

# THE INFLUENCE OF SECTARIAN TENDENCIES OF THE SELJUK SULTANS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MATURIDISM AND ASH'ARISM: A PHILOSOPHICAL AND HISTORICAL ANALYSIS\*

## A INFLUÊNCIA DAS TENDÊNCIAS SECTARIANAS DOS SULTÕES SELJUQUES NA RELAÇÃO ENTRE O MATURIDISMO E O ASH'ARISMO: UMA ANÁLISE FILOSÓFICA E HISTÓRICA

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**Abstract:** From early periods, it is known that caliphs, sultans, and other rulers had an effect on Islamic sects. Especially starting from the Umayyad period, rulers supported certain sects and thoughts to legitimize their governance and distanced themselves from others by following policies of oppression. The most important reason for that was that sectarian movements had a significant effect at the community grassroots and could pose a threat to rulers when necessary. Aware of this, rulers have always sought a religiously based social base for themselves. To develop policies that regulated their relations with sects and provide religious references for their governance was the most effective way to achieve it. The sectarian tendencies of the Seljuk sultans and other rulers are among the main factors affecting the relationship between Maturidism and Ash'arism, the two most important sects of the Seljuk period. During the Seljuk period, which carried out a Sunni-centered sectarian policy, the sultans' devotion to the Islamic religion and their love and respect for knowledge and scholars formed the foundations of the religious and sectarian policy. In this study, the sectarian tendencies of the Great Seljuk sultans, who played an important role in the Islamization process of the Turks, and their effects on the relationship between Maturidism and Ash'arism will

be examined. Additionally, in terms of topic integrity, the sectarian policy of the Seljuk sultans will also be addressed. Especially, the sectarian policy followed by the Seljuk sultans, considering the socio-cultural characteristics of society from the time of Tugrul Bey onwards, will be emphasized. In our study, data collection, analysis, and interpretation techniques were generally used. In the data collection stage, classical and contemporary studies related to the subject were used as much as possible. Therefore, the effects of

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the sectarian tendencies of the sultans during the Seljuk period on the relationship between Maturidism and Ash'arism were tried to be presented in a multifaceted manner.

**Keywords:** History of Islamic Sects. Great Seljuks. Ash'arism. Maturidism. Nizamiyya Madrasas. Political Philosophy. Authority and Belief.

**Resumo:** Desde os primeiros períodos, sabe-se que califas, sultões e outros governantes tiveram um efeito sobre seitas islâmicas. Especialmente a partir do período omíada, os governantes apoiaram certas seitas e pensamentos para legitimar sua governança e se distanciaram de outros seguindo políticas de opressão. A razão mais importante para isso foi que os movimentos sectários tiveram um efeito significativo na base da comunidade e poderiam representar uma ameaça aos governantes quando necessário. Cientes disso, os governantes sempre buscaram uma base social religiosa para si mesmos. Desenvolver políticas que regulassem suas relações com seitas e fornecessem referências religiosas para sua governança era a maneira mais eficaz de alcançá-la. As tendências sectárias dos sultões seljúcidas e outros governantes estão entre os principais fatores que afetam o relacionamento entre o maturidismo e o ash'arismo, as duas seitas mais importantes do período seljúcida. Durante o período seljúcida, que realizou uma política sectária centrada nos sunitas, a devoção dos sultões à religião islâmica e seu amor e respeito pelo conhecimento e pelos estudiosos formaram as bases da política religiosa e sectária. Neste estudo, as tendências sectárias dos grandes sultões seljúcidas, que desempenharam um papel importante no processo de islamização dos turcos, e seus efeitos na relação entre o maturidismo e o ash'arismo serão examinados. Além disso, em termos de integridade do tópico, a política sectária dos sultões seljúcidas também será abordada. Especialmente, a política sectária seguida pelos sultões seljúcidas, considerando as características socioculturais da sociedade desde a época de Tugrul Bey em diante, será enfatizada. Em nosso estudo, técnicas de coleta, análise e interpretação de dados foram geralmente usadas. Na etapa de coleta de dados, estudos clássicos e contemporâneos relacionados ao assunto foram usados tanto quanto possível. Portanto, os efeitos das tendências sectárias dos sultões durante o período seljúcida sobre a relação entre o maturidismo e o ash'arismo foram tentados para serem apresentados de uma maneira multifacetada.

**Palavras-chave:** História das seitas islâmicas. Grandes seljúcidas. Ash'arismo. Maturidismo. Madrassas nizamiyya. Filosofia política. Autoridade e crença.

## 1. Introduction

The Great Seljuk Empire left a significant mark on Turkish-Islamic history by dominating a wide area. In the Great Seljuk Empire, which held an important position in the Islamization process of the Turks, many religions and sects existed. The Seljuks, who completed the process of statehood with Tugrul Bey, which started with Seljuk Bey's migration to the Cend region, became an important political, religious and economic power in its geography in a short period of time. Since its foundation, the official religious understanding of the Seljuk Empire was shaped within the framework of Sunni Islamic thought. In no period of the Seljuks can it be said that any sect other than Sunni Islam play a decisive role in official institutions of the state. Rawendi, the historian of the period, states that the sultans from the lineage of the Seljuks patronized the scholars from the followers of Abu Hanifa so much that their love left traces in the hearts of everyone, young and old (Râvendî, 1960). The most important factor in the Seljuks' acceptance of the Islamic religion in the city of Cend was the widespread presence of Hanafi, which was associated with Islam. Indeed, Husayni mentioned that "Seljuk Bey was blessed with the happiness of converting to the Hanafi religion" (el-Hüseynî, 1999), while Rawendi stated, "Seljuk, the ancestor of the Seljuks, adopted Hanafism not as a jurisprudential sect but as a religion" (Râvendî, 1960), thus indicating how Hanafism and Islam became intertwined. Historical sources of the period indicate that the most important factor in the Seljuks' adoption of the Sunni interpretation of Islam was the fact that the Samanids dominated the Transoxiana region and the Seljuks accepted Islam through them. The Samanids' rule over this region and their fanatic adherence to Hanafism paved the way for the Seljuks to follow the Hanafi interpretation of Islam (el-Mağdisî, 1906). The affairs developed as a result of the need for a large military force due to the Samanids' struggles with surrounding states, commercial activities, and dervishes who received Sufi education in madrasas played a significant role in the Islamization of the Turks, particularly in their adoption of Sunni beliefs (Merçil, 1991).

