

Historiographical Analysis of Socio-Cultural Relations Between Central Asia And the Ottoman Empire

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Received: 30 January 2026; **Accepted:** 25 February 2026; **Published:** 19 March 2026

Abstract: The article analyzes the study of socio-cultural relations between Central Asia and the Ottoman Empire in Turkish historiography. The research highlights the issue of pilgrimage (Hajj) journeys and the problems associated with them, as well as the role of Uzbek tekkes in the socio-political, cultural, and economic life of the Ottoman state. In addition, the article notes that numerous documents related to the Hajj of the Bukhara Emirate are preserved in the Ottoman State Archives, which reflect various organizational, administrative, and social aspects of pilgrimage journeys.

Keywords: Hajj, the Üsküdar Uzbek Tekke, Central Asia, the Ottoman Empire.

Introduction: The influence of Hajj pilgrimages can also be observed in the relations between Central Asia and the Ottoman Empire. Central Asians not only undertook pilgrimage journeys but were also engaged in trade and, in some cases, carried out diplomatic missions. The rulers of Central Asia considered ensuring safe and convenient routes for the Hajj among their primary responsibilities. Since the routes leading from Central Asia to Mecca passed through the territories of Russia, Iran, and the Ottoman Empire, Central Asian rulers sought to establish stable and cordial relations with these states and to avoid conflicts as much as possible.

METHODS

Various sources and scholarly literature were used in conducting this research. In particular, the study relies on academic works produced by Turkish historians, as well as scholarly publications addressing the socio-cultural relations between Central Asia and the Ottoman Empire. Special attention was given to archival documents preserved in the Ottoman State Archives related to the Hajj of the Bukhara Emirate, as well as materials concerning the activities of Uzbek tekkes operating in Istanbul. These sources served as important primary materials for the research.

During the research process, scholarly works written by

Turkish historians were analyzed in order to determine the level of historiographical study of socio-cultural relations between Central Asia and the Ottoman Empire. In addition, documents related to the Uzbek Tekke located in the Üsküdar district of Istanbul—such as the “Pilgrims’ Registers,” official records, and documents concerning permanent residents—were examined. The information contained in these records provided important data for illuminating the subject of the research.

The study employs several research methods, including the historical method, comparative analysis, critical analysis of sources, and historiographical analysis. Archival documents, scholarly literature, and other historical materials were comparatively analyzed to determine their scholarly significance. These methodological approaches made it possible to conduct a comprehensive historiographical analysis of the socio-cultural relations between Central Asia and the Ottoman Empire, particularly the Hajj journeys and the activities of Uzbek tekkes

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Various issues related to the Hajj and pilgrimage journeys have also been examined by Turkish scholars. In particular, the studies of Cengiz Buyar, Derya İdikurt [1], Zekeriya Kurşun [2], Bahattin Gençal [3], Abdulkadir Özcan [4], Yusuf Sarıay [5], Mehmed Alpargu [6],

Ömer Metin [7], and Melik Sadık Küçüker [8] provide valuable insights into different aspects of the Hajj and its related socio-historical processes.

According to Melik Sadık Küçüker[9], there were several routes used by pilgrims departing from Samarkand and Bukhara for the Hajj. Along the first route, pilgrims traveled to Bombay and then reached Jeddah by sea. The second route passed through southern Russia to the Black Sea, from where pilgrims arrived in Istanbul and then continued to Mecca via Damascus or Cairo. However, Melik Sadık Küçüker does not specifically address the routes that passed through Ottoman territories.

In his study, Cengiz Buyar notes that the Turkestani historian Qurban Ali Khalidi (1843–1913), during his journey to perform the Hajj, visited Istanbul and expressed positive impressions about the city. The author also provides information that the distance between Damascus and Mashhad was about 1,200 kilometers, and in order to facilitate the long and difficult journey for pilgrims, caravanserais were constructed and wells were dug to supply water along the route.

According to Mehmed Alpargu [10], as a result, pilgrims crossed the Caspian Sea and reached Istanbul via Kafa and Özi. In his article, Cengiz Buyar also states that during the Ottoman–Russian War of 1877–1878, Russia opened a consular office from the late nineteenth century in order to regulate matters related to the Hajj. Reports of this office indicate that approximately eight to ten thousand pilgrims were registered annually. At the same time, the author emphasizes that it is impossible to determine the exact number of pilgrims, as many of them arrived without official documents.

