits to Istanbul. His third visit in 1876 resulted in an audience with Sultan Abdulhamid II, which led to his settlement in the city with the Sultan's consent, a relationship that lasted until he died in 1909. During

²⁵¹ Thomas Eich, "The Forgotten Salafi - Abu l-Huda as-Sayyadi", 67.

²⁵² Azmi Özcan, "Ebülhüda", 390. For studies about Ebu'l-Huda, please see, H.H. Tuvayrani, *el-Kavlü'l-fasl*, (Kahire, 1313), 41; B. Abu Manneh, "Sultan Abdulhamid II and the Sheikh Abulhuda es-Seyyadi, *Middle Eastern Studies*, XV/2, (1979), 131- 153; V. Yeken, *el-Malum ve'l-Mechul*, (Kahire 1909), 90. Thomas Eich, "The Forgotten Salafi Abu'l Huda as-Sayyadi", *Die Welt des Islams*, 43/1 (2003), 61-87; Itzhak Weismann, "Abu L-Huda L-Sayyadi and the Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism", *Arabica*, LIV/4 (2007), 586-592; Muharrem Varol, "Rasputinleştirilen Bir Şeyh: Ebü'l-Huda Sayyadi (1850-1909), *Tarihimizden Portreler: Osmanlı Kimliği*, ed. Zekeriya Kurşun – Haydar Çoruh, (Istanbul: 2013), 57-81; Muharrem Varol, *II. Abdülhamid'in Danışmanı Ebü'l-Huda Sayyadi'nin Hayatı, Eserleri ve Tesirleri (1850-1909)*, (M.A. Thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi, 2004).

²⁵³ B. Abu Manneh, "Sultan Abdulhamid II and the Sheikh Abulhuda es-Seyyadi", 133.

²⁵⁴ Azmi Özcan, "Ebülhüda"..., 390.

this visit, Sheik Ebu'l Huda cultivated a close relationship with the Sultan and was granted entry into the palace. He participated in confidential meetings and received various gifts from the Sultan.²⁵⁵ The sheik, who gained the trust of Abdulhamid II, gave information about the general conditions in his weekly visits and accelerated in the *ulama* hierarchy in a short time and was appointed head of the *Meclis-i Meşayih* with the rank of *Sheik-ul Meşayih*.²⁵⁶ On the other hand, historian Thomas Eich argues that in the summer of 1878, when Sultan Abdulhamid II dissolved the Ottoman parliament and ended the constitutional period, Ebu'l Huda was exiled from Istanbul to Aleppo, as he had authored a letter advocating for the principles of constitutionalism and appealing to the Sultan to refrain from dissolving the parliament.²⁵⁷ Nonetheless, Eich notes he was recalled to Istanbul a few months later, and in 1879, he was appointed as the sultan's tutor in *akaid* (theology and matters of faith).²⁵⁸

Ebu'l Huda had the power to provide contact with the Arab and African worlds, which Sultan Hamid thought were neglected.²⁵⁹ This assessment characterized Ebu'l Huda as a multifaceted figure who transcended his role as a religious leader to emerge as a strategic asset for the Ottoman Empire. His potential as a connector to regions where the Empire sought to reassert or maintain its influence is partly pertinent within the context of Sultan's Pan-Islamic policy.

In 1883, he formally expressed his aspiration to the Sultan to be appointed as Rumeli Kazaskerliği, a higher official role in the Muslim judiciary, through a

²⁵⁵ Ali Said, *Saray Hatıraları*, 91.

²⁵⁶ François Georgeon, *Sultan Abdulhamid*, 274.

²⁵⁷ Thomas Eich, "The Forgotten Salafi - Abu l-Huda as-Sayyadi", 69.

²⁵⁸ Thomas Eich, "The Forgotten Salafi - Abu l-Huda as-Sayyadi", 69.

²⁵⁹ Butrus Abu Manneh, "Sultan Abdulhamid II and Shaikh Abulhuda Al-Sayyadi", 135.

petition. However, this request was denied, mirroring the Sultan's previous refusal of Sheik Zafir's entreaty. Disheartened by this outcome, he communicated his unwavering loyalty to the Sultan in a letter.²⁶⁰ In a subsequent correspondence, he asserted that, having effectively managed the Anadolu Kazaskerliği, it was appropriate for him to be awarded the title of Rumeli Kazaskerliği. He continued that although he was among the *ulama-i Islam*, he was not granted the right to hold the title of Rumeli Kazaskerliği.²⁶¹ In this document, he conveyed his discontent regarding the appointment of Necib Efendi to the position of Rumeli Kazaskeri. It is evident that personal ambitions and envy motivated Sheik Ebu'l Huda to submit multiple petitions to the palace for various reasons.

According to Tahsin Pasha, who served as the private secretary of Sultan Abdulhamid II, the ultimate goal of Ebu'l Huda was to secure the title of Sheik-ul-Islam, and he consistently sought opportunities to advance this aim.²⁶² As he progressed within the hierarchy of *ulama*, Ebu'l Huda positioned himself to request the title of Sheik-ul-Islam. He declared that he no longer desired the position for the *meşihat* (the supreme sheik); instead, he wished for the Sultan to acknowledge him as the sole candidate worthy of that title, based on his loyalty to the Sultan and his association with the esteemed legacy of the Ottoman Empire.²⁶³

The sheik, along with his family, received substantial benefits from the benevolence of Sultan Abdulhamid II, Ebu'l Huda effectively integrated his relatives into the state apparatus. His brother, Abdurrezzak Efendi, was appointed to the

²⁶⁰ BOA/Y..PRK..AZJ../7/55/ 29.Zilhicce.1300 (November 02 1883).

²⁶¹ BOA/Y..PRK..MŞ../2/65/ 12.Cemaziyelevvel.1307 (January 06,1890).

²⁶² Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, 184.

²⁶³ BOA/Y..EE../14/157/L.15/ 29.Ramazan.1319 (January 11, 1902).

Harameyn Payesi in 1891²⁶⁴, an achievement that was subsequently elevated to the title of *Anadolu Kazaskerliği* in 1898²⁶⁵. Throughout 1907 and 1908, his salary witnessed consistent increases, reflecting his importance within the state structure.²⁶⁶ Furthermore, his sisters were also granted salaries. It is documented that beginning in the latter half of the 1880s, Ebu'l Huda undertook the appointment of his associates and other family members in various positions such as *nakibüleşraf*²⁶⁷, *mutasarraf* (governor), and *naib* (deputy) in strategical regions, including Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Baghdad, Humus, and Basra. These appointments played a vital role in reinforcing the policies of Abdulhamid II within the region.

One of Ebu'l Huda's most important roles was the part he played in Sultan's policies regarding the Shiite population in Iraq.²⁶⁸ The establishment of a robust base for the Sultan functioned as a buffer against the increasing influence of Shiism in these areas. By the 1870s, the Shia population in Iraq had become predominantly concentrated in the southern regions, particularly Basra, Najaf, and Karbala, which developed into notable centers for Shia religious education and authority.²⁶⁹ As Kemal Karpat argues, Abdulhamid II's centralizing policies restricted the influence of Shia leaders; his pan-Islamist agenda placed strong emphasis on Sunni Islam,

²⁶⁴ BOA/Y..MTV../63/78/ 16.Zilkade.1309 (June 17, 1892).

²⁶⁵ BOA/Y..PRK..BŞK../56/44/ 09.Zilhicce.1315 (May 02,1898).

²⁶⁶ BOA/Y..MTV../280/18/ 06.Ramazan.1323 (November 06, 1905) and BOA/Y..MTV../290/44/ 14.Şaban.1324 (October 06, 1906)

²⁶⁷ The *nakibüleşraf* holds a crucial role in verifying the status of the *sharif*, a status that offers significant advantages, including tax exemptions and exclusive military service. The *sayyids* demonstrate a high level of organization, particularly within the Shia community in Iraq, which is a vital component of Shia society's social structure. Therefore, the appointment of the *Rufais* as *naqib al-ashraf* not only strengthened the influence of Sunni Islam in the region but also effectively supports Abdulhamid II's stratetig efforts to assert control and integrate the Shia population.

²⁶⁸ Thomas Eich, "Abu l-Huda, the Rira'iya and Shiism in Hamidian Iraq", 144.

²⁶⁹ Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890-1908*, (Routledge 2006).

resulting in significant unrest among Shia communities.²⁷⁰ During this period, the impact of Iranian Shia religious authorities on Iraqi Shia communities grew substantially.²⁷¹ Furthermore, Abdulhamid II's tribal policies posed a threat to the traditional lifestyles of certain Shia tribes.²⁷² Consequently, from the 1880s onward, various uprisings among Shia tribes occurred in southern Iraq. Passive resistance and limited collaboration with Ottoman officials, while certain Shia groups opted to foster closer ties with Iran.

In response to these regional challenges, Sultan Abdulhamid II placed crucial emphasis on infrastructure investment as a means of garnering support from the local populace. This initiative encompassed the construction of roads and educational institutions, as well as the establishment of the Hejaz Railway. Concurrently, to mitigate Sunni-Shia tensions, a policy was enacted that respected Shia holy sites, and measures were taken to enhance the influence of the Rufaiyya order within the region. This strategic adaptation of Sufi practices to address sectarian tensions exemplifies a key characteristic of Neo-Sufism, wherein traditional religious forms are pragmatically modified to serve immediate political objectives rather than preserving authentic mystical traditions. The selection of the Rufaiyya order was a strategic decision. Thomas Eich has thoroughly examined the similarities between Rufaiyyas and Shia belief. For instance, a crucial ritual of the Rufaiyya order, the seven-day retreat (*halwat and khalwa*), commences on the 11th day of Muharram, immediately following the Ashura celebrations. Halwat was recognized as a

²⁷⁰ Kemal Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, 200.

²⁷¹ Selim Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909*, (I. B. Tauris, 1998).

²⁷² Ebubekir Ceylan, *The Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq: Political Reform, Modernization and Development in the Nineteenth Century Middle East*, London 2011.

fundamental obligation for every Rufai Sufi, which paralleled Shia practices.

Moreover, in the writings of Ebu'l Huda, the founder of the Rufaiyya order, Ahmed er-Rufai, has been referred to as the “thirteenth imam”, thereby establishing a connection to the Shia doctrine of the twelve imams.²⁷³

In addition, Thomas Eich identifies the names of the Rufaiyya sheiks located in Tikrit, Amara, and Karbala. He states:

Sayyadi was made a leading figure of the Rufaiyya order in the Ottoman Empire, which resulted in a period that can easily be labelled as the *tarikāt's* renaissance. This support comprised, among other things, the renovation and extension of Rifaiya shrines all over the Fertile Crescent, and a huge amount of the Rufaiyya literature was published.²⁷⁴

Eich elucidates how these sheiks were deployed to counter Shiite influence, as well as noting two works by Sheik Ahmed Rufaiyya that have been translated into Persian.

Although Ebu'l Huda was not a formal officer within the state mechanism, a significant portion of his expenses was borne by the state. In 1890, he was provided with a new residence in Serencebey Ramp, located in Beşiktaş. Ziya Şakir asserts that he hosted numerous Arab elites, facilitating mediation between them and the Sultan.²⁷⁵

In addition to supporting his relatives, Sultan Abdulhamid II also engaged with the Rufais and their order. As previously noted, the Rufais, similar to Kadiris and Rumis, were exempted from military service due to their classification as *sadat*, esteemed similarly to royalty, as indicated in the relevant documentation.²⁷⁶

²⁷³ Thomas Eich, “Abu l-Huda, the Rifa’iya and Shiism in Hamidian Iraq”, 146.

²⁷⁴ Thomas Eich, “Abu l-Huda, the Rifa’iya and Shiism in Hamidian Iraq”, 142.

²⁷⁵ Ziya Şakir, *Yarım Asır Evvel Bizi İdare Edenler*, 267.

²⁷⁶ BOA/DH..MKT../1358/79/ 03.Zilkade.1303 (August 03,1886).

The question of whether Ebu'l Huda originated from a sayyid family continues to be a significant topic of research within academic circles. Julia Gonnella, currently the director of the Lusail Museum in Qatar, referencing the insights of Werner Edne, firmly established that the most reliable information regarding Ebu'l Huda is that he lived and rose to prominence as the head of the Rufaiyya order in Istanbul during the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, Edne highlights Ebu'l Huda's substantial role in Sultan Abdulhamid II's entourage. Gonnella, asserts that Ebu'l Huda is not held in high regard by the modern descendants of Aleppo's distinguished families. In her thorough research, she brings to light various rumours circulating in contemporary Aleppo about the sheik. These include accusations of him fabricating his lineages and mystical credentials, deeming his title of naqib al-ashraf in Jisr al-Shughur absurd – given that the Nusayris were the primary inhabitants of the area – and even suggesting that he acted as an Ottoman agent. Citing Muhammad Tabbah, Gonnella effectively supports her assertions regarding Ebu'l Huda's alleged creation of a false lineage and mystical narrative.²⁷⁷

In contrast, research from Turkey presents a different perspective, asserting that sheik Ebu'l Huda has been unjustly vilified. Zekeriya Kurşun argues that Ebu'l Huda became a primary target for the political opposition against Abdulhamid II, and he emphasizes that the harmful perceptions of him were spread through derogatory discourse. Opposition newspapers from the period characterized Ebu'l Huda as a manipulative figure, accusing him of exploiting the populace and gaining influence

²⁷⁷ Julia Gonnella, "As Sayyid Abu'l-Huda al-Sayyadi in Aleppo", 297-307; Werner Ende, "Sayyid Abu T-Hudä, ein Vertrauter Abdülhamid's II. Notwendigkeit und Probleme einer kritischen Biographie," in XIX. *Deutscher Orientalistentag* 1973 in Freiburg, *ZDMG Suppl.* III., 2 Bde., Bd. III/2, ed. W. Voigt, Wiesbaden 1977, 1143-55; Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Zeytindağı*, (MEB, 1970), 74; François Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, (Homer Kitabevi, 2006), 175.

through superstition while directing state policies. A news report dated January 11, 1897, describing him as a “profiteer and usurper of the Yıldız gang”; a similar report from March 29, 1897, labelled him a fortune teller who made ominous predictions regarding the sultan’s health; another subsequent report on May 16, 1901, referred to him as the “father of misfortune”, alleging that the administration of the state was being entrusted to a small group of “beggars”.²⁷⁸

In his memoirs, Ali Said described Ebu’l Huda as an individual who “won the sultan’s favour through his charming tricks”.²⁷⁹ In contrast, Tahsin Pasha portrayed him as a person who “engaged in significant struggles with influential figures and submitted reports against them”.²⁸⁰ A report detailing an assassination attempt on the Sultan, purportedly involving British agents and Sultan M. Reşat, corroborates this portrayal.²⁸¹ Moreover, in his autobiographical work, Ebu’l Huda discusses his education in the field of astrology known as the science of *nucum*.²⁸² Although he did not hold the formal position of chief astrologer to the palace, it is probable that he provided occasional counsel to the Sultan on astrological matters.

François Georgeon reinforces this notion by describing Ebu’l Huda, “whom his opponents claimed was ‘the Sultan’s sorcerer’ and ‘the palace astrologer’ and tried to portray as a kind of Ottoman Rasputin”²⁸³. A revealing anecdote from Falih Rıfkı Atay in his book “Zeytindağı” underscores this negative portrayal. Atay

²⁷⁸ Muharrem Varol, “Rasputinleştirilen Bir Şeyh: Ebü’l-Huda Sayyadi (1850-1909), 71-74.

²⁷⁹ Ali Said, *Saray Hatıraları*, 91.

²⁸⁰ Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, 184.

²⁸¹ Muharrem Varol, *Rasputinleştirilen...*, 59; BOA/Y..PRK..AZJ../21/109/ 04.Zilkade.1309 (June 05, 1892).

²⁸² Ebu’l-Huda Sayyadi, *Zehiretü’l-Mead*, (Mısır 1306), 57. Indeed, for a document regarding an amulet written by Ebu’l Huda in response to a feeling of uneasiness of the sultan, see Baha Gürfırat, “Ebül-Huda’nın II. Abdülhamid’e sunduğu Arizalar (Yıldız Arşivi)”, *Belgelerle Türk Tarihi*, V.18, 1969.

²⁸³ François Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 208.

recounts how, despite gaining favour with Sultan Hamid, Sheik Esad Efendi faced exile to Adana after rumours surfaced regarding his ability to fortune-tell. The Sultan's remark, "We have one Ebu'l Huda; that is enough... Too Arabs are too many for the Ottoman state", further illustrates the precarious nature of Ebu'l Huda's standing.²⁸⁴

These discussions make it clear that there are divergent historical perceptions and evaluations of influential religious figures within the court during the late Ottoman period. The case of Ebu'l Huda exemplifies the intricate relationship between religion and politics during Abdulhamid II's reign, revealing the contrasting academic interpretations of these dynamics. While some Western and Arab sources depict Ebu'l Huda as a dubious figure, certain Turkish historians assert he has been the victim of unfounded accusations. This multifaceted viewpoint provides invaluable insights into the political and religious complexities of the era. When juxtaposed with sheik Zafir, it is evident that both religious figures occupied similar political roles, yet their historical narratives have been shaped quite differently.

