

# *Aca'ib*

Occasional Papers

on the Ottoman Perceptions of the Supernatural



A Journal issued by the Research Project

*GHOST: Geographies and Histories of the Ottoman Supernatural Tradition:  
Exploring Magic, the Marvelous, and the Strange in Ottoman Mentalities*

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## Abbreviations

BL: British Library (London)  
BnF: Bibliothèque nationale (Paris)  
BOA: Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Istanbul)  
İÜK: İstanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi  
SK: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi  
TSK: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi (Istanbul)  
TSMA: Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi (Istanbul)

*ActOrHung: Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*  
*ArchOtt: Archivum Ottomanicum*  
*BSOAS: Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*  
*EB: Études Balkaniques*  
*IJMES: International Journal of Middle East Studies*  
*IJTS: International Journal of Turkish Studies*  
*JAOS: Journal of the American Oriental Society*  
*JESHO: Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*  
*JOTSA: Journal of Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*  
*JTS: Journal of Turkish Studies*  
*OA: Osmanlı Araştırmaları – The Journal of Ottoman Studies*  
*RMMM: Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée*  
*ROMM: Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée*  
*SF: Südost-Forschungen*  
*SI: Studia Islamica*  
*TED: Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi*  
*THR: Turkish Historical Review*  
*TSAB: The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*  
*TSAJ: The Turkish Studies Association Journal*  
*WZKM: Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*

*EI: E.J. Brill's First Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1913–1936*  
*EF: The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition (Leiden, 1960–2002)*  
*E<sup>3</sup>: The Encyclopaedia of Islam Three (Leiden, 2007– )*  
*İA: İslâm Ansiklopedisi (Istanbul, 1940–1979)*  
*TDVİA: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (Istanbul, 1988– )*

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## A. EDITORIAL

# Working on the Ottoman perceptions of nature: assessment of a research project

MARINOS SARIYANNIS (RETHYMNO)

Six years ago, funding provided by the European Research Council under the program Consolidator Grant 2017 saw the launch of “Geographies and Histories of the Ottoman Supernatural Tradition: Exploring Magic, the Marvelous, and the Strange in Ottoman Mentalities”, or the GHOST project<sup>1</sup> for short. It is now with a mix of pleasure and sadness that we present the fourth and last

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- 1 The research team consists of Marinos Sariyannis (Institute for Mediterranean Studies/FORTH, Rethymno, Greece), as Principal Investigator, Zeynep Aydoğan (Institute for Mediterranean Studies/FORTH, Rethymno, Greece), N. Işık Demirakın (Institute for Mediterranean Studies/FORTH, Rethymno, Greece), Feray Coşkun (Özyegin University, Istanbul, Turkey), Güneş Işıksel (Medeniyet University, Istanbul, Turkey), Bekir Harun Küçük (University of Pennsylvania, USA), Ethan Menchinger (then Manchester University, UK), Aslı Niyazioğlu (Oxford University, UK), and Ahmet Tunç Şen (Columbia University, USA), as well as three Ph.D. candidates (Aylin Çakı, Dimitris Giagtzoğlu, Markos Litinas), our MA students (Maria Anastasiadi, Ermolaos Karaklidis, Nesli Ruken Han, Selcen Güney, İlektra Gatou, Theodoros Nasioulas Tzanatos, Sofia Kane) and our technical staff (Aris Kydonakis, Maria Malathraki), together with Kathi Ivanyi and Gülçin Tunalı Kaçan who participated as external contributors.

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issue of our online journal, “*Acai'b*: Occasional Papers on the Ottoman Perceptions of the Supernatural”.

Among the activities we conducted during the time that has elapsed since the publication of the previous issue (all can be seen in the “News” section of our site: <https://ghost.ims.forth.gr/news/>), the most important was of course the international workshop on “Knowing and controlling nature in Ottoman culture: scientific and occultist approaches in a global perspective”, which took place in Rethymno on November 16–18, 2023. Of the 23 papers presented, the reader will find eight in this issue, providing an abridged proceedings. Two of the contributors sent extended versions of their papers, which are published in the first section of this issue. Added to the articles and research reports published in the previous issues of our journal, as well as to the proceedings volume of the eleventh “Halcyon Days in Crete” international symposium (14–17 January 2022) on “Enchantments and disenchantments: early modern Ottoman visions of the world”, which will hopefully be published within 2024, they make a respectable corpus of material on the Ottoman perceptions of nature and the supernatural: a corpus that was, directly or indirectly, produced by the GHOST project.<sup>2</sup> In addition, we hope to be able to produce three monographs within 2024, authored by Marinos Sariyannis, Zeynep Aydoğan and Işık Demirakın, on various aspects of the topic.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, we have been engaged in a series of internation-

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2 For the contents of the papers presented in these two symposia, see M. Sariyannis, “International workshop “Nature and the supernatural in Ottoman culture” (Istanbul, December 14–15, 2019): a report”, *Acai'b: Occasional papers on the Ottoman perceptions of the supernatural*, 1 (2020), 105–116 <https://doi.org/10.26225/7hrz-g004>; idem, “Halcyon Days XI international symposium ‘Enchantments and disenchantments: early modern Ottoman visions of the world’ (Rethymno, January 14–17, 2022): a report”, *Acai'b: Occasional papers on the Ottoman perceptions of the supernatural*, 3 (2022), 125–152. <https://doi.org/10.26225/dqzv-s094>

3 To these papers one must also add: M. Sariyannis, “The limits of going global: The case of ‘Ottoman Enlightenment(s)’”, *History Compass*, 2020;e12623 <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12623>; idem, “«Nous étions tous stupéfaits et effrayés» : Émotions ottomanes face au surnaturel”, *Turcica*, 53 (2022), 277–306 <https://doi.org/10.2143/TURC.53.0.3291340>; idem, “A Tale of Two Cities: Jābarsā/Jābalqā and Their Metamorphoses”, *Der Islam*, 101/1 (2024), 162–192 <https://doi.org/10.1515/islam-2024-0006>; idem, “Transculturality in magical practices: the case of the Vernardakis Codex”, in Hasan Çolak (ed.), *Formation and Circulation of Knowledge in the Ottoman Empire: A Connected and Transcultural History of Ottoman Muslim and Orthodox Communities* (Syracuse, forthcoming); F. Coşkun, “Heavens, World, and Human Beings in the Ottoman Cosmographies”, in Ch. Ferella, T. Pommerening, and U. Steinert (eds), *Living Bodies, Dead Bodies, and the Cosmos* (Tübingen, forthcoming). Finally, Feray

al conferences, public lectures, interviews and other ways to disseminate our research agenda and findings.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, an obvious result of the project is the production of a significant body of scholarly studies, which arguably open new paths in the study both of Ottoman cultural history and of Islamicate mysticism and occultism. Submissions to our journal were made not only by members of the core project team, but also by other scholars (Gülçin Tunalı Kaçan, Edhem Eldem, Amila Buturović), in addition to all of our peers who participated in our three conferences. When the project began in early 2018, academic exploration of perceptions of the supernatural and of occult sciences in Ottoman culture was largely uncharted territory. However, in the ensuing years, studies of occultism in other regions of the Islamicate world were gaining momentum. Six years later, we can confidently assert that this field is now much less obscure. We can take pride in the fact that we feel that the GHOST project played its modest role in this development.

Our working hypothesis is based on the idea that the study of ideas and techniques must involve connecting them with broader social and cultural developments. Occultism, as with all cultural phenomena, is rooted in specific

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Coşkun organized a dossier on nature and the supernatural, with participation of members of the team, in *Toplumsal Tarih* 356 (August 2023) <https://tarihvakfi.org.tr/dergiler/toplumsal-tarih-sayi356/>

- <sup>4</sup> Members of the team participated in panels at the CIEPO-22 conference (Sofia, September 2018), at the second and third ENSIE conferences (December 2020, September 2021), at a series of workshops in the Freie Universität Berlin (July 2019, February 2020), in the 34. Deutsche Orientalistentag in Berlin (September 2022), at a round table at the University of Strasbourg (December 2022), and in the Turkologentag 2023 in Vienna (September 2023). Lectures were delivered at the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Vienna, October 2019), at the Otto Spies Memorial Lecture in Bonn (February 2020) and the Freie Universität Berlin (February 2020). Finally, the project was presented in the series of lectures of the ANAMED library (March 2021), at the Institute of European Studies of the University of California, Berkeley (March 2021), in a W'OTSAP meeting (July 2021), and in three interviews: in Açık Radio <https://acikradio.com.tr/podcast/234419> in websites: The Thinker's Garden, October 2020 <https://thethinkersgarden.com/the-ottoman-supernatural-tradition/> and EastEast, May 2021 <https://easteast.world/en/posts/357> Last but not least, the theatrical group Splish-Splash, in collaboration with the Institute for Mediterranean Studies/FORTH, presented the black comedy "Ayşem", written under the scientific guidance of Yannis Spyropoulos and Marinos Sariyannis in order to popularize and communicate parts of the actions and output of the research programs GHOST and JaNET, in Rethymno and Athens (June 2022).

dynamics of a given cultural and social context. We should therefore not regard these branches of knowledge as homogenous episteme and practice. Instead, we should examine which social groups endorsed or opposed which specific “occult” practice, the contexts in which they did so, the reasons for opposition, and how distinctions such as scholarly and vernacular intersect with social status and ethnoreligious identities in this domain. Our approach to studying Ottoman culture in relation with the supernatural has been comprehensive. We have made a concerted effort to include the intellectual and cultural history of non-Muslim Ottomans and have already produced knowledge on Greek Orthodox occult practices. We are eager to engage with scholars specializing in the Ottoman Jewish, Slavic, and Armenian communities, with the hope that the field will continue to expand and diversify in the future. The concept of transculturality, as developed by Wolfgang Welsch in the 1990s,<sup>5</sup> can effectively be drawn upon. Rather than recognizing distinct cultures such as Muslim, Greek Orthodox, Jewish, and others within a political imperial structure, this model advocates for the understanding of intertwined hybrid traditions within an imperial culture. Our research demonstrates that this model is perfectly compatible with the study of vernacular and scholarly belief in the supernatural and potential points of access to it. The diffusion of cultural elements from vernacular to scholarly settings (“trickle-up”), the popularization of learned magic and ideas into the lower urban strata (“trickle-down”), as well as the different “trickle-across” effects of diffusion between the different ethnoreligious traditions of the Ottoman Empire (but also of the Mediterranean basin at large) form a landscape characterized by fluidity, hybridity, and persistence.

Another feature of our approach is that it seeks to distinguish itself from both a traditional “history of science” approach, where occultist belief is regarded as an impediment that gradually declines to make way for sound scientific

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5 W. Welsch, “Transculturality. On the changing constitution of contemporary cultures”, in Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (ed.), *Migration and Cultural Change. Focus of the Journal for Cultural Exchange*, Vol. 1/45 (Stuttgart 1995), 39–44; A. Benessaïeh, “Multiculturalism, Interculturality, Transculturality”, in A. Benessaïeh (ed.), *Amérique transculturelles/ Transcultural Americas* (Ottawa 2010), 11–38; S. Autiero and M. A. Cobb (eds), *Globalization and Transculturality from Antiquity to the Pre-Modern World* (London 2022); H. Çolak, “İbrahim Müteferrika and the Ottoman Intellectual Culture in the Early 18th Century: a Transcultural Perspective”, R. Dıpratu – S. Noble (eds), *Arabic-Type Books Printed in Wallachia, Istanbul, and Beyond* (Berlin 2024), 3–20 at 5–6.

knowledge, and a “history of occultism” approach, where occult knowledge is viewed as either an integral part of science, or as an independent subject for functional and genealogical study. Rather, our field remained rooted in cultural and intellectual history, with a focus on studying beliefs and techniques within the framework of Ottoman cultural and social dynamics. We view these beliefs and practices as integral parts of the Ottoman *Weltanschauung*—a dynamic worldview, evolving with social and cultural shifts. One of our main research goals, indeed, was to investigate whether the supernatural was perceived as omnipresent or gradually fading from the observable world. In essence, our study aligns more closely with the history of knowledge: a burgeoning field that integrates artisanal and other non-scientific practice, skills, and approaches to dealing with failure, ignorance and the unknown.<sup>6</sup>

In this context, when faced with occultist beliefs or accounts of miraculous events, cultural historians question the extent to which these beliefs were truly widespread and well-founded, despite the prevalence of texts discussing them. Some scholars have referred to this as a *croyance clignotante* (“flickering belief”):<sup>7</sup> a partial, selective belief, where practices can also be conceived at times as a pastime akin to games. Others refer to ‘doubts’, rather than beliefs, or to a distinct category (‘aliefs’) based on a habitual, automatic belief-like attitude, often in conflict with one’s explicit beliefs and more akin to the history of emotions, rather than that of ideas.<sup>8</sup> We may never be sure whether a practitioner of lettrist magic, an astrologer or a geomancer writing manuals or treatises on their craft were really believing in its reality; and some of these practitioners indeed

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6 On this term see P. Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* (Cambridge 2015); C. Zwierlein (ed.), *The Dark Side of Knowledge: Histories of Ignorance, 1400 to 1800* (Leiden 2016); S. Dupré and G. Somsen, “The History of Knowledge and the Future of Knowledge Societies”, *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, 42/2–3 (2019), 186–199; J. Östling and D. Larsson Heidenblad, *The History of Knowledge* (Cambridge 2023); see also the “Forum: What is the History of Knowledge?” in the first issue of *Journal for the History of Knowledge* (2020), edited by Dupré and Somsen.

7 J.-P. Boudet, *Entre science et nigromance. Astrologie, divination et magie dans l’Occident médiéval (xiie-xve siècle)* (Paris 2006), 533.

8 W. G. Pooley, “Doubt and the Dislocation of Magic: France, 1790–1940”, *Past & Present*, 2023 <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtad002>; T. Szabó Gendler, “Alief and Belief”, *Journal of Philosophy*, 105/10 (2008), 634–663; cf. M. Pfeffer, “The Contribution of the Early Modern Humanities to ‘Disenchantment’”, *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft*. 16 (2021), 398–405.

left written traces of their doubts.<sup>9</sup> This plea for caution applies not only to belief in the supernatural, but also to the 'materialist' tendencies we occasionally encounter. Such nuance is, of course, hard to distinguish in our sources. Nevertheless, it is important to remain attentive to their existence, especially before generalizing and theorizing upon the results of our research. At the very least, one may attempt to reconstruct Lucien Febvre's *outilage mental*: the mental toolbox or equipment, which frames the understanding of time, of nature, of causality in a given moment of historical time and which allows or prohibits trespassing the borders and restrictions of a system of established beliefs.<sup>10</sup>

In this vein, our research within the framework of the GHOST project has examined topics as diverse as the reasoning of divination and magic in the Ottoman tradition, the use of tropes related to magic and the marvelous in early Ottoman epics, images of and polemics around sainthood and miracle-working, and the marvels and wonders of the world as seen in cosmographical texts but also chronicles and other sources. Our research has also investigated various aspects of Islamicate occult sciences in the Ottoman period, vernacular practices and the history of emotions, the position of occult and theological sciences in the classification of knowledge, the role of science in the process of disenchantment (and the very existence of this process), as well as theological disputes pertaining to the human agency. In sum, our research endeavors have encompassed a range of subject matter from a variety of approaches that have served to demarcate the place of the supernatural in the Ottoman worldview(s), the technology connected to it, and the complex and intersecting political, social and ideological factors influencing it. As part of this process, the research team closely studied a vast array of sources, including geographical and encyclopedic treatises, literary works, biographies and chronicles, grimoires and compendia of magic and divination, as well as archival material.

Given expected completion of the project, and publication of all associated materials within 2024, we hope that our scientific output has sufficiently encompassed all of the points described above, that it raises new directions for inquiry and that it sheds light on sources and subject matter heretofore unstud-

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9 See e.g. a late (mid-nineteenth century) example in G. Tunalı, "An Ottoman Astrologer at Work: Sadullah el-Ankarâvi and the Everyday Practice of İlmi-i Nücûm", in F. Georgeon and F. Hitzel (eds), *Les Ottomans et le temps* (Leiden 2012), 39–59.

10 These points were brought up in the final discussion of our 2022 symposium, transcribed in Sariyannis, "Halcyon Days XI international symposium", 132–152.



ied. From the supernatural field (i.e. things pertaining to God and angelic beings, including miraculous appearances) to human access and control over this field (i.e. occult knowledge and sciences), as well as the preternatural (i.e. the domain of things that belong to the order of nature but cannot be explained by the human intellect), we sought to explore the various ways in which Ottomans of varying socio-cultural status dealt with the invisible, the unpredictable, the inexplicable. Moreover, we have attempted to investigate how, when, and to what extent these dynamics changed with time; we sought to test concepts such as enlightenment, disenchantment, or secularism, and to examine whether the sources and dynamics we studied fit into their parameters. In this brief editorial I will not delve into the results of these efforts: each one of us may have formed differing opinions, as one would expect given the complexity and breadth of these questions, and the views of the present author will be presented in his forthcoming monograph. At any rate, it is our hope that the corpus of our scientific publications does contribute to this *problématique*, or, at least, that it clears a path for future such studies.

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## B. Papers

# Mehmed II's Copy of the Apocalyptic *Book of Daniel* (Ms. Ayasofya 3367) and the Limits of Interpretation

W. SASSON CHAHANOVICH

“Apocalyptic speculation has social functions that are geared to the specific groups to which the texts are intended, and the concerns and needs of those audiences differed.”<sup>1</sup>

—Lorenzo DiTommaso

“Here, [Ibn Ezra] interpreted ‘the Fourth Kingdom’ as the kingdom of Islam, and he interpreted the legs of steel of King Nebuchadnezzar’s vision as the kingdom of Islam.”

— Marginalia in Ms. Ayasofya 3367<sup>2</sup>

- 1 L. DiTommaso, “The Four Kingdoms of Daniel in the Early Mediaeval Apocalyptic Tradition”, in A. B. Perrin, L. T. Stuckenbruck, M. Hama (eds), *Four Kingdoms Motif Before and Beyond the Book of Daniel* (Leiden 2021), 208.
- 2 כְּסֵפֶה דְּדָנִיֵּאל (Book of the Prophet Daniel), TSMK Ms. Ayasofya 3367, fol. 22a. NB: I was only able to render the title in Syriac with the Estrangela script as I was not able to find a Western Syriac (Serṭo) keyboard for rendering the title properly. Our anonymous scribe

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Chahanovich, W. Sasson. 2023–2024. “Mehmed II's Copy of the Apocalyptic *Book of Daniel* (Ms. Ayasofya 3367), Imperial Eschatology, and the Limits of Interpretation”. *Aca'ib: Occasional papers on the Ottoman perceptions of the supernatural* 4.

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## Introduction

Sometimes it is better to start a paper with a perplexing problem rather than a confident hypothesis. Such an analytical *Ansatz* is pertinent for a publication concerned with the supernatural history of the Ottoman empire. The strange and unusual should not bend so easily to the scientific predilection for precision. This is especially true of apocalyptic visions generally, which are temporally transcendent and epistemologically otherworldly, and of Ottoman cosmocratic claims to eschatological authority specifically.<sup>3</sup> The padişahs were quite the

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identifies Ibn Ezra on 22b: “among the Jews is a commentator named Abraham bin Ezra.” Otherwise, Mehmed’s translator simply refers to Ibn Ezra as “a commentator” (e.g. fol. 7b, *qāl šāriḥ*) or as in fol. 22a with “he interpreted” (*fassar...*). Though not rendered in the definite, one could idiomatically consider Ibn Ezra as *the* commentator sine qua non for our scribe.