Imam Maturidi was accepted as an imam by almost all the Hanafis in the Transoxiana region and was also recognized by subsequent scholars for being a good follower of Abu Hanifa. This is why Maturidism became the sect of the scholars of Transoxiana (İsmail Hakki, 1981).

The spread of Maturidism, which parallels the views of Abu Hanifa, from the Turkistan region was facilitated by its balanced emphasis on rational thought without extremism. This laid the groundwork for its adoption among the Turks and, particularly during the Seljuk period, for it to become the official sect of the state (Ocak, 1999).

## 2. Results and Discussion

### Religious and Sectarian Policies of the Seljuks

The Seljuk Empire left a significant mark on Turkish-Islamic history, leaving an important cultural legacy for subsequent periods with its level of civilization and state institutions. Establishing the most powerful civilization of the era with its contributions in the fields of science, art, and culture, the Seljuks reached the pinnacle in terms of philosophy and religious sciences. They extended their borders from the Seyhun River to the shores of the Aegean Sea, and from the Caucasus Mountains to the Indian Ocean, dominating a wide geography. Ruling over such a wide area meant governing people from many different nations and religions. Although the Muslim population was the majority, Christians, Jews, and people of other religions continued their lives within the Seljuk Empire (Karadaş, 2003). Christians lived mainly in the western regions of the country, while Jews, although not as numerous as Christians, resided particularly in the Khorasan region (Piyadeoğlu, 2011). In addition to these religions, followers of Shamanism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Manichaeism, and other religions also lived together without any problems. These people from different religions did not feel oppressed and had the opportunity to practice their faith freely without facing any discrimination within the Seljuk Empire's borders (Sümer, 1980). The peaceful coexistence of non-Muslims with Muslims was a result of the Seljuks' religious policy and their tolerance towards the religious rights and freedoms of other people (Aydın, 1998).

Non-Muslims living within the borders of the Seljuk Empire clearly expressed that they were not subjected to any pressure or coercion during the Seljuk period and appreciated the tolerance shown by Seljuk rulers. The following words of the famous Armenian historian Matthew of Urfa, who lived in the 12th century, are extremely valuable in expressing the importance of Seljuk sultans for non-Muslims: "Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah was the fairest, the wisest, and the most powerful of men. He was like a father to his Christian citizens. All Greeks and Armenians willingly and voluntarily accepted Malik Shah's rule" (Mateos, 1987; Turan, 1969).

After Tugrul Bey, with Alparslan and Malik Shah, the Seljuk Empire reached the highest level of civilization of its time. Due to its justice, tolerance, and the value it placed on people, it held a unique position in the eyes of non-Muslims (Turan, 1998).

It is known that Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah paid special attention to the places of worship of non-Muslims and the clergy working there. In 1090, Armenian Patriarch Basil requested from Sultan Malik-Shah the removal of taxes on churches, monasteries, and priests. The Sultan responded positively to this request by sending a decree bearing his seal, exempting churches and

priests from taxes, as stated by non-Muslim historians (Mateos, 1987). Due to Malik-Shah's generosity and tolerance towards non-Muslims, not only Muslims but also Christians mourned for him upon his death (Cilaci, 2000; Tellioglu, 2015).

The Seljuk Empire, which followed a highly successful policy of integrating people with various religious beliefs, also achieved the same approach towards Islamic sects. In the wide Seljuk geography, it is possible to see many legal sects arising from differences in opinions on matters of worship and transactions. Muslims belonging to legal sects such as Hanafism, Shafi'ism, Malikism, and Hanbalism continued to exist in various regions of the state (Özaydın, 2018; Kara, 2018). Additionally, the most prevalent political and theological thought movements in the territories under Seljuk rule were Ash'arism, Maturidism, Mu'tazilism, Shi'ism, Batiniyya, and Hanbalism. These sects were not subjected to any obstruction or interference from the rulers as long as they did not negatively affect social life or threaten social peace. Although the diversity of theological and legal sects in the Seljuk State sometimes made the rulers' job difficult and created differences of opinion among them, the Seljuk sultans and rulers provided the same atmosphere of freedom and tolerance for all sect adherents as they did for Christians, Jews, and followers of other religions.

### **The Effects of Sectarian Tendencies of the Seljuk Sultans on the Relationship Between Maturidism and Ash'arism**

#### ***The Relationship Between Maturidism and Ash'arism in Tugrul Bey Period***

The founding period of the Great Seljuk State, particularly during the reign of Tugrul Bey, witnessed significant developments in inter-sect relations. Sources that provide information about Tugrul Bey's life and personality mention that he was strongly devoted to his religion, dedicated to his prayers (İbn Kesir, 1994) and also, he was generous and patient (İbn Hallikan, 2002). He was disciplined in his worship (Yaltkaya, 1925), performing all his prayers in congregation, and he followed the Prophet's Sunnah by fasting (İbnü'l-Esîr, 1987) on Mondays and Thursdays (Kitapçı, 1994). Ravendi expressed his opinion about Tugrul Bey, stating, "There was no one more devout and sincere in Islam than him" (Râvendî, 1960). Tugrul Bey's sensitivity to religious matters is also evident in his statement, "If I build a palace for myself without building a mosque beside it, I would be ashamed before God" (Hüseynî, 1999; Turan, 1969).

