

I am questioning, through the following juxtaposition of three different seventeenth-century cases of state-religion interplay, is, first, the growing tendency in the field of Ottoman studies to research and write the empire's history as if it makes sense only within the broader context of European history and historiography. This attitude marginalises Ottoman history at the periphery of an external historiographical tradition. Second, I think that we should always consider the basic fact that parallels between histories of contemporaneous or neighbouring empires may not always be an indication of omnipresent factors propelling the histories of those empires in the same direction, which we can then collectively squeeze into one paradigm. In the seemingly religious disagreements about what constituted correct forms of religion, the primary concern of the Ottoman, Russian and Habsburg courts were the longevity of their empires and the preservation of order. Such matters do not and did not become a government's priority as a result of extraneous impetus or inspiration; throughout history, they have been inherent goals of any polity, embedded in and feeding into every initiative.

The Case of the Ottoman Empire

Kadızelis (lit. the followers of *Kadıze*) were a group of preachers named after Kadıze Mehmed Efendi (d. 1635).² The *Kadızelis* movement, despite its far-reaching impact in the Ottoman capital, never amounted to an independent school of thought, nor did it gain an institutional character. The term '*Kadızelis*' is used to refer to those scholars and judges who held a certain interpretation of Islamic matters during the reigns of Murad IV (1623-40), Ibrahim (1640-8) and Mehmed IV (1648-87). During the seventeenth century, the *Kadızelis* exerted influence on Istanbul's population in three subsequent waves under the charismatic leadership of three preachers: Kadıze Mehmed himself, Üstüvani Mehmed from Damascus (d. 1661) and Mehmed b. Bistam of Van (known as 'Vani' Mehmed; d. 1685).

The rise of the *Kadızelis* took place within a specific historical context. Ottoman historians frequently reiterate that the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries of the empire were marked by social and political turmoil accompanied by institutional reform.³ The protracted wars at the turn of the seventeenth century depleted the treasury and set the stage for social change and transformation. The inefficiency of the *sipahi* cavalry in the wars against the Safavids (1578-90, 1603-18) and the Habsburgs (1593-1606) forced the Ottoman state to form new corps and recruit *levends* (landless vagrant peasants of Anatolia) as mercenaries

equipped with firearms. When not in service, these *levends* were mostly uncontrolled and soon began to terrorise the countryside. In response, the central government deployed newly recruited (and non-*devşirme* originated) Janissary corps in provinces for the protection of subjects against the *levends*. The process had two major consequences: first, in major Anatolian towns, the Janissary population increased and this eventually led to the urbanisation or 'civilisation' of the Janissaries who neglected their military duties and participated in local socio-economic life. This phenomenon has more recently attracted the interest of Ottomanists and is yet to be fully comprehended. The second impact of this change was in the capital and it was much more significant: selected Janissary officers served inside the palace as sultan's household troops and many of them held high offices.⁴ In 1622, the 'Janissary junta' in the capital organised a coup which ended with the execution of Osman II.⁵ Until 1656, the Janissaries would remain as the most influential clique in courtly politics.⁶

At a time of such social and political instability perpetuated by the lack of authoritative statesmen, the 'populism'⁷ of *Kadızelis* preachers and the influence they enjoyed on the population of Istanbul likely seemed a useful instrument to the court, which could exploit the preachers' charisma in the eyes of the population as an intermediary to reaffirm its control over the masses. Murad IV appears to have been the first sultan to employ *Kadızelis* for that purpose. The first nine years of Murad IV's reign appears to have been under the control of Murad's mother Kösem Sultan (1590-1651).⁸ Nonetheless, *sipahi* despots had become the actual disposers of state affairs. In the Ottoman land tenure system, the *sipahis* possessed privileges over tax collection across the empire and they had started to abuse those privileges by the first half of the seventeenth century. As their population increased unnecessarily, they also took over duties that did not belong to them, such as collecting tax from sultanic estates. In an effort to suppress *sipahi* power, Murad issued a *fermān* (imperial decree) in spring 1632 and annulled the privileges of the *sipahis* in tax affairs. Upon hearing of the decree, the *sipahis* gathered in Hippodrome square by the Sultan Ahmed (Blue) Mosque. Murad IV reacted by gathering an *ayak divanı*, an emergency session of the imperial council with the ability to talk to the sultan directly and attended by all high-ranking statesmen and dignitaries as well as any plaintiff. The sultan's goal was to receive the support of all administrative and religious representatives. He openly criticised *sipahi* leaders who were present at the meeting, and, in the end, he took written allegiance of the members of the *askerî* (Janissaries, statesmen and administrators), *kapıkulları* (sultan's household troops) and the ulema (scholars). Murad IV placed himself again at the head of

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