



The seat of actual ruling of the sultans of the Ottoman Empire

The "Haremlik"

Where wives, maidservants and the rest of women were profaned!

The presence of women and maidservants in the palaces of the Ottoman Empire was not a new thing. The empires throughout history witnessed this phenomenon; however, the Turkish sultans were not satisfied with a few women as before, but superseded to buy girls from all over the world, and established Haremlik Institution, which included the maidservants and wives of the Ottoman sultans, and they set strict laws for that Institution and created posts for maidservants, where they worked their way up to it until they became mothers of the sultans and rulers in the countries ruled by the Ottoman family.

This evolution, which historians described as an indication of how the Ottoman sultans panted after women and, fun gatherings and relaxing on beds, leaving the governance affairs, is what eventually led to the Haremlik, which is the place reserved for women in the palaces of the Ottoman sultans, the real seat of the country's rule and from which decisions were issued and plots that threatened the pillars of the Ottoman Empire before leading to its fall were hatched.

Historical sources also confirm that Ottoman sultans did not have private suites for the Haremlik in their palaces until the reign of Sultan Mehmet Al-Fateh (1481-1444), who was fond of women, so he gathered hundreds of maidservants and wives and allocated a place for them inside the palace and called it the "Haremlik" - where it was forbidden for men to enter.

Mehmet Al-Fateh established the Haremlik to keep his wives and maidservants under surveillance

On the other hand, Sultan Mehmet Al-Fateh wanted to keep an eye on his women and his maidservants, as some of the maidservants belonged to empires hostile to the Ottoman Empire, and the women of the Haremlik were brought from the slave markets that were promoted by the Turkish sultans, and there were merchants whose task was to search for a beautiful girl worthy of the Haremlik of the Ottoman house who they spent thousands of gold liras for their own pleasures and lusts.

Therefore, the Ottoman sultans created the order of Aghas, i.e., eunuchs who were apparently assigned to serve the Haremlik, but their actual task was to keep an eye on these women and track their movements.

Sultans opposed full secrecy on the women of Haremlik and they killed any man who approached them

Ever since the Haremlik was established, secrecy and strict laws were imposed, and it is no exaggeration to say that this place was on the top priorities of the Ottoman sultans who cared for women first and foremost.

This is demonstrated by the fact that the Haremlik was directly observed by the Ottoman Sultan. As for the architectural divisions of the Haremlik; historical sources show, it consisted of several overlapping buildings of suites and rooms, and corridors leading to entrances and exits to restrict internal movement, and it also included secret passages for the sultans to enter and exit.

The Haremlik contains more than 400 rooms for the family of the sultan and his maidservants, as well as suites for servants and female workers to take care of the maidservants and accompany the sultans' wives. The Haremlik also contains bathrooms, salons, and libraries. Undoubtedly, this place was kept out of sight inside the palaces and remained a mysterious part even for workers in the palace itself.

As for the rules of the Haremlik, it can only be described as extreme slavery rules, starting with forcing all maidservants and female slaves to convert to Islam involuntarily, which is something forbidden by Islam in clear and explicit texts, then upbringing them on some of the enslavement rules imposed by the Ottoman sultans, they are forbidden to look to the Sultan in his eyes, and the tip of his dress must be kissed when he approaches any maidservant, and they are not allowed to leave the Haremlik, and of course they must prepare themselves every night in anticipation of the desire of the Ottoman sultans.

To make sure that no one knows what the sultans of the Turks do inside this mysterious part of the palaces, brutal punishments were imposed on the women of the Haremlik. Whoever violates the instructions of the Sultan is to be kicked out to the doors. As for the maidservant who has an affair with any man, her fate is death.

For men, any man approaches the Haremlik, his death is inevitable. Historical sources indicate that a merchant from the citizens of the city of Venice dared and tried to look from a distance at the suites of the Sultan's Haremlik using binoculars. Soon enough, he was discovered; Sultan Murad IV (1640-1623) would have hanged him immediately, and the attempt was repeated by an Armenian man working as a translator for the French ambassador in Istanbul, the Ottoman authorities arrested him and quickly hanged him before the French authorities intervene to ask for a pardon.

Although Allah did not distinguish between people except by work, the Ottoman family has always divided people into classes and categories. Within the Haremlik itself, women were not equal. There are posts and ranks, and the influence of a maidservant is determined by her beauty and the Sultan's admiration for her.

The hierarchical system within the Haremlik was headed by the "mother of Sultan", who is the most important figure within the Haremlik as the mother of the ruling sultan, and she was the only one allowed to communicate with the outside world. As for claiming this post, it is obtained once a new sultan from the Ottoman family is appointed, his mother assumes this post.

The Sultan's mother presided Haremlik and she was significantly influential due to her position.

Historical sources reveal that the mother of the Sultan played other important roles by providing the necessary consultations to the Sultan regarding the Haremlik and the behavior of the women within. In other words, she is the first spy of the Sultan among his women.

After Sultan's mother, the role of the "Kadinefendi" comes to the surface, this term means the class of maidservants who gave birth to a son to the ruling sultan. Once they deliver the child, they move to that class, which enjoys special treatment, as maidservants are assigned to serve them as mothers to the sultans' children.

The one who gives birth to the eldest son of the Sultan is called "Bashqadin", as she becomes practically the next mother-sultan within the Ottoman Haremlik, according to the laws of the Ottoman state.

In third place comes the "Al-Jouza", Such word implied, the maidservant who was able to capture the attention of officials inside the palace, whether the sultan himself or others, and such obsession allowed her to rise within the Haremlik. As for the one who temporarily captured the Sultan's attention, she was called "Iqbal", and she also had a special position within the Haremlik.

Then comes at last "Al-Kalfa", which refers to the group of maidservants who have important jobs to run the affairs of the Haremlik, and they enjoy a higher prestige than the rest of the servants, the list of such group of maidservants includes maidservants who have routine tasks such as jewelry keeper or treasurer inside the Haremlik.

In spite of this strict system set by the Ottoman sultans, and the complete secrecy that imposed by the Ottoman sultan on entertaining gatherings and the Arabian Nights and days lifestyle "one thousand and one nights", which they had with the money of Muslims who suffered in their reign of poverty and underdevelopment, this regime did not last for long. Soon enough, everything that was occurring within this mysterious part of the palaces was revealed.

Historical narratives confirm that living inside the Haremlik violated all the prohibitions forbidden by Islam, and the Haremlik only satisfies the desires and the cravings of the Ottoman sultans who built basins of milk in which the maidservants bathe. Walls of the Haremlik also witnessed what can be described as vulgar poems to sexually arouse the maidservants and beautiful women, not to mention other actions that historians were ashamed of mentioning.

Haremlik witnessed the most heinous forms of immorality and depravity by the Ottoman Sultans.

Moreover, many of the agha's who served the maidservants and women of the Turkish sultans were able to make a fortune, whether in exchange for their service to the women of the Haremlik or by managing the money of some women, especially the wives of sultans. The wealth of some Aghas exceeded the wealth of the pashas and ministers of the Ottoman Empire.

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