

Ottoman Turkish State Practices

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Info Articles	Abstract
Article History Received: 2024-07-02 Revised: 2024-07-12 Published: 2024-07-31	This study examines the constitutional system of the Ottoman Empire as a model of government in Islamic history that exerted widespread influence and endured for more than six centuries. This study aims to examine the government structure, factors of progress, and the roots of the decline of the sultanate through a qualitative approach based on library research utilizing various sources of books and scientific journals. The results of the study indicate that the constitutional system of the Ottoman Empire was unique in that it united political and religious authority under one leadership figure, namely the sultan who also served as caliph. The glory of this sultanate was supported by several main pillars, including a solid bureaucracy, effective economic management, and progress in education and science. However, this sultanate ultimately experienced decline triggered by internal factors in the form of prolonged conflict and declining moral values, as well as external factors in the form of geopolitical pressure from the ever-increasing Western powers. It was the accumulation of these various pressures that then drove the transformation towards a secular state, and at the same time marked the end of the Ottoman Caliphate in the history of Islamic civilization.
Keywords: <i>State administration; Ottoman Empire; Caliphate.</i>	

I. INTRODUCTION

The existence and development of Islam in the Ottoman Empire is a significant phenomenon in the history of Islamic civilization, reflecting the dynamics of power, culture, and intellectualism of Muslims for centuries. This empire not only served as a dominant political and military force in Eurasia, but also became a center of scientific advancement, religious life, and Islamic culture, with its influence extending to Asia, Europe, and Africa.(Sakinah & Avicena, 2025)

The Ottoman Empire is considered one of the greatest empires in the treasury of Islamic civilization, with a span of power that lasted more than six centuries, from the end of the 13th century to the early decades of the 20th century. This resilience of power is inseparable from the existence of a detailed and structured system of government that was able to adapt to changing times. In practice, the Ottoman system of government was not solely based on Islamic law or sharia, but also integrated state administrative law known as *kanun*—a set of regulations formulated under the authority of the sultan as a form of pragmatic political policy.(Syahri, Martiana, & Roza, 2024)

As a political construct, the Ottoman Empire

displayed distinctive characteristics in its governance, particularly in its integration of political authority and religious legitimacy within a single leadership figure. The Sultan served not merely as head of state in a political sense, but also held religious authority as caliph for all Muslims. This position positioned Ottoman statecraft as a concrete manifestation of the concept of *siyasah syar'iyah*, namely the administration of state affairs oriented toward achieving the welfare of the people while always adhering to Islamic values and norms.(Mukhsin, 2023)Within this framework, the legal system and judicial institutions become central instruments in maintaining stability and continuity of the wheels of government.

The Ottoman Empire's success in sustaining its constitutional system was also inextricably linked to the role of supporting institutions, particularly educational and bureaucratic institutions, which served as platforms for developing qualified human resources. Educational institutions such as madrasas and palace schools were crucial pillars in producing both an intellectual elite and administrative personnel who formed the backbone of government administration.(Sejati & Mawardi, 2024)Thus, the strength of the Ottoman

state was not only based on military supremacy, but was also supported by social foundations and systematically arranged scientific traditions.

However, along the way, the Ottoman state system was not immune to various shocks, both internal and external, which ultimately prompted a massive transformation toward a modern, secular state under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. This major transition marked the end of the caliphate and became a historic moment that changed the direction of statecraft throughout the Islamic world.(Nursalam, Yunus, & Susmihara, 2024)

The study of Ottoman statecraft in Islamic history is a crucial area for understanding the development of political and legal systems in Muslim civilization. This research aims to understand and analyze statecraft practices during the Ottoman period.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative method with a library research approach, collecting and reviewing various written sources, such as books, articles, journals, and historical literature related to the Ottoman state. The data obtained are then analyzed using descriptive-analytical techniques to systematically describe the practice of state administration, government structure, and factors influencing its progress and decline. The research stages include data collection, source grouping, content analysis, and drawing conclusions to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the object under study.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Research results

The research results show that the history of the founding of the Ottoman Sultanate was due to the migration of the Oghuz Turkish tribe from the Mongol invasion in the 13th century.

This research also explains that the practice of Ottoman Turkish governance cannot be separated from the policies made by its leaders until it experienced a golden era or progress of Ottoman Turkey such as economic policies, the creation of institutions such as law enforcement, military development so that it could expand its territory

to three continents, to the construction of schools from elementary to university.

In addition, this study also presents the decline of the Ottoman Empire due to internal and external factors which caused the previous caliphate to become secularism.

B. Discussion

The Ottoman Islamic Empire emerged in the late 13th century in Anatolia. Its emergence was closely linked to the migration of Oghuz Turks from the Central Asian plains, forced by the Mongol invasion, who eventually settled and formed a new political community in the region.(Zahra, Pakpahan, Saragih, Gustian, & Ramli, 2025).

The early foundations of the Ottoman Empire can be traced back to the Seljuk era. After his death, leadership apparently passed to his son, Osman I, who would later be recognized as the official founder of the empire.(Sugiarto, Darmilah, & Asmilati, 2024).

Around 1299, Osman I proclaimed his independence and began an expansionist campaign into Byzantine territory. The full support of the ghazis and the fragmented political situation in Anatolia contributed to the accelerated expansion of his power.(Megawati, 2022)In a relatively short time, this power became the embryo of a great empire that would later be known on the historical stage as the Ottoman Empire.(Syahri, Martiana, & Roza, 2024).

