

OFFICIAL OTTOMAN IDEOLOGY AND ITS SCIENCE INSTITUTIONS
IN THE XV AND XVIth CENTURIES:
FÂTİH MEDRESES

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The Ottoman state, which had been founded as a frontier principality (*uç beyliği*), acquired a universalistic empire status with the conquest of İstanbul (1453). From then onwards it underwent radical changes in political, social, military, economic and educational spheres. The architect of this change that shaped the classical structure of the state was Mehmed II (the Conqueror). Therefore, he has been seen as its real founder¹.

Undoubtedly the Ottomans possessed necessary experience and tradition to establish such a state. Since the foundation of the state, they developed their philosophy or understanding of government in the direction of "centralism"². As a matter of fact, it is possible to see the most evident manifestation of this trend in the famous *qânûn-nâme* (code of laws) of the Conqueror³.

The Conqueror was in a strong position while he was using the experience and tradition in question to form the desired philosophy of government. He gained a great deal of influence throughout the Islamic world by succeeding what previous Muslim rulers had failed to achieve, viz., the conquest of İstanbul. Also he was very skillful in exploiting his success. On the other hand, as he took possession of the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, he was himself as the legitimate successor of this empire and as the protector of Orthodox Christianity⁴.

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¹ See, İnalçık, Halil, "Fatih Sultan Mehmed, İstanbul'un Fethi ve İmparatorluk", *Türk Kültürü*, XX (Ankara, 1964), p. 8; see also *idem*, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu", in *Türk Dünyası Elkitabı*, Ankara, 1976, p. 979 and "Mehmed II", *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, VII (İstanbul, 1979), p. 534.

² We must remember how the conflict over the throne among Yıldırım Bâyezîd's sons during the Period of Interregnum (*Fetret Devri*) which lasted more than ten years, brought the Ottoman Empire to the point of disintegration. It is also well known that the struggle between the Conqueror's sons, Bâyezîd and Cem, lasted many years acquiring an international dimension.

Concerning the conflict over the throne between The Law Giver's (Qânûnî) sons during the mid-XVIth century, see Turan, Şerafettin, *Kanûnî'nin Oğlu Şehzâde Bâyezîd Vak'ası*, Ankara, 1961; see also my "Kânûnî Devri Şehzâde Mücadeleleri ve Bunun Osmanlı Siyâsi ve Sosyal Târihi Bakımından Önemi", *Türk Yurdu*, XI/35 (July 1990), pp. 9-16.

³ Özcan, Abdulkadir, "Fatih'in Teşkilat Kanunnâmesi ve Nizâm-ı Âlem İçin Kardeş Katli Meselesi", *İÜEF Tarih Dergisi*, XXXIII (March, 1980-1981), İstanbul, 1982, p. 46.

⁴ This was not only the Conqueror's opinion. Foreigners, especially the Greeks were sharing the same opinion. Indeed, in 1466 a Greek scholar, Yorgi Trapezuntis, were telling him this: "No one doubts that you are the Emperor of Romans. The one who legally controls the Capital of Roman Empire becomes the Emperor and the Capital of Roman Empire is İstanbul." (See, İnalçık, "Fatih

Thus, by combining Islamic, Turkish and Byzantine state traditions he achieved to create the prototype of classical Ottoman Sultan⁵.

When we look at the measures taken by the Conqueror to establish an absolutist-centralist administration, we see that he was able to develop a kind of administration (and its ideology) "where every road would go to himself" -so to speak-. In fact, this ideology, developed by him, dominated the spirit of the philosophy of administration of the state.

In this general framework he got rid of the image of religion which appeared in social life in the form of "the twinship of state and religion". While, previously, religion managed to retain its independence and was not a secondary element in the service of the state, the Conqueror attempted and managed to bring religion under state control; and this, in turn, resulted in an identification of state and religion. As a matter of fact, in terms of its functions and place in the administration he gave the *Şeyhü'l-islâmlık* a position similar to that of Byzantine Patriarchate. Therefore, this institution, established as a governmental office, was put in a position to confirm and ratify what the central authority was to do⁶.

