



## The Role of Foreign Harem and Queen In The Fall of The Ottoman Empire: A *Siyasah* *Shar'iyah* Perspective

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**ABSTRACT:** The article from this research aims to explain the role of women and foreign women in the Ottoman government, which had positive and negative impacts on the Empire. At first, the role of women was not very prominent in government. However, women behind the scenes produced strong leaders who could increase the age of this Empire and experience a period of glory starting with the reign of Usman I. In Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, the role of foreign women and enslaved people became more prominent. Repeated attempts by women in power at the Ottoman court to take different roles profoundly affected the state's internal structure in the long term, especially in foreign diplomacy. The mothers and wives of the sultans could build entities within the state, and they had supporters from ministries and the army. It is worth noting that "one of the most important factors in halting the progress, and even setting back the Ottoman Empire, was the interference of the sultan's foreign wives and mothers for almost a century in state affairs." Court ladies strongly influenced the sultans, especially in the 17th Century, when the state was sometimes under their rule. The welfare of Muslims was disrupted in areas of Russia, Eastern Europe, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

**KEYWORDS:** Collapse, Foreign Women, Ottoman

### A. INTRODUCTION

During Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih, his mother's role was huge in educating her children. She hoped that her son would later realize the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W., which said that one day, the city of Constantinople would be conquered by the best rulers and the best soldiers with the Koran, strength, patience, and love of Muslims towards him. The role of foreign women in the Palace was not significant until the time of Sultan Sulaiman al-Qanun and after. Many opportunities were lost due to the diplomacy of foreign women at the Palace, such as the expansion of

Ottoman territory to Italy (Venice), the annexation of Poland, attempts to reoccupy Spain and Portugal after Arab and Berber Muslims were expelled or forced to convert to Christianity with the French alliance. The Ottoman Empire was influenced by almost a century of interference by the Sultan's wives and mothers in state affairs." Court ladies strongly influenced the sultans, especially in the 17th Century, when the state was sometimes under their rule and the slave guards from Africa (Qosim). "The interference of the Sultan's mother and wife in government is an illustration of the severe corruption that plagued the Ottoman Empire during the period between the death of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent and the ascension of Sultan Mustafa IV to the throne in 1807 AD.<sup>1</sup> The Sultan ruled that none of them were qualified to occupy the position of Sultan to carry out the rules. Foreign women who came from foreign countries such as Venice, Poland, and Russia influenced their appointment in the Palace and pretended to love them. They pretend to be loyal to the Ottoman Empire, but each hides their diplomatic relations with the brand's true homeland. They work to implement their country's government programs. To achieve the interests of their country, they are willing to take risks."<sup>2</sup>

In reviewing this discussion, we refer to the book written by Muhammad Farid Beik entitled *Daulah Iliyah al-Usmaniyah*, which discusses the involvement of women and foreign women in the Ottoman government, which not only caused conflict within the Palace but also caused shocks in the policy of this large and broad-reaching imperial government. Undoubtedly, the turmoil and decline that occurred in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire were one of the direct causes, along with other factors. Another primary source is a book written by Stanford Shaw entitled *History of the Ottoman Empire*, which describes the political elements carried out by the women of the Palace throughout the reign of the Ottoman Empire. He also provides an overview of the impact of the policies carried out by the Palace's intervention and its influence on foreign policy

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<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Farid Bek Al-Muhami, *Tarij Al-Dawla al-'aliyya al-'utmaniyya* (Beirut: Dar al-Nafa' is, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

and trade. Another source is an article written by Leslie P. Pierce, which tells about the standard historical treatment of the salience of the imperial Harem in Ottoman politics and views it, in the framework of the Islamic polity and Islamic society, as an illegitimate exercise of power. This chapter corrects certain misconceptions regarding harems in the Ottoman Empire. It explores the networks through which royal women in this gender-segregated society exercised power in the world beyond the walls of the Harem.

It can be said that this interference stopped during the time of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, who believed that "the greed of daughters' mothers caused their children to suffer disasters," and we "believe that the interference of Sultan Abdulaziz's mother and Sultan Murad's mother in state affairs did not result in a good outcome, both for the country and the royal family. The day after he acceded to the throne, he first kissed the hand of his queen mother and said to her: "I have made you mother, sultan." I specifically ask you to avoid interfering in state affairs: you seek help to protect this or that, and you help those who aspire to rank and office, and he adheres to this completely." In the book Ottoman Empire compiled by Agston entitled Encyclopaedia Ottoman, there is a discussion about his father's nanny, Aisha Osmanoglu, daughter of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, saying, "She remained so until her father's death, she continued to support his father's wishes and policies. Following his example, his daughters were married and became homeowners in the city; they followed the same path as his father, Abdul Hamid II. When Sultan Abdul Hamid II had free time, he sent news to whomever he wanted from his wife and daughters so that they would come and talk to them. He would not allow any of them to interfere in official matters, whether it was one of his wives or one of his daughters. The discussion in this article focuses on the Sharia policies adopted by the rulers as guidelines for the Kingdom since ancient times. Can they be influenced by the Sultan's Harem and his assistants? How were the significant policies that caused the collapse caused by Foreign Harim, who came from outside the Kingdom and then intervened heavily in government policies? Was it only foreigners who contributed to the decline of Ottoman

