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## THE CONCEPT OF IDEAL STATE IN THE OTTOMAN ADVICE BOOKS BASED ON "COUNSEL FOR SULTANS" OF MUSTAFA ÂLÎ (1541-1600): AN ASSESSMENT OF THE USE OF THE PAST AS A TOOL OF LEGITIMACY

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### Abstract

This study focuses on exploring the role of the past in legitimating ideas which were put forward in the advice books based on Mustafa Âlî's main work titled "Counsel For Sultans (Nushatü's-selâtin)". Thus, what did the past actually mean for Mustafa Âlî? what was the function of remembering the past? and how far could the past be reshaped by the needs of the present? are some of the questions that we hope to answer in this study. Under these premises, the study examines: (1) a brief overview of the advice literature in Ottoman Empire, (2) the past as a tool of legitimacy, (3) the use of the past as a tool of legitimacy for the idea of the ideal state in Counsel For Sultans. The study gives an opportunity to assess the minds of Ottoman scholars in the face of certain profound changes began to take place in the Ottoman Empire and reveals what did the past actually mean for writers of advice books based on Mustafa Âlî. In this regard, the findings of study have significant implications.

**Keywords:** The Ottoman Empire, Counsel For Sultans, Mustafa Âlî, the Past, Legitimacy.

### Introduction

The Ottoman Empire came into existence towards the end of the thirteenth century as a small frontier principality. The Empire took its name from the its founder, war-lord Osman Gazi, who is also known as Osman I. The Ottoman principality, in a short time, set up a formal government and expanded their territory under the reign of Osman I, Orhan, Murad I, and Bayezid I in the Northwestern Anatolia and in the Balkans. Thus, it was transformed into a transcontinental empire. Despite the defeat of the Ottoman Empire by Timur at the Battle of Ankara in 1402, which caused an interregnum period between 1402 and 1413, Ottoman Empire made a quick recovery in a short time and ended the Byzantine Empire with the conquest of Constantinople by Mehmed II in 1453. In the sixteenth century, new conquests extended its domain throughout the Arab portion of the old Islamic caliphate in the reign of Selim I (1512-1520) and in particular by the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566). Also, with the continued military success in the area stretching from the Indian Ocean to central Europe, the Ottoman Empire reached the peak of its power and gained the status of a world power. In this period, the Ottoman Empire developed a centralizing project. This resulted in the establishment of the absolutist Ottoman state, a patrimonial world empire, and

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centralized administration based on the heritage of mainly the Turks as well as the earlier Muslim polities and the Byzantine Empire. Thus, the Ottoman Empire institutionalized and developed a new amalgam of political, social, and economic organizations as well as traditions into a working whole. Consequently, in organizing the six centuries of Ottoman history, this period is defined as the classical period (1300-1600). It is taken as a well-defined, distinct period with an autocratic centralist government and a command economy (Shaw, 1976, 12-111; İnalçık, 2000, 3-40).

However, with the beginning of the last decade of the sixteenth century, certain profound changes began to take place in the Ottoman Empire. These changes eventually affected the whole political structure and the social conditions of the country (İnalçık & Quataert, 1997, 17, 22-25, 41-45; Lewis, 2002, 24; Öz, 2010, 38-48). These revolutionary changes prompted Ottoman bureaucrats and they tried to understand the reasons and nature of these alterations. They also offered to those in power their formulas for the desired recovery. At this point, one of these bureaucrats was Mustafa Âlî.<sup>1</sup> As an intellectual, Mustafa Âlî revealed the reasons and solutions for the alterations which emerged in Ottoman classical state order in sharp clear lines. He further portrayed the picture of an "ideal state" in his main work titled "Counsel For Sultans (Nushatü's-selâtin)."<sup>2</sup> Mustafa Âlî, like many of his contemporaries which will be mentioned in the next chapters, interpreted the alteration which occurred to be a consequence of the degeneration and abandonment of the classic laws and regulations of the Ottoman State. To this end, he attempted to justify his ideas by the arguments and rituals of legitimacy. At this point, his fundamental tool of legitimacy is the past. From this perspective, this paper attempts to explore the ways in which Mustafa Âlî used the past to legitimate his time i.e., to understand the events that happened in his time.