Another significant mark of Ebu'l Huda in Aleppo is the Rufaiyya *tekke* he constructed. Julia Gonnella asserts that the *tekke* was founded by Ebu'l Huda in 1295/1878 and completed by 1327/1909. She cites Kamil Al-Gazzal, who highlighted that the *tekke* was well-frequented, included numerous rooms, and showcased stunning views. Two inscriptions found in situ reference the years 1290/1873 and 1295/1878. The earlier inscription adorns the western entrance of the haremlik, while the latter, which aligns with Gazzal's timeline, is prominently displayed over the mosque's door. Thus, it is evident that Ebu'l -Huda initiated the

²⁸⁴ Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Zeytindağı*, 57.

construction of his complex during his tenure as naqib al-ashraf in Aleppo, starting with the zawiya he completed while exiled from Istanbul.

Ebu'l Huda as-Seyyadi's residence marks a pivotal point as the first European-style building in the old town, drawing its architectural concept and style from European influences. Having spent the majority of his political career close to the sultan in Istanbul, Ebu'l Huda undoubtedly soaked in the grandeur of the newly built imperial residences along the Bosphorus.²⁸⁵

In Istanbul, on the other hand, the Cafer Ağa Mosque, located in the Ibrahim Çavuş neighborhood of Fatih's Şehremini district, likely served as Ebu'l Huda's residence before his relocation to Beşiktaş. The inscription above the entrance of the *tekke*, with the first line elegantly written in thuluth (*sülüs*) script and the five lines below in italic, boldly indicates that this building was reconstructed in 1899 by Sheik Sayyid Ahmed Safi Efendi, known as "Ebu'l Huda." He was a prominent figure in the Sayyidi branch of the Rûfaiyya order and had close ties to Abdulhamid II. This renovation, dedicated to his late brother Sayyid Mehmed Nureddin Bey, saw the *tekke* proudly named "Hudaiyye Tekke." It is clear that following this renovation, the Cafer Ağa Mosque gained the status of a mosque-*tekke* affiliated with the Sayyidi branch of the Rûfaiyya order, solidifying its final form.²⁸⁶

Sultan Abdulhamid II funded the construction of the Rûfaiyya *tekke* in Aleppo in 1881²⁸⁷. Another document reveals the allocation of food provisions detailing the amount, source of this imperial subsidy to the *tekke* in Aleppo.²⁸⁸ He

²⁸⁵ Julia Gonnella, "As Sayyid ...", 303.

²⁸⁶ Emine Naza, "Cafer Ağa Mescidi", 366.

²⁸⁷ BOA/İ.ŞD../53/2992/ 01.Rebiülahir.1298 (March 04, 1881).

²⁸⁸ BOA/ŞD../102/16/ 28.Rebiülevvel.1298 (March 01, 1881).

exhibited considerable interest in the Rufaiyya order and its activities due to their significant influence in Hama, Homs, and Baghdad.

Ebu'l Huda occupied a pivotal role within both the empire and the Rufaiyya order during his tenure in Istanbul, as evidenced by three significant contributions. Primarily, the act of writing was regarded as the sheik's foremost obligation. He is acknowledged for having authored more than 230 books and for his contributions to various newspaper articles, particularly those addressing separatist Arab movements.

Moreover, his literary works underscored the legitimacy of Abdulhamid II's caliphate, affirmed his position as its representative, and promoted the notion of obedience among Muslims. Additionally, Ebu'l Huda functioned as a critical intermediary in the center-periphery relationship. According to the scholar Kemal Karpat, he effectively connected certain tribes and clans in the Arab world to the Sultan, thereby playing a vital role in facilitating communication and maintaining relations.²⁸⁹ Furthermore, Ebu'l Huda provided consultancy services to the palace. For instance, regarding a military agreement with the Kingdom of Serbia, his expertise was sought in determining the appropriateness of symbolic gestures, such as gestures, such as wearing the military uniform of the sultan, serving as the king's sole servant, or receiving a commission as a commander in the imperial army.²⁹⁰

Sheik Ebu'l Huda sought to establish an organization that not only possessed religious authority but also exerted political influence. This illustrates the Neo-Sufi transformation of religious authority from otherworldly spiritual guidance to practical political counsel, positioning Sufi leaders as technocratic advisors rather than purely mystical teachers. He undertook all necessary measures to achieve his

²⁸⁹ Kemal Karpat, *Politization of Islam*, 192-3.

²⁹⁰ Resuhi Baykara, "II. Abdulhamid'in resmi fetvaemini Ebülhüdanın bir fetvası", 1346-9.

objectives, recognizing the palace as an effective means to realize his ambitions. His energetic and proactive demeanour significantly contributed to the accomplishment of these goals. With the proliferation of *tekkes* in the provinces, Ebu'l Huda emerged as a vital political agent for the Sultan. His *tekkes* played a crucial role in disseminating viewpoints that supported the Sultanate and in mobilizing public opinion in favour of Sultan Abdulhamid II.

This propaganda effort extended beyond religious circles to include the Ottoman press, where Ebu'l Huda actively defended the Sultan's caliphal claims. In one of these newspaper articles, published in *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, dated January 10, 1881, Ebu'l Huda underlines that any endeavours to vacate the Arabs from the caliphate will yield and argues that the survival and salvation of the people of Islam is only possible through utter devotion to the caliphate. While representing Abdulhamid II as a righteous and just sultan, embodying the purest morality and the most beautiful traits, the heir to the exalted office of imamate and the bearer of the excellent caliphate standard, he emphasizes that compliance to the caliph is compulsory for every Muslim and that contending him would mean opposing the command of Allah and the Prophet. Pleading that the office of the caliphate will survive with unity and solidarity and will weaken with separation and division, Ebu'l Huda also intimidates the colonial powers, whom he portrays between the lines with terms such as *müfsits* (seditious) and *cahil müfteriler* (ignorant slanderers), and the external powers that are trying to separate the Arabs from the Ottoman caliphate; he also reminded the Arabs that they must be in absolute unity with all their monotheistic brothers with *kalp ve cihan ihlası* (sincerity of heart and soul).²⁹¹

²⁹¹ Ebu'l Hüda es-Seyyadi, "Bend-i Mahsus", *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, (November 10, 1881).

Sheik Zafir and Sheik Ebu'l Huda were entrusted with the task of writing and publishing religious and Sufi texts that articulated the foundational principles of their orders and affirmed the legitimacy of Sultan Abdulhamid II's claim to the caliphate. These works called upon all Muslims to unite behind him and reaffirm their loyalty to the caliphate.²⁹² This pan-Islamic discourse epitomized Neo-Sufi adaptation to modern political realities. While classical Sufism emphasized universal spiritual brotherhood transcending political boundaries, Neo-Sufism reframed Islamic unity as loyalty to a specific political entity, the Ottoman caliphate, thereby serving imperial consolidation efforts.

Sheik Ebu'l Huda distinguished himself from Sheik Zafir not only through his written works but also through his exceptional personality. While Sheik Zafir primarily concentrated on religious pursuits and an advisory position to the Sultan on matters related mostly to Northern Africa, Sheik Ebu'l Huda actively engaged in bureaucratic relations and political matters. His frequent visits to the palace facilitated the formation of a transactional relationship, significantly enhancing his prominence between 1879 and 1890. From the palace's perspective, while a *tekke* was built for Ebu'l Huda in Aleppo, the construction of both a *tekke* in Istanbul and a special tomb after Sheik Zafir's death illustrates a difference in the Sultan's emotional investment. Perhaps, Ebu'l Huda was aware of this proximity as various memoirs suggest that he was intensely jealous of Sheik Zafir and actively sought to sabotage his relationship with the Sultan, which gives an intention that Sheik Zafir emerged as one of Ebu'l Huda's principal rivals within the Ottoman Empire, particularly in the palace context. Documentation indicates that Zafir harboured

²⁹² David Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and social change in late Ottoman Syria*, (Oxford University Press, 1990).

resentment toward Ebu'l Huda, as evidenced by an archive document translated for the Sultan by Lewis Sabuncu. This document suggests a translation of a segment from an article published in the *Türkiye* newspaper in Egypt, which was recognized for its support of Sheik Ebu'l Huda's ideology. In the translated conversation between Sheik Zafir and İzzet Bey, the pro-French politician, İzzet Bey questioned Sheik Zafir regarding the suspension of the newspaper *Hidayat*, which has initiated publications of *Cehine* and *Şemsül Hakika*, both of which challenged the authority of the Ottoman Empire. Sheik Zafir retorted that he possessed a strong aversion to the name *Hidayat*, as it reminded him of Sheik Ebu'l Huda – given that etymological link between *Hidayat* and *Huda*.²⁹³ Furthermore, Sheik Zafir referenced another Egyptian newspaper, *El-Basire*, in which Mahmud Zeki Efendi discussed the disruptive conduct of Ebu'l Huda within the palace setting. Mahmud Nedim recounts their discord and mentions that they sent *journals* about one another to the palace.²⁹⁴

One prominent incident highlighting this rivalry was an assassination attempt on Sultan Abdulhamid II during the Friday prayer. The sultan occasionally attended the Ertuğrul Tekke in Beşiktaş for the Friday prayer. It was reported to the palace that there would be a bombing. Although the tekke was searched, no bomb was found. It is believed that Sheik Ebu'l Huda submitted this report to the palace out of jealousy over the Sultan's preference for the Ertuğrul Tekke. Orhan Koloğlu suggests that a follower of Ebu'l Huda orchestrated this event through the foreign office.²⁹⁵

There is no definitive evidence of enmity between Sheik Ebu'l Huda and Muhammad Zafir; however, their personalities provide insight into their behaviors

²⁹³ BOA/Y..PRK..TKM/41/10/ 5.Cemaziyelevvel.1316 (September 21, 1898).

²⁹⁴ Mahmud Nedim, *Arabistan'da bir Ömür*, 35-47.

²⁹⁵ Orhan Koloğlu, *Abdülhamid Gerçeği*, 319.

and intentions. *Jurnalcilik* was a prevalent tactic during the reign of Abdulhamid II, reflecting the intricate power dynamics within the palace as various religious and political figures vied for influence. In his memoirs, Cemal Kutay recounts an instance where Ebu'l Huda tried to undermine Sheik Zafir by submitting a false denunciation letter. Kutay notes that everyone was aware of this scheme and hoped that the Sultan would see through it:

The Shazeli Sheik Zafir Efendi was a man of great integrity who would do no harm to anyone. He stayed away from state affairs, yet his influence was significant. It is unclear how Sultan Hamit came to know this man, but perhaps he trusted Zafir's piety and righteousness during his time as a spiritual leader, believing that his prayers were effective. The sultan would visit the Sheik's lodge once or twice a year to receive his blessings. However, Ebu'l Huda, who lived on Serencebey Hill but across from the Shazeli Lodge due to an empty lot, was openly envious of the favour shown to Sheik Zafir. Those aware of the situation quickly realized that Ebu'l Huda had orchestrated a false report to undermine Zafir's integrity, motivated by his desire for similar recognition. He sent this report to Bucharest through a vagabond named (Vais) Efendi, who was likely connected to him and worked at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for some reason. This roundabout method seemed designed to intimidate the report's actual author and discredit him in the eyes of the Sultan. Despite Ebu'l Huda's dubious tactics, he ultimately achieved his aim, even if it was through underhanded means.²⁹⁶

Based on available documents, it can be stated that Ebu'l Huda was more politically passionate than Muhammad Zafir. His requests to the Sultan and petitions for his relatives indicated that he understood the significance of residing close to the palace and the Sultan.

²⁹⁶ Ahmet Reşit Rey, *İmparatorluğun Son Döneminde Gördüklerim Yaptıklarım (1890-1922)*, 13.

CHAPTER 5

TRUE FAITH: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE SULTAN IN THE EULOGIES OF EBU'L HUDA AND SHEIK ZAFIR

The Sultan Abdulhamid II has been the subject of various, often conflicting representations, influenced both by his character and the historical context of his reign. Some individuals depicted him as the “Kızıl Sultan”, while others referred to him as the “Ulu Hakan”. These divergent perspectives can be attributed, in part, to the uncertainties prevalent in the 19th century, a period marked by significant reform initiatives and organizational restructuring.

Considering the content of the works by Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir, it is obvious that they were written in response to the circumstances of their time. These works presented a state structure centered on the caliphate, in terms of both framework and content, and included many elements that Sultan Abdulhamid II required.

According to Itzhak Wiessman who also saw this need, Abdulhamid II's Pan-Islamic policy was essentially an instrumental strategy and religion itself was not a fundamental component of this strategy. Wiessmann posits that “As other, ‘modern’, ideologies suggested themselves, Abdulhamid II has no scruples to add them to his symbolic ‘toolkit’.”²⁹⁷ According to this approach, the modern Muslim state was doomed to develop in an authoritarian direction. Sultan Abdulhamid II sought to prevent the transfer of power to the new powers that modernization had created. For this purpose, Wisemann claims, the Sultan “devised a new kind of

²⁹⁷ Itzhak Weissmann, “Abū l-Hudā l-Şayyādī and the Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism”, 591.

politics that combined elite cooptation and population”.²⁹⁸ The mobilization of the people behind the Sultan was initially achieved through the Pan-Islamic ideology which was disseminated by Sufi orders.

An important tool in this dissemination was the eulogies written by Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir. These texts were written in response to the conditions of the period and combined the dual roles of Sultan Hamid as both statesman and religious leader, which had been distinctly separated during the Tanzimat period, under a unified title, and emphasized the authorities and responsibilities related to a state administration centered on the caliphate. It is also clear that Ebu'l Huda, in particular, lived both as a sheik and as an observer and unofficial diplomat, who was closely familiar with the current political situation and its actors due to the duties and responsibilities he undertook. It seems that he drew inspiration for the theory of the caliphate from the renowned work by Maverdi,²⁹⁹ which previously contained provisions supporting the Abbasids against the Fatimids, about the issues Abbasid caliphs needed.

The sheiks in this study presented a predominantly ‘positive’ image of Abdulhamid II, despite their personal ambitions and rivalries within the Yıldız Palace. Although both sheiks were leaders of Sufi orders, they were frequently subjected to comparison. The Sultan provided support for their orders, residing in the Yıldız Palace; however, their distinct orders and personalities often stood in stark

²⁹⁸ Itzhak Weissmann, “Abū l-Hudā l-Şayyādī and the Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism”, 591.

²⁹⁹ For more information about Maverdi’s work, Ahmet Güner, “Maverdi’nin Hilafet Kuramının Tarihsel Arkaplanına Bir Bakış (II)”, *D.E.Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, XVII, (İzmir 2003), 227-252, A.R. Gibb Hamilton, “Al-Mawardi’s Theory of the Caliphate”, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, ed. Stanford J. Shaw & Wilham R. Polk, (Princeton 1982), 151-166.

contrast to each other. For instance, Ahmet Reşit Rey characterized Sheik Ebu'l Huda as excessively greedy and worldly, while he portrayed Sheik Zafir as a resigned, devoted, and prayerful individual.³⁰⁰ Perhaps for this reason, François Georgeon also mentions that these specialized consultants, one of whom establishing links with Trablusgarp and the absence of collaborative efforts among these consultants, who do not organize 'Islam lobby' serving the interests of the caliphate.³⁰¹

Although there have been assertions of rivalry between the two sheiks, there exists insufficient evidence to demonstrate whether this competition was openly and reciprocally expressed. In this regard, it is relevant to address the issue of *jurnalcilik*, which played a significant role during the reign of Abdulhamid II. *Jurnalcilik* represented a significant aspect of Sultan Abdulhamid II's governance. The sultan recognized its value as a mechanism for uncovering behind-the-scenes information.³⁰² Despite acknowledging the questionable nature of *jurnalcilik*, he maintained that it was an indispensable practice.³⁰³

In 1880, Abdulhamid II founded the Yıldız Intelligence Organization, to be the first comprehensive and institutional intelligence organization established in Ottoman history. This organization was tasked with collecting information on external threats and closely monitoring opposition movements within the palace, in the capital, and in the periphery. The vast breadth and efficacy of this intelligence network, which had informants in every corner of the empire, created the impression

³⁰⁰ Ahmet Reşit Rey, *Gördüklerim-Yaptıklarım*, 11. Also, Osman Selim Kocaoğlu, *Derviş Vahdeti ve Çavuşların İsyanı*, 63-67.

³⁰¹ François Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, İstanbul: İletişim, 2012,

³⁰² Sultan Abdulhamid, *Siyasi Hatıratım*, 72.

³⁰³ Sultan Abdulhamid, *Siyasi Hatıratım*, 198.

that the sultan had “ears” in every realm. Indeed, the failed coup attempt in the Çırağan Palace in 1896 was thwarted through this intelligence network. This system of intelligence created an atmosphere of distrust among people within society. Over time, it evolved into a lucrative venture that served to shape both positive and negative perceptions of his rule, thereby establishing itself as a widespread occupation across the empire. Sultan Hamid profited from possessing an intelligence network, which included even the most remote regions under his administration, and influenced the conduct of the palace’s residents. Notably, this practice affected the behavior of Sheik Ebu’l Huda and Sheik Zafir, requiring considerable discretion in their actions and their interactions with the Sultan. Ayşe Osmanoğlu reported a rumor alleging that Ebu’l Huda served as the chief informer for Abdulhamid II, enhancing the notion that each historical period had its unique methods of governance.³⁰⁴ Moreover, various rumors circulated within the palace in an effort to demonstrate their loyalty to the sultan and his caliphate. In this respect, by writing eulogies that portray the Sultan as a robust, virtuous, and responsible leader committed to serving Islam and safeguarding its sacred sites, Sufi sheiks established their influence and proximity to imperial power.