Turkey's power? In the rules of Fiqh, it is said that تصرف الإمام على الرعية منوطاً بالمصلحة. The actions of an imam (Leader) depend on the welfare. Was part of the Sultan's decision to take lives based on a fatwa from the Ulama?

## **B. METHODS**

In preparing this article, we conducted a literature study and reviewed several articles related to the Ottoman Empire. After collecting data heuristically, we verified and interpreted through a comparative analysis between data obtained from Turkish, Arab, and Western sources. We interpreted the events and policies taken by the Ottoman rulers and the influence of foreign women on these policies with a qualitative approach, explained in detail.

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **The Beginning of the Influence of the Harem on the Ottoman Palace**

It is essential to convince your reader of the potential impact of your study/research. The discussion is written to interpret and describe the significance of your findings in light of what was already known about the issues being investigated and to explain any new understanding or insights about the problem after considering the findings. It should connect to the introduction by way of the research questions or hypotheses you posed and the literature you reviewed, but it does not simply repeat or rearrange the introduction; this section should always explain how your study has moved the reader's understanding of the research problem forward from where you left them at the end of the introduction.

The body could be divided into sections. Sections should be bold. Please be consistent throughout whichever spelling you choose (British or American English). Latin expressions, e.g., et al., versus (vs.), should be in italics. All terms or titles in Arabic should be transliterated following the Library of Congress guide.

Undoubtedly, the turmoil and decline that occurred in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire were one of the direct causes of the interference of foreign women in the Sultan's wife and mother in government affairs. We followed the events in this case and found that Sultan Sulaiman's very close

relationship with Ibrahim Pasha had caused disaster in the Sultan's life because of Harim Sultan (Roxelane), who came from Ukraine. Ibrahim Pasha was cruelly murdered, so Ottoman Türkiye lost a prime minister who was capable of action. This also impacted the Ottoman Turks' protection of Malay countries, such as the Malaysian peninsula and (now) Indonesia, from the wrath of Portugal.<sup>3</sup>

It can be said that this interference stopped during the time of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, who believed that "the greed of daughters' mothers caused their children to experience disaster, and he "believed that the interference of Sultan Abdulaziz's mother and Sultan Murad's mother in state affairs did not produce good results. good." Both for the country and the royal family. The first thing he did the day after his accession to the throne was kiss his queen's hand and say to her: "I have made you the sultan's mother (Queen Mother)." I specifically ask you to avoid interference in state affairs: you seek help to protect this or that, and you help those who aspire to rank and office, and he adheres to this completely."<sup>4</sup>

### **Nurbanu Sultan**

Nurbanu, an enslaved person who was bought and sold and who ruled the Ottoman Empire, set the political temperature in Europe and killed his stepsons so that his biological son would become the crown prince. She postponed her husband's funeral, Sultan Salim II, for 12 days to arrange regulations for his benefit.<sup>5</sup> Even so, he sent Turkish troops to Aceh Darussalam to help Aceh from the onslaught of Portugal and other parts of the archipelago, which had been done during the time of Sulaiman al-Qanuni.<sup>6</sup> It was the behind-the-scenes government of Ottoman Türkiye. He got rid of all his political opponents. He arranged international agreements that were mainly for the benefit of the Jews and Venice because that was

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<sup>3</sup> Muhammad Farid Bek Al-Muhami, *Tarij al-dawla al-'aliyya al-'utmaniyya* (Beirut: Dar al-Nafa' is, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Amnon Cohen, "The {Ottoman} Approach to {Christians} and {Christianity} in Sixteenth-century {Jerusalem}," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 7, no. 2 (June 1996): 205–212.