Thus, if we leave aside such strong personalities as Zenbilli Ali Efendi, it was always to be extremely difficult for the head of this institution to challenge decisions taken by the central authority -at least so long as the Palace remained powerful-. It should be kept in mind that there was a dismissal ('*azl*') mechanism at the disposal of the Sultan.

In this identification of state and religion, established by the Conqueror, the real (original) aim of the political authority was not religious; so, the application of Shari'ah was not the only function of the state. Even though the terms "religion and state" (*dîn ü devlet*) were often used together, the protection of the state was the real concern of the Ottomans. As Şerif Mardin put it, it could not be possible "to ensure the continuity of a religion that does not bereft from

Sultan Mehmet, ...", pp. 9-10). The Conqueror's Greek historian Kritovulos, writes in history book dedicated to the Conqueror himself that: "... bu pâdişâh yalnız hem-'asrı' olan mülûk u tâcdârâna değil milel-i hâzırada ve sâlifede yetişmiş hükümdârâna ve hattâ kendi hânedânından zuhûr eden ve her biri ümem-i sâ'ire mülûküne fâ'ik ve müsâbık olan pâdişâhân-ı 'izâma meziyyet ü fazilet ve şecâ'at ü besâletde câ'iz-i rütbe-i tevaffuk u tekaddümdür." (See, *Târîh-i Sultân Mehmed Hân-ı Sâni*, translation by Karolidi, Appendix of *Târîh-i Osmâni Encümeni Mecmû'ası*, İstanbul, 1328 (1910), p. 12); see also Ocak, A. Yaşar, "XV ve XVI. Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı Resmî Dini İdeolojisi ve Buna Muhâlefet Problemi", *İslâmi Araştırmalar*, IV/3 (Ankara, July, 1990), p. 192.

⁵ İnalçık, "Osmanlı Padişahı", *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, XIII/1 (Ankara, 1958), p. 68; *idem*, "Padişâh", *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, IX (İstanbul, 1964), p. 493; see also Lewis, Bernard, "İslâm Devlet Müessesesi ve Telâkkileri Üzerinde Bozkır Ahalisinin Tesiri", *İslâm Tedkikleri Enstitüsü Dergisi*, II/2/4 (1960), pp. 209-230.

⁶ Ocak, "... Osmanlı Resmî Dini İdeolojisi..." pp. 191-193.

the protective power of a strong state"⁷, and the state imposed this idea to its subjects as an unchangeable principle. Such matters as policy of religion an social and legal application of religion remained within the limits set by the central government⁸.

Irrespective of their religious affiliations, the religious life of all peoples in the Empire was under the direct supervision of the state. To the extent that it did not transgress the rules of established order, everybody enjoyed freedom of religion, because the idea of protecting the state was deemed paramount. Needless, to add that "state" and "dynasty" were identical.

It is well-known that the Conqueror had taken various measures to strengthen the centralist structure of the Ottoman polity. Among these measures were such military ones as increasing the number of Jannisaries; such economic ones as absorbing into the *timar* system *wakf* and *mülk* (private property) lands to weaken the position of religious groups; such political an administrative ones as counterbalancing the strength of Turkish aristocracy by using the *devshirme* system⁹.

The political and administrative system these measures were directed to achieve required a tight control over educational institutions. For this reason, - especially with the opening of the *Semâniye* medreses- both those medreses founded before his time and the ones established afterwards were to be reorganized and given the tasks of formulating official Ottoman ideology and bringing up the *personnel* (people) to be employed in the dissemination of this ideology among the subjects (*tebe'a*)¹⁰.

The Fâtih medreses, the topic of our writing, constituted one of these institutions perhaps the important one until the foundation of the *Süleymâniye* medreses.

It most be very interesting to examine and evaluate what sort of educational philosophy and state-institution relationship this mission exhibited in the Ottoman education system, and according to what kind of mechanism the network of human relations worked in these institution.

The Sultan, who represented the centralist approach to administration embodied in the Conqueror, was to rule the state apparatus through a loyal

⁷ Mardin, Şerif, *Türkiye'de Toplum ve Siyâset*, Makaleler 1, 1th edition (ed. M. Türköne - T. Önder), İstanbul, 1990, p. 180.

