The Political and Administrative Role of the Kizlar aghas in Egypt During the first Half of the twelfth Century A.H (A.D 1687-1737), in Contemporary Arabic Manuscript Sources

The Kizlar Aghas or Agha Dar al-Sa'ada (the chief black eunuch of the Ottoman Imperial Harem in Istanbul) played an important role in the political system of the Ottoman Empire, and attained vital administrative posts in Egypt and the Hijaz. Black eunuchs were presented to the Sultan by the Pasha and Mamluk beys of Egypt, and were selected for this purpose from slave caravans that arrived annually from Sennar and Darfur in sub-Saharan Africa, and to cement this Egyptian connection, the typical Kizlar Agha was exiled to Egypt on being removed from office. This paper attempts to study the political and administrative role of the Kizlar Aghas in Egypt from three prospectives; the role Kizlar Aghas who were already exiled in Egypt during the period 1099-1150/1687-1737, the importance of the network established by the Kizlar aghas in Istanbul and Cairo through their wakils and mamluks who became an important part of the political set-up in Ottoman Egypt, and finally through the direct interference of Kizlar Aghas in office in the affairs of Egypt, using their power and influence within the Ottoman court. Based on unexploited chronicles and Arabic manuscript sources,
this study aims to find out why the Kizlar aghas failed to establish their own households although they had sufficient wealth and power within the political system of Ottoman Egypt.

The Ottoman Harem(1) staff commonly included eunuchs. These were either white slaves recruited within the Ottoman Empire from Caucasus, Georgia, and Armenia, or black slaves donated to the sultans by their governors from Egypt, Sudan and Abyssinia. The black eunuchs

(1) Harem: An Arabic word used in reference to the female members of the Sultans' palace in Istanbul. The mothers and wives of the Sultans in particular enjoyed enormous wealth and political power in the Ottoman court, they were usually represented by their servants; the Kizlar Aghas.

were most preferred for the Hareem service because they were sandali (their genitalia were entirely amputated), and thus the master of the Hareem was usually a black eunuch who held the title of Kızlar Ağası or Agha Dār al-Sa‘āda, and was considered to be second only to the Grand Wazir (head of the imperial government) in the confidence of the sultan to whom he had arranged access, and by the second half of the seventeenth century he rivaled the Grand Wazir for the de facto control of imperial policy.

In addition to their importance at the head of the central administration many black eunuchs attained vital administrative posts in Egypt and the Hijaz, including Nazir Awqaf al-Haramayn (supervisor of the imperial endowments established for the holy cities of Makka and Madina), and Shaykh al-Haram al-Nabawi. The role played by kizlar Aghas in Egypt hardly attracted the attention of any modern scholar of Ottoman Egypt. Lack of primary material partly explains why so many historians have been discouraged from investigating this office. The only relevant studies available are Jane Hathaway’s articles entitled, 'The Role of the Kızlar Ağası in 17th and 18th Century Ottoman Egypt,' 'The Wealth and Influence of an exiled Ottoman Eunuch in Egypt: The Waqf inventory of ‘Abbas Agha','

Many other historians made a brief reference to the power and authority of the Kızlar Aghas in Egypt such as Shaw, Holt, and Winter, but very little reference was made in these works to the role played by the kizlar Aghas in the political system and administration of Egypt in the second half of the twelfth century A.H.

Unexploited chronicles and manuscript sources may uncover many of the hidden aspects of the imperial black eunuchs. In this paper, an

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(2) The word kız in Turkish means girl, the plural of it being kizlar.
(3) Published in, Stuvida Islamica, Ex fasciculo, no. 75 (Paris, 1992) pp. 140-158.
An attempt is made to analyse the role played by the Kizlar Aghas in the internal affairs of Egypt based on Arabic manuscript sources. The discussion covers three areas, viz.:

a. The Kizlar Aghas who were already exiled in Egypt during the period: 1099-1150/1687-1737.

b. The wakils and mamluks of Kizlar Aghas who became an important part of the political set-up in Ottoman Egypt during the first half of the twelfth century A.H.