<sup>5</sup> Abdurrahman Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern {Ottoman} {Empire}*, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

where he came from. She has extraordinary beauty and intelligence and is also a cold-blooded killer. The power of foreign harems continued and faded as the Ottoman Turks weakened.<sup>7</sup>

Aisha Osmanoglu, daughter of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, said about Sultan Abdul Hamid II, "his attitude remained like that and never changed until his death. As head of the family, he did not want state affairs to be interfered with by his family.<sup>8</sup> When Sultan Abdul Hamid's work was reduced, he sent news to whoever he wanted, including his wife and daughters, so they could come and talk to them. He would not allow any of them to interfere in official matters;<sup>9</sup> Hafsa Sultan, the wife of Sultan Selim I, who was also the mother of Sultan Suleiman I al-Qanuni, had a strong influence on her son. However, she did not use this influence in a negative direction. She played an administrative role in court in a total sense. Sources also say that Hafsa Sultan did her best to prevent Khorem Sultan and his legal wife, Gulbahar Mahidevran, from gaining influence in the Palace and the state.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Role Of Harem Slaves (Roxelane) In Government Policy**

Let us mention here an outrageous incident, namely the murder of his eldest son, Mustafa, Sultan, based on Roxelane's machinations, so that his young son Salim could become crown prince and his son-in-law the prime minister named Rustem Pasha who, according to Western sources had been infected with the Lion King's disease (Syphilis).<sup>11</sup> Rustem Sulaiman was a terrible prime minister known for his hot temper.<sup>12</sup> He is the person who first took bribes in politics and achieved all his desires. He

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<sup>7</sup> Farid Bek Al-Muhami, *Tarij Al-Dawla al-'aliyya al-'utmaniyya*.

<sup>8</sup> عبد الحميد and ترجمها عن النص الأصلي وكتب مقدماتها وحواشيها وقابلها بمذكرات للمعاصرين محمد حرب دار: al-Tab'ah. (Dimashq: محمد حرب، 1842-1918، منكرات السلطان عبد الحميد II (القلم، 2018).

<sup>9</sup> Angela Andersen, "Review: \textit{{Architecture}} and {Hagiography} in the {Ottoman} {Empire}: {The} {Politics} of {Bektashi} {Shrines} in the {Classical} {Age}, by {Zeynep} {Yürekli}," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 74, no. 3 (September 2015): 367–368.

<sup>10</sup> Leslie P Peirce, *Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*, New ed., Studies in {Middle} {Eastern} {History} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2010), 87.

<sup>12</sup> Farid Bek Al-Muhami, *Tarij Al-Dawla al-'aliyya al-'utmaniyya*.

helped Roxelane until the Sultan married his daughter to him. Rustem Pasha became Prime Minister, taking advantage of the opportunity of the war between the Ottoman Turks and the Persian Kingdom. Mustafa, the crown prince, was among the military leaders when the war broke out.<sup>13</sup> Rustem Pasha made fake news that Mustafa, the crown prince, would carry out a coup against his father, Sulaiman al-Qanuni. When this news reached the Sultan, he sent for his poor son.<sup>14</sup>

As soon as he arrived, several guards, consisting of Janissaries, strangled him, and he died in a tragic state. May God have mercy on him. He was a victim of the crimes of his father's wife, Roxelane, and this cruelty became a black spot in the history of Sultan Suleiman<sup>15</sup>. Safiye Sultan also intervened during the reign of her son, Mehmed III, directly in state affairs and administrative appointments and was essentially a weakling controlled by the Qosim, who had access to the outside world.<sup>16</sup> Roxelane has also diverted Sultan Sulaiman al-Qanuni's attention from Poland and Ukraine, which could have been used as bases to conquer mainland Western Europe. Ukraine was Roxelane's homeland, while the Polish solid lobby consisting of Jews could prevent the Sultan's expansion from being hit at the gates of the Austrian city of Vienna.<sup>17</sup>

During the reign of her son Mehmed III, Safia Sultan seized complete power, clung to Ibrahim Pasha, her daughter Aisha Sultan's husband, and made him Grand Vizier. Several times, he helped Venice in many ways. Apart from that, he helped England in various aspects, such as economic, commercial, and political. Mehmed III was appointed due to the confirmation because the Sultan had previously tried to prevent palace

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<sup>13</sup> Amnon Cohen, "The Ottoman Approach to Christians and Christianity in Sixteenth-century Jerusalem," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 7, no. 2 (June 1996): 205–212.

<sup>14</sup> Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Alan Masters, eds., *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, Facts on File library of world history (New York, NY: Facts On File, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India, 1200-1800 / Muzaffar Alam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

<sup>16</sup> A.A.A. Didi, *السلطة التشريعية في المالديف: مقارنة بالنظام السياسي الإسلامي والأنظمة السياسية المعاصرة*, (Jami'at al-Azhar, Kulliyat al-Shari'ah wa al-Qanun, 1999), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=CtYinQAACAAJ>.

