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**ARDUOUS JOURNEY TO HEDJAZ: TURKESTANI  
PILGRIMS,  
THE CALIPH AND ISTANBUL (16<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES)**

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**Öz**

***Hicaz'a Meşakkatli Yolculuk: Türkistanlı Hacılar, Halife ve İstanbul  
(XVI-XX Yüzyıl)***

16. yüzyılda kutsal toprakların Osmanlı Devleti'nin eline geçmesi İslam dünyası için yeni bir dönemin başlangıcı oldu. Bu yeni durum Osmanlı Devleti ile Müslüman tebaaya sahip tüm devletlerin ilişkilerine yeni bir boyut getirdi. Politik sorunlar nedeniyle İran üzerinden hacca gidemeyen Orta Asyalı Hacılar da neredeyse kuzey-güney yönünde tüm Osmanlı ülkesini kat ederek bu ritüeli gerçekleştirdiler. Önce Osmanlı'nın kuzey Karadeniz Limalarına gelen Türkistanlı Hac yolcularının büyük çoğunluğu İstanbul'da bir süre konuk oldular. Kimi devlet hizmetinde kimi özel izinlerle kimi de bireysel olarak hac yoluna çıkan hacı adayları yüzyıllarca büyük ölçüde güven içerisinde hem Halifenin ülkesini tanıdılar hem de en büyük İslami ideallerden birini gerçekleştirdiler. Hazar Denizi ve İran gibi coğrafi ve politik engellerle birbirinden ayrılan Türkistan Hanları ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu da hac sayesinde siyasal açıdan birbirine yaklaştı. Bu makalede bir dini ritüelin, tarihi bağları olan iki medeniyeti kültürel ve politik olarak birbirine nasıl bağladığı ve etkileşim yarattığı incelenmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Hac, Türkistan Hanlıkları, Halife, İstanbul, Osmanlı Devleti, Buhara, Hicaz, İran

**Abstract**

*This article aims to analyse how the unique religious ritual such as the Muslim pilgrimage the hajj can draw together, politically and culturally, two civilizations with historical ties and commonalities as well as create a mutual interaction*

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*between them. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman conquest of the Islamic Holy Lands was the beginning of a new era for the Islamic world. This new situation brought about a novel dimension for the Ottomans and all the Muslim states. The paths of all Muslims who wished to fulfil the sacred duty, the hajj pilgrimage, intersected within the Ottoman domains. Central Asian pilgrims who could not undertake the pilgrimage via Iran due to political problems had to cover almost all of the Ottoman domains from north to south to undertake this ritual. As a result, they became the carriers of culture from Central Asia to Anatolia and from Anatolia to Central Asia.*

**Keywords:** *Pilgrimage, Khanates of Turkestan, Caliphate, Istanbul, The Ottoman Empire, Bukhara, Hedjaz, Iran*

By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Islam was the most common belief system in Anatolia, the Middle East and Central Asia. Although there were numerous non-Muslim groups in every Anatolian city as a result of the tradition of Rome-Byzantium and former non-Muslim civilizations, however at the beginning of this century, the Ottoman Sultan, the defender and leader of Islam, became the Caliph of Muslims. The existing routes fell under the sovereignty of three different political entities: while the Ottoman Empire (including Rumelia and the Arabic peninsula) had sovereignty over Anatolia, the Safavids controlled the south and south-eastern parts of the Caspian Sea and the Khanates of Turkestan, under various political leaderships, had authority over the steppes stretching from the Caspian Sea to China. Every year, large numbers of Muslims from these Khanates left their respective countries for the pilgrimage. The ramifications from tourism and cross-cultural exchange were extensive. The religious journey which extended from Turkestan to Mecca had a significant impact on all diplomatic relations, religious and social habits, cultures and economies of each country on route. While those who set out on the pilgrimage enjoyed a sense of spiritual peace due to the fulfilment of their spiritual responsibility, they also brought back the stories of their experiences on their journeys. In relation to their journeys, both the books based on their narratives and the archival materials include many matters such as their departure, difficulties they encountered on route, and the cities in which they encamped and travelled too (Naganawa 168-169). In this study, based on the aforementioned sources, political relations of the Ottoman Empire with the Muslim ethnic communities of the parts of Central Asia that were affected by the pilgrimage will be examined.