c. The direct interference by Kizlar Aghas in office in the affairs of Egypt, using their power and influence within the Ottoman court.

a. The Aghas in Egypt

There was a close connection between Egypt as a province of the Ottoman state and the office of Kizlar Agha. Eunuchs were presented to the Sultan by the Pasha and Mamluk beys of Egypt, and were selected for this purpose from slave caravans that arrived annually from Sennar and Darfur in sub-Saharan Africa (8). To cement this Egyptian connection, the typical Kizlar Agha was exiled to Egypt on being removed from office. Hathaway argues that, in a hundred and fifty years, seventeen of thirty-eight Kizlar Aghas were banished to Egypt, where they received a stipend through the Keshide (9), a sort of corps of imperial appointees attached to the Ottoman governor’s Dīwān (10). The period 1099-1150/1687-1737 witnessed the accession of five Ottoman Sultans to the throne (Suleiman II, 1099-1102/1687-1690; Ahmad II, 1102-1106/1690-1694; Mustafa II, 1106-1115/1694-1703; Ahmed III, 1115-1143/1703-1730; and Mahmūd I, 1143-1167/1730-1754). This frequent succession of Sultans caused frequent changes in the Hareem and thus further changes in the Aghas of the Hareem. The majority of these Aghas were banished to Egypt, where they actually formed a class of their own and

(9) Keshide: A Persian term used in Ottoman administrative terminology in reference to specified salaries.

established a network with the Porte. Exiled Aghas in Cairo not only received salaries, but were also required to participate in certain administrative and economic functions fulfilled by the provincial authorities. Black Eunuchs were not seen as individuals but as a group of ex-service men who had excellent connections with the Porte and enjoyed a distinctive status in Egypt. They were particularly disliked by the military ojaqs(11) and often viewed as a burden on the local treasury. For the Porte, exiled eunuchs were a big investment, owing to the riches the treasury gained upon the confiscation of Aghas’ belongings, following their death, and sometimes during their lifetime.

The period 1099-1108/1687-1696 witnessed the peak of the Aghas’ power in Egypt. In 1099/1687 Bakir Agha Aghāt al-Walida (chief of the Sultan’s mother’s Aghas), was granted the office of Nazir al-Keshide (a waqf founded by Hurrem Sultan, wife of Suleiman I, 1520-1566). He arrived in Egypt with an Imperial Edict in his favour ordering the transfer of this office from the Amīr al-Hajj to Bakir Agha, who consequently resided in Egypt (12). Aghas’ power was further enhanced by another Imperial Edict in 1100/1688, which ordered that the southern provinces of Egypt such as; Boush, Ishmun, and Jaris be granted to the Kizl Agha and ‘Ali Agha, khazindar of the Sultan. Sanjaq beys and military chiefs protested against these orders, complaining that they had paid a high price for these districts. The protesters then warned Hasan Pasha (13), “the Aghas who made the requests should behave themselves while in Cairo or we will banish them to Ibrim” (14). In outrage the military chiefs forced

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(11) Ojaqs: The military garrison of Ottoman Egypt consisted of seven regiments called ojaqs; Mutafarriqa, Javushan, Gunullian, Tufekjian, Jarakise, Mustahfizan and Azeban.

(12) Al-‘Awfī, Ibrāhīm al-Sawālī (1701) f. 772.

(13) Hasan Pasha was appointed by Istanbul as viceroy of Egypt in February 1688. He was later appointed as pasha of Syria and thus his term in office in Egypt ended in September 1688.

(14) ibid., f. 782.
Bakir Agha\textsuperscript{(15)} to resign from office as Nazir al-Keshide, which was given back to the Amīr al-Hajj\textsuperscript{(16)}.

