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Representation, Politics, and Economy: Patriarchal Appointments in 17th-Century Ottoman Jerusalem

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Abstract

This article explores patriarchal appointments in 17th-century Ottoman Jerusalem through the interconnected lenses of representation, politics, and economy. As a continuation of the Ottoman state's broader approach to non-Muslim communities, patriarchal representation in Jerusalem held particular significance. Due to the city's sanctity, the Ottoman state utilized Jerusalem as a platform to project its legitimacy. The sultans' claim to universal rule—as both Islamic caliphs and Roman emperors—was expressed symbolically through their role as protectors of holy sites, patrons of Christians, and upholders of Islamic authority. In this context, Jerusalem patriarchs became crucial figures in representing the Ottoman state, Christian communities, and occasionally European powers. The study focuses on the appointment process as a means to understand the patriarchal institution's role within the Ottoman administrative structure. Positioned at the heart of a representation crisis, patriarchs engaged with multiple networks connecting Jerusalem to Istanbul, including ties to the Ottoman central authority, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and influential intermediaries. These appointments, shaped by various political and social factors, were often resolved through imperial strategies aimed at maintaining balance. Since the position required the payment of a pişkeş (tribute), the collection of necessary funds—typically from the community—entailed financial operations. The patriarch's authority was precisely defined through ahidnames, berats, and imperial decrees. The research is based primarily on Jerusalem sharia court registers no. 190 and no. 176 preserved in the Abu Dis Archive,[1] which contain records directly related to the subject and have remained largely unexplored in the existing literature, particularly in Turkish scholarship. In addition, it draws on Istanbul sharia court registers no. 3 and no. 12 housed in the Ottoman Archives (BOA)[2]—almost contemporaneous with the Jerusalem ones—as well as various supplementary archival documents. This study employs a document-based historical method, analyzing archival materials to contribute not only to a better understanding of patriarchal appointments in Jerusalem but also to a broader understanding of the patriarchal institution under Ottoman governance.

Keywords: Palestine, Jerusalem, Ottoman Policies, Non-Muslims, Patriarchates

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[1] Muessesetu İhyâʾ al-Turâth wa'l-Buḥûth al-Islâmiyya [The Institute for the Revival of Islamic Heritage and Research], Palestinian Ministry of Awqaf (Abu Dis Archive).

[2] The Ottoman Archives, Directorate of State Archives, Presidency of the Republic of Turkiye (BOA).

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Temsil, Siyaset ve Ekonomi: 17. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Kudüsü'nde Patrik Atamaları

Özet

Bu makale, 17. yüzyıl Osmanlı Kudüs'ünde patriklik atamalarının "temsil-siyaset-ekonomi" bağlamında değerlendirilmesini amaçlamaktadır. Osmanlı Devleti'nin gayrimüslimlere olan yaklaşımının bir uzantısı olarak patrikler nezdinde temsili Kudüs'te daha bir önem kazanmaktadır. Çünkü Kudüs'ün kutsiyetine binaen Osmanlı Devleti'nin burayı, kendi meşruiyetini gösterecek bir sahne olarak değerlendirme olanağı vardır. Hem Müslüman dünyada hem Hristiyan dünyada halife ve Rum kayzeri olarak evrensel hakimiyet emelinde olan Osmanlı sultanlarının yönetimi, sembolik anlamlar taşımakta olduğundan kutsal mekanların koruyuculuğu, Hristiyanların hamiliği ve İslam'ın üstünlüğü sergilenebilir. Dolayısıyla Kudüs patriklerinin Osmanlı Devleti'nin, Hristiyan cemaatlerin ve kimi zaman Avrupa devletlerinin dini ve idari temsili noktasında önemli bir aktör olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Bu çalışma patrik kurumunun Osmanlı yönetim sistemi içindeki yerini anlamayı kolaylaştıracak bir mekanizma olarak patrik atamalarına odaklanmıştır. Kudüs'ten İstanbul'a uzanan çeşitli ilişki ağları içinde patrikler doğrudan Osmanlı merkeziyle, İstanbul patrikliğiyle ve diğer nüfuzlu bağlantıları ile temsil krizinin ortasında yer almıştır. Çeşitli dinamiklerin etkilediği patrik atamaları Osmanlı Devleti'nin denge sağlamaya yönelik kararları ile bağlama göre sonuçlanmış görünmektedir. Osmanlı yönetimi patrik atamalarını belirli bir pişkeş ödemesi ile gerçekleştirdiğinden bu paranın tedariki ve diğer ödemelerle beraber halktan tahsili konusunda finansal bir faaliyet içinde bulunmak zorundadır. Yetki sınırları ise ahidnameler, beratlar ve fermanlar ile net bir şekilde belirlenmiştir. Araştırma, ağırlıklı olarak Abu Dis Arşivi'nde muhafaza edilen ve konuyla doğrudan ilgili kayıtlar içeren 190 ve 176 numaralı Kudüs şer'iyye sicillerine dayanmaktadır. Bu siciller, mevcut literatürde—özellikle Türkçe akademik çalışmalarda—büyük ölçüde ihmal edilmiş durumdadır. Ayrıca bunlarla neredeyse eş zamanlı olan Osmanlı Arşivi'ndeki (BOA) 3 ve 12 numaralı İstanbul sicilleri ve bir kısım müteferrik evraktan faydalanılmıştır. Bu çalışma, belge temelli tarihsel bir yöntem çerçevesinde arşiv materyallerini analiz ederek hem Kudüs'teki patriklik atamalarının daha iyi anlaşılmasına hem de Osmanlı yönetimi altındaki patriklik kurumunun işleyişinin ortaya konulmasına katkı sunmayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Filistin, Kudüs, Osmanlı Politikaları, Gayrimüslimler, Patrikhaneler.

Introduction

The Ottoman administration maintained its relations with non-Muslim communities through an integrated system combining symbolic representation and administrative control. In this respect, it offered not merely a tool of bureaucratic domination, but a multi-functional governance model defining the representation of various religious groups through legal documents and institutional structures. In these relations, both the administrative regulations extending central authority into the provinces and the symbolic codes and legitimacy constructs embedded within them were decisive.[3] Understanding how religious communities with distinct historical backgrounds and traditions were positioned within the Ottoman order requires analysis beyond the binary of tolerance or oppression, as elements of a more complex system of representation.[4]

[3] Halil İnalcık, "Osmanlı Padişahı," *Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 13, no.4 (1958): 77; See Feridun Emecen, "Osmanlı Toplumunda Birlikte Yaşama Mutabakatı," *Osmanlı Klasik Çağında Hanedan Devlet ve Toplum* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2011), 286-303.

[4] For a critical view of toleration see Hasan Çolak, "The Nature of the Ottoman Toleration," *Groniek Historisch Tijdschrift* (2018): 377-388.

In this context, patriarchal institutions can be understood as structures of spiritual leadership that simultaneously functioned as actors positioned at the crossroads of the state's administrative relations with non-Muslim communities. Especially in a city like Jerusalem, bearing overlapping forms of sacred significance, the function of patriarchal appointments exceeds routine assignments and gains meaning within a framework of representation. Questions such as which patriarch represents Jerusalem, which denomination claims which holy site, and how the Ottoman administration maintained this balance shift the discussion of appointments beyond internal communal affairs toward a broader context concerning the management of religious diversity by the state.

In recent decades, significant developments have emerged in the historiography concerning the position of patriarchates within the Ottoman administration. Studies in this field have enabled scholars to view the patriarchate as a religious institution embedded within a complex structure that encompasses representation, law, and economy. Halil İnalcık's works on the reestablishment of the Greek Patriarchate in Istanbul during the reign of Mehmed II remain key references for understanding early examples of the Ottoman state's representative relationship with non-Muslim communities.[5] Researchers such as Yavuz Ercan and Oded Peri have contributed to the subject, particularly regarding the Christians of Jerusalem. Yavuz Ercan's study on patriarchal appointment berats is significant for assessing the position of the Jerusalem Patriarchate. Oded Peri, through a diverse range of sources, has presented a multi-dimensional account of the ongoing sectarian competition over the sites in Jerusalem.[6] Additionally, Eugenia Kermeli has provided valuable background on inter-communal relations, while Hasan Çolak, with his comprehensive work on representation mechanisms and the relationship between the Greek patriarchates and the Ottoman State, has filled a major gap and challenged many assumptions with documentary evidence.[7]

Steven Runciman's work[8] holds a significant place in the literature concerning debates on the conceptualization of the "Millet System" used to explain the status of non-Muslims in the Ottoman State. The study appears to have inspired many scholars, as numerous works have followed a similar perspective. In contrast, the volume edited by Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis adopts a critical stance, particularly highlighting the risks of projecting

5 Halil İnalcık, "The Status of Greek Othodox Patriarch Under the Ottomans," *Turcica* 23, (1991): 407-436; Halil İnalcık, "Ottoman Archival Materials on Millets," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, vol. 1, eds. Benjamin Braude, Bernard Lewis (New York, London: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1982), 437-449.

6 Yavuz Ercan, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Gayrimüslimler: Kuruluştan Tanzimat'a Kadar Sosyal, Ekonomik ve Hukuki Durumları* (Ankara: Turhan Kitabevi, 2001); Yavuz Ercan, *Kudüs Ermeni Patrikhanesi* (Ankara: TTK Yayınevi, 1988); Peri, *Christianity Under Islam in Jerusalem: The Question of the Holy Sites in Early Ottoman Times* (Boston, Köln, Leiden: Brill, 2001).

7 Hasan Çolak, *The Orthodox Church in the Early Modern Middle East: Relations between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Patriarchates of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınevi, 2015); Eugenia Kermeli, "The Right to Choice: Ottoman, Ecclesiastical and Communal Justice in Ottoman Greece," *The Ottoman World,* ed. Christine Woodhead (London: Routledge, 2011), 347-362. Eugenia Kermeli Ünal, "Ebu's Su`ud's Definitions on Church Vakfs: Theory and Practice in Ottoman Law," *Islamic Law Theory and Practice*, eds. R. Gleave, E. Kermeli, (London: I. B. Tauris,1997), 141-157.

8 Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Peri, *Christianity*.

the concept of this system retrospectively onto periods before the nineteenth century.[9] Macit Kenanoğlu's contribution to this debate through the lens of Islamic-Ottoman law invites a reconsideration of the conceptualization by addressing both legal statuses and practical implementations.[10]

Among the studies on the position of Armenian churches and patriarchates within the Ottoman order, works by scholars such as Avedis K. Sanjian, Sebouh Aslanian, Henry Shapiro, and Ara Sanjian have drawn attention. From Turkey, Ensar Köse's archive-based research is notable for its focus on local practices through the analysis of archival documents.[11]

In studies on Jerusalem's specific administrative processes and its social and economic structure, works by scholars such as Amnon Cohen and Dror Ze'evi hold a central place.[12]

Meanwhile, a new generation of researchers—including Yasemin Avcı, Ömür Yazıcı Özdemir, Hasan Hüseyin Güneş, Alaattin Dolu, Mustafa Öksüz and Abdullah Çakmak—have deepened this literature by employing Ottoman archival sources within a broader analytical framework.[13]

As the main theme of the article is patriarchal appointments, berats are undoubtedly valuable for understanding the official dimensions of the patriarchate.[14] Yet, beyond their diplomatic formulas and stated content, the context of their circulation in the provinces, related disputes, and their treatment in the imperial council are equally significant. In this regard, the şer'iyye registers—which include documents like ilams, hüccets, estate records,

9 Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, "Introduction," In *Christians and Jews in The Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society I*. 1-34. eds. Benjamin Braude, Bernard Lewis, (Holmes and Meier Publishers, New York, London 1982); Benjamin Braude, "Foundation Myths of the Millet System," in *Christians and Jews in The Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society,* vol. 1, eds. B. Braude, B. Lewis (New York, London: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1982), 69-88.