This is due to the fact that the Khanates of Turkestan and the Ottoman Empire had a host of commonalities in terms of their culture and ethnic origin. Moreover, they were also adherents to Sunni (Sunnite) Islam.

However, two factors – namely the Caspian Sea and the Persian civilization in Iran — had geographically and politically become obstacles to a direct relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkic Khanates of Central Asia. In fact these barriers affected all commercial and social relations of the two Sunni centres - one in Anatolia and the other in Central Asia. One of the elements particular to the pilgrimage of Muslims from the Khanates of Turkestan was the length of the pilgrims' route, as these routes became longer than they need to.

### **Pilgrimage Route**

The road used for this long pilgrimage route was determined by many factors. It is difficult to say whether this decision was taken according to simply tangible factors such as distance, time, safety and cost. In fact, theoretically and practically, the shortest pilgrimage road to Mecca for the pilgrims from Turkestan would have been from Bukhara or Samarkand via Khorasan then onto Basra and finally to Mecca. However, the length of the journey and political disputes between Iran and the Khanates brought significant security problems.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, the route for the pilgrims was to be more indirect, longer and arduous, yet it was more favourable in terms of security and also advantageous for the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Turkestan.

In light of the above, there were two possible routes the pilgrims took from Turkestan. These two routes were relatively close to each other. Pilgrims who set out from Bukhara and Samarkand, arrived at the Caspian Sea via the steppes and after stopping for a rest at Astrakhan, they reached cities of Kefe or Ozi where the ships were anchored in and bound to Ottoman harbours. Thereafter while most of the pilgrims boarded the ships to Istanbul, those who did not wish to lengthen their travel preferred to go to the ports of Sinop and Samsun. Nevertheless, they had to continue their journey on the frequently-used yet hazardous roads from Eskisehir to Konya (Faroghi 155-156). It would have been possible to arrive at cities in Eastern Anatolia after passing north of the Caspian Sea and directly through the Caucasus. Turkmen pilgrims could have then reached the Hedjaz through Mosul and Baghdad. Nevertheless, the aforementioned security problem as well as the challenging geography of the Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia (in terms of geographical roughness and climate) did away with all the

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<sup>1</sup> At this point, in periods when more normal relations between Iran and the khanates were observed, it should be mentioned about exceptional examples like the performing of Imam Kuli Khan's Hajj journey with a crowded procession through the territories of the Safavid state in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Burton 1997: 208).

attractiveness of this route (McChesney 129-157). It is worth noting that these same security and border passage issues remain today.

On the other hand, the pilgrimage was connected to specific rules both due to security and commercial and political importance carried over from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, especially from the period of Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmet Pasha. In fact, from his reign onwards the pilgrims did not travel arbitrarily (Andican 200).<sup>2</sup> Within this framework, pilgrims who came to Istanbul found rest and waited for the preparation of the caravans running to Damascus. During their stay, the pilgrims mostly spent their days in popular Uzbek centres of the Ottoman capitol Istanbul such as Uskudar, Eyup and Sultanahmet<sup>3</sup>. Pilgrims from Turkestan had a significant impact on the development of various Sufi *tekkes* (lodges) and played a role in keeping alive the culture of the Turkmen in Istanbul. Also, these Uzbek *tekkes* had a major impact on the development of Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire (Alpargu, Özbek 557-606). Pilgrims from Turkestan left Istanbul with the other pilgrims in groups and interacted with pilgrims arriving from Sinop-Samsun at Damascus. There, candidates from Turkestan as well as pilgrims from regions like Iran, parts of the Ottoman Empire such as Anatolia, Iraq, and the Syrian city of Aleppo came together and travelled the road together with *Surre Alayı* coming from Istanbul at the end of the Islamic month Zilqade to arrive at Mecca.<sup>4</sup> However, another significant juncture that should be kept in mind is of Jerusalem. Also known as the “Gate of the Holy Cross” as described by Thierry Zarcone (Zarcone, Kudüs 19-20), it is the third holiest city in Islam after Mecca and Medina with both religious and spiritual importance in the Islamic faith. The Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem was the third holiest sanctuary after the Masjid al-Nabawi in Madina and the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca. Pilgrims from all over the Muslim world would visit Qubbet-us Sahra in Masjid-i Aqsa where Prophet Muhammad ascended