⁸ For detailed information see, Ocak, "Kanunî Sultan Süleyman Devrinde Osmanlı Resmî Düşüncesine Karşı Bir Tepki Hareketi: Oğlan Şeyh İsmail-i Mâşûkî", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, 10 (İstanbul, 1990), pp. 49-56; see also *idem*, "Kanunî Sultan Süleyman Devrinde Bir Osmanlı Heretiği: Şeyh Muhyiddin-i Karamanî", *Prof. Dr. Bekir Kütükoğlu'na Armağan*, İstanbul, 1991, pp. 473-384.

⁹ İnalcık, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu", p. 980.

¹⁰ Ocak, "... Osmanlı Resmî Dini İdeolojisi..." p. 193, footnote 19.

patrimonial bureaucracy. The *'ulemâ* was included in this group. Though essentially with civilian origins, they would be trained through a process of state-run education as qualified staff for employment by the state, and thus deserved to join in administrative cadres. It was therefore quite natural for any member of the *'ulemâ* to be loyal to the Sultan, his benefactor (or patron)¹¹.

The policy of central authority to keep members of the ruling class under tight control was true for the *'ulemâ* as well. Even though the *'ulemâ* was entrusted by the state with such activities as teaching, education and judicial affairs and was employed in fiscal and diplomatic areas, it was much more important for the state to use the *'ulemâ* in ensuring the loyalty of the *re'âyâ*, i.e. the ruled. To wit, the *'ulemâ* was indispensable for the Sultan to legitimize his rule in the eyes of his subjects.

The desire of the central authority to know more closely the people it would employ prepared the ground for the emergence of extremely complicate relations among the individuals involved. In particular, the method of protection and recommendation, though valid for the recruitment of non-*'ulemâ* bureaucrats, was used extensively within the science profession (*'ilmiye tariki*) as well. More specifically such methods and the like may be examined under the general title of "patronage relations"¹².

Although the state was careful not to ignore regional *'ulemâ* outside its direct control, quite naturally it preferred to employ those scholars recommended by someone who was trained and educated through official education channels, proved his loyalty in the eyes of central authority and was in a high position.

For such a Ottoman scholar, promoted to high office in the administrative structure by undergoing a lot of tests, the important thing was not to lose the confidence of the Sultan, and hence not to lose his job. Therefore, from the foundation by Sultan Orhan of the first one Iznik in 1330¹³ partially¹⁴, and

¹¹ Mardin, *ibid.*, p. 179.

¹² Mardin, *ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

¹³ Uzunçarşılı, İ. Hakkı, *Osmanlı Devletinin İlimiye Teşkilâtı*, 3th edition, Ankara 1988, p. 1.

¹⁴ For example, well before the development of the education system and its control by the state at the time of the construction of *Semâniye medreses*, the Conqueror invites Hayru'd-dîn Halil, an ancestor of *Şakâ'ik*'s writer Taşköprülü-zâde on the line of his father, in order to appoint him as a *müderris* in one of his *medreses*, he refuses the invitation saying that "... *bu mansûbda hubb-ı câh gibi hatar-ı 'azîm vardır, anun kabûli mahâ'il-i gavâ'il-i kesire ve şevâ'ib-i nevâ'ib-i gazireyi mutazammındur.*" and he adds that he does not need any post. (See, Mecdi Mehmed Efendi (trans.), *Hadâ'iku's-Şakâ'ik* (ed. A. Özcan), İstanbul, 1989, p. 140.

Although in the early periods of the Empire we frequently encounter the personalities who refused the academic and administrative positions offered to them by putting forward such excuses and distanced themselves from high government officials, in later periods such personalities are hardly seen. For example, Mevlânâ 'Izârî, one of the *müderrises* of the Conqueror's time, feels sad when he hears that famous *Hoca-zâde* become a *kâdî* (judge). The point that makes him feel sad is that Hoca-zâde accepts this post with great enthusiasm, although the *'ulemâ* usually avoid accepting such Posts Until that time (see, Mecdi, *ibid.*, p. 149). Again in Conqueror's time, reacting upon

from the establishment of the Fâtiḥ medreses to a much greater degree, Ottoman medreses functioned outside amateurish scientific objectives¹⁵. The mission (task) of the formation of official Ottoman ideology can, to a degree, explain why they were inadequate to revive scientific and intellectual life in Islamic world that had begun to fade away after the 9th century, why they could not achieve to produce creative scholars or why they were unable to prepare the ground for the foundation of our modern universities through a well-founded scientific tradition -which is what western churches and monasteries achieved in European historical development-¹⁶.