- 3 J.J. Collins, “Toward the Morphology of a Genre”, *Semeia*, 14 (1979), 9. Despite its age, this definition lines up perfectly with my own observations on Islamic eschatological apocalypses, especially concerning the genre of *jafī*, in the Ottoman empire. Ottoman imperial eschatology, which portrays positively the dynasty as the cause of the End-Times, is *per se* preternatural. Consider, for example, Oruç Bey (d. early sixteenth century), who in his *Tarih* states, “He who is called the Mahdi, a scion of the Prophet Isaac, will undertake a military expedition. He will conquer the city (i.e. Constantinople) by saying ‘God is Great’. And when they speak of conquest by the sword, they mean the emperor of Islam and the Muslim,” who is “Sultan Mehmed, the Conqueror of Constantinople.” Oruç Beğ, *Oruç Beğ Tarihi - Giriş, Metin, Kronoloji, Dizin, Tıpkıbasım*, ed. N. Öztürk (İstanbul 2008), 112. Mevlânâ ʿİsâ (d. late sixteenth century) declares in his *Cāmiʿül-meknūnāt* that the sultan’s military success “will be a sign / the Resurrection is near.” See Leiden Universiteitsbibliotheek (hereafter: LUB) Ms. Cod. Or. 1448, fol. 127a: *bu yılda hem iştiğāl bir ‘elāmet / yakın olduğda dērlər di kıyāmet*. Mevlânâ ʿİsâ continues to prophecy the Ottoman conquest of Rome and France: *varısar leşker-i İslām Rūme / ne Rūme Mağreb ü Maşrek-i kadīme / kilis-esine varub giriserler / kamu küffārī aında kırışarlar / uşadub pulların malın alalar / varub Franka iline dölalar*; cf. fol. 126a for the use of the title “Lord of the Conspicuous Conjunction” (Ot. *şāhib-i kırān*). In Taslıcalı Yahyā’s elegy of Süleyman, we are told that, “He is the Lord of the Conjunction of this world; / blessed is he with miracles. / He is the sovereign of the masses and the Shadow of God. / Verily, he is the consummate saint.” Qtd. in H. İnalçık, *The Ottoman Empire: Sultan, Society, and Economy* (İstanbul 2018), 50. I have adjusted the translation. The Ottoman is as follows: *Olki şāhib-i kırānī ‘ālemdir / her kerāmāt ile mükemmeldir / vālī-yi ḥalk ü-sāye-yi Ḥakkdır / fī l-ḥaqqıka velī-yi muṭlaqdır*. Two centuries of this kind of apocalyptic propaganda begat the most robust text of imperial eschatology: *The Tree of Nuʿmān Concerning the Ottoman Empire* (*al-Şağarah al-nuʿmāniyya fī al-dawlah al-uthmāniyyah*) composed between 1560~1578/79 by Pseudo (Ps.)-Ibn al-ʿArabī. See Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi (SK) Ms. Beyazid 4609, entire copy; İstanbul Üniver-

existential party-poopers, whether your soul desired redemption or not.<sup>4</sup> But it is not just the essentially cryptic nature of End-Times visions that confound analysis. Apocalypses, perhaps more so than other supernatural texts, can be read simultaneously in the mode of insider vs. outsider, empire vs. underdog, stakeholder vs. rebel. Cryptic revelations and eschatological prophecy change with the audiences that read them.

Enter the Ottoman interest in one of the most popular biblical apocalypses. Mehmet II's (r. 1444–1446, 1451–1481) commissioned copy of an Arabic translation of a Syriac *Vorlage* of the *Book of Daniel* (Ms. Ayasofya 3367) poses such an interpretive conundrum.<sup>5</sup> First, the historical, linguistic, confessional, and canonical layers alone suggest a complex tradition: from the second century BCE to the fifteenth century CE, from Aramaic and Hebrew through Syriac into Arabic, from a Jewish to Syriac Orthodox to Sunni Islamic setting, and from Hebrew Bible through Orthodox Christian canon and then as stand-alone Ottoman booklet. 'Imbricate bricolage' describes the sultan's edition of *Daniel* perfectly. Second, literature on this Ottoman apocalyptic curio has evaded in-depth scholarly analysis. Mehmed's *Book of Daniel* is found more often in footnotes or, when part of analysis, it is implicitly identified as an obvious text of imperial interest *sans* further investigation. What is so obvious about Mehmed's interest in Jewish prophecy? Or, more poignantly, does the inclusion of a book in an imperial library necessarily indicate that the sultan read it? It is not as though we have a card catalogue of the sultan checking it out.

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tesi Kütüphanes (İÜK) Ms. A. 4884, fols. 1b–48a; Bayezid Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi (BYEK) Ms. Veliyüddin 2292/2 fols. 40a–65a; Princeton University—Yahuda Collection (PYah) Ms. 4497, fols. 20b–49. See also W. S. Chahanovich, "Ottoman Eschatological Esotericism: Introducing Jafr in Ps. Ibn al-'Arabi's *The Tree of Nu'man*", *Correspondences*, 7.1 (2019), 1–48.

- 4 In Islamic eschatological tradition, the Turks are often associated with Gog and Magog; correcting this widely held belief was an obstacle for the Ottomans. And as for the Christians (*banū asfar*) of Byzantium and in the Catholic West, the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople proved that Mehmed and his coterie were the Antichrist. See Y. Kiyamoto, "The Influence of Medieval Prophecies on Views of the Turks: Islam and Apocalypticism in the Sixteenth Century", *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 15 (1991), 129 ff. Martin Luther infamously associated the Turkish sultan and the pope with the Antichrist.
- 5 J. Raby, "Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek Scriptorium", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 37 (1983), 19. The books *Bel and the Dragon* and *Susannah and the Elders*, which are included in Mehmed's copy, are not part of the Hebrew Bible; they are, however, included in Eastern Orthodox and Catholic bibles as "deuterocanonical" or "paracanonical."

Collections do reflect interest, personal curiosity, and connoisseurship.<sup>6</sup> But the book could have first been introduced to the sultan and/or his library by a scribe charged with gathering various works. Consider Mehmet's copy of the *Testament of Solomon* (TSMK Ms. GI 17), an Arabic translation of Georgios Gemistos Plethon's Zoroastrian Compendium, another neo-platonic work called the *Chaldean Oracles* also from Plethon's library, and the *Nomoi* which is a fragment of hymns to Zeus. The same applies to the contemporary world of antiquities dealings and auction houses. The rich and famous often consult specialists about their collections. But just because a rich connoisseur has in their collection a rare book or priceless piece of art does not automatically mean the owner read the book or has even hung up the art work to admire. Some reservation is necessary when it comes to an imperial Ottoman book collection as well. So, nothing is *per se* obvious about the inclusion of *Daniel* in the library. And as “the only full-blown example of apocalyptic literature in the Hebrew Bible,” *Daniel* does not lend itself to clean-cut interpretation.<sup>7</sup> Third, as mentioned above, *Daniel* can be analyzed from an “outsider/revolutionary”—i.e. oppressed—perspective and an “insider/imperial”—i.e. overlord—perspective.<sup>8</sup> Imperial coercion vs. oppressed resistance, sultan vs. subject, Islam vs. marginalized *millets* are unavoidable modes of reading that Mehmed, his scribe, or his interlocutors must have been aware of.

With the conquest of Constantinople functioning as a “metahistorical event” that transformed the Ottomans into an empire poised to conquer the world in fulfillment of Islamic apocalyptic prophecy, why would Mehmed want to read a text that might question the stability of his reign or his righteousness as ruler?<sup>9</sup> Reinterpreted at the hands of some of the earliest chroniclers of the

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6 I would like to thank Dr. Bronwen Gulkis (University of St. Andrews) for discussing this with me.

7 J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1998), 85.

8 DiTommaso, “Four Kingdoms”, 237; A.E. Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2011), 223–279.

9 G. Necipoğlu, “Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation: Artistic Conversations with Renaissance Italy in Mehmed II's Constantinople”, *Muqarnas*, 29 (2012), 1. Necipoğlu refers to Ayasofya 3367 on p. 12; cf. p. 60, footnotes 58 and 59. See also C. Fleischer, “A Mediterranean Apocalypse: Prophecies of Empire in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 61.1–2 (2018), 68. The qur'anic surah 30, vv. 2–3 is generally considered the revelatory *locus classicus* for predictions about

empire, Constantinople was the “pleasant country” (*baldatun tayyibatun*) of qur’anic prophecy (Q34:15) and its conquest was foreordained.<sup>10</sup> Mehmed was completing the grand cosmic arc of redemptive Islamic history. *Daniel* somehow fit into this nascent imperial self-narration. The complex nature and imperial appeal of Ms. Ayasofya 3367 demands expanded investigation. Sadly, I was not allowed permission to reproduce any illustration from the manuscript.

## Codicological Information

Before we begin, a few philological comments on the text are appropriate. Translated by an anonymous (former?) Syriac Christian, Mehmed commissioned his copy of *Daniel* for his newly built palace’s Imperial Inner Treasury (*hizāne-i ‘āmīre-i enderūnī*).<sup>11</sup> The dedication makes this imperial directive clear: *bi-rasm hizānat...al-Sultān bin al-Sultān bin al-Sultān al-Sultān Muḥammad bin al-Sultān Murād bin Bāyazīd Hān* (sic). Note the genealogical error; the father of Murad II was most certainly not Bayezid I (r. 1389–1402) but Mehmed I (r. 1412–1421). As such, the text was subsequently passed into the possession of

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the Islamic conquest of Byzantium, even though the original meaning was probably meant to describe the Byzantines’ victory over the Sassanids. See T. Tesei, “The Romans Will Win!” Q30:2–7 in Light of 7th c. Political Eschatology”, *Der Islam*, 95.1 (2018), 1–29.

10 F. Giese, *Die altosmanischen anonymen Chroniken, Tevārīḫ-i Āl-i ‘Osmān*. Vol. II (Breslau, 1925), 99, 148. This corpus, composed at an early point during the reign of Murad II was used by ‘Āşıkpaşazāde and, via ‘Āşıkpaşazāde, by Oruç Beğ cited in footnote 3 above. Amongst other things, the Ottomans were pressed to insert themselves into an otherwise exclusively ethnic Arab drama of apocalyptic conquest. Preserved in some hadith reports, we are told that the walls of Constantinople would be brought crushing down as the Arab Banū Ishāq proclaimed “God is Great!” The sons of Isaac are converted into the Ishāqiye, a Turkish dervish order of Abū Ishāq Kazeruni (d. 1034). See B. Flemming, *Essays on Turkish Literature and History* (Boston 2017), 207. Flemming, however, cites the verse prior to the actual verse in which “pleasant country” is mentioned. Interestingly, the verse is quite clear as to what it refers: Sheba (Yemen), not Byzantium nor for that matter Constantinople. Rather, as Giese notes, it is for the numerological value of the Arabic letters of *baldatun tayyibatun* that this verse is selected. Added up, *baldatun tayyibatun* equals 857 AH which is the year of the conquest of Constantinople. Chapter 17 in Flemming’s *Essays* is in its entirety a treasure trove for sources on the conquest of Constantinople, its place in Islamic apocalyptic, and Ottoman interpretations of the conquest. Ibid. 205–208.

11 There is nothing in the text that outwardly suggests the translator-*cum*-scribe converted to Islam.

Sultan Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512), the conqueror's son and successor, hence his almond-shaped seal on the titular page (fol. 1a) and on the colophon (fol. 44b).<sup>12</sup>

*Daniel* is recorded by 'Atufi, the royal librarian of Bayezid II, in his catalogue—composed between 908–909/1502–1504—of the imperial library under the genre of occult sciences (Fig 1).<sup>13</sup> Later, it evidently came into the possession of Mahmud I (r. 1730–1754), hence his distinct round imperial stamp and the oval hallmark of his *waqf* inspector. Mehmed's *Daniel* was henceforth stored in Mahmud's Ayasofya collection.<sup>14</sup> It is now kept in the Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi (TSMK). Thus far, all things seem quite factual, clean, and precise. But codicological information is the simplest information one can provide concerning *Daniel*.

## Initial Quandaries

Questions rather than answers abound when analyzing the biblical apocalypse's place in Mehmed's library, its appeal to the sultan, the marginalia therein contained, and its reception. Why would Mehmed be interested in *Daniel* given its intrinsically anti-imperial mode over, say, an Arabic translation of the prophecy of Ezekiel, if we are to presume that the sultan was interested in biblical apocalypse generally and not in eschatological prophecies *per se*? Or consider the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* which critically shaped Byzantine apocalyptic tradition and the idea of Last World Emperor.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps a translation of the

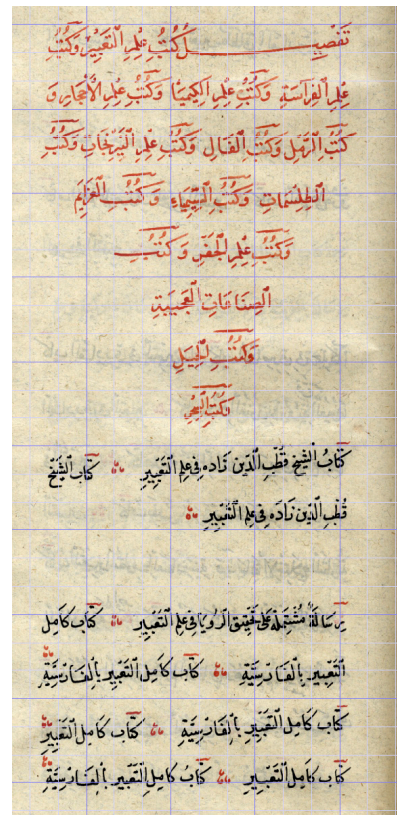
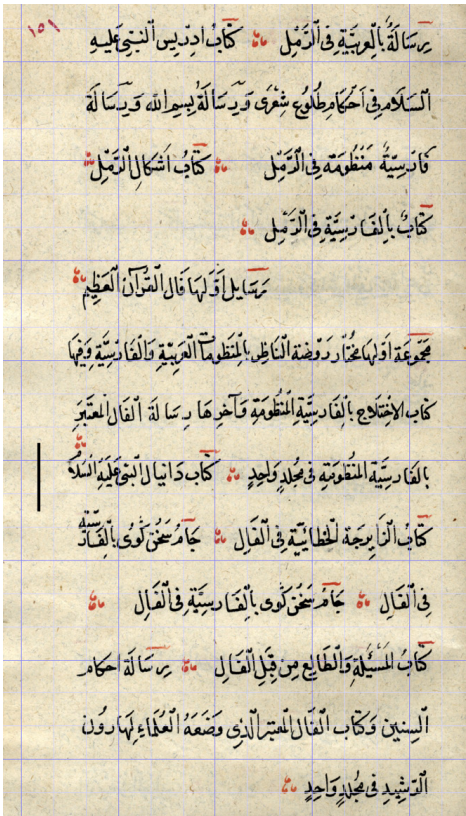
12 On the establishment of Mehmed's library, see İ. E. Erünsal, "The Catalogue of Bayezid II's Palace Library," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Kütüphanecilik Dergisi*, 3 (1995), 59; D. A. Deissmann, *Forschung und Funde im Serai: Mit einem Verzeichnis der nichtislamischen Handschriften im Topkapu Serai zu Istanbul* (Berlin 1933), 35–36. Deissmann remarks the following as Mehmed's chief interests: the Alexander legend, war history and war technology, geography, mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, poetry, and Old and New Testament material. However, in this publication, he does not, curiously, make mention of the *Daniel* translation in the catalogue of non-Islamic manuscripts.

13 See Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (hereafter: LHAS) Ms. Török F.59, fol. 308; N. Gardiner, "Books on Occult Sciences," in G. Necipoğlu, C. Kafadar, and C. Fleischer (eds), *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)* (Leiden, 2019), 742.

14 I thank Dr. Ahmet Tunç Şen for helping me identify the seals.

15 C. Bonura, "When Did the Legend of the Last Emperor Originate? A New Look at the Textual Relationship between the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius and the Tiburtine Sibyl," *Viator*, 47:3 (2016), 47–100. For a discussion of the succession of kingdoms in Pseudo-Methodius, see P. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley 1985), 18 ff.





Figs. 1 from Ms. Török F.59, fols. 302a (on the left) and 308a (on the right). The occult title section on fol. 302a, under which *Daniel* is included (see vertical black line above in margin), lists the following esoteric sciences/arts: dream interpretation, physiognomy, alchemy, supernatural properties of jewels and rare stones, geomancy, various talismanic sciences, the conjuring of spirits, the Islamic eschatological prophetic genre *par excellence* known as *jafar*, automated device production, and—of course—magic. I presume that *Daniel* is included in this section because of some implicit categorical affiliation with either dream interpretation (*ʿilm al-taʿbīr*), *fāl*, or *jafar*.

Syriac *Alexander Legend*, given the evident appeal of Syriac literature, seems more suitable than a biblical tale of exile and persecution. It is well-documented that the Ottomans self-identified as heirs of the Macedonian warrior to assert their legitimacy.<sup>16</sup> After taking Constantinople, wouldn't Mehmed want to

16 W. S. Chahanovich, "Alexander and Gog and Magog in Ottoman Illustrated Texts: Presenting the Padişah as the End-Times' World Sovereign in an Age of Eschatological Enthusi-

summon more textual proof to advance his family's claims to Islamic power and universal dominion?

Or should we see Mehmed's interest in *Daniel* because, and not in spite, of its outsider perspective? Does it align, in this light, with Tursun Beg's account in his *Tārīkh-i Ebü'l-Fetḥ* of Mehmed's humility upon entering the dilapidated Aya Sofya:

The spider serves as chamberlain at the Palace of Khusraw  
The owl sounds the hours at the castle of Afrasiyab<sup>17</sup>

In other words, as in Tursun Beg's account, do we also see the greatest Islamic monarch of his time seeking reflection and pause in Daniel's ill-omened vision of empire? An Ozymandias moment *avant la lettre*? The trope of contemplating ruins (Ar. *atlāl*) runs deep in Islamicate poetry. As Byzantine grandeur had passed, leaving behind it only the hollowed shell of one of the greatest churches of Late Antiquity, Tursun Bey's Mehmed pauses to understand what has happened. His own empire—built upon the ruins of eastern Christendom—could likewise dissipate into the historical ether, leaving only spiders and owls to guard over erstwhile glory.

Other contemporary Ottoman writers expressed an equal sense of reserve or worry around the final defeat of the Byzantines. For example, the *Dürr-i meknun*, composed if not immediately after, then within a decade following the defeat of the Byzantines, warns of the dangers of an overly ambitious overlord

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asm", in G. Tamer, A. Mein, and L. Greisiger (eds), *Gog and Magog: Contributions toward a World History of an Apocalyptic Motif* (Berlin 2023), 533–574. For the early stylization of Ottoman sultans as scions of Alexander the Great, see *Alexander Legend* (*İskendernâme*) of Tâceddîn Aḥmedi (d. 815/1412): Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter: BnF) Ms. Suppl. Turc 635, with the history of the Ottomans on fols., 263b–297a; *World Chronicle* (*Kitāb-ı Cihānnümā*) of Meḥmet Neşri (d. 926/1520): Neşri, *Ğihānnümā, Die altosmanische Chronik des Mevlānā Meḥmed Neschrī*, ed. F. Taeschner, vol. I (Cod. Menzel) (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1951), 5.

17 Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, H. Inalcik and R. Murphey (eds) (Minneapolis 1978). Inalcik and Murphey include a facsimile of the Topkapı Ms. Ayasofya manuscript. I cite from that. The line is found on fol. 51a: *perdeh-i dāri mī konad dar ṭāq-i Kosrā 'ankabūt / bōm neubet mī konad dar qal'e-yi Efrāsiyāb*. I rely on the translation here: N. İ. Hüner Cora and M. Pifer, "Introduction to Entangled Literatures and Histories in the Premodern World", *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, 7.2 (2020), 13.

and the “inauspiciousness” of Constantinople.<sup>18</sup> At best, the disputed author of the *Dürr-i meknun* considers Mehmed’s victory fulfilling Islamic prophecy and therefore a sign that the qur’anic “Final Hour” (*al-sā‘ah*) was nigh; at worst, we also see evidence of extreme doubt.<sup>19</sup> The author is intensely concerned with the fate of the dynasty. The final victory over Byzantium was “an ominous sign of a tyranny to come.”<sup>20</sup> As we shall see below, a parallel with the arc of Daniel’s prophecy is observed. All things come to pass. But given the preponderance of other evidence, the Ottomans from at least Murad II, and most certainly from Selim I, understood their success on the battlefield as proof to the apocalyptic pudding; the sultan was a glorified warrior of God and handyman of the Mahdi, if not the Mahdi himself. Let the End-Times come!

Lastly, how, in the absence of any other direct historical documentation, did the eschatological visions of Daniel fulfill the needs of Ottoman imperial ideology and apocalyptic belief? I am afraid that I can provide no precise answers to any of these questions, at least for now. All that is certain is that of all the books of the Hebrew and Christian bibles, *Daniel* appealed to Mehmed and/or his scribe on some practical, political, spiritual, and intellectual level. Not even the *Apocalypse of John* warranted an Arabic translation for the sultan’s private library, a fact that surprised me all the more.

## The Book of Daniel: An Outline of an Apocalypse Against Empire

In order to shed some light on this enigmatic text, let us first introduce a résumé of the biblical story. For those unfamiliar with the book, Daniel’s prophecies both of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Ch. 2; Ms. Ayasofya fols. 3b–8b) and of the Jewish visionary’s own oneiric revelation (Ch. 7; fols. 21b–24b) separate world history into four consecutive kingdoms, the last

18 S. Yerasimos, *La fondation de Constantinople et de Sainte-Sophie dans les traditions turques: légendes d’Empire* (Istanbul and Paris 1990), 193; K. Şahin, “Constantinople and the End Time: The Ottoman Conquest as a Portent of the Last Hour”, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 14 (2010), 339.

19 Qur’ān [hereafter: Q] 79:42; 7:187. For the phrases “the Hour is coming” (*al-sā‘ah ātiyah*), see Q 15:85; 20:15; 22:7; 40:59. Also see references for “the Last Day” (*al-yawm al-āḥir*) in Q 2:8, 62, 126, 177, 228, 232, 264; Q 3:114; Q 4:38, 39, 162; Q 5:69; Q 9:18, 19, 29, 44, 45, 99; Q 24:2; Q 33:21; Q 58:22; Q 60:6; Q 65:2.