<sup>2</sup> But in many sources, it is mentioned about individuals who went on the journey independently, like the example of Turkestani Dervish İbrahim mentioned in the book written by Wilfrid Sparroy and Haji Khan (Sparroy 1904: 278).

<sup>3</sup> <http://os-ar.com/modules.php?name=Encyclopedia&op=content&tid=186> (08.03.2013).

<sup>4</sup> Surre which means “purse” was first used for gifts and gold sent to Mecca and Madina during the period of Abbasid caliph Mahdi. During the periods of Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluks, it turned into a tradition and was performed in a festive atmosphere, so it took the name Surre Alayı (Surre Procession). The tradition of Surre was continued in the Ottoman era. It was first performed by Bayezid I who sent Surre with 80,000 coins. Later on this tradition was continued by subsequent Sultans (Atalar 1991: 8-11). Surre gained a deeper meaning from the time when Mecca and Median became Ottoman land in 1517. Surre with a letter to emir of Mecca, gifts and large quantities of gold, lasted until 1916. After a couple of years this tradition came to a standstill (Buzpinar 567-569).

Miraj and believed that they received “good deeds of a thousand martyrs” (Zarcone, Kudüs 20).

*Tekkes* (lodges), *Kalenderhanes* (an inn) and caravansaries on the roads were primary stopping places. Both the Ottoman sultans and the khans of Turkestan would see the services given for the pilgrimage journey as a symbol of legitimacy. The example of the restoration of *Kalenderhane-i Ozbekiye-i Nakşibendi Dergahı* by the government in the district of Eyup in Istanbul clearly represented that the Ottomans were concerned regarding the presence and continuity of such institutions. On the other hand for the pilgrims of Turkistan the *Kalenderhanes* and dervish lodges were the most important stop off places for the fulfilment of the Hajj journey from Central Asia to the *Harameyn* (BOA. Y.PRK.EV. 47/2) The Ottoman Empire, which met the cost of these resting places, sometimes allocated part of the collected wheat crop to the lodges in the Hedjaz (BOA. A.MKT.MHM. 460/96). From 1880, the number of poor pilgrims who were unable to satisfy their needs in terms of health and nutrition increased. Sultan Abdulhamit II, was very sensitive to the needs of the pilgrims and ordered the construction of a guest house within half an hour of the Ka’aba to provide an easy passage for them to fulfil the pilgrimage and to prevent them growing destitute. This was also to reduce begging generally (Sarıyıldız 141). Khans from Turkistan undertook similar investments; as in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Yakup Beg, the Emir of Qashgar, after repairing the religious buildings and monuments such as the lodges and tombs, both on his lands and the pilgrimage roads, ordered a guest house to be built in Mecca (Zarcone, Sufism 153-165).<sup>5</sup> The importance of such places on both the road and in the holy land was elegantly revealed by sources citing the position of pilgrims on both their outward and return voyages. These narratives explained the difficulties that the Central Asian pilgrims like all the others from different regions had to endure. One such writer was John F. Keane. While depicting the Central Asian pilgrims as Tartars and Bukharans encountered in Mecca, he wrote that “...they were well set... even if they come from the most remote geographies, they were overzealous and travel mostly on foot, but were dirty at least as much as even more than others” (Zarcone Kudüs 29-30).

