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VAIZAN AND ULEMA IN THE KADIZADELI ERA

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The Kadızadeli movement began in Istanbul in the early 17th century when a group of vaizan publicly attacked heterodoxy in general and Sufi practices in particular.

Despite the efforts of Ottomans who worried about the consequences of religious extremism, the Kadızadeli offensive persisted throughout much of the century. Kadızadeli orthodoxy enjoyed a peak between 1630 and 1680, during which time blood was spilled even within the sacred precincts of the mosque.

The Kadızadeli movement grew out of the enmity between Istanbul's premier Friday vaizan, headed by Kadızade Mehmed b. Mustafa (d. 1635), and certain of the major Sufi orders, symbolized in the 1620's and 30's by the Halveti Shaikh Abdülmecid Sivasi (d. 1639). Later, the dispute spread to other cities and to succeeding generations.

On the face of it, the dispute was an Ottoman version of chronic tensions between shariah-defined "orthodoxy" and emotive Sufism.

The Kadızadelis, like earlier generations of the orthodox, complained that the Sufis encouraged innovation, religious syncretism, and the like. Still, in the 17th century there were factors at work that were distinctly Ottoman.

Although religious discourse of the 17th century put "Sufism" on one side and shariah-guided "orthodoxy" on the other, the Kadızadeli controversy embraced a wider set of actors and sympathies than this dichotomy allows. The so-called "Sufi" side included many dignitaries who were not Sufis at all. As for the orthodox, its leadership regularly turned its back on the official guardians of orthodoxy, the ranking ulema of the empire.

In the major Kadızadeli episodes in the century, Sufis bore the brunt of Kadızadeli rhetoric and violence. But not with standing that Sufi focus, the Kadızadeli movement was implicitly and occasionally explicitly

directed against the role of the ulema. The struggle for the religious mind of Istanbul was as much a struggle between Kadızadeli puritanism and ulema pragmatism as between vaizan austerity and Sufi ecstasy.

Although they technically were members of the official religious class like the ulema, the vaizan, mosque preachers, who made up the Kadızadeli leadership belonged to a less prestigious subhierarchy. The Ottoman ulema, meanwhile, though often equated with the preacher corps, were medrese-trained jurists in possession of the most lucrative müderrisliks and kadılıks in the empire. This structural estrangement between vaizan and ulema became even more pronounced with the addition of ideology to a widening social and economic gulf.

When Kadızade Mehmed, the eponymous founder of the movement, became Friday vaiz at Aya Sofya in 1631, his appointment enlivened the centuries-old dialectic between innovation and fundamental, "orthodox" Islam.

Despite the historical position of the Sunni mainstream that some innovations were acceptable, a minority view always held that any innovation was by definition condemnable. Kadızade Mehmed and like-minded mosque preachers gave 17th century Istanbul effective leadership for the minority position.

The Kadızadelis focused on about twenty innovations which they accused Sufis generally, but the Halvetis and Mevleviis particularly, of inspiring and sanctioning. The bulk of the Kadızadeli points concerned practices and substances—coffee, opiates, sema, raks, devran—that were to be avoided. One, however, prescribed positive action. The Kadızadelis demanded that every believer obey the Koranic injunction to "enjoin right and prohibit wrong" (emr-i maruf ve nehy-i münker). In a word, both sin and sinners should be routed out. Kadızade Mehmed's chief antagonist, the Halveti Sivasi Efendi, devoted the last years of his life to defending his beliefs and occasionally his person. He had come to Istanbul under the patronage of Mehmed III (1595-1603). Like other prominent Sufis, Sivasi became a mosque preacher while continuing his primary role as a Sufi master. In 1617, he was awarded the Friday post at the new mosque of Sultan Ahmed I, where he remained until his death in 1639.

In substance, Sivasi's and Kadızade's arguments reflected the perennial debate over Sufism. But in method, the Kadızadelis broke new ground.

They succeeded in shifting debate from academic circles to the general public of the mosque. Their goal was not just to “educate” but to mobilize their congregations. To that end, Kadızadeli preachers campaigned for an activist, interventionist, “enjoining of right and prohibiting of wrong”. Believers were not only to purify their own lives. They were duty-bound to restore others to the straight path.

Few people disputed the authenticity of the command for the “enjoining of right”. Many, however, questioned Kadızadeli efforts to invoke it as a call to arms. Many Ottomans -including members of the Sufi orders themselves- disowned Sufi excesses as much as did the Kadızadelis. Still, when Katib Çelebi and others pleaded for a “balance” between religious extremes, they seem to have been provoked not by Sufi behavior but by Kadızadeli vigilantism. In my view, it was this active “enjoining of right” that both set the Kadızadeli movement apart and consolidated the resistance to it.

Although Murad IV is regarded as the Sultan who gave the Kadızadelis their start, he used the movement very selectively. While the vaizan saw coffeehouses and taverns as sinful and competitive with their mosques, Murad was primarily concerned with thwarting sedition. He had little quarrel with the Sufis provided that their attractions were not politically threatening.

