



# **The Ottoman Ulema (Scholars)**

**Author:** Professor Mehmet Ipsirli  
**Chief Editor:** Professor Salim Al-Hassani  
**Production:** Faaiza Bashir  
  
**Release Date:** May 2004  
**Publication ID:** 4059  
  
**Copyright:** © FSTC Limited, 2003 2004

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:**

All rights, including copyright, in the content of this document are owned or controlled for these purposes by FSTC Limited. In accessing these web pages, you agree that you may only download the content for your own personal non-commercial use. You are not permitted to copy, broadcast, download, store (in any medium), transmit, show or play in public, adapt or change in any way the content of this document for any other purpose whatsoever without the prior written permission of FSTC Limited.

Material may not be copied, reproduced, republished, downloaded, posted, broadcast or transmitted in any way except for your own personal non-commercial home use. Any other use requires the prior written permission of FSTC Limited. You agree not to adapt, alter or create a derivative work from any of the material contained in this document or use it for any other purpose other than for your personal non-commercial use.

FSTC Limited has taken all reasonable care to ensure that pages published in this document and on the MuslimHeritage.com Web Site were accurate at the time of publication or last modification. Web sites are by nature experimental or constantly changing. Hence information published may be for test purposes only, may be out of date, or may be the personal opinion of the author. Readers should always verify information with the appropriate references before relying on it. The views of the authors of this document do not necessarily reflect the views of FSTC Limited.

FSTC Limited takes no responsibility for the consequences of error or for any loss or damage suffered by readers of any of the information published on any pages in this document, and such information does not form any basis of a contract with readers or users of it.

## THE OTTOMAN ULEMA (SCHOLARS)

The term *ulema*, which is widely used in Islamic world and means community based scholars, is cited two times in Holy Koran<sup>i</sup> and many times in varying forms in *hadis*<sup>ii</sup>. In early periods of Islam for scholars in *hadis*, *tefsir*, *fikih*, and *kelam* fields the terms *mufessir*, *muhaddis*, *fakih*, and, *mutekellim* were used respectively instead of the term *ulema*. Afterwards the term *ulema* became preferred and gained widespread usage.

Though *ulema* is a plural word for *alim* (scholar) deriving from Arabic root *i/m* (knowledge), the term has gained a special meaning and became a common name for that section of community who are considered to be intellectual and partly aristocratic. The *Ulema* were perceived as the foremost element among the constituents of the community in almost every period of the Ottomans, and thus put under various evaluations as a group arousing high expectations<sup>iii</sup>.

*Ulema* was applied as a common term for those scholars who completed their *madrasa* training and gained an *icazet* (graduation degree), and took responsibilities in law, education, primary religious services and occasionally in bureaucracy or devoted themselves personally to community services in the Ottoman polity.

The *Ulema* increasingly gained and consolidated its power until XVII century, then entered into a period of decadence due to reasons most of which were external developments, and found itself within the harsh milieu of daily politics. In this period starting with Sultan Ahmed I and continuing with following reigns of children sultans, power has been transferred into the hands of military commanders, viziers, influential palace circles, and naturally to the *ulema*. Each group tried to get the support of the *ulema* in order to strengthen its own power and influence.

Mobilized by the advice coming from intellectuals who have observed rapid deterioration of the *ulema* due to this environment, official organizations spent great energy in order to reform and improve the *ulema* profession. In the XVII century starting with reform attempts, the *ulema* has been a supporter for reform initiatives and even a reform pioneer, assuming heavy responsibilities in the restructuring of the state<sup>iv</sup>. Furthermore, Grand viziers such as Damad Ali Pasha, Nevsehirli Ibrahim Pasha and Hekimoglu Ali Pasha, protected the *ulema* and tried to improve its conditions in this century<sup>v</sup>. However, starting by the XIX century the *ulema* has undergone a big loss in its material-spiritual influence and power as a result of partial transfer of first education, then legal responsibilities of *ulema* to other groups, as well as by the establishment of the Ministry of Imperial Foundations (Evkaf-i Humayun Nezareti) which delegated foundation administration and incomes from the *ulema* to the treasury<sup>vi</sup>.

<sup>i</sup> Qur'an, Suara, 2/198; Fatir 35/28.

<sup>ii</sup> For examples look at *al-Mu'jam al-mufahras li-alfaz al-ahadis, ilm and ulema*.

<sup>iii</sup> M. İpsirli, "Osmanlı İlmiye Meslegi Hakkında Gözlemler: XVI-XVII. Asırlar" [Observations on the Ottoman ilmiye Profession: XVI-XVII centuries], *Osmanlı Arastırmaları*, (İstanbul 1988), VII, pp.273-285.

<sup>iv</sup> H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*. London : Oxford University, 1969.

<sup>v</sup> I. H. Uzuncarsili, *Osmanlı Devletinin İlmiye Teskilatı*, [Ilmiye Organization of the Ottoman State], (Ankara 1965), p. 296; M. Tayyip Gokbilgin, "Ulema," *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, v. 13, p.26.