### 1. The Tradition of Advice (Nasihat nâme) Literature in the Ottoman Empire: An Overview

Advice (Nasihat nâme) literature is a term used to denote works of counsel for rulers and governmental officials, which is similar to mirrors for princes in western literature. Advice literature was a very widespread premodern Eurasian genre that outlined basic principles of conduct for rulers. Throughout the history, in particular during the eleventh century, in the Islamic states of central Eurasia and Asia Minor, many books of advice were written as the guidance to help rulers and members of the political and cultural elites. These books of advice that incorporated strands from earlier Indo-Iranian examples were mainly laid in Persian and Turkic treatises, and they formed the antecedents of the Ottoman version (Bosworth, 1993, 984-988; Pala, 2006, 409-410). Based on this tradition, the first examples of the books of advice genre in Ottoman Turkish were three Persian language work of the eleventh century. This included the *Kabusnama* of Kai Kabus, the *Siyasatnama* of Nizam al-Mulk, and the *Nasihat al Muluk* of al-Ghazali, which were available in Ottoman Turkish through translations by the end of the fifteenth century (Howard, 2007, 138-139).

The Ottoman Empire reached the peak of its power and wealth and became the preeminent Islamic empire. This was as a result of some political, military, economic, and cultural developments such as the conquest of Constantinople by Mehmed II, the conquests of Egypt, the possession of the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina-together with Jerusalem by Selim I and, and the successful military campaigns against the western world in the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent in the sixteenth century. Ottoman elites articulated the need of imperial claims of the Ottoman dynasty to a universal leadership by representing the Ottoman sultans as the new world conquerors (Emecen, 2019, 233-282; İnalçık, 2000, 23-40; Ágoston, 2007, 94). Due to the fact that all these conquests gave the Ottoman sultans an unparalleled legitimacy in the Islamic world, they had important implications for the evolution of a new imperial project based on a comprehensive theory which would encompass the whole human society. At this point, the Ottomans provided this imperial project mainly by an existing Persian tradition based on *ahlak* literature, drawing in its turn from the Aristotelian concept of man, society, and state. This kind of *ahlak* literature claimed a comprehensive view of the world as a unity as it was developed in three levels. These levels are individual ethics, the governance of self and household economics (the governance of the family and the house), and political theory (the governance of the city). In this regard, two famous sources of Persian political philosophy such as the thirteenth century work *Akhlâq-e Nâsirî* of Nasir al-Din Tusi and the fifteenth century work *Akhlâq-e Jalâlî* of

<sup>1</sup> Mustafa Âlî was born on April 24/25 1541 in Western Anatolia in the peninsula of Gallipoli and died in 1600. He served in various top administrative positions such as provincial treasurer, divan clericalism, and sanjak beylîği. However, he wrote approximately 50 works of history, politics, ethics, and poetry in Turkish, Arabic, and Persian. Therefore, he is considered as one of the leading bureaucrat and intellectual in the Ottoman Empire. for Mustafa Âlî see. Fleischer, 1966; Tahir, 1972; Babinger, 1992; İsen, 1998; Kütükoğlu, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> "Counsel for Sultans" (in Ottoman Turkish: *Nushatü's-selâtin*, often quoted as *Nasihatü's-selâtin*) is the main work of Mustafa Âlî. Completed in 1581, with minor additions added by 1586, it became quite popular (with nine known manuscripts, among which one dated 1627 and another 1698) while its publication in a model edition is done with annotated English ed. and trans., *Mustafâ 'Âlî's Counsel for Sultans of 1581*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1978-1983).



Jalal al-Din Davvani played a significant role (Sariyannis, 2015, 29). In this new approach, Ahmed bin Hüsameddin Amasi's work titled *Book of a mirror for kings* (Kitab-ı mir'atü'l-mülûk), Tursun Bey's work titled *History of the Father of Conquest* (Tarih-i Ebu'l-Feth) in fifteenth-century, and İdris-i Bitlisi's work titled *Imperial law* (Qanûn-i shehinshâhî) in sixteenth-century were among the leading works.