In all sources dealing with the Seljuk period, it is mentioned that Sultan Tugrul Beg supported Ahl al-Sunnah and Hanafi-Mâturîdism. Azimi, when speaking of Tugrul Bey, notes that he followed the Ahl al-Sunnah sect (Azimî, 1988). Ibn Asakir introduces Tugrul Bey as someone who adhered to the Hanafi sect (İbn Asâkîr, 1979). Shafi'i jurist and biographer Tâceddin es-Subki

also stated that Tugrul Bey was a Hanafi and emphasized that he was a knowledgeable person (Sübkî, 1964). Ibn Kesir, in his work "el-Bidâye ve'n-Nihâye," speaks highly of Tugrul Bey when discussing his entry into Baghdad, describing him as someone who loved and protected Ahl al-Sunnah (İbn Kesîr, 1994). While all sources discussing the period of Tugrul Bey mention his strong adherence to Hanafi-Maturidism, they do not indicate that he had a negative attitude towards other sects or oppressed them, except for a few exceptions. This can be explained by the fact that he followed the path of Imam Maturidi, thus paving the way for people to express their religious thoughts openly. Because Imam Maturidi, who grew up in Transoxiana, where scholarly debates were freely conducted, was a good follower of Abu Hanifa and lived without being involved in environments where many thoughts struggled for dominance, such as Basra and Baghdad. This also influenced the intellectual world of those who adopted Maturidism in later periods (Yüksel, 1980).

Tugrul Bey's contribution to the Hanafi-Maturidi thought was not limited to merely applying it in his religious life and worship. Tugrul Bey built mosques and madrasas to spread the Hanafi-Maturidi thought, and he paid special attention to appointing judges and preachers from this sect. When Tugrul Bey conquered the city of Rey, he built a mosque and dedicated it to the service of the Hanafis. The Hanafis gathered in this mosque, performing their prayers and having the opportunity to learn religious sciences. Tugrul Bey also appointed a Hanafi chief judge in Isfahan and placed the supervision of the mosque there in the hands of the Hanafis (Madelung, 2003).

Furthermore, Tugrul Bey made an effort to select Hanafi-Maturidi scholars not only for religious duties but also for political roles such as ambassadorship. Tugrul Bey conferred the title of "Khatib al-Khutaba," typically given to Shafi'i-Ash'arites, to a Hanafi named Abu'l-Hasan Ali al-Sandali (İbn Asâkîr, 1984). Another significant figure appointed by Tugrul Bey was the Hanafi Ali ibn Ubayd al-Khatibi.

During the period of Tugrul Bey, another influential Sunni sect alongside the Hanafi-Maturidis was the Shafi'i-Ash'arites. While Hanafis were appointed to significant positions during Tugrul Bey's reign, some Ash'arites were removed from these positions. For instance, Shafi'i Abu Osman al-Sabuni (d. 1057-1058), who served in Nishapur, an important center of science, was removed from his position as preacher and replaced by Ali ibn Hasan al-Sandali (d. 1091), a staunch Hanafi (İbn Asâkîr, 1979; Madelung, 2003). In addition, in the year 1055, the position of Chief Judge (Qadi al-Qudat) in Baghdad was given to the Hanafi Ali ibn Muhammad al-Damaghani al-Kabir (d. 1085). This position, which had long been held by Shafi'i-Ash'arites, was transferred

to the Hanafis following the death of the Shafi'i scholar Ibn Makula. Al-Damaghani was appointed as Qadi al-Qudat upon the proposal of Abbasid Caliph Al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah and the approval of Seljuk Sultan Tugrul Bey and his vizier Amidulmulk al-Kunduri. The transfer of the Qadi al-Qudat position, previously under the control of Shafi'i-Ash'arites, to the Hanafis was a significant achievement for the Hanafis. Al-Damaghani held this position for more than thirty years (İbnü'l-Cevzî, 2014; el-Bundârî, 1943).

The appointment of al-Damaghani to the position of Chief Judge (Qadi al-Qudat) was not welcomed by the Ash'arites, and some disputes arose between the two groups. Notably, significant debates took place between al-Damaghani and the well-known Shafi'i-Ash'ari scholar of the time, Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi, who was also a candidate for the position of Chief Judge. In these debates, many jurisprudential issues were discussed and deliberated between the two. (Sübkî, 1964). Another position where Tugrul Bey appointed Hanafis was the Chief Judge of Isfahan. Tugrul Bey appointed Ali ibn Abdullah al-Khatibi (d. 1074), one of the Hanafi scholars, to this position, and after his death, his son Ubaydullah (d. 1108) was appointed to the same position (Koca, 2001).