Why did we choose to call these texts eulogies? Eulogies, by definition, serve to commemorate a deceased person and praise their virtues and achievements, standing out as a type of speech that elevates rhetoric. As a literary genre, these texts glorify the attributes of the Sultan, delineate his contributions to Islam, thereby constructing an image of the ideal caliph, employing a rhetorically exalting style. Therefore, labelling these texts as eulogy underscores their dual purpose. They are

³⁰⁴ Ayşe Osmanoğlu, *Babam Sultan Abdülhamid*, 26.

not merely vehicles of praise; they also play an active role in constructing meaning within a performative context. In this respect, referring to these texts as eulogies preserves the memory of Abdulhamid II, reestablishes his authority, and facilitates an image-building process, thereby becoming “performative utterances” in J. L. Austin’s terminology. Consequently, the concept of eulogy provides an appropriate categorization for these texts in terms of both literary tradition and performative function.

An analysis of the works produced by Sheik Ebu’l Huda and Sheik Zafir is both necessary and pertinent. Our objective is to examine these eulogies in terms of their intent, content, and methodology, with special reference to the Speech Act Theory developed by J.L. Austin, who formulated it in his lectures at Harvard University in 1955. Austin argued that linguistic expressions are not merely descriptions but also performative actions. This approach, systematized in Austin's work *How to Do Things with Words* (1956), offers a new perspective on understanding how language constructs social reality.

In Sufi texts and the writings of sheiks, we frequently encounter prayers, advice, guidance, and transmissions of spiritual experiences that not only describe spiritual truths but also establish certain patterns of emotion, thought, and behaviour in society. For instance, when a sheik says, "you must practice remembrance of the heart," it is more than simple advice – it expresses the spiritual hierarchy between disciple and sheik while also creating a religio-social reality. In this context, we will analyse how the expressions, descriptions, and statements containing judgments, warnings, and claims in the texts of Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir – when reading

through Austin's classification of "locutionary,"³⁰⁵ "illocutionary,"³⁰⁶ and "perlocutionary"³⁰⁷ acts and the concept of "felicity conditions"³⁰⁸ – create effects in society as religious and political authorities.

In this regard, the linguistic strategy employed by Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir serves an important speech act. It is essential to note that all works were initially written in Arabic and later translated into Ottoman Turkish. This linguistic strategy functions as what Austin would call an "expositive"³⁰⁹ speech act by positioning Arab sheiks and their communities as valued contributors rather than mere subjects. Most importantly, these linguistic arrangements create "felicity conditions" for the speech acts contained within these texts to succeed. By having

³⁰⁵ Locutionary Act: For expressions J. L. Austin describes as "locutionary acts," he categorizes them as producing certain sounds, saying certain words with a particular grammatical structure, and using these words with specific meanings and references.

³⁰⁶ Illocutionary Act: Expressions J. L. Austin describes as "illocutionary acts" are defined as the action performed in saying something. For example, asking questions, providing information, warning, promising, commanding, announcing decisions. He argues that such expressions may also contain "illocutionary force" and that this should be considered separately from the meaning of the expression.

³⁰⁷ Perlocutionary Act: J. L. Austin claims that saying something often, sometimes typically, will produce certain effects on the feelings, thoughts, or actions of listeners and speakers. Austin uses term "Perlocutionary Act" to describe the results obtained by saying something. For example, persuading, frightening, surprising, and directing.

³⁰⁸ J. L. Austin underlines the "doctrine of infelicities" in order to explain the conditions necessary for these Speech Acts to be successfully performed. First of all, there must be an accepted conventional stand for the words practiced by certain persons in certain circumstances. These people and circumstances must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked. In addition, the procedure must be executed correctly, and completely. The final condition is the fact that the procedure must be specially designed for the use of the participant, who has intention to conduct in and must to do so subsequently. Please see J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 14-15.

³⁰⁹ Austin evaluates "illocutionary acts" in five categories. The first is "verdictives" referring to making a decision about a fact (evaluating, calculating, interpreting); the second is "exervitives" referring to using power or influence (appointing, voting, commanding, warning); the third is "commissives", referring to undertaking to do something (promising, intending, swearing); the forth is "behabitives" referring to attitudes and social behaviours (apologizing, congratulating, cursing); the the last one is "expositives" referring to explaining the place of utterances in a conversation (answering, objecting, accepting, assuming). Please see J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 162.

Arab Sufi sheiks as authors for these eulogies, written in Arabic, these texts gain authenticity and authority with Arabic-speaking populations. In addition, sheik's dual positioning – connected to both imperial center and local communities – gives their religio-political utterances the institutional backing necessary to function effectively as performative speech.

Furthermore, the use of Arabic signifies that this language was recognized and officially employed within the central administration, particularly in texts published in and disseminated from Istanbul, thereby acknowledging the Arab populace as collaborators of the state. Thus, the significance of these texts lies in their function as communications from the empire's center to the ordinary citizens in remote regions where Arabic was mostly spoken, mediated through the Sufi sheiks, who did not merely describe Ottoman authority but actively constructed it through carefully orchestrated eulogies operating within established religious and political frameworks.

Although comprehensive documentation of audience responses and specific performative elements will necessitate additional archival research, this study elucidates the methodological potential of synthesizing speech act theory with performance studies. This integration reveals mechanisms through which imperial authority is enacted and reinforced via performative textual practices.

5.1 Texts of Ebu'l Huda es-Seyyadi

Sheik Ebu'l Huda has been said to have authored over 200 works, with some sources suggesting the number could be as high as 300 or even 400. According to Tufan Buzpinar, the Süleymaniye Library houses 98 works by him, which included multiple copies and two manuscripts; the IBB Atatürk Library contains 47 printed

works, some of which are duplicates, while the IU Central Library Rare Books has 15, including three manuscripts; there are eight works in the Selim Ağa Library, four in the Millet Library and 1 in the Atıf Efendi Library.³¹⁰ Butrus Abu-Manneh claims that he composed approximately 212 texts between 1880 and 1908 in cities such as Istanbul, Cairo, and Beirut.³¹¹ Abu-Manneh studied these texts and categorized Ebu'l Huda's writings into three main themes: First, to embrace and defend the caliphate of the Sultan in order to secure the loyalty of the people; second, to promote and praise the Rufaiyya order; and third; to exalt the titles of *şeriflik* (the title of the governor of Mecca) and *seyyidlik* (descendants of the Prophet Muhammad) among his descendant while refuting opposing claims.³¹² Throughout his time in Istanbul, he devoted significant effort to supporting Sultan Abdulhamid II's caliphate, especially when he was commissioned to write and publish religious and Sufi works.³¹³

This study will analyze two of his various books. Both were focused on the Ottoman caliphate and the Sultanate, even though they also addressed different themes related to Sufism, Islam, the characteristics of the Rufaiyya order, and the behaviors and lives of the *tarikāt* members.

³¹⁰ Tufan Buzpınar, *Hilafet ve Saltanat*, 198.

³¹¹ Butrus Abu-Manneh, "Sultan Abdülhamid and Sheikh Ebu'l-Huda Es-Seyyadi", 140. A list of Ebu'l-Huda's works until 1906 in *Kitab al-Furkan* (Cairo 1906), 78-82 and a fuller list in Ebu'l-Huda's *Al-Tariqa al-Rifaiyya*, a new edition by M. al-Samarra'i (Baghdad, 1969), 9-16.

³¹² Abu Manneh, "Sultan Abdülhamid...", 140.

³¹³ According to Butrus Abu-Manneh, the sheikh Ebu'l-Huda and the sheikh Zafir were both asked to write texts during their Sufi activities, 140 and 150. See Ebu'l-Huda's biography in Tuwairani, pp. 41ff; and Muhammed Zafir, *al-Nur al-Şati* (Istanbul, A.H. 1301), the title page.

5.1.1 Da'i'r-resad li-sebili'l-ittihad ve'l-inkiyad

One of the earliest and most significant publications of Ebu'l Huda was a booklet titled "*Da'i'r-Resad li-Sebili'l-Ittihad ve'l-Inkiyad*". This work was printed at the government press in Istanbul³¹⁴, where Ebu'l Huda humbly identified himself as Nakib of Aleppo. The original manuscript was composed in Arabic; however, it was subsequently translated into Ottoman Turkish by Halepli Kudsizade Abdulkadir Efendi, a good friend of Ebu'l Huda and the grandson of Muhammad Kudsi, who served as the Mufti of Aleppo. Although the exact date of the composition and printing of the text remains unspecified, certain statements within the document provide valuable contextual clues. It is evident that the text was written after the promulgation of the *Kanun-i Esasi* in 1876, as it references the Sultan's actions:

... (he) established and arranged new regulations based on the rule of justice, abandoning the notorious Sultanic law for the comfort of the subjects. By displaying a state of benevolence rather than adhering strictly to Sultanic authority, the Sultan initiated a system of consultation to facilitate the implementation of the Imperial ordinance...³¹⁵

It is necessary to note that the text was composed before 1883, as stated by Abu-Manneh, who cited it in a listing of Ebu'l Huda's early works in the introduction to his book *Makarim al-Akhlaq* in A.H. 1302 (1883).³¹⁶ Furthermore, it is plausible to propose that the text was either drafted before the suspension of the parliament to provide guidance to the deputies, or afterwards to elucidate the rationale behind Sultan Abdulhamid II's closure of the parliament in 1878. Ismail Kara offers two

³¹⁴ Matbaa-yi Amire, Istanbul, probably after 1880.

³¹⁵ Ebu'l-Huda, *Dai'r-Reşad*, 59. "...kavaid-i hakkaniyet üzre nizamat-i seniyye tesis ve tertip buyurmuş ve hukuk-ı kadime-i meşhure-i mülukaneden bir nice hukuku rahat-ı raiyet uğrunda terk ve bast-ı bisat-ı re'fetle beraber kavanin-i esasiye-i sultaniye üzre teşrid-i bünyan-ı mülk eyleyerek manen ve fiilen re'y ü efkar-ı musavvere yerine infaz-ı ahkam-ı aliyye için ittihaz-ı usul-ı meşveret etmiştir..."

³¹⁶ Butrus Abu-Manneh, "Sultan Abdülhamid...", 152.

additional potential dates for the writings of this text: The first is 1876, which corresponds to Ebu'l Huda's third return to Istanbul; the second is 1878, when he was appointed as Naqib to Aleppo but was recalled to Istanbul within the same year.³¹⁷ In his words:

...To inspire positive change and elevate the well-being of people, while nurturing the prosperity of nations, a community association has been established generous gifts are being shared with the people of various districts to attract and unite the masses in a spirit of hope and collaboration...³¹⁸

Presiding over the affairs of Muslims is a unique position held by prophets. Defining the Sultan responsible for "*ıslah-ı ahval-i reaya*" (well-being of the people), he implies that the Sultan takes the place of the prophets. Ebu'l Huda characterized the position of rulership in terms of the duty of prophethood, without referring to the last prophet, thus holding the Sultan responsible for the same duty as they are. Also, the phrase "*kavanin-i esasiye sultaniye*", as noted in the footnote, unequivocally refers to the *Kanun-i Esasi*. In contrast, "*Emr ü şura*" clearly points to the parliament, while "*cemiyet-i umumiye teşkil ve etraf u aktar*" specifically designates the deputies of the parliament. It is essential to highlight that the final chapter of the text is primarily directed towards the officials of the Ottoman Empire, by stating that:

For officials, the foremost obligation is to uphold justice and provide exemplary service, in addition to offering respectful and compassionate treatment to all subjects. It is their duty to promote the interests of the imperial authority while safeguarding against any form of abuse directed at the Ottoman Empire and the Sultan. Furthermore, officials are encouraged to engage in sincere counsel rather than resorting to intrigue or pursuing personal ambitions...³¹⁹

³¹⁷ İsmail Kara, *İslamcıların Siyasi Görüşleri I*, 15.

³¹⁸ Ebu'l-Huda, *Dai'r-Reşad*, 59. "...Emr-ü şura ve ıslah-ı ahval-i reaya ve umran-ı evtan u anha zımnında bir cemiyet-i umumiye teşkil ve etraf u aktardan celb ü cem'lerine bezl-i lutf-ı cezil edip..."

³¹⁹ Ebu'l-Huda, *Dai'r-Reşad*, 72. "...memurin için birinci vecibe-i zimmet adalet ve hüsn-i hizmet olup kaffe-i tebeaya dahi lutf ile hüsn-i muamele ve kalben hazreti emirü'l-müminine mahabbetle beraber taraf-ı eşref-i hümayunlarına hayırlı olan umurun tevsiyesine ve zat-ı

The title of the book, “*The Guide to the Path of Unity and Obedience*,” clearly represents the positioning of the writer as not just a writer, but as a guide, establishing a specific relationship with his readers as one who leads or directs. Ebu’l Huda also frames *ittihad* (unity) and *inkiyad* (obedience) not as optional positions but as a *sebil* (path) with religious connotations, verdicting an authoritative judgment about the nature of proper political behavior. The conjunction of unity and obedience in the title is particularly significant as a performative utterance, since it constructs a reality where unity is achieved through submission to authority. This exemplifies that language does not merely reflect reality but creates it, especially when embedded within religious and political institutions. Ebu’l Huda does not merely recommend obedience but presents it as the correct religious path, from multiple overlapping positions of being the Sheik of Rufaiyya order and naqib of Aleppo. In this respect, Ebu’l Huda’s recognized position within institutional structures demonstrates the effectiveness of performative utterance that the text has, and this context leverages to maximize the performative power of his words.

Ebu’l Huda’s emphasis on the importance of Islamic unity and consensus can be interpreted as a reaction to the Orientalist mind-sets and the colonialist attitudes of the era, particularly those implemented by the British, which sought to delegitimize Ottoman’s patronage of Islam and fragment Muslim communities in the region, particularly the Middle East, by demonization of Abdulhamid II.³²⁰ During the

hümayununa ve umur-ı Devlet-i Aliyye’ye ait olan herbir eziyetin def’i esbabına ve desais ve gayat-ı nefsanîyeden halis nasihatlarâ çalışmak dahi vacibattandır...”

³²⁰ While British opposition to Ottoman caliphate claims was primarily driven by imperial competition and geopolitical concerns, the discourse employed often exemplifies Islamophobic tropes that depicted Islam as inherently incompatible with progress and civilization. First appearing in French colonial literature in the 1910s and becoming widely used, especially after the 1990s, Islamophobia is a term that refers to attitudes and behaviors that enclose fear, hatred, or prejudice towards Islam and Muslims. In particular, the process

second half of the 19th century, Orientalist discourse propagated by England had called into question of the legitimacy of the Ottoman Caliphate by equating Islam with backwardness and despotism. Lord Cromer, who served as British Consul-General in Egypt from 1883 to 1907, explicitly characterized Islam as incompatible with progress and reform.³²¹ However, in this respect, Ebu'l Huda assertions earn more significance to portray the caliph, acting as the protector of all believers, thereby creating an ideological defence against the British divide-and-rule policy in Muslim colonies.

Ebu'l Huda asserts that Sultan Abdulhamid II was a ruler of considerable political influence and profound religious devotion, whose legitimacy ought not be questioned and whose authority should be respected by the populace. To substantiate these claims, he highlights that the Islamic institution of the caliphate reached the

that began with Pope Urbanus II defining Muslims as servants of the devil during the First Crusade, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) depicting Islam as a peril to Christianity in his profound work *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Voltaire (1694-1778) accentuating Muslims as antagonists of art, Thomas Moore (1779-1852) illustrating Islam as the proxy of evil and darkness, especially referring for the Turks, are some of the names that have been consequential in the shape of prejudices against Islam in the West. These approaches were not merely cultural or theological prejudices but served strategic imperial purposes by undermining the legitimacy of Ottoman religious authority over Muslim populations in British-controlled territories. Lord Cromer (1841-1917), who left his mark on the Victorian era and served as the British viceroy of Egypt, reckoned Islam as the cause of social backwardness in his work *Modern Egypt*, being one of the first examples of the Islamophobic approach that shaped the British view of the Ottomans. The prominent poet Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), while conveying the imperialist ideas of the period in his book *The White Man's Burden*, portrayed the Muslim characters in his works as uncivilized and lack of knowledge. These and comparable approaches were highly efficacious in shaping the odd and impaired social perception that developed against Muslims and saw them as ugly, repulsive, and hostile. Considering the examples demonstrated in this thesis, Islamophobia epitomizes itself not only as a prejudice and hatred towards Islam and Muslims but also as a mindset towards Muslims' claim of sovereignty. In this context, the bigotry and hostility shown towards Abdulhamid II's caliphate claim can be deemed as one of the examples of Islamophobia. As Harry T. Norris notes in his examination of Western diplomatic correspondence, this phenomenon can be understood as “the paranoia – today we may call it Islamophobia – which was aired in Whitehall circles” regarding Islamic institutions and authority. Please see H. T. Norris, *Popular Sufism in Eastern Europe: Sufi brotherhoods and the dialogue with Christianity and heterodoxy*, Routledge, 2012.