Amasi, Tursun, and Bitlisi, using two famous sources of Persian political philosophy mentioned above, omitted or shortened the parts on theological, social or moral topics of both sources in order to concentrate on the political theory part rather than give a full description of Persian ethical theory. Their aim was to guide and aid Sultans and then justify their rule. Amasi, Tursun, and Bitlisi's works did much to popularize this coupling of political advice with moral philosophy in a complete explanatory system. This is based mainly on Tusi's and Davvani's elaboration on al-Farabi and Ibn Sina's neo-Aristotelian theory (Sariyannis, 2015, 30-36). However, with Kinalızade Âlî's famous work titled *Ahlâk-ı Alâî* which was composed in 1563-1565, Tusi and Davvani's development of theneo-Aristotelian political and moral philosophy (mainly through al-Farabi's version) was at last popularized in the Ottoman letters. In contrast to his predecessors, Amasi, Tursun and Bitlisi, Kinalızade's work gained increasing popularity throughout the 16th to the 18th centuries. The notions such as the "circle of justice (dâire-i âdliye)" or "four pillars or estates (erkân-ı erba`a)" were to dominate or at least be present in almost every treatise of political advice composed of the mid-sixteenth century onwards (Tezcan, 2001, 110-114).

From the mid-sixteenth century onward, the quest for a unifying theory of human society gave its place to a stress upon the smooth functioning of the state institutions. Initially, there were ready-made models of the Iranian "mirror for princes" literature that emphasizes the duty of the ruler to hold court regularly, the use of spies and so forth. The Ottoman authors were to develop this style and focus on the institutions rather than the Sultan or the Grand Vizier. If the analysis of the authors till now were transmitting the received Persian tradition and occasionally they made their own alterations or additions, this current tradition which began with Lutfi Pasha's mid-sixteenth century *Asafname* is perhaps the best example of this sort of political literature. It inaugurates a distinctively Ottoman tradition and arguably, in this respect, it is not a coincidence that Lutfi Pasha was a full product of the distinctively Ottoman system of recruitment (Fleisher, 1986, 100; Sariyannis, 2015, 30-36).

Following the *Asafname* of Lutfi Pasha, particularly, in the second half of the sixteenth century as a result of the alterations which occurred in the state system of the Ottoman Empire, the quantity of these accounts had dramatically increased and Ottoman political treatises began to be more pragmatic. Thus, late sixteenth century texts such as anonymous works, *Book on the proper courses for Muslims and on the interests of the faithful* (Kitâbu mesâlih-i'l-müslimîn ve menâfi'i'l-mü'minî), dated in the last decade before Süleyman's death (1566), *Stronghold [or, amulet] of the kings* (Hırzû'l-mülûk), which must have been composed around 1574 and dedicated to Murad III and "Counsel for Sultans" of Mustafa Âlî followed the path opened by Lutfi Pasha's treatise. These texts were not only addressed mostly to the Grand Vizier rather than the Sultan himself, they also had the tendency to ignore older tradition. They also hardly mentioned authorities such as Davvani or al-Ghazali, and, most importantly, they scarcely described the moral qualities demanded by the higher officials. A sense of imperial decline affected the authors of these works. Thus, more than just advocating a return to some golden age, they tried to reveal specific systemic problems such as nepotism, revolts, military defeat, and corrupt Janissaries in the empire. They provided a number of proposals to prevent the "decline" of the imperial system and they discussed the reasons in their works (Çalışır, 2011, 44). However, the immediacy and urgency which was apparent in the Ottoman works set them apart from earlier examples. These Ottoman writers had intentions to give more than just advice on how to rule. They presented a critical analysis of Ottoman society and warned that failure to correct the evils they described meant risking a social and political cataclysm (Howard, 1988, 55).

## 2. The Past as a Tool of Legitimacy

Legitimacy, in a way, is the perception that an idea is exercised in a rightful, justified, and acceptable manner. It refers to the rightfulness of a thought, and it can be seen as the way that an idea can achieve justification by being seen as rightful. From this perspective, it can be said that to lay out an idea without at least a minimal amount of legitimacy would lead to deadlock or collapse. In the absence of legitimacy, the idea cannot be grounded. To this end, all humans attempt to justify their ideas through the arguments and tools of legitimacy. At this point, one of the most significant (and less studied) tools in the legitimation process is the past.

