

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

الدور السياسي والإداري للأغوات الطواشية بمصر إبان النصف الأول من القرن الثاني
عشر الهجري (١٦٨٧-١٧٣٧م) بالاعتماد على مصادر المخطوطات العربية

Bashir Al-Abdin

بشير العابدين

Department of Sociology, College of Arts, University of Bahrain

Email: zein73@hotmail.com

Received: (10/2/2008), Accepted: (26/5/2009)

Abstract

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 perspectives; 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 *wakīls* 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.

ملخص

أدى أغوات دار السعادة (وهم الأغوات الطواشية المسؤولون عن قسم الحريم في البلاط السلطاني باسطنبول) دوراً كبيراً في النظام السياسي للدولة العثمانية، وتولى كبارهم صلاحيات إدارية واسعة وتبوأوا مناصب عليا في مصر والحجاز. وتعود علاقة الأغوات الطواشية بمصر إلى مرحلة مبكرة من حياتهم، حيث كانوا يجلبون إلى مصر من السودان، ومن ثم ينخرطون في خدمة الأمراء المماليك وخدمة باشوات مصر فضلاً عن إرسال الأكفاء منهم للخدمة في البلاط السلطاني باسطنبول، وعندما يتم الاستغناء عن أحد الأغوات الطواشية فإنه في أغلب الأحيان يتم نفيه إلى مصر ليمضي باقي حياته فيها. وبناء على ذلك فإن هذا البحث يقوم بتقصي الدور السياسي والإداري الذي أداه الأغوات الطواشية بمصر من خلال مراحل ثلاث رئيسية؛ أ- دور الأغوات الطواشية الذين تم نفيهم إلى مصر بعد التخلي عن خدمتهم في اسطنبول إبان الفترة ١٠٩٩-١١٥٠هـ/١٦٨٧-١٧٧٣م. ب- علاقة الأغوات الطواشية الوطيدة باسطنبول مع وكلائهم والمماليك التابعين لهم في القاهرة. ج- التدخل المباشر للأغوات الطواشية باسطنبول في الشؤون الإدارية والمالية بمصر من خلال الصلاحيات التي تمتعوا بها والنفوذ الذي كانوا يمارسونه في البلاط السلطاني. وحيث إن الدراسات المتعلقة بنفوذ الأغوات الطواشية في مصر وتغلغلهم في النظام الإداري بها لم تستحوذ على اهتمام العديد من الباحثين المعاصرين؛ فإن هذه الدراسة تعتمد بصورة أساسية على مصادر المخطوطات العربية التي تم تصنيفها إبان النصف الأول من القرن الثاني عشر، بالإضافة إلى ما يمكن الاستفادة منه من كتابات المؤرخين المحدثين في هذا الشأن، وذلك لمعرفة أسباب فشل الأغوات الطواشية في تأسيس بيوتات لهم في مصر ومراكز قوى على الرغم من الثراء والسلطة الواسعة التي منحها لهم النظام السياسي والإداري للدولة العثمانية.

The Ottoman Harem⁽¹⁾ staff commonly included eunuchs. These were either white slaves recruited within the Ottoman Empire from Caucasia, 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 Harem service because they were *sandali* (their genitalia were entirely amputated), and thus the master of the Harem was usually a black eunuch who held the title of *Kizlar Ağasi*⁽²⁾ 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 Kizlar Ağasi in 17th and 18th Century Ottoman Egypt*'⁽³⁾, and '*The Wealth and Influence of an exiled Ottoman Eunuch in Egypt: The Waqf inventory of `Abbas Agha*'⁽⁴⁾.

Many other historians made a brief reference to the power and authority of the *Kizlar Aghas* in Egypt such as Shaw⁽⁵⁾, Holt⁽⁶⁾, and Winter,⁽⁷⁾ 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

(2) The word *kiz* in Turkish means girl, the plural of it being *kizlar*.

(3) Published in, *Stuvida Islamica, Ex fasciculo, no. 75* (Paris, 1992) pp. 140-158.

(4) Published in, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, vol. 37* (4), (Brill, Leiden, 1994), pp. 293-317.

(5) Shaw, S. (1962) pp. 253-270.

(6) Holt, P.M. (1966) p 109.

(7) Winter, M. (1992) pp. 192-196.

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 *wakīls* 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

(8) Gibb, H. and Bowen H. (1957), p. 305.

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

(10) Hathaway, J. (1992), p. 142.