During this period, Abbasid caliphs also played significant roles in the relations between the Hanafi-Maturidis and the Shafi'i-Ash'arites. The Abbasid caliphs, who sometimes favored the Shafi'i, sometimes favored the Hanafis, as in the election of al-Damaghani to the position of Chief Judge of Baghdad. While Tugrul Bey preferred to appoint Hanafi-Maturidis to significant positions, the Abbasid caliph of the time did not hesitate to appoint individuals from the Shafi'i sect. The reason behind this was more political than religious. This is because the Abbasid Caliphate, which had completely lost its political opportunities since the Shi'ite Būveyhids, aimed to regain political supremacy by making appointments in accordance with its interests, albeit to a lesser extent. In this context, Abu'l-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad al-Mawardi (d. 1058), who was sent to the Seljuk center by the Abbasid Caliph to recognize Tugrul Bey, was notable for his Shafi'i identity (İbnü'l-Esîr, 1987). Mawardi was not only a good jurist but also known for his evaluations in many areas such as politics, ethics, society, and economics (Kallek, 2003).

The most important event that should be considered in the context of the relationship between Hanafis and Ash'arites during the reign of Tugrul Bey is undoubtedly the cursing of the Ash'arites from the pulpit with the encouragement of the vizier Amid al-Mulk al-Kunduri (İbnü'l-Esîr, 1987), Vizier Kundürî's sectarian fanaticism and personal desires had a great influence on the realization of this event, which would continue to have an effect even in the post-Tugrul Bey period. In fact, Kundürî, who had a successful period of viziership during his tenure, performed very important services for the Seljuk State. During the reign of Tugrul Beg, Kundürî made a great

contribution to the development of mutual relations between the Seljuks and the Abbasids. During Tugrul Bey's first journey to Baghdad in 1055, Kunduri accompanied him, played a key role in the marriage between Tugrul Bey and the daughter of Caliph Al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah, Seyyide Hatun, and even used different persuasion methods to make the marriage happen (Râvendî, 1960). Due to all these services, Kunduri gained Tugrul Bey's full trust and managed to influence his religious and political decisions. In this context, Tugrul Beg, under the influence of his vizier Kundüri, pursued a policy against the Ash'arites, who constituted the other part of the Ahl al-Sunnah, and even ordered them to be cursed for a while (Koca, 2001). Vizier Kundüri first asked the Sultan for permission to curse the Rafizids, and after the Sultan's permission, Imam al-Ash'arî and al-Ash'arîs were included in the group that was cursed by accusing them of being the people of bid'ah and causing corruption in the religion (*Yalkaya, 1925*).

During the reign of Tugrul Bey, the oppression and intimidation policies initiated against the Shafi'i Ash'arites under the influence of the vizier Kundüri, who had adopted Mu'tazilite thought, drove a wedge between the Seljuks and the Shafi'i Ash'arites. By revealing his sectarian tendencies, the vizier Kundürî caused Sultan Tugrul Beg to carry out an oppressive policy towards the Ash'arites in both political and religious fields (İbnü'l-Esîr, 1987).

During this period, which lasted for about ten years until the death of Tugrul Bey, preachers, professors and judges who were Ash'arites were subjected to investigations, suspended from their duties, prevented from giving lectures and sermons, and those who were in official positions were dismissed from their duties and some of them were sentenced to be arrested. This situation quickly spread to all the eastern provinces under Seljuk control. As a result of these measures, many Shafi'i-Ash'arite scholars had to leave the region. In response to these developments, Ash'arite Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni, along with famous scholars of the time such as al-Bayhaqi and Abdulkarim al-Qushayri, left Nishapur and went to Baghdad. Al-Juwayni later moved to the Hijaz and stayed for a while in Mecca and Medina. After the death of Tugrul Bey, Seljuk Sultan Alp Arslan appointed Nizam al-Mulk to replace Kunduri, prompting al-Juwayni to return to Nishapur, where he began teaching at the Nizamiyya Madrasa built for him (İbn Asâkir, 1979).

Following the developments, Sultan Tugrul Beg summoned the prominent figures of the Ash'arite sect, including 'Abd al-Karîm al-Qushayri, and in the meeting, the Ash'arite scholars demanded that the unfair practices against them to be abandoned. Before, Vizier Kunduri had informed Tugrul Bey about certain beliefs and practices of the Ash'aris that were deemed inconsistent with religion and the Sunnah. Misinformed about Imam Ash'ari and the Ash'aris,



Tugrul Bey rejected the requests of Imam Qushayri and his group. The Sultan asked them why the situation had reached this point, and they tried to explain that Ash'ari did not say the things that were claimed. After ongoing accusations and defenses, Sultan Tugrul Bey concluded the meeting by saying, "We only ordered curses on those who say such things" (İbn Kesîr, 1994).

Abdulkarim al-Qushayri, who did not get what he wanted as a result of his meeting with Tugrul Bey, wrote a treatise titled “Şikâyetü Ehli's-Sunna bi hikayeti mâ nâlehüm mine'l-Mihne” due to the event they experienced (Özköse, 2000). Because of this treatise, Vizier Kunduri convinced Tugrul Bey to allow the arrest and imprisonment of Abdulkarim al-Qushayri, Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni, Reis al-Furati, and Ibn al-Muwafaq. Following the investigation, Reis al-Furati and Qushayri were captured and imprisoned in Nishapur, while Juwayni escaped by leaving the city. Abu Sahl, who could not be captured because he was not in the city, gathered a group and came to Nishapur, demanding the governor release Qushayri and Reis al-Furati. When the governor did not respond positively to this request, they raided the fortress with his men and freed them. Following these events, due to the ensuing conflicts, Qushayri and some scholars left Khorasan. Qushayri returned to Nishapur and continued his educational activities there after Nizam al-Mulk was appointed as vizier (Sübkî, 1964; İbnü'l-Esîr, 1987).