The past, in most general terms, is defined as the period before the events directly recorded in any individual's memory. However, as William Faulkner (1919, 85) stated, "The past is never dead, it's not even past." This is because it is, in a way, the object of a construction whose place is formed not in homogenous



and empty time, but in that which is fulfilled by the here-and-now (Benjamin, 1999, 261). Accordingly, it sets the pattern for the present. This means that it suggests the possibility of better understanding ourselves in the present by understanding the forces, choices, and circumstances that brought us to our current situation (Little, 2017). It tends to be the court of appeal for present disputes and uncertainties: law equals custom and age wisdom is used in illiterate societies. The documents enshrining this past which acquire a certain spiritual authority does the same in literate or partly literate ones. However, given that to be a member of any human community is to situate oneself with regard to one's (its) past, the past can be assessed as a permanent dimension of the human consciousness. This can be seen as an inevitable component of the institutions, values, and other patterns of human society. This is because, ideally, each generation copies and reproduces its predecessor as long as it is possible. It also considers itself to fall short of it as long as it fails in this endeavor. We may therefore still be forced back upon the past in a way which is analogous to the traditional use of it as a repository of precedents. However, selections are now made in the light of analytical models or programmes which have nothing to do with it. Yet, the nature of this often arbitrary process of dipping into the past for assistance in forecasting the future requires more analysis than it has so far received (Collingwood, 1946, 10; Hobsbawn, 1979, 3-13; Carr, 1990, 20-22; Braudel, 1992, 31).

People, by nature, tend to look to the past to assess their present. Therefore, the understanding of the past shapes peoples' sense of the present and the future. More so, it plays a fundamental role in human thought. It also comes to play a role in giving conceptual identity and legitimacy to human thoughts. However, it has serious implications for almost every contentious arena of public policy, collective identity, and personal experience. Briefly, it can be said that the thoughts' legitimacy is reinforced by arguments of the past. As a result, this legitimates the present and explains that the past is not seen as a set of reference points or even as duration, but the past is seen as a process of becoming the present (Hobsbawn, 1979, 3-13). In this regard, the past was a very real presence among Ottoman scholars of the 16th and 17th centuries. It might provide a legitimating template for the current order of things which explains how things were meant to be or provide an image of an ideal order. Thus, this is a Golden Age against which the present could be judged. In the next chapter, authors such as Mustafa Âli had spoken of "deviations" or "departures" from the institutional lines of old. They had not dismissed novel ways of coping with the contemporary situations, nor had they made this comparison a central argument in their treatises. As they did this, they used the past as a tool of legitimacy to justify their ideas.

### 3. The Use of the Past as a Tool of Legitimacy for the Ideal State in Counsel For Sultans

As mentioned above, Lütü Pasha's realism especially affected Mustafa Âli. Thus, he dared to go beyond anything pertaining to Lütü Pasha, and he opened the new ground to advice literature. As an intellectual, Mustafa Âli revealed the reasons and solutions for the alterations which emerged in Ottoman classic state order in a tone of outrage. Also, this portrayed the picture of an "ideal state" in his main work titled "Counsel For Sultans". To this end, as he put forward his ideas on this topic, an attempt was made to justify his ideas by the arguments and rituals of legitimacy. At this point, his fundamental tool of legitimacy is the past. Thus, in the present chapter, the manner in which Mustafa Âli used the past as a tool of legitimacy for the idea of ideal state and society raises concern. As noted above, one of the most famous examples of advice letter literature in the early modern Ottoman Empire was Mustafa Âli's "Counsel For Sultans". This work of Mustafa Âli consists of four main chapters apart from a Preface (without title) on the responsibility of sultans for the acts of their appointed officers; a shorter second Preface (entitled *Muqaddime*) on God's special favors bestowed on the Ottoman dynasty; a closing chapter (*Khatime*), containing various recommendations, subdivided into 10 sections (*fast*); a Supplement (*Tezyil*) in which the author defends himself against accusations of bias and expresses his confidence in the Sultan's understanding; and an appendix (*Teznib*) dedicated to the author's profession of sincerity.