10 Macit Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi: Mit ve Gerçek* (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2004).

11 Avedis K. Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria under Ottoman Dominion*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965); Sebouh David Aslanian, *Early Modernity and Mobility, Port Cities and the Printer Across the Armenian Diaspora (1512-1800)* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2023); Sebouh David Aslanian, "The Circulation of Men and Credit: The Role of the Commenda and the Family Firm in Julfan Society," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50, no.2-3 (2007): 124-171; Henry R. Shapiro, *The Rise of the Western Armenian Diaspora in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire From Refugee Crisis to Renaissance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022); Ara Sanjian, "The Armenian Church and Community of Jerusalem," in *Communities of Jerusalem and Holy Sites Studies in History, Religion and Politics*, ed. Antony O'Mahoni, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 64-65; Ensar Köse, "Bir Hayalin Peşinde Yüz Yıl Kudüs ve Ermeni Patrikliğini Birleştirme Çabaları (1650-1750)," *Tarih Dergisi* 63, no.1 (2016): 41-88; Ensar Köse, "İstanbul Ermeni Patrikliği'nin Osmanlı Hükümeti'yle Münasebetlerine Tesir Eden Dinamikler (18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısı)," *Osmanlı Medeniyeti Araştırmaları Dergisi* 13, no.5 (2017): 1-24.

12 Amnon Cohen, *Palestine in the 18th Century, Patterns of Government and Administration,* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1973); Dror Ze'evi, *An Ottoman Century, The District of Jerusalem in the 1600s* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996).

13 Yasemin Avcı and Ömür Yazıcı Özdemir, "Kudüs Kamame Kilisesi: Hıristiyanlığın Merkezinde Osmanlı Mirası ve Statüko Meselesi," *Cumhuriyet Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 15, no.29 (2019): 35-58; Hasan Hüseyin Güneş, *Kudüs Meğaribe Mahallesi* (Ankara: Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü Yayınları, 2017); Hasan Hüseyin Güneş, *Bir Taşra Şehrinden İnsan Manzaraları: Osmanlı Kudüsü'nde Vakıflar ve İnsanlar* (İstanbul: Ketebe Yayınları, 2020); Alaattin Dolu, *Osmanlı Kudüs'ü Kent Kimliği Nüfuz ve Meşruiyet (1703-1789)* (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2020); Mustafa Öksüz, *Şam Eyaleti'nin Güney Sancaklarında (Filistin) Nüfus XVI. Yy*. (Ankara: Sonçağ Akademi Yayınları, 2023); Abdullah Çakmak, *19. Yüzyılın Başlarında Kudüs* (İstanbul: İlem Yayınları, 2020).

14 For a thorough analysis of these documents, see Çolak, *Church;* Ercan, *Kudüs.*

and copies of imperial orders—offer rich material reflecting both central commands and local tensions, though their potential remains underexplored.[15]

This article aims to reveal the scope of authority and activities of the Jerusalem patriarchs as reflected in court records, offering insight into the nature of non-Muslim representation in the Ottoman Empire. The powers granted by patriarchal berats—ranging in the 17th-century from waqf ownership and legal representation to marriage, inheritance, and donation networks—help illuminate both the Ottoman stance and the patriarch's influence across administrative, symbolic, and intercommunal domains. These appointments also provide a view to examine how central authority operated in the provinces and how Christian communities shaped internal hierarchies.

1. The Sanctity of Jerusalem: A Ground for Representation and Legitimacy

In the Christian imagination, Jerusalem represents the geographical embodiment of a sacred narrative unfolding from Adam to the Apocalypse, rather than a city confined to history. As the place where Jesus was born, preached, crucified, and is believed to rise again, the city bears a sanctity shaped by both doctrine and memory. Over time, however, this sanctity extended beyond spiritual meanings, becoming an arena of the political claims, sectarian rivalries, and struggles over representation.[16] Questions such as "on whose behalf does Jerusalem speak," "whom does it represent," and "under what authority is it protected" have long defined the framework of both internal communal tensions and interdenominational competition.[17]

Orthodox Greek patriarchs under Ottoman rule used symbolic repertoires to keep the Byzantine legacy alive and build identity through it. According to Greek jurist Pentazopoulos, these patriarchs often called themselves "leaders of the noble Greek race" in church documents, adopted titles like "Afentis" and "Despotis" from Byzantine emperors, and used the double-headed eagle emblem. These choices reflect their attempt to symbolically sustain the Byzantine political ideal.[18] Thus, considering the patriarchate as a space of symbolic and ideological continuity, their sense of ownership over Jerusalem gains meaning in the context of patriarchal struggles and appointments.[19]

As seen, becoming a patriarch in Jerusalem meant being a representative, administrator, and supervisor. Duties such as managing waqf revenues, organizing donation networks, protecting holy sites, and defending community rights gave this office recognized institutional authority. Over time, preserving memory and claiming space turned into a field of sectarian competition. In a city like Jerusalem, shaped by pilgrimage donations and waqf income, access to material resources supported legitimacy, and vice versa.

15 For detailed information on sijils see: Yunus Uğur, "Şer'iyye Sicilleri," *DİA*, 39, (İstanbul 2010), 9; Also, for the nature of the Jerusalem sharia court records, see: Güneş, *Meğaribe,* 29-34.

16 Rober Louis Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian Histology* and *Thought* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1992), 63; Joan E. Taylor, *Christians and Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins* (New York: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press, 1993), 15.

17 Peri, *Christianity.*

18 Halil İnalcık, "Patriarch," 408.

19 According to Peri, the Ottomans organized the Church in a way reminiscent of the early Byzantine "Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre," viewing it as a strategic maneuver against Catholic Europe (Peri, *Christianity*, 100).

Competing candidates and supporting church bodies may have acted with strategic aims that included both symbolic prestige and economic power. Recognition by the Ottomans also meant legal and financial protection. Thus, patriarchal appointments were multi-dimensional processes shaped at the intersection of religious, political, economic, and ideological legitimacy.[20] Daily life in Jerusalem and its surroundings was shaped by interwoven networks involving the Ottoman central authority, provincial elites, diverse local populations, protectors, sympathizers, servants, and visitors from around the world, all embedded in religion, politics, and economy. Examining Ottoman patriarchal appointments in this context may offer insights into this complex landscape. The patriarch in Jerusalem was likely regarded as both a representative of his community and an administrative figure responsive to central expectations.[21]

The Ottoman sultans' claims of guardianship over Islamic holy cities like Mecca and Medina, especially their emphasis on protecting pilgrimage routes, combined with the title of "Caliph," became a basis not only for authority over Muslims but also for their role as protectors of non-Muslim subjects.[22] As part of a rivalry with the Mamluk legacy and a strategy to legitimize symbolic leadership in the Islamic world, Jerusalem may have functioned within this symbolic framework.[23]

On the other hand, the Ottoman sultans' self-ascribed role as "Roman Emperor" required them to act as protectors of Christians, making the governance and protection of Christian pilgrimage sites highly significant. This should not be seen merely as a duty or favor toward Christian subjects under Ottoman protection, but as part of a competitive arena where their claim to universal representation was made visible.[24]

[20] İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, states that those appointed to the post of Jerusalem kadı (judge) within the Ottoman scholarly and administrative hierarchy were selected from among the high-ranking ulema of "mevleviyet" status, which reflects the region's symbolic as well as administrative significance (İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin İlmiye Teşkilatı (*Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1988), 101; Gibb and Bowen also mention Jerusalem among the "mahrec kadılıks"—a subcategory of the most important administrative centers—based on references found in the kanunnames (H.A.R. Gibb, Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West,* vol 1 (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1962), 89. Also see Peri, *Christianity*, 74. Therefore, Jerusalem was an important administrative district, and the appointments of its officials held significance in this regard.

[21] Peri, *Christianity*, 38-64.

[22] Halil İnalcık, "Osmanlı Sultanlarının Unvanları (Titülatür) ve Egemenlik Kavramı," *Doğu Batı Makaleler,* vol. 2 (İstanbul: Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2008), 190-192. Hess argues that Selim I's victory over the Mamluks and his conquest of the Holy Lands contributed to the expansion of Ottoman control over the dhimmi populations (Andrew C. Hess, "The Ottoman Conquest of Egypt (1517) and the Beginning of the Sixteenth-Century World War," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4, no.1 (January 1973): 70).

[23] The privileges granted to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Church of the Nativity were not unique to Ottoman rule; earlier Muslim states also tolerated these churches through symbolic acts that emphasized the Islamic significance of the region and asserted their control over Christian holy sites. For example, the Umayyads constructed the Dome of the Rock as a counter-monument to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. (Shelomo Dov Goitein, "The Historical Background of the Erection of the Dome of the Rock," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 70, no.2 (1950): 104-108). The Ottomans, too, were fully aware that this city was Islam's third holiest site. Like their predecessors, they protected the Christian sanctuaries there as a way to symbolize the supremacy of Islam and its status as the true religion. At the same time, a more pragmatic and worldly motivation may have been to avoid provoking hostility from Christians both within and outside the empire (Peri, *Christianity*, 45, 51,73-74).

[24] As the ruler and legitimate heir of the Second Rome, Mehmed II was referred to as "Caesar" and "Basileus" in Latin and Byzantine sources, and Ottoman sources likewise adopted the title "Roman Emperor" for him.

Managing patriarchs may have brought not only symbolic but also practical benefits. The beginning of the period known as the "World War of the Sixteenth Century," marked by the Habsburg-Ottoman rivalry, coincided with the 1517 fall of the Mamluk state. This was also a time when Eastern churches came under Ottoman rule, just before major political upheavals.[25]

The reflections of this representation can also be traced in the Ottoman image shaped in early modern Europe. In the Slavic fictional texts analyzed by M.D. Kagan, titled "Legendarnyy Tsikl Gramot Turetskogo Sultana k Evropeyskim Gosudaryam," the Ottoman sultan presents himself as "Protector of the Holy Sepulchre" and appears as a challenger to Christian kings.[26] Though not historical accounts, these texts are propagandistic works of 17th-century political literature, indicating that the Ottoman Empire claimed a representational role in Jerusalem within the Christian imagination, even if seen as a usurper of sanctity.[27]

In conclusion, the patriarchal office in Jerusalem functioned as part of a composite representational framework in both the Muslim and Christian worlds. The Ottoman administration regarded this office not merely as a spiritual position but as a strategic institutional element within the functioning of a multi-religious order. Meanwhile, the patriarchs' strategies to generate legitimacy within their own communities extended beyond the religious sphere, shaped by historical and symbolic elements.

