

MEHMED PAŞA

Defterdār, Şarı, Baqqalzāde
(d. 1717)

LIFE

M.P. was born in Istanbul. Some sources refer to him with the epithets el-Ḥācc (Ḥācī), Baqqalzāde, and Şarı, but he is generally known as *defterdār* or *defterī* with reference to the office he held on seven different occasions. After his primary education, M.P. entered a career path as clerk in charge of financial transactions (*rūznāmçeci*) at the tax and revenue office (*defterdārliq*). There he learned financial procedures in the retinue of Defterdār Qılıç (Qıncı) °Alī Paşa (d. 1103/1691-92) and served him as his private secretary (*mektūbcu*).¹ After the assignment of Rāmī Mehmed Paşa (d. 1119/1707?) to the grand vizierate (18 Dhulhijja 1114/5 May 1703) he was appointed chief revenue officer and remained in this office until the Edirne episode (Rabi I 1115/August 1703), when the janissaries deposed Muşafā II (1106-15/1695-1703) and brought to power Aḥmed III (1115-43/1703-30). The janissaries appointed Muḥsinzāde °Abdullāh Efendi (d. 1161/1748) *defterdār*. M.P. was in Edirne at that time and was forced to hide, as were many other statesmen. When Muḥsinzāde failed to provide the remuneration (*baḥşış*) which was traditionally granted to soldiers on the occasion of the succession of a new sultan, M.P. was brought back to the office of the *defterdār*. Although he succeeded in resolving the problems concerning remuneration and late salaries,² he was soon dismissed from his post and appointed to the office of *rūznāmçe-i evvel* instead.³

After a few months, M.P. was assigned for the third time to his old office (23 Shawwal 1115/29 February 1704), which he held for brief periods of time in later years as well (Safar 1117/June 1705 and Dhulqada 1119/February 1708). He entered a brief retirement but was soon called back for government service. The governorship (*mutaşarrıf*) of Selānik (Thessaloniki) had been granted to him as his benefice (*ar-palık*) in recognition of his rank as vizier and governor-general. On 6 Rajab 1121/11 September 1709, the province of Qocaeli (Kocaeli) was added to this office.

Due to the probability of a war with Russia, M.P. was charged with the duty of taking a special force (*serdengeçti*) consisting of 200 *sipāhīs* and *silāhdārs*, who enlisted in Istanbul, to Yūsuf Paşa (d. 1123/1711), the governor of Özi (Ochakiv), who was in Bender (Tighina) at that time.⁴ After the Battle of Prut, M.P. successfully served in Bender for two and a half years.⁵ Upon his return, with his title of *paşa* taken away, he was appointed to the office of the *defterdār* for the sixth time on 10 Dhulhijja 1123/19 January 1712 and served in this capacity for six months. In Dhulhijja 1124/January 1713 he was assigned to the post of the financial trustee of the imperial dockyard (*tersāne-i °āmire emīni*).⁶ In the same year, he served in the commission to determine the Ottoman-Russian border within the context of the renewal of the Treaty of Prut. By the time he was assigned to the office of the *defterdār* for

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the seventh time on 27 Rajab 1126/8 August 1714, M.P. had become one of the statesmen close to Damad °Alī Paşa (d. 1128/1716).⁷

During °Alī Paşa's Mora campaign of 1127/1715, M.P. was charged with the duty of transferring provisions for the army from Eğriboz (Euboia). In the following year, he participated in the Austrian expedition. M.P. was one of several statesmen who believed they would receive an appointment to the grand vizierate when the army retreated to Belğrad (Beograd) upon °Alī Paşa's death in battle. When the seal was granted to Arnavud Qoca Ħalīl Paşa (d. 1146/1733),⁸ however, M.P. was ordered to assist the new grand vizier with the promise of an appointment to the grand vizierate later. At that time, the Austrian army under the command of Prince Eugen had come as far as Temeşvar (Timişiora). M.P. believed in the promise of the grand vizierate and the suggestions of flatterers around him that the "seal of the grand vizierate was delayed". The fact that his impatience led him to ask openly for the seal and that he openly mocked Aĥmed III, however, worked to his disadvantage.⁹ He was stalled until the arrival of the army in Edirne and was appointed as warden of Selānik in 1129/1717. Following this assignment, M.P. was ordered to equip 3000 soldiers at his own expense within a few months and to come to the plain of Niş (Niş).¹⁰ In the meantime, M.P. continued to criticize the sultan and put himself into an increasingly disadvantageous position vis-à-vis his rivals like Nevşehirli İbrāhīm Paşa (d. 1143/1730). When he was also accused of oppressing the inhabitants of Selānik and of contributing to the loss of Temeşvar, he was imprisoned at the fortress of Qavala (Kavala). M.P.'s properties were confiscated, and he was executed in Rabi II 1129/March 1717. He was buried in the courtyard of the Ulu Mosque in Qavala. His death has been recorded by the chronogram *şeker ĥāb*.¹¹