From another perspective the Kizlar Aghas in Cairo shared the burden of preparing campaigns against the Bedouin. In 1103/1691 ‘Ali Pasha sent ‘Abdullah Bey on a tajrīḍa (a local military campaign) against the ‘Urban in Buhayra. Sanjaq beys funded part of the campaign and the Aghas were also required to pay towards it out of their own funds. It is reported that ‘Abbas Agha sent ten of his own Mamluks to fight in this campaign\textsuperscript{(17)}, which is a clear indication that the Aghas had their own atba‘ and Mamluks. This proposition is further supported by an Imperial Edict in 1105/1693 which addressed the provincial administration as follows:

’The black eunuchs served the Sultans several years and came to Egypt. Then you burden them with costs of tajārīd and include their atba‘ for these tajārīd. On account of their service to the Sultans, they should no longer be burdened with costs of tajārīd nor should their atba‘ join these tajārīd or anything else’\textsuperscript{(18)}.

The Military chiefs protested and accused the Aghas of complaining against them to the Sultan, but the Aghas defended themselves. ‘Ali Pasha kept quiet until the Noble Script was read in full, whereupon he left the Dwān, while the Aghas ran away in fear of the military who were in a state of outrage.

However these orders were not taken seriously by the state or the military. In 1108/1696 another Noble Script appointed a certain ‘Ali Bey as commander of a safra\textsuperscript{(19)}, in connection with which the military had to

\textsuperscript{(15)} Bakir Agha was one of the most prominent servants of the mother of Sultan Muhammad IV (1648-1687), during the end of his reign Bakir was sent to Egypt and appointed as Nazir of the Keshide, shortly afterwards the Sultan was deposed and his brother Suliman II took over in 1687, and thus Bakir Agha lost his power and post to Amir Al-Hajj.

\textsuperscript{(16)} ibid., f. 782.
\textsuperscript{(17)} ibid., f. 830.
\textsuperscript{(18)} ibid., f. 856.
\textsuperscript{(19)} Safra: Egyptian garrison’s contribution in Imperial Campaign. This particular safra headed towards Istanbul to join a major campaign in the Balkans.
pay the costs of preparing five hundred men. The Noble Script stated, “The black eunuchs should prepare five hundred to accompany ‘Ali Bey”. The Aghas did not prepare the five hundred and were deprived of their salaries for five months.

Muhammad b. Mahmūd, author of the supplement of Tarājim al-sawā‘iğ provides significant information about the Aghas and their belongings. The reader could obtain the impression that the Porte aimed at strengthening these eunuchs and exempting them from paying any local administrative costs because of the money and valuables the Aghas had to return to the khazna (the annual Treasury). The Imperial Hareem eunuch thus served as an investment for the central administration, which adopted several other means of collecting as much as possible from Egypt. During the period 1099-1126/1687-1714 six Aghas lost their fortunes on the execution of orders from the Porte to confiscate all their belongings in Egypt, sell them by auction, and send the money raised to Istanbul. Following are some of the examples of the riches of Kizlar Aghas and great revenues gained by the Imperial Treasury when their belongings were confiscated.

- In 1099/1687 Yūsuf Kizlar Agha was banished to Egypt. A Noble Script ordered the confiscation and sale of his belongings. First, Yūsuf’s wakīl Ahmad Agha, was called to give full information about the Kizlar Agha’s belongings. His predecessor, Mustafa Agha, who was the previous wakīl, was also called for investigation. When all was registered, the iltizam villages of Yūsuf Agha were sold by auction in the Dīwān. On the second day his kitchen-ware

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(20) ibid, f. 920.

(21) Iltizam villages: After the Ottoman conquest of Egypt the entire cultivable land (other than waqf lands) was divided into parcels and distributed amongst the members of the ojaqs and other persons as Multazims. Each parcel of land was burdened with a tax paid by the peasants to the Multazims who held the land as a grant from the state. In the course of the seventeenth century these tax farmers acquired the right of hereditary succession and by the eighteenth century the Multazim appears as the effective owner of his assignment in the sense that he had the power to sell it to other Multazims, bequeath it to his son, or burden it with an irrevocable endowment. See, Gibb and Bowen, (1957) 1.1/258-275.
including dishes, bowls, and trays were all sold. His eighteen Mamluks were also sold. One was sold for nineteen thousand paras to Murad Javush Mustahfizān (22), another sold for eighteen thousand paras to Hussein Agha of the Mutafarriqa (23), and Ibrahim Agha ‘Azebān (24) bought four Mamluks for fifty thousand paras. It is interesting to note that Yūsuf Agha owned a vast number of villages and districts, which were sold at high prices. Amongst the belongings also were two wakālāt (markets), a public fountain, a bath-house, and seven shops in Cairo. There were also palaces and several other estates, but these were not sold because they were awqāf (endowment). The rest of his belongings were sold for 977 Kise (Purses; 1 purse = 25,000 paras), including the cash which has been preserved by his wakil (25).