<sup>17</sup> "الدولة العثمانية.. تربة خصبة للقيادة النسائية ومقومات النهوض بالمرأة | نون بوست", accessed August 17, 2023, <https://www.noonpost.com/content/40064>.

women from intervening in essential state policies. In the end, there were many deviations, and the Ottoman Turks lost much territory in Africa and Europe.<sup>18</sup> After Mehmed III's death, Sultan Ahmed I was appointed his successor. She prevented the court ladies from using their influence and did not allow herself to become a puppet in their hands. Sultan Ahmed, I sent Safiye Sultan to "Eski Saray," a palace of exile for women, thus preventing women from interfering in state affairs.<sup>19</sup> Khandan Sultan, the mother of Sultan Mustafa I, also played a role in triggering the Agawat Janissary dispute against Sultan Osman II, intending to return Sultan Mustafa I to the throne, and this is what happened after the assassination of Sultan Osman II. This incident is considered one of Ottoman history's most dangerous and tragic.<sup>20</sup> As for Kösem Sultan, wife of Sultan Ahmed I and mother of Sultans Murad IV and Ibrahim I, they participated in the leadership of the state during the reigns of her two sons, "Murad IV" and Ibrahim I, and at the beginning of the reign of her grandson, "Muhammad IV." As "Sultan's mother" or deputy. According to Western Sources, he is the cause of many heinous events not in line with the country's national policy of benefit.<sup>21</sup> He is knowledgeable, cunning, and skilled at devising complex political plans and multidimensional conspiracies.<sup>22</sup>

As a result, Sultan Ibrahim I expelled his mother from the Royal Palace, knowing the extent of the erosion of her power. Despite this, it is difficult to say he succeeded in curbing her.<sup>23</sup> At the beginning of Sultan Mehmed IV's reign, Kösem Sultan appointed his followers to key administrative positions. The Palace became the scene of continuous struggle between Kösem Sultan and Khadija Tarkhan Sultan, the Sultan's

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<sup>18</sup> Tracey Amanda Sowerby and Christopher Markiewicz, *Diplomatic Cultures at the {Ottoman} Court, c.1500-1630*, Routledge research in early modern history (New York (N.Y.): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2021).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Farid Bek Al-Muhami, *Tarij Al-Dawla al-'aliyya al-'utmaniyya*.

<sup>21</sup> Leslie P. Peirce, *Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*, New ed., Studies in Middle Eastern History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>22</sup> Abdurrahman Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Halil İnalcık, *The {Ottoman} {Empire}: The Classical Age 1300-1600* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000).



wife; later, the Sultan's wife managed to get rid of her mother-in-law. Kösem failed to appoint Suleiman II to replace Mehmed IV because he thought he could manipulate Umm Suleiman better, but what happened was not as expected.<sup>24</sup> Khadija Turkhan then took on the role of the Sultan's mother (queen mother) due to his inability to carry out his duties ultimately. We assume a significant positive role in a period that is considered one of the worst periods: chaos spread in the regions, revolutionaries took control of some of them, the influence of the Janissaries increased, bribery and corruption spread, and the ambition of foreign countries, but there was still the construction of mosques -Libraries, and schools surround the grand mosque. Plus, there are forts in the Black Sea and Ukraine.<sup>25</sup> This also cannot be separated from the role of women in appointing Muhammad Kubrili Pasha to that end. The Ottoman Turkish fleet became strong again and was again respected by Western European countries and Russia.<sup>26</sup>

It becomes clear to us from the description above that the intervention of the mothers and wives of the Ottoman sultans in government, although in some cases positive, in many other times brought disaster and tragedy to the country, which was the cause of destruction by infiltrating Ukrainian and Polish Jews into the country in the Ottoman Empire which had an area stretching from land to Central Europe, the Arabian Peninsula to the Indian Ocean, from Austria to Indonesia.<sup>27</sup> The power of women, especially foreign women, has attacked its internal structure. Bribery was seen during the time of Sultan Sulaiman in collaboration with Hürrem Sultan (Roxelane). The conspiracy of foreign concubines, the Sultan's daughters, and ultimately the killing of the Sultan's best sons himself has changed the direction of the benefit of Islam. Muslims

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<sup>24</sup> Brian L. Davies, *The Russo-Turkish War, 1768-1774: Catherine II and the Ottoman Empire* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Konrad Zasztowt, "The Crimean Tatar Muslim Community: Between Annexed Crimea and Mainland Ukraine," *Studia Religiologica* 52, no. 1 (2019): 27–48.

<sup>26</sup> Peirce, *Imperial {Harem}*.