Evidence of Murad’s flexibility on the Kadızadeli-Sufi debates is provided by his relationship to Istanbul’s Mevlevis. On several occasions, Mevlevis performed the sema at the palace specifically on Murad’s invitation.

In addition, for thirteen years of his seventeen-years reign, Murad chose as his Şeyhülislam Zekeriyazade Yahya (d. 1644), an esteemed jurist and a friend of the Sufi lodges. Although Yahya was denounced by name from Kadızadeli pulpits, his tenure ended only with his death, of natural causes, in 1644.

The Kadızadelis were more successful under Murad’s less able heirs, Ibrahim I and Mehmed IV. The Kadızadelis’ champion in those years was Üstüvani Mehmed (d. 1661) of Damascus. By 1655, Üstüvani had become Friday vaiz at Fatih and enjoyed an influential following among the imperial Baltacı, Bostancı, Kapıcı, and Helvacı.

Until 1651, Üstüvani had had little success in "enjoining right". In that year, however, he persuaded the Grand Vezir to order the destruction of a Halveti lodge. When the Kadızadelis were unsuccessful in extending the order to all Sufi lodges, they tried another approach. They obtained a supportive fetva from the Şeyhülislam, Bahai Mehmed (d. 1654), and used it to threaten yet another Halveti shaikh. The intended victim warned the Şeyhülislam that the fetva, however correct in juristic terms, would produce bloodshed.

When Bahai's own cousin, the former Şeyhülislam Sadeddinzade Ebusaid (d. 1662), reminded him of the dynasty's long association with the dervish orders, Bahai ordered the Istanbul kadı to punish any preacher who publicly denounced the Sufis. In effect, the Şeyhülislam countermanded his own fetva, again depriving the Kadızadelis of formal legal sanction.

Bahai's original fetva against Sufi excesses was in line with the opinion of the most revered of his Şeyhülislam predecessors. Still, as Bahai took care to explain, neither he nor they endorsed the forceful prohibition of Sufi ceremonies or the physical abuse of Sufi brethren. In another effort to legitimize their campaign, the Kadızadelis attempted to outlaw criticism of their primary manuals, the "Risale" and "Tarikat-i Muhammediye" of the 16th century theologian Birgili Mehmed. In the Üstüvani years, when two Halveti partisans wrote refutations of Birgili, the Kadızadelis appealed to both the Şeyhülislam and the Sultan to have the offenders executed.

The Şeyhülislam refused to go along with the demand, but the Sultan was persuaded to convene a council of ulema to settle the matter. The council voted to suppress the more problematic of the two Halveti treatises. The other had already been disowned when its author fled the city.

Thus, criticism of the venerable "Tarikat" and the equally venerable Birgili were officially forbidden.

The ulema's decision was taken at the behest of the Sultan, who had not only ordered them into session but expressly directed them to nullify the "Tarikat" critique. Regardless of these political pressures, the council's decision was consistent with Bahai's and other jurists' stand on such matters. The ulema could more readily support the Kadızadeli side so

long as their pronouncements were confined to academic opinion rather than wielded publicly to incite violence and disturb order.

This second Kadızadeli wave ended in 1656 shortly after the appointment of Köprülü Mehmed (d. 1661) to the Grand Vezirate. Köprülü was not overly fond of the Sufis, whether true mystics or charlatans. In any case, when he assumed office, it was Kadızadeli vigilantism, not the Sufi movement, that challenged his authority.

In 1656, when armed Kadızadelis endangered his tenuous hold on the capital, he convened another council of leading ulema. The council declared the Kadızadelis' claims to orthodoxy false and their actions liable to punishment. Üstüvani and his confederates were arrested and banished to Cyprus.

Under Köprülü's son, Fazıl Ahmed (d. 1676), the Kadızadelis again came into their own. Fazıl Ahmed's affection for Mehmed b. Bistam, "Vani" Mehmed (d. 1685), paved the way for the third spasm of confrontations.

Vani became Sultan Mehmed's personal shaikh as well as Fazıl Ahmed's confidant and the first Friday vaiz at Istanbul's newest mosque, the Valide.

He soon proved to be as antagonistic as his Kadızadeli predecessors toward the ecstatic wing of Sufism. He managed to have a dervish lodge near Edirne destroyed, and in Istanbul, he revived the practice of publicly denouncing the Sufis for encouraging disobedience to the law. In 1665, he had the public performance of the Mevlevi sema forbidden. He also used his influence at court to renew the prohibitions on wine and tobacco.

In a revealing conflict during the campaign year 1664, Vani's opposition to inter-communal prayer had prevailed over the Şeyhülislam's more accommodating position. More than the ulema hierarchy, Vani Efendi until his banishment in 1683 seemed to decide the limits of tolerance and the direction of the faith.

After 1683, however, the Kadızadelis sank into the background of Istanbul's religious life. Within a year after Vani's removal, the sema was restored to the Mevlevis. When the issue of inter-communal prayers was raised again some years later, Vani's position was rejected. In accordance with the position of the Şeyhülislams, inter-communal prayers were organized at Istanbul and Edirne for the success of the Ottoman army.