20 C. Grenier, “Solomon, His Temple, and Ottoman Imperial Anxieties”, *BSOAS*, 85.1 (2022), 28.

of which being the most deleterious and unholy. Of key importance are the themes of iniquitous foreign administration, dynastic collapse, and the restitution of a fifth, final, and righteous monotheistic—and specifically for Daniel, Jewish—kingdom through the divine intervention of God in human history. These key points are what make Mehmed's interest in the *Book of Daniel*, especially following his conquest of Constantinople in 1453, intriguing.

The biblical apocalypse claims to have been written by a Jewish figure named Daniel who is called to serve at the court of Nebuchadnezzar (r. ca. 605–561 BCE) during the Jewish Babylonian captivity (ca. 598–538 BCE) following the destruction of the First Temple. Though a compelling narrative idea, this is not the case. Apocalypses are, generally, written pseudepigraphically and retrospectively vis-à-vis the events they claim to foresee.<sup>21</sup> Critical scholarship generally agrees with the third-century CE philosopher Porphyry that the *Book of Daniel* was in fact composed in the second century BCE by a Jewish scribe living during the reign of the Hellenic-Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes (r. 175–164 BCE), who is more popularly associated with the Channukah narrative of Jewish victory over foreign iniquity.<sup>22</sup> The Jews' Seleucid overlords and especially Antiochus are identified with oppression, persecution, and the imposition of polytheistic belief and practice. Thus, the apocalypse is considered in its origin as an “outsider” or revolutionary account of foreign domination and Hellenistic cruelty. Enter the historiographic schema of four kingdoms.

The Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar is visited with a terrible dream (Ch. 2), wherein he sees a statue composed of four metals in decreasing value: gold head, silver arms and chest, bronze stomach and thighs, steel legs and feet of mixed steel and clay. When Nebuchadnezzar's Chaldean astrologers and ma-

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21 See my discussion of Ps.-Ibn al-ʿArabī's *The Tree of Nu'mān Concerning the Ottoman Empire* (*al-Šağarah al-nu'māniyya fi al-dawlah al-uthmāniyyah*) in Chahanovich, “Ottoman Eschatological Enthusiasm: Ps.-Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Tree of Nu'mān* as an Early Modern Islamic Esoteric Apocalypse in the Service of Empire”, unpublished dissertation, Harvard University, 2021, 34–69. See also L. Nasrallah, “Out of Love for Paul: History and Fiction and the Afterlife of the Apostle Paul”, I. Ramelli and J. Perkins (eds), *Early Christian and Jewish Narrative: The Role of Religion in Shaping Narrative Forms* (Tübingen 2015), 93; K. King, “‘What Is an Author?’ Ancient Author-Function in *The Apocryphon of John* and *The Apocalypse of John*”, in W. Arnal, R. Ascough, and R. Derrenbacker (eds), *Scribal Practices and Social Structures Among Jesus' Adherents: Essays in Honour of John S. Kloppenborg* (Leuven 2016), 15–42.

22 Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 87–88.

gicians fail to interpret his dream, the rigorous monotheist Daniel is called to court (vv. 10–26, Ms. Ayasofya 3367, fols. 4a–5a). With an appeal to God to help him in his task, Daniel proclaims that the statue is a message from God and a warning (vv. 31–35; Ms. fols. 6b–7a):

Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statute...While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

Daniel continues to interpret the enigma of the statue. Nebuchadnezzar and his dynasty are the head of gold. After him will follow another empire, that of Darius and the Medes. Then, Cyrus and the Persians will overtake the Medes and enjoy their own time as supreme Mesopotamian rulers. The chronology of empires here is, noticeably, incorrect; not only is there no such Median king known as Darius, but the Persians historically succeeded the Babylonians in 539 BCE. But that is beside the point. Lastly, the mixed empire of steel and clay is understood as the present period of the real and anonymous Jewish scribe: that of the Hellenes, and in particular the Seleucid Syrian dynasty. By implication, the Macedonian warlord Alexander and his successors, the Diadochoi, are the fourth and final kingdom. Recall that the Seleucid King Antiochus is the persecutor *par excellence* of the Israelites. Therefore, God himself will rectify the miserable position of the Jews through divine intervention. The fifth kingdom, herewith symbolized by the massive mountain, is Elohim's newly purified empire on earth.

The same “historiographic framework” of four kingdoms is repeated in Daniel's dream in Chapter 7 (fols. 21b–24b); here, the reader is told by Daniel in first person of “four-hybrid beasts that crawl out of the sea, one after the other.”<sup>23</sup> Increasing in monstrosity, the first is a lion with eagle's wings, the second an upright bear gnashing ribs in its fangs, and the third a winged, four-headed leopard. The fourth and final beast—herewith associated with the kingdom of steel and clay of Nebuchadnezzar's vision—is an unspecified creature with iron

23 DiTommaso, “Four Kingdoms,” 206.



teeth and bedecked with ten horns that crushes and consumes its victims (Ch. 7:7–8; fols. 21b–24a):

After this I saw in the visions by night a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth and was devouring, breaking in pieces, and stamping what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that preceded it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, when another horn appeared, a little one coming up among them; to make room for it, three of the earlier horns were plucked up by the roots. There were eyes like human eyes in this horn, and a mouth speaking arrogantly.

This fourth beast is the worst of all dynasties and therefore doomed to be decimated by the hand of God. Daniel watches as it is slain—by some anonymous force which should be understood as God—and “stripped of authority” (v. 12; fol. 24a). Thereafter, in parallel with Ch. 2, the “Ancient of Days” (Ar. *ʿatīq al-ayām*, fol. 24a) arrives and establishes the reign of the “supremely holy” (Ar. *al-qiddisīn al-ʿālīyīn*). Again, in an obvious parallel with Ch. 2, the fifth and final kingdom of God and his chosen people takes over as an empire without end for all eternity. Apocalyptic history concludes, much like a Disney movie, with a happy ending.

### **Marginalia Matter: Between a Fifteenth-Century Syriac Scribe and a Twelfth-Century Jewish Commentator**

The marginalia tell an even more interesting story. As noted above, the historical, linguistic, confessional, and canonical layers make reading Mehmed's copy fertile ground for a number of different studies. With the biblical apocalypse composed in both Hebrew (Chs. 1:1–2:4a, 8–12) and Aramaic (Chs. 2:4b–7:28), the anonymous translator and scribe took as his model a Syriac copy. This is made abundantly clear for the reader on fol. 1a, where he renders the title in the West Syriac (Serto) alphabet, as though to not only serve as an autobiographical note regarding his (former?) Christian identity, but also as a method of establishing the veracity of his translation for a Muslim patron. And in what seems to be another paratextual flex to prove his access to biblical and ancient truth, our anonymous scribe includes in his commentary the original Aramaic phrase of the infamous “writing on the wall” verse in Ch. 5: *Mene mene tekel uparsin* (fol. 18a). This particular chapter in the *Book of Daniel* concerns

the king Belshazzar, son of Nebuchadnezzar, who during a feast drinks wine with his Babylonian comrades from goblets pilfered from the Jerusalem Temple. Suddenly, a disembodied hand begins to write on the wall of the dining hall. Terrified, Belshazzar summons Daniel, as Nebuchadnezzar did, to understand the meaning of this paranormal graffito. Our Jewish diviner proceeds to explain the phrase word by word (v. 26):

*Mene* — God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.

*Tekel* — You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.

*Peres* — Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.<sup>24</sup>

The polyglot marginal note gives the line first in Syriac, then in Arabic transliteration, then Arabic translation and, finally, in the original Aramaic! Mehmed's scribe is no mere translator, but a scholar of a multi-confessional tradition.

As a reward, Daniel receives the gift of a purple robe. Then, without giving second thought to Daniel's ominous exegesis, Belshazzar retires for the night. Woe unto the monarch whose ears are deaf to God's warnings. In fulfillment of the prophecy, Belshazzar is slain in his sleep. Then, in reference to his warning to Nebuchadnezzar about the coming end of Babylonian dominion, the Medes arrive, overthrow the Jews' Mesopotamian captors, and establish their own dynasty, which, of course, will also come to an unsavory but celestially preordained end. No ungodly kingdom lasts forever is this book. God always has the final word. One may rightly surmise that Mehmed, who aspired to be a "philosopher king," could not have missed the memo.<sup>25</sup> Even though we have no direct proof he read or studied this text, the scribal note sticks out. The writing in the margin is as obvious as God's message on Belshazzar's banquet wall. In short, the valence of the text with the help of the marginalia transform the copy into a kind of contemplative booklet. But did Mehmed believe his own glory, too, would decay and pass like those of Kusraw, Afrasiyab, and the Babylonians? I am not so certain.

The inclusion of Syriac in Mehmed's Arabic copy is a deliberate scribal strat-

24 *Peres* is the singular of *parsin*. The proclitic *u* in the transliteration is for the Hebrew "and". As per vatic exegesis, *peres* is meant to identify the Persians. Again, note that Daniel's prophecy is unconcerned with the attested historical chronology of empires. The Medes definitely did not precede the Persians as the Babylonians' successors.

25 Necipoğlu, "Visual Cosmopolitanism," 8–9; *ibid.* 1 for Mehmed's attempt to "refashion his public persona and dynastic self-image" following the conquest of Constantinople.

egy that vividly confirms a kind of spiritual/theological reliability inherent in the Syriac Christian tradition. The alphabet and language of this confessional community are paramount to magical seals of authenticity. Though Mehmed was skilled in a number of languages aside from Turkish and Arabic, such as Persian, Greek, Latin, I am unaware of testimony asserting his fluency in reading Syriac, though as we will see below Mehmed may have studied Hebrew enough to argue with rabbis about Daniel's meaning. Thus, wherever Syriac appears in the paratextual material, I contend that it serves several goals. First, it affirms the text's antiquity—kept for ages among the Syriac Christians who themselves received it from the Jews—and by extension its authority. Second, it lends the stand alone copy, otherwise denuded of its canonical position in the Bible, the aura and power of preternatural wisdom *qua* apocalypse. Especially with the title in Syriac script, the Muslim reader is meant to understand: “this comes from the people of the book.” Lastly, the idea that a Syriac copy, and not a Aramaic-*cum*-Hebrew copy, was chosen suggests that for Mehmed the language and its community of Christians were a source of legitimacy. Consider this an example of Ottoman Orientalism vis-à-vis the empire's more ‘ancient’ religious minorities and subjects. After all, only a Syriac scribe was capable of mustering the philological knowhow to include in the marginal note the meaning of *mene mene tekel uparsin* in Syriac, then Syriac transliteration, then Arabic, and then in Aramaic. Admittedly, one cannot explain how or why a Syriac Christian would be adept at writing and reading Aramaic and/or Hebrew. Enigmas abound.

Let us consider this point of the Syriac language or Syriac identity as authorizing the text. For example, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* in its origin is a Syriac text and was composed in reaction to Arabian Muslim expansion and conquest. Having made its way over the centuries to the court of the Byzantine kings, Ps.-Methodius became a prophet of cosmocratic propaganda. Byzantine understanding of the Last World Emperor derives principally from this work. For the Ottomans, this was an equally well-known text and concept, though they preferred their own mélange of Chengisid, Timurid, Byzantine, and of course Islamic eschatological traditions vis-à-vis universal sovereignty.<sup>26</sup> Recall that the

26 A.F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (Cambridge 2008), 7; B. F. Manz, “Timurane and the Symbolism of Sovereignty,” *Iranian Studies*, 21.1–2 (1988), 105–22; Bonura, *idem*; B. Flemming “Sahib-Kiran und Mahdi: Türkische Endzeiterwartungen im ersten Jahrzehnt der Regierung Süleymans,” Hans R. Roemer and Albrecht Noth (eds), *Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Vorderen Orients. Festschrift für Bertold*



concept of “Lord of the Conspicuous Conjunction” (*ṣāhib-i kīrān*) had particular appeal for Süleyman and his successors. Likewise, legends around Alexander the Macedonian, too, were passed on to Muslims via the Syriac tradition, a philological point of fact the Ottomans were most likely aware of as well.<sup>27</sup>

And then there is the Islamo-Danielic prognosticatory tradition known as the “destinies” (Ar. sing. *malḥamah*, pl. *malāhim*; Ot. *mülheme* or *şemsiyye*).<sup>28</sup> As Alexander Fodor argues, this particular vatic genre comes from the Syriac community around Tur Abdin in modern-day Turkey’s Mardin Province, most likely taking first textual shape around the turn of the twelfth century.<sup>29</sup> Here, Daniel is depicted as the source of agricultural, astrological, and meteorological divination.<sup>30</sup> Emphasis on supernatural wisdom concerning the sublunar sphere is a logical extension of dream interpretation. An ability to predict crop yields based on weather forecasts is, in a way, a function of the kind of political prophecy in the *Book of Daniel*. Famine, floods, crop failure can undermine the stability of a dynasty. Peasant revolts were real and they often begat charismatic leaders that challenged the empire head on, such as Şeyh Bedreddin Mahmud of Samavna and his sidekick (*halife*) Börklüce Mustafa in the early fifteenth

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*Spuler zum 70. Geburtstag* (Leiden 1981, 58–61; C. Fleischer, “Seer to the Sultan: Haydar-i Remmal and Sultan Süleyman”, in J. L. Warner (ed), *Kültür Ufukları: Talat S. Halman Armağan Kitabı* (Syracuse and Istanbul 2001) 291; H. Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton 2018), 283. For perhaps the oldest attestation of belief in the Last Emperor, see F. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge 2010), 125.

27 For a very general introduction to Syriac Christians under the Ottomans, see H. van den Berg, “Syriac Literature and Christian-Muslim Relations Under the Ottomans, 16th–19th Centuries”, in D. Thomas and J. Chesworth (eds), *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, Vol. 18—The Ottoman Empire 1800–1914* (Leiden 2021), 27–37. Much can and should be done on Ottoman impressions and awareness of Christian minority communities like the Syriac Christians.

28 See E. İhsanoğlu, *Osmanlı Astroloji Literatürü Tarihi ve Osmanlı Astronomi Literatürü Tarihi Zeyli* (Istanbul 2011), 3–6.

29 See A. Fodor, “Malhamat Daniyal”, in G. Kaldy-Nagy (ed), *The Muslim East: Studies in Honour of Julius Germanus* (Budapest 1974), 85, 90, 91. I am inclined to side with Fodor’s thesis of origins over Vajda’s insufficient critique. See G. Vajda, “Quelques observations sur la Malhamat Daniyal”, *Arabica*, 23 (1976), 84–87.

30 See J. den Heijer, “Malhamat Daniyal and Christian Arabic Literature”, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 218 (1982), 223–232. For some Ottoman *Mülheme-yi Dāniyāl*, see TKSM, Ms. H.491, fols. 1b–35b; Harvard Hough Library Ms. Turk 13, fols. 1a–35b (incomplete, missing initial pages).

century, Şahqulı in Teke ili (1511–1512), Şeyh Celal of Bozoq (1519–1520), and the Bektaşî Kalender in Kırşehir (1527–1528).<sup>31</sup> Note, however, that the *Mülheme-yi Dāniyāl* literature should not be confused with the much older Islamic genre of “dynastic destinies” genre (*hidthān al-duwal, malāḥim*).<sup>32</sup> Part of this non-apocalyptic *mülheme* tradition may draw from other Syriac works such as the *Cave of Treasures* or the *Book of Medicine*.

Consider the fact as well that Mehmed’s anonymous scribe concludes in the colophon that he chose to include the parabiblical chapters “Bel and the Dragon” and “Susannah and the Elders” because “I studied them in my childhood”. Neither of these chapters are included in the Hebrew Bible; they figure only in Catholic and Eastern Orthodox bibles.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, by confirming his long-standing exposure to and study of Syriac, we can surmise that Mehmed received this as a positive credential. Such personal scribal note, however short, is a stamp of quality and truth. The scribe speaks through his inclusion of the Syriac script in the title, his own linguistic insertions across several languages, and his final autobiographical comment. It is as if he were saying to his reader, “trust me, through the translation of my native tongue, and through our own tradition, I can bring you closer to divine wisdom.”

But the importance of the paratextual material does not end there. For example, take the second quotation at the top of this paper: “Here, [Ibn Ezra] interpreted ‘the Fourth Kingdom’ as the kingdom of Islam, and he interpreted the legs of steel of King Nebuchadnezzar’s vision as the kingdom of Islam” (fol. 22a). Ibn Ezra (d. ca. 1138–40 CE) was a twelfth-century Jewish Andalusian scholar who, among other things, composed a commentary on the *Book of Daniel*. Our anonymous translator peppers his copy throughout with Ibn

31 E. Werner, “Häresie, Klassenkampf und religiöse Toleranz in einer islamisch-christlichen Kontakzone Bedr ed-Din und Börklüce Mustafa”, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 12 (1964), 255–76; A. Gölpınarlı, *Simavna Kadısoğlu Şeyh Bedreddin* (Istanbul, 1966); M. Balivet, *Islam mystique et révolution armée dans les Balkans ottomans: vie du cheikh Bedreddin, le “hallaj des turcs”, 1358/59–1416* (Istanbul, 1995); A. Y. Ocak, *Osmanlı toplumunda zındıklar ve mülhidler (15.–17. yüzyıllar)* (Istanbul, 1998), 136–202.

32 For more on that, see EI2, “Malḥama” (T. Fahd).

33 Protestant bibles pejoratively refer to these works as “apocryphal.” I thank Dr. Kelsie Rodenbiker for educating me about apocrypha, the less loaded alternative terminology (i.e. paracanonical or parabiblical), and in general about the importance of paratexts. See, for example, K. Rodenbiker, “The Second Peter: Pseudepigraphy as Exemplarity in the Second Canonical Petrine Epistle”, *Novum Testamentum*, 65 (2023), 115, 129–30.

Ezra's commentary. Aside from a single explicit reference to Ibn Ezra by name on fol. 22b, the Iberian Jewish interpreter is otherwise tersely referred to as the "commentator" (*qāl šāriḥ*) par excellence or as "the interpreter" (*fassar...*). One is reminded of St. Thomas Aquinas who in his *Summa Theologica* often spoke of Aristotle simply as "the Philosopher." The person in question need not be mentioned by name; his popularity is self-evident. Two questions arise: why would a Syriac Christian scribe know of Ibn Ezra? And why would he include his commentary in a copy for Mehmed? The first question is, for now, unanswerable. Any answer to the second question involves a lot of informed conjecture. Certainly it is evasive.<sup>34</sup>

Specifically, Ibn Ezra associates the fourth kingdom on fol. 22a in reference to the fourth beast of Daniel's dream with that of Nebuchadnezzar's ominous vision of a statue in Chapter 2. Both are synthesized as apocalyptic predictions concerning the advent of a world-wide Islamic empire. This is not a positive development for Ibn Ezra. As a Jew, Ibn Ezra was driven from Granada in 1066 during a violent eruption of antisemitic riots. Following his return to Granada, Ibn Ezra continued to suffer under the Almoravids. Islamic dominion, in this context, is comparable with the Seleucid occupation of Israel in the second century BCE. The anti-imperial position of biblical apocalyptic is not excised from Mehmed's copy, and the marginalia apparently confirm this. With Islam as the fourth and final kingdom—and by association therefore also the most wicked one according to Ibn Ezra—the Ottomans stand out as a dynasty worthy of God's punishment. Recall that a rock will smash the statue to make way for the final apocalyptic kingdom of God. So, too, is the fourth beast in Daniel's dream defeated in preparation for the restitution of celestial kingship on Earth.

Or is it really this simple? Take, for example, the following commentary on fol. 22b:

34 Well before Mehmed succeeded to the throne, his father's premier court occult master and mystic 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 1454) in his "Key to the Comprehensive Prognosticon" (*Miftāḥ al-ḡafr al-ḡāmi*) infused esoteric elements into this synthesized tradition of power and eschatological belief, thereby further establishing Ottoman apocalyptic ambitions as part of the court life. The oldest copy of the "Key" is SK Ms. Hafid Ef. 204 composed in 1494. Sultan Süleyman's court geomancer Haydar-i Remmal had a copy (SK Ms. Laleli 1532) composed by his eunuch Muzaffar in 943/1536 (see fol. 108b). Though not a complete list, addition copies I have found are: TSMK Mss. Bağdat 373, Revan 1697; SK Mss. Süleymaniye 1060, Bağdatlı Vehbi 941, Pertevniyal 761, Esad Ef. 1506, Şehit Ali Paşa 1817; İÜK Ms. Türkçe 6624; BnF Ms. 2669.

Ibn Ezra commented on the *Book of Daniel* and said that the small horn [of the fourth beast that emerges in Daniel's dream] represents one of the kingdoms of Islam that appear on earth. And from among these kingdoms a great king will appear who will eradicate three kings among the Muslim kings as well as a great many of the Greek and Roman princes. And he will take [text unclear]. And he will be wise (*ḥādiq*) and demonstrate proficiency in many sciences and basic principles.

