

MEHMET MEMDÜH

(b. 1839; d. 08.04.1925)

LIFE

M.M. was born in 1255/1839-40,¹ as the son of Muṣṭafā Maẓlūm Fehmī Paşa (d. 1278/1862) and Fulāne Ḥānım (d. ?), both of whom were originally from Candia (Heraklion/Qandiye) in Crete (Girīd).² He used the name Memdüḥ as his sobriquet in the offices of the Sublime Port, and Fā'iq in his poems.

M.M.'s family relations appear to have played a decisive role in his future life. His father was a distinguished bureaucrat, whose last appointment was to the High Council (*meclis-i vālā*).³ His father-in-law, Muṣṭafā Nā'ilī Paşa (d. 1288/1871), served as governor of Crete (1256-67/1841-51), later as president of the High Council of Justice (*meclis-i vālā-yı aḥkām-ı 'adliyye*) (1268-69/1852-53), and twice as grand vizier (1269-70/1853-54 and 1273-74/1857).⁴

Having studied at the high schools of Bāyezīd and Vālide, M.M. obtained the degree of master-clerk (*h'āce*) when he was 7, and then that of fourth grade at the age of 9, when his father was the chief of justice (*de'āvī nāzırı*).⁵ In 1271/1854-55, when his father was the undersecretary of the Grand Vizierate, M.M. started his apprenticeship at the office of the chief secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*mektüb-i ḥāriciyye oḍasına çırāğ*), where he remained for six years, without a salary, and was conferred the third grade. After the accession of Sultan 'Abdül'azīz (16 Dhulhijja 1277/25 June 1861), his father was appointed minister of imperial treasury (*ḥazine-i ḥāṣṣa nezāreti*) and steward to the royal mother (*vālide sultān ketḥudāsı*), and M.M. was awarded a high salary of 15.000 *ğuruş* as a secretary at the palace. He attained the degree of examining official (*mümeyyiz*) and was conferred the *Mecīdī* order of the third degree.

M.M. was later appointed to the receiving office (*āmedī oḍası*) of the Sublime Porte (1278/ 1861-62) and served as a scribe to the special assembly of ministers (*Encümen-i maḥşūş-ı vükelā*) (1288/1870-71), the chief secretary at the Ministry of Education (Rajab 1289/September-October 1872), the chief secretary of the Grand Vizierate (1292/ 1875-76), and the chief secretary of the Ministry of Finance (1293/ 1876-77). After his position at this office ended in 1295/1878 due to an administrative reorganization, he was reassigned first to the Council of Financial Affairs (26 Dhulhijja 1298/19 November 1881), then to the State Council (3 Muharram 1300/14 November 1882). Having received a *Mecīdī* order of the second degree (26 Ramadan 1300/31 July 1883), and a High Ottoman order of the second degree (26 Rabi II 1304/ 22 January 1887) he served as a member of the special commission established under the State Council to examine the Military Penal Code (28 Jumada I 1299-29 Muharram 1304/17 April 1882-28 October 1886), in the Supreme Court of Appeal of the State Council (8 Shawwal 1300-25 Shawwal 1304/12 August 1883-17 July 1887), in

the Commission for the Selection of Civil Servants (*İntihâb-ı me'mûrîn qomîsyonu*) (1 Jumada I 1302-24 Shaban 1302/ 16 February 1885-8 June 1885), and in the committee created to formulate the budget of the municipality of Istanbul (*Şehremāneti*) (20 Rajab 1303-5 Dhulqada 1304/24 April 1886-26 July 1887).