<sup>vi</sup> M. İpsirli, "II Mahmud Döneminde Vakıfların idaresi [Administration of Foundations in Mahmud II's Reign]," *Sultan II.*

The Ottoman state, which emerged on the historical scene as a border principality, was an heir to the previous Turkish-Islamic tradition in the fields of *ilm* and education similar to many other fields. Though it is hard to show the elements of the imminent influence coming from the *ilm* and cultural life of Central Asia clearly<sup>vii</sup>, Islamic traditions and motives are easier to follow within historical development.



Figure 1 - Ibn Kemal

The case in the Ottoman state should be evaluated on the background of this understanding. The reason for Ibn Kemal's (d. 1534) entrance into the *ilmiye* class from the *seyfiye*, (military) class in the early XVI century is important for representing community understanding at the time. When he was a junior officer under the command of vizier Candarli Ibrahim Pasha, Pasha arranged a meeting under his chairmanship when the army was in Sirem. While the meeting was going on a scholar enters and passes by all state officers sitting at nearby the grand vizier. Ibn Kemal watches this young scholar a sitting even above legendary warrior Evrenosoglu Ali Bey in perplexity and learns that he is Molla Lutfi who was a *muderris* (instructor) in Sirem when he asks about him. When he asks about how come he had such a great privilege, the answer is "*rutbat al-ilm a'la'r-rutab*"<sup>viii</sup>. Ibn Kemal starts to study. He reasons that he cannot possibly reach to the status of Evrenosoglu Ali Bey in army no matter how many courageous acts he would have performed, but rather he aimed to reach the level of Molla Lutfi *who* was above Evrenosoglu, and he therefore decided to change his *seyfiye* career for an *ilmiye* one<sup>ix</sup>.

In the partially well known life and reign of Osman Gazi it is difficult to follow activities of *ulema* in a sound way<sup>x</sup>. This is also evident in his will to his successor son Orhan to consult with *ulema*.<sup>xi</sup> He appointed

Mahmut ve Reformları Semineri, Bildiriler, (İstanbul 1990), pp. 49-57.

<sup>vii</sup> Sahabettin Tekindag, 'Madrasa Donemi [Madrasa Period]," Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılında İstanbul Üniversitesi, (İstanbul 1973), s. 3-4.

<sup>viii</sup> "Status of *ilm* is the highest status," *Hadis-i Serif*.

<sup>ix</sup> Mecdi, *Sakaik Tercumesi* [Sakaik Translation], İstanbul 1852, p. 381; Ismet Parmaksizoglu, "Kemal Pasazade," *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, VI, 562.

<sup>x</sup> For *ilm* life in the formative period look Arif Bey, "Devlet-i Osmaniye'nin teessus ve takarruru devrinde ilim ve ulema [Ilm and Ulema in the formation and development of the Ottoman State]," *Darulfunun Edebiyat Fakultesi Mecmuası*, no. 2, (İstanbul 1332), pp. 137-144.

<sup>xi</sup> Mehmed Nesri, *Kitab-i Channuma, Nesri Tarihi* [Nesri History], (Ankara 1987), I, 145-146; Aydin Taneri, *Osmanlı Devletinin Kurulus Doneminde Hukumdarlık Kurumunun Gelişmesi ve Saray Hayatı-Teskilatı* [Development of the Sultanate

judges to the settlements conquered, and opened the first *madrasa* (academia) in Iznik (Nicea) in 1330 appointing Davud-i Kaysari (d.1350) as a *muderris*.<sup>xii</sup> New *madrasas* were built and new institutions in the fields of education and judiciary were established during the reign of Murat I and Yildirim Bayazid. *Kadiasker* (Office of Chief Judge) institution was formed and certain amount of fees was introduced for processing cases in courts.<sup>xiii</sup> Along with those official developments the real progress in this period was observed in the consolidation of *ilm* life and development of a tradition in this field. Early period Ottoman sultans played a great role in all those developments. As a part of their position they were raised as warriors but they always paid a great tribute to *ilm* and *ulema* and took concrete steps in that direction.<sup>xiv</sup>

There are a number of ways that the *ulema* benefited from during these formative years. Rulers decided almost every issue after taking on the ideas of scholars. On the other hand, they also helped the *ulema* in a direct way by appointing them to the memberships of *Divan* as vizier, grand vizier, *kadiasker*, *defterdar*<sup>xv</sup>, or to some important posts in the central bureaucracy.

Exchange trips for academic purposes were one of the most important elements in enriching and vitalizing *ilm* life during the formative period.<sup>xvi</sup> There is a strong and well-established tradition of such trips for learning and teaching in the Islamic world. In *hadis* collections this practice has been promoted. In the Middle Ages when an Islamic renaissance was taking place it is observed that *madrasa* teachers and students visited all great *ilm* centers periodically, and a high degree of mobility was created under very difficult transportation conditions.



Figure 2 - Madrasa, teacher and students during the course

Their teachers guided students to visit famous *ilm* centres such as Cairo, Semerkant, Buhara, Maveraunnehir, Baghdad and Damascus in order to complete their education reaching a certain level in their training.. Through student voyages and visits of guest teachers from other centres it was possible to

Institution and Palace Life-Organization in the Formative Period of the Ottoman state], (Ankara 1978), p. 269.