- During the same year, ‘Ali Agha Khazindar was also banished to Egypt. He too owned a large number of villages, which were all sold to the sanjaq beys and military chiefs. His belongings and estates were sold, leaving him only a small house to stay in (26). Details of the total amounts paid for his belongings are not available.

(22) Mustahfizān: This regiment was considered to be the most important in Egypt, it was responsible for maintaining law and order in the Citadel and in the streets of Cairo, amongst the prominent posts of this regiment are the Pashas’ deputy the Ketkhuda, in addition to the Sirdars of the Hajj and the Khazna.

(23) Mutafarriqa: One of the seven military regiments in Cairo, their task was to maintain the citadels in the provinces of Egypt, they were also in charge of storing gunpowder for the Egyptian army.

(24) ‘Azeban: This regiment was considered the second largest in the Egyptian garrison, their chief duty was to guard the Citadel of Cairo. Their notables were also in charge of tax collection in Bulaq and Alexandria.

(25) ibid., f. 758.

26 ibid., f. 764.
Table of Yusuf Agha's *Iltizam* land sold in auction in 1099/1687\(^{(27)}\):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Iltizam</em> village</th>
<th>Amount sold (in paras)</th>
<th>Buyer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bush in Bahnassa</td>
<td>255,000</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maymoun in Bahnassa</td>
<td>1,050,000</td>
<td>Muhammad Ketkuda Azeban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bana in Bahnassa</td>
<td>1,890,000</td>
<td>Murad Bey, <em>tabi'</em> of Uzbek Bey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shubra Babel in Gharbiyya</td>
<td>1,400,000</td>
<td>Javush and Sayyid Hashim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmien in Fayyum</td>
<td>825,000</td>
<td>Ahmed Bey Khazindar of Qaytas Bey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- In 1101/1689 an Imperial Edict confirmed that ex-*Hareem Aghas* who had been banished to Egypt should receive their salaries in full (from the revenues of the province) as long as they remained alive and that when they died all their salaries and belongings should go to the Imperial Treasury\(^{(28)}\).
- In 1106/1694 two ex-service chief black eunuchs residing in Cairo (Nazir Agha and Ismai’l Agha) were jailed and their houses and belongings confiscated on orders from the Porte. Horses, Mamluks, concubines, furniture, palaces, and villages were all sold by auction. The total amount gained was estimated at 1,400 purses, which were sent to Istanbul\(^{(29)}\).
- In 1108/1696 'Abbas Agha died. This time, not only his horses, Mamluks, concubines, palaces, *wakālāt*, and furniture were sold, but also his *awqāf* estates were also offered for sale by auction and sold accordingly\(^{(30)}\).

\(^{(27)}\) Ibn Mahmūd also refers to selling four palaces in Cairo in the same auction for a total sum of 1,175,000 paras. *ibid.*, ff. 754-756.

\(^{(28)}\) *ibid.*, f. 810.

\(^{(29)}\) *ibid.*, f. 888.

\(^{(30)}\) Ali b. Ridwan (1699), f. 228.
In 1126/1714 an unnamed Kizlar Agha was jailed in Anatolia. His wakil in Cairo, Ahmad Agha, gave a full account of all his belongings, which were all sold and sent to the Imperial Treasury\(^{31}\).