2. The Institutional Origins of Patriarchal Representation in the Ottoman Empire and the Initial Contacts with the Greek Patriarchate of Jerusalem

It has been widely shown that the Ottoman conquest policy was not limited to territorial expansion but deepened through strategies of institutional construction and representation. Relations with non-Muslims occurred in various phases. In the early "istimalet" (conciliation) phase, the aim was to gain public support, integrate local military and religious elites into the system, and preserve existing social structures. According to Albanian tax registers, the Ottomans had already initiated contact with the Orthodox Church before the conquest of Constantinople, granting timars to metropolitans and incorporating them into the ruling class. Studies based on Byzantine sources also reveal Mount Athos's relations with Ottoman officials. The Ottomans, through metropolitans within their domains, established ties with churches beyond their borders.[28] These were "emanname"-type documents, containing general assurances that Christians would not be harmed and advising the return of those who had fled, and were later renewed.[29]

The oldest document given by Mehmed II to non-Muslim clergy is known as the Metropolit Canon Law. It grants exemptions from customary taxes, rights over church-owned lands,

See: Feridun Emecen, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Kuruluş ve Yükseliş Tarihi (1300-1600)* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2015), 143-144.

25 Hess, *Egypt*: 74-75; Çolak, *Church*, 55.

26 M.D. Kagan, "Legendarnyy Tsikl Gramot Turetskogo Sultana k Evropeyskim Gosudaryam," in *Trudy Otdela Drevnerusskoy Literatury*, 225–250, ed. D.S. Likhachev (Moskva-Leningrad: Tom XV, 1958).

27 Ivan A. Polyakov, "Azbuka Fryaskaya" Knyazya s. v. Romodanovskogo i novye spiski Gramot iz tsikla "legendarnoy perepiski turetskogo sultana" *Drevnyaya Rus': Voprosy medievistiki* 1, no. 71 (2018): 89–99.

28 İnalcık, "Patriarch," 409-410.

29 Kenanoğlu, *Millet*, 90.

the obligation to pay pişkeş upon appointment, authority over clergy and Christians in their domain, and freedom of worship.[30]

Another document is the Istanbul patriarchal berat. It states that the patriarch would pay pişkeş for appointment, serve for life, and have authority over many regions in Anatolia and the Balkans. He was empowered to appoint and dismiss clergy, manage administrative affairs, and could be removed by the clergy if rituals were not properly performed. Church endowments would continue, and the patriarch would manage their income. Estates of clergy up to 5,000 akça belonged to the church; the rest to the treasury. He had authority in marriage, divorce, and inheritance within the community, and held tax collection rights. Forced conversions and interference were prohibited. However, as later berats—such as those to Bosnian clergy—did not grant full authority in issues like inheritance, the authenticity of this document is questioned.[31]

Following the conquest of Istanbul, the ahidname granted to the Galata community stands out among agreements with non-Muslims. The Genoese, long settled in Byzantium with trade privileges, had signed an agreement in Edirne in exchange for neutrality and were later granted an ahidname after the conquest. Mehmed II sought to transform Istanbul into a vibrant commercial center.[32] The Galata ahidname was not a bilateral treaty but a unilateral declaration reflecting the Ottoman approach toward non-Muslims. It illustrates how the state categorized them under different legal statutes—"müstemens" as temporary residents by permission, and "dhimmis" as permanent subjects. The document is also key to understanding the incorporation of a non-Muslim region into the Ottoman system. Within his imperial vision, Mehmed II prioritized this integration by bringing together Orthodox, Greek, Armenian, and Jewish leaders in Istanbul and assigning each an official role and administrative authority. Yet, debates persist over whether patriarchal appointments and authorizations were issued through berats or verbal mandates.[33]

Following the conquest of Istanbul, many speculations arose regarding the privileges granted to Christians by the sultan. These include claims about Mehmed II's inclination toward Christianity, his authorization of patriarchs, and whether the city was taken "sulhen or anveten," which would shape relations with non-Muslims. However, suggesting that a sultan aiming to represent Islam institutionalized privileges in favor of Christians due to personal religious leanings is not a sound interpretation. This issue is better understood within the political context of the 17th-century.[34]

Ultimately, beyond these narratives, the formal regulations shaping relations with non-Muslims help illuminate how the governance model established in Istanbul was applied in Jerusalem and how the patriarchal institution functioned both locally and across the empire. The early contact between Mehmed II and Jerusalem Patriarch Athanasios IV is considered a reflection of this comprehensive approach. According to Greek sources, Athanasios secretly visited Istanbul in 1458 to congratulate the conquest, carrying with him

30 Kenanoğlu, *Millet,* 85.
31 Kenanoğlu, *Millet,* 87.
32 İnalcık, "Patriarch," 212.
33 Kenanoğlu, *Millet,* 78-83; İnalcık, "Patriarch," 412-416.
34 Kenanoğlu, *Millet*, 76.

the ahidnames of the Prophet Muhammad and Caliph Umar.[35] In this meeting, he requested permission to collect alms from Ottoman lands on behalf of Jerusalem and asked for travel freedom for the monks.[36] According to Church Register No. 8, references were made not only to the permissions granted by the Prophet Muhammad and Caliph Umar but also to firmans issued by former sultans. They requested continued control over their long-held churches and worship sites, authority over waqfs, and tax exemption for the patriarchs and affiliated clergy. In response, Mehmed II pledged protection for the Jerusalem patriarchate and its clergy regarding these matters.[37] Hattox views this recognition and the issued firman not merely as a symbolic gesture of tolerance but as a strategic move by the Ottomans to assert representation and authority in a region not yet under direct control. He argues that the patriarchate's properties in Jerusalem, its rights over holy sites, and their waqf status involved both material interests and institutional legitimacy. The firman issued by Mehmed II, resembling an ahidname, ordered the protection of these properties and waqfs, possibly implying a critique of Mamluk neglect. However, according to Çolak, since Mamluk sources do not mention this meeting, it may instead reflect a customary act, as patriarchs likely continued to renew their berats from the Mamluk sultans until the end of that state.[38]

The legal status of Christians came to be directly defined by the Ottoman central authority following Yavuz Sultan Selim's annexation of Jerusalem. His initial entry into the city and his approach to non-Muslims there held symbolic value, reflecting the Ottoman stance toward non-Muslims. His visit aimed to show that he would personally protect the holy sites and fulfill the imperial ideal. The Armenian Patriarch Sarkis III and Greek Patriarch Attalia, along with their communities, went to greet the sultan, who had set camp outside the city. The visit appeared inclusive enough to support claims by various religious groups that they had received privileges from the sultan. That it coincided with the Christian New Year was seen as meaningful, and some even claimed he attended Christian ceremonies in disguise.[39]

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35 For references suggesting that these documents were later letters sent by local Christian clerics outlining their commitments to the sovereign, see: Mustafa Fayda, *Hz. Ömer Zamanında Gayrimüslimler* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1989), 177-181. The document preserved in the Ottoman archives is a copy of the emanname granted by Caliph ʿUmar to Patriarch Sophronios of Jerusalem in 637. The text guarantees the safety of Christian religious leaders, places of worship, and pilgrimage sites; it protects their lives, property, and freedom of worship; and it affirms that no obligations beyond the "jizya" would be imposed. Furthermore, it declares that Muslims must uphold this covenant, which was issued in the presence of the Prophet's companions and proclaimed to remain valid until the end of time. [A{DVN.KLS.d.8, 5; *Administration of Christian Denominations and Communities of Jerusalem Critical Edition of Defters of Church of Holy Sepulchre*, ed. Numan Yekeler, Yılmaz Karaca (Istanbul: Presidency of the Republic of Turkiye Directorate of State Archives Publications, 2019), 58-59].

36 Saul P. Colbi, *Christian Presence in the Holy Land* (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1988), 79; Kenanoğlu, *Millet*, 89.

37 A{DVN.KLS.d.8, 6; *Administration of Christian Denominations and Communities of Jerusalem Critical Edition of Defters of Church of Holy Sepulchre*, 60-61; Ralph S. Hattox, "Mehmed the Conqueror, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Mamluk Authority," *Studia Islamica* 90 (2000): 105-123.

38 Çolak, *Church*, 54.

39 Ercan, "Kudüs," 12-14; Feridun Emecen, "The Early Period of Ottoman Rule in Jerusalem," in *Proceedings of the International Congress on al-Quds during the Ottoman Era Damascus 22-25 June 2009* (İstanbul: IRCICA, 2012), 28-29. For further discussion on the Christian perception of the sultan as a "messiah" figure—one who sees

3. Dynamics of Patriarchal Appointments: Networks from Jerusalem to the Capital in the Shadow of a Representation Crisis

The patriarchal office in Jerusalem extended far beyond representing a sacred geography. At times, it received imperial decrees from the capital, served as the address for petitions at the sultan's court, or even as the patriarch's residence. Court records tracing the dynamics and procedures of patriarchal appointments also confirm the existence of dense and complex networks between Jerusalem and Istanbul. Holding the office required not only the synod's approval, but perhaps the tears of a palace favorite, support from a few viziers, and, when needed, the backing of a moneylender's ledger. Representation had become not just the clergy's domain, but a matter of networks.

The recommendation of the sitting patriarch can be given as an initial example of the role of networks in patriarchal appointments. In the hatt-ı sherif stating that Dositheos II Notaras (1660–1669) was appointed as Greek Patriarch, this is expressed as follows:

Ott. tr.: "Kudüs ve tevabi Rum taifesinin üzerine berat-ı alişan ile mutasarrıf olan Nectarios nam rahib dersaadete arz-ı hal idüp pir u a'mel-mande ve düyûn-ı kesiresi olmakla hüsn-i ihtiyar ile patrikliğin kendi tevabi'lerinden Dosithecos nam rahibin mahal ve müstehak olmağla tevcih olunup berat-ı alişan verilmek rica eylemeğin avatıf-ı pişkeş içün 1079 recebinin 6. gününde hazine-yi amireye vereceği nakid dokuz bin dokuz akça teslim eylemeğin rahib-i mezbure berat virdüm ve buyurdum ki mezbur Dosithecos nam rahip varub ref' olan Nectarios nam rahib yerine Kudüs ve tevabinde vaki Rum keferesine kadimde olagelen adet ve kanun ve üslub-ı sabık ve ayinlerin mucebince patrik olup…"[40]

This copy of the berat is significant as it shows that, alongside "reference," the criterion of "merit" was also considered in the appointment. Just as old age and lack of physical strength were cited as reasons for dismissal, it may be inferred that being young enough and physically capable to handle the demanding life of the patriarchate were expected conditions. To this must be added sufficient financial means to afford the "pişkeş" payment.

Pişkeş was one of the key dynamics in patriarchal appointments. Patriarchs were appointed for life through a berat issued by the sultan. Unless a new sultan came to power, renewal of the berat was not required. Only the Greek and Armenian Patriarchs of Istanbul paid 140,000 kuruş annually in four installments to receive a renewed firman each year, allowing them to collect lump-sum taxes within their jurisdiction.[41]

Pişkeş functioned not only as a financial obligation but also as an essential part of legitimacy and hierarchical protocol, similar to high-level appointments in the civil and military bureaucracy. As a prestigious post, the patriarchate required a substantial pişkeş.[42] Within Ottoman protocol, the average 20,000 kuruş pişkeş paid by Greek Orthodox

saints with the eye of the heart, revives monasteries, and elevates prominent monks—see: Emecen, *İskender*, 359.