As noted above, the work is started with a preface (without title) on the responsibility of sultans for the acts of their appointed officers. Here, Mustafa Âli stresses the importance of justice. At this point, we must state that Mustafa Âli's view of justice is based on the meritocracy. As he noted, "Justice means putting things in the places where they belong."<sup>3</sup> Sultans should grant high offices to those who qualify so that the prominent and conspicuous persons excel over the lowbred persons. The sultan should delegate all power to trustworthy administrators and his main duty is to protect the subjects against these administrators' potential oppression. However, the sultan must have close contact with high and low persons and promote people of intelligence and not only those trained in the Palace. According to him, an ideal sultan must act in

<sup>3</sup> Koran, An-Nisâ: 58.



accordance with these requirements. In this regard, in order to justify his thoughts, stories from the past are cited as follows:

The story is told that Sanjar Khan,<sup>4</sup> a mighty king of inherited greatness, when he was a powerless captive of Sultan Ghazan and downcast by the loss of his kingdom, was asked by some understanding person about the cause [of his downfall]. This was his apt reply: "I gave the high posts to low people and expected people of high status to accept low positions. Then the low people were unable to cope with the high offices, and the high-grade men found it dishonorable to accept posts that were below their rank. There can be no doubt that the absurdity of these two orders caused the collapse of [my] kingdom and empire and led to disaster, self-accusation, and remorse." (Mustafa Âli, 1978, 18-22).

As noted in the story above, If the sultan does not take into consideration these requirements of the appointment of officials from other social groups to impair the delivery of justice, it would bring about the collapse of the state. Additionally, with this kind of stories, Mustafa Âli shows how irresponsible appointments can bring forth ruin and disaster.

Âli proceeds to an introduction which shows God's special favors bestowed on the Ottoman dynasty such as the excellence of the sultans' palace and retinue; their religious orthodoxy; their freedom from plague; their absolute power to appoint their own people as governors of far-flung provinces; their extraordinary military power; and the fine state of their finances. These bestowals incur a strong responsibility for keeping their lands in justice and good order. At this point, Âli uses some references from the past to justify his thoughts. In Âli's view, the Ottoman sultans who are in power are pillars serving as a reminder of Alexander the Great. In terms of majesty, they represent the Solomons<sup>5</sup> of the time and in violence and fierceness, each one is referred to as Tamerlane. In particular, his main reference is Alexander the Great, whom Âli used as an example of the virtue of forgiveness. He normally appeared as a God-fearing and heroic Persian king. Âli attributes to him many wise sayings and compared the Ottoman sultans to him.

The first chapter (1978, 41-66) is on the matters necessary for Sultans. It is subdivided into 17 "requirements" (*lazime*) of no particular order:

(1) to gain the love and loyalty of their subjects by protecting the poor, studying history, restraining their own violence (*dest-i ta'addîlerini kasîr idiüb*), not giving over the affairs of the state (*umûr-i mülk*) to eunuchs, mutes and other courtiers, respecting the ulema and taking care of the army; (2) to choose an educated, well-mannered, and honest companion (*musâhib*) without granting him any office or rank; (3) to reward those who offered good service to themselves and their ancestors, to retain governors who have shown good and praiseworthy conduct especially in frontier regions; (4) to employ an extensive network of spies in order to check the well-functioning of all services and officials, since reports by officers or clerks in favour of other fellow-officers are not free from self-interest; (5) to dismiss and banish usurers (*ribâhorân*), *naibs*, and other corrupt local personalities who oppress the subjects with their loans and whom even governors fear; (6) to control tightly the conduct of the divan secretaries, especially to remove those addicted to drugs, and to give special attention to the election of the *re'îs-i küttâb* and the *tuğrakeşân/ nişâncı* being the jurisconsults (*müftiyân*) of the imperial laws; (7) to appoint wise men in high offices; (8) to reward governors and soldiers in order to have their weapons and equipment complete, and to dismiss those who neglect these duties; (9) to create charitable foundations only with the personal property of the Sultan i.e., his share of the booty, and not with the public treasury (*beytü'l-mâl*), where the constructing of mosques, dervish lodges etc. in a flourishing city is condemned as hypocritical; (10) to send the janissary cavalry (*bölük halkı*) to Egypt instead of leaving them to go astray in Istanbul after their exit from the imperial palace; (11) to suppress demagogical preachers who cause distrust against the sultan and his officers among the people; (12) to prevent peasants from leaving their homelands and dwell in cities, or at least to collect the due tax (*çift-bozan resmi*); (13) to exert liberality with equity and not to consider the lavish spending of money as generosity (*sahâ vu kerem*), but as waste and dissipation; (14) to protect the public treasury (*beytü'l-mâl-i müslimîn*) from unnecessary expenditures, such as the keeping of numerous palaces in the same city or the waste in the palace kitchen and the court artisans; (15) not to show excessive honour to those who come from other countries, to the expense of people who have served the Ottoman sultan for years, and especially not to give high offices to Turks or Kurds; (16) to offer safety in office to people that have not committed serious mistakes as such people's positions must be "consolidated by perpetuation" and the old practice of *dirlik*s being hereditary offices (*ocaklık*) should be reinstated; (17) finally, to prevent interventions of the *beğlerbeğis* to their provinces' finances.