The original valence of *Daniel* as an anti-imperial text and Ibn Ezra's pejorative identification of Islam as the final iniquitous kingdom, is herewith transformed into an encomium of sorts at the hand of our scribe; the scribe has transformed the meaning of Ibn Ezra's exegesis. One should understand that there is an uprising in unjust Islamic kingship. This is exemplified in Daniel's vision by the multiplication of horns on the fourth apocalyptic beast. Daniel says, "I was considering the horns, when another horn appeared, a little one coming up among them; to make room for it, three of the earlier horns were plucked up by the roots. There were eyes like human eyes in this horn, and a mouth speaking arrogantly." Daniel's vision concludes with the final horn "waging war against the holy people" (fol. 24a, *tuqātil al-aṭḥār*, cf. fol. 25a where it is given as *al-qiddīsīn al-ʿawāl*) and "changing God's laws and principles of faith" (fol. 25a, *yataḡayyir al-ʿawābid wa-l-iʿtiqādāt*). This boastful and wicked horn is then removed from power by God, the Ancient of Days. Crucially, however, any further commentary from the Syriac scribe on this section stops. Is a terminal—if even boisterous—Islamic overlord necessary, good, and even welcome. Is the final horn actually a godsend? Or rather, is the strategic silence of the Syriac scribe supposed to allow the sultan to interpret Ibn Ezra's prophecy of a final Islamic kingdom as unavoidable and therefore a restitutive act of God. I think that the greater context of Ottoman eschatological enthusiasm must be taken into consideration.

Mehmed's interest in the *Book of Daniel*—or the inspiration for his scribe's decision to introduce the work to the sultan—principally derived from an interest in apocalypticism *tout court*. The reason why the *Book of Daniel* is more appealing over any other biblical apocalypse—or conversely, why his scribe found it relevant to translate it for the sultan's personal collection—is because of its imperial focus. That is to say, if Mehmed read the work, he did not understand the subversive nature of Daniel's Babylonian visions or the anti-Islamic position of Ibn Ezra. The Jewish and early Christian tradition of reading Daniel

against empire, therefore, was totally lost on the conqueror of Constantinople. Our anonymous Syriac translator drew on two tools to drive a possible and quite narrow pro-dynastic reading: the reinterpretation of the commentary of Ibn Ezra and strategic marginal silences. First, presuming that Mehmed knew nothing of Ibn Ezra's suffering at the hand of Andalusian antisemitism, the Almoravids' oppression of the Jews, and Ibn Ezra's identification of the fourth and final beast with Islam writ large, the inclusion of Jewish commentary material loses its anti-imperial flavor, especially when the scribe implicitly suggests that a sultan like Mehmed would conquer other Muslim monarchs and be a renaissance man of culture.<sup>35</sup> Second, silence allows for a great deal of ambiguity. By not elaborating further on this particular vision of the horn, Mehmed was left with the ambiguity of interpretation. One has to fill in the gaps. Personal preference informs the hermeneutic of private literary interest. And if, as stated in the marginalia, a final Islamic kingdom *sans* qualification will overthrow three other kingdoms and emerge as the last of all earthly reigns, then the Ottoman imperial self-understanding as God's final empire pre-Last Judgment fits the bill. The horn speaks boastfully, and so too, in a loud voice that would rival the horns that brought down the walls of Jericho, a Muslim monarch would bring Constantinople to its knees by proclaiming "God is great!"<sup>36</sup> In this light, one could argue that the inclusion of *Daniel* in the imperial library derives from an effort to align Islamic tradition with a much older biblical tradition. As a rule, especially concerning apocalypses, the older a tradition or a text is perceived to be, the greater authority and truth its readers attribute to it. Although Daniel *qua* prophet is not mentioned in the Qur'an, his popularity as a visionary of the future was long established as part of Islamic culture and belief.<sup>37</sup>

Secondary evidence may support the supposition that Mehmed read this

35 Evidently, Ibn Ezra may have been introduced into Christian and Islamic intellectual circles via the conversion of a Jew. Take for example the case study in D. Halfi, "Isma'il Qazvini: A Twelfth/Eighteenth-Century Jewish Convert to Imami Shi'ism and His Critique of Ibn Ezra's Commentary on the Four Kingdoms (Daniel 2:31–45)," in M. Hjälms (ed), *Senses of Scripture, Treasures of Tradition: The Bible in Aramaic Among Jews, Christians, and Muslims* (Leiden 2017), 281–304. I have not been able to access the rest of this collection. Further research into how Ibn Ezra became popular among Syriac Christians is extremely relevant for any further research.

36 Oruç Beğ, *Tarihi*, 112; K. Teply, *Türkische Sagen und Legenden um die Kaiserstadt Wien* (Vienna 1980), 120.

37 See L. DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel and the Apocryphal Daniel Literature* (Leiden 2005),

text and understood it as somehow pro-imperial. Take the sixteenth-century Hebrew chronicle *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* composed in 1523 by Eliyahu Capsali (d. ca. 1550), rabbi of Candia (modern-day Heraklion). Capsali relates that Mehmed II personally undertook the study of Hebrew to read *Daniel* and employed Rabbi Isaiah Meseni to read the apocalypse out loud to him.<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, Capsali's uncle Moses (d. 1500) was Chief Rabbi of Constantinople under Mehmed II, which gives one reason to suspect that there is some kernel of truth to the narrative.<sup>39</sup> Conversely put, how or why would Capsali have known that Mehmed even possessed a copy of *Daniel* from which Meseni could read, never mind his awareness that Mehmed was interested in this particular book of the Hebrew Bible over any other. Further sources claim that Mehmed debated George Amiroutzès (d. ca. 1469–70), the sultan's most intimate and trusted Greek tutor, concerning the meaning and resonance of the apocalyptic schema of four kingdoms.<sup>40</sup> One rightly should doubt the veracity of both claims, but it is intriguing that any outside source, especially ones far removed from the epicenter of historical action, would be aware of Mehmed's interest in, as well as possession of, the *Book of Daniel*. With the Ottoman banner flying high over Constantinople, "Mehmed's providential destiny as Muslim heir to the Eastern Roman Empire" inspired the Ottoman monarch to portray himself as artistically, culturally, and metaphysically superior to his Christian and Islamic counterparts.<sup>41</sup> The Byzantine's interpreted themselves positively as the "fourth kingdom."<sup>42</sup> So, too, did Charlemagne and his Carolignian successors, as well as Frankish kings in medieval central Europe.<sup>43</sup> The pro-imperial interpretation

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esp. 1–34 which establishes the tradition of Daniel legends and apocrypha from early post-biblical literature to Byzantine and even Islamic texts.

38 C. Berlin, "A Sixteenth-Century Hebrew Chronicle of the Ottoman Empire: The *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* of Elijah Capsali and Its Message", in C. Berlin (ed), *Studies in Jewish Bibliography, History and Literature in Honor of I. Edward Kiev* (New York 1971), 27.

39 For a more critical appraisal of Capsali and his *Sefer Eliyahu Zuta*, see A. Shmuelevitz, "Capsali as a Source for Ottoman History, 1450–1523", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 9.3 (1978), 339–344.

40 A. Argyriou and G. Lagarrigue, "Georges Amiroutzès et son 'Dialogue sur la foi au Christ tenu avec le Sultan des Turcs'", *Byzantinische Forschungen*, 11 (1987), 161–168. The original Greek text is lost. All that remains is a Latin copy upon which Argyriou and Lagarrigue base their work.

41 Ibid, 12.

42 DiTommaso, "Four Kingdoms," 216.

43 Ibid., 229.



of the fourth kingdom as good was trendy. Why should Mehmed not enjoy political *translatio imperii* for his own dynastic benefit? But this is only another reading. It is not any more certain or probable than the previous hypothesis of Mehmed's interest in *Daneil* as a contemplative text *against* imperial hubris. The limits of interpretation are real.

## Conclusion

As Lorenzo DiTommaso observes, apocalypses are mercurial texts, perhaps more so than any other revelatory genre. Though the *Book of Daniel* is in its origin principally against empire, the “concerns and needs” of an Ottoman imperial readership, like Mehmed and his court, require us to reconsider just how anti-imperial *Daniel* was. If we consider the literal warnings of the Jewish prophet of Babylon, then Ayasofya 3367 emerges as a contemplative text with heavily anti-imperial themes. Mehmed may have selected it as a revelatory “mirror for princes”-esque handbook as he stood at the cusp of world-dominion. Keen on knowing how to run the world and avoid falling afoul of God's plan, the prophecy against Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel's dream scenario of apocalyptic beasts presented the sultan with clear signposts. Better to learn what the “people of the book” say as a counterweight to more bombastically positive Islamic prophecies concerning the conquest of Constantinople. This aligns well with Tursun Beg's account of a conqueror concerned with the passing of time and the instability of power and the wary sentiments of the author of the *Dürr-i meknun*.

But if we explore the paratextual material, one can also see how the Syriac scribe adroitly inserted historical commentary, reinterpreted said commentary, and also left marginal silences when necessary. This is most obvious in the section concerning Daniel's vision of the four beasts. Did Mehmed receive the text as a more robustly pro-imperial work rather than anti-imperial warning? Recall that the anonymous scribe suggests that the final horn of history is that of an Islamic potentate skilled in science and statecraft. There is little here that does not also align with the Ottoman reception of Islamic political eschatology and Mehmed's own self-styled image as renaissance man of learning. And the idea of empires passing onto to other empires—herewith exemplified by the marginal emphasis on a final Islamic kingdom replacing three other Islamic dynas-

ties—mirrors what DiTommaso observed regarding the “stakeholder” reading of the Danielic apocalypse of empire:

Stakeholder groups, by contrast, applied the schema in its insider/imperial mode, modulated by the *translation imperii*, in order to preserve the present order, which they had fought to establish, not overthrow. Identifying the final kingdom [of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel’s visions] with their own rule normalizes their political positions and provides the basis for legitimation and/or social policy.<sup>44</sup>

The notion of *translation imperii* is key. Mehmed was now the inheritor of Byzantium and a contender for European Christian claimants to international power and prestige. Again, as Oruç Bey in his *Tarih* exuberantly states, “He who is called the Mahdi, a scion of the Prophet Isaac, will have a military expedition and conquer the city (i.e. Constantinople) by saying ‘*God is Great*.’” That man was Mehmed. With the Ottomans well on their way to establishing cosmocratic dominion in fulfillment of diverse eschatological traditions, *Daniel* now becomes in Mehmed’s hands a prophecy *pro* not *contra* imperial success and power. Our Syriac scribe deploys quotations from Ibn Ezra, otherwise taken out of context, and strategically keeps mum when it serves his employers. Thus, a *dhimmi* translator of scripture becomes an accessory to Mehmed’s claim to End-Times hegemony.

But this argument, too, requires a lot more evidence. The long and short of this article must conclude that neither the outsider mode nor the stakeholder mode are certain. Perhaps both theses should complement each other. Why choose? Mehmed could have both been interested in the text for its anti-imperial admonitions as well as for its pro-imperial proclamations. Until further historical proof emerges about *how* Mehmed read the text, the only thing one can say is that Ms. Ayasofya 3367 shows us the limits of certainty in historical interpretation. Mehmed’s *Daniel* remains as fluid as the concerns and needs of its readers across confession, empire, and time.

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44 DiTommaso, “Four Kingdoms”, 237.



# Probing Hidden Knowledge through Divine Inspiration: Charismatic Authority and Occult Sciences in 17th- and 18th-century Ottoman Conservative Theology

NIKOLA PANTIĆ

For centuries, the pursuit of “hidden” knowledge represented a significant and near-ubiquitous ritualistic practice. People endeavored to amass extensive corpora of rituals and techniques designed to penetrate the metaphysical realms and obtain strategic information beyond ordinary perception.<sup>1</sup> In the Arabic language, techniques of contending with and controlling the unseen world (*‘ālam al-ghayb*) were termed *al-‘ulūm al-khafīyya*, or *al-‘ulūm al-gharība*. These “hidden” and “strange” sciences delved into the invisible, but not praeternatural in the present-day sense, as the unseen was considered integral to nature.<sup>2</sup> By the thirteenth century, the concept of *al-ghayb* had gained significant currency

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1 P. Boyer, *Religion Explained: The Human Instincts that Fashion Gods, Spirits and Ancestors* (London 2002), 180–191, 216–246.

2 Similar to beliefs of various peoples across the globe. See Boyer, *Religion*, 11–12, and M. Weber, *The Sociology of Religion, Introduction by Talcott Parsons with a New Foreword by Ann Swindler* (Boston 1993), 1–4.

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in the territories predominantly populated by the Muslims.<sup>3</sup> It continued to endure well into modern times despite occasional shifts towards stricter and more literalist interpretations of the scriptural sources of religious orthodoxy.<sup>4</sup>

Muslim thaumaturgical (miracle/wonder-working) and occult practices represented a heavily overlapping field, yet they were often technically and anthropologically homologous with various types of magic (*sīhr*), provoking occasional doctrinal attacks. Since the medieval period, perhaps most notably with Ibn Taymīyya (d.1328), various streams of Muslim rigorism developed in parallel with mainstream theological views on Sunni orthodoxy. Rigorists struggled to restrict the power over praeternatural phenomena to Allah and His prophets, denying wondrous faculties and control of the occult to human beings after the *al-salaf* generations.<sup>5</sup>

Rigorist thought during the early modern period, particularly of the Qādīzādali and Wahhābī movements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, remains a significant subject of academic investigation. During the sixteenth century, a renowned Ḥanafī-Māturīdī scholar, Birgivī Meḥmed Efendī (d.1573), expressed concern regarding what he deemed excesses in Sufi practice of his time, criticizing them as dreaded innovations (*bid'a*). His seminal work, *Muḥammadan Path*, argued for a strict adherence to Scriptural sources and Sunni jurisprudence. The *Path* was widely copied and circulated, and in part came to represent the foundation of Qādīzāde Meḥmed Efendī's (d. 1635) doctrine, yet coupled with a strong Taymīyyan sentiment reflected by many of Qādīzāde's

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3 The terms "Muslim" and "Islam" in this paper correspond to Shahab Ahmed's conceptualization, implying those human and historical phenomena, pertinent to various times and regions, relevant for producing meaning in terms of a hermeneutical engagement with what was presumed to have been the revelation to Muḥammad. See Sh. Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of being Islamic* (Princeton 2016), 404–405, 542.

4 M. Sariyannis, "Studying Ottoman Views of the Supernatural: The State-of-the-Art and a Research Agenda," *Aca'ib: Occasional Papers on the Ottoman Perceptions of the Supernatural*, 1 (2020), 5–20 at 9; M. Melvin-Koushki, "Introduction: De-orienting the Study of Islamicate Occultism," *Arabica*, 64/3–4 (2017), 287–297; idem, "Powers of One: The Mathematicalization of the Occult Sciences in the High Persianate Tradition," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World*, 5 (2017), 127–199; L. Saif, "Between Medicine and Magic: Spiritual Aetiology and Therapeutics in Medieval Islam," in S. Bhayro and C. Rider (eds), *Demons and Illness from Antiquity to the Early-Modern Period* (Leiden 2017), 313–339.

5 A. I. Al-Matroudi, *The Ḥanbali School of Law and Ibn Taymiyyah: Conflict or Conciliation* (London 2006), 16–30; *EI2*, "Ibn Taymiyya" (H. Laoust).

followers.<sup>6</sup> For the better part of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as rigorism gained momentum within imperial socio-political milieus, the Ottoman ‘*ulamā*’ underwent an internal struggle over social, political, and religious authority.<sup>7</sup> Ottoman religious establishments faced historical shifts similar to those caused by Protestant reforms in Europe, further challenged by the Wahhābī doctrines emerging from the eighteenth-century Arabian peninsula. Both the Qādīzādālīs and Wāhhābīs had in common the denial of wondrous powers to the Sufis, of *ziyārāt* legitimacy, as well as of any human effort to cause praeternatural effects through devotional, transactional, or mechanical means. Eighteenth-century Wāhhābīs remained a distant object of derision for many of the Ottoman ‘*ulamā*’.<sup>8</sup> However, the Qādīzādālī campaigns gained serious momentum in Istanbul and some Ottoman provinces, directly impacting networks of imperial religious professionals, and many other social milieus.<sup>9</sup>

This paper explores the apologetics of the Ottoman Sufi-‘*ulamā*’ in-office, which were crafted in response to rigorist theological movements of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire. These movements were largely influenced by the Qādīzādālīs, and by adherents to Taymīyyan attitudes more broadly, as well as partly by the Wāhhābīs. Early modern turbulences forced the conservative ‘*ulamā*’ to venture a degree of conformity with the spirit of the times, while defending their craft through tireless preaching and meticulous writing. The Khalwatīyya Sufi order, along with some others, appeared willing to put up a fiercer resistance to rigorist attacks,<sup>10</sup> while the gradually reforming Naqshbandīyya handled itself more comfortably in the prevalent social and political setting, mostly due to its intensified presentation as an order of strict adherents to the *Sunna*, who took efforts to abstain from possible excesses in their devotional and thaumaturgical practice.<sup>11</sup> Current scholarship

6 K. A. Ivanyi, *Virtue, Piety and the Law: A Study of Birgivi Meḥmed Efendi’s al-Ṭarīqa al-muḥammadīyya* (Leiden 2020), 1–15, 26–46.

7 M. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age* (1600–1800) (Minneapolis 1998), 129–226.

8 D. Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (London 2006), 1–70, 130–154.

9 M. D. Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Empire* (Oxford 2008), 63–138.

10 D. Terzioğlu, “Sufis in the Age of State-Building and Confessionalization,” in Ch. Woodhead (ed.), *The Ottoman World* (London 2012), 86–102.

11 D. Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandīs in the Ottoman World*, 1450–1700 (Albany 2005), 1–10, 107–156.

has noted a simultaneous waning of narratives regarding the occult, miraculous, or wondrous, which was recently described as indicative of a particularly Ottoman “disenchantment” process.<sup>12</sup> Reading two famous Syrian Naqshbandī scholars, who in many ways represented the official Ottoman Sunni views, as well as popular beliefs that opposed more “puritan” attitudes among the Muslims, this paper examines the extent to which state-appointed religious professionals contributed to this disenchantment process, paying special attention to their opinions on occult operations.

‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulī (1641–1731) was a contemporary of the Qādizādālī movement, and a critically acclaimed Sufi master who was widely considered an axial saint (*qutb*) of his time in the Ottoman Province of Damascus. There, he operated as a *muftī* and left plentiful works, today described as a lifetime of resistance to rigorist thought.<sup>13</sup> Muḥammad Amīn Ibn ‘Ābidīn (1784–1836) was a Ḥanafī-Māturīdī scholar, until the present widely considered one of the most authoritative interpreters of Ḥanafī *fiqh*, who served as *amīn al-fatwā* in early modern Damascus. At times his works present clear resistance to rigorist thought and carefully address the topics of wonders (*karamāt*), sainthood (*wilāya*), and various occult themes, highlighting conservative ulamaic reactions to remaining Qādizādālī influences, Taymīyyan skepticism, and the impact of the Wahhābī movement in the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>14</sup> Not only were these two figures accomplished scholars and influential lawmakers—they also stood on top of a vast Ottoman corporate establishment of religious professionals, their written works representative of early modern Ottoman Sunni orthodoxy.

12 Sariyannis, “Ottoman Views of the Supernatural,” 1–18; idem, “Ottoman Occultism and its Social Contexts: Preliminary Remarks,” *Aca’ib: Occasional Papers on the Ottoman Perceptions of the Supernatural*, 3 (2022), 35–66 at 42–43; idem, “Knowledge and Control of the Future in Ottoman Thought,” *Aca’ib: Occasional Papers on the Ottoman Perceptions of the Supernatural*, 1 (2020), 49–84 at 80–84.

13 D. Le Gall, “Kadizadelis, Nakşbendis, and Intra-Sufi Diatribe in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul,” *TSAJ*, 28, No. 1/2 (2004): 1–28; L. Demiri and S. Pagani, “Introduction: ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulī and the Intellectual and Religious History of the 17th-18th-Century World of Islam,” and A. Meier, “Words in Action: ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulī as a Jurist,” in L. Demiri and S. Pagani (eds), *Early Modern Trends in Islamic Theology: ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulī and His Network of Scholarship (Studies and Texts)* (Tübingen 2019), 1–30, 107–136. Further see S. Akkach, *Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi: Islam and the Enlightenment* (Oxford 2007), 27–30, 123–125.

14 H. Gerber, *Islamic Law and Culture 1600-1840* (Leiden 1999), 1–100.

Analysis of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century apologetic theology indicates that beliefs in occult, wondrous, and miraculous phenomena did not wane among the state-appointed *‘ulamā’* at least until the early twentieth century (while many still thrive among the ordinary people). Their attention was primarily focused on defining to *whom* were such phenomena allowed. Primary material indicates a continual representational strategy the Ottoman *‘ulamā’* used to justify their monopoly both over the wondrous and the occult. Ulamaic responses to rigorist thought addressed modes of proper belief and orthodox religious practice, establishing rules to be followed both by the ordinary Muslims and religious virtuosi in-office. Doubtlessly in part incited by theological debates in Birgivi’s *Path*, the Sufi-*‘ulamā’* heightened their emphasis on the importance of the *Sunna* and *shari‘a* for proper orthodox practice.<sup>15</sup> However, they firmly insisted upon the continuity of wonders past *al-salaf* generations, defending the legitimacy of various thaumaturgical operations and the occult sciences related to them, albeit only in the hands of trained professionals from their own ranks. Utilizing the concept of sainthood, which allegedly supplied grace to virtuous believers, early modern conservative theologians were eager to, like Ibn Khaldūn centuries before, confine all licit praeternatural practices to the *‘ulamā’* with appropriate Sufi training, justifying their efficacy as revelation through Allah’s *baraka*.<sup>16</sup> Free-lance dabbling in the practice was considered unlawful, and could potentially lead to allegations of magic and witchcraft. Aligning occult sciences to the binary of thaumaturgy-magic, Sufi-ulamaic texts aimed at wider audiences, and narrated amply of widespread beliefs and established orthodox practice, yet seemed to deliberately withhold detail about the diversity and technicalities of Sufi rituals (many of them overlapping with, or incorporating occult operations). Upholding the Sufi vows of silence, and confining details of Sufi occult engagements behind the *zāwiya* doors, the Ottoman *‘ulamā’* crafted representational narratives to deflect anti-Sufi skepticism. At the same time, their apologetics strove for clear boundaries between initiated thaumaturgical professionals and the ordinary subjects of the Empire.