40 KŞS-190, 495/a2, 495/b, 496/a1

41 Canan Seyfeli, *İstanbul Ermeni Patrikliği* (Ankara: Aziz Andaç Yayınları, 2005), 86; Köse, "Dinamikler," 4.

42 İnalcık, "Materials," 447. For further information see: Ahmet Nezihi Turan, "Bir Pîşkeş Defteri İçin," *Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi (OTAM)*, no.13 (2003): 59-74; Fatma Ünyay Açıkgöz, "XVII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Devleti'nde Pişkeş Geleneği, Amaç ve İşlevleri," *Turkish Studies* 13, no.24 (2018): 287-300.

patriarchs was treated like official fees referred to as resm-i berat. In return, robes, horses, swords, gilded saddles, and furs were granted, indicating that pişkeş also symbolized both partial reciprocity and the authority delegated by the sultan.[43]

According to Kenanoğlu, the payment of pişkeş defines the legal nature of the patriarchate as a spiritual tax-farming system. Based on İnalcık's views on the link between the patriarchate and tax farming, he argues that patriarchs, being required to pay pişkeş to collect taxes, should be considered "mültezim."[44] Köse, however, finds it inaccurate to reduce the patriarch to a religious tax-farmer, emphasizing that their status and authority extended well beyond tax collection.[45] Similarly, Çolak criticizes this reductionist view, highlighting the patriarch's roles in spiritual and legal representation between the Ottoman state and non-Muslim communities. He also regards Runciman's reference to Ahmed Cevdet Paşa in defining the patriarch's position as anachronistic.[46]

Regardless of theories framing pişkeş as an indicator of institutional identity, it is clear that in the 17th-century, pişkeş became a central practice in Jerusalem's patriarchal competition. Records frequently show that one could not become patriarch without paying it; some were denied appointment[47] or kept under house arrest until payment;[48] churches and communities faced impoverishment due to pişkeş, and church properties were pawned or sold to cover the cost. It has been argued that the frequent appointments and dismissals of patriarchs in this period stemmed not only from internal communal rivalries but also from pişkeş offers made to the Ottoman central authority.[49] Still, the frequent replacement of patriarchs to extract higher pişkeş payments was actually against the wishes of the Ottoman administration, as appointing a new patriarch before the previous one had settled his debt caused confusion and financial loss for the treasury. Replacing pişkeş with a "meat tax" (rüsum-ı kassabiyye or imdadiyye) would further complicate matters and result in state revenue loss.[50] Some interpretations suggest that certain high-ranking Ottoman bureaucrats held specific prejudices or antipathy toward the Armenian community, which may have influenced such appointment decisions.[51]

The Jerusalem and Istanbul court records show that during the efforts of Patriarch Eghiazar[52]—a key figure in 17th-century Armenian church history—to unify and

43 İnalcık, "Materials," 447.

44 Kenanoğlu, *Millet,* 60,84; Macit Kenanoğlu, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Gayrimüslim Teb'anın İdaresinde Kullandığı Bir Yöntem Olarak 'Ruhani İltizam' Sistemi'", *Divan* 14, no.1 (2003): 67-84.

45 Köse, "Dinamikler," 15.

46 Çolak, *Church,* 18-20.

47 When Kyrillos I was first elected as patriarch in 1612, his appointment was not confirmed by the Ottoman authorities due to his inability to pay the pişkeş However, with financial support from the English and Dutch ambassadors, he was able to pay the required sum and assume the patriarchate during his second term (intermittently between 1620 and 1638. İnci, "Fener," 37.

48 İnci, "Fener," 31.

49 Sanjian, A. K, "Communities," 108-109.

50 Elif Bayraktar Tellal, *The Patriarch and the Sultan: the Struggle for Authority and the Quest for Order in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire* (PhD diss., Bilkent University, 2011), 165.

51 Aslan, *Armenia:* 110-111; Sanjian, A.K, "Communities," 114-119.

52 From the second half of the 17th-century onward, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem played an active role in the power struggle between the churches of Istanbul and Etchmiatzin. Bishop Eghiazar (Yeghiazar of Ayntab; 1649, 1666–68, 1670–77) and his efforts to seize the Istanbul patriarchate are evidence of this involvement. While these efforts were viewed negatively in terms of weakening the overall power of the

reorganize the church under Istanbul, the issue of pişkeş arose repeatedly. Martiros[53] states that Eghiazar was appointed catholicos by offering 15,000 akça as pişkeş after obtaining the right to distribute Belasan oil, a sacred anointing oil used in Armenian rites. This, he claims, cut off a vital income source for the 500–600 poor Armenians in Jerusalem who lived on alms and donations. Martiros himself became patriarch by offering 11,900 akça in pişkeş to replace Eghiazar.[54] Martiros, who had earlier criticized Eghiazar for paying pişkeş, eventually faced dismissal under the same circumstances. After his petition revealed that the dismissal was without cause, he was reappointed as patriarch in place of a monk named Ovanes, paying 11,900 akça as pişkeş.[55] This example shows that even if the same person is reappointed to the same office, they are still required to pay the pişkeş.

Paying the pişkeş was not always easy. Patriarchs sometimes had to use church property to cover the cost. When Martiros was appointed, he sent a man to Istanbul reporting that former patriarch Eghiazar had taken "various items, cash, liturgical books, crosses, golden chalices, jeweled crowns, priestly vessels, and other copper objects" from the treasury of the Mar-Yakub Church, and had committed excess and corruption. He requested the matter be recorded and reported to the center. While this petition may have aimed to discredit his rival, it also appears to be a way of avoiding blame for damage to the church. It also reflects the Ottoman state's role as overseer and protector of the church's assets and financial stability. Contrary to claims that the state ignored church losses for the sake of collecting pişkeş, it is seen that officials in Jerusalem were ordered to inspect the situation and report it to Istanbul without awaiting further instruction.[56]

At times, a patriarchal candidate would use sectarian rivalries to secure election. Demonstrating the ability to combat opposing ideologies and citing past actions as proof appears to have been effective. Catholicos Avedik I, the highest figure in the Armenian Church, submitted a petition stating that, due to his struggle against Catholicism in Erzurum, the Armenian community now wished him to lead the same struggle in Istanbul as patriarch. As a result, he secured the patriarchal seat in 1702. Though his title "Patrik-i Ermeniyân-ı İstanbul hâlâ Kuds-i Şerif" suggests a personal unification of the two offices, claiming this was an institutional merger—or a strategy solely aimed at opposing

Armenian Church, they were also seen as positive in enhancing the influence of the Jerusalem Patriarchate within the Armenian ecclesiastical hierarchy. As its prominence increased, Armenian claims over holy sites also intensified, reaching their peak during Eghiazar's tenure (Peri, *Christianity*, 104). Eghiazar is occasionally described in Armenian sources as an ambitious yet beneficial figure for the community (Malachia Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia*, Burbank, California: The Western Diocese of Armenian Church of North America, 2007, 82).

53 Martiros Ghrimetsi (Martiros of Crimea) was an Armenian cleric who served as Bishop of Istanbul from 1659 to 1660 and as Patriarch of Jerusalem in two separate terms (1677–1680 and 1681–1683). He authored a historical work on the Armenians of Crimea and wrote various satirical poems. See: Krikor Maksoudian, "Armenian Communities in Eastern Europe," *The Armenian People From Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 2, eds. Richard G. Hovannisian (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997), 58.

54 İŞS-3, 129/b1 (1 Şaban 1077/18 Ocak 1667); *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Bab Mahkemesi 3 Numaralı Sicil (H.1077/M.1666-1667)*, vol. 17 (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi (İSAM) Yayınları, 2011), 827; Ensar Köse, "Şah, Çar ve Sultan Arasında: Ermeni Kutsal Makamı Eçmiyadzin'in Çalkantılı Yılları (1700-1725)," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Türkiyat Mecmuası* 34, no.1, (2024): 69-70.

55 BOA, İbnul Emin Maliye (İE.ML). 25, 2446 (5 Şevval 1091/29 October 1680).

56 KŞS-190, 490/b3,491/a1. (Evail-i Receb 1079/26 Kasım-6 Aralık 1668)

Catholicism—would be difficult to support.[57] Some Jerusalem patriarchs were also praised for their struggle against Catholics. For instance, Catholicos Hakob III of Etchmiatzin came to Istanbul despite his old age during a time of crisis, when Catholic missionaries were gaining influence over Armenians. He sought ways to counter the propaganda of Polish Patriarch Nicholas Torosowicz (1605–1681), who had forced Catholicism upon Polish Armenians.[58] While such examples may suggest that opposition to Catholicism was valued in patriarchal selections, it is more accurate to say that anti-Catholic positions in the capital—including in patriarchal appointments—varied with the political context and were shaped by inter-state relations.[59] The opposite dynamic should also be considered: did being pro-Catholic truly disadvantage a candidate in patriarchal appointments? The answer likely depended on one's supporters. For example, Thomas (Tovma), the first Jerusalem Armenian Patriarch educated in Europe, was appointed with European backing (1684–1705), yet he was ultimately rejected by the community and executed.[60]

Support from other power holders, even if not cross-border, was also significant. For the Greek Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the backing of Wallachia and Moldavia played a key role. Voivodes and local churches, who regularly provided financial and technical assistance, supported their own candidates and paid the required pişkeş. Some modern researchers argue that one reason for the patriarch's residence in Istanbul was to benefit more directly from Wallachian and Moldavian support.[61]

Among the Christian elites who offered support, the influential women of the imperial harem should also be noted. Dionysios, appointed as the Greek Patriarch by Mehmed II, was the godfather of Lady Mara, the wife of Murad II. She both paid his gift and pleaded with the sultan for his appointment.[62] Such forms of support might well have existed in the 17th-century as well.

Beyond examples demonstrating that patriarchs sought support through elite networks, are there cases showing that gaining the backing of the local community also strengthened their position? A candidate who informed the administration about a current patriarch's mismanagement—such as harming church property, damaging waqf assets, violating liturgical norms, and provoking communal hatred—would not only present himself as an ideal patriarch but also as a representative capable of addressing the religious, social, and

57 Ensar Köse, "Dinamikler," 3-4, 12-13.

58 Sanjian, A.K, "Communities," 114-119.

59 From the second half of the 16th-century, and within less than a century, the Franciscans intermittently gained and lost privileges over the holy sites in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. These shifts must be understood in conjunction with the political and military conflicts involving Catholic powers of Europe. For instance, the 1651 decree forbidding the Franciscans from conducting their rites—allegedly in response to complaints from both Muslim authorities and the ever-present Orthodox patriarchs—was, in reality, a reaction to threats posed by the Venetian navy near Istanbul and Çanakkale. Spain also played a significant role, particularly through the "Obra Pia" fund, active since 1498, which provided financial aid for the maintenance of Christian shrines (Colbi, *Christian*, 83). This example concerning the Catholic churches' rights and privileges over holy sites in Jerusalem is relevant here, as it parallels the Catholic propaganda campaigns among the Armenians.

60 Ahmet Türkan, *İstanbul'da Ermeni Cemaatleri Arasında Dini ve İdari İhtilaflar ve Tartışmalar* (PhD diss., Selçuk Üniversitesi, 2011), 70.

61 Katz, Kark, Itamar, Ruth Kark, "The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and is Congregation: Dissent over Real Estate," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, no.3 (2005): 387.

62 Salih İnci, "Osmanlı Dönemi Fener Rum Patriklerinin Seçimi," *İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, no.33 (2015): 29.

economic concerns of his community before the state. In a court record from 1671, reflecting complaints against the patriarch Martiros, members of the congregation sent a petition to the imperial army stationed at Resbon(?) yaylağı, accusing him of misusing the patriarchate's waqf properties and transferring annual taxes collected from Armenians in and around Jerusalem to Iran, thereby undermining the community's financial integrity. Following these accusations, the community demanded Martiros's dismissal along with the expulsion of his affiliates, who were associated with a Iranian identity, from the Armenian community in Jerusalem.[63] When considered alongside the previous petition dated 1699, it becomes evident that communal support was presented as a factor in patriarchal appointments. Indeed, the continuation of the document shows that Eghiazar, who was reported to have the backing of the community, was appointed to the patriarchal office and granted authority through a berat.

