

The Uzbek Taakiyas in Turkey: The Religious, Social, and Economic Role of the Uzbek Taakiya in Uskudar

Bebitov Maqsud Abdirasulovich

Denov Entrepreneurship and Pedagogy Institute, Lecturer
(Denov, Uzbekistan)

Tel: +998(97) 786-33-00

E-mail: m.bebitov@dpi.uz

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6013-5586>



Abstract

This article examines the political and economic aspects of the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Uzbek Takiyas. Special attention is given to the Uzbek Takiyas in Istanbul, focusing on state funding allocated to these institutions and the connections between Takiyah sheikhs and the imperial court. Rare archival documents from the Ottoman archives serve as the main source for this research.

Although there have been previous studies on this topic [1, B. 200-202; 40-45; 38-43; 27-34], many of them have not fully utilized archival materials. The novelty of this study lies in its presentation of new information regarding not only the religious significance of the Takiyas but also their role within the political and economic system of the Ottoman Empire.

In particular, the Uzbek Takiyah in Uskudar played a crucial intermediary role in the relations between the Ottomans and Central Asia. This article analyzes the social, political, and economic activities of this institution based on previously unexplored archival documents.

Keywords: Uzbek Takiyah, Ottoman Empire, Naqshbandiyya, social structure, economic relations, religious center.

Introduction

During the Ottoman Empire, religious and social institutions played a vital part in the state governance. The religious and cultural centers, as crucial components of the Muslim society, significantly influenced the political and economic development of the empire. The Uzbek Takiyah, established in the Uskudar district of Istanbul for Uzbek pilgrims, traders, and scholars from Central Asia, was one of the key mediators in these interactions. This research explores the

historical development of the Takiyah, its relations with the Ottoman Empire, its funding, and its social-political role.

The establishment and development of the Uzbek Takiyah date back to the mid-18th century. This Takiyah served as a refuge and religious center for Muslims from Central Asia, including Bukhara, Samarkand, and Tashkent. The creation of these Takiyas is closely linked to the Naqshbandi order, which played a central role in preserving Islamic traditions, spreading knowledge, and fostering political-economic relations.

The Ottoman Empire supported the Uzbek Takiyas by allocating specific state funds. Takiyah Sheikh maintained direct contact with state officials and operated under the religious policies of the government. Additionally, the Takiyah served as a unique cultural and economic bridge between Central Asia and the Ottoman Empire.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs historical analysis, archival research, comparative-systemic approaches, and systematic presentation methods. The main foundation of this research lies in the analysis of Ottoman archival documents, particularly from the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), such as the documents in the Jevdet Evkaf and Irade-Meclesi Vala funds. These documents helped clarify the financial support and the relations between Takiyah and the state. Additionally, the work of Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname* (The Book of Travels), provides significant insights into this topic.

The Takiyah functioned not only as a religious center but also as an important institution involved in educational, economic, and cultural activities. It played a mediating role in the relations between the Ottoman Empire and Central Asia. Despite some limitations in state financial support, the Takiyah displayed a certain degree of economic independence.

The study primarily utilizes qualitative analysis methods, and no statistical methods were employed. Furthermore, the study is constrained by the uncertainty or insufficient preservation of some archival sources.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of scholarly sources on the topic provides critical information on Uzbek Takiyas and the religious-political structure of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman archival documents from the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA) contain valuable data regarding the state activities of the Uzbek Takiyah in Uskudar and the activities of its sheikhs. Specifically, the economic sources from the Jevdet Evkaf fund, including documents №8528 and №2578, were studied to understand the subsidies granted by the state.

Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname* serves as an important source in describing the social and cultural role of the Uzbek Takiyah. The article by M. Baha Tanman (1994), *Özbekler Tekkesi*, discusses the role of the Takiyah in the Ottoman Empire and its significance in the Naqshbandi order.

Sulayman Beyoğlu's (1997) research analyzes the funds allocated by the Ottoman state and the distribution processes of these funds.

The book *An'anavî Türk San'atları: Ebru* by N. Öztürk (2015) provides information about the art of *ebru* and other crafts practiced in the Uzbek Takiyah.

Haskan Mehmed Nermi's (2001) work, *Asrlar Döneminde Uskudar*, offers insights into the social and economic role of the Takiyah in the Ottoman context.

Research Results. The results of the research demonstrate that the Uzbek Takiyah in Uskudar, Istanbul, during the Ottoman Empire period, played a significant role not only in religious terms but also in political, economic, and cultural aspects.