³²¹ Lord Cromer (Evelyn Baring, 1st Earl of Cromer), *Modern Egypt*, 229.

Ottoman dynasty, Sultan Abdulhamid II in particular, a designation that has been maintained in an unbroken line starting from Abu Bakr, who has been defined as the first caliph of the Prophet Muhammad. Historically, the emphasis on the continuation of the caliphate with the Ottomans, aside from its use for the sole purpose of praise, is expressed to strengthen the Sultan's position against both internal and external challenges. Until the second half of the 19th century, there was no project to revive this pre-Mongol caliphate in the Ottoman Empire. However, during this period, especially when we recall the direct challenges the British posed to Sultan Abdulhamid II's position as the universal leader of the Muslim community, as mentioned earlier, this usage retains a very functional significance. Furthermore, Abdulhamid II is characterized as "*emr ü nehye malik*³²²" (the possessor of political sovereignty) and "*gayret-i diniyye ve himmet-i mustaviye sahibi*³²³" (the protector and supporter of God's religion and sharia). He states that:

...the fact that, in the East of the West, by the master of the Islam, having a Muslim commander is among the obligations is apodictic and confirmed. Therefore, this great title, in the nation of the Islam, since the time of the first Caliph Sıddık-ı Ekber (r.s.), passed constantly from the friends of the dignified notables, who were the people of good reputation, till the dignity of the highness of the *Qur'an* and the gorgeous shariat was protected. The order of this honored vow, in the command of asylum and protection, was communicated in the standby of the great land of the Ottoman Empire. Since the legacy of prosperity in the times of the Glory of the World (i.e. the Prophet Mohammed), on the continuation of the accurate chain of the degree has, thanks to God, become the rare pearl of the beautiful genealogy of the Ottoman Empire, and the fellow of the Sultanate of this pure family...³²⁴

³²² Ebu'l-Huda, *Dai'r-Reşad*..., 13.

³²³ Ebu'l-Huda, *Dai'r-Reşad*..., 14

³²⁴ Ebu'l-Huda, *Dai'r-Reşad*..., 13-14. "... Meşarık u megaribde cümle esatız-i İslâmın nezdinde bir imamü'l-müslimin bulunmak vacıbbattan olduğu müsellemler ve musaddıklar olarak binaenaleyh bu makam-ı alî millet-i İslâmiyede halife-i evvel cenabı Sıddık-ı Ekber (r.s) zamanından ve ihvan-ı kiramı a'yan-ı ashab-ı fihâm hazarattan intikal ve ta ki Kur'an ve şeriat-ı garranın hıfz-ı şeref-i aliyesinde ve bu ahd-i şerifin rabıtasını sıyanet emrinde itkan ile ittisaf eden cehabize-i devran mülük-ı muazzama-i al-i Osman hazaratında ittisaf eyledi. Fahr-i kainat aleyhi efdalü't-teslimat efendimizin ahd-ı saa'detlerinden beri rabıta-ı müteselsile-i asliye üzre bu emr-i hatir-i hilafet ü imamet bi-hamdihi te'ala bu kerre silsile-i

Sultan Abdulhamid II was also presented as a legitimate ruler due to his dedication to serving the sacred sites of Islam and the broader Muslim community. After Ebu'l Huda legitimized the state of Abdulhamid II, he continues with a verse from the Qur'an saying that "...obey Allah, obey the Prophet and those in authority (Nisa 5/59)". The purpose of using this verse was to invoke divine authority to establish political obligations. By placing Abdulhamid II in the Quranic category of "those in authority", Ebu'l Huda is not merely describing the Sultan's position but actively constructing it as divinely mandated, by placing him within a sacred hierarchy. In other words, the verse establishes a powerful structural parallel: Obedience to Abdulhamid II is presented as part of the same religious obligation as obedience to Allah and the Prophet Muhammad, elevating political loyalty to the level of religious duty.

It is highly likely that the target audience for this message was primarily the Arab populace in the region of Syria and Shiites in Iraq. Considering the hardships in the region, Ebu'l Huda articulates that the Sufi imams counseled their disciples to cultivate a profound connection with the Emir of Muslims in pursuit of goodness, strength, and steadfastness. He asserts that it is the obligation of the virtuous to assist the ruler through verbal and physical actions. A just sultan is regarded as a symbol of goodwill and abundance, which he characterizes as being intrinsic to the spiritual dimension of human existence. He posits that the resolution of the critical matters or

celile-i Osmanitenin dürr-i yektası ve sülale-i tahire-i saltanatın zat-ı bi-hemtası serir-i hilafette malik-i nehy ü emre ve nasır-ı kelimetü'l-Hakk'ı fi's-sırri ve'l-cehr, sahib-i mehamid-i hamide ve menakıb-ı cemile-i adide, et-takiyyüt-tüka, es-salihü'l-mücahid ve 's'sabir fi havmeti'l-meydanı bi'r-rıza, el-mütelakki'l-veridat bi'l-istinadi ile kyvveti's-Samedî'l-Vahid halife-i hazreti nebeviye ba-ittisal-i uhud-u esanid mevlana el-Gazi es-Sultan Abdülhamid ibnü's Sultan Abdülmecid hazretlerine vusuliyle that-ı saltanat-ı İslamiyede calis olup..."

any hardships of people can only be achieved through the authority of the sultan, as it is the Sultan's duty to protect the integrity of Islam and its territorial borders. The Sultan is also designated to wield the sword of the prophet during warfare. In this regard, Ebu'l Huda emphasized that in a context of justice, it is imperative for all Muslims to pray for the welfare of the Sultan with benevolence. Conversely, in situations of oppression, Muslims are encouraged to wish for the sultan's well-being and to abstain from uttering any words of discontent and disparagement regarding him, whether in public or in private. In this context, Ebu'l Huda asserts that:

... the service to the highly degreed prophets and the guarding of the prosperous house (Kabe) and the protection of the sacred Mescid-i Aksa and the dignified service to the each holy tomb and the place of holy figures were belong to this beautiful glorified and necessary position of the caliphate of the time and (he was) responsible and since the beginning of the Islam, being the seat of caliphate and the Sultanate (Istanbul; the capital), the giant property and the whole power of Islam was collected together and situated under his sacred caliphate rule...³²⁵

Throughout the discussion, a significant adversary emerges that threatens the unity of the Ottoman Empire and, by extension, the broader Islamic world. This adversary is likely represented by the European powers, specifically Russia and Great Britain, which opposed Ottoman interests. Russia presented a considerable challenge to Ottoman sovereignty over Crimea and the Ottoman Empire in the Near East became fundamentally at odds. Şükrü Hanioğlu posits that Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 signalled the cessation of active British support for the Ottoman Empire.³²⁶ Moreover, British engagement in the Middle East was bolstered by their initiative to

³²⁵ Ebu'l-Huda, *Dai'r-Resad*, 40-41. "... hidmet-i atabe-i seniyye nebeviyye ve hiraset-i Beyt-i mamur ve muhafaza-i Mescid-i Mukaddes-i Aksa ve herbir merkad-i mukaddes ve makam-ı akdes hidmet-i şerifesi bu makam-ı celil-i lazimü't-tebcil-i hilafet-i uzmayaya ait ve raci ve zuhur-u İslamdan beri makarr-ı hilafet ve saltanat olan memalik-i cesime ve azime-i İslamiyyenin kaffesi daire-i milket-i hazreti hilafet-penahide müctemi' ve vakidir..."

³²⁶ Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 131.

elevate discussions regarding the Caliphate, which fostered divergent views of the Ottoman Caliphate, particularly during the nascent years of Sultan Abdulhamid II's rule. In light of these developments, Ebu'l Huda accentuated the imperative of maintaining allegiance to Sultan-Caliph Abdulhamid II as a means to counteract threats to the empire's cohesion. The protection of the *vatan* (motherland), the establishment of order, and the realization of favourable propositions for the empire could only be achieved through such loyalty. Abdulhamid II's tenure on the throne was thus justified by:

... This sacred position of the caliphate is the deed of the permanency of the religion. And with this way, (it) formed the establishment of the obedience and the union among the Muslims in the whole districts of the world by this rank, exclusively to the entailing aim...³²⁷

One of the most significant distinctions between this text and the second text, as well as those authored by Sheik Zafir, is the lack of direct and harsh criticism directed at the opponents of Sultan Abdulhamid II's rule. Ebu'l Huda clearly makes an authoritative moral judgment about officials who adopt Western customs by stating that:

...we have seen many officials in the Arabic regions and in the current cities of the Ottoman Empire, who was occupied with personal pleasures by assimilating into the rules of the civilization; therefore, caused to the increase in some expenses in general and for this aim, to the disloyalty to the owner of the command in his officialdom, with the excessive negligence, to the start of the abuse of the subjects, (he) compared putting on the colored dresses and combing their hairs and leaning on the walking stick to the praised virtues...³²⁸

³²⁷ Ebu'l-Huda, *Dai'r-Reşad*, 40. "... bu makam-ı mukaddes-i hilafet menkabe-i bekay-yı din ve namika-i mersum-ı İslam ve müslimindir. Ve bu suretle kaffe-i aktar-ı alemde bulunan müslümanların inkıyad ve ittihad eylemesini mucib olan mezaya münhasıran bu makamda ictima etmiştir..."

³²⁸ Ebu'l-Huda, *Dai'r-Reşad*, 44. "... bilad-ı Arabiyye ve sair memalik-i mahruse-i Devlet-i Aliyye'de pek çok memur görmüşüzdür ki bu medeniyet kaidesine tatbiken huzuz-ı nefsanîye ile iştilal etmesinden naşı bir takım masarifat-ı zaide-i külliyye ve bunun için de memuriyetince veliyyü'l-emre hıyanete ve fart-ı teseyyüble beraber zulm-ı raiyyete başlayıp

Rather than merely describing their behavior, the text constructs it as a moral failing through carefully selected terminology, such as *hiyanet* (betrayal) and *zulm* (oppression). He reframes the political-religious discourse of the late Ottoman period where Western modernization had been regarded as necessary for progress by connecting Western fashion (adorned clothing, styled hair, walking sticks) with moral corruption, personal excess, betrayal of the sovereign and oppression of subjects, the situations Ebu'l Huda portrays as political sins. He creates a moral context, where rejection of Western influence becomes equivalent to political loyalty. As the leader of the Sufi order, Ebu'l Huda exercises a particular force exercising obligations for officials to reject Western customs, which he depicts as objects of mockery.

Ebu'l Huda appears to critique the Young Turks and the Arab deputies in parliament for adopting modern attire. His primary concern lies not only in their Western-style clothing but also in their failure to exhibit the courtesy and modesty expected in their conduct. In the concluding section of his discussion, he emphasized the significance of jihad and Ghaza, arguing for the nobility of defending one's life and property in the context of these principles.

In an age of significant defeats and subsequent economical hardships, the Ottoman Empire was trying to tackle an escalation of anti-Ottoman activities, which were exacerbated by a substantial defeat to the Russians, resulted in the influx of hundreds of thousands of Muslim refugees from the Balkans and the Caucasus, thereby added to the strain on Ottoman recourses. In this context, Ebu'l Huda

esvab-ı müzahfere iktisa ve saçlarını düzeltip bastona ittıkayı meziyet-i mahmude kıyas eylemiştir...”

frequently underscored the necessity of unity and solidarity, urging individuals to assist one another. He strongly advocated for obedience to the Sultan, supporting his standpoint with relevant verses and *hadiths*. Ebu'l Huda posited that even when certain legal provisions did not entirely align with religious tenets, “acting with a reasonable attempt would be regarded as justice”. This perspective highlights his conviction that Sultan Hamid, as the emir of the faithful, was devoted to addressing these pressing issues in accordance with the principles of governance and the orderly operation of the state. He was committed to safeguarding the rights of all Muslims, applying the foundational tenets of Islam as a guiding framework.

5.1.2 *En-nefahatu 'n-nebeviya fi hidmeti 'l-hamidiyyeti 'l-Osmaniye*

In the context of eulogies devoted to Sultan Abdulhamid II, the second text was *En-Nefahatu 'n-Nebeviya fi Hidmeti 'l-Hamidiyyeti 'l-Osmaniye*.³²⁹ The precise publication year of the text remains unknown; however, İsmail Kara proposes that it may have been written in the late 1880s, based on the author's reactionary perspective towards texts authored by critics of Sultan Hamid.³³⁰ Furthermore, the translator's identity is also unclear; it has been suggested that Halepli Kudsizade could have undertaken the translation of this work.³³¹

The title of the book, “*Prophetic Inspirations in Service of the Hamidian Ottoman Caliphate*,” implies a primary objective of the text from the beginning. The establishment of a direct connection between prophetic authority and Sultan Abdulhamid II's rule aimed to legitimize the Sultan's authority through divine

³²⁹ The Prophetical Blows in the Service of the Ottoman Hamidian Caliphate. IUL, no. 4704.

³³⁰ İsmail Kara, *Hilafet Risaleleri*, 19.

³³¹ İsmail Kara, *Hilafet Risaleleri*, 22.

sanction. The phrase “in service of” is essentially the declaration of Ebu’l Huda’s commitment and allegiance to the Ottoman Caliphate. By invoking prophetic inspirations, the title positions the book as flowing from divine inspiration rather than mere human opinion, thereby establishing the institutional authority necessary for its performative utterances to succeed in invoking the engagement of its readers.

İsmail Kara presupposes that the text was specifically intended for the members of Sufi orders and the general populace, as the author emphasized faith and core Islamic tenets in the context of jihad. The author corroborated this appeal by referencing both the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and the pronouncements of the *pir*, head of the Rufaiyya order, within a framework in which Sultan Abdulhamid II was extensively praised and glorified, while an intense adoration and tendency towards Western civilization was strongly vilified.

In the initial section of the text, before engaging in an etymological analysis of the term “caliphate”, Ebu’l Huda posited that “when an individual is designated as caliph, obedience to him in the name of God is obligatory, while opposition of defiance is both sinful and illicit.”³³² Ebu’l Huda’s declaration about obedience to the caliph from the very beginning of the book represents an illocutionary act functioning as “exertive”, proposing an assertion of power that establishes obligations rather than merely describing them. By positioning obedience as “sinful and illicit”, the statement performs a religious-political act that creates the very social reality it appears to represent. The performative power of this statement becomes even more crucial when considering its strategic placement before any

³³² Ebu’l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü’n-Nebeviye...*, 22. “hilafet-i muazzama-i Osmaniye’nin kaffe-i müslimin üzerinde olan hak ve meziyetini beyan edelim”.

etymological analysis, as it establishes the normative religious framework first before engaging in seemingly objective linguistic scholarship.

He proceeded to examine the religious implications of the term “caliphate” and the necessity of obedience to the *imam* (the religious leader), drawing upon religious texts and historical examples from the Umayyad caliphate. The sheik proclaimed, “Let us affirm the legitimacy, authority, and superiority of the great Ottoman caliphate over the entire Muslim world”.³³³ Following this assertion, he elaborated on the advantages associated with obedience to the *imam*.

Sultan Abdulhamid II was always mentioned with his title of ‘ghazi’ and represented as the *mansib-i celil-i imamet* (supreme ruler of the glorious imamate) and the possessor of the *tac-ı bahirü’l-ibtihac-ı hilafet* (the crown that outshines the exaltation of the caliphate).³³⁴

On the other hand, Ebu’l-Huda claimed that those people who openly opposed the authority of the *imam* also appeared in the reign of the Ottomans, as existed in the age of the prophethood. Even though these presumptuous people tried to dishonor the Sultanate and the caliphate of Sultan Abdulhamid II, they would not accomplish anything in realizing their intentions. Ebu’l-Huda stated that:

... with honoring the re-circulated grandeur throne of the caliphate by the enthroning of his strengthened personality of the sacred caliphate, a series of disasters attacked from every side, so the rule of the uniquely sedate king, with his royal intact of precaution, which was followed by his virtue of accurate politics and by the obeisant sovereignty of his mature reason, for the welfare and the happiness of the future state, with the supply of the necessary causes and the means and the equipment of military troops and the supply of money, (he) re-organized the existed problems, and ended the fires of the fighting in war, and provided the *Düyun-u Umumiye* with the beauty of

³³³ Ebu’l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü’n-Nebeviye...*, 23. “birisi mansib-ı hilafete geçince ona Allah’ın emriyle itaat etmek vacib ve muhalefet etmek günah ve haram olur”.