The main character behind the pressure and intimidation policies against the Ash'arites during the Seljuk period, briefly mentioned above, is undoubtedly Vizier Kunduri and his sectarian fanaticism. However, it is quite difficult to explain these practices, which continued for a long time, were effective in many Seljuk cities, and caused unrest among Muslims, solely by Kunduri's sectarian fanaticism. In fact, there is no consensus on which sect Kunduri belonged to. Bundari mentioned that Kunduri was extremely loyal to the Hanafi sect and its followers, and very hostile towards those from the Shafi'i sect (el-Bündârî, 1943). Subki claimed that Vizier Kunduri supported the Mu'tazilite sect while hiding behind Hanafism (Sübkî, 1964), and Ibn al-Asir mentioned Kunduri's hostility towards the Shafi'is (İbnü'l-Esîr, 1987). According to Serefeddin Yalkaya, Amidulmulk Kunduri was a member of the Mu'tazilite sect who believed in the created nature of actions, and adopted the bad beliefs of other sects as well (Yalkaya, 1925). According to Kafesoglu, Vizier Kunduri was the person who caused the Ash'arites to be cursed (Kafesoglu, 1964).

In light of the ideas about Kunduri's sectarian thought, it can be said that he was a staunch supporter of the Hanafi sect, however, he also accepted Mu'tazilite ideas (Ocak, 2002; Süleyman Uludağ, 2002). Although this event appears to be a religious debate, the underlying reason behind it is more political than religious or sectarian. Vizier Kunduri's desire to maintain his authority and

position within the state hierarchy, his political ambitions, and his struggle for power led him to take such actions.

Another reason for the cursing and oppression of the Ash'arites was the increasing power of Ash'arism both among the general populace and within state ranks. This continued to escalate during Tugrul Bey's reign. Vizier Kunduri and his supporters likely aimed to weaken the power of the Ash'arites through such measures, convincing Tugrul Bey to initiate the mihna process. Another important point is that although Imam Ash'ari came from within the Mu'tazilite sect after leaving it, he brought serious criticisms against Mu'tazilite thought. These criticisms sometimes put the Mu'tazilites in a difficult position and caused a great reaction and hostility towards Imam al-Ash'ari. This reaction manifested itself during Tugrul Bey's reign through the mihna practices against the Ash'arites (Yavuz, 2017).

When considering all these reasons together, during the mihna period that emerged in the reign of Tugrul Bey, significant pressures and sanctions were applied against the Ash'arites. However, these practices were not limited to the Mu'tazilite-Ash'arite conflict but were also supported by some Hanafis who were not Mu'tazilites. Consequently, this caused a rift between the Ash'arites and other Hanafis. Despite all the pressures, Ash'arism emerged stronger from the mihna process, which ended with the death of Tugrul Bey. Even, in the subsequent period, Ash'arism was more strongly represented in the state ranks than before, becoming the official sect of the Seljuks.

### ***The Relationship Between Maturidism and Ash'arism During the Reign of Sultan Alp Arslan***

During the reign of Sultan Alp Arslan, who succeeded Tugrul Bey, the sectarian policy favoring Sunnism continued. Sultan Alp Arslan supported Hanafi-Maturidi thought in all areas and made great efforts to spread this doctrine. In appointments to important state positions, professors assigned to madrasas, and appointments to key positions such as judgeships and embassies, priority was given to those who adhered to Hanafi-Maturidi. The clear stance of Sultan Alp Arslan on this matter can be seen in the work of "Siyasetname" by Nizam al-Mulk, the most important statesman of the period. In this work, Nizam al-Mulk summarizes the attitude towards other sects as follows: "In the Seljuk state, when a person applied for any position, they were asked which city they came from and their sect and nationality were investigated. If the person said they belonged to the Hanafi or Shafi'i sect or came from the Sunni regions of Khorasan and Transoxiana, they were accepted and appointed to the position. If the person came from cities like Qom, Kashan, Saveh, Ave, or Rey and belonged to the Shi'i sect, they were absolutely not accepted, even if they donated all their

wealth to get the position. The Seljuk rulers never allowed such people to approach them. Both Sultan Tugrul Bey and Sultan Alparslan would be angry if they received news that a Turk had hired a person with a corrupt sect. Therefore, their reigns continued in prosperity and order without any troubles."

Nizam al-Mulk's statements are quite striking in showing Sultan Alp Arslan's strong adherence to the Hanafî sect. In fact, Sultan Alp Arslan's loyalty to the Hanafi sect sometimes reached the level of fanaticism. Alp Arslan always desired that his vizier Nizam al-Mulk be from the Hanafî sect and repeatedly expressed this wish to his vizier. Nizam al-Mulk mentioned that he always feared for his life because Sultan Alp Arslan considered his belonging to the Shafi'i sect a flaw due to his strong loyalty to Hanafism. Nizam al-Mulk expressed this situation in his work "Siyasetname" as follows: "Sultan Alp Arslan was so strongly attached to his sect that he often said, 'Alas! If only my vizier Nizam al-Mulk were not of the Shafi'i sect, he would be more magnificent and authoritative.' I was frightened and worried by Sultan Alp Arslan's strict attitude towards his sect, which reached the level of discrediting the Shafi'i sect. Sultan Alp Arslan constantly criticized the Shafi'i sect and always reproached me for being from this sect" (Nizâmülmülk, 1941).

During the reign of Sultan Alparslan, none of those who belonged to sects other than Hanafî and Shafi'i were given positions in state institutions, nor were they allowed to appear before the sultan. All personnel assisting state officials, those with the authority to make decisions, the state's prominent figures, and the artisans belonged to the Hanafi and Shafi'i sects.