M.M. was appointed governor-general (*vālî*) of Qonya (23 Shawwal 1304/15 July 1887) with the rank of *bālā*, and then of Sivas (8 Shaban 1306/9 April 1889), where he was relieved of duty by the sultan upon complaints of his unjust and oppressive administration from the local Armenians (23 Rabi II 1310/14 November 1892). After the establishment of his innocence in the Armenian affair, M.M. was reassigned to the governor-generalship of Anqara (Ankara) (4 Jumada II 1311/13 December 1893). After his appointment to the office of the vizierate (25 Muharram 1312/29 July 1894), he became the minister of interior affairs (*dāhîliyye nāzırı*) (18 Jumada I 1313/6 November 1895), in which capacity he served for thirteen years. Following this appointment he obtained several Ottoman, German, Bulgarian, Russian, and Iranian medals and orders, and was given special assignments by various commissions.⁶ Despite always remaining one of the close companions of °Abdülhamîd II, he was never appointed grand vizier.⁷

Although M.M.'s works indicate that he regarded the constitutional movement favorably, he resigned voluntarily from the Ministry of Interior Affairs following the announcement of the Second Constitution (3 Rajab 1326/30 July 1908). Three days later he was arrested and then exiled, first to Prinkipo Island (Büyükada), then to the Island of Chios (Saqız), where he was compelled to reside until the Italian occupation (1329/ 1911), and finally to İzmir. Following his release in the amnesty of 1330/1912, M.M. returned to Istanbul and spent the rest of his life in seclusion at his waterside residence in Kireçburnu. He was paralyzed for the last two years of his life, and he died at the age of 86 on 3 Ramadan 1343/9 April 1925. He was buried in the garden of the convent of his sheikh °İşmet Efendi in Çarşamba-Fâtih (Istanbul) in accordance with his will.⁸

İnal describes M.M. as an arrogant figure who always claimed to have played an important role in any event of significance⁹ — although İnal's judgment may have been colored by the fact that his father was dismissed from the governorship of Deñizli by M.M. when he served as the minister of interior affairs.¹⁰

WORKS

His duties as an active official during °Abdülhamîd II's reign and the first years of the Second Constitution gave M.M. the opportunity to personally witness, better understand and more easily explain the political, social, and financial events of that period. However, he refrains from describing and explaining the period where he was the decision-maker, and he likewise omits information which might cause him difficulties. When it is impossible for him to withhold the facts, he tends to defend himself vehemently. He records and analyzes a train of events and tries to find why

things were as they appeared to be. He often attributes sense to the natural and providential phenomena in order to understand and explain political or social events. Referring to M.M.'s abundant use of puns, wordplay, rhyme, and metaphors, İnal argues that for M.M. the word is more important than the meaning.¹¹ M.M.'s style becomes especially elaborate when he addresses the Sultan.¹² M.M.'s texts were conceived as works of high literary art and include considerable amounts of Arabic and Persian vocabulary.¹³

① *Feverān-ı Ezmān*

A pamphlet of 13 pages completed on 2 Shawwal 1326/28 October 1908, this work consists of the author's analyses of the political and economic events of the periods of the Reform (*İşlāḥāt*) (1272-93/1856-76) and the First Constitution (1293/1876), and deals with the reign of °Abdülḥamīd II (r. 1293-1327/1876-1909) and the period of the Second Constitution in a more general manner. M.M. criticizes the administrative and political mentality during the reign of °Abdülḥamīd II.

② *Yemen Qıṭ'ası Ḥaqqında Ba'zı Müṭāla'āt*

This work is an account of the policies devised to prevent revolts and thereby secure the future of Yemen. It includes copies of M.M.'s memoranda written to the grand vizier and the sultan in the capacity of minister of interior affairs; the dispatches sent to Yemen; the ciphered telegrams, petitions, and letters sent from Yemen; and the reports written by the committees put together to resolve the Yemenite affairs. A copy of the memorandum recommending reforms in the province of Yemen (*Yemen vilāyetine °aid lāyiḥa-i işlāḥiyye*) is included at the end of the book.