<sup>xii</sup> For life and publications of this renown scholar who is the first *muderris* look Mehmet Bayraktar, "Davudi Kayseri," *Diyonet Islam Ansiklopedisi*, 9, 32-35.

<sup>xiii</sup> Amounts of those fees in different periods look H. Inalcik, "Adaletnameler," *TTK-Belgeler*, 11/3-4, (Ankara 1967), p. 78.

<sup>xiv</sup> For *ilm* life in the formative period, and for first Ottoman *madrasas* in various cities, their founders and instructors look Mustafa Bilge, *Ilk Osmanli Medreseleri* [Early Ottoman *Madrasas*], (Istanbul 1984).

<sup>xv</sup> *Fatih Kanunnamesi*, (Abdulkadir Ozcan, *Tarih Dergisi*, (Istanbul 1982), no. 33, p. 34.

<sup>xvi</sup> "Those leaving for learning are on the path of Allah until they ate back"; "Angels cover the one who left his home in the pursuit of learning with their wings due to their joy," *Ramuzu'l-ehadis*, (Istanbul 1982), p. 389, 419.

gain a knowledge about relative superiority in different fields and *ilm* circles of each centre, which was used to advise students preparing for a new academic voyage. Ottoman sultans' invitations towards *ulema* and their good treatment contributed to *ilm* life by attracting guest scholars from other Anatolian principalities and famous centres.



Figure 3 - Fatih and his famous scholar Hocazade

Murat II's period has a particular importance in that respect. This period was somewhat a cultural preparation for the great conquest witnessing the establishment of the institution of *Seyhulislam* institution and appointment of Molla Fenari to this post (1425) and the foundation of *madrasas* in Edirne, Bursa and other big cities parallel to the developments of scholarly and *sufi* movements.



Figure 4 - Famous Ottoman scholar Molla Zeyrek

Many scholars came to the Ottoman polity at that period. Those scholars trained by great masters like Sadreddin Taftazani (d. 1389) and Seyyid Serif Curcani (d. 1413) transferred scholarly, intellectual and philosophical debates to the Ottoman lands and initiated a clear progress<sup>xvii</sup>. Such academic voyages decreased after the conquest of Istanbul and became rare by the XVI century. Though it would be hard to pass a final judgment without a comprehensive research, this development has been one of the main factors behind the inertia in the Ottoman *i/m* life.

Fatih period is not only a turning point in terms of organization but also in terms of perspective or approach. See Figure 3 for a picture of Fatih and his famous scholar Hocazade. In the famous law regarding organization and protocol there were provisions about *ulema* for the first time. In addition, a clear-cut differentiation was made between *ilmiye*, *seyfiye* and *kalemiye* occupations, with some preferences with regard to origins, educational backgrounds and formations of the youngsters that would serve in those fields.

Fatih's personality, attitude and reign have a critical importance in terms of *i/m* life like many other domains. Figure 4 shows a famous Ottoman scholar Molla Zeyrek's who lived during Mehmed II's reign. Fatih had a great interest in religious-philosophical debates and initiated discussions among scholars concerning such subjects. See Figure 5 for famous scholar Ali Kuscu and Fatih's miniature.

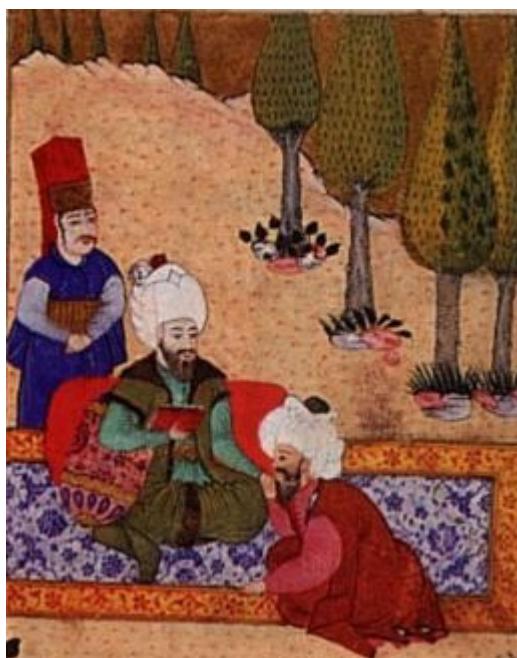


Figure 5

It is known that in the same period there were similar developments in *madrasas*, which included philosophical courses in their curricula, though such courses gradually disappeared. That has given rise to deterioration in the intellectual climate of the *madrasas* and criticized by Katip Chelebi. In Fatih period there

<sup>xvii</sup> H. Inalcik, "Murat II", IA, VIII, pp. 613-614.

was not only a development quality-wise but also in quantity-wise, with opening *ilm* and culture institutions being a fashion in that period.<sup>xviii</sup> Figure 6 shows Fatih's reign scholar Molla Khayreddin.

Privileges provided for the *ulema*: The *ulema* as a part of military (administrative) class was rewarded by being provided with broad privileges. Those privileges can be classified into two categories as special treatment in taxes and punishments, and privileges given to their children. Though there were some tax exemptions for all military classes those of the *ulema* were defined in a broader way.