The curses and oppressive practices against the Ash'arites during the reign of Sultan Tugrul Bey ended with the rise of Sultan Alp Arslan to the throne of the Seljuks. After taking over the administration, Alp Arslan had Vizier Kunduri arrested and imprisoned, and later executed him (İbnü'l-Cevzî, 2014). Sultan Alp Arslan, who adhered to Hanafi-Maturidi thought, appointed Nizam al-Mulk, a Shafi'i-Ash'ari, to the vizier position vacated by Kunduri. This significant appointment was positively received by the Shafi'i-Ash'aris, transforming the previous situation entirely and replacing the difficulties experienced by Ash'ari scholars with happiness. Upon assuming the vizier position, Nizam al-Mulk used all his powers to put an end to previous practices, eliminate the chaos that had arisen in society, and bring back the Ash'ari scholars to their homelands, and he did not hesitate to make any sacrifice. The scholars who had to leave their homelands due to the pressures returned and were honored and rewarded by Sultan Alp Arslan and Nizam al-Mulk (*Yaltkaya*, 1925). During this period, the establishment of the Nizamiyya Madrasas and the assignment of significant positions to Shafi'i-Ash'ari scholars in these madrasas

made them forget the difficulties they had previously faced and eliminated the tensions between the Hanafis and Ash'aris. Shafi'i-Ash'arites were assigned to the Nizamiye Madrasas, which were built in the important Seljuk cities of Isfahan, Nishapur, Herat, Hamedan, Merv, Rey and Balkh and turned into higher education institutions (Kafesoğlu, 1964).

Nizam al-Mulk's requirement that all personnel assigned to the madrasas, from the servants to the highest administrators, belong to the Shafi'i-Ash'ari sect and his inclusion of this in the madrasa inscriptions and endowment deeds were not welcomed by the Hanafis (İbnü'l-Cevzî, 2014). This led to debates between the followers of the two sects and even resulted in some scholars changing their sect.

Furthermore, during the reign of Sultan Alp Arslan, Nizam al-Mulk, who held all the powers in both the state administration and the institutions of learning and justice, began to use his appointment powers in favor of Ash'arism. Ibn al-Adim, citing a source from Abu Abdullah al-Hanafi, reported that Nizam al-Mulk favored Shafi'i-Ash'arites greatly and gave them special attention by appointing scholars in madrasas from among the Shafi'i-Ash'arites and judges from among the Hanafis (İbn al-Adîm, 1982). Abu Abdullah mentioned that Nizam al-Mulk's adoption of this appointment method was not an innocent thought, and that the vizier followed such a policy to strengthen the Shafi'i-Ash'arites. In fact, selecting Shafi'i-Ash'arites as lecturers in the madrasas led to significant progress in the field of knowledge for Ash'arism and an increase in Ash'ari scholars. Ash'ari lecturers, who spent most of their time teaching and following developments in the field of science, spread to different regions and contributed to the development of Ash'arism. The words of Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi, one of the renowned scholars of the Nizamiyya Madrasas, summarize this situation best: "When I traveled to Khorasan, in every town and village I passed, there was a judge, preacher, or mufti who was my student or friend" (İbn Kâdî Şühbe, 1979). However, the Hanafis who were engaged in legal and judicial affairs could not devote enough time to their studies and scholarly activities, which led to the weakening of Hanafism, a decrease in their interest in science, and intellectual pursuits (El-Bundârî, 1943).

Despite Vizier Nizam al-Mulk's policies favoring Shafi'i-Ash'arites, Sultan Alp Arslan made decisions supporting Hanafi-Maturidi thought. He always kept Hanafi-Maturidi scholars by his side and valued their advice. The Hanafi scholar Abū Nasr Muhammad b. Abdilmelik al-Bukhari was the most prominent of these scholars. Alparslan kept him by his side, including the Battle of Malazgirt (*Yaltkaya*, 1925; Hüseyinî, 1999). Even during the battle, Alp Arslan heeded al-Bukhari's advice, who said, "You are fighting for the Islamic faith, which Allah promises to elevate above all

others. Therefore, attack the enemy on the blessed Friday when all preachers will pray for you with the Muslim congregation from the pulpits," and acted accordingly (Bundârî, 1943; Turan, 1969).

Also, during this period, the shrine of Imam al-‘Azam Abu Hanifa was built in Baghdad by Abu Saïd al-Mustawfî, known by the nickname Sherefulmülk, who was sent to the Caliph as Sultan Alparslan's envoy. In addition, a dome was constructed over Abu Hanifa's shrine (İbn Kesîr, 1994; *Yaltkaya*, 1925). When Abu Sa'id al-Mustawfi arrived in Baghdad, he saw that those appointed by Nizam al-Mulk had begun the construction of the Nizamiyya Madrasa for the Ash'arites. He then decided to build a mosque and madrasa for the Hanafis. After completing the shrine of Abu Hanifa, Abu Sa'id al-Mustawfi built a large mosque and a madrasa for the Hanafis next to the shrine. After appointing professors to teach at the madrasa, he also established a foundation to meet the needs of the madrasa and the students. With the efforts of Abu Sa'id al-Mustawfi, this madrasah was completed and put into service before the Nizamiye Madrasah (Ocak, 1999). The work built by Abu Sa'id al-Mustawfi during the period of Alp Arslan was used by the Hanafis for a long time and contributed to the education of many students.

Despite his policies supporting Hanafi-Maturidi thought, Sultan Alp Arslan never allowed policies against the Ash'arites. He ended the anti-Ash'arite practices carried out in Khorasan during the previous period and also permitted the Ash'arites to build a second mosque in Nishapur (Nizâmülmülk, 1941).