In the cultural relations between the Central Asian khanates and the Ottoman Empire, the tekkes operating in Istanbul made a significant contribution. These tekkes actively participated in the political, social, and cultural life of the Ottoman state. According to various sources, there were eight, and according to some accounts five [11], Uzbek tekkes in Istanbul. These institutions served not only as caravanserais for pilgrims from Central Asia, India, and Russia traveling to the Hajj, but also functioned as legal institutions that dealt with pilgrims' documents and financial matters. In this regard, issues related to the Hajj further strengthened the ties between the Central Asian khanates and the Ottoman Empire

According to the analysis of the studies, cooperation served as an important factor that further strengthened the ties between the states. In the Ottoman State Archives alone, more than 200 documents related to the Hajj of the Bukhara Emirate

are preserved, covering various issues associated with the pilgrimage. Moreover, documents dating to the late nineteenth century indicate an increase in the number of Bukharans who settled in the Ottoman Empire for various reasons. According to information derived from studies based on archival documents, instructions were issued to the sanjak governors and beylerbeys to show them the same attention and consideration as that given to the local population [12].

They mainly settled in the sanjaks of Adana and Zor, and it can be observed that the number of those who arrived and settled there increased over different periods. Among the archival materials, around 20 documents contain information related to trade activities, nearly 60 documents refer to individuals who suffered hardships for various reasons, and 8 documents provide information about Bukharans who came to obtain secular education. It should be noted that the majority of Bukharans who settled in the Ottoman Empire consisted of sheikhs, scholars (ulama), and prominent religious figures, who established tekkes and religious lodges.

In the documents, they are generally recorded as Bukharans, the Bukhara Tekke, or the Uzbek Tekke [13]. Among these institutions, one of the most prominent is the Uzbek Tekke located in the Üsküdar district of Istanbul. According to Baba Tanmant[14], the building of the tekke was constructed in 1752 by Abdullah Pasha, the governor of Maraş. From 1758 onward, Hasan Ağa was responsible for managing the financial affairs of the tekke. The first sheikh of the tekke is considered to be Haji Haje Abdullah Akbar al-Uzbeki.

In 1788, the Uzbek Tekke was reorganized as a waqf institution. Its founder was al-Hajj Khalil Ağa ibn Ahmat Efendi, a prominent landowner who was actively engaged in trade.

In official Ottoman documents, the name of the waqf was recorded not after its founder but after the first sheikh of the tekke. One of the most reliable sources regarding the tekke is the work *Hadikat al-Jawami'*, written by Hafiz Hüseyin Ayvansarayi in the second half of the eighteenth century.

According to the conclusions of historical research, the tekke was initially established by a sheikh family that had migrated from Vobkent in Bukhara. At first, it served the qalandars belonging to the Naqshbandi Sufi order who had come from the Qalandarkhana quarter of Samarkand. Later, however, it began to serve all members of the Naqshbandi.

From the second half of the nineteenth century onward, it began to serve pilgrims from across Central Asia and India. Throughout different periods, the Uzbek Tekke was headed by twenty sheikhs. From the second

half of the nineteenth century until 1925, the Uzbek Tekke functioned as an intermediary in the relations between Istanbul and Turkestan.

A number of scholarly studies devoted to the issue of Uzbek tekkes have been conducted on the basis of archival documents preserved in Turkey. In these studies, the activities of the tekkes have been analyzed within various academic perspectives. In particular, the works of Alkan Mustafa and Okan Yaşılıut [15] focus on the social role of the tekkes and their functions within society. The studies of Süleyman Beyoğlu, Övüç Erkan, and Hülya Küçük [16] examine the material and spiritual assistance provided by the Uzbek tekkes to Turkey during the period of the Turkish National Struggle in the 1920s.

In addition, Kılıç Abdullah and Muharrem Varol analyze the scholarly and educational activities of the tekkes, while Işlı Esin Demirel studies the architectural characteristics of tekke buildings and their place within the urban cultural environment. Esra Duran Turay, Uğuzhan Şahin, Resul Oy, and Yusuf Sarıнай [17], in turn, have examined issues related to Sufi traditions, travel culture and journeys, as well as the Hajj pilgrimage from a scholarly perspective.