Discussing Ottoman ulamaic representational narratives, present-day scien-

15 For instance, Muṣṭafā Ibn Kamāl al-Dīn al-Bakrī, “Al-Manhal al-‘Adhb al-Sā’igh li-warrādihi fi Dhikr Ṣalwāt al-Ṭarīq wa Awrādihi,” MS Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Hs. Or. 14153.

16 M. Melvin-Koushki, “In Defense of Geomancy: Šaraf al-Dīn Yazdī Rebuts Ibn Ḥaldūn’s Critique of the Occult Sciences,” *Arabica*, 64 (2017), 346–403 at 374, Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, ed. Juma’a Shaykha (Tunis 1984), 139–165, 584–600, 623–671, 677–689.

tific works noticed how Ibn Khaldūn's scholarship echoed in early modern theology. It was pointed out that, even though he wrote in protest of his own environment, densely pervaded by massive popularity of *al-ghayb*, Ibn Khaldūn's sentiments appeared triumphant during Ottoman early modernity.<sup>17</sup> However, the alignment of Ibn Khaldūn's scholarship to that of Ibn Taymīyya and his disciples in some recent academic works does not seem justified.<sup>18</sup> While the latter were bent to excise many Sufi ecstatic and thaumaturgical practices out of orthodox Sunnism, Ibn Khaldūn seemed intent to confine mystical arts to an exclusive Sufi *awliyā'* monopoly,<sup>19</sup> justifying their wondrous privilege through beliefs in God's *baraka* as the constituent of the charisma<sup>20</sup> of appointed religious professionals. Ottoman Sufi-*'ulamā'* relied on comparable models of conservative theology, preserving this tradition since the medieval period onwards.<sup>21</sup> They were focused on defining who may have justly operated as thaumaturge and occultist, defining the image of the mystic for the public.<sup>22</sup> In most cases assumed to be built through specific training and education, such image most often applied to institutionally trained and appointed Sufi-*'ulamā'*. Theologians' representational methods aimed at strengthening the perceived charisma of the ulamaic office,<sup>23</sup> ensuring its position as a sole spiritual and doctrinal authority within the Ottoman realm. The state-appointed Ottoman Sufi-*'ulamā'*, while perhaps intent to disenchant<sup>24</sup> further the wider population of the uninitiated,

17 Melvin-Koushki, "In Defense of Geomancy," 374–384; Sariyannis, "Esotericism," 8–9.

18 Melvin-Koushki, "Islamicate Occultism," 289; idem, "In Defense of Geomancy," 366

19 Ibn Khaldūn, *Shifā' al-Sā'il wa Tabdhīb al-Masā'il*, ed. Muḥammad Muṭī' al-Ḥāfiẓ (Damascus 1996), 37–166.

20 The relation of *baraka* to charisma as a Weberian sociological concept has already been noted in literature on Islam. For instance, J. E. Brockopp, "Constructing Muslim Charisma," in J. P. Zúquete (ed.), *Routledge International Handbook of Charisma* (London 2021), 163–174; N. Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt 1173–1325* (Edinburgh 2015), 95, n.13; J. W. Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford 2002), 100–116.

21 For instance, Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn al-Ṭayyib Ibn al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-Bayān 'an al-Farq bayn al-Mu'jizāt wa al-Karāmāt wa al-Ḥiyāl wa al-Kihāna wa al-Siḥr wa al-Nārinjāt*, ed. R. J. McCarthy (Beirut 1958), 37–108, or Saif, "Ways of Knowing," 317–322.

22 J. Grehan, *Twilight of the Saints: Everyday Religion in Ottoman Syria and Palestine* (Oxford 2014), 64–66.

23 M. Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt (Chicago 1968), 48, 54–58.

24 The context in which this concept was developed by Max Weber, as well as its various mean-



through their teaching and writing re-affirmed their monopoly over any licit and orthodox preternatural effects (*khawāriq al-‘āda*), perpetuating the “enchanted” character of their specialist niche. The process that took place was one of occultating the occult further with aims to strengthen the integrity of the conservative ‘*ulamā*’, while addressing both detractors and the wider population of the faithful.

## I. Grace as Privilege: Charismatic Authority and Occult Power

Drawing upon a centuries-long tradition of beliefs, which in many regions persist even today, Ottoman authors left narratives about “hidden” elements of the universe that could be perceived and influenced by extraordinary people, often through performing specific actions. Replete with unseen angels (*malā’ika*), daemons both neutral (*jinn/jān*) and evil (*shayāṭīn*), spirits (*arwāḥ*) and spiritual essences (*rūḥānīyyāt*) of created things, the universe was believed to represent a system of correspondences between plants, minerals, human beings and celestial bodies, pervaded with Allah’s grace, but also malevolent energies, that all caused preternatural effects on Earth. Since the ninth and tenth centuries, the beliefs in chains of causalities beyond conventional expectations inspired writing in Arabic and Persian languages documenting pragmatic efforts to turn such imaginary phenomena to human advantage.

The disciplines relevant to managing and controlling *al-ghayb* were appealing to a variety of groups beyond the emerging Sufi paths.<sup>25</sup> However, since the ninth century, Sufi practices have been closely intertwined with many techniques of *al-ghayb* manipulation. Sufis have shown growing interest in lettrism, talismanics, astrology, and the world of the unseen in general.<sup>26</sup> While Sufism

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ings, perhaps merit some revision, as previously implied. See J. A. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (Chicago 2017), 1–21, 269–316.

25 Sariyannis, “Occultism,” 35–66.

26 E. Orthmann, “Lettrism and Magic in an Early Mughal Text: Muḥammad Ghawth’s *Kitāb al-Jawābir al-Khams*,” in N. El-Bizri and E. Orthmann (eds), *The Occult Sciences in Pre-modern Islamic Cultures* (Beirut 2018), 223–248 at 229; D. Rašić, “Summoned Letters, the Disjointed Letters and the Talisman of Ibn ‘Arabī,” *Journal of Sufi Studies*, 12/2 (2023), 167–181; A. Knysh, *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism* (Princeton 2017), 54–58; E. Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam* (Bloomington 2010), 21–22; L. Saif, “From *Gāyat al-ḥakīm* to *Šams al-ma‘rif*: Ways of Knowing and Paths of Power in Medieval Islam,” *Arabica*, 64/3–4 (2017), 297–345; Melvin-Koushki, “In Defense of Geoman-



developed into a fully-fledged, bureaucratized, self-replicating system of institutional learning, based on *ṭarīqas* and rooted in mystical *silṣilas* of *baraka*-effluence, its popularity among the '*ulamā*' caused the Sufi-*ulamaic* overlap, instigating the emergence and development of a network of religious professionals who combined jurisprudential, legal, mystagogic, and thaumaturgical functions.<sup>27</sup> This overlap was without precedent during the Ottoman period,<sup>28</sup> so that religious professionals who took interest in occult sciences effectively combined the roles of master thaumaturges, *ulamaic* erudites, landed aristocracy, and the holders of official state appointments, who were sociologically and anthropologically—if not theologically—comparable to members of priestly establishments in medieval Catholic Christianity.<sup>29</sup> Individuals on high positions within the Sufi-*ulamaic* networks functioned as authorities over imperial orthodoxy and continuously engaged with identifying improper practices, or practitioners. Beliefs that Sufi-*ulamaic* thaumaturges could sense *al-ghayb* elements, interact with them, or compel them to perform various actions were widespread, while Sufi lodges bustled with studies of the mystical powers of letters, talismans, and various prognostication techniques.

The rise in currency of Muslim rigorism in seventeenth and eighteenth cen-

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cy," 375–376; N. Gardiner, "Esotericist Reading Communities and the Early Circulation of the Sufi Occultist Aḥmad al-Bunī's Works," *Arabica*, 64/3–4 (2017), 405–441; Sariyannis, "Occultism," 35–38.

- 27 N. Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Oxford 2012), 15–124; E. Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition: 'Umar al-Suhrawardī and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhood* (Leiden 2008), 1–14; A. Al-Azmeh, *The Times of History: Universal Topics in Islamic Historiography* (Budapest 2007), 222–223.
- 28 D. Terzioğlu, "Power, Patronage, and Confessionalism: Ottoman Politics Through the Eyes of a Crimean Sufi, 1580–1593," in M. Sariyannis (ed.), *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire* (Rethymno 2019), 149–186; eadem, "How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion," *Turcica*, 44 (2012–2013), 301–338; eadem, "Sunna-Minded Sufi Preachers in Service of the Ottoman State: the *Naṣīḥatnāme* of Hasan Addressed to Murad IV," *Archivum Ottomanicum*, 27 (2010), 241–312; H. Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton 2018), 1–20; R. Chih, *Sufism in Ottoman Egypt: Circulation, Renewal and Authority in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century* (London 2019), 7–11; D. D. Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria* (Oxford 1990), 7–20.
- 29 N. Pantić, *Sufism in Ottoman Damascus: Religion, Magic, and the Eighteenth-Century Networks of the Holy* (London 2023), 16–18; Weber, *Sociology*, 28–31, 115–120; P. Bourdieu, "Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field," *Comparative Social Research*, 13 (1991), 1–44 at 10.

turies motivated the conservative ‘*ulamā*’ to, in a “Khalidūnian” fashion, once more underline that the alleged effects of various branches of *al-‘ulūm al-gharība* were supposed to be aligned with the straightforward *karāma-siḥr* binary, through the concept of sainthood.<sup>30</sup> The strategies of doing so were available since the early medieval period. The concept of *wilāya*, which emerged from early proto-Sufi writing, intertwined with various beliefs in knowledgeable religious masters whose alleged closeness to the divine supplied them with sufficient *baraka* to alter or break the commonly perceived reality and cause praeternatural effects, jointly referred to as wonders (*karāmāt*).<sup>31</sup> As occult sciences and thaumaturgy were often anthropologically and technically homologous to various types of magic (*siḥr*), concerns about permitted practices arose early in Sufi history.<sup>32</sup> Theologians busied with creating distinctions between licit and illicit practice in their struggle to control the spread of *al-‘ulūm al-gharība*. Ibn Khaldūn pointed out that *al-ghayb* could be accessed either by magicians who reveled in daemonic energy, or by pure and chaste individuals of unshakeable faith whom God rewarded with His grace, most often after years of appropriate training in a lodge.<sup>33</sup> Medieval Sufis who dabbled in the occult—as practitioners or theoreticians—occasionally emphasized that the knowledge of *al-ghayb* should be confined to the initiated.<sup>34</sup> It was common among theologians to assume that Allah represented the sole cause of licit wonders,<sup>35</sup> including any permissible probes into the unseen, which were allowed only to the institutionally trained disciples. This argument was heavily used in later centuries to justify the socio-political and mystical roles of the Ottoman ‘*ulamā*’.<sup>36</sup>

By limiting popular access to *al-ghayb*, the state-appointed Sufi-‘*ulamā*’ guarded their position against what they saw as upstarts, sorcerers, or outright infidels, while justifying their own practices as divinely graced. Maintaining

30 See Ibn Khaldūn, *Shifāʾ*, 100–121.

31 Green, *Sufism*, 33–47, 71–124; B. Radtke, “The Concept of *Wilāya* in Early Sufism,” in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism Volume I: Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi* (700–1300) (Oxford 1999), 483–496.

32 Geoffroy, *Sufism*, 21–22.

33 Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, 139–165, 584–601.

34 Saif, “Ways of Knowing,” 334; Gardiner, “Circulation,” 440–441; Knysh, *Sufism*, 145–149.

35 Saif, “Ways of Knowing,” 297–345; D. M. Varisco, “Illuminating the Lunar Mansions (*manāzil al-qamar*) in *Šams al-ma‘ārif*,” *Arabica*, 64/3–4 (2017), 487–530 at 490; Orthmann, “Lettrism,” 223.

36 Sariyannis, “Ottoman Views of the Supernatural,” 7–9.

such theological argumentation throughout the early modern period, they espoused true arrogance and power in the wake of Qādīzādālī decline,<sup>37</sup> perceived from another angle through the analysis of the status of occult sciences for Ottoman religious orthodoxy.

## II. Sciences of the Hidden, or Hidden Sciences? Representational Strategies of Ottoman 'ulamā'

During Ottoman early modernity, the officially-appointed 'ulamā' continually emphasized that licit access to *al-ghayb* represented a wonder, restricted only to individuals with proper learning (*ta'lim*) and satisfactory etiquette (*adab*). In addition, traits of piety, virtue, chastity, and true faith comprised the cherished *ṣalāḥ*, which was believed to have been the primary condition for *baraka*-emission. Theologians narrated of saintly wonders, from centuries long gone to contemporary times, using them to justify the Sufi practice as that of the *ṣālīḥūn*, while drawing legitimacy from *Ḥadīth* compilations and conclusions made upon the material produced by the many generations of Sunni *fuqahā'*.

Since his earliest authoring days, 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulī engaged in providing theological and jurisprudential rationale for beliefs in continual thaumaturgical power of the saints and Sufi *shaykhs*. This famous commentator and adherent to Ibn 'Arabī's teachings left numerous *riḥlas* to map the topography of saintly shrines in the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula,<sup>38</sup> works replete with homage to thaumaturgical prowess of the saints that defended *ziyāra* to hallowed graves,<sup>39</sup> and theological discussions which addressed the distinction of orthodox practice from *siḥr*.<sup>40</sup> Some of his texts explored certain occult practices, such as oneiromancy, which had a long tradition and great currency for Sufi ranks in various lodges across the Ottoman Empire.<sup>41</sup>

37 Zilfi, *Politics*, 38–40.

38 Online portals at times still use al-Nābulī's texts for identifying certain *maqāms*. For instance, <https://english.palinfo.com/news/2018/04/28/The-Old-Town-of-Awarta> (accessed November 2023).

39 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulī, "Kashf al-Nūr 'an Aṣḥāb al-Qubūr," in "Wasā'il al-Taḥqīq wa Rasā'il al-Tawfīq," MS Princeton University Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Manuscript Collection, Islamic Manuscripts, New Series no. 1113 Princeton, 162A–174A.

40 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulī, *Asrār al-Shar'īyya: Aw al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī wa al-Fayḍ al-Raḥmānī*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (Beirut 1985), 136–137.

41 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulī, *Ta'ṭīr al-Anām fī Ta'bīr al-Manām*, (Cairo: s.n., 1859). Further

Among his important commentaries, al-Nābulṣī left a detailed work committed to Birgivi's *Muḥammadan Path*, its extreme popularity promoting it as one of the fundamental early modern texts for (re-)establishing the Ottoman Sunni creed. The *Path* reaffirmed the centrality of *shari'a* for all manners of religious belief and practice, and the importance of *al-salaf* model in defining behavioral and social norms for all Muslims. Al-Nābulṣī wrote a detailed *Explanation* (*Sharḥ*) of the *Path*, which he used for addressing rigorists described as "fanatical ignoramuses" who diminished the work's benefits. As in his other texts, al-Nābulṣī wrote cautiously and subtly, backing his arguments with *silsilas* of previous religious and jurisprudential authorities. He agreed that the strict adherence to *shari'a* represented the primary requirement for every Muslim, and a fundamental criterion for identifying proper Sufi or saintly practice.<sup>42</sup> Provided that *shari'a* and the *tawḥīd* principle were honored,<sup>43</sup> wonders were available to the *awliyā'* and had continuity in the contemporary world, while the saints would, alongside other righteous (*ṣāliḥūn*) and the Sufi-*'ulamā'*, intercede on behalf of the faithful, both on Earth and hereafter.<sup>44</sup> Al-Nābulṣī understood that beliefs in the thaumaturgical prowess of the *awliyā'*, as well as practices of saints' and saintly graves' veneration may very well have represented innovations past the *al-salaf* age, yet held that most such practices were good innovations (*bid'a ḥasana*), that were permissible, insofar as they properly honored hallowed individuals and were performed in God's, and not the saints' independent honor.<sup>45</sup>

Al-Nābulṣī defined the outpour of God's grace as the sole legitimate source

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see Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, 597–601; Chih, *Sufism*, 68; D. Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus: Nouveau Literacy in the Eighteenth-century Ottoman Levant* (Stanford 2013), 54, 131.

42 J.P. Allen, "Reading Mehmed Birgivi with 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulṣī: Contested Interpretations of Birgivi's *al-Ṭarīqa al-muḥammadiyya* in the 17th–18th-Century Ottoman Empire," and K. Ivanyi, "'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulṣī's Commentary on Birgivi Mehmed Efendi's *al-Ṭarīqa al-muḥammadiyya*: Early Modern Ottoman Debates on *Bid'a fi l-āda*," in Demiri and Pagani (eds), *Early Modern Trends*, 153–170, 137–152.

43 Identical sentiments echoed in many Sufi manuals of the early modern period. See, for instance, a Qādiriyya instruction text, Muḥammad Ibn Ṣāliḥ al-Kilānī, "al-Durra al-Baḥiyya fi Ṣūrat al-Ijāza al-Qādiriyya," MS Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Sprenger 819 p.1, Berlin, 1B–2B.

44 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulṣī, *al-Ḥadiqa al-Nadiyya: Sharḥ al-Ṭarīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*, 2 vols. (Miṣr 1860), 1: 183, 199–200.

45 For instance, al-Nābulṣī, "Kashf," 168B–170B, and Meier, "Words in Action," 127–128.

of praeternatural potency. He attributed the entire domain of licit powers over *al-ghayb* to inspiration dependent on divine will, believed to reach Allah's "friends" to reward their impeccably virtuous lives.<sup>46</sup> Praeternatural effects caused by others, especially those aimed to harm or manipulate human beings, were understood as magic (*sihr*). While it was beneficial to acquire knowledge about magic for the sake of protecting oneself and others, its practice was generally forbidden—it led to *shirk* due to beliefs in the power of objects, people, or symbols, independent from God.<sup>47</sup> The Damascene axial saint categorized various prognostication techniques, such as the use of *al-mandal*, under the joint rubric of soothsaying (*al-kihāna*), without a much better disposition than towards *sihr*. He discussed astrology (*al-tanjīm*) under the same rubric. Al-Nābulī explained that divination was a craft through which practitioners hoped to obtain knowledge that only Allah possessed (and at His discretion shared with His "friends"),<sup>48</sup> therefore committing unbelief (*kufṛ*) and posing a risk to society, as they may have misled people to believe theirs, and not Allah's power. Sorcerers and soothsayers who truly believed, or incited others to believe in the power of their craft, their implements, or the power of created things over godly potency, were accused of adjoining idols to Allah (*shirk*), which was infidelity.<sup>49</sup>

Discussing spiritual healing and exorcism (*al-ruqyā*), al-Nābulī conceded to their permissibility, yet indicated mandatory rules for the practice. Usage of divine names in *dhikrs* represented an important feature of *al-ruqyā* techniques. The *qutḥ* saw the divine names and the *dhikr* as a power dominant over evil.<sup>50</sup> Whatever words were pronounced or written in the course of a ritual needed to be in Arabic language, and fully understandable, as other inscriptions may have been blasphemous or infernal. The mystical potency of the Qur'ān and its *ayāts* were considered ultimate. Scriptural chapters and excerpts were allowed for recitation and use during *ruqyā*, and were generally often involved in the creation of various kinds of, according to beliefs, healing elixirs and charms,

46 Al-Nābulī, "Kashf," 162A–174A, al-Nābulī, *Sharḥ*, 1: 108–132, 199–200.

47 Al-Nābulī, *Sharḥ*, 1: 232, 2: 390.

48 See Akkach, *al-Nabulusi*, 54–59.

49 Al-Nābulī, *Sharḥ*, 2: 389–391; Akkach, *al-Nabulusi*, 86–88.

50 S. Akkach, *Letters of a Sufi Scholar: The Correspondence of 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulī* (1641–1731) (Leiden 2010), 99–104.

along with a wide range of presumably blessed items, such as saintly shrine collectibles and other materials.<sup>51</sup>

Amulets (*tamā'im*) or talismans rested on a thin line between orthodoxy and *shirk*. Unlike, for instance, Ibn Khaldūn, who seemed disdainful towards talismanics,<sup>52</sup> for al-Nābulī the use of charismatic objects<sup>53</sup> was permissible if they were crafted while observing the monotheistic principle, ensuring the flow of *baraka* and not another type of energy. The axial saint encouraged such items to sport Qur'anic chapters or excerpts, perhaps including various Sunni supplications and the *dhikr*. The *quṭb* insisted that the production of *baraka*-endowed objects needed to be fully aligned with the principles of Sunni doctrine, avoiding any potential *shirk*, such as using extra-orthodox, foreign, or possibly pre-Islamic elements.<sup>54</sup>

This categorization of occult operations put forth by al-Nābulī appears to be lacking, raising questions about potentially deliberate omission of various traditional occultist practices. Such omissions may be explained from three different angles. The climate pervaded by booming rigorism, in which al-Nābulī developed his views,<sup>55</sup> may have caused a decrease of general interest in the occult. It certainly created an array of taboos, so the *quṭb*'s classification may have served to build an image of the Sufi saint and *shaykh*, freed of possible problematic notions to remain atop the spiritual hierarchy of the Ottoman religious establishment.<sup>56</sup> Finally, it should be considered that the *Muḥammadan Path* and its commentaries quite likely aimed for a wider audience, comprising various other social milieus in addition to al-Nābulī's peers and numerous popular preachers. The *quṭb* wrote in broad strokes of well-known beliefs in the unseen, offering points from which he thought all Muslims could benefit, while confining extensive details of occult operations to the appropriately trained.