<sup>27</sup> Peacock Andrew, *Ottoman Expedition to Aceh*. (Place of publication not identified: Betascript Publishing, 2011).

have borne the consequences, such as in the archipelago and Malaysia.<sup>28</sup> Even though during the time of Grand Vizier Koprlili, he was able to strengthen the army, build infrastructure, and improve the political situation, women and foreign women still became a burden on the state due to increasing rebellion and disobedience, so that competence was removed from their positions and sometimes killed, this made the sultans into playthings, in the hands of soldiers and women.<sup>29</sup> "Historians have confirmed that this intervention was one of the most important factors in the decline of the Ottoman Empire because of the terrible and painful incidents and events resulting from their intervention in Ottoman history," especially since the continuous intervention until it ended during the time of Sultan Abdul Hamid II.<sup>30</sup> The impregnable fortress of Islam has been opened wide, making Muslim countries objects of colonialism, such as the Middle East, Indonesia, and Malaysia."<sup>31</sup>

### Fratricide

As for the bad and painful habit, namely the habit of the sultans killing their sons and brothers, it is against humanity; even if a weak reason is found for it, it takes the lives of children and innocent people without sin.<sup>32</sup> This is due to the fear that disputes will arise in the power struggle. Finally, essential positions in the Ottoman Empire were occupied by Europeans who seemed clever in controlling the situation with the support of foreign women in the Palace. Some of them pretended to be Muslim, concealed their disbelief, and returned devastated and defeated to the land after wasting

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<sup>28</sup> Peacock Andrew, *Ottoman Expedition to Aceh*. (Place of publication not identified: Betascript Publishing, 2011).

<sup>29</sup> C G A Clay, *Gold for the Sultan: {Western} Bankers and {Ottoman} Finance 1856-1881: A Contribution to {Ottoman} and to International Financial History*, International library of historical studies (London ; New York : New York, NY: I.B. Tauris ; In the U.S.A. and Canada distributed by St. Martin's Press, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> سليمان البستاني، عبرة ونكرى أو الدولة العثمانية قبل الدستور وبعده (دار الأخبار، 1908) <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=nWYrkAAACAAJ>.

<sup>31</sup> İsmail Hakkı Kadı, A C Peacock, and Giancarlo Casale, *Ottoman-{Southeast} {Asian} {Relations}: Sources from the {Ottoman} {Archives}* (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2020).

<sup>32</sup> Ruth Barzilai-Lumbroso, "Turkish {Men} and the {History} of {Ottoman} {Women}," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 5, no. 2 (July 2009): 53–82.

their energy fighting on several fronts, Persia and Western Europe.<sup>33</sup> Muhammad al-Fateh changed this murder of siblings into a law that was established, according to several sources.<sup>34</sup> The meaning of this law is that the Sultan in charge of the throne has the authority to liquidate his rival princes by agreement with the Ulama and Mufti.<sup>35</sup> However, no documents or evidence were found after conducting research, including death records for the Sultan's sons. The only thing that existed was a coup that ended with the death of the Sultan's uncle.<sup>36</sup> This policy prioritizes the represented state's highest political interests in maintaining its political entity's unity. Facing the consequences of adopting the principle of royal succession in terms of formative imbalances that provide an appropriate climate rather than leading to the dissolution of the state entity when power is transferred from father to son.<sup>37</sup>

A century later, after Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih, these laws and methods were replaced by another law regulating the abandonment of the policy of physical liquidation, and he was satisfied with imprisoning all princes who could carry out a coup. However, many historical experts deny that Muhammad Al-Fatih could have done this because he was very submissive to the Fatwa of the Ulama, who taught him Aq Syamsuddin. No historian who lived then wrote about this either in Turkey or Egypt.<sup>38</sup> The influence of the actions of the Harem in the succession continued but changed with the Palace and could not be connected with the outside world. This allowed the detained princes to govern, which at one time would have been detrimental to the Ottoman Empire. Later, this law underwent amendments because it required a new law.<sup>39</sup> It was mandatory to give the

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<sup>33</sup> Giancarlo Casale, *The {Ottoman} Age of Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> Ahmad Nabil Hasan Najar, 2020, *الدولة العثمانية: قراءة جديدة لعوامل الانحطاط*.

<sup>35</sup> Ahmad Nabil Hasan Najar, 2020, *الدولة العثمانية: قراءة جديدة لعوامل الانحطاط*.

<sup>36</sup> Hüseyin Yılmaz, "II. Kingship and Legitimacy in the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," *The Empires of the Near East and India* (August 1, 2019): 193–204.

<sup>37</sup> Peirce, *Imperial {Harem}*.

