

FRIDAY KHUTBA OF TOKYO CAMII

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WAS THE OTTOMAN STATE AN EMPIRE?

Dear Mumins!

Because of the proximity of connotation between emperorship and imperialism, the Western countries describe great states as empires throughout history. Even though some countries in the past can be described as empires because of their acts and policies, it would be an injustice to qualify Islamic countries in general with this name. Today we will discuss this label imputed particularly to the Ottoman State. As you know, Western citizens generally use the term, "Ottoman Empire," while referring to the Ottoman State. Whereas those of Ottoman did not describe their state as an empire, on the contrary, they named their state the "Ottoman Sublime State (Dawlat Âliyya Othmâniyya)."

Inside an emperorship, there are dominant individuals and people who are overpowered and forced to submit to the dominant people. Rulers, governors, commanders, and senior bureaucrats always comprise the dominant folk. But in Ottoman, people who are mostly grand viziers (sadrazam), viziers, generals (pasha), and representatives were not of Turkish origin. Even some Christian Armenian ministers and commanders worked in the Ottoman Sublime State.[1]

In an emperorship, dominant people live very comfortably by obtaining all kinds of possessions quite easily in the territories under domination and colonize those people. However, who can claim that the Ottoman, whose most important mission was "*'ilâ kalimati'llah*" (اعلاء كلمة الله : exalting Allah's orders), followed that kind of politics? For example, the Ottoman did not go to Yemen to exploit its coffee or petroleum. Likewise, the petroleum was discovered in the 20th century, and they have never exploited Yemen's petroleum. The Ottoman captured the strait of Bâbu'l-Mandab and lost the lives of thousands of martyrs to prevent the occupation of the Portuguese in the 16th century. They again went to Red Sea to prevent the British from occupying Makkah and Madinah. Similarly, sailors like Pîrî Rais, Seydî Ali Rais, and Murad Rais fought Portugal, a major naval force of the 16th century, in the Indian Ocean. By doing so, they provided road safety to Muslims coming from India, Malaysia, and Indonesia, who would go on the pilgrimage to the Hejaz. In response to the demands of the Sultan Alâeddîn Qahhâr of Malaka and Ache[2], two ships and hundreds of soldiers were sent to reinforce the Muslims in the region in 1567.



They did not have any intention to exploit that region in the future.

Dear My Brothers and Sisters!

Governance of emperorship dictates the language of a dominant nation onto other nations. Think about the African communities, for instance. In Algeria and Tunisia under French management, an aboriginal who could not speak French could not find any job. Also in the Soviet Union, members of the other nations had to learn to speak Russian. As for the Ottoman, they never forced the Turkish language onto the people of other nations; even they themselves used Arabic in their education for centuries, since it is language of the Qur'ân.

They have written Turkish with the Arabic letters. The most beautiful calligraphic pieces had been written by not Arabian, but by Turkish calligraphers. In addition, the number of words derived from Arabic in the Ottoman Turkish (language) was much higher than those of Turkish origin.

As you know, the British and French overtook Arabian countries from Ottoman and made them their colonies.

They introduced the Ottoman as colonialists to our Arab brothers. Did any ruler among the French or British make Arabic as the major language of education? Did any French or British king have an Arabic name? Even to consider these questions is ridiculous. Most of the names of the Ottoman Sultans are of Arabic origin. Is it possible to imagine that the Arabic language, not English or French, were used as the educational language in French or British schools? Again, is it possible to internalize that the English or French language was drawn with Arabic letters?

The act of deeming the Ottoman Sublime State as an empire and describing it as imperialist state is an explicit slander, which does not harmonize with historical truths and realities. I am finishing my khutba with a verse that warns Muslims and draws attention to the past nations: "***That was a nation who has passed away. They shall receive the reward of what they earned and you of what you earn...***"[3] May Allah be pleased with all men and nations who are honored with serving Islam.

[1] For example, Mr. Aristarki was one of the Ottoman consuls in Bavaria.

[2] Nowadays Malaka is located in Malaysia and Ache is located in Indonesia.

[3] Al-Baqarah, 134.