1. **State Funding:** The activities of the Takiyah were supported by the Ottoman state, with the salaries of the sheikhs being provided from the state budget. This indicates that the Takiyah was integrated into the state system, not only religiously but also politically.
2. **Limitations on Financial Independence:** Although the Takiyah independently managed its funds, its operations were under state control. For instance, properties of the Uzbek community who died without heirs were donated to the Takiyah, but the state appropriated part of these funds for its treasury.
3. **Importance as a Center for Science and Art:** The research indicates that the Takiyah was not just a religious center but also actively participated in the development of cultural fields such as calligraphy, wood carving, ebru (marbling) art, and weaving. This confirms its strategic position in the cultural life of the Ottoman Empire.
4. **Strategic Aspects of Political and Economic Cooperation:** The Ottoman Empire used the Uzbek Takiyahs not only for religious purposes but also as a means of strengthening political relations with Central Asia. The sheikhs acted as intermediaries in the legal and social issues of the Uzbek communities living within the empire.

Main Body:

The takiyas (religious institutions) held a significant role in the religious, political, cultural, and social life of the Ottomans. Just like other Muslim communities, the Ottoman Empire also had a considerable number of such religious establishments. One of these was the Uzbek Takiyya located in Üsküdar, which served as a shelter for those coming from Central Asia for pilgrimage and scholarly pursuits. This takiyya, which belonged to the Naqshbandi order, was also known as "Hojixona" and "Qalandarxona." Specifically, the Uzbek Takiyya in Üsküdar was built in 1752–1753 by the governor of Maraş, Abdulloh Posho (d. 1755). Initially, it functioned by installing a pulpit in the mosque, and over time, with the addition of further resources, it evolved into a fully-fledged religious institution.

According to a decree issued by the Ottoman state on December 9, 1760, rice and wheat were allocated from the Filibe mukataa (a fiscal district) to meet the daily needs of the takiyya. Furthermore, during the dry months of the year, additional food provisions were supplied by the state treasury.

After the death of Sheikh Mahmud Afandi in 1798, Sheikh Hoji Nazir Afandi from Samarkand was appointed as the new sheikh of the takiyya. During his tenure, the sultan allocated one shinik (approximately eight kilograms) of rice daily for the needs of the poor citizens. After Hoji Nazir's death, Sheikh Halil Afandi from Bukhara took over the leadership of the takiyya. As before, he petitioned the Divan Humayun (the highest decision-making body of the Ottoman Empire from the mid-15th century to the mid-17th century) for the allocation of rice. In August 1799, a decree was issued granting him the same privileges as the previous sheikhs.

Following Sheikh Hoji Halil Afandi's death in 1813, his sons, Sheikh Ibrahim and Ismail Afandis, continued to receive the allocated rice, as per the earlier decisions. The Uzbek Takiyya in Istanbul was financially supported by the state, and the sheikhs and their disciples also engaged in certain

trades. The fact that the takiyya was not financially independent necessitated its service to the state's interests. Any conflict with the state could result in restrictions on the takiyya's income or even its closure. As a result, the relationship between the takiyyas and the state was harmonized. The Ottoman state generally had a positive stance toward the tariqas, as it did not interfere in their internal regulations. Moreover, the mutual relations among the members of the tariqas were balanced. Acknowledging the religious and social functions carried out by the takiyyas, the state provided them with economic and social support. The task of overseeing and regulating the activities of the takiyyas was entrusted to the Waqf Directorate.

Additionally, the Uzbek Takiyya was renovated in its present form in 1844 by Sultan Abdulmajid (1839–1861).

According to Ottoman state archives, the sheikhs of the Uzbek Takiyya in Üsküdar, Abdurrazzoq Afandi (d. 1854) and Mehmet Sodiğ Afandi, each received a monthly salary of 50 kuruş, amounting to a total of 100 kuruş. The sheikhs of the Uzbek Takiyya were also entrusted with holding the properties of Uzbeks who had died in Rumelia and Anatolia without heirs. For example, Sheikh Abdurrazzoq Afandi petitioned the Beytul-Mal (the Ottoman treasury) to receive the inheritance of a deceased person, known as “Hujjatul-Islam,” in Üsküp, which amounted to 1764 kuruş. This matter was later referred to the Majlis-i Valo (Council of Justice), where it was decided that the property of Uzbeks without heirs would be left to the takiyya. If heirs were found, their property would be held in the Beytul-Mal and returned once they were located.

The Majlis-i Valo agreed to allocate the properties of individuals with no heirs to Sheikh Abdurrazzoq Afandi, but the maximum limit for the sheikh's claim was set at 200 dirhams of silver (fizza). According to a decree issued on March 4, 1848, if the value of an Uzbek's deceased estate exceeded 500–600 kuruş, the portion beyond 200 kuruş was to be transferred to the state treasury.

This decree shows that the state was not in favor of allocating excessive property to the takiyyas. The rationale behind this policy was to prevent the takiyyas from becoming excessively wealthy. Since the dervishes of the takiyyas already received a sufficient allowance, there was an attempt to establish limits on the personal wealth of the sheikhs as well. These measures, on one hand, aimed to prevent a significant reduction in state revenues.