In particular, Yusuf Sarıнай emphasizes that for Central Asians it became a common tradition to stop in Istanbul during their Hajj journeys. According to his observations, pilgrims traveling to or returning from the Hajj usually stayed in Istanbul for a certain period, residing mainly in congregational mosques, tekkes, and guesthouses. It is also noted that many of them sought accommodation in the Uzbek tekkes located in the Üsküdar district. This situation demonstrates that these tekkes functioned not only as religious institutions but also as important establishments that received pilgrims and provided them with temporary shelter and social assistance

In the studies of Lale Can [18], interesting information is provided about pilgrims who arrived in Istanbul via Odessa. According to the author, almost all passengers who came to Istanbul by ship from Odessa were recorded in the “Pilgrims’ Registers” (Musafir Defterleri) kept at the Uzbek Tekke in Üsküdar. These registers contain important demographic and historical information about the pilgrims’ places of origin, travel routes, and their temporary residence in Istanbul. In this regard, these records serve as a significant source for studying the history of Hajj journeys and the relations between Central Asia and the Ottoman Empire.

The author also provides information about the places where pilgrims stayed in Istanbul, including congregational mosques, small guesthouses, dervish

lodges, and tekkes. In particular, the tekke located in the Eyüp district is identified as an important center for the activities and social life of pilgrims. This situation demonstrates that the tekkes of Istanbul functioned as important social and cultural centers for Hajj pilgrims.

In the studies of Lale Can, it is particularly emphasized that pilgrims from Turkestan received greater attention compared to pilgrims arriving from other regions. The author explains this situation by the presence of Uzbek tekkes operating in Istanbul and their traditional role in hosting pilgrims from Central Asia. These tekkes functioned not only as temporary accommodation for pilgrims but also as important institutions that assisted in organizing their journeys, arranging their documents, and resolving various practical matters related to their travel.

In the studies of Halim Baki Kunter [19], it is noted that pilgrims resided not only in Istanbul but also in guesthouses, zaviyahs, and tekkes located in other cities of Anatolia. The author characterizes these pilgrims as important intermediaries of cultural exchange. During their travels between different regions, pilgrims not only fulfilled their religious duties but also participated in the dissemination of information, news, customs, and cultural traditions from various places.

From this perspective, Hajj pilgrims formed a distinctive network of information and cultural exchange within the society of that period. Along with news from their homelands, they also transmitted various narratives, historical memories, and stories belonging to the oral traditions of their communities. This demonstrates that the Hajj journey functioned not only as a religious obligation but also as an important factor in strengthening social and cultural relations between different regions.

Historical information regarding the Üsküdar Uzbek Tekke has been examined by Halim Baki Kunter, Uğuzhan Şahin, Serpil Özcan, and Ay Resul [20] on the basis of various archival sources and written documents. These studies analyze the history of the tekke, its role in socio-cultural life, and issues related to the activities of Hajj pilgrims based on primary sources. The findings of these studies demonstrate that the Üsküdar Uzbek Tekke maintained an official record-keeping system in which several types of registers were systematically kept.

According to the analysis of sources, three main types of registers related to the activities of the tekke have survived. These include: the Pilgrim Registers (1898–1906), the Official Pilgrim Registers (1914–1925), and the Registers of Permanent Residents of the Uzbek Lodge. These records contain valuable information

about pilgrims, travelers, and permanent residents who stayed at the tekke, and they serve as important sources for studying the history of Hajj journeys, the social relations between Central Asia and the Ottoman Empire, and migration processes.

In particular, the Pilgrim Registers kept at the tekke consist of 142 pages without a cover. A total of 566 individuals are recorded in these registers. These records provide significant data for identifying the pilgrims' places of origin, travel routes, social composition, and the geography of Hajj journeys carried out through Istanbul.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the studies demonstrates that Hajj journeys and the Uzbek tekkes operating in Istanbul played an important role in the socio-cultural relations between Central Asia and the Ottoman Empire. The tekkes functioned not only as temporary shelters for pilgrims and as institutions providing organizational and legal assistance, but also as centers facilitating information exchange and cultural interaction between different regions. In particular, the pilgrim registers kept at the Üsküdar Uzbek Tekke preserve valuable information on the pilgrims' places of origin, travel routes, and social composition. Therefore, these records constitute an important source for studying Central Asia–Ottoman relations, Hajj routes, and issues of historical demography.

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