The above examples indicate that the banished Aghas were excessively rich. They purchased their own Mamluks, but failed to create households because they were not given a chance by the Porte to continue their careers. Most of the Aghas were stripped of all their riches during their lifetime which was indeed a severe limitation to the ex-service Aghas, who could have been one of the most influential groups in the political and economic affairs of Egypt.

b. Wākilīs and Mamluks

While in office, Kizlar Aghas exercised their powers and influence in Egypt through their wākilīs, who also looked after their masters’ villages and represented their interests. Many influential Kizlar Aghas are associated in chronicles with their wākilīs in Cairo. Taking into account the riches and influence of Aghas, their wākilīs in Cairo played an important part in the political affairs of Egypt. Those wākilīs were actual manumitted Mamluks of the Aghas. Two examples of influential wākilīs, Mustafa Bey and Ahmed Agha, could well support this view.

1. Mustafa Bey Kizlar was described by al-Jabarti as tabī‘ Yūsuf Agha Dār al-Sā‘āda. He was raised to the office of sanjaq bey in 1094/1681, and was also appointed qa‘immamāqam\(^{32}\) in 1109/11697 and Defterdar\(^{33}\) in 1133/1720. During the civil war of 1123/1711,

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\(^{31}\) Al-Malwānī, Yūsuf (1719), f. 155.

\(^{32}\) Qa‘immamāqam: By the end of the seventeenth-century, the holder of this post exercised full viceregal powers between the death or removal from office of one viceroy and the installation of the next.

\(^{33}\) Defterdar: Within the local administration of Egypt the most important office was that of Defterdar (Treasurer). It was a non-military post but of considerable importance. The Defterdar was not only a permanent member of the Dīwān and a person authorized to hold Jam‘īyahs in his house, but he also had the advantage of being required to stay in Cairo. During the period of study, Defterdars were chosen from amongst the Mamluk beys of Egypt and usually the strongest Mamluk was chosen for this post.
Mustafa was amongst a handful of beys who chose to be neutral and did not take part in the conflict. He maintained his sanjaq title during his lifetime and, unlike the majority of Mamluk beys, he died of old age. Mustafa Bey was also the wakil of Bashir Kizlar Agha. It was from the service of these two rather influential and powerful Aghas that Mustafa gained his status and prestige, being appointed to the highest offices in the Ottoman provincial administration and preserving his title of sanjaq beys although he became blind and too old to hold a new office or responsibility. It must be taken into account that in Mamluk-dominated Egypt during the period 1123-1150/1711-1737, it was rather difficult for any Mamluk bey to make such a career without being a member of the Qassimi or Faqari households, unless they were backed by rich and influential external officials.

2. Ahmad Agha. Very little is known about Ahmed Agha, but he maintained a good status and served for quite a long period as wakil of more than one Kizlar Agha. In 1099/1687 his name appeared as the wakil of Yusuf Agha. Muhammad b. Mahmūd confirms that he was a member of the Jarakise regiment and enjoyed the regiment's protection. In 1126/1714 his name appeared in Tuhfat al-ahbāb, this time as the wakil of a Kizlar Agha who was jailed in Beyaz Hisar. Al-Malwāni recalls that Ahmed Agha was indeed the tabi’ of

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(35) Mamluk Households: During the second half of the seventeenth century the mamluk institution in Egypt broke into two major factions; Qassimiya and Faqariya. The Qassimi household was established by Ridwan Bey Abu al-Shawarib, who was followed by Murad Bey (d. 1107 A.H/1695 A.D). Qassimi mamluks dominated the post of Defterdar. The Qassimi house broke later into several factions such as: Shanabiya, Showarbiya and Iwaziya. The Faqari household was established by Ridwan Bey al-Kabir (d. 1066 A.H/1655 A.D), who assumed many important posts in the administration of Egypt of which the most significant was; Amir al-Hajj. Most of the Faqari leaders were massacred in an incident refereed to as: waqiat al-Sanajiq which took place in 1071 A.H/1660 A.D.
(36) Muhammed b. Mahmūd (1701), f. 752.
Yūsuf Agha, which implies that he was not only his wakīl but also his Mamluk (37).

The relationship between Kızlar Aghas and their wakıls was that of masters and their Mamluks. Another example is mentioned briefly by Damurdashi in recording the events of 1107/1695. When ‘Ali Agha died, his wakīl, who was in charge of the registers and accounts of ‘Ali Agha, went to Istanbul. The Kızlar Agha appointed the wakīl to take charge of his master’s house; “An yatawalla baita Sayydihi”, a Noble Script ordered the provincial administration in Cairo to incorporate ‘Ali Agha’s wakīl into the Janissary regiment. He later became Mutafarriqa bashı (38).