In the practice of governance, the ruler of the Ottoman Empire held two titles simultaneously: Sultan and Caliph. The title Sultan referred to the authority of leadership in state and worldly affairs, while the title Caliph reflected the religious legitimacy he held as the spiritual leader of the Muslim community. The system of governance implemented drew heavily from Byzantine and Persian civilization. In carrying out these two functions, the Ottoman rulers relied on three pillars: bureaucracy (Men of the Pen), military power (Men of the Sword), and religious authority (Men of Religion).

The golden era during the Ottoman Empire was inseparable from the state administration practices carried out by the Sultan's power, so that the Ottoman Empire became one of the great Islamic nations that had an extraordinary influence on the state administration today.

First, During the Ottoman Empire, a special position existed called the defterdar, an official responsible for the country's finances and monetary affairs. The defterdar's authority encompassed the management and collection of various sources of state revenue, including zakat (alms), taxes on trade activities conducted by foreign investors, and jizya (tax) levied on various territories under Ottoman rule. In carrying out its functions, the defterdar was under the direct supervision of the sadrazam, the highest government authority.

Second, In religious matters, the Ottoman Empire relied on two primary authority figures: the mufti and the qadi (qadi). The mufti served as the interpreter and analyst of Islamic law, while the qadi served as the implementer and enforcer of that law in real-life practice. Both were directly responsible for the implementation of Islamic law in daily life within the Ottoman Dynasty.

Third, In the realm of defense and military affairs, the Ottoman Empire possessed an elite force renowned for its strength, the Jenisseri Corps. This recruitment system was first pioneered by Sultan Orkhan through the recruitment of children from Christian prisoners of war, who were then intensively trained and educated in military barracks. In addition to military training, they were also equipped with knowledge and understanding of Islamic teachings as a spiritual foundation. (Nurfazillah, 2020).

Fourth, In the intellectual and educational fields, the Ottoman Turks established primary and secondary schools as well as universities and built medical faculties and law faculties. (Munzir, Antianasari, & Ismail, 2022).

Entering the 17th century AD, the glory of the

Ottoman Empire began to fade slowly due to the spread of a culture of luxury within the palace environment accompanied by persistent internal conflicts. This condition also resulted in a decline in discipline within the military, while corruption began to erode the very foundations of government. Throughout the century, the Ottoman Empire suffered successive defeats in various military conflicts against Western powers, and trade routes to the East gradually shifted into the hands of European nations.

The Ottoman Empire's most crushing defeat came when the sultanate sided with Germany in the war, leading to similar consequences for the Ottoman Empire, which ultimately saw its territories divided and colonized by the Allied powers. Amidst this precarious situation, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's forces successfully defended the core of Anatolia and parts of Asia Minor from the threat of foreign occupation.

This historical fact demonstrates that the Turkish nation is truly a nation with a strong military tradition. Since its inception, this country has been virtually inextricably linked to the battlefield. In its early stages of development, it frequently achieved victory in numerous battles against European powers. However, over time, the technological and economic rise of Eastern Europe, coupled with the opening of direct trade routes to the West, shifted the balance of power and placed the Ottoman Empire in an increasingly precarious position.

Recognizing its growing gap, after the defeat, the Ottoman government attempted to catch up with Western advances through the development of science and technology. However, this effort encountered resistance from the long-established madrasah institutions, as the ulamas rejected the inclusion of Western sciences in the curriculum. In response, the government took the initiative to establish new schools specifically teaching Western languages and sciences. This step, in turn, gave rise to a sharp dichotomy between religious and general knowledge within Islamic

society, a divide whose impacts could still be felt long after the period had passed.(Achiriah & Rohani, 2018).

Mustafa Kemal paid close attention to the reform initiatives initiated by Sultan Mahmud II to integrate European influences into the Ottoman Empire, particularly after the Tanzimat movement. He then went further by erasing all religious identities and symbols inherent in Ottoman society, replacing them with Western-oriented lifestyles and behavior patterns. It is no exaggeration to call Kemal Ataturk the first figure in Islamic history to implement such a comprehensive and massive process of secularization. The culmination of this transformational agenda was his move to overthrow the institution of the Caliphate and its long-standing imperial legacy, and then establish the secular Republic of Turkey in its place.(Iqbal, 2014).

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

A. Conclusion

The constitutional practices of the Ottoman Empire demonstrated a structured system of government that combined political power and religious legitimacy under a single leadership, the Sultan as both head of state and caliph. The Ottoman Empire's success in achieving its heyday was supported by a strong bureaucratic system, sound economic management, formidable military strength, and the development of education and science. However, over time, the empire experienced decline caused by internal factors such as power conflicts, moral decline, and military weakness, as well as external factors such as pressure and competition with Western nations. These conditions ultimately led to a major transformation towards a secular state system that marked the end of the Ottoman Caliphate.

B. Suggestion

So that studies on the practice of Ottoman

Turkish state administration continue to be developed in a more in-depth and comprehensive manner, especially in examining its relevance to the modern government system, so that it can provide a real contribution to the development of Islamic state administration science and become a reference in building effective governance based on Islamic values.

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