The "Armenians from Adjem/Iran" mentioned here likely refer to the Armenian merchant community of Julfa, originally from Old Julfa in northwestern Iran, known for funding the Etchmiatzin Church. In the early 17th-century, during heightened Ottoman-Iranian rivalry over silk trade and control of alternative trade routes, Shah Abbas forcibly relocated these Armenians near his capital as a strategic move, establishing New Julfa. From this new center, Armenians became prominent across trade networks stretching from Asia to Europe. The merchants of New Julfa not only traded through India, the Caspian, and the Black Sea, but also held influence along the Aleppo route, which had gained importance since the 15th-century.[64] In the 17th and 18th-centuries, the Armenian merchants had expanded throughout the Mediterranean, from India to Europe, likely through a business model akin to the Islamic "mudāraba" partnership or the Jewish "isqa," known in the West as "commenda." Trade was conducted based on contracts between capital-owning merchants—often titled "ağa," "ter," "hoca," or "çelebi"—and mobile agents. These arrangements enabled the circulation of merchants and capital through extensive east-west journeys, typically under the management of family-run commercial enterprises. Due to their commercial success and organizational structure, some families were able to obtain administrative or political privileges from powers such as Russia or the Papacy.[65] Although dating to the 18th-century, archival records that shed light on their status indicate that these Armenians, treated as dhimmis, were often perceived as suspicious by the public due to their mobility. Known to have extensive trade networks across Rumelia and Anatolia, they would temporarily stay in the areas they passed through. Some were reported to have entered homes and committed crimes, prompting the issuance of firmans ordering them

63 KŞS-190, 568/b2,a1 (13 Şaban 1082/15 Aralık 1671).

64 Abdülkadir İlgen, "Siyasal Yapıları İçeren 'Ekonomi-Dünyalar' İçinde Bir Ticaret Diasporası: Ermeniler (XVII. –XVIII. Yüzyıllar)," in *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler: Sosyo-Ekonomik Hayat*, vol. 5 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2014), 73-78; Shapiro writes that the Armenians, affected by the crises of the 17th-century, were compelled to turn westward following the Treaty of Zuhab due to ongoing political tensions between the Ottoman Empire and Iran as well as the Jelali Revolt (Shapiro, "*The Rise*," 9-14).

65 Aslanian, "The Circulation," 124-171.

to remain in caravanserais. In some cases, judges were instructed to enforce this restriction.[66]

In Jerusalem, as in many other matters, they appear to have clashed with the local Armenian community over the control of patriarchal revenue sources.[67] The influential Armenian community of New Julfa had gained prominence in the selection of the Catholicos of Etchmiatzin. The appointment of Hakob III, a Julfan, without the approval of the Armenians in Istanbul led to internal division, prompting the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Eghiazar, to declare himself Catholicos in Aleppo. During this period, he succeeded in banning the envoys of the Etchmiatzin Catholicos, known as "nuiroks," from collecting money within the Ottoman Empire and secured judicial authority over Ottoman Armenians. Hakob III, during his visit to Istanbul, submitted a petition to Sultan Mehmed IV in Edirne and succeeded in having the ban lifted. After Hakob's death in Istanbul, the clergy of Etchmiatzin invited Eghiazar in an effort to end the division and appointed him Catholicos. He held this position until his death. Following his tenure, Nahapet served as Catholicos for ten years with the approval of the Ottoman Armenians. The subsequent election of Aleksandr, a Julfan, indicates that the Julfa community continued to exert influence over the selection of the Etchmiatzin Catholicos for some time.[68]

As shown above, support from influential lay elites—wealthy, non-clerical figures—was of considerable importance for both Greek and Armenian communities. In both Istanbul and Jerusalem, these individuals possessed their own commercial and political networks. Was it not one such wealthy Greek who provided a residence for the Patriarch of Jerusalem? The house granted to Patriarch Theophanes IV (1608–1641) by Prince Cantacuzene, which had burned down in 1649, was rebuilt by Greek merchants from the Phanar and subsequently designated as the official residence of the Jerusalem Greek

66 Ensar Köse, "Acem Tüccarlarının Osmanlı Ülkesindeki Faaliyetleri (18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında)," in *İzmir Demokrasi Üniversitesi Üçüncü İktisat Tarihi Kongresi Bildirileri,* vol. 3 (İzmir: İzmir Demokrasi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2019), 43-61.

67 According to Peri, the Ottoman state also attempted to unify the Armenian churches. However, the principal center of Armenian religious authority remained outside Ottoman borders. The Ottomans were uneasy about the fact that this center was under the control of their rivals, the Safavids. They pursued certain strategies such as establishing the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul and positioning Armenian bishoprics in southern and eastern Anatolia as an alternative to Etchmiatzin. Yet, the division of Ottoman Armenians into two groups—those affiliated with Etchmiatzin and those connected to Istanbul—gave rise to a crisis. The status of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and its affiliation became a significant factor in this division (Peri, *Christianity*, 102-104). On the other hand, beginning particularly in the second half of the 16th century, the activities of the Julfan Armenians in cities they visited for trade appear to have caused discomfort not only among the local population but also the authorities. During this period, a significant Julfan Armenian presence—alongside Jewish merchants—played a notable role in trade in Aleppo. (Ina Bagdiantz McCabe, "Global Trading Ambitions in Diaspora: The Armenians and their Eurasian Silk Trade, 1530-1750," in *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks: Four Centuries of History,* eds. Ina Bagdiantz McCabe, Gelina Harlaftis, Ioanna Pepelasis Minoglou (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2005), 40. In a document reporting the situation in Aleppo, it was stated that Iranian merchants were collecting coinage from the market by offering 6–7 akça above the standard rate and smuggling it into Iran [Halil Sahillioğlu, "Osmanlı Para Tarihinde Dünya Para ve Maden Hareketlerinin Yeri," *Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Studies in Development*, Special Issue: Türkiye İktisat Tarihi Üzerine Araştırmalar (1978): 13].

68 Köse, "Şah, Çar ve Sultan," 69-73.

Patriarchs.[69] By the end of the century, patriarchs supported by the Phanariots were clearly dominant over those elected by popular backing.

During the 17th-century, the involvement of lay elites in ecclesiastical matters began to expand, particularly through financial patronage and mediation with the Ottoman administration. This growing lay participation foreshadowed the developments that would later be described as a "Renaissance" in Armenian church history during the early 18th-century, when wealthy Amira families strengthened their ties with the imperial court. Their support extended to education, cultural initiatives, publishing, and to the consolidation of patriarchal authority.[70] Within Jerusalem, the lay class had already gained visible influence: as Sanjian notes, following Selim I's conquest, lay Armenians from Anatolia and nearby regions such as Damascus, Latakia, and Egypt settled in the city alongside the clergy—a pattern that continued well into the 18th and 19th-centuries.[71]

Having a close ally of the sultan—especially one who held the position of grand vizier, the sultan's absolute deputy—was evidently of great significance.[72] The role of the Istanbul banker Abro Çelebi was crucial in enabling Eghiazar to gain approval both as Catholicos and Patriarch of Jerusalem, despite the successful moves of his rival, the Etchmiatzin Catholicos Hakob. Abro Çelebi's connections, particularly with Fazıl Ahmed Paşa, played a decisive role in Eghiazar's recognition. It is even reported that, as a sign of his ambition for a Jerusalem-centered catholicosate, Eghiazar managed to build a church in Jerusalem under the name of the "Holy Etchmiatzin Church."[73]

For the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, the period of greatest benefit came under Patriarch Dositheos (1669–1707) and his nephew and successor Chrysanthos. Chrysanthos is known to have received support from Chief Dragoman Alexander Mavrokordatos, who was involved in the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699.[74] Chief Dragoman Panagiotakis Nikousios (1661–1673), recognized for his debates with Şeyhülislam Vani Efendi and his service during the Siege of Candia, earned the favor of Grand Vizier Fazıl Ahmed Paşa. After the conquest of Crete, he played a key role in securing imperial permission for the reconstruction of the Orthodox Church and was among Patriarch Nectarios's most important supporters in Istanbul. His personal ties with the grand vizier also facilitated the translation and publication of Christian texts and the issuance of a hatt-ı sherif granting the Church of Bethlehem and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to the Orthodox.[75]

69 Theodore Edward Dowling, *The Orthodox Greek Patriarchate of Jerusalem* (New York, London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1913), 23.

70 Köse, "Münasebetler," 6

71 Sanjian, Ara, "Church," 61-68.

72 In patriarchal appointments, a separate payment known as "caize" (plural: "cevaiz") was made to the grand vizier. See. Kenanoğlu, *Millet*, 165-166.

73 Ensar Köse, "Bir Hayalin Peşinde," 47-55.

74 Colbi, *Christian*, 85.

75 Eugenia Kermeli Ünal, "17. Yüzyılda Bir Kültürel Rastlaşma: Vani Efendi ile Panagiotakis Nikousios'un Söyleşisi," in *Prof. Dr. Özer Ergenç'e Armağan*, ed. Ümit Ekin (İstanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2013), 449-450.

In contrast, Armenian Patriarch Avedik I, after the death of his protector Şeyhulislam Feyzullah Efendi during the 1702 Edirne Incident, attempted to flee Istanbul but was imprisoned in the Yedikule Fortress and later exiled to Arvad Island in Syria.[76]

As seen, the imprisonment of patriarchs in dungeons designated for high-profile hostages and political offenders—such as foreign rulers or princes—and their execution by strangling or hanging, like the sultan's own servants, are telling indicators of their position within the Ottoman administrative hierarchy.[77] According to Salarcı's detailed study of the Baba Cafer Dungeon, in the 17th-century the confinement of Armenian patriarchs—within a facility notorious for holding common criminals—was largely a result of the Church's financial crisis and the patriarchs' misconduct. The dungeon, he argues, functioned as a stage for the complex intrigues and calculations that shaped patriarchal appointments. Ottoman records, as he suggests, may contain evidence of both former and prospective patriarchs being imprisoned amid cycles of accusation, acquittal, and renewed prosecution. Salarcı further notes that patriarchs known by epithets such as "Ladder to Hell" and "Ekmekçi" (Breadmaker) continued their factional maneuverings even while confined, a point also supported by Ormanian and Eremya Çelebi Kömürciyan. [78]

4. The Patriarchal Activities

The initial ahidnames, berats, and firmans granted by the Ottoman sultans to the Greek and Armenian Patriarchs are significant, as they were cited in subsequent authority documents issued to the Patriarchs of Jerusalem for various reasons. Since the Ottoman state explicitly outlined and limited the duties and powers of patriarchs in these documents, their analysis is essential for clearly establishing the patriarchs' position, leaving no room for speculative interpretations of autonomy.[79] Following Selim I's annexation of Jerusalem in 1517 (923 AH), a firman was issued confirming the rights granted to the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Attalia and his community. Based on earlier ahidnames and firmans dating back to the time of Caliph Umar and previous rulers, the document reaffirmed their ownership and usage rights over holy sites, churches, monasteries, cemeteries, olive groves, and waqf properties. Control over many sacred places and properties within and around Jerusalem was entrusted to the Patriarch and his affiliates. Georgian, Ethiopian, Serbian, and other communities affiliated with the patriarchate were also included. These groups were granted exemptions from customs, taxes, and traditional levies, and were given the right to manage their goods and positions. The firman ordered that no other group interfere with these rights, recognizing the Greek Patriarch as the primary representative of all Christians. The text was reinforced both legally and religiously by warning that any violation would incur divine punishment.[80]

[76] Silvart Malhasyan, *Patrik Avedik'in Gizemli Yaşamı,* (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2023), 54-55.
[77] Bayraktar Tellal, *The Patriarch,* 79.
[78] Salarcı, *The Baba Cafer Dungeon* (MA Thesis, Fatih Üniversitesi, 2010), 87, 93; Malachia Ormanian, *Azkabadum,* Jerusalem 1912; Eremya Çelebi Kömürciyan, *İstanbul Tarihi: XVII. Asırda İstanbul,* trans. Hrand D. Andreasyan (İstanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1988)
[79] Çolak, *Church*, 37; Kenanoğlu, *Millet,* 44-57.
[80] A{DVN.KLS.d.8, 7; *Administration of Christian Denominations and Communities of Jerusalem Critical Edition of Defters of Church of Holy Sepulchre*, 62-63.