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<sup>5</sup> Some examples with respect to the investments in the Holy land and sent gifts, as Selim Deringil records, could give an impression of a positive discrimination towards the khanates of Turkestan. Deringil gives a case quoting from British documents that a silver ladder worth 45 thousand rupees sent to the door of Kabaa by a nawab who was under the auspices of Britain, was rejected on the ground that sending such gifts to the holy land was just a privilege of the Ottoman sultan. The Ottoman documents related to the subject show that the khans of Turkestan had greater freedom than British nationals about such kinds of gifts and investments (Deringil 2002: 65).

In many Ottoman archival documents, we see the steps the authorities took to deal with the predicament and struggles that the pilgrims were facing during their travels. The Ottoman authorities intervened in many cases regarding the grievances reported and attempted to resolve them (BOA. HAT. 626/30954). For example, it was stated in a document dated 1910 that a sum of money had to be given to the pilgrims who went short or lost their money by other means during their travel (BOA. MV. 163/36). It is seen that in 1913 this assistance became a tradition and it was even ordered that each year necessary aid should be provided to the poor and needy pilgrims (BOA. MV. 180/8).

Since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the vehicles used by the pilgrims had also changed. Journeys in the past from Inner Asia started with caravans. Later the pilgrims started to use the railways constructed by the Russians for the purpose of occupation. At first, the passengers of the railways were just Russians and Armenians because of the refusal of Bukharans to use these vehicles. But later, decreasing travel costs, the saving of time and especially advertisements lured the pilgrims from Turkestan into using rail travel (Poujol and Fourniau 66). Likewise, after the construction of the Hejaz Railway in 1908, the second stage for the Turkmen pilgrims and their long journey ran throughout the Ottoman lands, expanding rail usage further. Sea routes were another alternative. Pilgrims boarded Bukharan ships and arrived in Beirut and Alexandria through the Marmara, the Aegean and the Mediterranean. From there, they went to the holy lands. After the opening of the Suez Canal, the sea journey extended further all the way to Jeddah (BOA. A.MKT.NZD. 380/64).<sup>6</sup> However, for centuries the main route for the Turkmen pilgrims was by land.

### **The Importance and Safety of the Pilgrimage Route**

As the Turkmen pilgrims used the Ottoman territories to reach the holy lands, it was both politically and economically important for the Ottomans to maintain this route. Pilgrims spent their money in the Ottoman cities and bought silk and fur in order to sell them in the Turkestani markets. In general they bought Turkish goods on the way back (for obvious packing purposes) (Andican 201). Despite the orders from Istanbul, pilgrims would not pay

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<sup>6</sup> In the 16th and 17th centuries, some Turkestanis went on pilgrimage on a quite different route. It could be said that the Ottomans had the least control over this route. Those who chose this route went from the khanates towards the south and arrived at India. From the centres like Agra and Delhi, they went to Jeddah by sea (Atalar 1991: 156. McChesney 2003: 135).

customs duty in Azov and Kefe, it is understood from the pilgrims' complaint letters that higher amounts of custom duty were sometimes collected in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Öztürk 289-290). Besides, among the elements that added economic value to the pilgrimage, these should be balanced against the expenditure, made by states which were party to the issue of the pilgrimage when it came to travel services and security in addition to the commercial activities and consumption of pilgrims.

Sovereignty over the pilgrimage route was one of the most important disputes between the Ottoman, Mamluk and Safavid states from the reign of Mehmed II to the era of Selim I. Commercial and political advantages that came from being the master of this route created political tensions between countries. But the deadlock was largely resolved in favour of the Ottomans when Selim I went on a campaign to Egypt. With the passage of the Caliphate to the Ottomans in 1517, the Ottoman sultans were the supremely vigilant guardians of the Hajj for nearly four centuries. The Ottoman sultans from the time of Selim I, even if they had many titles, paid much more attention to the title of the *Khadim al-Haramayn*/servant of the two holy cities (Algar 21-136).