<sup>38</sup> Farid Bek Al-Muhami, *Tarij Al-Dawla al-'aliyya al-'utmaniyya*.

<sup>39</sup> Arthur F. Buehler, "III. Sufism And The Divine Law: Ahmad Sirhindi's Ruminations," *The Empires of the Near East and India* (August 1, 2019): 160–174.

throne, when vacant, to the oldest surviving male of the Ottoman family.<sup>40</sup> As a result of the implementation of this law, over a century and a half, brothers, uncles, and cousins took over the position of Sultan. Most of them were prisoners in cages and, therefore, individuals who did not have and fulfill the conditions that were essential for occupying the position of Sultan. Hence, members of the royal family lived in constant fear, waiting for each other in a circle, who took turns to face their fate. They had to obey the Sultan to save their necks from being cut by the executioner. They were prisoners and heirs to the Kingdom when the Sultan died.<sup>41</sup>

### **The Role Of The Harem In Foreign Relations**

Palace women's political intervention was by appointing courtiers to become ministers or bringing flatterers into the ranks of officials and contracts, such as heading ministries and leading the army. In carrying out their activities, these people had to be spied on because they had access abroad, which would be detrimental to the Ottoman Turks. What has been learned about the most critical factors that caused the Ottoman state to have several sultans, such as Sultan Suleiman, Salim II, Murad IV, and others, can be analyzed. The conspiracy was carried out secretly to carry out its objectives during the reign of Sultan Ahmed III in 1115 H/1704 AD.<sup>42</sup> When the Ottoman army surrounded the Russian Tsar Peter the Great and his concubine Katrina in his Palace, Muhammad Pasha (Commander-in-Chief) was lured by Katrina with jewels, so he lifted the siege on them, missing a great opportunity to eliminate the Russian head of state who later played a role in bringing down the Ottoman Turks.<sup>43</sup> The crown prince remained imprisoned in the harem house, so they saw nothing of the world and knew nothing, and often, they also learned nothing because they did not know what they would become. He was controlled, or they were pulled from the

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<sup>40</sup> Nikolay Antov, "II. Conversion, Apostasy, And Relations Between Muslims And Non-Muslims: Fatwas Of The Ottoman Shaykh Al-Islams," *The Empires of the Near East and India* (August 1, 2019): 32–54.

<sup>41</sup> Ruth Barzilai-Lumbroso, "Turkish Men and the History of Ottoman Women," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 5, no. 2 (July 1, 2009): 53–82.

<sup>42</sup> Patrick Balfour Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire*, Morrow Quill paperbacks (New York, N.Y: Morrow, 2020).

<sup>43</sup> إمبر أورطايي - ترجمة عبد القادر عبد الله، *الخلافة العثمانية: التحديث والحداثة في القرن التاسع عشر* (مكتبة 2007) (2007), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=7QretAEACAAJ>, يستأن المعرفة للطباعة والنشر والتوزيع.

throne and killed, or the ladies of the court controlled them. Associating with enslaved women was a destructive habit, especially if they were kept in Palace custody.<sup>44</sup>

### ***Siyasah Shar'iiyyah* Analysis Of The Assassination Of The Crown Prince**

The facts and motives for killings in power struggles in the Ottoman Empire are often manipulated; some are even taken from their historical context so that, in the end, it shows that the Ottoman Sultan killed potential rivals for power without legal justification. The Ottomans were not the only country that experienced incidents of murder, so they can be highlighted in a tendentious picture that aims to undermine the goodness of the country by talking about its shortcomings. However, we do not condone them doing so. The Fratricidal Law, issued by Muhammad al-Fatih, limited its application to anyone who expressed disobedience and attempted to defeat the Sultan with weapons to seize power or collaborate with enemies of the state, namely, the question of armed rebellion against the legitimate ruler.<sup>45</sup>

There is no doubt that Ottoman Turkey was not a country led by a Prophet; it has a long history in which there are deviant, cruel acts, even though it developed based on the Islamic religion. One form of tyranny is bloodshed in a power struggle. Sulaiman I's murder of the crown prince, Mustafa, son of Mahedveran, was based on the apparent facts reported by Rustem Pasha on Roxelane's orders so that his son would become the crown prince. Sulaiman asked the National Mufti in a taunting and indirect manner, and eventually, a misunderstanding occurred. At the beginning of the growth of Ottoman Turkey as a sultanate country, the policy was in line with Islamic shari'a along with the guidance of scholars; even the crown princes were under the tutelage of selected scholars and teachers and were required to memorize the Qur'an and the Prophet's Hadith, Arabic, and Persian, as well as mathematics and astronomy. Scholars can dispute the Sultan's decision, which must align with Islamic law. The Sultans sometimes

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<sup>44</sup> Halil İnalcık, Norman Itzkowitz, and Colin Imber, *The {Ottoman} Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 2013.