Subsequently, a berat issued by Süleyman I in response to a petition from Greek Patriarch Germanus (1537–1539) outlined the hierarchical structure and ritual practices in detail. The communities under the patriarch's authority, such as the Georgians, Serbs, and Ethiopians, were expanded to include new groups like the Copts, and the churches and monasteries within his jurisdiction were listed individually. Worship practices, sacred spaces, and liturgical items were also described in detail.[81] A court record from 1669 indicates that the Greek Patriarch's jurisdiction encompassed Jerusalem, Gaza, Ramla, Jabal Ajlun, Safed, and their respective subdistricts. The Greek Orthodox population and clergy residing in these regions fell under the patriarch's direct religious and administrative authority. The patriarch's jurisdiction was not limited to Greeks but extended to clergy serving in Georgian, Ethiopian, Serbian, and Coptic monasteries, recognizing him as the final authority in their religious and legal affairs.[82]

The 1517 firman issued by Selim I to the Armenians closely resembles that granted to the Greeks. It confirmed that the patriarchs residing in the Mar-Yakub Church held traditional authority over the Ethiopians, Copts, and Syriacs. The document recognized their spaces, possessions, and worship in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, as well as their control over cemeteries, waqf rooms, vineyards, gardens, and olive groves. It also affirmed their inheritance rights and authority to collect taxes. Interference in the affairs of the Armenian Patriarch was strictly prohibited under this imperial decree.[83]

Firmans recorded in court registers provide valuable information about the powers directly obtained and renewed by the patriarchs through contact with the Ottoman administration. For instance, a document issued in response to a petition personally submitted by Greek Patriarch Dositheos in Istanbul states that, according to his berat-ı hümâyun, the bishoprics, monasteries, and sacred springs in Jerusalem and its surroundings were under the authority of the patriarchate. Consequently, all annual taxes, dues, lease payments, property fees, marriage charges, and other revenues collected from the dhimmi population in these areas rightfully belonged to the patriarchate by established law. However, the document also shows that this authority was openly violated by provincial officials, including beylerbeyi, sanjakbeyi, voyvoda, subaşı, and other members of the military-administrative elite. These officials not only interfered in the collection of taxes but also seized transport animals used for revenue collection, confiscated the property of deceased clergy, and arbitrarily assumed powers of appointment and dismissal within the church. Notably, despite the patriarchate's objections, they also conducted marriages involving nuns and non-Christian men, in clear violation of religious custom.[84] Similarly, a document concerning the Armenian patriarchs reports infringements on their exclusive right to perform marriages according to their religious law, affirming that no one other than the patriarchs had the authority to officiate weddings or collect related fees.[85]

81 A{DVN.KLS.d.8, 8; *Administration of Christian Denominations and Communities of Jerusalem Critical Edition of Defters of Church of Holy Sepulchre*, 64-65.
82 KŞS-190, 495/a2 (18 Şevval 1079 /21 Mart 1669).
83 Ercan, "*Kudüs*," 15-17.
84 KŞS-190, 495/a2 (18 Şevval 1079 /21 Mart 1669).
85 BOA, İbnul Emin Maliye (İE.ML). 25, 2446 (5 Şevval 1091/29 October 1680).

As evidenced by, patriarchs were authorized—upon payment of pişkeş—to collect certain taxes from specified communities within the jurisdictions outlined in their berats and related decrees. These included miri rusum or "mal-i miri" (state taxes), "miri patriklik" and "miri metropolitlik" (patriarchal and metropolitan dues) at a rate of 12 akça per household, "zitiye" (an ecclesiastical tax to cover church expenses), "zarar-ı kassabiye/zarar-ı lahm" (a daily provision of 105 okka of meat for the imperial gardeners), "tasadduk akçası" (alms), "ayazma/hagiasma" (sacred spring tax), monastery and fair taxes, and marriage fees ranging from 80 to 240 akças. These dues could also be paid in kind, such as grain or fabric. Alms were often given in the form of goods like honey, butter, olive oil, or wine.[86]

In addition to the types of taxes described above for the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Istanbul, the Patriarchs of Jerusalem had another significant source of income related to pilgrimage. Revenues were generated through the organization of pilgrimages, including travel, transit, visitation, and associated commerce. Patriarchates that hosted pilgrims of their own denomination not only secured considerable income from these activities but also gained prestige and an opportunity to demonstrate their legitimacy. Even in construction permits granted by the state, reasons such as accommodating pilgrims were cited and accepted—an indication that the state had delegated responsibility for pilgrimage affairs to the patriarchs.[87]

The judicial authority of the patriarchs was limited to areas such as family and inheritance law, and even in these matters, community members retained the option to appeal to Islamic courts. Non-Muslims were subject to the same laws as Muslims, as legal universality was a fundamental principle in the Ottoman Empire. When special provisions applied to non-Muslims, these were explicitly stated under separate headings in the legal codes. Patriarchs did not possess the authority to legislate or enforce laws binding on non-Muslims within the empire.[88] However, disciplinary measures against clergy—such as head shaving or dismissal for failing to fulfill obligations—could be carried out by metropolitans with the assistance of Ottoman officials.[89]

The centralization of the Ottoman state from the 17th-century onward was not limited to the concentration of patriarchal seats in Istanbul or the regulation of appointments. Patriarchs also became directly involved in the empire's urban economic networks. In this context, a sharia court record dated 1074/1663 is particularly noteworthy for illustrating how the Jerusalem Patriarchate was intertwined with Istanbul's commercial and financial life. The document records a case brought by a Christian from Tırnova, who sued in Istanbul, claiming he could not collect a debt owed to his deceased son Panayot from the fur trade. Anastas, a Greek from the calab (butcher) guild and the defendant,

[86] İnalcık, "Patriarch," 424-427.

[87] *KŞS*-176, 16/b1. (Evasıt-ı Muharrem 1075/4-13 Ağustos 1664). I am currently conducting a study on the management of Christian pilgrimage logistics in 17th-century Ottoman Jerusalem.

[88] Macit Kenanoğlu, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Gayrimüslim Teb'anın İdaresinde Kullandığı Bir Yöntem Olarak 'Ruhani İltizam' Sistemi," *Divan* 14, no.1 (2003): 68-69.

[89] For further discussion on the Church's penal authority, its implementation, and particularly the impact of non-Muslims' recourse to Islamic courts on the ecclesiastical judicial system, see: Kermeli, "Choice."

acknowledged a debt of 10,150 esedi kuruş to Panayot. However, he claimed to have already paid part of it to various individuals and the remainder to the merchant's mother, asserting that he owed nothing further. According to Anastas's testimony, 500 esedi kuruş of this debt had been paid to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Kanarios (Nectarios), one of Panayot's creditors. Such credit and debt relations with wealthy artisans, merchants, and guilds in major cities indicate that patriarchs operated within a broad economic sphere, engaging in trade either personally or institutionally.[90]

The economic support of community members outside Jerusalem for the patriarchate and holy sites could also continue through individual acts of piety. For example, a court record documents that an Armenian woman living in Istanbul, Melek binti Dadur, collected a debt of 150 kuruş from her son Antana, donated 50 kuruş back to him, sent 20 kuruş to Jerusalem, and used the remainder for her own expenses. Such micro-level initiatives played an important role in maintaining the economic and emotional ties between the patriarchate and Armenian communities beyond Jerusalem.[91]

Such acts of individual charity directed toward Jerusalem could at times take on more permanent and institutional forms. Indeed, court records include examples of non-Muslims establishing waqfs for the benefit of the Armenian community in Jerusalem. According to a registration at the Istanbul Bab-ı Meşihat Court, an Armenian woman named Meryem binti Perdede donated her house as a waqf, following the guidance of her husband and another Armenian from her neighborhood. The property—a two-story house with four rooms, two halls, a toilet, a water well, and a small garden—was bordered on one side by a Muslim-owned property, on two sides by Armenian properties, and on one side by a main road. Meryem stipulated that the use of the house would pass first to her husband and brother, then to their descendants, and eventually the income would be allocated to the poor of the Armenian community in Jerusalem. The designated amount was fixed at 360 kuruş annually, calculated as 1 kuruş per day. She appointed Vartan bin Hoseb as trustee responsible for managing the waqf. This case illustrates how charitable intent was institutionalized through a concrete plan of property and income, extending beyond symbolic devotion to Jerusalem. Such waqfs also functioned as socio-economic mechanisms that sustained the Armenian diaspora's enduring connection with the city.[92]

As the examples show, the economic contributions of non-Muslim communities to holy sites ranged from individual acts of charity to institutional waqf arrangements, yet their legal formulation was shaped within the boundaries of the Ottoman legal system. Non-Muslims were not granted the right to establish waqfs directly in the name of their churches or monasteries. As a result, Christian waqfs were officially registered not "for the church" but in favor of the "poor who attend the church." Thus, while the purpose of the

90 İŞS-12, 102/b2 (14 Rebîʻül-âhir 1074/29 Kasım 1663); *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri İstanbul Mahkemesi 12 Numaralı Sicil (H.1073-1074/M.1663-1664),* vol. 16 (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi (İSAM) Yayınları, 2010), 259.

91 İŞS-12, 107/a2 (Rebîʻül-âhir 1074/ 26 Kasım-24 Aralık 1663); *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri İstanbul Mahkemesi 12 Numaralı Sicil*, 780.