<sup>4</sup> Sanjar Khan, the last ruler of the Greater Seljuls Empire, 1118-1157, was defeated by rebels in 1153 and remained their captive until 1156. Of course, he was not the captive of the Mongol ilkhan Ghazan Khan (1295 – 1304).

<sup>5</sup> According to the Koranic tradition, King Süleymân (Solomon) possessed supernatural powers.



According to Âlî, all these requirements are necessary for sultans and these were all presented by the previous Ottoman rulers or the ancient caliphs who governed with equity and “through beneficial innovations and laudable rules”. From this perspective, it can be said that the past is a real presence for Âlî, and in some sense it is still living in the present. However, it can be seen that he gave examples from the past, in particular, about Alexander the Great and Selim I to illustrate views revealed. This can be seen in the example below:

“Being the emperor of the world and the sovereign over all mighty kings, Alexander the Great had completed all the requirements of the caliphate and obtained all the necessities of the emirate and government. Nevertheless, he appointed *Plato as his representative and always held priceless consultations with Aristotle*. The power of his throne resplended at all times through the help of the Greek thinkers and his government over East and West excelled through the assistance of the philosophers of his time. The discovery of so many treasures, the undoing of so many spells, and the distribution of these gains among his multitudinous army were the results of the services of those wise men and the fruits of their obedience and personal attendance at the court. On the other hand, the zeal of these men was ignited by the land attention shown to them by the glorious Alexander. This is because he never for one moment separated from them, he honored them immensely with all kinds of words, and he always agreed to, and followed, their fine advice.” (Mustafa Âlî, 1978, 52). To justify his thoughts about the importance of appointing wise men in high offices, Âlî uses the past as a tool of legitimacy.

In the second chapter (1979, 66-86), Âlî deals with the disorder (*ihtilâl*) of his days which is contrary to the old law (*hilâf-ikânûn-ı kadîm*). This happens in eight ways, namely: (1) Many people are covetous for high positions, which are granted to them. Thus, “the scum (*edânî*) begins to gain power by lavishing money [in bribes]” (scum meaning “of lower origin” here) and “the high classes (*e’âlî*) are disappointed and stunned”. Judges become directors of finances or provincial governors. (2) Offices are given by way of tax-farming (*iltizâm*) with fraudulent pledges. If the registers of such revenues (*mukâta’a*) were checked, there would appear that they are quite disadvantageous for the state. Moreover, these revenue farmers oppress the subjects in order to increase their gains. (3) Provinces (either *beğlerbeğlik*s or *sanjaks*) were divided into further provinces, thereby reducing the income of their governors and burdening the people with more exactions. Here, in describing the unfoundedness of an unjust governor, M. A. gives a list of the desired qualities of such an official, namely justice, reliability, valor, sagacity, friendliness (meant here as the opposite of rudeness), and piety (*’adâlet, emânet, şecâ’at, firâset, hüsn-i hulk, diyânet*). (4) The ulema are not honoured and protected. They have to visit viziers in order to prevent the ignorants from overtaking them. Vacant offices are given according to the candidates’ relations with powerful men and not according to worth. Provincial judges are often ignorants (even “Turks... of the merchant class”, *renc-ber tâyifesinden*), sometimes presenting even fraudulent diplomas. (5) Sons of viziers are appointed governors while their fathers are still viziers, thereby being able to oppress the people without fear of punishment. According to Âlî, the office of *beğlerbeği* should be given neither to princes nor to viziers’ sons. Moreover, sons of officers who have held high offices in borderlands should not be given high offices in the heartlands of the empire (*iç il hükmindeki*). (6) The Ottoman coin has been debased and it is untrustworthy. Money-forgers have made it worthless and its prestige is rapidly declining. Moreover, money changers (*sarraf*) “render defective what is complete.” In a marginal note, Âlî explains how Jewish money changers exploited the monetary regulation of 1585/86 to their favor. (7) Viziers and governors endow their servants with fiefs. This did not happen until their masters were dead. The servants in turn use these revenues in order to become merchants. Thus, lower people occupy the higher offices and the public treasure is distributed to unworthy men. (8) Governors promote their own men to posts of deceased persons or posts that are vacant. Then, they exchange these offices with fiefs, which they transfer to their new place of appointment in order to carry their men with them in good honor.