It can also be noticed that there were strong relations, and indeed solidarity, between the Aghas in Istanbul and Cairo. Al-Jabarti refers to a certain ‘Abd al-Ghaffar, who became chief of the Mutafarriqa regiment because his father’s Mamluk (who was a black eunuch) had become a senior official in Istanbul and had arranged for his master’s son to hold this office in the Egyptian garrison (39). It is reported that in 1142/1729 Abdullah Pasha K prülü (40) was searching for ‘Abd al-Ghaffar Agha to honour him because he was known to the Grand Wazir’s Ketkhuda (who was himself a black eunuch previously owned by ‘Abdi Pasha). This rather interesting network of eunuchs implies that they functioned as a group which played an important part in the beylicate (as in the case of Mustafa Bey) and the military (e.g., Ahmed Agha and ‘Ali Agha’s Khazindar). They also arranged for their colleagues to gain high offices in Egypt and protected the interests of their masters in their absence.

(37) Al-Malwānī, Yūsuf (1719), f. 155.
(38) Al-Damurdashi, Ahmed (1741 0, f. 29.
(40) Abdullah Pasha K prülü (1142-1144/1730-1732): a member of the K prülü family, for long among the ruling aristocracy in the Ottoman capital, he was praised by many contemporary chroniclers as a capable statesman who loved knowledge and science.
c. Kızlar Aghas in Office

Very little information is provided by manuscript sources concerning two important Aghas who served as Sultan's Kızlar Aghas in Istanbul: 'Abbas Agha and Yūsuf Agha. Both were banished to Egypt, and all their belongings were later confiscated and sold. There is, however, a good amount of material on Bassir Agha (1129-1158/1717-1746) who has been described as the longest lived and one of the most powerful Kızlar Aghas in Ottoman history. In 1125/1713, while holding the office of Hazindari-Shehriyari (Palace Treasurer), he was removed to Cyprus with the deposed Kızlar Agha Uzun Suleiman (1116/1704-1125/1713). He was later appointed Shaikh al-Haram al-Nabawi and was recalled to the palace to become himself Kızlar Agha in 1129/1717 (41). Contemporary chronicles find particular importance in the appointment of Bassir Agha to the office of Kızlar Agha. His arrival in Cairo in 1129/1717 and his residence there for two months was carefully documented (42). This is not surprising since Bassir Agha had a particular interest in Egypt. Not only did he stay in Cairo for two months before leaving for Istanbul, but he also built public places such as a fountain and a school, as is mentioned by Shalabi. Through his wakil, Mustafa Bey Kızlar, he was well informed about the events in the Egyptian capital, but unlike other Kızlar Aghas he developed personal contacts with several Mamluk beys and participated in the Mamluk household struggles. Bassir Agha did not support one side against another, but accepted hilwān and gifts in return for intercession with the Sultan. It must be emphasized that there is no clear evidence supporting Bassir's sympathy or backing for the Faqaris against the Qasimîs. His wakil in Cairo, Mustafa Bey, maintained a neutral stance and was hardly involved in the factionalism which dominated Egyptian politics during the period of study.

(42) Al-Malwâni, Y (1719), f. 169.
In connection with the year 1134/1721, Shalabi narrates the story of Bashir’s intercession for Ismail’s pardon by the Sultan:

“In a moment of happiness and pleasure Bashir Kizlar reminded the Sultan of Ismail Bey’s request for pardon and forgiveness. The Grand Wazir commented, ‘Your slave Ismail did not receive a notification of your pardon, so he could resume his service of the Sultan.’ The Sultan answered positively. Bashir Agha kissed the ground before him and paid the one thousand purses which Ismail b. Iwaz sent in order to be granted forgiveness. A Noble Script was written and sent with a fur coat immediately to Egypt” (44).