③ *Serā'ir-i Siyāsiyye ve Taşavvulāt-i Esāsiyye*

Written as a self-defense and sent to the Parliament on 18 Ramadan 1326/14 October 1908 upon his arrest, the work not only provides an account of M.M.'s family background and his own activities, but also describes briefly and with an ornate language the pre-*Tanzīmāt* and post-Second Constitution periods.

④ *Eşvāt-ı şudūr*

Completed on 23 Shaban 1330/7 August 1912, *Eşvāt-ı şudūr* is a biographical work providing information on thirty-three grand viziers between the reigns of °Abdülmecīd (r. 1255-77/1839-61) and Meḥmed V (r. 1327-36/1909-18). M.M. does not provide information on the lives of these figures prior to their grand vizierate.¹⁴ Thanks to his acquaintance with Ottoman high officials during his fifty years of service, M.M.'s reports on what he heard and saw contain many personal details and add to the originality of the work.¹⁵ The autobiographical information provided by *Eşvāt-ı şudūr* is limited. M.M. claims to have often played an important role in decisions made concerning the appointments of some grand viziers close to °Abdülḥa-

mīd II,¹⁶ and important state affairs, such as the convening of the Council of Ministers (*meclis-i vükelā*) to discuss the promulgation of the Constitution in 1909.¹⁷

The appendix to the work includes a response to the memoirs of Sa°id Paşa (d. 1332/1914) as well as copies of several official documents concerning the Second Constitutional period. M.M. utilizes florid language and does not cite his sources.

⑤ *Mir'āt-ı Şu'unāt*

Focusing on the domestic and foreign affairs, particularly on matters during the reigns of Maḥmūd II through Murād V (r. 1293/1876) having to do with Egypt, M.M. provides information on the attitudes of the ministers, especially those of Muştafa Re-şīd Paşa (d. 1274/1858) and °Āli Paşa (d. 1288/1871). *Mir'āt* includes six diplomatic letters exchanged between the Russian, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian empires concerning the Hungarian nationalist affair; the letters of resignation from grand vizierate of Fu'ād Paşa and from the Council of State of Midḥat Paşa; two petitions sent to the sultan and the corresponding responses during the grand vizierate of Ḥusrev Paşa; and finally, copies of forty-one original documents concerning various political issues. Although written immediately after M.M.'s dismissal from the secretariat of the grand vizier, the work was published with a delay of thirty-three years due to censorship during the reign of °Abdülḥamīd II.¹⁸

⑥ *Taşvīr-i Aḥvāl, Tenvīr-i İstiqbāl*

Written at the very beginning of the Young Turk Revolution and based on M.M.'s eyewitness account of events, this work was completed on 14 Dhulhijja 1326/7 January 1909.¹⁹ In the first part, M.M. examines the regime of °Abdülḥamīd II, the preparation and proclamation of the Second Constitution, and, briefly, the evolution of the institution of the caliphate. The second part includes M.M.'s thoughts on the future, his analysis of the reforms during the reigns of sultans from Selīm III (r. 1203-1222/1789-1807) to °Abdülḥamīd II, and a brief discussion of Freemasonry. The first part is original, whereas the second part lacks historical significance and includes inaccurate information on the grand vizier Sa°id Paşa.²⁰

⑦ *Ḥal°ler İclāslar*

Intended as a book of admonitions for future generations, *Ḥal°ler İclāslar* provides information on accessions, dethronements, abdications, causes of death, as well as burial places of Ottoman sultans from Murād I (r. 762-91/1361-89) to °Abdülḥamīd II. Himself an eyewitness to events concerning Midḥat Paşa and to the dethronements of °Abdül°azīz and °Abdülḥamīd II, M.M. also utilized various primary and secondary Ottoman sources without mentioning their titles.²¹ The work's ornate language includes numerous Arabic and Persian expressions.