That the central administration viewed medreses as places where loyal official were brought up led the 'ulemâ to consider these institutions not as scientific centers but as necessary ladders to climb up upper echelons of the bureaucracy. As a matter of fact, some statistical data relating to the *Semâniye* medreses that will be given below clearly demonstrate this tendency. In fact, the desire of the overwhelming majority of Ottoman scholars was to attain a *kâdilîk* (magistrateship) after completing their training and education.

We observe that this desire of the 'ulemâ became increasingly apparent during the period of stagnation and crisis that followed the rise and maturity of the state. According to the translator of *Şakâ'ik*¹⁷, Mecdî Mehmed Efendi, out of 105 *Sahn* professors who died in mid-16th century only 40 (38 per cent) did not take up any post other than professorship (*müderrişlik*). We further observe that within the fifty-year period from mid-16th century to the beginning of the seventeenth, this proportion decreased into 20.3 per cent (34 out of 167), and his percentage remained around 22 throughout the 17th century (143 out of 648). The

the imprisonment of Sinân Paşa, the writer of *Tazarru'-nâme* and the son of the famous Hızır Beg, forced the Conqueror to release him by threatening that they would burn all of their books and leave Ottoman lands (see, Mecdî, *ibid.*, p. 194). It is impossible to see such reactions in the subsequent centuries.

¹⁵ Ocak, "... Osmanlı Resmî Dinî İdeolojisi...", p. 193.

¹⁶ Although it is well known that our universities lack traditions, due perhaps, I think, to Süheyl Ünver and several other scholars, the claim that today's İstanbul University has its origins in the Fâtiḥ medreses is not correct. Historically it is meaningless to celebrate five hundred so and so years anniversary of the İstanbul University by leaning on such a view. Because there is no connection and continuity between Fâtiḥ medreses and the İstanbul University in terms of teaching method traditions, let alone any organic relationship between them. İstanbul University can only be said to have its origin in the *Dâru'l-fünûn*, a product of the *Tanzimât* period. In this period Fâtiḥ medreses were operating in the *Nekâhat-hâne* (place for convalescence) or guest house within the *Tâb-hâne* (a kind of guest house), one of the annexes of the Fâtiḥ Complex. *Tâb-hâne medrese* survived until the abolition of medreses in 1924. On the other hand, İstanbul University were operating according to the modern educational principles in the same city. The medreses and the universities were moving opposite directions, so to speak.

¹⁷ Taşköprülü-zâde Ahmed İsamü'd-dîn's well-known work; its full name is *es-Şakâ'iku'n-Nu'mâniyye f' Ulemâ'id-Devleti'l-Osmâniyye* (ed. A. Subhi Furat, İstanbul, 1985); for its translation into Ottoman Turkish see, *Hadâ'iku's-Şakâ'ik* (ed. A. Özcan, İstanbul, 1989).

majority of medrese-trained persons came to occupy such administrative offices as magistrateship (*kâdîlik*), district (*sancak*) *müftîlik*, *nakîbü'l-eşrâflık* (the office that supervised the affairs of the descendants of Prophet Mohammed), *şeyhü'l-islâmlık* (the office of the Chief Mufti) and so on¹⁸.

It should be kept in mind that some of those medrese-trained people without any job outside medrese could not achieve it, not because they did not wish to do so but because that died before such an opportunity arose. In fact, many of them died in their forties or fifties.

It can be argued that this tendency of the *'ulemâ* was closely connected with the patrimonial government philosophy and the patronage relations fed by it (this philosophy). On the other hand, despite the absence of a cast-like system in Ottoman society to hinder social mobility, the official Ottoman ideology, which legitimized these relations, prevented the *'ulemâ* from having an extensive public backing. In addition, since the *'ulemâ* was placed in a much better position to benefit from social opportunities, these patronage relations led to a development whereby the social base of the *'ulemâ* was limited to their immediate milieu, and hence the *'ulemâ*, in time, became inward-looking.