In conclusion, unlike the period of Tugrul Bey, it can be said that during the reign of Alp Arslan, a special interest was shown towards the Shafi'i-Ash'arites, influenced by Vizier Nizam al-Mulk. While the Seljuks supported Hanafism against the Ash'arites during Tugrul Bey's time, this policy seems to have been abandoned during Alp Arslan's reign. It is observed that socio-cultural factors influenced this change in policy. Because the Shafi'i-Ash'arites gained power in the Seljuk geography, especially in Baghdad, the center of the caliphate, and this led to a change in the sectarian politics of the Seljuks.

### ***The Relationship Between Maturidism and Ash'arism During the Reign of Sultan Malik-Shah***

It is known that Sultan Malik-Shah, like Sultan Alp Arslan, was also devoted to the Hanafi sect. When Sultan Malik-Shah entered Baghdad for the first time in the year 479 AH, he went directly to visit the tombs of Abu Hanifa and Maruf al-Kerhi, showing his respect for them. During his time in Baghdad, Malik-Shah led the Eid prayer by reciting the takbirs according to the Hanafi sect, instead of the Shafi'i sect (Ahmed b. Mahmud, 1977).

During his stay in Baghdad, after completing his meeting with the Abbasid Caliph, Sultan Malik-Shah visited the Baghdad Nizamiyya Madrasa. Although he found the madrasa somewhat small, he expressed his admiration for it. Sultan Malik-Shah said that he liked this madrasa, which he had never seen before, although it was a bit small, and he prayed for the professors, students and other staff in the madrasa and showed his satisfaction with the scientific activities. Later, he went to the madrasa's library and created a booklet dictating the hadiths he had heard. The other hadith scholars in the library listened to the Sultan.

Abdurrahman ibn Ahmed, one of the well-known jurists of Samarkand and a leading scholar of the Shafi'i-Ash'arites, played an important role in the conquest of Samarkand by the Seljuks during the time of Sultan Malik-Shah. After his death in Baghdad, despite being very old and ill, all the state officials, including Nizam al-Mulk, attended his funeral. Sultan Malik-Shah later visited the grave of Abdurrahman ibn Ahmed who was buried next to the grave of Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi to show his respect for him (İbn Kesîr, 1994).

Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi, who was sent as an envoy to Sultan Malik-Shah by the Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadi bi-Amr Allah, was respectfully received and hosted by Sultan Malik-Shah and Nizam al-Mulk, and his requests were fulfilled. Later, al-Shirazi also had a meeting with Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni in the presence of Vizier Nizam al-Mulk (*Aybakan*, 2010).

The value that Seljuk sultans, regardless of their sect, placed on scholars and their thoughts is clearly seen in the following incident between Sultan Malik-Shah and Ash'ari theologian Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni. It is narrated that Malik-Shah announced the arrival of Ramadan Eid a day early without considering the sighting of the crescent moon towards the end of the month of Ramadan. However, Juwayni objected to this situation, stating that according to Islam, the start and end of the month of Ramadan are determined by the sighting of the crescent moon and not by calculations or calendars. Therefore, he declared that it was not possible to announce Eid before the crescent moon was sighted. When the crescent moon was not sighted after sunset, Juwayni opposed Malik-Shah's announcement and issued a fatwa stating that the next day was not Eid, and that the month of Ramadan should be completed as thirty days. In response to this sensitive situation, the Sultan invited Juwayni to the palace to learn his thoughts directly. During their meeting, Juwayni said: "It is our duty to obey the Sultan's orders in state affairs, but in matters of religion related to fatwas, the Sultan should consult us." Finding Juwayni's response justified, the Sultan accepted the fatwa and honored Juwayni, sending him off with respect. Similarly, "Ali bin Hasan al-Sandāli, a scholar from Nishapur, after Tugrul Beg's expedition to Baghdad, began a life of asceticism by devoting himself to worship. During a Friday prayer, Sultan Malik-Shah

encountered him and asked why he did not visit him. Sandali replied, "In order that you remain the best of rulers, and I do not become the worst of scholars." He then explained his response as follows: "The best of rulers are those who visit scholars, and the worst of scholars are those who rush to visit rulers" (Turan, 1969).

Based on the examples above, it is noticeable that during the period of Malik-Shah, the Shafi'i-Ash'arites were more prominent compared to the Hanafi-Maturidis, and important positions were given to the Shafi'i-Ash'arites. As in the period of Alp Arslan, it can be said that the influence of Vizier Nizam al-Mulk on the sects continued to strengthen during Malik-Shah's reign. In addition, it can be suggested that Nizam al-Mulk followed a balance policy between the Shafi'i-Ash'arites and the Hanafi-Maturidis.

### ***Relationship between Maturidism and Ash'arism in the Post-Malik-Shah Period***

The sultanate fights that emerged with the death of Sultan Malik-Shah led to political and social turmoil that would last for a long time in the Seljuk State. There were fights for the throne among Malik-Shah's sons, and many political, economic and social gains the state had previously achieved were lost in the weakness of the administration that lasted for about twelve years. This caused the state to lose its former strength and decline in all areas (Köymen, 1993). However, all the sultans who ruled the Seljuk State after Malik Shah adopted the Hanafi-Maturidi thought and supported the development and spread of this thought at every opportunity.