⑧ *Quvvet-i İqbāl °Alāmet-i Zevāl*

Completed on 18 Ramadan 1327/3 November 1909, the book deals with the political events of the First Constitutional period, the reign of °Abdülhamīd II, the Second Constitutional period, and especially the upheaval of 31 March (1325/13 April 1909). The work analyzes the political and administrative aspects °Abdülhamīd II's character and thought. Based largely on M.M.'s personal experiences, the book includes six letters to the sultan concerning various matters and is characterized by the author's efforts to analyze the relations between officials and their superiors, as well as the high bureaucrats with the Sultan °Abdülhamīd II. Although he cites natural phenomena as having contributed to the dethronement of °Abdülhamīd II, M.M. quite often claims to have played an important role in most of the social and political developments he describes.²² M.M. discusses the causes and results of the events of 31 March and lists ten factors that led up to the events.

⑨ *Miftāh-ı Yemen*

Written in Chios and completed on 11 Shaban 1327/28 August 1909, *Miftāh-ı Yemen* describes the conquest of Yemen (945/1539) and the reforms carried out there in order to prevent revolts, and gives a short history of Sana'a castle.

M.M.'s numerous nonhistorical works include: *Nöro Fizîq*. An unpublished translation of Adolphe Ganot's *Neuro Psychique* (Paris, n.y.) into Ottoman Turkish, made before 1879. The translation is lost.²³ *Fizîq Elemanter*. An unpublished translation of Adolphe Ganot's *Traité élémentaire de psychique* (Paris, 1855?) into Ottoman Turkish, made before 1879. The location of the manuscript is unknown.²⁴ *Tercüme-i Hikāye-i Jönevîev*. A translation of Alphonse de Lamartine's *Geneviève, histoire d'une servante* (Paris, 1850) published in 1285/1868-69 [Istanbul?]. *Eser-i Memdüh*. A work arguing the superiority of "the pen" to "the sword" (Istanbul, 1289/1872-73), dedicated to Pertev Paşa, the governor-general of Qastamonu. *Berg-i Sebz*. Also found in M.M.'s *Dīvān*, this is a 22-page work containing eulogies and lyric poems, published as a lithograph (Istanbul, 1289/1872-73). *Dīvān-ı Eş°ār*, or Collection of Poems, was published twice in Istanbul (1332/1916; 1338/1922). *Bedāyi°-i Åsār*. A collection of sample letters (Istanbul, 1330/1914-15).

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HISTORIANS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

C. Kafadar H. Karateke C. Fleischer

② *Yemen Qıf'ası Hıaqqında Ba'zı Mü'âla'ât*
Editions: 1) Istanbul, 1324/1908-09. 2) Istanbul, 1325/1909-10; with the title *Yemen İřlâhâtı ve Ba'zı Mu'âla'ât*.

③ *Serâ'ir-i Siyâsiyye ve Tařavvulât-i Esâsiyye*
Edition: Istanbul, 1328/1912-13.

④ *Eřvât-ı řudûr*
Edition: Izmir, 1328/1912-13.

⑤ *Mir'ât-ı řu'unât*
Editions: 1) Izmir, 1328/1912-13; 2) *Tanzimattan Meřrutiyete*; vol. 1: *Mir'ât-i řu'unât*, ed. by Hayati Develi (Istanbul, 1990) (in Modern Turkish).

⑥ *Tasvîr-i Ahvâl, Tenvîr-i İstiqbâl*
Editions: 1) Izmir, 1328/1912-13; 2) *Tanzimattan Meřrutiyete*; vol. 2: *Kuvvet-i ikbal-alâmet-i zevâl. Tasvîr-i ahvâl-tenvir-i istikbâl. Feverân-ı ezmân*, ed. by Ahmed N. Galitekin (Istanbul, 1995), pp. 97-158 (in Modern Turkish).

⑦ *Hal'ler İclâslar*
Edition: Istanbul, 1329/1913-14.