92 İŞS-3, 8/a1) (20 1077 Rebîʻül-âhir 1077/ 6 Ekim 1666); *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Bab Mahkemesi 3 Numaralı Sicil,* 123.

waqf was clear, the language used in the deeds was constructed in a symbolic and indirect form that did not violate the limits of Islamic law.[93]

This sense of belonging toward Jerusalem manifested through the establishment of waqfs and through regular fundraising efforts carried out on behalf of the Jerusalem Patriarchate. For example, Ovanes, son of Krikor, who was appointed as a representative to collect donations at the request of priests at the Church of the Virgin Mary in Nişancı Mahallesi near Kumkapı in Istanbul, was compelled to take legal action due to serious obstacles he encountered during these activities. Presenting several Armenian goldsmiths as witnesses, Ovanes stated that a group of Armenians had repeatedly subjected him to insults and verbal abuse, and that most recently, the tax collector stationed at the church was physically assaulted with punches and a firearm.[94] This incident illustrates how financial activities carried out on behalf of the Jerusalem Patriarchate could become a source of intra-communal tension among Armenians in Istanbul, and how the patriarchate's representatives faced financial, physical, and social pressures alike. Unless the case reflects a purely personal dispute or a deliberate concealment, the document may point to the existence of a faction within the Istanbul Armenian community that resented the practice of sending funds to Jerusalem. Indeed, there was broader resistance among community members to the heavy tax burdens often imposed by Armenian clergy.[95]

Beyond the objections to sending donations to Jerusalem, the relationship between the patriarchate and community members appears to have been rested on voluntary solidarity, coupled with specific financial obligations and administrative procedures. A document concerning Martiros bin Kirkor, the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, who authorized several individuals to collect a debt of 10 esedi kuruş from Nazar bin Aznar, an Armenian living in Istanbul, is notable in showing that patriarchs pursued such claims through legal channels. The court requested that those presenting themselves as representatives bring witnesses to verify their claims; three witnesses—two from Istanbul and one from Erzurum—were heard, and their statements were deemed credible.[96]

However, the revenues generated within the community were considered insufficient for the survival of the patriarchates. The support of Christian ruling elites—particularly that of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia—was of vital importance. The assistance extended by the Wallachian and Moldavian princes stemmed partly from religious motivations such as confession, penitence, and charity, and partly from their pursuit of legitimacy in the eyes of the Ottoman authorities. In addition to providing financial resources for clergy and pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem, these principalities contributed to the restoration of sacred sites and the maintenance of the waqf system. Archival evidence

93 Uriel Heyd, "Some Aspects of the Ottoman Fetva," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 32, no.1 (1969): 60; Also see Muhammed Ceyhan, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Gayrimüslimlerin Mülk ve Vakıf Edinimi* (PhD diss., Ankara University, 2016)

94 İŞS-3, 13/a3 (7 Cemâziye'l-evvel 1077/22 Kasım 1666); *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Bab Mahkemesi 3 Numaralı Sicil,* 147.

95 Köse, "Dinamikler," 12.

96 It is plausible to assume that the individuals with whom Martiros established financial relations were merchants from Kaffa like himself. İŞS-3, 103/b3 (11 Ramazan 1077/24 Mart 1667); *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Bab Mahkemesi 3 Numaralı Sicil*, 672. Also, for the sources of the Greek Patriarchate of Jerusalem in Anatolia during the 17th-century, see: Çolak, *Church*, 219-221.

confirms that, from the 17th-century onward, patriarchs sought to secure such support through long journeys lasting several years. For instance, Patriarch Theophanes III of Jerusalem purchased the historic Monastery of Saint Sabbas (Mar-Saba) near Jerusalem, as well as several monasteries in Galata, Bucharest, and Nicorița, directly with the financial assistance of the Wallachian principality. This demonstrates that Jerusalem's connections with the broader Christian world were far from symbolic; they were sustained through tangible mechanisms of property acquisition and financial exchange. Beyond matters of ownership, the patriarchs also benefited from these principalities' patronage in developing a wider cultural and religious infrastructure.[97]

One of the recurring topics in the berats granted to patriarchs was their authority over the estates of deceased clergy. In the ahidname issued by Selim I, it was stated that the patriarch would collect and manage the estates of deceased monks and nuns.[98] Similarly, in the ahidname of Süleyman I, the phrase "the patriarch shall collect the belongings of deceased monks, metropolitans, bishops, and kalegoryans" affirmed the patriarch's right to inherit the estates of clergy under his jurisdiction.[99] A firman recorded in a sijil, addressed to the judge of Jerusalem and to judges in regions inhabited by members of the Greek community, reports that the Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem requested a royal decree to prevent interference by provincial officials in the collection of the estates of deceased metropolitans, bishops, priests, monks, and kalegoryans—rights that legally belonged to the patriarchate.[100] In another court record, a man named Abdullah appeared before the imperial council to lodge a complaint. As the legal representative of his late uncle, the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, Abdullah claimed that the inventoried belongings and 300 gold coins left behind by his uncle were rightfully his, but that he had been unable to retrieve them. In response, the sultan appointed Yusuf Ağa from among his officials to ensure Abdullah received his due.[101]

Petitions submitted by the patriarchate to the Ottoman state frequently concerned requests for construction permits. The state's stance in such matters appears to have been shaped by a variety of factors, including the nature of the conquest, the course of interstate relations, the needs of the population, the fulfillment of obligations by non-Muslims, and the broader economic context. According to archival evidence cited by İnalcık, even during periods when Ottoman military defeats against Christian powers heightened public hostility toward dhimmis, the state gradually adopted more flexible approaches toward non-Muslims. This shift indicates that non-Muslims were increasingly recognized as part

97 Çolak, *Church*, 84. İnalcık states that the state allowed and even encouraged the patriarchs—such as the travels of Patriarch Jeremias I of Istanbul—to maintain contacts with churches beyond the empire's borders, as it felt confident in its ability to control such activities (İnalcık, "Patriarch," 430)

98 A{DVN.KLS.d.8, 7; *Administration of Christian Denominations and Communities of Jerusalem Critical Edition of Defters of Church of Holy Sepulchre*, 63.

99 A{DVN.KLS.d.8, 8; *Administration of Christian Denominations and Communities of Jerusalem Critical Edition of Defters of Church of Holy Sepulchre*, 65.

100 KŞS-190, 493/a,494/b,495/a1 (22 Aralık 1668)

101 KŞS-176, 19/a2 (14 Şaban 1082/21 Aralık 1671); The name "Abdullah" was commonly used by members of all three religions in Jerusalem (Emecen, "Jerusalem," 33).

of the broader Islamic society.[102] In this context, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa's active involvement in the construction and repair of numerous churches during the 17th-century gains further significance when considered alongside the devastation caused by the Vienna campaign.[103]

On the other hand, construction requests by non-Muslims carried particular importance in Jerusalem. One of the patriarchate's primary responsibilities was to provide accommodation for Christian pilgrims. Although this need often justified petitions to the imperial council for building permits, obtaining such approval did not always guarantee that construction could proceed.[104] Sharia court records reveal that local officials or segments of the Muslim population frequently attempted to obstruct repairs or construction projects, citing alleged violations of Islamic law, and often demanded money under the guise of inspections or penalties. For instance, a 1669 court record notes that one side of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—visited by Catholics, Greeks, and Armenians—had collapsed, and permission for reconstruction had been granted. However, ehl-i örf (officials) interfered unlawfully in the collection of construction materials and harassed those involved. In such cases, central authorities issued firm instructions explaining the legal basis of their decisions and strictly forbade any further attacks or obstruction.[105]

The use of holy oil in sacraments and worship practices holds great significance for both the Greek and Armenian Churches, as it is a matter of deep religious importance. The preparation and distribution of this oil require special authorization.[106] In the context of the Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate and inter-church authority disputes, the issue of holy oil gained particular relevance when Eghiazar declared himself catholicos and assumed the associated prerogatives. This move became a subject of formal complaint. The Ottoman administration's response to the matter is also noteworthy. Eghiazar's actions were described in official documents as "gadr ve hayf" (oppression and injustice) and were interpreted as a violation of the established order that had prevailed since the imperial conquest. Ultimately, the petition submitted by Hakob III of Etchmiatzin was upheld by the central authorities; Eghiazar's claim was annulled, the patriarch was replaced, and it was decreed that the traditional practice of distributing the Belasan oil would remain firmly under Etchmiatzin's jurisdiction. Furthermore, any intervention by Eghiazar or

102 Halil İnalcık, "The Foundations of Ottoman-Jewish Cooperation," in *Jews, Turks, Ottomans: A Shared History, Fifteenth Through the Twentieth Century*, ed. Avigdor Levy (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 6.

103 Kemal Beydilli, "Osmanlı Döneminde Kilise Siyasetinden Bir Kesit: II. Mahmud Devrinde Kilise Tamiri," in *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Din ve Vicdan Hürriyeti* (İstanbul: İslami İlimler Araştırma Vakfı Yayınları, Ensar Neşriyat, 2000), 255-266.

104 In this regard, compliance with sharia was reinforced through şeyhulislam fatwas. However, the requirement for such fatwas appears to have been lifted in the 19th-century, likely in connection with the Reform Edict (Islahat Fermanı) and the subsequent wave of extensive construction and restoration activities. See: Beydilli, "Kilise Siyaseti": 258. Meanwhile, unauthorized construction activities by non-Muslims were observed throughout the empire. In his study tracing unlicensed buildings, Ceyhan identified eight religious structures and sixteen schools built without permits during the 19th-century (Muhammed Ceyhan, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ruhsatsız Olarak İnşa Edilen Kilise, Manastır, Havra ve Mektepler," *Turkish Studies-Comparative Religious Studies* 15, no.2 (2020): 168).

105 KŞS-190, 501/b2,a1.

106 Canan Seyfeli, *Ecmiatzin Katoğikosluğu'nun Ermeni Kilisesindeki Yeri*, Ankara University (PhD diss., 2007), 157-164.

other patriarchal candidates in this arrangement was explicitly prohibited.[107] This state-led intervention, though intended to quell opposition, proved short-lived due to a combination of factors: Eghiazar's mobilization of personal networks, subsequent patriarchal appointments in Istanbul and Jerusalem, and the growing concern among the clergy of Etchmiatzin over the escalating conflict.[108]

Conclusion

Patriarchal appointments in 17th-century Ottoman Jerusalem were far from being mere spiritual assignments; rather, they unfolded within a complex framework shaped by intersecting dynamics of imperial representation, political strategy, and economic interests.

The position of the Patriarch of Jerusalem functioned as a significant platform of representation in both the Muslim and Christian worlds. The Ottoman sultans employed Jerusalem as a symbolic stage to reinforce their claims to universal sovereignty; the patriarch served as a key figure in conveying the empire's message of legitimacy to both its non-Muslim subjects and the broader international audience. While the sultan affirmed his role as caliph and protector of Muslims, he simultaneously projected himself as "the Roman Emperor" safeguarding his Christian population. The operation of the patriarchate under Ottoman supervision reinforced the image of the sultan as both "the Custodian of the Holy Cities" and "the Protector of the Holy Sepulchre."

Although the state occasionally adjusted its practices in line with changing political circumstances, its relationship with non-Muslim communities remained rooted in the legal framework of dhimma. Non-Muslims were integrated into the Ottoman system as protected subjects who were allowed to live according to their own religious laws and communal structures, yet remained part of a society governed by Islamic legal and administrative norms. In this dual structure, the smooth functioning of patriarchates was essential to sustaining the broader imperial order.

The challenges of such representation become clearer when considering the internal diversity of non-Muslim communities, which, like Muslims, were far from homogeneous. Non-Muslims did not belong to a single religion, sect, or ethnicity, and even those who shared a sectarian or ethnic identity were not necessarily affiliated with the same church. Although Ottoman sultans occasionally sought to centralize ecclesiastical authority, it cannot be claimed that the Greek and Armenian patriarchates operated under the direct control of Istanbul. Nonetheless, due to their location in the capital, the patriarchates of Istanbul played a crucial role in conveying the concerns of provincial patriarchs to the central administration. In some cases, certain patriarchs also sought to extend their authority over other churches in pursuit of ecclesiastical unity—an example being the activities of Armenian Patriarch Eghiazar.