Thus, the Ottoman Sultan, as Caliph of Islam, began to carry a title that required important duties and responsibilities. Ensuring the security of the pilgrimage routes was among the duties of the Ottoman state (Emecen 86). The security issue of the pilgrimage route, like its length, was a multi-dimensional issue. Protection of pilgrims against brigandage in the countryside, ensuring physical safety and property rights were, unsurprisingly, among the most common concerns. The Khanates of Turkestan also had great expectations of the Ottoman sultans for security and international issues. A good example of this can be seen in the instance of a request from Bukharan sheiks who, following the Russian occupation of Astrakhan, asked for help from Selim II for easing the suffering of the Muslims.

In another example, Hadji Mehmed Khan, the Khan of Kharezm, sent a letter to Selim II, addressing him as Caliph of the earth, the server of Mecca and Medina and the guardian of pilgrimage roads. While explaining the situation regarding the conditions of pilgrims going through Russia and Iran before the campaign of Astrakhan, he notified the Ottoman Sultan that, "the Shah of Iran has arrested the pilgrims from Turkestan once they have entered their lands and the Russians who captured Astrakhan did not yield the right of way and raised difficulties to those pilgrims" (Burton, Bukhara 83-103). Following the arrest of the pilgrims by Shah Tahmasp in 1562, it was noted that Suleiman the Magnificent in return banned the passage of Iranian

pilgrims through the Ottoman territory to Mecca (90). However the Ottoman Sultan had to solve the issue of the pilgrimage routes. In fact the apparent reason for the Astrakhan Expedition of Selim II in 1569 was to ensure the safety of the pilgrimage routes. After the failure of the expedition, attempts were made to keep open the pilgrimage routes through diplomatic channels (Alpargu, Özbek 76).<sup>7</sup>

Despite the loss of Astrakhan, the Ottoman Empire still kept control of the pilgrimage routes and used it to its advantage against Russia. During the reign of Murat III (1574-1595), the Ottomans also used this situation against Abdullah II, Bukharan Khan (1577-1598), who had some problems with them and wanted to go on a pilgrimage with a delegation of 10,000 people. But he was given the right to take only a limited number of people. As we can see, the Ottomans retained the rights of the pilgrimage as political currency against the Khanates (Burton, Bukhara 90). Dominion over the route was, in short, a valuable asset.

The Ottomans were not the only power who considered the safety of pilgrims and pilgrimage roads as their objective. The Crimean Khanate, where the pilgrims from Turkestan passed before their arrival to the Ottoman territories, also shared the same responsibility. In fact, the Crimean Khans were self-appointed guardians and protectors of the pilgrims. They also appointed a Tatar officer in pilgrimage caravans in order to uphold their rights during their journey as sometimes they were requested unaffordable tax in customs (Faroqhi 156). It was possible to find examples of sultans of other Muslim states gaining prestige from opportunities offered to pilgrims during the period of the Mughal Empire, too. During the reign of Akber Shah (1556-1605), the practice started of sending gifts worth hundreds of thousands of rupees to Mecca like the Surre tradition in the Ottoman state. Sending several women including his wife and aunt to Mecca from his palace in 1575, Akbar Shah started to facilitate the pilgrimage of his citizens and to meet the financial needs of those who wanted to go on the pilgrimage. After this date, it became a tradition. By sending gold to the poor in Mecca and Medina, the Shah both added religious qualifications to his rule and challenged the religious authority of the Ottomans over the Muslim World (Casale 279-280). In spite of the Tatars' endeavours, however, the Russians from time to time declared the Tartars were responsible for the grievances that the pilgrims were exposed to, like assaults and robbery etc. (Alpargu,

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<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the closure of pilgrimage routes meant at the same time the closure of trade routes. In this context, the Don-Volga canal project was also discussed (Agiş 2000: 699-707).