CONCLUSIONS

The Kadızadeli movement taken as a whole was a failure. Nonetheless, the recurring disputes are instructive about the nature of divisions within the Ottoman religious establishment.

The Kadızadelis' stability and longevity owe to their chain of leaders from the academician Birgili Mehmed into the 17th century by way of the activist Kadızade and his disciples.

The vaizan component suggests the movement's anti-elitist edge. This, I think, is borne out by one of the Kadızadelis' 20 issues, namely, their condemnation of prostrations and other abject obeisances before ulema, among others.

The purely religious aspects of the movement were present and meaningful, of course. But the social and economic circumstances of the participants require comment.

In the first place, vaizan were not ulema as the Ottomans used the term. They may have been learned in the law, as some were, but there were sharp distinctions between their recruitment, compensations, training, and function and those of the ulema. Except for the small group of imperial vaizan, vaizan as a whole were less educated, less compensated members of the dead-end subhierarchy that ranged below the *ilmiye* as such.

The relationships between the *ilmiye* hierarchy and this subhierarchy were further complicated as the increasing sinecurism of the ulema cut down on the subhierarchy's resources and overall life chances. Sinecurism, for example, siphoned off the largest of the subhierarchy *kadıllıks*, converting them into *ilmiye arpalıks*. But there were even more direct economic and social pressures on the vaizan corps of the time. These pressures were caused by the infusion of Sufi shaikhs into imperial mosques. Although not a new more phenomenon, it was pronounced in the 17th century.

True vaizan of the *tarik-i vaz ve nasihat* were forced to share their mosques with Sufis who doubled as part-time vaizan. It cannot be overstressed that the violent confrontations of the period really centered around the mosques, not the *tekkes* or the *medreses*. Kadızadeli vaizan in a sense were defending both a religious vision and a way of life.

I do not think it is an overstatement to say that the Kadızadeli movement emerged out of career antagonisms between the regularly recruited Friday vaizan and their Sufi competitors.

Between 1621 and 1685, there were 48 appointments to the top five imperial mosques of Istanbul-Aya Sofya, Sultan Ahmed, Süleymaniye, Beyazid, and Fatih. Of the 48, 19 were Halvetis. These men were the principal Halveti shaikhs of their time. Their chief occupation was the operation of Halveti lodges and the indoctrination of Sufi adepts. It is not just coincidence that the Halvetis, representing the most "public" of orders, were the main targets of Kadızadeli violence.

There were also 4 Celvetis among the 48. Regardless of their order, however, these Sufi vaizan had a number of features in common. Unlike regular vaizan, they entered the ranks of the imperial mosques by special patronage. Also, they did not have to rely exclusively on preacher stipends for their livelihood. In addition, their special appointments were made by the Sultans often with at least the acquiescence of the Şeyhülislams. Given the various points of contact between ulema grandees and the Sufi orders, these Sufi vaizan were more likely than regular vaizan to move in the social circles of which the ulema were a part.

When we look at what the appointment of Sufis to vaizan posts meant for the regular vaizan, religious concerns cannot be disentangled from career antagonisms. It was one thing for Sufi rites to be performed in tekkes far removed from mosques and vaizan. It was another thing for such rites to take place within the devotional center of Islam. It was doubly galling, I think, when orthodox-minded preachers had to hear raucous Sufi exercises performed under their noses by men whose very presence in the pulpit deprived regular preachers of opportunities and sullied the mosque. It does not take a lot of imagination to guess the reaction of the orthodox to the Halveti shaikh Ibrahim (d. 1633), preacher at Cerrah Pasha mosque, who was so overcome by mystical ecstasy that he routinely fell out of the pulpit.

In all of this controversy, the ulema hierarchy was a kind of point of convergence. In the eyes of the Kadızadelis, the higher ulema's tolerance and even encouragement of the growing Sufi presence gave license to the two-fold encroachment on the mosque. It was even worse that many ulema, Şeyhülislams among them, were active friends of the Sufi orders.

In 1633, in a sermon delivered for Mevlud, Kadızade Mehmed made clear the Kadızadeli position on the *ilmiye*. He referred the distinguished Mevlud congregation to the tale of Nasreddin Hoca and his two oxen. Kadızade described how the Hoca one day beat the larger of his two oxen even though it was the smaller one who had refused to work. Kadızade repeated the Hoca's defense of his action: "The little one will only move when he sees the larger made an example of". The ulema in attendance had no doubt who was meant. For Kadızade and his followers, the ulema of the realm were answerable for their own conduct and for that of the community. If the ulema refused to take the lead against unbelief, others would do their job for them.

In the end, the Kadızadelis' austere ethic proved impossible to implement more than intermittently. Sufi sensibilities were embedded in society, and the empire itself had been founded on confessional diversity. Moreover, the chief exponents of the faith, the ulema, rejected Kadızadeli efforts to systematize inquisitional activism. Although there were prominent ulema among the Kadızadelis just as there were ulema among the Sufis, in general, the ulema of the highest *ilmiye* ranks continued to represent the empire's Sufi-leavened theological center.