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 *Kizlar 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

(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, Ibrahīm al-Sawālihi (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⁽¹⁵⁾ to resign from office as *Nazir al-Keshide*, which was given back to the *Amir al-Hajj*⁽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 *tajrīda* (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⁽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’⁽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 *Dīwān*, 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*⁽¹⁹⁾, in connection with which the military had to

(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*.

(16) *ibid.*, f. 782.

(17) *ibid.*, f. 830.

(18) *ibid.*, f. 856.

(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⁽²⁰⁾.

Muhammad b. Mahmūd, author of the supplement of *Tarājim al-sawā'iq* 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*⁽²¹⁾. On the second day his kitchen-ware

(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 *wakīl*⁽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) *Mustahfizan*: 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 *Kekhuda*, 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⁾:

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

- 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 *wakīl* 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. *Wakīls* and Mamluks

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

1. Mustafa Bey *Kizlar* was described by al-Jabarti as *tabi' Yūsuf Agha Dār al-Sa'āda*. He was raised to the office of *sanjaq bey* in 1094/1681, and was also appointed *qa'immaqam*⁽³²⁾ in 1109/11697 and *Defterdar*⁽³³⁾ in 1133/1720. During the civil war of 1123/1711,

(31) Al-Malwāni, Yūsuf (1719), f. 155.

(32) *Qa'immaqam*: 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'iyahs* 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⁽³⁴⁾. Mustafa Bey was also the *wakīl* 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⁽³⁵⁾, 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 *wakīl* of more than one *Kizlar Agha*. In 1099/1687 his name appeared as the *wakīl* of *Yūsuf Agha*. Muhammad b. Mahmūd confirms that he was a member of the Jarakise regiment and enjoyed the regiment's protection⁽³⁶⁾. In 1126/1714 his name appeared in *Tuhfat al-ahbāb*, this time as the *wakīl* of a *Kizlar Agha* who was jailed in Beyaz Hisar. Al-Malwāni recalls that *Ahmed Agha* was indeed the *tabi'* of

(34) Al-Jabarti, 'Abd al-Rahmān (1880). 1/178.

(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*, *Shawarbiya* and *Iwaziya*. The *Faqari* household was established by Ridwan Bey al-Kabir (d. 1066A.H/1655A.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 referred to as: *waqi'at al-Sanajiq* which took place in 1071 A.H/1660A.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 *Kizlar Aghas* and their *wakīls* 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 *Kizlar 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 bashi*⁽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-Malwāni, Yūsuf (1719), f. 155.

(38) Al-Damurdashi, Ahmed (17410, f. 29.

(39) Al-Jabarti (1880) 1/214-6.

(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. *Kizlar Aghas in Office*

Very little information is provided by manuscript sources concerning two important *Aghas* who served as Sultan's *Kizlar 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 Bashir *Agha* (1129-1158/1717-1746) who has been described as the longest lived and one of the most powerful *Kizlar Aghas* in Ottoman history. In 1125/1713, while holding the office of *Hazindari-Shehriyari* (Palace Treasurer), he was removed to Cyprus with the deposed *Kizlar 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 *Kizlar Agha* in 1129/1717⁽⁴¹⁾. Contemporary chronicles find particular importance in the appointment of Bashir *Agha* to the office of *Kizlar Agha*. His arrival in Cairo in 1129/1717 and his residence there for two months was carefully documented⁽⁴²⁾. This is not surprising since Bashir *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 *wakīl*, Mustafa Bey *Kizlar*, he was well informed about the events in the Egyptian capital, but unlike other *Kizlar Aghas* he developed personal contacts with several Mamluk beys and participated in the Mamluk household struggles. Bashir *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 Bashir's sympathy or backing for the Faqaris against the Qasimis. His *wakīl* in Cairo, Mustafa Bey, maintained a neutral stance and was hardly involved in the factionalism which dominated Egyptian politics during the period of study.

(41) Hathaway, J. (1992), p.150.

(42) Al-Malwāni, Y (1719), f. 169.

In connection with the year 1134/1721, Shalabi narrates the story of Bashir's intercession for Ismail's⁽⁴³⁾ 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*⁽⁴⁵⁾, Muhammed al-Saifi 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 I waz 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; Muhammad Jerkes. This rivalry led to the break of the *Qassimi* house to *Iwaziya* and *Shanabiya*.

(44) ‘Abd al-Ghani, Ahmad Shalabi (1738), p. 344.