Özbek 76). At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Uzbek rulers also took on an important role for the Ottoman Sultan, as they played the role of effective functionary on various international issues. In a letter to Ahmet III (1703-1730), Ubedullah Khan (1702-1711), ruler of Bukhara, expressed the following:

“As your majesty knows, resolving some of the problems of “*Turan Ülkesi*” (Turan lands/country) under the control of Muslim states rests with your auspices as you are our Caliph. ...” (Saray 15)

The number of pilgrims in the 19<sup>th</sup> century tells part of the story as well; 10,000-15,000 from Khiva, 30,000-40,000 from Bukhara, and 70,000-80,000 from Kokhand-China Tataristan (Zarcone, Yasak Kent 58) The number of pilgrims showed fluctuations in parallel with the political situations in the regions they came from or passed through. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russia gained control of roads which Central Asian pilgrims had traditionally used to enter into the northern lands of the Ottoman Empire. This turned the pilgrimage routes into a diplomatic card used by the Russians against the Ottoman Empire. In fact it became an important advantage when it came to the administration of Muslims living in the Russian lands (Yalçinkaya 154-155). At first Russia showed religious tolerance as a Tsarist policy in order to establish good relations with the local people in places seized by their empire. Turkmen mullahs, along with those from the Caucasus, were allowed to give sermons on religious matters like pilgrimages to sustain people’s spirituality. But in the following years, as the Russia established its domain, this tolerance disappeared and more rigid social policies were instituted (Nogayeva 102). Because of the increase in epidemics at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russia, who had imposed restrictions on pilgrimages, gave permission to 5,000-7,000 Muslims, most of them from the Fergana valley, to travel after the completion of roads that linked Turkestan to Western Russia in 1906. After the establishment of a passport system and the road construction, built originally for military purposes, 20,000-25,000 Muslims were able to go to Odessa in 1907 (Brower 567-584). At this point it should be noted that epidemic diseases had become an increasing problem for pilgrims. According to British documents about the epidemics, some of the Turkmen pilgrims went into quarantine in some centres like Jidda, Bombay and Sinop in 1908-1909. According to a report of the British Embassy, due to the measures taken by the Ottoman Ministry of Public Works, particularly in Jidda, and due to the doctors sent there, the number of cholera cases was considerably reduced (British Documents 71).

Among the pilgrims who passed through the Ottoman lands, those coming from Turkestan had much more freedom of travel than the others. For example, while the pilgrims from Bukhara, Kokand, Eastern Turkestan, Kazan and Kasghar were assisted and were granted free passage in 1910, it was ordered that necessary precautions should be taken against the pilgrims from Russia and they were forced to carry passports (BOA. DH. İD. 77/9). The reasons for such attitudes towards Russia were probably caused by espionage affairs. Some of the pilgrims from Russian lands, when they came to Anatolia, informed the Ottoman State about “the condition of the enemy” (BOA. HAT. 9542/193).

Since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, different functions of pilgrimage travels have occurred for the Ottomans, including anti-Russian propaganda for the pilgrims emanating from the Caliphate. In fact, until then such sophisticated messaging had hardly been needed. These propaganda texts, spread widely through papers and pamphlets, consisted of different messages according to the audience they targeted. As an example, in the propaganda activities on Indian pilgrims who were British subjects, with which the Ottoman Empire had moderate relations, they were called to give just moral and material support to the Muslim world. However, pilgrims from the Russian-dominated areas were called to “rebel and fight against the Russians” (Özcan 98). In the common resistance of Caucasians against the Russian occupation, it can be seen that pilgrims were part of similar chain of propaganda. Chechen resistance fighter Imam Mansur (a.k.a. Uşurma) was able to announce both his fame and his struggle beyond the Caucasus through the pilgrims (Fedakar 142).