When we glance at the information given by Mecdî Mehmed Efendi¹⁹, Nev'î-zâde Atâyî²⁰ and Şeyhî Mehmed Efendi²¹, it appears that until the mid-16th century 46.5 per cent (49 out of 105), from the mid-16th century to the beginnings of the 17th 29.3 per cent (49 out of 167), and in the 17th century 34.1 per cent (221 out of 648) came from humble origins²².

It is possible to make a similar analysis in term of birth-place and upbringing. According to the information extracted from these source, while only 2 person out of 105 cited by Mecdî were born and bred in İstanbul, the number of *'ulemâ* born and bred in İstanbul increased substantially in the second half of the 16th century (72 out of 167, i.e. 43.1 per cent). It appears that this overall pattern remained more or less stable throughout the 17th century, for, according to the information given by Atâyî an Şeyhî, 294 out of 648 scholars who died in this century were born and educated in İstanbul. Thus, it seems that the children of those scholars who gathered in İstanbul in the wake of the conquest filled the overwhelming majority of position in higher educational institutions. Anatolia

¹⁸ For detailed information see, my *Kuruluşundan Günümüze Fâtih Külliyesi* (Ph.D., Institute of Social Sciences of Hacettepe University; forthcoming), Ankara, 1993, pp. 354-360.

¹⁹ For his translated work see, *Hadâ'iku's-Şakâ'ik*, ed. A. Özcan, İstanbul, 1989.

²⁰ For his work see, *Hadâ'iku'l-Hakâ'ik fi Tekmileti's-Şakâ'ik*, ed. A. Özcan, İstanbul 1989.

²¹ For his work see, *Vekâyi'u'l-Fuzalâ*, ed. A. Özcan, İstanbul 1989.

²² For details see, my *Fâtih Külliyesi*, pp. 212-213 and 221.

and Rumelia followed the Capital in supplying educated scholars for the Empire²³.

The desire of the *'ulemâ* to complete their teaching period as soon as possible and to attain an administrative post was so strong that it seemed impossible for them to stay in medrese for a long time. In point of fact, there were financial interests and prestige to stimulate this desire. It appears that salaries of medrese teachers remained more or less at the same level throughout the centuries. For instance, the daily salary of *müderriş* in *Semâniye* medreses (established in 1470) would not exceed 50 aspers (*akçe*), the amount stipulated in the *vakfiye* or foundation document, in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries; this can be seen from the Registers of Accounting and Assignments of the Fâtiḥ Complex (Fâtiḥ Külliyesi Muhâsebe ve Vezâyif Defterleri)²⁴. In the event of the need to increase the salary of a popular scholar, it would be done not through normal channels but by allocating a specified amount from what was called *zevâ'id* (extras or surpluses)²⁵.

It can be argued that the inability of medrese teachers to teach at the same institutions for longer periods prevented particular medreses from coming into prominence, thereby stopping short of a development in which specialization could have been achieved, and a scientific tradition and perception could have formed the bases for our modern university. When we evaluate the statistical information cited above from this point of view, it will be seen that rarely did a *Sahn* teacher stay and teach in this medrese for a 5 and 10 years period. So much so that from the 17th century onwards, this average period seems to have shortened to the extent that, in some cases, it was about a few months or even days. Apparently this method was used as a necessary step to attain a *kâdilîk*. For example, in order to fulfill the formality of attaining a *Sahn* post before one could take up one of a Great *Kâdilîks*, this method was often misused and accepted as a normal procedure called *tahille* (legal avoidance) or *tafra* (a step in promotion)²⁶.

In carrying out all these activities, the success of a *müderriş* was closely connected with his success in what call patronage relations. We often come across the cases of medrese teachers whose fortune changed suddenly by the

²³ For details see, *ibid.*, pp. 214-215 and 222

²⁴ See, *Fâtiḥ Mehmed II Vakfiyeleri*, publication of Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü, Ankara, 1938, p. 263; *Sûret-i Vakfiyye-i Ebu'l-feth*, Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi (Archives of Topkapı Palace), D. 3882; *Defter-i Vezâyif*, Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Prime Ministry Archives), Mâliyeden Müdevver (BOA, MD), Nu. 5305; see also Registers of Accounting (Muhâsebe Defterleri), BOA, MM, Nu. 5973, pp. 67-68, 88, 198, 219, 244, 257, 258; Nu. 6214, p. 6; Nu. 5948, p. 4; Nu. 5019, pp. 5, 48; Nu. 18245, p. 4 and Nu. 21138, p. 3.