Regarding another incident during the same year, Shalabi also reports that Jerkes sent his chief Sarraj, Muhammed al-Saïfi to the Grand Wazir and to Bashir Agha requesting their intercession with the Sultan that he might be granted forgiveness after having been declared an outlaw. Jerkes promised to pay four hundred purses but said that he was unable to pay this amount immediately and rather wanted it to be divided into four installments to be paid over the following four years. This caused the Kizlar Agha change his mind about Jerkes. He was ordered to pay the full amount immediately (46). In 1136/1723 the name of Bashir Agha appears again, this time when he requested the Sultan to exclude two Ketkhudas in the Egyptian garrison from an imperial campaign. The two officers were invited to stay in Istanbul and received a salary as long as they stayed in the Ottoman capital (47).

(43) Ismail Bey (d. 1732), became the leader of the Qassimi household following the death of his father Iwaz Bey Al-Kabir. He was known for his generosity and enjoyed the support of the Ulema, however, he faced a fierce rival for leadership of the Qassimi house; Muhammed Jerkes. This rivalry led to the break of the Qassimi house to Iwaziya and Shanabiyaa.
(44) ‘Abd al-Ghani, Ahmad Shalabi (1738), p. 344.
(45) Jerkes Muhammed (d. 1727), Tabi’ of Ibraham Abu Shanab, he led the Qassimi faction of Shanabiyaa following the death of his master, and was appointed to many important posts such as Difterdar and Amir al-Hadj. In 1725 he led a rebellion against the central Authority which led to his death in 1727.
(46) ibid., p. 346.
(47) ibid., p. 411.
Although Bashir *Agha* complained at one stage about Qassimi usurpation of his villages in Egypt, he also helped ‘Abd al-Rahman Bey, who was a Qassimi *sanjaq bey*, against his rivals. Damurdashi narrates concerning 1138/1725 that ‘Abd al-Rahman Bey of Dalja fled to Istanbul in fear of Mohammed b. Abu Shanab’s plans to kill him while he was out of Cairo. The Shawaribi bey complained to the Grand Wazir and *Kizlar Agha* about Jerkes and his abuses. Bashir *Agha* sent a message to his *wakil* to look after Dalja on behalf of ‘Abd al-Rahman Bey and managed to obtain a Noble Script which ordered that Dalja should remain in the possession of the Qassimi bey and should not be sold or transferred to anybody else. Bashir’s *wakil* was Mustafa Bey, who had previously been the *wakil* and *tabi‘* of Yūsuf *Kizlar Agha*. Dalja was incorporated into the land which Mustafa Bey looked after on behalf of Bashir *Agha* (48).

It can be noticed that *Kizlar Aghas* in office were able to form a network of Mamluks and black eunuchs who served their interests, but as soon as they were isolated from their power and riches, their households or network of Mamluks and *Aghas* collapsed, only to be replaced by another *Kizlar Agha*. This prevented the long endurance of any *Agha*-Mamluk household, since *Kizlar Aghas* were frequently removed and their possessions and estates were confiscated by the Imperial Treasury.

The *Kizlar Aghas* played an important role in Ottoman Egypt. They served in various administrative posts such as *nazirs* and *multazims*, and also participated in the funding of local and imperial campaigns. Through their contacts with the central administration in Istanbul the *Kizlar Aghas* formed an efficient network and were able to appoint their agents and mamluks to the highest posts in Egypt such as *defterdar* and *qai‘imməqam*, and had their interests well preserved in Egypt. But despite the important political and economic role played by the *Kizlar Aghas*, this office was heading towards a period of decline. *Aghas* in Egypt were not liked by the *sanjaq beys* and the military, as the office of *Kizlar Agha* remained foreign to Egypt. *Kizlar Aghas* operated through *wakils* and Mamluks, and were accused by the Egyptian elite of working only for

their own interests and well-being. Bashir Agha may have been the most powerful person to hold this office, but he was also the last significant and politically influential Agha. Not only did the provincial administration oppose the wealth and prestige of black eunuchs, but certain institutions within the Ottoman system in Istanbul also opposed their role. The confiscation of possessions and isolation of ex-service Aghas is good evidence of this.

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