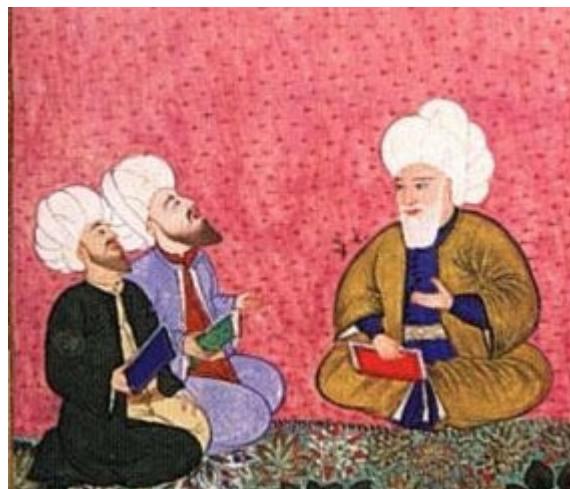


Figure 6 - Fatih's reign scholar Molla Khayreddin

## ***Ilmiye families***

Due to the great importance given to *ilm* and *ulema* in the Islamic religion and community, inheritance of *ilmiye* occupation from father to sons and grandsons became customary and gave rise to emergence of well-established families. There are numerous examples for this both in Muslim-Arab states like Umayyad, Abbasids and Fatimids and in Muslim-Turk states like Karahanlilar, Persian and Anatolian Saljukids and principalities. With the special privileges provided by the Ottomans such families developed a distinct identity and through inter-marriages created an *ilmiye* network and an aristocratic class.

In an overall evaluation one may argue that there are advantages and disadvantages of the transfer of the posts from father to son and of the formation of families. Positive aspects are; raising the child in an *ilm* atmosphere, his acquisition of knowledge on many subjects conveniently from his father and father's friends, and particularly his access to books and libraries in an age in which it was difficult to own such means due to material-social reasons. However, providing privileges on the basis of being a progeny to *ulema* does not have any justification. Normally a son selecting his father's occupation with all its natural advantages should have reached to a higher level in the field, whereas with all those privileges and rights giving them an opportunity to promote without due effort, this practice gave rise to a rapid deterioration and internal corruption.

---

<sup>xviii</sup> Fatih period *ilm* life and institutions have been studied by Suheyl Unver. S. Unver, *Fatih, Kulliyesi ve Zamani Ilim Hayati* [Fatih, His Complex and time life at His Time], (Istanbul 1946).

*Ulema* in the Ottoman state was not a group outside the state bureaucracy and system but rather a part of it. *Ulema* performed its role by serving in various posts as *kadi*, *muderris*, *kazasker*, *nakibuleshrafi*, tutorial to sultan, preacher for the sovereign, *Seyhulislam*, etc.; and by preparing reports aiming at administrative reforms that the state required from time to time, as well as directly involving into the reform process in accordance with those reports, assuming the role of forming a public opinion for the relevant subject.<sup>xix</sup> However, in performing those missions they have sometimes stepped into political quarrels from which they should have refrained, and issued some political *fetvas* guiding the community in a wrong direction.



Figure 7 - A *seyhulislam*

Decay in the *ulema* and reform efforts: From its formation up until the times of *Kanuni ilmiye* vocation has progressed on a continuous way and a system peculiar to the Ottoman state has emerged; developing degrees for *madrasas* in time and degrees for *Kadi* organizations of Rumeli, Anatolia and Egypt, as well as procedures in subjects like rules of transfer from one to the other. However, all those developments also brought some unavoidable weaknesses.

Historians are in agreement that the decay in the Ottoman institutions and basic order started by the second half of the XVI century. That negative process was immediately observed and, on the one hand, through State ordinances this decay was pointed out in a polite way, urging for a return back to the established tradition. On the other hand writers, intellectuals and historians of the times touched upon this negative developments in a harsh and open manner, stating their anxiety for the posterity. Actually one may relate those two channels of early warnings and accept them as a contemporary observation of the situation, because the justifications stated the ordinances were derived from observations and complaints coming from different sources, turning their advice into orders. After presenting common observations of the writers, it shall be possible to point out where they agree and where they differ regarding relevant issue.

Taskopruluzade Ahmed Efendi (d. 1561), who came from among *ulema* ranks and served to this vocation by his books, states in pains as early as by the 1540s that the old interest for theology and mathematics

<sup>xix</sup> For instance, Sahaflarseyhizade Esad Efendi, Yasincizade Abdullvehhab Efendi and Kadizade Mehmed Tahir Efendi, among others, played a significant role in creating a favorable public opinion for reform movements of Mahmut II.

branches has disappeared among *madrasa ulema* and the scholarly level has decreased, as evident in the assumption among the *ulema* that they have been mature enough by reading simple hand-books without going through basic theoretical books.<sup>xx</sup> The strongest criticism raised against the *ulema* in the second half of the XVI century came from Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali. Ali made an overall evaluation about and raised his criticisms against *ilmiye* vocation in his history book. Ali narrates how *ulema* transformed into a ritualistic group from being a vital part of the state and the society, how they left many beneficial meetings due to this change, that they were very unsuccessful in writing original books, that there was no scholar producing an important piece of work with the exception of Ebussuud Efendi, how widespread patron-client relationships was among the *ulema*, that *kadiaskers* turned towards corruption in the application of *mulazemet* procedure, that *muderris* and *kadi* posts were being purchased, and particularly the harmful affects of the rights and privileges given to the *ulema*. He states that regular courses were not performed, that many teachers were paid but did not teach, and that when teachers intended to teach they did not find students to teach.<sup>xxi</sup> Figure 8 shows an Ottoman madrasa class with teacher and students.