This last argument stems from the axial saint's musings about the legitimacy of pursuing the study of magical arts. Al-Nābulī espoused an older belief among

51 Al-Nābulī, *Sharḥ*, 2: 391–392; I. Mattson, *The Story of the Qur'an: Its History and Place in Muslim Life*, 2nd ed. (Oxford 2013), 163–168; Pantić, *Sufism*, 185–227.

52 Melvin-Koushki, "In Defense of Geomancy," 375–377; Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, 623–631.

53 M. Vedeler, "The Charismatic Power of Objects," in Z. T. Glørstad, E. Siv Kristoffersen et alii (eds), *Charismatic Objects: From Roman Times to the Middle Ages* (Oslo 2018), 9–30.

54 Al-Nābulī, *Sharḥ*, 2: 391–393.

55 Akkach, *Letters*, 1–54.

56 Similar to Ibn Khaldūn, *Shifā'*, 37–121.



theologians, that all forms of knowledge (*‘ilm*) were sacred, and that therefore *‘ilm* of various *sihr* subgroups was not inherently condemnable, as it helped the *learned* understand the distinction between magic and miracle. Emphasizing the superiority of learned over uninformed, the *qutb* insisted that *sihr* studies were beneficial, as long as magical practice was not their goal.<sup>57</sup> Given the character of Ottoman institutions of learning that imperial subjects had available, it is likely that al-Nābulī used this discourse on magic to insinuate that all knowledge of *al-ghayb* should have remained within (like-minded, naturally) ulamaic circles who supported the Sufi *shaykhs* and the imperial saintly network. The *‘ulamā’* of proper *ṣalāḥ* allegedly reaped benefits from this knowledge, acquiring a deeper understanding of the ever-present *mu‘jiza*, while their own saints, under the auspices of Allah and His angels, in widespread belief continued to perform similar wondrous feats (*karāma*) of which many directly related to *‘ālam al-ghayb*.<sup>58</sup> In a “Khaldūnian” fashion, al-Nābulī underlined that purity and faith protected the graceful from all lowly acts—further backing his argument by alluding to the scriptural story of Solomon and the *shayāṭīn* (for while devils disbelieved, Solomon had not, Q2:102).<sup>59</sup> Al-Nābulī used the charisma of his office to justify the occult operations that were considered a part of Sufi thaumaturgical practice, and confine them to the Sufi-*‘ulamā’*, whose power and privilege were casuistically linked to God through belief in the transmission of divine blessings (*baraka*).

A century later Ibn ‘Ābidīn wrote within a ulamaic establishment that successfully resisted the Qāḍizādālī influence. However, echoes of the Qāḍizādālīs and the emerging Wahhābī movement provided ample motivation for further writings. Consulted unto the present day, Ibn ‘Ābidīn’s commentary (*Answer to the Baffled*) on al-Ḥaṣkafī’s (d.1677) comprehensive book of *fiqh*, *The Gorgeous Pearl*, contains occasional instructions about the mystical. Within, saintly wonders drew legitimacy out of careful application of *Ḥādīth* narratives, while certain questions regarding the unseen received proper analysis and legal inter-

57 Al-Nābulī, *Sharḥ*, 2:389. Reminiscent of Ibn Khaldūn’s attitudes, as in Sariyannis, “Ottoman Views of the Supernatural,” 8.

58 Al-Nābulī, *Sharḥ*, 1: 199–200.

59 Al-Nābulī, *al-Fatḥ*, 136–137, and Al-Nābulī, *Sharḥ*, 1: 107–132. See also J.-C. Coulon, “Magie et politique: événements historiques et pensée politique dans le Ṣams al-ma‘ārif attribué à al-Būnī (mort en 622/1225),” *Arabica*, 64/3–4 (2017), 453–462.



pretation.<sup>60</sup> However, Ibn ‘Ābidīn perhaps most eloquently delivered his views on the mystical in a treatise written in posthumous defense of his Naqshbandī master, the widely renowned Khālīd al-Naqshbandī (d.1827). As succession disputes arose within the *ṭarīqa* after al-Naqshbandī succumbed to an epidemic, the late *shaykh* was accused of heresy, sorcery, and infernalism.<sup>61</sup> Entitling his treatise *Unsheathing the Indian Sword*, Ibn ‘Ābidīn opposed puritan thought of the time in a text brimming with anger, arrogance, and sternness, which did not, however, cloud his usual attention to detail and care in approaching Sunnī *fiqh*. Combining his pedigree as a Shāfi‘ī disciple and Ḥanafī authority, Ibn ‘Ābidīn defended his master’s legacy in language laden with mystical symbolism that celebrated the thaumaturgical power of the saints and *shaykhs*. The Damascene judge offered similar views as al-Nābulī, who was frequently quoted in Ibn ‘Ābidīn’s extensive work on *fiqh*. His approach to various occult practices was based on a triad of principles: the mystical force believed to empower the practitioner, the practitioner’s intent, and their social and religious image and standing, thereby classifying these practices along the spectrum between thaumaturgy and sorcery.

Ibn ‘Ābidīn maintained that the continuous flow of divine grace from Allah to His *awliyā’* enabled the manifestation of *karāmāt* on Earth, which were akin in essence to *mu‘jizāt*, yet lacked the same outreach, stability, and the prophetic calling.<sup>62</sup> The Sufi *shaykhs* and saints represented all-seeing sages for whom dealing with *al-ghayb* was a natural privilege. Glimpses into the unseen and hints of future or past events were a classical element of imagined saintly repertoire,<sup>63</sup> yet Ibn ‘Ābidīn insisted that the *awliyā’* knew only what God wished them to know (or wished to announce through His messengers), and that they would not claim to be the ultimate masters of such knowledge, nor that their wisdom is absolute. They simply received what God revealed, as *charismata* to

60 For brief instances, Muḥammad Amīn Ibn ‘Ābidīn, *Radd al-Muḥtār ‘alā al-Durr al-Mukhtār* 14 vols., ed. Muḥammad Bakr Ismā‘īl (Beirut 1994), 2: 114–115, or 9: 111.

61 M. Mundy, “On Reading Two Epistles of Muhammad Amin Ibn ‘Ābidīn of Damascus,” in Y. Aykan and I. Tamdoğan (eds), *Forms and Institutions of Justice: Legal Actions in Ottoman Contexts* (Istanbul 2018), Open Access: [10.4000/books.ifeagd.2316](https://books.ifeagd.2316) (accessed: November 2023); Grehan, *Twilight*, 151.

62 Muḥammad Amīn Ibn ‘Ābidīn, “Sall al-Ḥusām al-Hindī li-Naṣrat Mawlānā Khālīd al-Naqshbandī,” in *Rasā’il* 4 vols. (Damascus 1883–1885), 2: 14–16; Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, 139–165.

63 Akkach, *al-Nabulusi*, 125–126.

His chosen. These minor insights were nowhere near His own knowledge, everlasting and omniscient.<sup>64</sup> Anyone who with certainty claimed awareness of hidden things needed to adhere to the notion that Allah was the sole mediator of the occult. Claims of acquiring revelation independently, or with assistance of the power of natural and celestial objects, without the acknowledgement of God's supremacy, was heinous and despicable. All the while, it was believed that saints and prophets could enter an individual's consciousness to impart messages or insights as determined by God.<sup>65</sup> Notably, al-Nābulī had posited a century earlier that, with divine providence, deceased *shaykhs* could also provide spiritual guidance.<sup>66</sup>

Discussing astrology (*ilm al-nujūm*), Ibn 'Ābidīn acknowledged the potential benefits of this practice. Astronomical calculations were useful, particularly in determining the precise direction of the *qibla*, or the appropriate prayer time. Ibn 'Ābidīn derived two types of astrological practice—arithmetic (*ḥisābī*) and inferential (*istidlālī*). The former he based on precise calculations through which one could identify the positions of celestial objects. The latter aimed at inferring certain phenomena or events from the movements of such bodies. Both were permissible insofar as the practitioners would stick to clear material evidence and understood the importance of the Creator as the supreme being in the universe, who caused celestial movements and everything that followed them. Problems arose when practitioners of astrology sought to transcend the boundaries of rational outcomes, which was a violation of God's will to let certain things remain hidden from human knowledge. Furthermore, as such operations may have inspired both the practitioners and the audience to believe in the independent supernatural powers and direct influence of created objects or human beings over the universe, they bore the risk of *shirk* and heresy.<sup>67</sup>

For Ibn 'Ābidīn, Allah's grace represented the only legitimate force that allowed for occult operations. Beliefs in independent powers of stars, planets, other celestial bodies, or natural elements, led to *shirk*, while attempts to avail of such powers were classified as *sihr*, especially if they were harnessed with malicious intent.<sup>68</sup> The judge treated similarly the attempts at manipulating jinnic

64 Ibn 'Ābidīn, "Sall," 2: 40–42.

65 Ibn 'Ābidīn, "Sall," 2: 38–39.

66 Al-Nābulī, "Kashf," 171B–172A.

67 Ibn 'Ābidīn, "Sall," 2: 42–44.

68 Ibn 'Ābidīn, "Sall," 2: 25–37.

or infernal forces for divination and talismanics.<sup>69</sup> Ibn ‘Ābidīn discarded as impotent the talismans produced with alleged assistance of jinnic powers, or those that invoked properties of celestial objects disregarding of Allah’s supremacy, adding that their effects were due to ordinary causes. Unlike with *karāmāt*, the reasons of magical efficacy may have appeared imperceptible, but did not truly transcend the custom.<sup>70</sup> Yet for Ibn ‘Ābidīn, graceful individuals were—like the Prophet—capable of asserting control over the *jinn* without committing any harm, which was permissible as a part of their wondrous repertoire. They did not claim independent power but were considered servants of divine will. Unsurprisingly, Ibn ‘Ābidīn too added Solomon’s example to legitimize such implications.<sup>71</sup>

Ibn ‘Ābidīn concluded his discussion on *al-ghayb* indicating *who* could possibly access the occult. Any individual putting forward a claim to unseen knowledge needed to be properly evaluated. Any notion of cooperation with the *jinn* or belief in independent supernatural power of created things immediately annulled the veracity of their claims and implied heresy. However, if the claimant was “of good faith (*min ahl al-diyāna*), virtue (*al-ṣalāḥ*), and uprightness (*al-istiḳāma*), then that was their wonder (*karāma*), since they did naught but inform upon true inspiration (*ṣādiq al-ilhām*).”<sup>72</sup> The *ṣalāḥ-baraka* link informed the legitimacy of the Sufi-ulamaic and saintly praeternatural faculties. That the Damascene judge directly referred to this professional establishment, to which he himself belonged, is reflected by the author’s immediate turn to warning against denying saintly powers and denouncing the authority of the Sufi-‘*ulamā*’, the people of learning and gnosis (*ahl al-‘ilm wa al-‘irfān*).<sup>73</sup>

As with al-Nābulsi’s *Explanation*, Ibn ‘Ābidīn’s *Indian Sword* quite likely aimed at a wider audience, and provided insufficient detail about the exact procedures of thaumaturgical and occult operations. Similar to the Damascene *quṭb*, Ibn ‘Ābidīn may have preferred to leave technical matters to the confines of the lodges. To examine which particular practices kept the Sufis busy behind closed doors, one must turn to a different type of written material.

69 Ibn ‘Ābidīn, “Sall,” 2: 28–29.

70 Ibn ‘Ābidīn, “Sall,” 2: 36.

71 Ibn ‘Ābidīn, “Sall,” 2: 34–35.

72 Ibn ‘Ābidīn, “Sall,” 2: 44. Also see Akkach, *al-Nabulsi*.

73 Ibn ‘Ābidīn, “Sall,” 2: 45–47.

### III. Behind Closed Doors: The Occult within and beyond the Lodge

For centuries, the Ottoman realm witnessed the emergence of tomes of occult knowledge and practice, offering instructions into various thaumaturgical methods and “strange” rituals. At first glance, most such volumes seem to hold no comprehensive topical arrangement. They sometimes begin without the usual *basmala*, written by groups of anonymous authors in various imperial languages (such as Ottoman Turkish and Arabic), and cover a wide range of prophylactic, apotropaic, divinatory, and many other practices. Within, readers can find precise wordings for *du‘a*-type invocations aimed at a multitude of goals, from general wellness, to highly specific queries, such as romance, wealth, acquisition of otherwise inaccessible strategic information, protection from evil, diseases, and odious human beings, or conjuration of mysterious *khuddām* that fulfilled wishes and imparted hidden knowledge. Usually labeled by cataloguers generically as “Collection” (*majmū‘*),<sup>74</sup> such grimoires suggest proper times and detailed conditions in which invocations needed to be completed. They contain ample detail about the alleged powers of the Arabic alphabet, potent divine names and the thaumaturgical potential of Qur’ānic chapters, methods for creating talismans for a variety of purposes, descriptions of occult forces, such as the *jinn* and *shayāṭīn*, geomantic tables, magic squares, various diagrams for seals and rings, instructions for exorcisms and healing, and lists of mystical powers of the zodiac and astrological operations. Combining occasional excerpts from older grimoires, with certain thaumaturgical procedures attributed to legendary names such as al-Bunī, Abū Ḥanīfa, al-Ghazālī, and others, many such tomes were produced and copied in the Middle East during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some of the procedures detailed in these pages remained in use centuries after they have been written down,<sup>75</sup> and some can still be found today.<sup>76</sup>

These tomes were far from unusual across the Ottoman realm during early

74 For instance, see “Majmū‘ min Kull Fann,” MS Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Glaser 100, Berlin, or “Majmū‘,” MS Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Hs. Or. 14283, Berlin. Further see Pantić, *Sufism*, 185–227.

75 Compare Glaser 100, 147A, with E. W. Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians, Written in Egypt*, 2 vols. (London 1836), 1:351.

76 Compare Hs. Or. 14283, 16B, with [www.youtube.com/watch?v=3U-0crlL9EA&t=67s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3U-0crlL9EA&t=67s) (Last Accessed: Nov 6th 2023).

modernity.<sup>77</sup> Their pages echo ulamaic emphasis that strict adherence to *sharīʿa* and *tawḥīd* were fundamental for any thaumaturgical endeavor. Contents of such grimoires extensively glorify God and warn that the Creator represents the cause and catalyst for all procedures within, which is frequently reflected in the wording or diagrams pertinent to various listed rituals. These compendiums should be approached as training manuals, which were most likely intended for internal use among disciples in the Sufi lodges—the level of detail sketched out by such manuals indicates that intended readers were required to possess an advanced stage of thaumaturgical training, after more divine names had been revealed and complex *dhikr* recitations became a matter of course. Deeply involved with Sufism, scholars like al-Nābulṣī and Ibn ʿĀbidīn must have been aware of the existence of this material, while their own works thus indicated ulamaic strategies of knowledge control within the exclusive circles of the Sufi-*ulamāʾ*.

An old theological argument dictated that deliberate intent distinguished magic from wonder, as the saints in theory served only as vessels for Allah's will.<sup>78</sup> These tomes further demonstrate that ulamaic rhetoric served mostly as a representational strategy, as thaumaturgical practice naturally involved practitioners' intent at all times. It usually did not bode well for free-lancers, however. In Egypt, Syria, and Palestine (even until the twentieth century), alleged magicians were incarcerated under accusations of black magic,<sup>79</sup> geomancers without proper pedigree were beaten and banished,<sup>80</sup> vigilantes made judges conduct official investigations of enchantresses' abodes,<sup>81</sup> while sorcerers attracted unwanted attention through daemonology, or entrancing women over long dis-

77 A. Buturović, "The Melting Occult Pot in Ottoman Bosnia: Between Theory and Practice," *Acaʿib: Occasional Papers on the Ottoman Perceptions of the Supernatural*, 3 (2022), 113–124. Further see Chih, *Sufism*, 52, or G. Burak, "Prayers, Commentaries, and the Edification of the Ottoman Suppliant," in T. Krstić and D. Terzioğlu (eds), *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450–c. 1750* (Leiden 2020), 232–252.

78 See, for instance, M. Asatrian, "Ibn Khaldūn on Magic and the Occult," *Iran & the Caucasus*, 7–1/2 (2003), 73–123; Ibn ʿĀbidīn, "Sall," 2: 1–47.

79 Lane, *Egyptians*, 1:345–346.

80 Mikhāʾil Burayk al-Dimashqī, *Tārīkh al-Shām* 1720–1782, ed. Quṣṭantīn al-Bāshā al-Mukhalliṣī (Harissa 1930), 14.

81 Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Budayr, "Ḥawādiṭh Dimashq al-Shām al-Yawmīyya min Sanat 1154 ilā Sanat 1176," MS Chester Beatty Library Ar 3551/2, Dublin, 36B; Grehan, *Twilight*, 152.

tances.<sup>82</sup> Occasional primary evidence testifies to the heavy popularity of various occult practices among the ordinary people, and it is likely that the 'ulamā' could not control every trader of charismatic goods, especially in the countryside.<sup>83</sup> However, the conservative religious establishment of the Ottoman Empire remained steadfast in their claims to monopoly. They wrote in defense of their saints' wonders, ensuring the beliefs in continuous effluence of *baraka* past the *al-salaf* age. The 'ulamā' presented themselves as bearers of prophetic legacy,<sup>84</sup> passing down grace to the rest of the ordinary people. Such tendencies are visible even up to the very late phase of Ottoman rule. Simultaneously a member of approximately half a dozen Sufi orders,<sup>85</sup> the Ottoman judge Yūsuf al-Nabhānī (1849–1932) left a dictionary of saintly wonders to break down the very same theological arguments used by Ibn 'Ābidīn and al-Nābulī (the latter quoted by al-Nabhānī), and defend the beliefs in an enchanted ulamaic office against detractors.<sup>86</sup> Such narratives, however, could not hope for much success in a climate increasingly pervaded by the Muslim reformist thought of the modern period.<sup>87</sup>

#### IV. Conclusion

Juxtaposing early modern ulamaic apologetics to Sufi grimoires and primary material that testifies to popular religious practices reveals that the Ottoman religious authorities' distancing from various occult sciences was more a representational strategy than an actual state of affairs. Faced with stern opposition

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82 Burayk, *Tārīkh*, 22; Lane, *Account*, 1:345–346; S. H. Stephan, "Lunacy in Palestine Folklore," *The Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, 5 (1925), 1–16 at 6, n.3.

83 Grehan, *Twilight*, 141–163.

84 A. Al-Azmeh, "God's Caravan," in M. Boroujerdi (ed.), *Mirror for the Muslim Prince: Islam and the Theory of Statecraft* (New York 2013), 326–400; Akkach, *Letters*, 114–122.

85 See A. Ghazal, "Sufism, *Ijtihād* and Modernity: Yūsuf al-Nabhānī in the Age of 'Abd al-Ḥamid II," *ArchOtt*, 19 (2001), 239–272; B. Abu-Manneh, "Sultan Abdulhamid II and Shaikh Abulhuda Al-Sayyadi," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 15/2 (1979), 131–153.

86 Yūsuf Ismā'īl al-Nabhānī, *Jāmi' Karāmāt al-Awliyā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Wārith Muḥammad 'Alī, 2 vols. (Beirut 2009), 1: 9–58.