³³⁴ Ebu’l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü’n-Nebeviye...*, 26.

countenance. So, (he) saved the center of the Sultanate and the caliphate and the patient Ottoman Empire from the aggression of the enemy...³³⁵

Sultan Abdulhamid II was capable of handling such a challenging task like a renovator due to his tenacity and his dedication to repairing the losses and damages that had afflicted the Imperial Ottoman Dominions, which he believed were divinely protected.³³⁶ Ebu'l Huda criticizes the interpretations about *Düyun-u Umumiye* (Public Debt Administration) as the empire's weakness and dependence on foreign powers. He reframes this perception into an achievement of Sultan Abdulhamid II. He presents the financial crisis and foreign intervention as challenges that the Sultan was effectively addressing by portraying the Public Debt Administration as a triumph of the Sultan, thereby undermining the effect of increasing foreign control over the Ottoman economy. He states that Sultan Hamid tirelessly worked day and night, without languor, to repair the losses and damages that had afflicted the Imperial Ottoman Dominions, which he believed were divinely protected.³³⁷ Abdulhamid II was depicted as a diligent leader, a hardworking doctor, implementing measures with sincere intentions to revive the empire. His politics were considered magnificent, and he demonstrated exceptional talent in defending the empire's borders and upholding private law. Sultan Abdulhamid II possessed *niyet-i halise* (good will) and *siret-i hamide* (praiseworthy moral quality), and *birr u*

³³⁵ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü'n-Nebeviye...*, 56. "... Zat-ı müeyyede-i hazreti hilafet-penahilerinin serir-i şevket-musırr-ı hilafete şeref-bahş-ı cülus olmalarıyla beraber seyl-i gavail her taraftan hücum etmiş olduğundan mücerred re'y-i rezin-i şahane ve hüsn-i tedbir-i mülukanelerine inzimam eden maharet-i tamme-i siyasiye ve akl ü firnat-ı re-i cenabı tacidarileriyle selamet ve saadet-i mülk ü millete muktazi esbab u vesaili ikmal ve techiz-i cünud ve bezl-i nükud ederek vak'ı-gavaile intizam ve ateş-i harb ü kitale nihayet ve düyun-ı umumiyye hüsn-ü suret verip merkez-i hilafet ve saltanatı ve sabir bi'l-cümle memalik-i şahanelerini düşman tasallutundan kurtarmış..."

³³⁶ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü'n-Nebeviye...*, 56.

³³⁷ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü'n-Nebeviye...*, 56.

ihsan (a unique benevolence), which distinguished him among his contemporaries and in the realm of civilization, making him worthy of his role as Caliph.³³⁸ He even composed a quatrain to celebrate his leadership and the significance of his caliphate:

Caliphate came to him as submissive
By embroidering his laps with praise
Caliphate cannot be apt without him
It is impossible for him to find peace without caliphate³³⁹

It is easily seen from these sentences that Sultan Abdulhamid II was regarded as a unique emperor who loved his subjects, cared for the empire and possessed the necessary skills (political virtue) to command and rule the whole empire without any sign of indecision and stagnation. Interestingly, Ebu'l-Huda makes a comparison between Abdulhamid II and Plato while stating the degree of his politics in his words “*hikmet-i siyaset-i Felatun-pesendaneleriyle* (with the wisdom of his politically Platon-favoring)”.³⁴⁰ He might have tried to portray Abdulhamid II as the ‘philosopher king’, having the capacity to rule, in addition to his being a philosopher. According to Plato, the only character proficient in ruling a just society must be one with an ardor for truth, and who has attained the greatest wisdom or knowledge of the Good, who is the philosopher³⁴¹. In this respect, the philosopher king, Sultan Abdulhamid II, was exalted for his propensity to solve the disputes and problems, which would restore peace, and for his tremendous capacity to act as a philosopher-king. He also suggests that the Sultan rules with such wisdom that even Plato would approve of. This flattering comparison would have had particular resonance in

³³⁸ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü'n-Nebeviye...*, 56.

³³⁹ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü'n-Nebeviye...*, 56. Hilafet ona münkad olarak geldi/ Eteklerini fahr ile süsleyerek/ Zaten hilafet onsuz salih olmaz/ Onun da hilafetsiz salah bulması sözkonusu değil.

³⁴⁰ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü'n-Nebeviye...*, 56.

³⁴¹ Plato, *Republic*, Book 5.

Ottoman court culture, where a strong tradition of philosophical statecraft existed, influenced by both Islamic and Greek philosophical traditions. The Ottoman intellectual tradition highly respected Greek philosophy, particularly that of Plato and Aristotle, whose works were translated and studied throughout the Islamic world.³⁴² According to this mystical moral perspective, just as Ibn Arabi and Farabi, took the concept of the philosopher-king to a mystical dimension, a person should equip himself with divine moral characteristics that will transform him into a caliph, *imam*, perfect man, the shadow of God and the caliph of God's merciful attribute, thereby, the sultan should also adopt this.³⁴³

In the company of eulogies praising Sultan Abdulhamid II, Ebu'l Huda also exalted the Ottoman family, noting that they had reached a very high level of honor through the conquest of Istanbul, which the Prophet Muhammad had praised centuries ago. Therefore, Ebu'l Huda tried to construct a holy image of the Ottoman dynasty by presenting the conquest of Istanbul as the beginning of their dignified and magnificent administration. He stated that:

The one and maybe the main/first holy/blessed spring/source and essence of this sublime Ottoman state is the eminent conquest of the city of Constantinople...³⁴⁴

The Ottoman dynasty deserved the most exalted notice of treatment because they collected the dissipated and persecuted Islamic world under one rule and brought the power of Islam back to the scene:

³⁴² Khaled El-Rouayheb, "Ottoman Philosophy", *Encyclopedia of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. M. Sgarbi, Springer, Cham, 2018, 1-4.

³⁴³ Hüseyin Yılmaz, *Hilafeti Yeniden Düşünmek*, İletişim 2023, 277.

³⁴⁴ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü'n-Nebeviye...*, 38-39. "... bu devlet-i mübareke-i Osmaniye'nin menabı ve mesair-i celilesinin biri ve belki birincisi feth-i mübin-i şehr-i Konstantiniyyedir."

...that Holy Title has been handed down from father to the competent son in line of the impeccable (decent) Ottoman family by compliance (subordination/submission/obeisance) of the believers as an honorary degree (zinet-yab), and the whole people of Turkey, Arabia, Albania, Egypt, Syria (Şam) and Northern Africa (diyar-ı garbiye) etc... has subordinated it and has invoked in the name of the Sultan prayers and the sermons (khutba) by every pulpit in the East and the West. ...³⁴⁵

Here, Ebu'l Huda reveals a sophisticated performative utterance that functions far beyond mere historical description. He clearly renders an authoritative judgment about the historical reality of the transfer of holy titles to the Ottoman dynasty while simultaneously constructing it, by enumerating various peoples and regions that entered "the circle of obedience". This attempt is a pure illustration of religious discourse serving as the vehicle for constructing political legitimacy as well as an aim to shape the political attitudes and behaviors of his readers, deterring potential opponents. The main emphasis in this statement regarding the Ottoman dynasty is on the house or lineage rather than the individual sultan, implying that whether acquired or bestowed by God, all these attributes were thought to have been passed down from one ruler to another, thus granting the Ottoman lineage a right and privilege to rule the Ottoman Empire.³⁴⁶

The Ottomans were highly regarded for their benevolent service to Islam and the sacred sites, including *Mescid-i Aksa* (The Dome of the Rock) and *Harameyn-i Şerifeyn* (Mecca and Medina)³⁴⁷. Ebu'l Huda observed that the Ottoman dynasty had achieved such extraordinary popularity and grandeur that the memorials of

³⁴⁵ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü'n-Nebeviye...*, 34. "bu mansıb-ı mukaddes sülale-i tahire-i Osmanıyye ile zinet-yab olarak beyat-ı ümmetle bi'l-ırs ve'l-istihkak bu ana kadar birinden diğerine intikal edegelmiş ve kaffe-i akvam-ı Türkiye ve Arabiye ile Arnavud ve saire ve Mısır ve Şam ve diyar-ı garbiye katıbe-i dahil-i daire-i itaatleri olmuş ve şark ve garbda bulunan herbir minber üzerinde nam-ı hümayunlarına hutbe ve dualar okunmuştur".

³⁴⁶ Hüseyin Yılmaz, *Hilafeti Yeniden Düşünmek*, 291.

³⁴⁷ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü'n-Nebeviye...*, 33.

Andalucia and the Abbasids had been overshadowed.³⁴⁸ He argued that the Ottomans reinstated the institution of the caliphate at a time when Islam's dignity had been compromised, particularly after the Abbasid dynasty's defeat by the Tatars and the derision from the Fatimids in Egypt. The nobles and virtuous members of the Ottoman dynasty were unparalleled in their faith, moral integrity, and commendable qualities. Consequently, earlier caliphs held them in high esteem, making it *vacip* (incumbent) upon the populace to obey Sultan Caliph Abdulhamid II, who was recognized as the *imam* of his era.³⁴⁹

After commending the Ottoman family for their dignity and celebrating the Sultan for his exemplary governmentality,³⁵⁰ linked to his political virtues, the sheik becomes more aggressive in his critique of those harbouring malicious intentions towards Ottoman rule, particularly Sultan Abdulhamid II. He asserts that individuals, referred to as *erbab-ı fesad* (men of depravity), exist not only in the East but also in the West, intent on inciting hatred among the populace and encouraging denunciations of the Ottoman Caliphate. This criticism is particularly aimed at the Sultanate and caliphate under Sultan Abdulhamid II. Ebu'l Huda stated that:

...the masters of the mischief/immorality (*ahlak-ı faside*) wish for the success of deception of their superstitions/ misbelieves/ heresy (*batın*) over this virtuous *ümmet*, by slandering and maligning to Holy Caliphate by blundering the conception/cognition and the reason and tempting to their side, by inducing press and media to lies and depravity, by insulting to the Holy Person absolved from all sin and cleansed in Heaven by God Almighty

³⁴⁸ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü 'n-Nebeviye...*, 68.

³⁴⁹ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü 'n-Nebeviye...*, 69.

³⁵⁰ Michel Foucault's concept of "governmentality" is particularly relevant; it fuses the ideas of "governing" and "mentality" to illustrate that a complete understanding of power necessitates examining the political thought that underpins it. Importantly, Foucault contends that governing encompasses not only state and governmental structures but also extends to any form of administration, including religious, medical, and maternal systems, among others.

and by describing their mischief/immorality and their false accusations (isnad-ı me'ayibe) by an effort for revealing their false superstitions.³⁵¹

He claims that these *erbab-ı fesad* were involved in malevolent attempts in and out of the Ottoman Empire:

...those who lie and destroy friendships, with their boasting behaviours and words from the above, sometimes show the viciousness in the West, and sometimes tell ridiculous words in the East. Some spend great effort to mislead the people by presenting the wrong as the right, and so suppose the fact that the doubt will defeat the accurate knowledge by stimulating the owners of the accurate knowledge to the truth on some matters, and cheat themselves by this way...³⁵²

This definition also encompasses British colonial policies that targeted the legitimacy of the Ottoman caliphate. From the 1870s onward, Britain's propaganda activities in the Muslim world sought to create a perception that questioned the authority of the Ottoman caliphate by portraying it as an "oppressive" and "anti-progressive" institution.

The opposition group, composed of the Young Ottomans and certain *ulamas*, was dissatisfied with Sultan Abdulhamid II's rule and played a significant role in the *coup d'état* in 1908. Notably, some *ulamas* opposed the absolutist regime in the Ottoman Empire, and they engaged with opposition groups within the empire. Şükrü Hanioglu identifies two key characteristics of this relationship: First, some *ulama* members did not view their colleagues as natural allies, considering them as

³⁵¹ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü'n-Nebeviye...*, 59-60. "... ahlak-ı faside erbabının akl u idraki selb ve kendi taraflarına cezb ü celb ile matbuat ve neşriyatlarını kizb u dalalete vesile ve alet ederek makam-ı mukaddes-i hilafete mücerred bühtan ve iftira tarikiyle isnad-ı me'ayibe ve kendi ahlak-ı fasidelerini tasvir ile Cenabı Hakk'ın alem-i gaybda me'ayibden tathir ve tenzih buyurmuş olduğu zat-ı mukaddese 'azv u isnada ve tezvirat-ı batiniyyeleri gayret-i zahiriyyeleriyle bu ümmet-i necibiyyeye tesir ettirmeye muvaffakiyeti temenni ederler..."

³⁵² Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü'n-Nebeviye...*, 61. "... erbab-ı fesad ve ehl-i tezvir ü inad ise meydan-ı hızlan u tavra-furüşide hal u kalleriyle bazan garbda izhar-ı fesad ve bazan de şarkda türrehat ve bazıları da batılı hak suretinde gösterip halkı aldatmağa gayret ve batılın bazı umurda nazar-ı nakıdın ve nezd-i ehl-i yakinde hakka bi'l-iltibas ile şekkin yakine galip geldiğini zan etmekte ve kendi kendilerini bu suretle aldatmaktadırlar..."

obstacles to social progress; second, the opposition sought religious maxims to refute Abdulhamid II's Islamic claims and to legitimize their opposition to his rule.³⁵³

While they established their movement within the Ottoman Empire, many members eventually fled abroad, particularly to Paris and London, to continue their protests by the end of the 19th century. For the first time, these political activists utilized mass media to openly and courageously criticize Ottoman rule. The Young Ottomans began publishing the newspaper *Hürriyet* in London in 1896 and *Meşveret* in Paris in 1895, under the direction of Ahmed Rıza. Additionally, *Mizan* was published in Istanbul in 1888, featuring articles by some members of the *ulama* as well. Hoca Muhiddin also collaborated with the Young Ottomans to publish a journal called *Kanun-i Esasi* in Egypt in 1896.

This opposition movement described Abdulhamid II's reign as one of tyranny, during which the populace was left illiterate, public opinion was stifled, civilization was suppressed under misused religion, and community development was hindered. They presented the Sultan as a tyrant fundamentally opposed to religion and sharia, acting contrary to proper religious life and tenets of Islamic governance. They claimed that Abdulhamid II had usurped the caliphate and characterized submission to his authority as an act of infidelity. These views were published in various newspapers and periodicals, featuring numerous articles and letters that expressed grievances against the shortcomings of the Ottoman Empire and the despotism of Abdulhamid II.³⁵⁴

³⁵³ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 49.

³⁵⁴ For detailed information please see, "İhtar", *Mizan*, no. 173, May 1896, 2488; "Mekke-i Mükerrerme", *Mizan*, no. 170, April, 1896, 2463; "Bu Ne Hilafettir Ya Rab?", *Mizan*, no. 172, April, 1896; "Hakk-ı Saltanat", *Meşveret*, no. 23, 1896.

On the other hand, Ebu'l Huda employed similar arguments and verdicts for the newly emerging intelligentsia who were in favor of a constitutional regime, but also certain *ulama*, who sought to restore their declining political power in his eulogies. He sincerely believes in Abdulhamid II's command to re-establish the power and reputation of the Ottoman Empire, and stated in the eulogy as follows:

... when the Islamic society of people was a patient, which showed signs of being completely sunk in the ocean of the pains, (she) took the remedy from her great and generous commander and the venerated caliph, and her eyes were opened. There is no one who does not know this fact that (she found remedy) as she was given back the fame of power and the condition of precision...³⁵⁵

This metaphor inevitably brings to mind the expression of “sick man” that was frequently used in European diplomacy yet first employed by Emperor Nikolai for Turkey during his conversation with British ambassador Sir Hamilton Seymour in 1853.³⁵⁶ The use of medical metaphors in this text was genuinely a response to those sayings about the empire, emphasizing the specific power dynamic between ruler and ruled. By casting the Sultan as the physician, the texts naturalized the hierarchy between ruler and community just as a patient must trust, obey, and submit to a physician's expertise and authority for healing to occur, the community must similarly submit to the Sultan's guidance. Ebu'l Huda frames societal challenges not as political issues but as illnesses requiring expert intervention from above, which suggests that potential dissent or opposition is symptomatic of disease rather than a legitimate political position. This approach does not simply describe Ottoman governance. Still, it actively constructs an understanding in the community that

³⁵⁵ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü'n-Nebeviye...*, 61-62. “... heyet-i ictimaiyye-i İslamiyyenin müstağrak-ı derya-yı evca'u alam olan bir hasta halinde iken imam-ı hümam ve halife-i vacibü'l-ihtiramının devahane-i hikmetinden aldığı ilaç ile gözleri açılarak iktisab-ı ber'u sıhhat ve iade-i şân u kuvvet eylemiş bulunduğunu bilmeyen kimse yoktur...”

³⁵⁶ Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)*, 68-69.

thereby owns continued allegiance to the Sultan who has restored its glory and strength.