⑧ *Quvvet-i İqbâl 'Alâmet-i Zevâl*
Editions: 1) Istanbul, 1329/1913-14. 2) *Tanzimattan Meřrutiyete*; vol. 2: *Kuvvet-i ikbal-alâmet-i zevâl. Tasvîr-i ahvâl-tenvir-i istikbâl. Feverân-ı ezmân*, ed. by Ahmed N. Galitekin (Istanbul, 1995), pp. 13-96 (in Modern Turkish).

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¹ BOA., DH.SAİD, 1/84.

² M.M., *Mir'ât-ı Şu'unât* (İzmir, 1328/1912-13), 29; İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal, *Son Asır Türk Şairleri*, vol. 3 (İstanbul, 1988), 382-383; Yılmaz Öztuna, *Devletler ve Hanedanlar*, vol. 2 (Ankara, 1989), 739; Sinan Kunalp, *Son Dönem Osmanlı Erkân ve Ricali (1839-1922): Prosopografik Rehber* (İstanbul, 1999), 90.

³ M.M., *Mir'ât-ı Şu'unât*, 29; İnal, *Türk Şairleri*, vol. 1, 382-383; Kunalp, *Prosopografik Rehber*, 90.

⁴ M.M., *Serâ'ir-i Siyâsiyye ve Taşavvulât-ı Esâsiyye* (İstanbul, 1328/1912-13), 3; Kunalp, *Prosopografik Rehber*, 109.

⁵ BOA, DH.SAİD, 1/84; İnal, *Türk Şairleri*, vol. 3, 913.

⁶ BOA, DH.SAİD, 1/84.

⁷ İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal, *Son Sadrazamlar*, vol. 3 (İstanbul, 1982), 1605-06.

⁸ İnal, *Türk Şairleri*, vol. 3, 917.

⁹ İnal, *Son Sadrazamlar*, vol. 3, 1657.

¹⁰ İnal, *Son Sadrazamlar*, vol. 3, 1434.

¹¹ İnal, *Türk Şairleri*, vol. 3, 924-925.

¹² İnal *Son Sadrazamlar*, vol. 3, 1204; İnal, *Türk Şairleri*, vol. 3, 914; Şükrü Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Örgüt Olarak İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Jön Türklük* (İstanbul, 1985), 58.

¹³ Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, *Mektuplar Makaleler* (İstanbul, 1977), 227-230.

¹⁴ M.M., *Eşvât-ı şudür* (İzmir, 1328/1912-13), 3.

¹⁵ M.M., *Eşvât-ı şudür*, 2.

¹⁶ Such as Avlonyalı Mehmed Ferid Paşa (d. 1333/1914), M.M., *Eşvât-ı şudür*, 48. Cf. Mehmet Tefik Bey, *Bir Devlet Adamının Mehmet Tefik (Biren) II. Abdülhamit, Meşrutiyet ve Mütareke Devri Anıları*, ed. F. Rezam Hürmen (İstanbul, 1993), 395; İnal *Son Sadrazamlar*, vol. 3, 1592, 1625, 1626.

¹⁷ M.M., *Eşvât-ı şudür*, 80. Cf. İnal, *Son Sadrazamlar*, vol. 3, 1062-1063.

¹⁸ M.M., *Mir'ât-ı Şu'unât*, 7.

¹⁹ M.M., *Taşvir-i Ahvâl Tenvir-i İstiqbâl* (İzmir, 1328/1912-13), 2-3.

²⁰ Cf. İnal, *Son Sadrazamlar*, vol. 2, 1107 and vol. 3, 1204.

²¹ M.M., *Hal'ler-İclâslar* (İstanbul, 1329/1913-14), 4-5.

²² M.M., *Quvvet-i İqbâl 'Alâmet-i Zevâl* (İstanbul, 1329/1913-14), 12-18.

²³ BOA, DH.SAİD., 1/84.

²⁴ BOA, DH.SAİD., 1/84.

Selim ASLANTAŞ and A. Teyfur ERDOĞDU

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