(45) Jerkes Muhammad (d. 1727), Tabi' of Ibarahim Abu Shanab, he led the *Qassimi* faction of *Shanabiya* following the death of his master, and was appointed to many important posts such as Dfterdar and Amir al-Hajj. 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 *wakīl* 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 *wakīl* was Mustafa Bey, who had previously been the *wakīl* 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'mmaqam*, 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 *wakīls* and Mamluks, and were accused by the Egyptian elite of working only for

(48) Al-Damurdashi, Ahmed (1741), pp.156-157.

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.

References

- ‘Abd al-Ghani, Ahmad Shalabi. (1738). Awdah al-isharāt fī man tawalla misr min al-wuzarā’i wa al-bashāt (Yale University, Carlo de Landberg collection, Ms. No. 3, History of Egypt from 922/1516-7 to 1150/1737-8). An edition of this manuscript (quoted in this study) has been published by ‘Abd al-Rahīm ‘Abd al-Rahmān ‘Abd al-Rahīm (Cairo, 1987).
- Ali b. Ridwan. (1699). Zubdat al-ikhtisār (London, British Library, Add. 9972). A Chronicle of Ottoman Egypt which begins in 923/1517 and goes down to 1111/1699. An edition of this manuscript has been published by Bashir Zain al-Abdin (Cairo 2006).
- Al-‘Awfī, Ibrahīm al-Sawālihi. (1701). Tarājim al-sawā ‘iq fī waqi‘at al-sanājiq (Cairo, Dār al-Kutub, Ms. 226 Tarīkh; Paris 843 Arabe; Sofia A1277; Munich Cod. Arab. 415). This manuscript focuses on the 1071/1660 crisis. An edition of this text was annotated by A. A. ‘Abd al-Rahīm and published in 1986. The text of the Dār al-Kutub manuscript however continues down to 1113/1701, the supplement being written by a different author, Muhammed b. Mahmūd. This unpublished addition has been used in this study, it presents a valuable and detailed account of the final years of the seventeenth century.
- Al-Damurdashi, Ahmed Ketkhuda ‘Azebān. (1741). al-Durrah al-musanah fī akhbār al-kinānah. This consists of a group of manuscripts available in the following libraries; (1) the British Library, Ms. Or. 1073-1074; (2) Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms.

- Bruce 43; (3) Vienna, National Bibliothek, Ms. Hist. Osm. 38; (4) Munich, Staats Bibliothek, cod. Arab 399; (5) Cairo, Dār al-Kutub, Ms. Tarīkh 4048. A copy of the manuscript has been annotated and published by A. A. ‘Abd al-Rahīm, (Cairo, 1988), which has been quoted in this study. A copy of the manuscript was also translated into English, annotated, and published by A. Bakr and D. Crecelius, (New York, 1991).
- Gabriel, P. (1990). "The Formation of an Ottoman Egyptian Elite in the Eighteenth Century", International Journal of Middle East Studies. 22 (1990), 275-289.
 - Gibb, H. and Bowen, H. (1957). "Islamic Society in the Eighteenth Century". In: Islamic Society and the West, vol. 1. Parts 1 and 2, London.
 - Hathaway, J. (1992). "The Role of the Kizlar Ağası in 17th-18th Century Ottoman Egypt", Stuvida Islamica, Ex fasciculo, no. 75 (Paris, 1992) pp. 140-158.
 - _____, (1994) "The Wealth and Influence of an exiled Ottoman Eunuch in Egypt: The Waqf inventory of ‘Abbas Agha", Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, vol. 37 (4), (Brill, Leiden, 1994), pp. 293-317.
 - Holt, P.M. (1966). Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, 1516-1922. A Political History, Ithaca, New York
 - Al-Jabarti, A. (1880). ‘Ajā’ib al-āthar fī al-tarājim wa-l-akhbār, Cairo.
 - Al-Malwāni, Yūsuf. (1719). Tuhfat al-ahbāb biman malka Misr min al-mulūk wa-l-nūwāb. (Cairo, Dār al-Kutub, Ms. 5623 Tārīkh). This manuscript of 403 folios is divided into four sections of which the fourth is the largest, focusing on the history of Ottoman Egypt. The work of al-Malwāni ends in 1131/1719, but was continued by Murtadā al-Kurdi until the year 1136/1724.

- Shaw, S. (1962). The Financial and Administrative Organisation and Development of Ottoman Egypt, 1517-1798. Princeton, New Jersey.
- Winter, M. (1992). Egyptian Society Under Ottoman Rule, 1517-1798, Routledge, London.
- _____, (1982). Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha’rānī. New Brunswick, New Jersey.