87 Commins, *Islamic Reform*, 45–46, 116–118; A. Al-Azmeh, "The Discourse of Cultural Authenticity: Islamist Revivalism and Enlightenment Universalism," in *Islams and Modernities* (London 1993), 39–59.

of various rigorist, and later, reformist groups of theologians, the Ottoman conservative religious establishment strove to confine further the details of occult ritual to the privacy of Sufi lodges, busying with establishing proper credentials for licensed practitioners of occult arts. While early modern apologetic theology may have inspired historians of the previous decades to perceive the official ‘*ulamā*’ as aloof from various Sufi and occult practices, closer research reveals that it was not so. Despite the emergence of more puritan attitudes,<sup>88</sup> even with certain Sufi practitioners, ‘*ulamā*’ in-office seemed mainly focused on rhetorical, and very subtle changes, relying on old theological arguments emerging as early as proto-Sufi works. At the same time, traditions of contending with *al-ghayb* featured among the collective representations<sup>89</sup> of Sunni Muslims long after the proliferation of reformism in the modern period, comprising in part the cultural influence to which the ‘*ulamā*’ themselves were exposed for centuries.<sup>90</sup> Aside from apologetics addressed to wider audiences and opponents, Sufi lodges quite likely continued to bustle with various occult arts, controlled by vows of silence and strict management of knowledge circulation through initiatory chains and allegedly charismatic *silsilas*. Preserving the enchanted character of their office well into modernity, the Sufi-‘*ulamā*’ handled criticism and free-lance incursions into their practice by issuing accusations of magic and infernalism, striving to maintain the disenchantment of the uninitiated and perpetuate their own claim to *al-ghayb*.

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88 Chih, *Sufism*, 77–109, 146–147.

89 E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. J. W. Swain (New York 2008), 1–22.

90 See T. Canaan, *Mohammadan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine* (London 1927), for an ethnographical research into customs of the ordinary people and Sufis in Palestine of the early twentieth century.



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## C. Research reports

### Knowing and controlling nature in Ottoman culture

In December 2019, the inaugural conference organized by the GHOST project attempted to grapple with the Ottoman concepts of nature and the supernatural. With a team of scholars assembled following an open call for contributions, the conference sought to map an emerging field in Ottoman studies, one that seeks to trace the varying conceptions and techniques pertaining to the hidden world in an early modern Islamicate empire, following the recent surge of such studies concerning late medieval Middle Eastern cultures. The second conference, held in January 2022 in the framework of Halcyon Days in Crete, expanded its lens to encompass visions of the world and of nature in the Ottoman Empire (including non-Muslim populations), with an emphasis on the well-established debates on the Enlightenment(s), the Weberian disenchantment (and/or re-enchantment) of the world, and the way these notions may be applied in non-European environments. The third and final conference, on “Knowing and controlling nature in Ottoman culture: scientific and occultist approaches in a global perspective”, was held in November 2023. The

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Pantić, Nikola. 2023-2024. “Probing Hidden Knowledge through Divine Inspiration: Charismatic Authority and Occult Sciences in 17th- and 18th-century Ottoman Conservative Theology”. *Aca'ib: Occasional papers on the Ottoman perceptions of the supernatural* 4.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26225/vk48-sz31>

twenty-three papers presented sought to explore the intermingling of occult and scientific approaches (as described by Brian Vickers) and the various paths toward knowledge and action followed simultaneously or not by Ottoman scholars and commoners. Participants shed light on the peculiar characteristics of Ottoman science, and the extent to which vernacular “science of the market” interacted with scholarly traditional or intercultural scientific training and activity. The conference proceedings also explored the degree to which Ottoman occultism built upon previous traditions, whether it developed its own techniques, and interacted with other occult traditions, within or outside of the empire. Overall, the proceedings created the space for the examination of whether it is meaningful to situate Ottoman scientific activity (including occult sciences) in a global context, and how best to proceed accordingly.

Here we present a selection of seven short papers from among those delivered in the workshop. Two of the contributors, W. Sasson Chahanovich and Nikola Pantić, sent extended versions of their papers, which are published in the Papers section of this issue.<sup>1</sup>

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- 1 In addition, the following papers were also delivered in the workshop: **Hasan Umut**, “Astrology in Aydın Sayılı’s scholarship: some remarks on the historiography of science in modern Turkey”; **Işık Demirakın**, “Between supernatural and natural in the late eighteenth—early nineteenth century Ottoman Empire”; **Aslı Niyazioğlu**, “How to make starlings bring tons of olive to Istanbul? Late fifteenth-century historians and a lettrist talisman”; **Feray Coşkun**, “Control of nature in Ottoman Ajaib al-makhlūqāt”; **Amila Buturović**, “The occult pharmacopeia of Ottoman Bosnia: plants and herbs in love spells”; **Zeynep Aydoğan**, “Forging paths of continuity: “borderline” miracles in the early menākibnâme literature”; **Rao Mohsin Ali Noor**, “Martial apparitions: corporeality, cosmology, and crisis on the Ottoman-Habsburg borderlands (c.1593–1606)”; **Ahmet Tunç Şen**, “The Role of Experience in Astrology and an 18th-Century Ottoman Court Astrologer’s Take on Experiential Knowledge”; **Yasemin Akçagüner**, “Crises and critical days: medical astrology in the work of Şanizade Atıullah Efendi (d.1826)”; **Sara Nur Yıldız**, “A felicitous translation: Meḥmed es-Su’ūdī’s Meṭālī’u’l-sa’adet (composed ca. 1582) and its Jalayirid model of prognostic astrology and related practices”; **Kostas Sarris**, “A playful and drinking Greek-Orthodox natural magic: the ‘marvelous things’ of Kaisarios Dapontes”; **Ethan Menchinger**, “Interpreting the dreamscapes of early Ottoman chronicles”.

# Stars, Djinns, and the Air: Reconciling Natural and Supernatural in Explaining Diseases in the Ottoman Healing Domain in the 1660s

TUNAHAN DURMAZ

This paper delves into the relationship between the natural and supernatural realms in the understandings of disease and sickness in the late seventeenth century, particularly in the 1660s. Its main objective is to explore both the boundaries and the points of reconciliation between the natural and supernatural realms as they relate to disease and sickness during this period. The historiography of early modern Ottoman medicine has placed emphasis on categorical distinctions between various medical sectors such as learned medicine, folk medicine, and prophetic medicine.<sup>1</sup> Seeking to underscore intersecting epistemologies

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- 1 Remaining the most comprehensive historical analysis of Ottoman medicine in English to this day, M. Shefer-Mossensohn's seminal work *Ottoman Medicine: Healing and Medical Institutions* elaborates on three "building blocks" of Ottoman medicine (i.e., folk medicine, mechanistic learned medicine, and prophetic medicine). M. Shefer-Mossensohn, *Ottoman Medicine: Healing and Medical Institutions, 1500–1700* (Albany 2009), 22–29. Even

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instead, the study argues that such reconciliation of natural and supernatural phenomena in contemporary etiologies fosters a more comprehensive understanding of healing practices in the Ottoman world. To that end, what follows is an examination of a case study on Ibn Sellum's medical manual *Gâyetü'l-Beyân fî Tedbir-i Bedenü'l-İnsan* (The Utmost Explanations on the Protection of the Human Body), compiled in the early 1660s.

## Pursuing intersecting epistemologies of disease

The prevailing medical system in the pre-bacteriological era was humoralism, which regarded bodily health as existing in the balance between the four humors: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile.<sup>2</sup> Scholarship has considered humoral theory a framework of learned medicine. Nevertheless, this ancient epistemology of health and sickness permeated the collective mindset across societal layers for centuries, with transcendent influence over the realm of learned medicine. First, humors were employed by non-medical intellectuals as a means of analogy and allegory in the Ottoman world. For instance, Katip Çelebi (d. 1657) was so familiar with the four humors that he compared the four social classes (i.e., scholars, soldiers, traders, and the commoners) to the four humors of the body.<sup>3</sup> This practice was also common in poetry. Poets like Fuzûlî (d. 1556), who had formal medical training, often made extensive references to humoral pathology in their work.<sup>4</sup> However, the use of humors as metaphors extended well beyond the realm of medically trained poets. One

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though Shefer-Mossensohn acknowledges the possible overlaps between these categories, the distinctions still prevail in the narrative of Ottoman healing practices (ibid., 25–26).

- 2 For a comprehensive analysis of humoral theory see, R.J. Hankinson, "Humours and Humoral Theory," in M. Jackson (ed.), *The Routledge History of Disease* (London 2017), 21–38.
- 3 K. Sözen, "Katip Çelebi'nin Devlet Görüşü ve Osmanlı Türk Düşüncesindeki Etkileri," *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 22 (2009), 93–105. For a transcription of the particular section in Katip Çelebi's *Düştürü'l-Amel li İslâhi'l-Halel* ("The Ways to Follow in Reforming the Defects"), see O. Ş. Gökyay, *Katip Çelebi'den seçmeler* (İstanbul 1968), 154–161.
- 4 M. Eliaçık, "Fuzûlî'nin Sıhhat u Maraz'ında Ahlât Erbaanın İşlenişi ve Bir Tıp Eseri Terceme-i Hulâsa-i Tıb İle Mukayesesi," *Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 27 (2010), 131–147. Z. Koyuncu, "Ahlât-i Erbaa/Humoral Patoloji Teorisi ve Divan Şiirinde Hakkânî Örneğinde İşlenişi," *Hikmet – Akademik Edebiyat Dergisi*, 10 (2019), 75–97, <https://doi.org/10.28981/hikmet.512320>.

such instance is evidenced in the poetry of Hakkânî, a sufi poet from the 15th or 16th centuries, whose poetry drew upon the humors.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, humoralism formed the basis of healing practices applied by ordinary people. The extent to which they engaged with the theoretical framework of humoralism held little pertinence in their practices. In this context, certain contemporary sources provide direct evidence, with the most notable being Evliya Çelebi's (d. 1683/4) *Seyahatnâme* (The Book of Travels).<sup>6</sup> In his work, Evliya Çelebi documents an intriguing account of a healing spring in Darica, renowned for its therapeutic properties against various diseases. This spring attracted thousands of people from Istanbul and beyond during the cherry season in July, which evolved into an elaborate annual festival. Those suffering from ailments would consume the healing water for three days. The accounts of Evliya provide examples of individuals who, through divine intervention, underwent significant purging, expelling excessive quantities of yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm ("*sarı sarı yeşil yeşil safra ve sevda ve balgam*").<sup>7</sup>

Such examples from Evliya Çelebi's accounts illustrate the existence of humoralism within widespread healing practices, indicating that the humoral theory was not exclusively a learned medical framework. Similarly, it is also possible that certain phenomena—labeled as 'folk beliefs'—were considered by medical experts and authors. In order to highlight complexities of Ottoman medical epistemologies, and to reconsider terms such as learned medicine, or popular/folk medicine, I present a case study on the renowned medical manuscript *Gâyetü'l-Beyân fî Tedbir-i Bedenü'l-İnsan* (The Utmost Explanations on the Protection of the Human Body), compiled in the early 1660s by Salih bin Nasrullah, also known as Ibn Sellum. Ibn Sellum served as the court physician of Mehmed IV (r. 1648–1687) from 1656.<sup>8</sup> He became a familiar figure for the

5 Z. Koyuncu, "Ahlât-i Erbaa/Humoral Patoloji Teorisi ve Divan Şiirinde Hakkânî Örneğinde İşleniş," *Hikmet – Akademik Edebiyat Dergisi*, 10 (2019), 75–97, <https://doi.org/10.28981/hikmet.512320>.

6 For an extensive biography of Evliya Çelebi see R. Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality: The World of Evliya Çelebi*, Rev. 2nd ed, Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage, v. 31 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2006), 1–214.

7 Evliya Çelebi b. Derviş Muhammad Zillî, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi, II. Kitap: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Bağdat 304 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu – Dizini*, eds Z. Kurşun, S.A. Kahraman and R. Dankoff (Istanbul 1998), 38.

8 For more information on the life of Ibn Sellum, see Şeyhî Mehmed Efendi, *Vekayii'l-Fuzela Şeyhî'nin Şakâ'ik Zeyli II*, ed. D. Örs, trans. R. Ekinci (Istanbul 2018), 976; A. Demirhan

subsequent generation of physicians, due primarily to his interest and initiatives in iatrochemistry (i.e., medical chemistry).<sup>9</sup>

The rationale behind my focus on his *Gâyetü'l-Beyân* lies in its distinct characteristics, particularly its open integration of supernatural elements in its explanations. This sets it apart from previous medical works, where such phenomena were either omitted or explicitly rejected. The subsequent sections of the paper examine a case study in two parts: The *Gâyet* and the concepts of transformation in Ottoman medicine during the late seventeenth century (i), and the harmonization of natural and supernatural elements in Ibn Sellum's etiology (ii).

### ***Gâyet* and the ideas of transformation in medical knowledge**

The *Gâyet* is a manual on bodily health intended for both medical and non-medical readership.<sup>10</sup> Its textual structure is akin to that of any contemporary treatise on the same topic. The tome continues a tradition followed by some pre-

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Erdemir, "Hekimbaşı Salih Bin Nasrullah (?-1669)," *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları*, 100 (1996), 195-202; M. Shefer-Mossensohn, "An Ottoman Physician and His Social and Intellectual Milieu: The Case of Salih Bin Nasrallah Ibn Sallum," *Studia Islamica*, 106/1 (2011), 102-23, <https://doi.org/10.1163/19585705-12341254>; TDVİA, s.v. "Salih b. Nasrullah" (K. Kırbıyık) <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/salih-b-nasrullah>; S. Ayduz, "Ottoman Chief Physician Sâlih Naşrallah b. Sallûm al-Ḥalabî," *Dört Öge*, 9 (2016), 131-138.

- 9 For Ibn Sellum's medical career and interests, see A. Adivar, *Osmanlı Türklerinde İlim*, 4. Baskı (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1982), 130-32; N. Bachour, *Oswaldus Crollius und Daniel Sennert im frühneuzeitlichen Istanbul Studien zur Rezeption des Paracelsismus im Werk des osmanischen Arztes Şâlih b. Naşrullâh Ibn Sallûm al-Ḥalabî*, 2012, 35-139, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-86226-965-5>; N. Bachour, "Iatrochemistry and Paracelsism in the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 6, no. 1-2 (2018): 102-10, <https://doi.org/10.1163/2212943X-00601008>. H. Küçük, *Science without Leisure: Practical Naturalism in Istanbul, 1660-1732* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019), 144-49.
- 10 Using author's copy, Zekiye Gül Elbir transcribed *Gâyet* to modern Turkish alphabet in form of a doctoral dissertation in 2000: Z. G. Elbir, "Salih Bin Nasrullah (Ibn Sellum El-Halebi) Gayetü'l-Beyan Fi Tedbiri Bedeni'l-İnsan (Giriş-İnceleme-Metin-Dizin)", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Fırat Üniversitesi, 2000. The available facsimile of Elbir's dissertation does not include page numbers. Therefore, I directly cite folios provided within the text.



vious medical writers such as Emir Çelebi<sup>11</sup> (d. 1638) and Sakızlı İsa Efendi<sup>12</sup> (d. 1649). The work focuses on two aspects of healing: preventive measures (*hıfz-ı sıhhât*) and eradicating disease from the body (*izâle-i maraz*). It consists of three sections: The first section is comprised of discourse on the importance of medicine and lists certain factors that may affect bodily health. The second section is a pharmacopoeia (*edvîyye* or *müfredât*) that lists plants and drug recipes. This part particularly reflects the author's interest in chemical medicine (*tıbb-ı kimyevî*) and active substances. The majority of the plant names appear in Arabic. The last part of the work is a nosology, namely a categorical listing of all the diseases with respective entries on causes, diagnosis, and remedies.

In the introductory section, Ibn Sellum's rationale for composing the book (*sebeb-i telîf*) is preceded by discussion on the need for "updating" the existing knowledge. It is noteworthy that he emphasized the necessity to elucidate the proliferation of diverse and "marvelous" medical practices (*mücerrebât-ı acîbe*) and "strange" methods of treatment (*mualecât-ı gâribe*). Furthermore, he underscored the emergence of diseases that were previously unknown to medical scholars (*ulemâ-ı etibbâ*) and therefore not documented.<sup>13</sup> The author highlights the prominence of certain diseases, such as syphilis (*efrencî*) and epilepsy

11 Emir Çelebi (d. 1638) served as the head physician at the court of Murad IV. He is particularly known for his work titled *Enmûzecü't-tıb* (*The Specimens of Medicine*). Emir Çelebi's work not only focuses on the air, soil, and climate as the main factors affecting human health but also explains certain types of diseases and their possible remedies including the medicinal ones. For more on Emir Çelebi, see *TDVİA* s.v. "Emîr Çelebi" (A. Demirhan Erdemir) <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/emir-celebi>.

12 Sakızlı İsa Efendi (d. 1649) intermittently served as the head physician at the court of İbrahim IV, having been deposed and appointed four times in this position. When Mehmed IV assumed the throne in 1648, İsa Efendi got indefinitely removed from the position by the sultan. He died a year after in 1649. He is known for his *Nizâmü'l-Edviye* (*The Order of Remedies*) and *Devâ'ü-Emrâz* (*The Cure for Diseases*). The first one is a lexicon of medicinal substances and plants. The second one is an attempt to sort and discuss certain diseases. It is a rare book in the sense that it is one of the few texts that was solely devoted to nosology at the time. Even though it is outside the periodical focus of this study, İsa Efendi and his *Devâ'ü-Emrâz* is a significant point of reference for envisioning the intellectual background of Ibn Sellum. For more on İsa Efendi see A. Akdağ, "Sakızlı İsa Efendi'nin Deva-i Emraz İsimli Eseri," in S. Murad and M. Kaçar (eds), *Sakızlı İsa Efendi ve Nizamül Edviye'si Üzerine İncelemeler* (Istanbul 2021); Sakızlı İsa Efendi, *Nizamül Edviye*, ed. S. Murad and M. Bedizel Aydın (Istanbul 2019).

13 Elbir, "Salih Bin Nasrullah (Ibn Sellum El-Halebi) Gayetü'l-Beyan", 5a.

(*sar'*), which had attained 'particular infamy' (*rütbe-i şöret*),<sup>14</sup> warranting specific mention. This is of enormous significance in the sense that the author here reflects on a notable shift that captured his attention. According to his analysis, this shift warranted intervention, prompting him to leverage his expertise. His specific focus on syphilis and epilepsy also merits detailed examination. It could be that these two diseases mattered more than the others. It could perhaps have been a response to a rising number of cases in these two instances. These diseases may somehow have caused considerably more concern. Attempting to address these conundrums requires complementary empirical evidence. At this juncture, court records (*kadı sicilleri*) can be utilized as significant sources of circumstantial evidence. Examination of cases recorded at Istanbul courts during this period, reveals a considerable number of instances involving syphilis. Many of these records document cases in which the selling of a slave was revoked because it was later revealed that the latter was infected with syphilis.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, cases involving epilepsy (*sar'*) were also considered a reason for the nullification of contracts of sale.<sup>16</sup>

Ibn Sellum's reliance on unconventional sources in addressing such matters has drawn scholarly attention. Notably, Nathalia Bachour's seminal monograph examines the relevance of Ibn Sellum within the question of Paracelsianism, while also addressing the authorship and legitimacy of works attributed to Ibn Sellum.<sup>17</sup> The author's reliance on a combination of traditional sources, specif-

14 Elbir, *ibid.*, 5b.

15 For example, a certain Selim beşe returned a female slave because it turned out that she was afflicted with syphilis. See *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Transkripsiyon Projesi*, İstanbul Mahkemesi Kayıtları (1072–73/1661–1663), Defter no. 10, folio 5a–5. Accessed on <http://www.kadisicilleri.org/goster.php?blm=ist010&bsm=ist010b130>

16 A case from the Istanbul Court (*İstanbul Mahkemesi*) in the year 1072/1661 draws particular attention in this context: A certain el-Hac Mustafa b. Hüseyin comes to the court to renunciate the contract of sale of a slave by the name of Marya, whom he bought from a certain Hüseyin Beşe. El-Hac Mustafa said that Marya had exhibited certain impairments such as afflicted eyes and was reportedly suffering from scabies at the time of sale. Yet, it was revealed subsequently that she also had epilepsy as she experienced a severe seizure, characterized by convulsions and foaming at the mouth. The court found el-Hac Mustafa's demand proper and approved the renunciation of the contract. *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri* (İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi), İstanbul Mahkemesi Kayıtları (Hicri 1072) Defter no. 9, folio 7b.

17 N. Bachour, *Oswaldus Crollius und Daniel Sennert im frühneuzeitlichen Istanbul Studien zur Rezeption des Paracelsismus im Werk des osmanischen Arztes Şâliḥ b. Naşrullāh Ibn*

ically from the sources of Islamic medicine, and contemporary Latin/European medicine such as the works of Daniel Sennert and Oswald Crollius, holds scholarly importance. Yet, Ibn Sellum's eclectic and reconciliatory tendencies went beyond his interest in European medicine. His etiological treatments in *Gâyetü'l-beyân* also exhibits a notably reconciliatory character, as he successfully combines observation with belief, nature with the supernatural, and the environment with the body. Environmental conditions and natural phenomena play a visibly crucial role in the author's grasp of bodily health and diseases. Intriguingly, this is accompanied by a widespread recognition of the supernatural, or as they refer to it, *avamin inancı*, in relation to illness and maladies.