Figure 8

In the same years historian Mustafa Selaniki (d. approx. 1600), after referring to the key role of the *ulema* within the community, urges that this group representing religion and law should not go away from truth and integrity, and that though the major occupation of them was to promote virtue and prevent vice they could not perform their duty due to laziness and fear, abandoning many important meetings just because of the fight over being before in the protocol. He also states how increased firings led to a state of indecisiveness and anxiety<sup>xxii</sup>.

<sup>xx</sup> H. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire, The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, (London 1973), p. 179.

<sup>xxi</sup> *Kunhu'l-ahbar*, Uni. Libr., TY 5959, fol. 85b-90a; *Nushatu's-selatin*, pub. A. Tietze, *Mustafa Ali Counsel for Sultans of 1581 I*, (Wien 1979), pp. 174-179; *Meva'idu'n-nefais fi kava'idil-mecalis*, (Istanbul 1956) (the same edition), section 28, pp. 102-109.

<sup>xxii</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih-i Selaniki*, prepared for publication by M. Ipsirli, (Istanbul 1989), pp. 87-88.

## The Crisis of the Ottoman *Madrasa* and the *İlm* Life

Koci Bey, the renowned writer of the XVII century, naturally devoted a part to the *ulema* in his two treatises that were presented to Murat IV and Sultan Ibrahim. He stated that religion and state rest upon *ilm* and *ilm* rests upon *ulema*, that the Ottoman sultans had shown a respect to the *ulema* more than any other sultan, and that the *ulema* could not make use of this advantage. He referred to the harmful effects to the vocation of the frequent firings, corruption and patron-client type of relations as well as to the detrimental affects of misapplication of *mulazemet* as a basic aspect of the profession.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Katip Celebi, the renowned scholar of XVII century also talked about the crisis of the Ottoman *madrasa* and the *ilm* life in general, its causes and remedies, in various occasions. His views are the soundest ones on this subject. In his book *Mizanu'l-hak*, he approaches intellectual and social subjects in a sound and critical way, giving a high quality analysis of the problems of the Ottoman *madrasa*. In his view Christianity and philosophical branches of knowledge have always been in conflict whereas Islamic world has never rejected such branches of knowledge, rather trying to reconcile both. In the early periods of Islam foreign science and thought had been rejected due to the fear of their possible subversive effects upon faith, but after a while they were all permitted as Islamic faith had established itself, achieving a complete translation and interpretation of Greek science and philosophy. In early periods of the Ottoman rule till the Kanuni period an *ulema* group raised who united wisdom and religion. Mehmed II in his *madrasas* made courses like *Hasiye-i Tecrid* and *Serh-i Mevakif* obligatory.

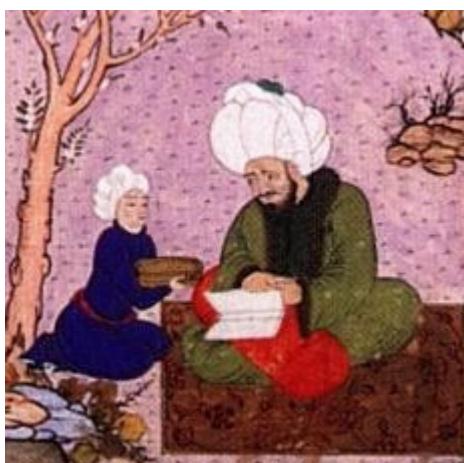


Figure 9 - Fatih's reign famous scholar Kara Yakub's

Later generations eliminated such courses cursing them as philosophy and thus prevented the development of knowledge. Those coming from Eastern provinces with a sense of superiority filled this vacuum. He states that some men of knowledge observing those developments tried to reenter those courses, and he himself encouraged able students in that direction, pointing out differences between those *kadi* and *mufti* who know and who don't know mathematics with concrete examples.<sup>xxiv</sup>

<sup>xxiii</sup> Koci Bey, *Risale*, (Haz. Ali Kemal Aksut), Istanbul 1939, p. 33-37.

<sup>xxiv</sup> *Mizanu'l-hak fi ihtiyari'l-ehakk*, (Istanbul 1306).

Katip Celebi, while examining "*Ilm al-hikma*" subject in his book *Kasf al-Zunun*, touches upon this problem and criticizes elimination of wisdom and philosophy courses.