Muhammad Tapar is notable for his strict adherence to the Hanafi sect. The mosques in the cities of Isfahan and Hamadan, which were endowed by Nizam al-Mulk for the Shafi'i-Ash'arites, were taken from the Shafi'i-Ash'arites and allocated to the Hanafis by Sultan Muhammad Tapar. According to the information narrated by Rawandi, because of Nizam al-Mulk's sectarian fanaticism, Sultan Muhammad Tapar sent armies and ordered executions to ensure that Rukneddin, the foremost of the Sadr-i Jahans, could deliver the sermon in the Isfahan mosque given to the Shafi'i-Ash'arites by Nizam al-Mulk. When the news reached him that prayers were performed there, he was so delighted that he threw his cap into the air, prayed, and gave charities. Sultan Tapar did the same in the Hamadan Mosque as he did in Isfahan (Râvendî, 1960).

Sultan Muhammad Tapar appointed Emir Amid Muhammad al-Juzakani, the Baghdad commander, to the position of Seljuk tugra. This position is extremely important because the tugra holder acts as the Sultan's vizier during the vizier's absence on hunting expeditions, and he was trusted in all affairs. According to the information narrated by Bundari, the only reason why

Muhammad al-Juzakani was appointed to this important position was that he belonged to the Hanafî sect and was born in Khorasan and was a native of the region (El-Bundârî, 1943).

Just as Muhammad Tapar, Sultan Sanjar was also strictly adherent to the Hanafi sect and made efforts to spread Hanafi thought (*Cüveynî, 1999*). The following statements in “Rahat al-Sudur” highlight Sultan Sanjar’s devotion to the Hanafi sect: “The great Sultan Sanjar bestowed great favors and benevolence upon the Sadr-i Jahans and Imam Burhani in Khorasan, Transoxiana, and Ghazni. When the infidel Khata-Khan occupied these lands, he could not manage them without their assistance. That is why he still keeps their descendants dominant and in place in these regions. If any position in the world were held by someone other than the followers of Abu Hanifa, it would be taken by force and given to the followers of Imam al-Azam” (Râvendî, 1960).

During the reign of Sultan Sanjar, there was a debate between Sultan Sanjar and al-Ghazali, one of the most influential figures who adopted Shafi'i-Ash'ari thought, regarding Abu Hanifa. Some people disturbed by al-Ghazali's public reputation and scholarly authority in the eyes of the people complained to Sultan Sanjar, claiming that he had maligned Abu Hanifa. Upon receiving the information that al-Ghazali had made negative statements about Abu Hanifa, Sultan Sanjar summoned al-Ghazali to his presence. Al-Ghazali rejected Sanjar's invitation and responded with a letter. In his letter, al-Ghazali stated that he had previously promised himself that he would never go to the feet of any sultan. Sultan Sanjar did not find al-Ghazali's response sufficient and insisted on his attendance. Unable to withstand the insistence, al-Ghazali finally appeared before Sultan Sanjar. When Sultan Sanjar mentioned the allegations regarding Abu Hanifa, al-Ghazali spoke highly of Abu Hanifa. He responded to the baseless accusations by saying, "The idea that I maligned Imam al-Azam Abu Hanifa spread among people. Such an idea is completely wrong. I expressed my thoughts about Imam al-Azam in my book *Ihya Ulum id-Din*. Imam al-Azam Abu Hanifa was one of the most distinguished scholars of his time with his views in the field of fiqh and his scholarly level" (Nûmânî, 2008). Having the utmost respect for Abu Hanifa, Sultan Sanjar was pleased with al-Ghazali's thoughts about him and asked him to put his statements in writing. Following this conversation, al-Ghazali wrote his work *Nasihât ul-Muluk* and sent it to Sultan Sanjar (*Yalrkaya, 1925*).

During the reign of Sultan Sanjar, there was a conflict between the Shafi'i-Ash'aris and Hanafis and after the incidents between the two sides, about 70 Hanafis lost their lives in Nishapur. During these events, Sultan Sanjar's headquarters was located in a region close to here. To resolve the conflict, Sultan Sanjar summoned the great Hâcib Mahmud Kashani and sent him to the leader of the Shafi'is, Shaykh Muhammad ibn Yahya (Sevim, Merçil, 1995).



The examples given above, regarding al-Ghazali and Shaykh Muhammad ibn Yahya in relation to Sultan Sanjar, clearly demonstrate the Seljuk sultans' approach to sects. Although Sultan Sanjar himself adopted Hanafi-Maturidi thought, he always respected Shafi'i-Ash'ari scholars, valued their advice, and gave them the respect they deserved.

## **2. Conclusion**

Considering the state of Islamic sects, their relationships with each other, divergences, and polarizations during the Seljuk period, it is evident that the Seljuk era witnessed significant developments among the sects. Although these sects sometimes experienced problems due to their internal differences, they continued to exist in peace, security, and harmony as a result of the effective sect policies implemented by the Seljuk State.

From the perspective of religious and sectarian differences, the fact that the Seljuks managed to govern such a diverse set of beliefs without any problems is a significant achievement. Behind this success lies a serious religious and sectarian policy. As a result of this policy, Muslims, Christians, Jews, and followers of other religions lived together harmoniously.

The sectarian affiliations of the Seljuk sultans directly affected the relationships between the two most important sects of the period, Maturidism and Ash'arism. Starting with the founding ruler Tugrul Bey, all Seljuk sultans accepted the Hanafi-Maturidi interpretation of Sunnism. They advocated for this sect in all the regions they ruled, paving the way for the upbringing of significant scholars. However, the assignment of Ash'ari scholars in the Nizamiyya Madrasas established by Vizier Nizam al-Mulk and supported by the Seljuk sultans advanced the Ash'aris ahead of the Maturidis in educational activities. Nonetheless, it can be said that a balance policy was generally followed between the Ash'aris and Maturidis during the Seljuk period, taking into account the sectarian tendencies of the sultans and other administrators.

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