### **Privileged Turkestanis on the Road to Mecca**

Pilgrimage also constituted an important part of diplomatic relations both for the Ottoman state and the Khanates of Turkestan. The majority of envoys from Turkestan went on the pilgrimage to Mecca during their visit or after completing their official duties in Istanbul. When we look at the assistance provided to Hoca Ishak for the pilgrimage, bringing letters from Abdullah II to Sultan Mehmed II in 1598, it can be seen that the special treatment of envoys and privileged types on the road to Mecca had a long history (Burton, Sufism 14). A person from Bukhara called Muhammed Zakir, who went on a pilgrimage in 1786, brought a letter from Muhammed Danyal Bey the vizier of the Khanate. On the way home he was given both the answer to the letter and his travelling expenses (BOA. HAT. 20/928). After these unofficial envoys, officials setting out for Mecca, who were carrying messages from the Khanates of Turkestan, started to be seen in Istanbul. In 1820 Muhammed Fazıl who was the envoy of Emir Haydar, the

Khan of Bukhara, was given 7,500 piaster as travel expenses when he came back from Mecca (BOA. HAT. 782/36608). In 1852 Hacı Kurban Bey, the envoy of Kokand, was given *atiyye*<sup>8</sup> so that he could go on the pilgrimage to Mecca with his family. After Kurban Bey and the other envoys left Istanbul, how they would go to Hijaz was planned in detail (BOA. A.MKT.MVL. 58/73–20). Like Kurban Bey, while the envoys were staying in Istanbul, they were entertained in a grand manner in guest houses and given their daily wages by the Ottomans (BOA. İ.HR. 173/9441). Some of them, usually in groups of 40-50, had been shipped by sea. (BOA. HR.MKT. 54/40). Along with the envoys and delegates among those coming from the Khanates to Istanbul, there were people from the members of the Khan family (such as the cousin of the ruler of Khiva (BOA. Y.PRK.BŞK. 11/74.) As those who came to Istanbul by special request of the Khans.<sup>9</sup> These individuals usually were given gifts, travelling expenses or a daily wage by the Ottoman State on their arrival or departure. They were also looked after by the authorities where they were put up.<sup>10</sup> The Khan of Kashgar, Yakup Khan's mother was sent off with 250 piaster per day (Osmanlı Belgelerinde 259).

In addition, old statesmen were also seen on the pilgrimage roads. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Imam Kulu Khan, the Khan of Bukhara, went on pilgrimage via Iran after becoming visually-impaired and giving up the throne to Nezir Muhammed Khan. Just like him, after having renounced his throne, Abdul Aziz Khan also went over to Mecca. At this point, Imam Kulu's use of the path through Iran started to be seen as a privilege in itself (Mukminova 47-48). His uncle Nadir Divanbeyi, the state officials in Kulu's service and part of a community of nobles, almost two hundred people, took advantage of this privilege, too. As was seen, his attendants became a very large group and there were various reasons for such a crowd. Among these, the discontent from his brother's Khanate and the affection felt for İmam Kulu

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<sup>8</sup> The word *Attiye* means gift, tip, grace or benefaction. The *attiye* given to Hacı Kurban Beg in October 1852 was about 15,000 piaster. 9,000 of the total was the travelling expenses for a period of more than two months spent in Istanbul. The remaining 6,000 was a gift for the pilgrimage (BOA. A. MKT. NZD. 69/24). However, it could be that he was treated generously because he had been attacked and robbed two months previously near Trabzon (BOA. A. MKT. UM. 111/47).

<sup>9</sup> In general, leaving the palace or capital even for a pilgrimage was unusual for members of the Sultanate in Muslim states. So such kinds of journey were shown great interest by foreigners. The pilgrimage journey of the Egyptian Governor Abbas Hilmi Pasha's mother, who had extraordinary security measures and very valuable gifts, was one of the prominent ones (The Washington Post 1907: 6).