WORKS

① *Zübde-i Veqāyi°āt*

Although some manuscripts and library catalogues record the title of the work as *Zübdetü'l-Veqāyi°e*, it is clear that the original title of the work is *Zübde-i Veqāyi°āt*. Ħanīfzāde (d. 1217/1802) and Babinger make the grave mistake of attributing the work to Damad Meĥmed Paşa (d. 1129/1716), who held the office of the *defterdār* several times before and after M.P.¹² M.P. states that he composed *Zübde-i Veqāyi°āt* in order to receive recompense from God and to secure a good posthumous reputation for himself.¹³ Although there is no concrete information on the date of composition, various clues suggest that some parts of the work were written during the reign of Meĥmed IV (1058-99/1648-87) and that its final version was completed probably between 1126-28/1714-16.

In terms of content, *Zübde-i Veqāyi°āt* can be divided into three parts. The introductory part of the work includes supplications and the statement of the reason for its composition. In the introductory second part of the Cairo manuscript, important events that transpired from the foundation of the Ottoman state up to the succession of Meĥmed IV are related briefly. The fact that this section is not included in other

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manuscript copies suggests that it may have been omitted by the author at some later point. After summarizing significant events that occurred between 1058-66/1648-56, M.P. relates political events of the grand vizierates of Köprülü Meḥmed Paşa (d. 1072/1661) and his son Fāzıl Aḥmed Paşa (d. 1087/1676). From 1082/1671 onwards, M.P. provides a chronological account of events and, at the end of each year, mentions prominent figures who died that year.

The topics included in the work are as follows: Campaigns, especially the second Vienna expedition, and peace treaties concluded with several countries; the articles of the Treaty of Qarlofça (Karlowitz) and the determination of borders; ceremonies of succession, and the reception of envoys; the births of princes, circumcisions, wedding festivities, ceremonies of exchange of greetings on the occasion of religious holidays, rewards of robes of honor, and celebrations of the birth of the Prophet (*mevlid*); the distribution of salaries and provisions; various appointments, assignments, imprisonments, executions, deaths and confiscations; the depositions of Meḥmed IV and Muṣṭafā II and the consequent upheavals; the reasons and phases of the Edirne incident, which M.P. personally witnessed, and the demise of Şeyḫülislām Feyzullāh Efendi (d. 1155/1703) and his relatives; upheavals, desertions, and the pursuit of deserters in the provinces; the Yegen °Oşmān Paşa (d. 1099/1688) incident and the complete abolition of the institutions of *şaruca* and *sekbān* for the abrogation of the title of “serçeşme”; the asylum of Thököly Imre (d. 1116/1705), the prince of Erdel (Transylvania), in Ottoman lands; earthquakes, storms, fires, rainstorms, floods and activities of construction and repair; a discussion concerning the collection of taxes from tobacco and wine; fiscal and economic conditions; the grant of fiefs; incidents which reflect the social conditions of the time such as the necessity of fixing prices officially (*narḥ*) and the demolition of *bozaḥānes*; the desolate state of Ottoman subjects due to extended wars and the improvement of the condition of the Rumelian subjects thanks to the activities of Köprülüzāde Muṣṭafā Paşa (d. 1102/1691); and curious incidents M.P. personally witnessed. *Zübde-i Veqāyi°āt* concludes with the death of Muṣṭafā II in 1114/1703.

In the introductory section of his work, which is included only in the Cairo manuscript, M.P. states that he used Ḥoca Sa°deddīn Efendi (d. 1008/1599) and Qaraçelebizāde °Abdülazīz Efendi (d. 1068/1658) as his sources. Although he does not acknowledge any other historian by name, M.P. may have utilized the works of chroniclers like Ramażānzāde Meḥmed Çelebī (d. 979/1571) and Peçuyly İbrāhīm (d. 1059/1649?) as well. The main part of *Zübde-i Veqāyi°āt*, which covers the period after 1082/1671, is based on Vecīhī Ḥasan’s (d. 1071/1661) *Ta’rīḥ*, *Qandiye Fethnāmesi*, °Abdī Paşa’s (d. 1103/1692) *Veqāyi°nāme*, and probably °İsāzāde *Ta’rīḥi* or its source. In this part of his work, M.P. related contemporary events based on what he personally witnessed or heard. Due to the fact that *Zübde* and °Uşşāqizāde *Ta’rīḥi* were composed between 1126-28/1714-16 and 1124-25/1712-13, respectively, a recent study argues that M.P. borrowed heavily from the chronicle of °Uşşāqizāde.¹⁴ According to *Zübde*’s publisher A. Özcan, however, M.P. began composing drafts of

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his work as early as the reign of Meḥmed IV, but gave *Zübde* its final form shortly before his death. The similarities between the two works can be attributed to a common source used by both authors.