### **Publications of the *ulema***

The Ottoman *ulema* has been accused particularly by today's intellectuals for not writing basic and scientific publications. If we consider a huge geographical homeland extending from Algeria to Creampie and from Budin to Basra within very long duration of six centuries, that criticism might look like justified to some extent. However, two points need to be stressed at that junction. First; the Ottoman state originated as a state geared towards conquest and *gaza*, preserving this character throughout six centuries. In that context, it would not be a mistake to call the Ottoman state as an expedition lasting for six centuries. That was a uniform expedition effort first directed to the struggle against Byzantine, continued with the conquests in Europe and struggles to disseminate Islam in Europe and finally culminating in the struggle to maintain the lands conquered. The *ulema* was next to the Sultan and pioneer warriors, to motivate them, and to explain the sacredness of this struggle to the military and to the general public. In a sense, the *ulema* provided the ground for this struggle. That was what the *ulema* was expected to do. Therefore, time consuming scientific studies remained secondary and required personal devotion and curiosity. That is in fact the historical reality. Secondly; this is not yet a scientific examination regarding publications of the Ottoman *ilmiye* group. The publications are on library shelves waiting for researchers who are serious and open-minded. In order to reach final judgments about the issue one has to wait the findings of such systematic studies.

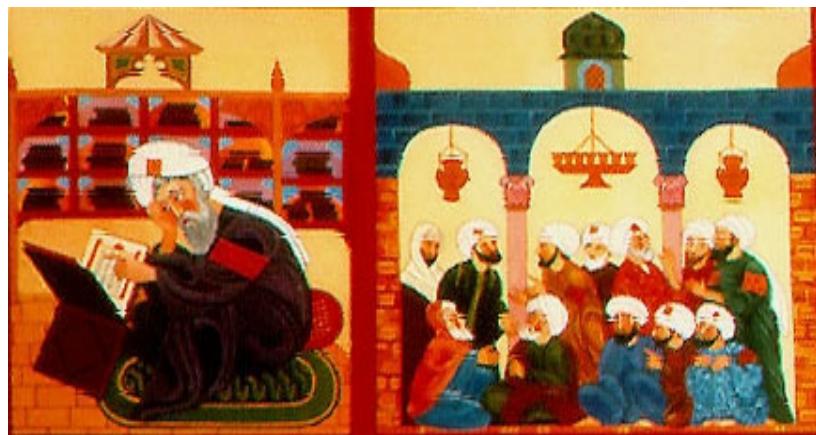


Figure 10 - A scholars group discussing and reading books

After pointing out those two points, if the publications at hand might be classified and evaluated, it is observed that there are many scholars in the field of religion who published books on the curricula of *madrasas* or written explanations for such books, and there are also plenty of scholars who produced high quality original publications in the fields of *tefsir*, *hadis*, *fikih*, etc.

There was a strong relationship between the *ulema* and poets in the Ottomans. Many *ulema* members were also average or high ranking poets, having divans. A sizeable number of them attained *ilmiye* membership not because of their scholarly power but because of their mastery in poetry.

In the publications in the field of the history of the Ottoman organization *ulema* has been depicted as a motivating force and pioneers of the community, enjoying wide opportunities. The *ulema* members employed by the state were able to visit many parts of the country and get acquainted with the conditions of the people thanks to the *mulazemet* (rotation} system. Therefore, they were expected to write realistic letters and reports to the responsible persons including the sultan about the people of the region, their needs and problems, and respective ways of solving those problems. Those reports were also primary sources of contemporary historians.

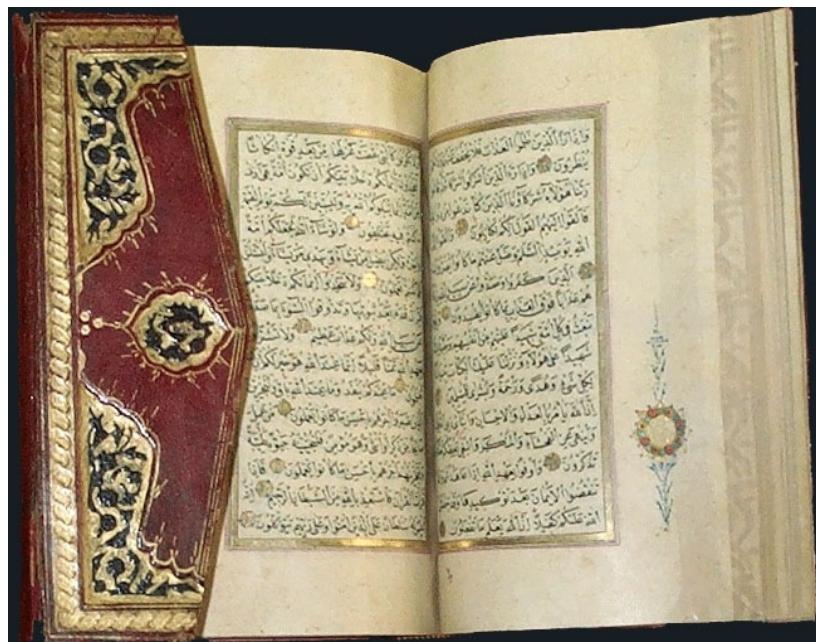


Figure 11 – A Handwritten Quran

## **Ulema and the reform movements**

Contrary to the received knowledge and beliefs, many reform movements in the Ottoman state were achieved by the leadership, support, or at least, consent of the *ulema*. In fact, that has a well-established tradition in the Ottoman state. From the period of formation till the demise of the state the leadership or encouragement of the ulema created many military, scientific, and political organizations. There were numerous *ilmiye* members of different calibre among writers of reform reports in XVIII-XIX centuries, among those writing in the field of state administration.