While Sultan Abdulhamid II was presented as the philosopher king in the first chapter, Ebu'l-Huda compared the Sultan with the fifth caliph Mu'awiya³⁵⁷ in the second chapter, who was granted the title of Chosroes³⁵⁸ of Arabs³⁵⁹. He affirmed that:

...(He) held the illiterate and the learned, the missing and the full in one site. (He) never presents praise to the illiterate, which will disturb the learned man, and does not allow the opposition of the trusted man of reason. This way of ruling bore resemblance to the wisdom of rule and the politics of Mu'awiya, who was titled as the Kisra-yı Arab...³⁶⁰

Ebu'l Huda compares Abdulhamid II's talents of ruling with those of Mu'awiya, such as the ability to recognize and to differentiate the man of learning from the ignorant, and the mature from the immature, and to bring the illiterate under the supremacy of the erudite. Ebu'l Huda's comparison of Mu'awiya is vital because this comparison of Abdulhamid II to Mu'awiya constitutes a striking deviation in Ottoman intellectual history. Vefa Erginbaş's study "Reading Ottoman Sunnism through Islamic History" reveals the existence of a widespread negative perception

³⁵⁷ Mu'awiya was the ruler who established the Umayyad dynasty in 661 and Umayyad dynasty possessed the second of the four Islamic caliphates³⁵⁷ after the death of Prophet Mohammad. Mu'awiya was known for his construction of a great Islamic state between 661 and 680. He was successful to turn the religious role of the caliphate into the political one and quickly suppressed those opponents of his caliphate. For further information please see: *The Encyclopedia of Islam*; P.M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis ed., *The Cambridge History of Islam*, (Cambridge 1970); A.A. Dixon, *The Umayyad Caliphate*, London 1970; G.R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam*, (Croom Helm, 1986).

³⁵⁸ Hüsrev in Turkish.

³⁵⁹ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü'n-Nebeviye...*, 62-63.

³⁶⁰ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü'n-Nebeviye...*, 63. "...Daire-i saltanat-ı uzmaları dahi alim ve cahili, nakıs ve kamili cami' olup herkesi bir derece be menzilet-i mahsusa ile mukayyed buyurup alimi mutazarrır edecek derecede cahilin rif'atine, akil-i sadıkın hürmetini tenkıs edecek raddelerde bayağı gafillerin i'tilasına meydan vermezler. Bu hususta ibra buyurdıkları hikmet-i idare-i hikmette kisra-yı Arab ünvanı almış olan halife-i hamid Muawiye (r.a.) hazretlerinin hikmet-i idare ve siyasilerine pek ziyade müşabihdir..."

of Mu'awiya among Ottoman intellectuals from the 14th to the 17th century.

Erginbaş finds that Ottoman historians described Mu'awiya as *mutegallibe* (ruler by force) and *mutaghallib* (usurper), viewing him as a figure who usurped Ali's rights and transformed the Islamic caliphate into a kingdom. However, in *Mizaniü'l-hakk* Katip Çelebi, as Erginbaş posits, "categorically forbids Muslims from cursing Mu'awiya because he was a companion of the Prophet, and a mujtahid."³⁶¹ He continues to argue that "the majority of Sunnis, including Al-Ghazali, do not approve of cursing Yazid".³⁶² According to the findings presented in Erginbaş's article, a strong *Ahl al-Bayt* (the companions of Muhammad) tendency was dominant among Ottoman intellectuals, and this brought about a love for the Ali lineage and a critical approach towards the Umayyad dynasty. However, as can be seen from Katip Çelebi's discourse, there is a deviation from the *Ahl al-Baytist* tendency in Ebu'l Huda. There might be two reasons for this situation, the first of which can be explained by sheik's identity from Syria. As Erginbaş emphasizes, the "Damascene tradition"³⁶³ that developed in the Damascus region from the 9th century onwards showed a tendency to rehabilitate Mu'awiya and embrace the Umayyad heritage.

³⁶¹ Vefa Erginbaş, "Reading Ottoman Sunnism through Islamic History: Approaches toward Yazid b. Mu'awiya in Ottoman Historical Writing", 471.

³⁶² In his article, Erginbaş claims that there was a division between Kadızadeli and Sufis regarding Mu'awiya and that this dispute was also reflected in Ottoman society. The majority of people referred to curse Mu'awiya. However, in the writings of Kadızadeli's spiritual leader Birgivi Mehmed, he asserts that it is forbidden by religion to curse someone who does not die as an infidel, citing hadiths. Although Birgivi does not directly mention Mu'awiya in this discourse, Katip Çelebi provides a clear perspective on the issue, stating, "Any disagreement among them is a matter of ijtihad (independent reasoning); a companion who is proven to be wrong in his reasoning receives a reward in the afterlife for his intention, whereas one who is proven right receives punishment between them, they deserve credit because they were both companions of Muhammad." Please see, Vefa Erginbaş, "Reading Ottoman Sunnism through Islamic History: Approaches toward Yazid b. Mu'awiya in Ottoman Historical Writing", *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450-c. 1750*, Brill, 2020, 468-495.

³⁶³ Vefa Erginbaş, "Reading Ottoman Sunnism through Islamic History: Approaches toward Yazid b. Mu'awiya in Ottoman Historical Writing", 473.

Therefore, this analogy can be evaluated as a reflection of the sheik's geographical and cultural affiliation in historical memory. Another reason can be read as Ebu'l Huda's attempt to base his definition of the caliphate on Ibn Arabi. According to Ibn Arabi:

There are those for whom the authority is manifested and who hold the exterior caliphate just as by virtue of their spiritual degree they hold the interior caliphate. Such was the case of Abu Bakr, of Umar, of Uthman, and of Ali, of Hassan, and of Mu'awiya b. Yazid.³⁶⁴

In this context, Ebu'l Huda's interpretation of the caliphate presents a synthesis that combines the distinction between the esoteric and the exoteric, which he derives from Ibn Arabi's Sufi tradition, with Katip Çelebi's pragmatic approach to politics. This approach distinguishes the spiritual authority that follows the prophet from the political authority of the four caliphs and those who came after them and develops a formula that appeals to both Shia and Sunni theology. This hybrid model acknowledges the spiritual sensitivities of the *Ahl al-Bayt* while simultaneously legitimizing the pragmatic reality of their historical political authority. The strategic calculations behind this theological synthesis closely coincide with the requirements of the Ottoman Pan-Islamic policies of the late 19th century. To build a sectarian bridge, Ebu'l Huda seems to have the aim of presenting Ottoman authority within a supra-sectarian framework while providing theological dialogue, especially with the Shia population in Iraq. This legitimization effort aims to strengthen the authority of Sultan Abdulhamid II, both spiritually and politically. In this context, Ebu'l Huda reinterprets the institution of the caliphate as a model of inclusive Islamic authority, transcending the traditional Sunni-Shia antagonism.

³⁶⁴ Michel Chodkiewicz, "The Esoteric Foundations of Political Legitimacy in Ibn Arabi", 194.

Moreover, Ebu'l-Huda also refers to the Abbasid Caliph Mansur, who was known for his rapid establishment of the Abbasid dynasty as the champion of Sunni orthodoxy, a policy that helped unify an increasingly cosmopolitan Muslim empire.³⁶⁵ He compares them for their just treatment of state administration with an example of the appointment of a state official. He stated that:

...when a relative of the Abbasid caliphate Mansur asked him to appoint a relative of his own to a region. Mansur answers him: We make decisions according to merit? And available positions are neither by personal request nor by patronage. Our glorious caliph has the same attributes and high character...³⁶⁶

In fact, it was a story of nepotism. Both Sultan Abdulhamid II and the Abbasid Caliph Mansur, in Ebu'l Huda's writing, never permitted nepotism to be applied in the state mechanism. In other words, Ebu'l Huda claims that the Sultan is involved in the *ibraz-ı hilm* (presentation of patience) in his treatment with people, and in the *izhar-ı beşaset u insibat* (showing of cheerfulness and gladness) during the meetings.³⁶⁷ In addition, the Sultan never went against the Sharia Law; instead, he always followed and tried his best to restore it in cases of outrage.³⁶⁸ Here, Ebu'l Huda tried to show the humane face of the Sultan and his devotion to the rule of law. In other words, Sultan Abdulhamid II was presented as a ruler who acted in line with

³⁶⁵ For further information please see, *The Encyclopedia of Islam*; P.M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis ed., *The Cambridge History of Islam*, (Cambridge University Press, 1970); F. Omar, *The `Abbasid Caliphate 132/750-170/786*, (Baghdad University Press, 1969); J. Lassner, *The Shaping of `Abbasid Rule*, (Princeton University Press, 1980); M.A. Shaban, *The `Abbasid Revolution*, (Cambridge University Press, 1970).

³⁶⁶ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü 'n-Nebeviye...*, 63-64. "... Rebi-i rahmetullah halife-i Abbasi Masur'un akraba ve taallukatından birisinin bir nahiyeye yakınıni yine Mansur'dan rica ve istirham edince, Mansur der ki: "... biz memuriyetleri erbab-ı istihkak ve kifayetle verimiz, öyle hatır ve gönüle hürmet ve riayet için tevcih etmeyiz..." ...velinimet-i azam ve halife-i müfehham efendimiz hazretleri dahi aynı bu hikmetlerle muttasıf ve bu şime-i aliyye ile müzeyyendirler..."

³⁶⁷ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü 'n-Nebeviye...*, 65.

³⁶⁸ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü 'n-Nebeviye...*, 65.

the laws and who took cognizance of modesty in his communication with people. It is significant to note here that archive records indicate that Ebu'l Huda submitted several requests to the Sultan aimed at securing advantages for his relatives and family members. This situation contributed to the emergence of gossip and the circulation of *jurnals* within palace circles and among Ottoman intellectuals. In this regard, it can be argued that Ebu'l Huda adeptly addressed the circulating rumors while simultaneously fulfilling his obligation to safeguard Abdulhamid II from such allegations.

Finally, Ebu'l Huda posits that every Muslim has a fundamental obligation to obey the *imam* in accordance with God's commands and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. He argued that "even if rulers commit acts of tyranny and injustice, the populace should not resort to violence against them."³⁶⁹ In this context, it is maintained that Sultan Abdulhamid II was a just ruler who governed with patience and virtue, and as such, he warrants the obedience and respect of his followers, alongside acknowledgement of his caliphate and Sultanate. Should the Sultan act unjustly or harshly, this should be interpreted as a reflection of political motives; nevertheless, obedience and submission remain imperative for all Muslims.

5.2 Texts of Muhammad Zafir al-Madani

Sheik Zafir Al-Madani emerged as a prominent supporter of Sultan Abdulhamid II and served as an adviser. He authored several significant works that upheld the legitimacy of Pan-Islamism, particularly highlighting Abdulhamid II's role as the caliph. While his writings were not solely aimed at defending the Sultan's role as

³⁶⁹ Ebu'l-Huda, *En-Nefhatü 'n-Nebeviye...*, 244.

caliph, they were intended to depict Abdulhamid II as a ruler dedicated to the welfare of all Muslims and as a genuine caliph who adhered to Islamic law.

Sheik Zafir's primary purpose in writing was to explore the essence of Shadiliyya-Madani order, along with the theories and practices of the *tarikah*. A chapter of his books is also dedicated to the eulogy of Sultan Abdulhamid II. These writings facilitated his gathering of support for the Sultan, since he was another advocate of the Sultan's Pan-Islamic intentions throughout North Africa.

This study will focus on two notable books in which he praises Sultan Abdulhamid II. The first is *En-Nuru's-Sati' ve'l-Burhanu'l-Kati* and the second is *El-Envaru'l-Kusiyye fi Tenzih-i Tariki'l-Kavmi'l-Aliyye*. These works are among his most important, as they were translated into Ottoman Turkish and presented to the palace. We believe that these texts significantly contributed to the development and success of Pan-Islamism in the Arab regions, where discussions on the caliphate were both popular and essential.

5.2.1 En-nuru's-sati' ve'l-burhanu'l-kati

Sheik Zafir authored *En-Nuru's-Sati' ve'l-Burhanu'l-Kati* in 17 Cemaziye'l-ula 1298/1881 in Istanbul, which he regarded as the sacred city and the heart of the Caliphate. The book is composed of three chapters. In the prelude, Sheik Zafir indicates the purpose of the book, followed by his eulogy for Sultan Abdulhamid II. In the first chapter, Sheik Zafir examines the foundational principles of the Shadiliyya-Madani order, addressing key inquiries such as the rationale for obeying the sheik, the process of becoming a *murid*, and the methodology for establishing the circle of *zikr*. The second chapter presents the perspectives of the *ulama* on Sufism and Sufi educational practices, with the author aiming to legitimize the doctrines and

training associated with the Shadiliyya order by appealing to representatives of orthodox Islam.

While the text primarily outlines the teachings of the order in a systematic manner, the title of the book itself, “The Brilliant Light and Decisive Prove” employs critical Islamic rhetorical forms that highlight both *nur* (illumination), and *burhan* (demonstrative evidence). The preference of these words clearly reflects the intellectual climate of the period, as Muslim scholars recognized the urgent necessity to defend traditional practices with textual and historical evidence. Among these urgent necessities, the missionary activities of colonial powers come first. İhsan Süreyya Sırma unearthed two critical documents found in the French Foreign Ministry Archives asserting that:

Document no: 8, Benghazi, Encrypted:

The Pan-Islamic activity of the Shadeliya-Madaniya brotherhood. Please indicate the importance of zawiyas (lodges) between Fezzan and Lake Chad. The relations of their leaders with Constantinople and the Misrata Zawiya. Their influence on caravans heading to Central Africa. Their relations with the Tuaregs. Their Pan-Islamic propaganda. Ways to monitor, mitigate, or win over this influence to our advantage.”³⁷⁰

Document no: 9, Jeddah, Encrypted:

The activity and prestige of the Grand Master of the Shadeliya-Madaniya in Constantinople; influence of his representatives in Medina, Jeddah, and Mecca. These roles with the Grand Sherif and North African pilgrims. Ways to monitor, mitigate, or win over this influence to our advantage.

The same information about the Rifaiyya brotherhood. Names and qualities of their representatives, number and importance of zawiyes; their relations with Constantinople; degree of independence; activities conducted in favour of Pan-Islamism and the Turkish Government.³⁷¹

These encrypted telegrams from Benghazi and Jeddah demonstrate the involvement of French colonial intelligence in gathering information regarding the Sufi orders

³⁷⁰ İhsan Süreyya Sırma, “Quelques Documents Inetdis Sur Le Role Des Confreries Tariqat Dans LA Politique Panislamique Du Sultan Abdulhamid II”, 289-290.

³⁷¹ İhsan Süreyya Sırma, “Quelques Documents Inetdis Sur Le Role Des Confreries Tariqat Dans LA Politique Panislamique Du Sultan Abdulhamid II”, 290.

operating in North Africa at the time. In terms of geographical reach, the telegram sent from Benghazi indicated order's influence from Fezzan (in modern Libya) to Lake Chad (Middle Africa), while in tribal relations, the documents reveal the fact that the Sufi orders might have generate alliances with the Tuaregs, via commercial caravans passing by trans-Saharan trade route, who were the nomadic Berber groups controlling vast territories in the Sahara. All of these facts underscore the purpose of the book, posited by Sheik Zafir in the prelude of the book:

Our order has become quite widespread, and the practices of those who follow this path have evolved significantly. However, it is clear that the public lacks sufficient information about our order. To address this, I would like to introduce our order, which is a branch of the revered Shadiliyya order that has spread in Medina.³⁷²

The specific mention of Medina is also significant here because of the fact that establishing a Medina connection, being the one of the sacred centers of Islam, would bolster the legitimacy of the order in the minds and hearts of North African Muslims and bolster their feeling of belonging to a bigger brotherhood than they thought they were.

The juxtaposition of French colonial intelligence reports with Sheik Zafir's introduction illustrates a crucial understanding about the impact and power of the Shadiliyya order in the region. Colonial surveillance from Jeddah reveals the administration's concerns about the order's transnational networks, linking Constantinople with the Hejaz and North Africa, which reflects French anxieties regarding the potential of these networks to serve as political proxies for the Ottomans.

³⁷² Şeyh Zafir el-Medeni, *Şazeliye Tarikatının Esasları*, 12.

Following the rudimentary purpose of the book, Sheik Zafir dedicates the work to the Sultan by uttering that:

I composed this treatise during my sojourn in Istanbul, the sanctified epicenter of the Islamic Caliphate. The incumbent caliph is the equitable and venerable sovereign, the implementer and guardian of the excellent canonical laws of Islam, the adherent to the methodologies of the illustrious calips, the zealous advocate for the Sublime interests of the Islamic community, one who derives illumination from Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him), the devoted protector of the Two Sacred Sanctuaries, His Imperial Majesty Sultan Ghazi Abdulhamid Khan. May Allah safeguard him through the Seven Verses, may He bestow the governance of the world to his administration, may He repeatedly grant his armies victory, and may He shelter and preserve his government as He protects his remembrance, for the sanctity of Taha and Yasin. Amin.³⁷³

Sheik Zafir's mention of writing the book in Istanbul declares the author's proximity to power, creating an "expository" speech act that positions Sheik Zafir's voice as authoritative and legitimate. By anchoring his writing in the imperial center, Sheik Zafir is not merely describing his location but also performing an act of associating himself with the seat of religious and political authority. In addition, by emphasizing Istanbul as the "epicenter of the Islamic Caliphate", Sheik invokes a specific response in his followers, by strengthening the religio-political legitimacy of both the Ottoman capital and, by extension, the Sultan's authority. This spatial reference helps create "felicity conditions"³⁷⁴ for the remainder of Sheik's praise and prayers to be received as valid and authoritative. Hence, geographical framing represents a perfect example of "to say something is to do something"; Sheik Zafir is not simply

³⁷³ Şeyh Zafir el-Medeni, *Şazeliye Tarikatının Esasları*, 12. "Bu eseri, İslam Hilafet Merkezi, kutlu şehir İstanbul'da ikametim sırasında kaleme aldım. Dönemin halifesi adil ve muhterem padişah, Şeriat-ı Garra esaslarının tatbikatçısı ve muhafızı, büyük halifelerin yollarının takipçisi, İslam ümmetinin yüce maslahatları için gayret eden, Allah ve Resulü'ne (sav) dayanıp onlardan feyiz alan, Haremeyn-i Şerifeyn'in hizmetkarı, Sultan Gazi Abudulhamid Han Hazretleri'dir. Allah, kendisini es-Seb'u'l-Mesani ile korusun, dünyayı onun yönetimine versin, ordularını daima muzaffer edip, zikrini koruduğu gibi hükümetini de Taha ve Yasin hürmetine korusun ve esirgesin. Amin.

