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The diary of Khairuddin Agha and the Royal Palace

With the weakening of the Ottoman Empire and, in particular, with their defeat in the First World War, many diaries and memories of Ottoman figures were published in the newspapers. Some of these figures were family members or senior statesmen. There has been a great debate over the authenticity of these diaries' attribution to their owners, and sometimes about the accuracy of the information contained in them. Some Turks accused the intelligence services of the Allied countries of direct participation and financing of this media campaign.

Whatever the authenticity and credibility of these diaries, or the party behind them, their publication opened the door to active and continuous discussions of the state of the Ottoman Empire in its last days.

Among these diaries was the diary of Khairuddin Agha during the era of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. It was first published in the press, and later republished as a book. Khairuddin Agha or editor of the book, gave this diary an interesting title, "The Secrets of the Haremlik in the Ottoman Court".

In this diary, Khairuddin Agha sheds important light on what was going on behind the scenes in the Ottoman palaces. Khairuddin Agha began by explaining the nature and roles of the "Agha", and how they were brought into the palace as children, or at the beginning of youth, after their sexual abilities were eradicated. Khairuddin Agha explains the secret behind this disgraceful act. In this case, the Agha can work in the Haremlik, deal with women and protect them without fear of the emergence of a sexual relationship between aghas and the Sultan's Haremlik. Nevertheless, he tells us about courtesy relations between some of the aghas and the maidservants in the Haremlik, as a result of the fact that the castration of the slave was incomplete, or took place at a later age, or even as a result of the young aghas being forced to do so by the ladies of the palace.

Khairuddin Agha tells us about the circumstances and ranks of the aghas, since their arrival to the palace when they were young, until they were included in the ranks and reached the highest level, "The Agha of The House of Felicity", and the extent of the latter's impact on the Sultan's Haremlik, and even on decision-making within the Ottoman court.

Khairuddin gives us important indications about the conditions of the maidservants in the Ottoman palaces, the manner of their upbringing, their supervisors, and concubines -among them- to the Sultan. There are interesting details of what happens in secret from promiscuity, such as the sultan's entry to the "the bathroom", surrounded by semi-naked maidservants, and the accompanying rituals.

Khairuddin also tells us about the noisy parties in the Ottoman palaces, and the associated extravagance and wasting, at a time when the Ottoman Empire was suffering from severe economic crises.

Among the most interesting in this diary are what we might call the conspiracies and intrigues of the Haremliks in the palaces. Among these exciting stories is the story of Sultan Abdul Aziz's jealousy over Feriha Khanum, and his suspicion that she is still in a relationship with her former lover, Hassan Bey, and the latter's exile to Yemen, until the Sultan is sure that she is his alone.

Another interesting story is the story of Prince Murad, who will later become Sultan Murad V. He fell in love with a Belgian girl, and when his wife found out, she arranged a conspiracy to kill the girl and asked one of her lovers to carry this out. But things don't always go as they're planned, as Berto Pasha - the wife of Prince Murad - became a victim to the conspiracy that affected the Ottoman palace.

Despite our opinion in those diaries or criticism directed to it or even the date of its issuance with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, it indicates one of the reasons for the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which is the disintegration of the internal building because of the conspiracies of the Haremlik, and the life of luxury and extravagance in the Ottoman palaces, while the state was going through its worst historical stages.