Due to factors such as M.P.'s misfortune, the fact that he failed to present his work to a prominent statesman, and most importantly that Rāşid's work was published at an earlier date, *Zübde* did not attract the attention of historians except Rāşid, who was the first historian to use it as his source. Appointed to the office of the official chronicler in 1127/1715, Rāşid Meḥmed began his narrative with Aḥmed III's succession. On Nevşehirli İbrāhīm Paşa's orders, however, he picked up where Na'īmā left off and covered the period from 1071/1660 until 1115/1703, borrowing extensively from *Zübde*. Hammer was the first to point out that Rāşid, who refrains from citing his sources, utilized *Zübde*.¹⁵ Indeed, with the exception of the Edirne episode, *Ta'rīḥ-i Rāşid*'s narrative of events shows significant parallels with *Zübde*. Rāşid's account of that incident is based to a large extent on Silāhdār's *Nuşretnāme*.¹⁶ In most cases, Rāşid's use of *Zübde* amounts to plagiarism, leading to the confusion of *Ta'rīḥ-i Rāşid* with *Zübde*. Rāşid, however, fails to equal *Zübde*'s content because his narrative includes abbreviations and errors concerning dates of death, epithets, dismissals, appointments, as well as military, political and domestic events. Yet, *Ta'rīḥ-i Rāşid* provides some official records not included in *Zübde*. This aspect of his work makes sense when one considers that Rāşid had access to government documents as the official chronicler of the Empire.

② *Neşāyihü'l-vüzerā ve'l-ümerā* or *Kitāb-ı Güldeste*

Written as a *siyāsetnāme*, the work is intended as a guide for high-ranking statesmen, especially for grand viziers. Although the name of the author is not mentioned, the statement that he held the office of *defterdār* when Aḥmed III ascended to the throne indicates that it was written by M.P. In the beginning of the *Neşāyih*, M.P. states that historians before him composed narratives which secured their reputation for posterity and notes that the scattered nature of these works convinced him to write a history himself, which he completed without the support of high-ranking statesmen. While M.P. quotes earlier histories to confirm his arguments, he also provides original points of view.¹⁷ As a member of the imperial council as *defterdār*, M.P. was able to notice the drawbacks of the fiscal system of the Ottoman state. Having perceived the religious and moral weaknesses of statesmen who held office in the beginning of the 18th century, M.P. argues again and again that piety and righteousness are unconditional requirements for being a good statesman and cites Quranic verses and hadiths. M.P. also includes many poems, proverbs, and quotations to emphasize his opinions.

Consisting of nine parts, the work includes sections on the moral qualities and attitudes of grand viziers; office holders; the damage caused by bribes; *defterdār* and officials of the imperial council; janissaries and subjects; the harm caused by oppression; the situation of enemies, borders, and the qualities of commanders-in-chief.

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In the last part of *Zübde*, M.P. discusses subjects such as parsimony and generosity, ambition and greed, arrogance and envy, humility and pride, good and bad habits, hypocrisy and slander, and issues related to fiefs (*ze^cāmet, timār*). M.P. also compares his own time with the age of Süleymān I (926-974/1520-1566), criticizes the financial and economic conditions of the time, explains how abuses occur, and provides suggestions and advice on how to rectify these problems.

It can be argued that the work entitled *Ta^clīmāt-ı Şehīd ^cAlī Paşa*, which was found among M.P.'s effects after his death and attributed to Şehīd ^cAlī Paşa, was also penned by the author because of the fact that it constitutes a complete summary of *Neşāyiḥ* and concerns a figure who was probably one of M.P.'s relatives. In *Ta^clīmāt*, M.P. advises statesmen to obey God and to follow sharia in their actions; to follow the right path; to treat everybody, poor or rich, equally; not to request fines and bribes; to abstain from oppressing Ottoman subjects and to avoid wastefulness; to pay attention to the issue of officially fixed prices (*narḥ*); to assign appropriate and able people to offices; to take particular trouble to ensure prompt payment of soldiers' salaries; to check the standard of coins frequently; to inspect the realm in disguise and to rest one day a week; to be careful about assignments of fiefs (*ze^cāmet, timār*); to use spies to gather information about enemies in a timely fashion; and to obey the rules stated in *Ta^clīmātnāme*.¹⁸

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part of Joseph von Hammer's collection, is one of the two best and most complete copies.

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