As Âlî deals with the disorder (*ihtilâl*) of his days mentioned above, he looks to the present at least as much as to the past, seeking patterns and analogies in the latter which could explain developments in his own time. At his point, he stresses the “old law (*kânûn-ı kadîm*)”. According to him, the main reason of the disorder of his days is to act in contrary to the old law, that is to say, the past. This is because, according to him, the disorder can be seen in several ways in his days which did not exist in the past. All these were in order in the past. However, with acting in contrary to old law, the order deteriorated. If the arrangements can be structured in accordance with old law, it can overcome the disorder. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Âlî brought to his historiography a critical faculty and determined independence of thought. Thus, his nostalgia for the past was not the conventional one which was traditionally associated with the Islamic domains. In the Islamic tradition, history is seen as a process of decline proceeding inevitably as the “perfect” era of the Prophet’s lifetime and the days of the primal Muslim community recede further into the



past. Nonetheless, Âlî's views are based on the more immediate past, i.e., the fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth centuries. This period represents for him a period in which old law was applied in order. This is made abundantly evident by Âlî's constant references to the courts of Sultan Mehmed II and Sultan Selim I as the paradigmatic models of statecraft and literary patronage.

The third chapter (1983, 9-47) discusses "the weaknesses in the general situation (*ahvâl-i cumhûr*) which is caused by certain evil abuses". As it seems, the difference from the previous chapter lies in the fact that these abuses are not alterations of the old law, but they are misdeeds of established officers.

The fourth chapter (1983, p.48-95) of the book is a kind of autobiography, obviously with the main aim both to stress Âlî's education and skills that justify his giving of advice and to illustrate this state of decline described in the previous chapters.

### Conclusion

Modern scholars of the Ottoman period have mostly focused on the causes and true nature of revolutionary alterations as well as the formulas for the desired recovery revealed in advice books. However, this study has offered a new assessment of advice books based on Mustafa Âlî's Counsel for Sultans drawing on the tools of legitimacy used. It has argued that in order to understand the ideas revealed on Ottoman Empire's transformation process in advice books, historians must take into account the tools of legitimacy, i.e., how they justified their ideas and what were their references. Accordingly, this study has determined that Mustafa Âlî used the past as a main tool of legitimacy for his ideas on ideal state and society in the Ottoman Empire. The comparison with the allegedly glorious times of the past became more and more fashionable by Mustafa Âlî. Mostly, using stories from the past about historical characters such as Alexander the Great and Selim I, he tried to illustrate his views. From this perspective, it can be said that Âlî saw the past through the eyes of the present and in the light of its problems. Thus, the past became a real presence and in some sense it is still living in the present. It also provided a legitimating template for the current order of things, explaining how things were meant to be in the image of an ideal order, against which the present could be judged. Consequently, in term of revealing what the past actually meant for writers of advice books based on Mustafa Âlî, all these findings are of significant importance.

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