²⁵ Gökbilgin, M. Tayyip, *Edirne ve Paşa Livâsı*, İstanbul, 1952, p. 304.

²⁶ For details see, my *Fâtiḥ Külliyesi*, pp. 207-211; see also Uzunçarşılı, *ibid.*, p. 72.

death or dismissal of their patrons; there were also those who complained about holding the same post for years²⁷.

In Ottoman parlance, this sort of "taking refuge", seen in the *'ilmiye* profession, was known as *intisâb* (joining, adhering). Anyone who saw his future in this profession had to find an influential figure under whose moral and sometimes material influence he would complete his education. After that he would expect to find of job through his patron's intercession and feel his support as long as he lived.

It will be sufficient to examine various biographies containing curriculum vitas of Ottoman scholars -and even administrative officials- to see that the panoramic view given above was not a product imagination²⁸.

Given the mission with which Ottoman medreses were entrusted during the foundation and growth periods of the state, i.e. the task of formulating the theory of official Ottoman ideology, it is fruitless to argue why these institution could not attain a high level of sophistication in terms of their scholarly and intellectual activities, or why they were unable to produce the likes of Ibn Sînâ, Fârâbî and Gazzâlî. For, it is pretty obvious that Ottoman medreses and the *'ulemâ* they produced did not have such objectives. Most of them came into prominence by virtue of their ranks in the administrative structure. Thus, the greatness of such scholars as Ibn Kemâl and Ebu's-su'ûd, whose reputation has reached our own time, stemmed from the significance of their posts and the quality of their assignments rather than their scholarly contributions.

An important part of Ibn Kemâl's writings was made up of works aimed at defusing the -unwanted- effects of Shiite-Safevid propaganda which posed a serious threat to the Ottomans. Likewise, Ebu's-su'ûd Efendi acquired his reputation not through his *Tefsîr* (Exegesis of Kur'ân), which was nothing more than a good translation of *Keşşâf*, but through his great achievement in conforming sultanic *qânûn-nâmes* (code of laws, customary laws) with Shari'ah²⁹.

Consequently, the objective of the Ottoman scholar, who did not have any fancy for intellectual activities, was to obtain practical knowledge in handling

²⁷ For various examples, see my *Fâtih Külliyesi*, pp.185-206.

²⁸ For some examples, see, *Şakâ'ıku'n-Nu'âmniye ve Zeyilleri* (ed. A. Özcan), Vol. I-V, İstanbul, 1989.

²⁹ Ebu's-Su'ûd Efendi's exegesis *İrşâdü'l-Akl's-Selîm ilâ Mezâye'l-Kitâbi'l-Kerîm* was written within the tradition of Râzî school which promoted "reason and judgement" (*'akl u re'y*). It is known however that he wrote this work, to a great extent, under the influence of *el-Keşşâf 'an-Hakâ'ıki't-Tenzîl* by Zemahşerî, who was a well-known scholar (of the XIIth century). (For his works and method of *tefsîr* see, A. Aydemir, *Ebussuud Efendi ve Tefsirdeki Metodu*, publ. Diyânet İşleri Başkanlığı, Ankara, undated).

For an Ottoman scholar [Şeyhü'l-İslâm Es'ad Efendi], who was highly praised by Atâyi, see, my "Atâyi'nin Gözüyle Bir Osmanlı Âlimi", *Türk Yurdu*, X/37 (September 1990), pp. 45-50.

state affairs. He was a pragmatist who gave utmost importance to applying his scientific knowledge to social life. Speculative science whose result might have appeared centuries later did not therefore attract him; at least, he would think that he hardly had any time to spare for such sciences. That is why he often spoke of "useful science" (*'ilm-i nâfi'*).

Thus, philosophical sciences which seemed to have revived in Fâtih's time left their place to practical branches as a result of the fact that their fruits could not be obtained in a short while. Clearly, Ottoman administrative mentality played its part in this process. For this reason, the overwhelming majority of Ottoman scholars felt the need to take interest in subjects concerning *fikh* or Islamic Law.