<sup>45</sup> Hasan Najar, *الدولة العثمانية*.

have to wait at the Ulama's door to be able to go in to see the Ulama. Sometimes, the Ulama can mock the Sultan because his morals are not in line with Islamic Norms. However, after experiencing a golden age, that is where the degradation of leadership when the influence of foreign women entered the Palace, especially Catholics and Jews. The government atmosphere has undergone many changes. The foreign capitulation policy became increasingly widespread, and the Sultan could use it to review the territory up to Italy and the coast of Spain and Poland, but that was not done. A policy that does not benefit Muslims much and is not in line with Maqashid Shari'ah. Finally, the Muslims in the Russian region were languishing and destroyed by Ivan the Terrible (the Russian emperor), who had conquered easily and almost captured the city of Moscow.<sup>46</sup>

**However, Two Things Should not be overlooked:**

First, The Ottoman Empire is not unique in this matter, as all kingdoms and states suffered the same thing, for example, the conflict, in which conflicts broke out over the king and the physical elimination of opponents, whether in the Umayyad or Abbasid state (between Al-Amin and Al-Ma'mun, the two sons of Harun Al-Rashid) or the Mamluk state. And others.<sup>47</sup> It is not a secret to many readers that Al-Zahir Baibars, the most prominent Mamluk statesman who had incredible heroics and excellent services to the nation, was promoted to the Sultanate after he assassinated Sultan Saif Al-Din Qutuz, the hero of Ain Goliath and the crusher of the Tatars.<sup>48</sup> There are many examples of this, and therefore, the Ottomans are not the only ones among whom murder incidents occurred; for them to be highlighted in this tendentious way that aims to undermine the virtues of the state by talking about its shortcomings, even though we do not justify any of them doing so.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> "The Destruction and Burning of {Moscow}: {Devlet} {I} {Giray}'s {Crimean} Campaign.," *Crimea Platform*, n.d.

<sup>47</sup> Hugh Kennedy, "The Early Abbasid Caliphate: {A} Political History," *The Early Abbasid Caliphate: A Political History* (January 2016): 1–238.

<sup>48</sup> Christian Mauder, *In the {Sultan}'s Salon: Learning, Religion and Rulership at the {Mamluk} Court of {Qānişawh} al-{Ghawrī} (r. 1501-1516)*, Islamic history and civilization (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2021).

<sup>49</sup> "الدولة العثمانية.. تربة خصبة للقيادة النسائية ومقومات النهوض بالمرأة | نون بوست"

Second, the facts and motives of killings over power in the Ottoman Empire were often manipulated. Some of them were extracted from their historical context to show, in the end, that the Ottoman sultans were killing potential rivals for power without legal justifications.<sup>50</sup>

### **The Truth About The Fatwas That Permit Killing Competitors:**

In the context of incidents of murder against authority in the Ottoman Empire, rumors are being circulated about the existence of legal fatwas permitting sultans to kill brothers and relatives to preserve public order. This is a heinous accusation that has no proven basis. Nothing is more evident than the fact that the references that dealt with the fatwas equivocal mentioned them. The names of the scholars who issued such alleged fatwas and the times they were issued were not specified.<sup>51</sup> The late Jordanian thinker Ziad Abu Ghanima vehemently denies the existence of any basis for such fatwas. He says in his book "Lighting Aspects in the History of the Turkish Ottomans": "I read twenty-odd Arab, Turkish, and English references chronicling the Muslim Ottomans, but I did not find a single reference among them that mentioned the text of the alleged fatwa." Or mention the name of one scholar to whom the fatwa is attributed."<sup>52</sup>

### **Assassination Of Crown Prince Mustafa**

According to many historical references, historians consider Khurrem or Roxelane responsible for the murder of Prince Mustafa, whom the people loved. The reference states that Khurrem played a significant role in inciting Sultan Suleiman to kill Mustafa, his crown prince. In this, he was assisted by his daughter's husband, Grand Vizier Rustam Pasha, who took advantage of Mustafa's opportunity to lead. Military campaign into Persia,

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سليمان البستاني، عبرة ونكرى او الدولة العثمانية قبل الدستور ويعده (دار الأخبار، 1908) <sup>50</sup>  
<https://books.google.co.id/books?id=nWYrkGAACAAJ>.