³⁷⁴ J. L. Austin, *How to Do with Words*, 14-15.

reporting his location but actively constructing a religio-political reality, in which Istanbul functions as the blessed center of the Islamic world and Abdulhamid II as its divinely sanctioned ruler.

Traditionally, Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem have been accepted as the holiest cities in Islam. By designating Istanbul as one of them, Zafir elevates its religious significance, creating a spiritual geography that focuses on the Ottoman capital. This characterization helps to intertwine the Ottoman and Islamic identities, suggesting that the Ottoman Empire was not merely a political entity but a divinely sanctioned protector of Islam, which also serves the Pan-Islamic policies of the Sultan. From a Sufi perspective, sanctity can be attributed to places through the presence of holy individuals, relics, and spiritual practices. As the Shadiliyya sheik, Zafir is likely to emphasize the spiritual aura of Istanbul, which has been cultivated over centuries through Islamic scholarship, Sufi practices, and the existence of significant relics and mosques.

Sheik Zafir dedicates the book to the Sultan Caliph Abdulhamid II, positioning him as the *Hadem-i Harameyn-i Şerifeyn*, the servant of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. This designation serves to underscore the Sultan's merit in garnering the admiration of all Muslims, as well as a response to the propaganda deployed by opposition groups in the region. According to an article published in *Times*, "An arabic journal called *Ittihad*, which is published in Paris and largely circulated in all countries where the Arabic language is spoken, the Sultan has been of late much annoyed by articles in that journal ridiculing his pretensions to the caliphate, and about three weeks ago instructed his prime minister to try and get the

paper suppressed.”³⁷⁵ Challenging the Sultan’s religious and political authority, such incidents necessitated a direct and strict response, as well as the continuous dissemination of counter-propaganda tools that underscore the genuine character of the Sultan’s spiritual leadership and temporal power.

The Sheik, accordingly, conveys his respect for Abdulhamid II by highlighting his political and religious responsibilities. The Sultan is referred to as *ghazi*, a title historically attributed to Ottoman Sultans, signifying their role as defenders of Islam in the context of holy warfare. According to Paul Wittek, what fueled the energies of the early Ottoman conquerors was essentially their commitment to *ghaza*, an “ideology of Holy War” in the name of Islam.³⁷⁶ The application of the *ghazi* title to Sultan Abdulhamid II represented a significant role, considering the empire’s ongoing fight against the French in Tunisia, the British in Syria, the Shias in Iran and Iraq, as well as the opposition within the empire’s borders. Deringil observes that “During the reign of Abdulhamid II, there occurred a self-conscious attempt on the part of Ottoman bureaucrats/intellectuals to recharge and redefine basic Islamic institutions, namely the sharia and the caliphate, as the basis of the quest for a new imperial/national identity.”³⁷⁷ Abdulhamid II took crucial steps to implement the traditional form of *ghaza* into modern conditions. Rather than leading armies into battle, Abdulhamid II’s holy warfare consisted of resisting Western cultural, economic, and political encroachment on Islamic sovereignty through commissioning books and other written documents. As Şerif Mardin posits, the written world held a power for social mobilization, and “pocket libraries”

³⁷⁵ *Times*, December 2, 1880.

³⁷⁶ Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 11.

³⁷⁷ Selim Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains*, 48.

reached inaccessible areas, such as Van in eastern Anatolia in the 1890s.³⁷⁸

Therefore, Sufi sheiks aligned with Ottoman authority recognized the Sultan's resistance to European influence as a powerful form of jihad, in their pen. Sheik Zafir's depiction of Istanbul as a sacred Islamic center both elevated Abdulhamid II's religious status and *payitaht* as a sacred place.

While the actual military campaigns had become historical relics, the title "ghazi" continued to hold significant status among imperial titles in the 19th century and was frequently used on medals awarded by the state during important events, such as the 1877-78 Russo-Ottoman War or during the conferral of official appointments. In the first medal produced during his reign, which can be interpreted as a defeat medal due to the Ottoman forces' loss to Russia, Abdulhamid II initially employed a floral motif, akin to that of his father, before subsequently replacing it with the title of ghazi on this and future medals. This title was conferred upon the Sultan post-18th century as a symbol of victory; however, Sultan Abdulhamid II retained it during the initial months of his reign in the 1870s, which functioned as a potent legitimizing device, enabling the Sultan to appeal to a diverse array of Muslim subjects. Therefore, the designation Ghazi Abdulhamid represents the Sultan as the legitimate ruler engaged in safeguarding and governing on behalf of Islam against non-Muslims forces, thereby fostering loyalty and support among his Muslim subjects. Thus, Sheik Zafir implicitly implied to his readers that the Sultan is the foremost defender against colonialism, challenges of modernity, striving to promote unity and peace within the borders and among all Muslims. Consequently, he is portrayed as the exemplary leader of the era, deserving of unwavering allegiance.

³⁷⁸ Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change*, 76.

His political power was bolstered by his profound knowledge and enlightened understanding of Allah and the Prophet Muhammad. Sheik Zafir sought to present the Sultan as a devoted Muslim worthy of the title of caliph, in addition to his political qualifications for the position. Rather than being perceived as an arbitrary and despotic ruler, the Sheik portrayed the Sultan as a loyal follower of the great caliphs, who ruled with both peace and justice.³⁷⁹ This attempt evokes what Selim Deringil identifies as an example of “invented tradition”, arguing that “Abdulhamid’s official faith was propagated through such ideologues as Abulhuda al-Sayyadi, Sheikh Hamza Zafir, and Ahmad As’ad³⁸⁰”, thereby deliberately supporting the legitimacy of the rule of Abdulhamid as caliph of Islam.

This text also exemplifies multiple categories within Austin’s illocutionary force. It prominently features ‘exercitives’ through its legitimation of authority; ‘behabitives’ through its expression of reverence, supplication, and praise; and ‘commissives’ through its implicit pledge of loyalty to the Sultan’s governance.³⁸¹ The systematic invocation of honorable appellations when referring to Sultan Abdulhamid II, “*adil ve muhterem padişah*” and “*Şeriat-i Garra esaslarının tatbikatçısı*”, transcends mere description and constitutes what Austin would categorize as a performative utterance, wherein the articulation itself accomplishes an action rather than merely describing reality. This listing of flattering titles functions as an illocutionary act of legitimation, reinforcing the Sultan’s authority through linguistic recognition while simultaneously positioning himself in a relationship of deference and loyalty within the established political hierarchy.

³⁷⁹ *En-Nuru’s-Satı ve’l-Burnau’l-Katı*, 12, “...büyük halifelerin yollarının takipçisi, Allah ve resulüne dayanıp onlardan feyz alan...”.

³⁸⁰ Selim Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains*, 65.

³⁸¹ J.L. Austin, *How to Do with Words*, 162.

Sheik Zafir is acknowledged as a significant proponent of the Ottoman Caliphate, actively participating in discussions regarding both the institution and title of the caliph during the 19th century. An increased awareness of Arab populations and Indian Muslims of the importance of the caliphate in both domestic and international politics characterized this period. Azmi Özcan documents how the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 catalyzed the interest in the caliphate among Muslims globally, noting that “the war created an unprecedented level of anxiety and solidarity among Muslims of India, who organized prayers and fundraising for Ottoman success.”³⁸² On the contrary, opposition to the Ottoman Caliphate also emerged between 1877 and 1878, following the military defeat of the Ottoman Empire by the Russian forces. Detractions asserted that the Ottoman Empire was no longer capable of defending Islam, both in diplomatic contexts and on the battlefield. It was believed that the empire lacked the strength to foster peace among Muslims and adequately represent the Islamic world in international affairs.³⁸³

Wilfrid Blunt, a prominent critic of the Ottoman Caliphate, identified three foundational aspects of its legitimacy: The first was appointment, the second was election, and the third was the tenure of the holy places of Islam.³⁸⁴ Conversely, the Ottoman Sultans contended that the title of Great Caliph was grounded in the principle of allegiance, divine will, inheritance, and actual power.³⁸⁵ In this regard, Sheik Zafir reinforced the Sultan’s caliphal status as part of a larger geopolitical

³⁸² Azmi Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain*, 45-52.

³⁸³ For further discussions, see Caesar E. Farah, “Great Britain, Germany and the Ottoman Caliphate”, *Der Islam*, 66/2 (1989), 264-288; Sylvia Haim, *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*, 35/3 (1955), 132-143; Ş. Tufan Buzpinar, “The Question of Caliphate under the Last Ottoman Sultans”, *Ottoman Reform and Muslim Regeneration*, 18- 36.

³⁸⁴ Wilfrid S. Blunt, *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt: Being a personal narrative of events*, (London 1907).

³⁸⁵ Ş. Tufan Buzpinar, “The Question of Caliphate under the Last ottoman Sultans”, 20.

struggle, asserting that the Ottoman Sultan acted as the guardian of Islam's sacred sites through unwavering commitment to Islamic law. Moreover, Abdulhamid II was portrayed as a devotee of the preceding caliphs, specifically, the four caliphs of the Rashidun era and those from the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, implying that the Ottoman dynasty was inherently entitled to the caliphate, thereby legitimizing Abdulhamid II's right to govern the Islamic world. He was not alone, but descended from ancestors who had previously held the title. These ancestors could be either the first four caliphs or the previous Ottoman Sultans; however, Abdulhamid II had no contender for the title of caliphate.

Additionally, Sheik Zafir highlighted the Sultan's role as the protector of sacred places, and prays to God that "he might bring the whole world under his rule³⁸⁶, invoking a desire for divine assistance extending his rule over the entire world. This supplicatory phrase represents an especially salient demonstration of Austin's theory regarding perlocutionary effects. By incorporating Qur'anic references and traditional Islamic invocations, Sheik Zafir deploys language not merely to express pious sentiment but to engender specific emotional and cognitive responses in the audience, namely, the conflation of political allegiance with religious obligation. The perlocutionary dimension here aims to galvanize the followers of the Shadiliyya order into accepting the inextricable connection between religious orthodoxy and political fealty, thereby fostering acquiescence to the Sultan's authority through the penumbra of divine sanction.

This aspiration suggests that the Sultan not only had the capacity to govern the existing Muslim community but also possessed the potential to emerge as a

³⁸⁶ Şeyh Zafir El-Medeni, *Şazeliye...*, 12. "Allah, kendisini es-Seb'u'l-Mesani ile korusun, dünyayı onun yönetimine versin".

global emperor. In conclusion, Sheik Zafir firmly believed that Abdulhamid II represented a uniquely qualified leader capable of safeguarding Islam and leading Muslims with sincere Islamic intentions in both public and private spheres.

His timing was particularly significant as he wrote the book, for Sir Blunt had completed his report on the caliphate and the status of Ottoman sultans for the British government. This report illuminated the ongoing discussions surrounding the institution of the caliphate following the anticipated collapse of the Ottoman Empire, a consequence of the war and subsequent political crisis. In particular, the Arab lands were in upheaval over the pressing question of “who will lead the Islamic world?” It is well known that European powers, particularly Britain, actively investigated and analyzed the caliphate’s potential as a tool of controlling Muslim populations, due to the belief that Ottoman religious authority was in decline, presenting an opportunity for Britain to shape the future leadership of Islam.³⁸⁷ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt³⁸⁸’s report for the British government represented what Martin Kramer calls “imperial caliphology” in his article “British Policy and the Caliphate”. Kramer notes that “Blunt’s 1880 memorandum, ‘The Future of Islam,’ sought to assess whether Britain could potentially influence or control caliphal authority to advance colonial interest.”³⁸⁹ Actually, Blunt (1840-1922) played a significant role in shaping the early British perspective on the caliphate. Together with his wife, Blunt travelled extensively in Arabia and the Middle East, returned to England in 1879, convinced

³⁸⁷ Elie Kedourie, *The Chatham House Version and Other Middle-Eastern Studies*, 208.

³⁸⁸ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840-1922) was an aristocratic poet, traveler, and diplomat who cultivated close relationships with Muslim intellectuals and leaders across the Middle East. His profound knowledge of Islamic affairs led the British government to commission him to create a comprehensive assessment of the future of the caliphate. For details Elizabeth Longford, *A Pilgrimage of Passion: The Life of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt*, (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007).

³⁸⁹ Martin Kramer, “British Policy and the Caliphate, 1914-1924”, 80.

that the Turks were responsible for the decline of Islam.³⁹⁰ According to Azmi Özcan, Blunt's report "systematically assessed potential candidates for a new caliphate, with particular emphasis on Arab leaders from the Hejaz who might be more receptive to British influence than the Ottoman Sultan".³⁹¹ He specifically suggested supporting the localized authorities who would be more susceptible to European influence, particularly Sharif of Mecca as a viable alternative caliph, an idea that would later influence British policy during World War I.

Blunt also tries to differentiate the history of the caliphate from Turkish

History by mentioning that:

The true history of the Caliphate has been published and set aside with that Turkish history which the ignorance of a previous generation had come to compound it. At the present day, nobody with any instruction doubts that the first successful rival might legally displace Abd el Hamid and his house, and that the only right of Constantinople to lead Islam is the right of the sword.³⁹²

He characterized the Ottoman caliphate as lacking historical background, implying that the transfer of the caliphate to the Ottomans is inconsistent with historical realities, framing it as a constructed narrative.

Sultan Abdulhamid II was acutely aware of British discussions surrounding alternative caliphates and developed sophisticated strategies to reinforce the legitimacy of the Ottoman caliphate. In this respect, the Sultan systematically utilized Sufi networks to bolster caliphal loyalty in the regions where British and French influence were expanding. The Sultan established new Islamic educational institutions, dispatched religious emissaries, distributed copies of the Qur'an, and funded mosque construction in regions from North Africa to Southeast Asia,

³⁹⁰ Wilfred Blunt, *Secret History*, 67.

³⁹¹ Azmi Özcan, *Pan-Islamism*, 64.

³⁹² Wilfred Blunt, *Future of Islam*, 93.

precisely where British assessments identify potential alternative centers of Islamic authority.

To consolidate unity against European powers and promote the mechanism of Pan-Islamism, the Ottoman Sultan required the sincere intentions and active cooperation of African leaders and Muslims in general. According to the Sheik, the Sultan was the only person in the world who could secure the establishment of the Islamic unity and ensure that the Islamic community would prevail over all other communities. Sheik Zafir was a dynastic representative of this objective and a mediator between the Arabs and the Ottoman center. The Shadiliyya order was like an official institution of the Sultanate in the region, working to sustain the clement and the “fine tuning³⁹³” in the treatment of provincial inhabitants. Therefore, this document and the Shadiliyya order can be considered the agents of missionary activities, which generated a center-to-periphery relationship, illuminating the enduring questions about religious authority, imperial power, and resistance that continue to shape global politics today.

5.2.2 Envarü'l- kudsiiyye fi tenzihi turuki'l-kavmi'l-aliyye

The second book composed by the Sheik Zafir was the *Envarü'l- Kudsiiyye fi Tenzihi Turuki'l-Kavmi'l-Aliyye*, which was completed and published in 1302 (1882) and presented in a comprehensive edition to the palace. The book has multiple editions, which shows a notable feature. The Turkish version, published in 1302 (1882) consists of 423 pages in the name of *Envarü'l- Kudsiiyye fi Tenzihi Turuki'l-Kavmi'l-Aliyye* and includes sections in Ottoman Turkish. It was distributed throughout the

³⁹³ Selim Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains*, 8.

empire.³⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the manuscript version presented to the Sultan carried the name of his brother Sheikh Hamza.³⁹⁵ The book was re-edited and republished in 1304; and this version was only in Arabic in the name of *al-Anwar al-qudsiyah fir tanzih turuq al-qawm al-'aliyah 'ala al-awrad wa-al azab al-Shadhiliyah* and did not include sections praising Sultan Abdulhamid II that appeared at the end of the first edition.³⁹⁶

The original book contains two languages: The first 240 pages were written in Ottoman Turkish, while the remaining sections and the *hasiyes* (the notes near the text) are in Arabic.

The sheik authored this book to elucidate the foundation of the Shadeliyya order and to command the grand sheiks associated with it. Notably, Sultan Abdulhamid II is portrayed positively by these preeminent sheiks, demonstrating three significant points: The first, the sheik's administration for the Sultan; second, Abdulhamid II's considerable power during this period, which allowed him to be a subject of Sufi literature; and third, Sheik Zafir's recognition of Abdulhamid II as the ruler of the world and his acknowledgment of him as the spiritual leader of the *tarikats*.