By 1852, the takiyya had fallen into ruin. A decision was made to allocate 4400 kuruş from the Laleli waqf for its repair, with an additional 1100 kuruş for bedding.

Once the properties of the Uzbeks in the Ottoman territories were sold, the revenues (whether large or small) were transferred to the state treasury. Adequate funds were also allocated for hosting Uzbek guests at the takiyya. Due to these and similar reasons, the sheikhs of the takiyya sought additional sources of income through various crafts. For example, Sheikh Hoji Mahmud Solih Afandi, who had previously learned the art of lithography, engaged in printing books.

In 1860, he wrote a letter to the “Majlisi Maorif” requesting permission to publish a book. During this time, those wishing to engage in printing activities in Istanbul had to obtain approval from the “Majlisi Maorif” and the authorities, and only then could they establish a printing press. Even though Sheikh Mahmud Afandi was a citizen of the Ottoman Empire, he still needed special permission. This period also saw the existence of publications expressing extraordinary or superstitious ideas, which the state strictly controlled. The head of the military administration also guaranteed that the sheikh would adhere to the legal requirements.

Mehmed Afandi was required to submit the books and treatises he intended to publish to the "Majolisi Maorif" (Council of Education) for approval, and only after receiving permission could he proceed with printing. Unauthorized publications were prohibited, and if found to violate the law, the printing press could be shut down, and its owners and guarantors could be punished. On May 11, 1860, Mahmud Solih Afandi obtained official permission to open a printing press in a short period [5, 30173, digital document].

In the Ottoman Empire, when an Uzbek person passed away, the deceased's property was sold, and the resulting revenue was transferred to the state treasury. Adequate funds were also required for hosting Uzbek visitors at the tekkes. Due to such reasons, tekkah sheikhs sought to create additional sources of income by learning various crafts and trades.

Sheikh Hoji Mahmud Solih Afandi, who had previously learned the art of lithography, engaged in printing books. In 1860, he applied to the "Majolisi Maorif" for permission to publish books. At that time, any individual wishing to engage in publishing activities in Istanbul had to be examined by the "Majolisi Maorif" and relevant ministries and obtain approval from the Sadrazam (Prime Minister) of the Ottoman Empire.

Despite being a subject of the Ottoman Empire, Mahmud Afandi was required to obtain special permission. During this period, publications promoting innovations (bid'at) and superstitions were present, and the state strictly controlled such publications. The Ministry of War provided a guarantee to ensure that the Sheikh adhered to legal requirements.

Mehmed Afandi could only publish books and treatises after submitting them to "Majolisi Maorif" and receiving their approval. Unauthorized publications were deemed illegal, and if found in violation, the printing press would be shut down, and those responsible would face severe penalties.

On May 11, 1860, Mahmud Solih Afandi obtained official permission to open a printing press in a short time.

Uzbek tekkes played an important role in the history of art and industry in the Ottoman Empire. Sheikh Mahmud Sodiq Afandi, who learned the art of ebru (a technique for applying paint to paper in a special manner) in his homeland of Bukhara, played a significant role in its development. He also taught this art to his sons, Ibrahim Adham and Mahmud Solih Afandi.

Born in 1829 at the tekkes, Sheikh Ibrahim Adham Afandi was recognized as a versatile artist. He mastered various crafts, including calligraphy, ebru [6, p. 34], woodworking, carpentry, engraving, printing, and weaving. Ibrahim Adham Afandi studied under his father, Sheikh Sodiq Afandi, and with Bukhara scholars who visited the tekkes, learning Arabic, Persian, and Chagatai languages fluently, and composing poetry in these languages.

He also learned the art of "Taliq" calligraphy from Charshambali Orif Bey, where the term "Taliq" refers to a writing style that evolved from the Persian "ta'liq" script, which connotes being suspended or hanging. Later, he obtained permission to write in this style. Due to his expertise, he was given the nickname "Hezarfen" (Master of a Thousand Arts) [7, p. 670].

In 1863, Adham Afandi participated in an international exhibition in Istanbul, receiving significant recognition for the intricate designs and high-quality craftsmanship of his woven prayer rugs [8, p. 87]. In 1867, he participated in the Paris International Exhibition with a steam engine, for which he also received an award. The steam engine plaque invented by Sheikh Adham Afandi is still preserved in the tekkes to this day.

Sheikh Adham Afandi, a prominent master of the ebru art of his time, trained and mentored many distinguished ebru artists, including Sami Afandi, Aziz Afandi, and Abdülqodir Qodri Afandi. In his youth, Sheikh Adham Afandi engaged in archery and achieved notable success in this field. Upon learning of his proficiency, Midhat Pasha appointed Adham Afandi as the head of the Mavkibi Humoyun Industrial School, which he founded in 1869.