مركز الابحاث للتاريخ والفنون والثقافة الاسلامية، الدولة العثمانية تاريخ وحضارة، and أوغلي، أكمل الدين احسان <sup>51</sup>  
سلسلة الدولة العثمانية تاريخ وحضارة ؛ (مركز الابحاث للتاريخ والفنون والثقافة الاسلامية، 1999)  
<https://books.google.co.id/books?id=8uYrwAEACAAJ>.

<sup>52</sup> Antov, "II. Conversion, Apostasy, And Relations Between Muslims And Non-Muslims: Fatwas Of The Ottoman Shaykh Al-Islams."

and the Sultan's servants informed him that his son intended to fight him with military assistance.<sup>53</sup>

In 1553, the Sultan traveled to Persia and summoned his son to his tent. He was strangled immediately upon entering with a silk thread and with the help of five deaf and hard-of-hearing executioners, who were entrusted to him to hang people of high status, especially members of the ruling family, following the Ottoman tradition of executing essential figures.<sup>54</sup>

It is said that Suleiman the Magnificent killed his son Mustafa with a fake fatwa from Sheikh al-Islam Abu Saud (Mufti of the state) when the Sultan sent a letter to the Mufti in which he said: "A wealthy merchant is not in the capital, and he entrusted his slaves to supervise his business. Once the merchant was away, the enslaved person attempted to steal his master's money, destroy his company, and conspire to take the lives of his wife and children. Sheikh Islam replied that he deserved to die. This fatwa made the Sultan even more determined to kill his son, considering that a child's betrayal of his father was nothing more than an enslaved person's betrayal of his master. However, the life of a child is different from the life of an enslaved person in that it cannot be sacrificed or analogous to a child not being punished criminally for stealing his parents' property, as well as a child's property belonging to his parents, following the provisions of Islamic law."<sup>55</sup>

#### **D. CONCLUSIONS**

Beginning with the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, there were repeated attempts by ruling women in the Ottoman court to assume various roles within the state. These attempts left profound impacts on the state's internal structure in the long run. They diminished the status of the sultans, marginalized some, and distracted them from the affairs of government, sometimes even leading to the murder of some. Some mothers

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<sup>53</sup> "لماذا أمر السلطان سليمان القانوني بقتل ابنه مصطفى؟ - إضاءات" accessed July 28, 2024, <https://www.ida2at.com/why-did-sultan-suleiman-alkanoni-give-an-order-to-kill-his-son-mustafa/>.

<sup>54</sup> Peirce, *Imperial Harem*.

<sup>55</sup> Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern {Ottoman} {Empire}*.



and wives of sultans were able to build structures within the state and gained supporters in the ministry and the army. It is worth noting that "one of the most important factors in the Ottoman state's stagnation, or even decline, was the interference of the sultans' wives and mothers in state affairs for nearly a century." The women of the Palace strongly influenced the sultans, especially in the seventeenth Century, when the state was under their rule. The interference of the sultans' mothers and wives in government is considered a manifestation of the severe corruption that afflicted the Ottoman Empire during the period "between the death of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent and the accession of Sultan Mustafa IV to the throne in 1807 AD. During this period, eighteen sultans ruled, none of whom were qualified to exercise power". What is strange is that "some of the wives of the People of the Book pretended to embrace Islam, pretended to love their sultan husbands, and even pretended to be loyal to the Ottoman Empire. However, each of them concealed deep within her a deep love and loyalty to her homeland, working to implement the program of her country's government to achieve the interests of her country, even if this program was harmful". There is no doubt that the turmoil and deterioration that occurred in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire were directly caused, along with other factors, by the interference of foreign women, the wives, and mothers of the sultans in the affairs of government. When we examine the events in this regard, we find ourselves unable to differentiate between Ibrahim Pasha and Sultan Suleiman despite the distance between an enslaved person and his enslaver.

From the above, it is clear that the interventions of the mothers and wives of the Ottoman sultans in government, while sometimes positive, were often disastrous, bringing tragedies upon the state and devastating its internal fabric. They also contributed to the decline of the sultans' role and encouraged corruption among state officials. Bribery became rampant, and the army strengthened its power. This army burdened the state due to increased instances of rebellion and disobedience. Competent individuals were removed from their positions and sometimes killed, while those who benefited were brought closer. This made the sultans play things in the hands of the army and women, who were sometimes dismissed, imprisoned,

or killed. "Historians have confirmed that this interference was one of the most important factors in the decline of the Ottoman Empire, as their interference resulted in unfortunate and painful events and incidents in Ottoman history," especially since "the Ottoman Empire—despite its recent shortcomings—was a formidable bulwark for Islam and a strong, broad wall for the Arab and Islamic countries."

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