Abdulhamid II successfully intertwined these two roles, political authority and spiritual leadership, establishing himself as an exemplary sultan deserving of

³⁹⁴ Sheikh Zafir el-Medeni, *Envarü'l-Kudsiyye fi Tenzihi Turukı'l-Kavmi'l-Aliyye*, (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1302). TDV, İSAM, 76252.

³⁹⁵ Istanbul University Library, Turkish Manuscripts, no. 4648. Tufan Buzpinar suggests that the alternative attribution between brothers reflects a common Sufi practice of shared spiritual authority within *tariqa* families. See Tufan Buzpinar, *Abdulhamid II, Islam and the Arabs*, 254.

³⁹⁶ The Turkish edition with imperial praise was meant primarily for Ottoman subjects, while the Arabic edition without such explicit content was designed for circulation in regions with stronger Arab nationalist sentiments or under European colonial control. This might also be related with the change of the credit name.

support and praise. In his writings, the sheik presents Abdulhamid II as a model for world leaders, emphasizing his commitment to promoting justice. The text suggests that the Sultan embodied fairness, and his actions were closely monitored by the international community. Consequently, his achievements in justice and equity were both observed and emulated, as reflected in the sheik's discourse.

The eulogies examined in this thesis reveal that Sultan Abdulhamid II's Pan-Islamic policy was a much more sophisticated and multi-layered control mechanism than the "symbolic toolkit" concept put forward by Weissmann. The texts of Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir are not only tools of religious propaganda but also, when analyzed within the framework of J. L. Austin's theory of performative discourse, they emerge as texts actively construct and reproduce Ottoman authority. Combined with surveillance mechanisms, *jurnalcilik*, these religious-performative strategies demonstrate the comprehensive nature of the Sultan's toolkit. Therefore, Hamidian era Pan-Islamism should be evaluated, rather than being a simple ideological tool, as an attempt at a multi-actor hegemony-building system in late Ottoman history.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

I would like to begin my conclusion with a quotation by Hungarian musician and philosopher Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967). He stated in 1954:

The characteristics of a good musician can be summarised as follows: 1. A well-trained ear. 2. A well-trained mind. 3. A well-trained heart. 4. A well-trained hand. All four must develop together, in constant equilibrium.³⁹⁷

Kodály's principle of musical balance and education provides a perfect metaphor for understanding the subtleties of statecraft. In ideal statecraft, the leader's "ear" serves as a receptor that hears the voice of society, perceives its needs, and senses changing conditions. His "mind" becomes a decision-making mechanism that analyzes this information, nourished by historical precedents and contemporary developments. The actions of the ruler, whose "heart" beats with the desire for justice and service to society, are guided not by mere pragmatism but by a deep moral responsibility. His "hand" is therefore his institutions, bureaucracy, and policies that enact these decisions into practice. Just like Kodály's principle, in an ideal state, these four elements should develop in a harmonious manner, none of them should overshadow the other. Without the ear hearing, the mind evaluating, and the heart guiding, the hand cannot establish justice.

This integrated vision of statecraft resonates with Edebali's reportedly advised wisdom to Osman Ghazi, which emphasized that a leader should view politics as an instrument and that the ultimate goal should be to establish a just and powerful state. According to Edebali, who was not only a Sufi sheik but also a

³⁹⁷ See <https://cottagemusicinstitute.com/the-characteristics-of-a-good-musician>; accessed on June 1, 2025

respected local administrator in the Bilecik region, the duty of the state leader was to establish a justice apparatus that would provide common good for all the components that constitute the state, in which all subjects, without exception, obeyed the rules, fulfilled their duties and respected the established order. Subsequently, what is good and right is obedience to the law, which in turn brings obedience to the ruler. Edebali says to Osman Ghazi:

On this path, we must fix our gaze upon eternity; walk tall and die big. On this path, ambition, thorns, ego, and arrogance are obstacles my son. Don't get stuck in yourself or drown in yourself. Oneness is only for Allah, don't make decisions alone and risk lifting the unbearable weight of this rough world on your own. Consult with competent people to manage your affairs. If you consult, you will make progress; if you don't consult, you will get stuck on the path, my son.

According to Edebali, a well-mannered and intelligent administrator does not make decisions or make progress alone whilst administering the state. The most important basis of a just state administration is that the administrator acts in conjunction with competent people. The administrator needs honest and knowledgeable people to carry out state affairs and regulate the relationship between the people and the state.

It is not known whether Abdulhamid II took his share of this advice.

However, when we examine the lives and texts of the subjects of this thesis, Shadiliyya Sheik Zafir al-Madani and Rufaiyya Sheik Ebu'l Huda es-Sayyadi, the first finding that emerges is that they played key roles in advising the Sultan and established a critical connection and network between the centre and the periphery, it could be said to have acted as unofficial diplomats. This cemented their roles as historical figures.

Sultan Abdulhamid II ruled an empire that was caught in a whirlwind of political, economic, social and cultural turbulents in the 19th century, in an age of disease and deformity, a transitional period in which the foundations of the modern

world were laid, and empires were in their final stages, with developments such as the second industrial revolution, economic imperialism, accelerating colonialism, the rise of nationalism and the dominance of the idea of the nation-state, and the global spread of Western culture. Much like the rest of the world around it, the Ottoman Empire was a state that contained many paradoxes and challenges. As a ruler caught between modernity and tradition, Islam and Westernization, conservatism and demands for reform, Sultan Abdulhamid II ruled for thirty-three years in the twilight of the empire, trying to navigate through these conflicting forces. Described by some historians as a “genius” and by others as a “paranoid despot,” the Sultan still remains an enigmatic and controversial historical figure.

His priority was not to make laws, but to “arrange things in the most appropriate way,” as Foucault tried to explain with the phrase “governance.” In other words, the aim of his tenure as ruler was to establish order, and his means of rule were tactics rather than the rule of law. Indeed, Abdulhamid II’s reign coincided with a period when European states, emboldened by their industrial power, pursued aggressive colonial policies which in turn threatened not only Ottoman lands but the entire Muslim world, the Scramble for Africa, when blocs and alliance systems were established among the great powers, and when Germany rose as a new world power. Within the Ottoman Empire, he was a ruler caught between the loss of fiscal independence with a soaring public debt, an economic crisis stemming from foreign debts and budget deficits, territorial losses and the disruption of the balance between non-Muslim and Muslim populations, and the rise of nationalist awakenings among the empire’s ethnic elements. Abdulhamid II tried to create a new identity for his empire, one that could withstand both external imperialism and festering internal divisions. His “new gold dream” was a reform package based on the symbiosis of

certain elements of Western modernity, while preserving the Ottoman presence, demonstrating his ability to read the zeitgeist and engage the empire with the world system, rather than isolating it from contemporary developments. He always sought relevance and stability.

One of the most controversial elements of Abdulhamid II's dream of symbiosis was the nature of his relations with the mystic Sufic orders, especially the Rufaiyya Sheik Ebu'l Huda al-Sayyadi and the Shadhiliyya Sheik Zafir al-Madani. These relations have been interpreted by some as a sincere reflection of the sultan's Islamic identity, and by others as a tool of political manipulation. The truth is probably somewhere in between: A relationship rooted in his sincere religious beliefs, and a set of political manoeuvres driven by strategic calculations. These relations exhibited a distinctive structure that transcended the traditional sultan-sheik dynamics and operated in complex dimensions of interaction.

The first aspect of Abdulhamid II's relationship with the sheiks was undoubtedly to form a strategic alliance. However, the relationship between the Ottoman state and the Sufi orders had been a multi-layered engagement since the empire's foundation, what Cemal Kafadar has termed "metadoxy", a complex dynamic that transcends simple orthodoxy or heterodoxy. This intricate relationship had undergone significant transformations since the reforms of Sultan Mahmud II. The imperial decrees of 1811 and 1836, as well as the establishment of the *Evkaf-ı Hümayun Nezareti* in 1826, had fundamentally altered the economic independence and administrative autonomy of the Sufi orders, while the state control over these religious institutions was further strengthened with the Tanzimat reforms. When Abdulhamid II ascended to the throne in 1876, the relationship between the Sufi orders and the state had already settled on a bureaucratic basis. However, he

transformed these relations into a strategic and political tool to strengthen his own power: An autocratic-reformist regime based on the policy of Pan-Islamism, which derived its legitimacy from the caliphate of Islam.

The second aspect involved unofficial diplomacy. Abdulhamid II attempted to use the sheiks as "unofficial diplomats" in his relations with Muslim communities in the far corners of the empire, especially those under colonial rule. While the sheiks influenced the people at the local level, they were also positioned as instruments of Abdulhamid II's global Islamic policy. Both the instrumentalization of Sufi networks and *the* active involvement of *tekkes* in politics, through informal and formal practices, exemplify what Fazlur Rahman identified as the Neo-Sufism paradigm, a pattern observable in analogous cases throughout North Africa. However, across the vast territories extending from the Maghreb to British India, the expected capacity of these sheiks to effectively challenge or circumvent European colonial authority remained quite limited by the systematic imperial mechanisms designed to suppress such transnational Islamic revival movements, perceived as Pan-Islamic threats to colonial stability.

The third aspect was the construction of legitimacy. Whether it was the will of Abdulhamid II or not, Ebu'l Huda, and Sheik Zafir wrote these works theorising the legitimacy of the caliphate. With these eulogies, they sought to position the title of the Sultan not only as a religious authority but also as an active political figure in his role as the defender of Muslims worldwide. Viewed through Benedict Anderson's conceptual framework, these efforts can be seen as attempts to create a kind of "imagined Islamic community," a community that transcends geographical boundaries and theoretically places Abdulhamid II at its centre. This strategic use of religious symbolism and authority was a sophisticated response to European

imperialism in the late 19th century, and provoked serious political debate in the publications of colonial states and in the reports of Western diplomats to their courts.

The fourth aspect was the effort to create an information network. Sufi sheiks, along with the informers and the secret service, were intended as an alternative channel for the Sultan to flow information. However, this system contributed to the increasingly paranoid atmosphere of the late Ottoman central administration and often resulted in the creation of exaggerated or false information rather than genuine intelligence. The fifth aspect was relationships based on personal interests. Abdulhamid II's connections with Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir were both an idealised nexus and a pragmatic duality. Both sheiks received significant material benefits, including salaries, residences, and appointments for their family members, while producing works that supported the Sultan's policies and worked to spread his religious legitimacy. The establishment of the Ertuğrul Tekke for Sheik Zafir and the construction of the Rufaiyya *tekkes* under the influence of Ebu'l Huda demonstrate how Abdulhamid II's efforts to consolidate these relationships, while also increasing the visibility and prestige of the orders.

The specific nature of Abdulhamid II's relationship with Sheik Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir demonstrates the incompatible aspects of the synthesis he attempted to establish between modernisation and traditionalism. On the one hand, he tried to implement Western-style institutions and reforms, while on the other hand, he used Islamic symbols and actors to consolidate his own power. This ambivalent stance was both praised and criticised by the intellectuals of the period. While some saw it as a masterful balance in the face of the period's challenges, others argued that this juxtaposition delayed the modernization process of the Ottoman state.

During Abdulhamid II's reign, critical developments occurred in synchronicity. However, it is more accurate to evaluate this situation not as a chain of mystical coincidences but as a necessary result of the historical conditions of the period. First, it included the simultaneous use of modern means of communication and the culture of allegiance and loyalty. Despite the foresight shown by Abdulhamid II in his efforts to spread modern means of communication, such as the railway, modern education, and the telegraph, to the farthest corners of the empire, it is evident that he primarily utilized these technological innovations to enhance state control and keep the opposition under surveillance. The oppression he applied while trying to preserve the unity of the Ottoman Empire also united the opponents of his regime and the nations seeking autonomy, creating another dilemma for his style of governance.

The second development saw his Pan-Islamism policy and the aggressive expansion of Western imperialism simultaneously influencing the period. Abdulhamid II's Pan-Islamist discourse coincided with the period when Western imperialism was spreading most aggressively in the Islamic world. This synchronicity is not a coincidence, but rather the result of a reactionary political strategy; however, the extent to which this strategy was successful is debatable. In the face of the territorial losses following the 1877-78 Russo-Ottoman War, the Berlin Conference, the British occupation of Egypt in the 1880s, the French annexation of Tunisia, the Armenian Incidents in Eastern Anatolia in the 1890s, and the accelerating division of Africa, it is difficult to say whether the policy of Pan-Islamism provided any concrete gains. Indeed, while Pan-Islamist policies caused Western states to adopt more aggressive policies, the autocratic administration encountered increasing opposition among Ottoman intellectuals and officers. This

opposition eventually culminated in the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy and the dethronement of Abdulhamid II in 1908.

A critical examination of the works of Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir reveals that these texts were not mere expressions of personal loyalty or purely religious writings, but carefully prepared political documents that contributed to the Sultan's Pan-Islamist policy. Both Sheiks generally portrayed Abdulhamid II in positive terms, supporting his religious devotion, political acumen, justice, and claim to the caliphate with both religious and historical references.

In Ebu'l Huda's works, *Dai'r-Reşad li Sebili'l-Ittihad ve'l-Inqiyad* and *En-Nefahatu'n-Nabawiye fi Hidmeti'l-Hilafeti'l Hamidiyyeti'l-Osmaniye*, Abdulhamid II is portrayed as a "philosopher king" similar to the Umayyad caliph Muawiyah and the Abbasid caliph Mansur. Similarly, Sheik Zafir portrayed the Sultan as the legitimate protector of Islam's holy places and the rightful heir to the caliphate in his works, *En-Nuru's-Sati ve'l-Burhanu'l-Kati* and *Envarü'l-Kudsiyye fi Tanzihi Turuqi'l-Kavmi'l-Aliyye*. They played an essential role in countering British challenges to Ottoman legitimacy, questioning the sovereignty of Islamic society in general and the Ottoman caliphate in particular, as evident in the published reports or memoranda proposed by figures such as Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, who argued that Muslim society could not progress under Ottoman rule. Blunt's stance represented a direct challenge to Ottoman caliphal claims, proposing alternative candidates for the leadership of Islam at a time when Abdulhamid II's political authority was increasingly being questioned. In response to such Western critiques of Ottoman Islamic authority, Sheiks promoted unity among Muslim subjects by emphasising obedience to the caliph as a religious obligation, referring to Sultan Hamid.

When viewed as a political application of J.L. Austin's theory of performative language, these texts not only made a significant contribution to how religious authority entwined with political power but also demonstrated how religious discourses were an act of influence, affecting the survival and rejuvenation of the empire. Abdulhamid II created a new relationship between the symbols of the modern state apparatus and those of traditional Islamic authority, which corresponded to Austin's emphasis on establishing proper procedure. In other words, his caliphate and authority were not only emphasised through semiotic discourses, but the legitimacy and sincerity derived from the authors' affiliation with the order also proved the texts' appropriateness to the circumstances.

When these works, which are the most important relaters of this multilayered engagement, are evaluated in line with Austin's principle of "saying is doing", Ebu'l Huda and Sheik Zafir not only provided theoretical knowledge, but also actionably restructured the institution of the caliphate as a political instrument and a social reality. And this reality was not just rhetoric, but also gained a performative value as active actions complementing the words, expressions, witticisms, and adjectives that they used. On the other hand, these texts, which draw an idealised portrait of the Sultan, were inadequate in providing solutions to the structural problems and the search for identity faced by the Ottoman Empire.

When considering Abdulhamid II's tenure and rule, all these developments should be evaluated not as a chain of mere coincidences but as distinct aspects of Abdulhamid II's complex, contradictory, and sometimes necessary responses to the challenges of his time. A ruler who drew strength from tradition but sought to modernise, a sultan who sought popular legitimacy but also resorted to autocratic practices, a ruler who parades both extraordinary displays of power and deep

vulnerabilities. The complex interconnectedness of his policies reveals a leader who was aware that power in the late Ottoman period required not only force but also discourse, not only control but also participation, not only authority but also resonance with the deep layers of Ottoman and Islamic heritage. Like a jazz musician working with incompatible instruments, Abdulhamid II created a composition that seemed cacophonous to contemporary observers, notes and instruments not designed to play together, seemingly contradictory musical themes, incompatible rhythms: Constitutionalism and autocracy, information and censorship, Pan-Islamism and Ottoman nationalism, technological progress and religious conservatism. Perhaps it was the only possible composition, given the instruments at his disposal and the turbulent scene, but it could not prevent the empire's collapse; it could only delay it.

Finally, the examination of how Abdulhamid II is represented in religious texts and the analysis of how he tried to use religious figures for political legitimacy also have parallels with contemporary politics. Today, many political leaders attempt to bridge traditional religious symbols with modern state structures. In this context, both the internal and external dimensions of Abdulhamid II's religious policies deserve further investigation. As contemporary societies continue to grapple with issues of religious authority, political legitimacy, and cultural identity, the historical example of Abdulhamid II's complex and contradictory management of religion and state remains relevant today and retains its value for scholars.

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