The following trades were taught at this school: • Working with hard metals • Woodworking and smoothing • Metal processing. Sheikh Adham Afandi played a significant role in the production of various military devices, particularly in the introduction of lead pipe casting technology, being the first to do so in Turkey. During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, he commanded the Mavkibi Humoyun Corps, established in Üsküdar [9, pp. 438-442].

Sources indicate that Sheikh Adham Afandi acquired his technical knowledge from Indian masters. It is also noted that Sultan Abdulhamid, interested in the art of weaving, entrusted Sheikh Adham Afandi with weaving special fabrics for the palace's needs.

Between 1855 and 1904, during the leadership of Ibrahim Adham Afandi, the Uzbek Tekkes became a center for science and art. Among the notable figures educated at the tekkes were: • Mathematician Solih Zeki Bey • Minister of the Military College, Gholib Pasha • Artist Husayn Zekai Pasha • Writer Khalida Edib • Philosopher Rizo Tevfik (a senior officer in the Janissary corps) • Calligraphers Sami Afandi, Aziz Afandi, Abdülqodir Qodri Afandi, Najmiddin Okyay, and others.

It is known that the Uzbek Tekkes became a center for legal assistance and security checks for those arriving from Turkestan and wishing to permanently settle in the Ottoman Empire. This arrangement was beneficial for both the immigrants and the Ottoman state. For instance, a person named Murod Afandi, who wanted to become a subject of the Ottoman Empire, agreed with Sheikh Sodiq Afandi after a request was made. Thus, the Uzbek tekkes operated in close cooperation with the Ottoman state.

Conclusion

This study, conducted on the Üsküdar Uzbek Tekkes, shows that the tekkes were almost entirely financially dependent on the state. Even the sheikhs' salaries were paid by the state. The state constantly monitored and controlled the tekkes. However, the state did not interfere in the religious ceremonies and prayers held in the tekkes. Furthermore, the tekkes could not act in opposition to the state's interests, as any conflict could result in a reduction of their income or even the closure of the tekkes.

In addition to their religious functions, the tekkes made significant contributions to art and cultural life. For instance, the "Uzbek Tekkes" served as a representative of Central Asian culture in the Ottoman Empire. The research findings show that the sheikhs of the tekkes were knowledgeable and skilled individuals capable of meeting their own needs. Furthermore, the Uzbek Tekkes played a crucial role in the development of science, art, and the national struggle against foreign imperialism, as well as in the religious life of the Ottoman state.

References

1. Tanman, M. Baha. (1994). "Özbekler Tekkesi". Istanbul Ensiklopediyasi: O'tmishdan Hozirgi Kunlargacha (VI jild, 200-202-betlar). Istanbul: Kültür A.Ş.
2. Bektosh, Chengiz. (1984). "Özbekler Tekkesi". Tarix va Jamiyat Jurnal, 8-son (avgust), 40-45-betlar; 9-son (sentyabr), 38-43-betlar.
3. Beyoğlu, Sulaymon. (1997). "Usmonli Davlati Tomonidan Üsküdar O'zbekler Takiyasiga Ajratilgan Mablag'lar". Birinchi Turk Dunyosi Tadqiqotlari Jurnal, 7-son, 27-34-betlar.
4. Bosh Vazirlik Usmonli Arxiv. Jevdet Evkaf, № 8528 raqamli hujjat.
5. Bosh Vazirlik Usmonli Arxiv. Jevdet Evkaf, № 25778 raqamli hujjat.
6. Bosh Vazirlik Usmonli Arxiv. Irade-Meclisi Vala, № 2831 raqamli hujjat.
7. Bosh Vazirlik Usmonli Arxiv. Irade Dahiliye, № 30173 raqamli hujjat.
8. Öztürk, N. (2015). An'anaviy Turk San'atlari: Ebru. Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı (34-bet).
9. Xabar. Uz. (2025). Ebru: Suvdagi san'at assari – tarix va go'zal namunalar. [Elektron manba]. Qabul qilingan sana: 25.03.2025. URL: <http://m.xabar.uz/uz/madaniyat/ebro-suvdagi-sanat-asari-tarix-va-gozal-namunalar-foto>.
10. Kubbealtı Lugati. (2023). Misalli Büyük Türkçe Sözlük (3 jild). [Murojat qilingan sana]: 14.02.2025. URL: <https://www.lugatim.com/s/hezarfe>.
11. Evliya Çelebi. (1683). Seyahatname. Istanbul: Topkapi Sarayi Kutubxonasi, MS Bağdat 304. (Jild I, 670-bet).
12. O'nsay, Rifat. (1988). Tanzimat Davrida Usmonli Sanoati va Sanoatlashtirish Siyosati. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 87-bet.
13. Haskan, Mehmed Nermi. (2001). Asrlar davomida Üsküdar (I jild, 435-442-betlar). Istanbul: Üsküdar Belediyesi.