<sup>10</sup> In the Ottoman archives there are many documents about it. Some of them are as follow: BOA. Y. MTV. 27/ 11, İ. HR. 30/1389, A. MKT. UM. 440/5, A.MKT. MHM. 761/24.

stood at the forefront. Travel among the privileged classes was noteworthy and travel through Iran was a feature of that (Burton, The Bukharans 208).

Sheikhs and dervishes were another privileged class among the Turkmen pilgrims. Suraiya Faroqi states that those people who had a document (*laisser-passer*) allowing the right of free passage - although there would not be such a phrase - were not charged any fees when they went around travelling. Some of these people introduced themselves as important descendants in terms of the history of Islam and philosophy and were respected with their large companies.<sup>11</sup> One of the sheiks who went to Istanbul before the pilgrimage was one of the important *Mudarris* (professor) of the Muslim World, Mufti Dâmlâ İkrâm (Khalid 367-396). In a document dated December 26, 1861 from the Ottoman Archive, it is written that Sheik Mehmed Effendi from Bukharan ulema and his fellows, now in Istanbul while going on the pilgrimage, were ordered to be sent to Alexandria by a steamer of the *Hazine-i Hassa* Company (civil list) and requested that necessary assistance and respect should be given to a Bukharin *Kalender* (philosopher) along the way (BOA. A.MKT.NZD. 380/64. BOA. A.MKT. UM. 520/51). Among the pilgrims who used the Istanbul route, there was the Caucasian *Mujahid* Sheikh Shamil who went to Mecca as a break from his captivity with the permission of the Tsar (Bushuyev 13-25). He spent his time in Istanbul and was looked after in guest houses where the envoys of Bukhara stayed. There, Sheik Shamil was granted an audience by Sultan Abdülaziz (Vak'a-nüvis Ahmet Lütfi 69).

Granting gifts to needy pilgrims, extending good hospitality to envoys, delegates and important statesman during their pilgrimage and ensuring the safety of roads increased the legitimacy of the Ottoman sultans as a focal power. In the middle ages and early modern period, the Khanates and states in Central Asia solved this legitimacy problem - either making their genealogy depend on Genghis Khan or using the Caliphate in a limited area. However, such was not the case for the Ottoman state. At this point, the effect of the Ottoman Empire in its dominant geography was dependent on its political, militaristic and economic power as well as its sacred values. While all its "practical services" to the Muslim world (roads, caravansaries, mosques, waqfs etc.) were increasing its political clout, the safety and security of the pilgrimage road also made a contribution to this increase (Faroqi 157).

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<sup>11</sup> Stating that some of them introduced themselves as descendants of Ahmet Yesevi and that one of them even introduced himself as a descendant of Hazrat Omar, Faroqi writes that these people travelled with their wives who were not seen among the Ottoman pilgrims (Faroqi, 1995: 157).

### **Conclusion**

The Hedjaz and holy relics were among the most important symbols of power for the Ottoman sultans who were the leaders (Caliphs) of all Muslims and fought against the non-Muslims in the far west. Given the condition of communications at that time, the most suitable method for improving relations - broken off due to the geographical and political obstacles with Turkestan, with which the Ottoman had genealogical relations - was the winning of the favour of Muslims on the pilgrimage roads. In this context, the Ottoman sultans prepared the way for the formation of a "Turkestani atmosphere" by opening the Ottoman territories to the pilgrims of Turkestan. Thus national, religious and political ties between the Ottomans and Turkmens who had a direct relationship, sometimes in the form of a travelling companion or innkeeper-passenger, gradually strengthened in a new form. Turkmen pilgrims revealed great affinity between these geographies, derived from commonalities like religious rituals to daily habits. It also made it easier to recognize each other in terms of the cultural identity of the two communities. If we need to look at the political consequences arising from this relationship, it can be seen that both groups achieved significant gains, while the Ottomans established legitimacy in the interior part of Asia, the Khanates of Turkestan gained fortune through their alliance with a great empire. It can be said, therefore, that the process of these political and cultural relations has drawn these two distant geographies towards each other even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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