## **XVIII-XX centuries**

Reform studies in the *ilmiye* organization continued in the following centuries with a different approach. There were different imperial orders to the responsible people regarding reform of the *ilmiye* during the reigns of Ahmed III and Mahmut I in the early XVIII century. Those were covering the classical topics that were common in the XVI-XVII centuries. Selim III gave importance and priority to *ilmiye* in his widespread reform efforts towards the end of the century.

However, it is observed that starting with Mahmut II there was a different approach to the *ulema* class and its role. Put in a clear way, that was a period in which the *ulema* started to be marginalized and lose its privileges and widespread field of influence step by step. The strongest attack in that period was the establishment of *Evkaf-i Humayun Nezareti* (the Imperial Ministry of Foundations) in 1826, which transferred all foundation incomes previously enjoyed to a large extent by the *ulema* to the treasury via the ministry. That change gave a great damage to *madrasas* and religious services managed by foundation incomes.<sup>xxv</sup>

All in all, the Ottoman *ulema*, who were described above with their main characteristics, had been a basic element of the state and the society, presenting progressive visions particularly during the formative and developing phases, despite all its deficiencies, creating a dynamism in society. That feature of the *ulema* had been reported in the publications of Western diplomats and voyagers clearly and in comparison to their own societies. The *ulema* under investigation in that paper, and in others at different levels as well, is the center *ulema* who had usually an education in Istanbul *madrasas* and taken official responsibilities in different regions of the state. Though this section is the major part there were, on the one hand, *ulema* getting their education from famous and well-established *madrasas* in the Arabian provinces of Egypt-Azhar,<sup>xxvi</sup> Damascus,<sup>xxvii</sup> Tunisia,<sup>xxviii</sup> and Algeria, representing different traditions which remained out of the system in the Ottoman state; on the other hand, there were *ulema* in Safavi, Qajar,<sup>xxix</sup> Morocco,<sup>xxx</sup> Ozbek and Babur which were outside the Ottoman homeland but retained close ties to it. It is known that those *ulema* visited the Ottoman homeland with diplomatic missions and from time to time participated in the scholarly debates. Those *ulema* schools of different backgrounds within the Ottoman world need a separate investigation.

## Bibliography

Qur'an, Suara, 2/198; Fatir 35/28.

Algar, Hamit, Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906, The Role of the Ulema in the Qajar Period, (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1969).

Arif Bey, "Devlet-i Osmaniye'nin teessus ve takarruru devrinde ilim ve ulema [Ilm and Ulema in the formation and development of the Ottoman State]," Darulfunun Edebiyat Fakultesi Mecmuasi, no. 2, (İstanbul 1332), pp. 137-144.

<sup>xxv</sup> For more information look B. Lewis, *Modern Turkiye'nin Dogusu* [Birth of the Modern Turkey], (trs. M. Kiratli), (Ankara 1970), pp. 93-95; M. Ipsirli, "II. Mahmut Doneminde Vakiflarin Idaresi [Administration of Foundations during the Reign of Mahmut II]", *Sultan II Mahmut ve Reformlari Semineri, Bildiriler*, (İstanbul 1990), p. 49-57.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Danil Neil Crecelius, *The Ulema and the State in the Modern Egypt*, Princeton University, Ph.D., 1967; A. Chris Eccel, *Egypt, Islam and Social Change*, Al-azhar, Berlin 1984; A. L. Marsot, "The Ulema of Cairo in the Eighteen and Nineteen Centuries; Scholars, Saints, and Sufis, Muslim Religious Institutions since 1500, Ed. Nikki R. Keddie, (University of California 1972), pp.149-166.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Joan Elizabeth Gilbert, *The Ulema of Medieval Damascus and the International World of Islamic Scholarship*, University of California Berkeley, Ph.D., 1977; Moshe Maoz, "The Ulema and the Process of Modernization in Syria during the Mid-Nineteenth Century; The Ulema in Modern History, Asian and African Studies, 7, (1911), pp. 77-78.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Arnold H. Green, The Tunisian Ulema 1873-1915, Social Structure and Response to Ideological Currents, Leiden 1978; L. C. Brown, "The Religious Establishment in Husainid Tunisia; Scholars, Saints, and Sufis, Muslim Religious Institutions since 1500", Ed. Nikki R. Keddie, (University of California 1972), pp. 47-92.

<sup>xxix</sup> Hamit Algar, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906, The Role of the Ulema in the Qajar Period*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1969).