Patriarchal appointments were shaped by a variety of factors, including the candidates' identities, personal attributes, networks of influence, patrons, future ambitions, and rival

[107] İŞS-3, 129/b1 (1 Şaban 1077/18 Ocak 1667); *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Bab Mahkemesi 3 Numaralı Sicil (H.1077/M.1666-1667)* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi (İSAM) Yayınları, 2011), 827.

[108] Seyfeli, *Ecmiatzin*, 203-204.

contenders. At times, a sitting patriarch would request his own dismissal and recommend a successor based on merit; in other cases, a synod or council would nominate a candidate deemed beneficial. Support for candidates could come from Ottoman elites, foreign powers, or wealthy and influential members of the community. Ultimately, however, it was the Ottoman state that made the final appointment. Upon payment of a fixed sum known as pişkeş, the appointed patriarch was granted authority—clearly defined in an imperial berat—to oversee matters of taxation, administration, and religious leadership. These documents raise important questions about the patriarch's legal status, including whether he functioned as a "mültezim" and about the degree of autonomy the office held in the eyes of the Ottoman state.

Challenges did not end with a patriarch's appointment; maintaining the position despite opposition, satisfying patrons, honoring commitments, and aligning with imperial goals all required ongoing negotiation. These complex dynamics are documented in sharia records through petitions, firmans, and renewed berats, shedding light on the direct relationships established between patriarchs and the Ottoman administration.

For example, a dispute among the Armenians of Jerusalem over allegiance to either Istanbul or Etchmiatzin resulted in the replacement of the local patriarch. Given Jerusalem's status as the locus of Christian sacred geography, the selection of a patriarch also entailed navigating intercommunal and interdenominational rivalries. The question of who would occupy the patriarchal seat thus extended beyond internal ecclesiastical affairs and became a site of broader sectarian competition and communal tension.

The presence of Catholic missionaries and other Christian groups in the region often compelled Ottoman authorities to manage representational balances carefully. This environment led some patriarchal candidates to emphasize their opposition to rival sects as a means of reinforcing their own legitimacy. Indeed, resisting Catholic influence was sometimes portrayed as a qualification. While the Ottoman state occasionally distanced itself from Catholic missionary activities and expected local patriarchs to do the same, this policy shifted depending on the political context.

In this light, what may be called crises of representation typically stemmed from sectarian rivalry, foreign intervention, or questions of internal legitimacy. The Ottoman center responded with a balancing strategy, using patriarchal appointments to preserve the stability and equilibrium of its multi-religious order.

While responding to the needs of the Christian community, the Ottoman state was also obliged to manage internal church rivalries by appointing figures who would exercise authority on the sultan's behalf without oppressing the people—individuals capable of cooperation, conflict resolution, and maintaining both communal and imperial interests. In this context, the patriarch's role, embedded in representation and politics, was closely tied to economic functions.

Patriarchs, seeking funds to pay the pişkeş or secure their appointments, were authorized to collect taxes through the iltizam system within limits set by the state. Beyond this, they managed church waqfs, sought external support, and pursued new sources of revenue for

church construction, repair, or related permits. Notably, they also played a central role in pilgrimage-related activities, which were key to both economic and strategic consolidation.

In light of these considerations, patriarchal appointments in Jerusalem served as instruments through which the Ottoman central administration maintained political stability and preserved the continuity of its multi-religious order. Thus, these appointments can be understood as a key component of the empire's broader policy toward its non-Muslim subjects.

Declarations

1. **Ethics committee approval:** Not needed for this study.

2. Author contribution: The author declares that no one else has contributed to the article.

3. Competing interests: The author declares no competing interests.

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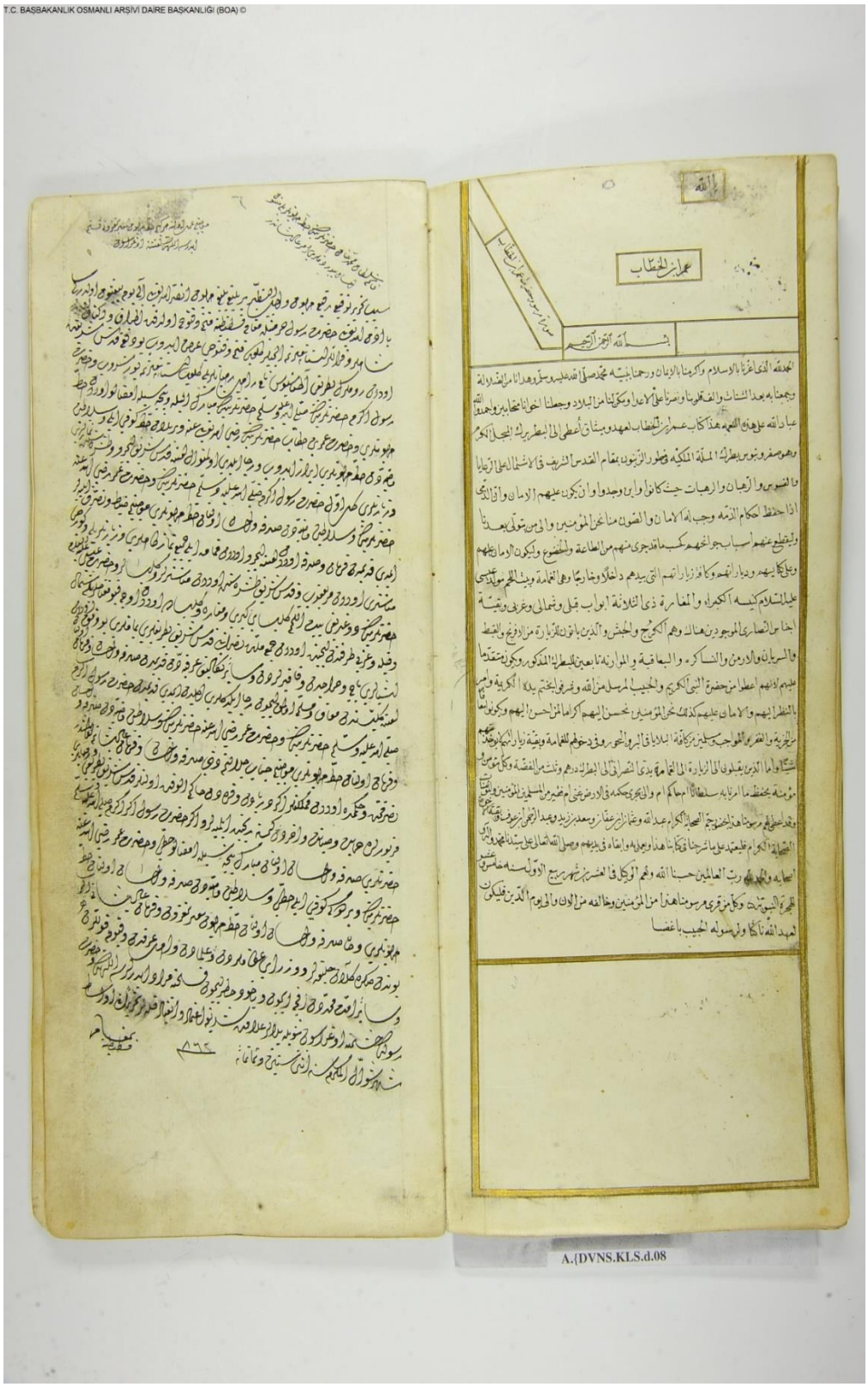
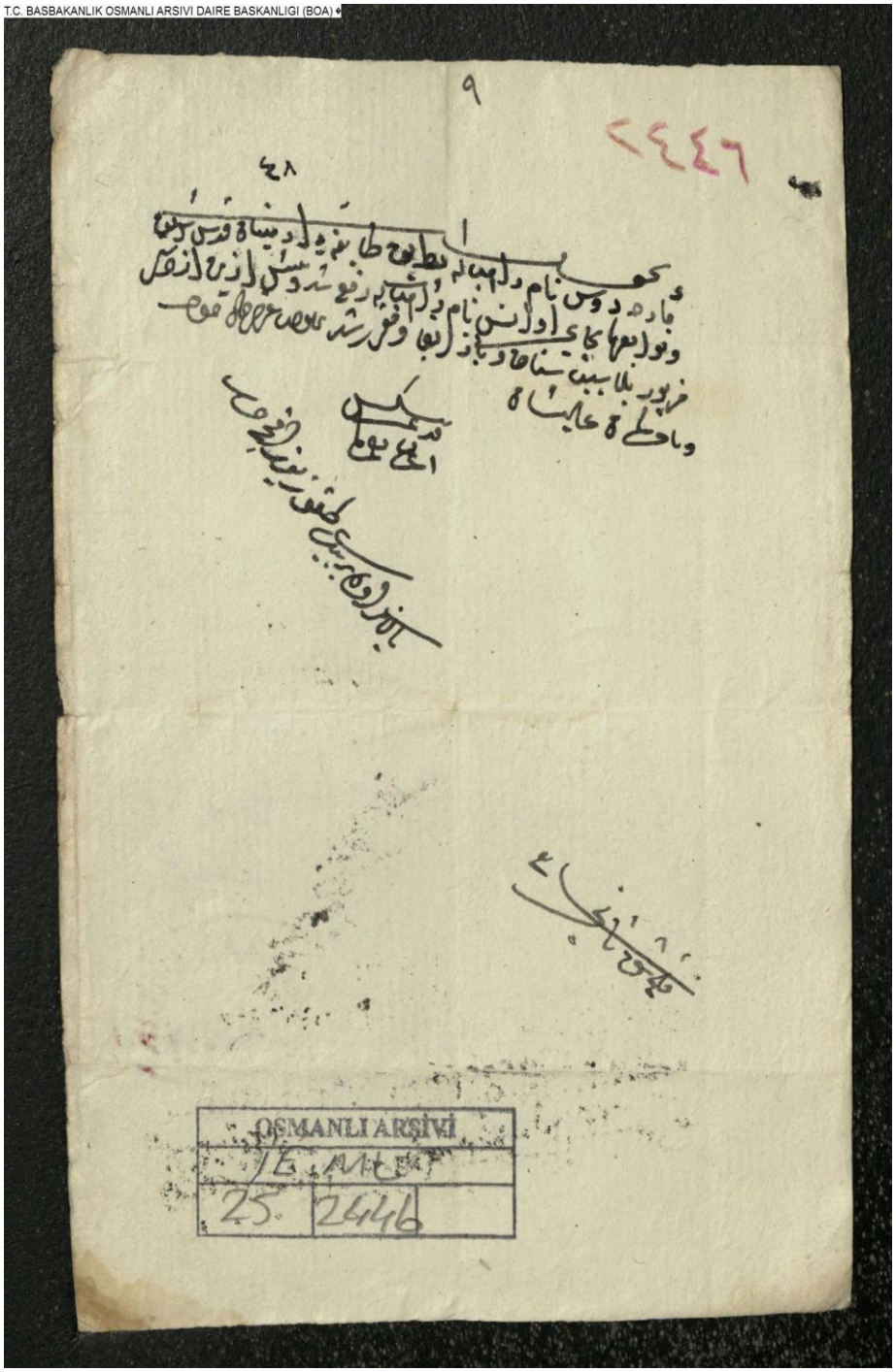
Apendices

Appendix 1: Ahidname of Caliph Umar ve Ahidname of Mehmed II



Appendix 2: A receipt for the pişkeş


T.C. BASBAKANLIK OSMANLI ARSIVI DAIRE BASKANLIGI (BOA)
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