<sup>xxx</sup> P. Shinar, "The Historical Approach of the Reformer Ulema in the Contemporary Magrib; The Ulema in Modern History,

- Bilge, Mustafa, *Ilk Osmanli Medreseleri* [Early Ottoman Madrasas], (Istanbul 1984).
- Brown, L. C., "The Religious Establishment in Husainid Tunisia; Scholars, Saints, and Sufis, Muslim Religious Institutions since 1500, Ed. Nikki R. Keddie, (University of California 1972), pp. 47-92.
- Danil Neil Crecelius, *The Ulema and the State in the Modern Egypt*, Princeton University, Ph.D., 1967.
- Eccel, A. Chris, *Egypt, Islam and Social Change*, Al-azhar, Berlin 1984.
- Fatih Kanunnamesi, (Abdulkadir Ozcan, *Tarih Dergisi*, (Istanbul 1982), no. 33, p. 34.
- Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Kunhu'l-ahbar*, Uni. Libr., TY 5959, fol. 85b-90a;
- Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Meva'idu'n-nefais fi kava'idi'l-mecalis*, (Istanbul 1956) (the same edition), section 28, pp. 102-109.
- Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Nushatu's-selatin*, pub. A. Tietze, Mustafa Ali Counsel for Sultans of 1581 I, (Wien 1979), pp. 174-179;
- Gibb, H. A. R., and H. Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*. London : Oxford University, 1969.
- Gilbert, Joan Elizabeth, *The Ulema of Medieval Damascus and the International World of Islamic Scholarship*, University of California Berkeley, Ph.D., 1977.
- Gokbilgin, M. Tayyip, "Ulema," *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, v. 13, p. 26.
- Green, Arnold H., *The Tunisian Ulema 1873-1915, Social Structure and Response to Ideological Currents*, Leiden 1978.
- Inalcik, H., "Adaletnameler," *TTK-Belgeler*, 11/3-4, (Ankara 1967), p. 78.
- Inalcik, H., "Murat II", *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, VIII, pp. 613-614.
- Inalcik, H., *The Ottoman Empire, The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, (London 1973), p. 179.
- Ipsirli, M. "II. Mahmut Doneminde Vakiflarin Idaresi [Administration of Foundations during the Reign of Mahmut II]", *Sultan II Mahmut ve Reformlari Semineri, Bildiriler*, (Istanbul 1990), p. 49-57.
- Ipsirli, M., "Osmanli Ilmiye Meslegi Hakkinda Gozlemler: XVI-XVII. Asirlar" [Observations on the Ottoman ilmiye Profession: XVI-XVII centuries], *Osmanli Arastirmalari*, (Istanbul 1988), VII, pp.273-285.
- Katip Celebi, *Mizanu'l-hak fi ihtiyari'l-ehakk*, (Istanbul 1306).
- Koci Bey, *Risale*, (Haz. Ali Kemal Aksut), Istanbul 1939, p. 33-37.
- Lewis, B., *Modern Turkiye'nin Dogusu* [Birth of the Modern Turkey], (trs. M. Kiratli), (Ankara 1970), pp. 93-95.
- Maoz, Moshe, "The Ulema and the Process of Modernization in Syria during the Mid-Nineteenth Century; *The Ulema in Modern History, Asian and African Studies*, 7, (1911), pp. 77-78.
- Marsot, A. L., "The Ulema of Cairo in the Eighteen and Nineteen Centuries; *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis, Muslim Religious Institutions since 1500*, Ed. Nikki R. Keddie, (University of California 1972), pp.149-166.
- Mecdi, *Sakaik Tercumesi* [Sakaik Translation], Istanbul 1852.
- Mehmed Nesri, *Kitab-i Cihannuma, Nesri Tarihi* [Nesri History], (Ankara 1987), I, 145-146.
- Mehmet Bayraktar, "Davudi Kayseri," *Diyonet Islam Ansiklopedisi*, 9, 32-35.
- Parmaksizoglu, Ismet, "Kemal Pasazade," *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, VI, 562.
- Ramuzu'l-ehadis, (Istanbul 1982).
- Selaniki, *Tarih-i Selaniki*, prepared for publication by M. Ipsirli, (Istanbul 1989), pp. 87-88.
- Shinar, P., "The Historical Approach of the Reformist Ulema in the Con-temporary Magrib; *The Ulema in Modern History, Asian and African Studies*, 7, (1971), pp. 181-210.
- Taneri, Aydin, *Osmanli Devletinin Kurulus Doneminde Hukumdarlik Kurumunun Gelismesi ve Saray Hayati-Teskilati* [Development of the Sultanate Institution and Palace Life-Organization in the Formative Period of the Ottoman state], (Ankara 1978), p. 269.

---

*Asian and African Studies*, 7, (1971), pp. 181-210.

Tekindag, Sahabettin, 'Madrasa Donemi [Madrasa Period]," *Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılında İstanbul Üniversitesi*, (İstanbul 1973), s.3-4.

Unver, S., *Fatih, Külliyesi ve Zamanı İlim Hayatı* [Fatih, His Complex and time life at His Time], (İstanbul 1946).

Uzuncarsili, I. H., *Osmanlı Devletinin İlmiye Teskilati*, [Ilmiye Organization of the Ottoman State], (Ankara 1965), p. 296.