### Nature and supernatural: Ibn Sellum's etiological comments

Ibn Sellum, like his predecessors, sought to understand the factors contributing to a healthy lifestyle and the causes of diseases. He identified six essential codes (*esbâb-ı sitte-i zarûriye*) consisting of: (a) air, (b) eating and drinking, (c) bodily movement and rest, (d) emotional and mental movement and rest, (e) sleeping and wakefulness, (f) evacuation and constipation.<sup>18</sup> These six conditions were designed to govern the interaction between the human body and its natural environment. According to Ibn Sellum's theory, any deviation from these conditions would result in an imbalance of bodily humors, consequently leading to the onset of illness. This emphasis on the organic relationship between the body and its natural surrounding does not undermine the role of the supernatural. Instead, the author delicately positions his stance where observable phenomena embrace the imperceivable. Ibn Sellum's evident attention to common beliefs of people emerges as the primary means in this self-positioning between natural and supernatural.

In my opinion, two instances from *Gâyet* present the most striking examples in support of this assertion:

(1) As in any pre-bacteriological medical domain, the quality of air (*hava*) in

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*Sallûm al-Ḥalabî* (Freiburg 2012) <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-86226-965-5>. For her publication in English on the subject, see Bachour, "Iatrochemistry and Paracelsism in the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries."

18 (a) *ebdanımızı muhit olan hava*, (b) *yemek ve içmek* (c) *hareket ve sükun-ı bedeniyye* (d) *hareket ve sükun-ı nefsanîyye* (e) *uyumak ve uyanıklık* (f) *istifrag ve ihtibas*. Elbir, "Salih Bin Nasrullah (Ibn Sellum El-Halebi) Gayetü'l-Beyan Fi Tedbiri Bedenî'l-İnsan (Giriş-İnceleme-Metin-Dizin)," 7b-26b.

contemporary Ottoman medical thought was considered the most significant aspect of matters of health and disease.<sup>19</sup> *Gâyet*, as a medical text, provides an excellent example of this idea as Ibn Sellum discusses various reasons why air becomes contaminated. The quality of air is important due to its association with disease, as per the miasmatic theory.<sup>20</sup> “A human being is not capable of holding their breath for an hour because the soul of the heart (*ruh-ı hayvanî*) lives by constant breathing.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, if vapors, smoke, and rotten smells infiltrate the air, the human body begins to experience a variety of pains, nose-bleeding, and fever. Furthermore, corrupted air (*fesadlı hava*) harms the animals and plants; and gives rise to feverish diseases (*humma-ı vebaiyye*), smallpox (*çiçek*), measles (*kızamuk*), and bubonic plague (*ta'un*). [And] this especially scourges the one with a sanguine characteristic (*demeviyyü'l mizâc*).<sup>22</sup>

Ibn Sellum believed that the quality of air could become corrupted for two principal reasons. One reason is related to the earth (*arz cihetiyle*). When animals die and their corpses are not buried, the smell they emit pollutes the air. Likewise, if the bodies of fallen soldiers on a battleground are not buried, their smells foul the air. Similarly, stagnant water bodies also tend to emanate unpleasant smells, corrupting the surrounding air. The second reason pertains to the skies (*semâ cihetiyle*) mainly to the astral events that play a significant role in the atmosphere's corruption. According to Ibn Sellum, the assembly of stars causes the contamination of the air, which is because of people's major sins and evil-doings (*ma'âsi ve irtikab-ı kebâ'ir*). In such cases, an outbreak of plague was considered unavoidable. Similarly, meteors were thought to cause plague epi-

19 For an overview of air in Ottoman medical texts, see M. Bedizel Aydın, “Osmanlı Tıp Metinlerinde (15–17. Yüzyıl) Hava – Sağlık İlişkisi,” *Sosyal ve Kültürel Araştırmalar Dergisi* 4, no. 7 (2018).

20 According to miasmatic theory or miasmatism, some epidemic diseases were caused by foul air. M. Worboys, “Contagion,” in *The Routledge History of Disease*, ed. Mark Jackson, The Routledge Histories (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 72. For a general assesment of miasmatism, also see R. Porter, ed., “What Is Disease?,” in *The Cambridge History of Medicine* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 88.

21 “İnsan bir saat nefisini tutmaya muktedir değildir. Zira ruh-ı hayvaninin hayatı ve itidali taze havayla tenefüs etmekle olur.” Elbir, “Salih Bin Nasrullah (Ibn Sellum El-Halebi) Gayetü'l-Beyan Fi Tedbiri Bedeni'l-İnsan (Giriş-İnceleme-Metin-Dizin),” 9a.

22 Elbir, 9b.

demics towards the end of summer.<sup>23</sup> Ibn Sellum provides rare insight into the prevailing perceptions of the common people of the era, explaining how such events are referred to as shooting-stars (*yıldız düşmesi*), reflecting an etiology of plague combining natural and supernatural explanations.

It is possible to draw connections between the medical field and public perceptions by examining the term “shooting stars” (*yıldız düşüklüğü*). For instance, in 1661, three years before the completion of *Gâyet*, Seyyid Hasan Nûrî Efendi (d. 1688) detailed in his daily notes an outbreak of plague in the neighborhoods of Istanbul that occurred in the late summer of that year.<sup>24</sup> The author narrated the devastating process of the epidemic and how several of his families succumbed to it. While recounting the affliction of his son, Mustafa with the plague, he noted that prior to becoming infected he was suffering from a condition known as “shooting star” (*yıldız düşüklüğü*).<sup>25</sup> Subsequently, Mustafa became afflicted with the plague, eventually dying within the span of a few days. It is believed that a certain Cinci Ahmed Hoca, a spiritual healer, had diagnosed this effect of shooting stars on Mustafa and provided a *nüsha-i şerîfe* (*sacred copy*).<sup>26</sup>

(2) Ibn Sellum’s study of epilepsy (*sarî*) demonstrates a similar kind of eti-

23 Nühket Varlık demonstrated the emergence of specific “causal explanations” for the plague during the sixteenth century, a significant change that eventually enabled authors to draw from diverse etiologies. N. Varlık, *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World: The Ottoman Experience, 1347–1600* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 231. It appears that Ibn Sellum’s classification of plague causes continues a similar trend in the late seventeenth century.

24 For Hasan Efendi’s narratives of the 1661 plague epidemic, see T. Durmaz, “Family, Companions, and Death: Seyyid Hasan Nûrî Efendi’s Microcosm” (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Istanbul, Sabanci University, 2019), 83–90; G. Yakar, “Individual and Community, Public and Private: The Case of 17th Century Istanbulite Dervish and His Diary” (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Ankara, Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, 2019), 86–94; I. Hathaway, “Experiencing Epidemics,” Ottoman Experiences of Epidemics, n.d., <https://experiencing-epidemics.org/ep-7-ottoman-experiences-of-epidemics/>; T. Durmaz, “Bir Duygu ve Tavrılar Tarihçesi 1661 İstanbul Veba Salgını Hakkında Çağdaş Bir Günlüğün Bize Anlattıkları,” *Aktüel Arkeoloji*, December 2020.

25 Seyyid Hasan Nûrî Efendi, «Sohbetnâme I», Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Hazine 1426, fol. 13b.

26 fol. 14b. It is possible that this *nüsha-i şerîfe* was a plague prayer (*ta’un duası*). I would like to thank Amila Buturović for highlighting this possibility during our post-presentation discussions at the “Knowing and controlling nature in Ottoman culture: scientific and occultist approaches in a global perspective” conference on November 17, 2023.

ological take, serving as a prominent example among many others recorded in *Gâyet*. The author combines various explanations from the natural, supernatural, and folkloric domains to elaborate on the causes of epilepsy. In this sense, he notes that ordinary people (*halk*) refer to this affliction as “djinn possession” (*cin tutdı*).<sup>27</sup> Following this, the author explains that the causes of epilepsy are primarily attributed to imbalances in and corruption of humors.

According to Ibn Sellum, epilepsy is caused by a poisonous and corrupt smell that rises from the stomach. He acknowledges that it is a hereditary disease (*anadan babadan miras/emrâz-ı mevrûse*) and that it usually afflicts those who were born during a lunar eclipse. He also attributes epilepsy in some to the presence of djinn. His reasoning for this is rather intriguing, pointing out that, “there is nothing against the possibility that bodily balances can get disrupted by the djinn, too.” This example illustrates that the etiological take of Ibn Sellum was a syncretic one, drawing together natural and supernatural beliefs as well as folk traditions, to form a unified body of knowledge. In essence, Ibn Sellum synthesized various explanations from different domains of knowledge to create his own unique perspective.<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusion

Foremost among the concerns of healing practitioners was the effective cure of ailments. For this reason, akin to contemporary medical cultures, the medical writing of early modern Ottomans prioritized diagnostics and remedies. As for the quest to explain the causes of diseases (i.e., etiology), it was crucial when the disease presented itself as an enigma. It appears that this was where the supernatural played a significant role in Ibn Sellum’s understanding. Celestial events

27 Elbir, “Salih Bin Nasrullah (Ibn Sellum El-Halebi) Gayetü'l-Beyan Fi Tedbiri Bedeni'l-İnsan (Giriş-İnceleme-Metin-Dizin),” 141b.

28 Ibn Sellum’s take on djinn possession diverges from some of his predecessors’ views. Emir Çelebi (d.1048/1638), the head physician of Murad IV, disregards any attribution to supernatural phenomena when explaining epilepsy. For the section on epilepsy see H. Halit, “XVII. Yüzyıl Hekimbaşısı Emir Çelebi ve Eseri Enmûzecü't-Tıbb” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Kırıkkale, Kırıkkale Üniversitesi, 2021), 294–95. Similarly, Sakızlı İsa Efendi (d.1649), the head physician of Ibrahim I, denies the belief connecting the ailment to djinn possession, sharply calling it “erroneous.” Sakızlı İsa Efendi, “*Devai'l-Emrâz*,” Kütahya Zeytinoğlu Halk Kütüphanesi 401, fol. 22b. My ongoing doctoral project presents a thorough analysis of the issue, particularly in relation to Ibrahim I’s famous encounter with ‘melancholy’ and its consequential impact in the politics of diagnosis and healing.

and the djinns were modes of explanation for incurable diseases such as plague or epilepsy.

The late seventeenth-century Ottoman healing domain emerges in the examples provided in the *Gâyet* as a multifaceted landscape wherein diverse epistemologies of disease coexisted. The modes of thinking in the Ottoman healing domain were informed by the norms of various traditions of knowledge. While definitive approaches may seem convenient, they risk oversimplifying the complexity of healing practices and perceptions. Instead, a more resilient approach would be to either perceive the Ottoman medicine as a uniform entity or acknowledge the particularities of individual cases.



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# Political advice and ethics in an occult framework: Alai Muhibbi Şirazi's *Düstûru'l-vüzerâ* as an example of 16th century Ottoman lettrism

DIMITRIS GIAGTZOGLU

The literary genre of political advice (*siyâsetnâme*) occupies a significant role within the annals of Ottoman political philosophy, representing a substantial component of the era's literary landscape. Rooted in the Persian tradition, particularly epitomized by the “mirror for princes” genre, and more recently categorized as “treatises on ethics”, these works began to emerge within Ottoman literature as early as the late fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

The prominence and popularity of ethics literature were openly expressed and emphasized to their direct recipients, encompassing both rulers and other prominent figures. While previous research often approached these works with indifference, engaging with them in rather formulaic terms, closer examination has unveiled substantial differences in both content and structure.<sup>2</sup> One such

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1 For a summary of the academic discussion on terminology and categorisation of this truly rich and broad textual group see M. Sariyannis, *A History of Ottoman Political Thought Up to the Early Nineteenth Century* (Leiden 2018), 6–9.

2 For a recent assessment of this unarguably very rich literary genre see H. Yılmaz, *Caliphate*

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notable work is “The Code of the Viziers” (*Düsturü'l-Vüzera*, hereafter referred to as *Düstur*). This advisory and guiding political treatise delineates the virtues and codes of conduct to be adhered to, not by the sultans or the princes, but by the viziers during times of peace and war. Its author, Alayi bin Muhibbi eş-Şirazi eş-Şerif was a versatile Ottoman intellectual of the sixteenth century. Information regarding his life is scant and somewhat contradictory. He is believed to have spent his entire life in the city of Konya, a prominent center of religion, mysticism, and culture, where he likely received education in calligraphy and copying. Sources also associate him with the Mevleviyye Sufi brotherhood, within which he gained recognition as a skilled reciter of the *mesnevî* and as a gifted poet. His poetry, composed in Persian, Arabic and Ottoman Turkish, plays a significant role in his works, particularly in *Düstur*, serving as literary bridges within the text. Hailing from Shiraz, a renowned literary and intellectual hub in the Persianate world, his family background suggests a rich literary heritage.<sup>3</sup> The exact dates of his birth and death remain unknown. Drawing from the dating of his numerous works, the earliest of which date back to the 1550s, it can be inferred that he was likely born in the 1520s or late 1510s, with his life spanning the greater part of the sixteenth century. This conjecture is supported by the dating of one of his seemingly later (if not his latest) works: a concise theological text, structured in the form of questions and answers, addressing various Qur'anic concepts, presented to the former governor of Anatolia, Silahdar Cafer Paşa (d. 1587).<sup>4</sup>

According to Kâtip Çelebi, Alayi completed and presented his treatise in Konya in 1558–1559,<sup>5</sup> a period marked by turbulence in the Empire. Sultan Süleyman's two remaining sons, Bayezid and Selim, unable to solve their differences and in an effort to put an end to the struggle of succession, were getting ready for a direct clash. Despite their father's efforts to compromise them, the two finally met with their armies in the great plain of Konya, Selim's governing province. The battle, which took place on the 30th of May 1559, saw Selim as the

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*Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton 2018), 69 et seq.

3 In an Ottoman biographical dictionary, we read that his father's name was Mir Muhyi eş-Şirazi, a fact that confirms his Persian origins; see S. Solmaz, *Abdî ve Gülşen-i Şu'arâsı (İnceleme-Metin)* (Ankara 2018).

4 The text has been published recently by M. A. Alpaydın, *Sorular ve Cevaplar Işığında Ayetlerdeki İncelikler: Risâletü'l-Es'ile ve'l-Ecvibe fî İlmi't-Tefsîr* (İstanbul 2020).

5 L. Forrer, *Die osmanische Chronik des Rüstem Pascha* (Leipzig 1923), 195–196.

winner while Bayezid was forced to flee the Ottoman lands, reaching until the enemy court of the Safavids.

One of the pivotal figures in this consequential victory, solidifying Selim's position as the sole heir to the throne, was his tutor (*lâlâ*) and personal advisor, Mustafa Paşa, a Bosnian convert. It is to this individual that Alayi dedicated his treatise. Initially, the rationale behind this dedication appears evident: Mustafa Paşa's pivotal role in the victory elevated him to the position of Selim's second-in-command. Despite attempts by the Great Vizier Rustem Paşa to diminish his influence, Mustafa Paşa's authority persisted, evidenced by Selim's intervention to rescind his appointments in Pozega and Timisoara. Alayi, cognizant of these political dynamics, appears to have hastened to garner the favor of the Paşa. In his preface, he makes his sole reference to both Mustafa Paşa and Selim, whom he reverentially addresses as *Sultân*.<sup>6</sup>

While the aforementioned explanation appears reasonable, further textual evidence from the period suggests that the dedication of Alayi's treatise to Mustafa Paşa transcended conventional literary patronage. Mustafa Paşa indeed enjoyed a reputation as a notable patron of intellectuals and artists, with Gelibolu Mustafa Ali counting among his most renown proteges. However, his affiliations extended beyond mere patronage; he held a significant connection to Alayi's mystical brotherhood, the Mevleviyye, and exhibited a strong interest in occultism.<sup>7</sup> A notable piece of evidence support this assertion is found in the famous miniature from Mustafa Ali's *Nusretname*, depicting Mustafa Paşa awaiting an oracle in the shrine of Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi in Konya. This miniature serves as compelling evidence of the importance attributed to the esoteric sciences in the conduct of both war and politics.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, this image provides a strong indication of the heavily occult character of Alayi's text, a characteristic that warrants the further examination provided below.

There exist just two known manuscripts of *Düstur*, both preserved with-

6 *Düstûru'l-Vüzerâ*, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa, fol. 92/a.

7 Mustafa Paşa's Mevleviyye affiliation is corroborated through his generous donations and gifts and from his actions for the building of their convent right after the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus; N. Yıldız, "The Vakf Institution in Ottoman Cyprus" in M. N. Michael, M. Kappler and E. Gavriel (eds), *Ottoman Cyprus: A Collection of Studies on History and Culture* (Wiesbaden 2009), 134–136.

8 R. Grierson, "Cover Illustration: Lala Mustafa Paşa Visits the Shrine of Jalal al-Din Rumi Nusretname, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, H. 1365 Istanbul, 1584, Fol. 36a." *Mawlana Rumi Review*, 8 (2017), 7–12.

in the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library as components of multi-themed collections. Given that the manuscript of Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa precedes that of Bağışlar by a few years, our study was primarily grounded in the former.<sup>9</sup> It is pertinent to acknowledge that the work has already undergone comprehensive examination and transliteration in its entirety by Emrah Dokuzlu, utilizing the same manuscript as our primary source.<sup>10</sup>

## Structure and content of the work

The treatise spans a total of twenty-three folios and consists of an introductory section, three primary chapters (*bâb*), and an epilogue.<sup>11</sup> The introductory portion delves into an analysis of the term itself before delving into a discussion on the administrative and bureaucratic significance of the vizier throughout the Islamicate period.

The second chapter offers insights into the history and virtues of select viziers, primarily from the early centuries of Islam, encompassing the era of the Prophet Muhammad and the first caliphs. These virtues pertain to various facets of the vizier's professional and domestic life, including their interactions with the ruler and his subordinates within the state apparatus, as well as their efforts to maintain order within their households.

Until this juncture, the text presents no notable deviation in content or structure. Such descriptions and arguments, both in terms of individuals and sources, are prevalent in numerous Ottoman mirrors for princes. However, the subsequent and final chapter exhibits a marked shift in content. This concluding segment, which we will predominantly examine, surpasses the preceding one in length. Its introductory section reads as follows:

Third chapter: Some of the prayers in this chapter come from the Messenger of Allah. They are recited by the Prophet, his Companions and by other righteous predecessors. And since the aforementioned prayers and the knowledge, that benefits from letters, words and prayers, are not exclusive to the war and the military

9 *Düstur* covers folios 90b–123a. The texts preceding and following it in the miscellany are Imam Gazali's *Netîcetü's-Sülûk fî Nasîhati'l-Mülûk* and Hüseyin Herzafen's *Telhîsu'l-Beyân fî Tahli'si'l-Büldân* respectively.

10 E. Dokuzlu, "Alâî b. Muhibbî eş-Şirâzî'nin *Düstûru'l-Vüzerâ* isimli siyasetnâmesinin metin ve tahlili", unpublished M. A. thesis, Istanbul Üniversitesi, 2012.

11 For a summary description of the treatise's content see Dokuzlu, "Alâî b. Muhibbî", 35 et seq.

and all wishes and intentions are general and comprehensive, for this reason they are separately mentioned in this chapter.

As elucidated by Alayi, the knowledge conveyed in this section transcends the domains covered in preceding chapters. Whereas the advice and exemplary actions cited in the first and second chapters predominantly pertained to politics, ethics, warfare, and military strategy, here the author indicates his intention to impart knowledge on the talismanic utilization of sacred scripts and the letters of the alphabet. In a subsequent sentence, the writer explicitly asserts that this form of talismanic knowledge “is an indispensable weapon in the hands of sultans, viziers and statesmen” against their adversaries (*Şah vezîr ve hâkim ve emîre lâzım ve vâcibdür*). With this statement, Alayi appears to address any potential concerns regarding the apparent departure from the ethos and objectives outlined in his introduction. It is as if he interjects to assert that talismanic lettrism and prayers are equally vital for members of the ruling class, should they seek protection against the adversities inherent in wielding great power and navigating internal conflicts.

In terms of narrative and structural composition, the talismanic section maintains continuity with the preceding chapters, with Alayi drawing upon the wisdom gleaned from the words and deeds of esteemed figures in Islam. However, a notable shift occurs politics yields precedence to Sufism. While the earlier chapters shed light on the exemplary conduct of early caliphs and Ottoman sultans in matters of statecraft, diplomacy, and warfare, the talismanic section draws inspiration focal points, the quintessential luminaries of Islamic esotericism and various Sufi brotherhoods. Unsurprising, the foremost among these figures is Ali bin Abu Talib, the Prophet’s son-in-law, renowned as the primary recipient of esoteric knowledge and subsequently the transmitter of this wisdom to eminent sheikhs. The pervasive influence of Ali’s persona on Alayi’s work is palpable throughout, with Ali depicted as the epitome of an ideal ruler, embodying virtues encompassing both exoteric and esoteric understandings of the world. Within this chapter, particular emphasis is placed on the latter aspect, portraying Ali as a Sufi ruler adept in practice of talismanic lettrism:

On the day of Badr, his excellency the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, recited this prayer: “O Allah, Who sent down the Book, O Allah, Who makes the clouds move and defeats the armies, O Allah, defeat them and make us victorious.” And He used to recite this prayer as well: “O Allah, we ask You to stand

against them by Your might and we seek refuge in You from their evil, Hâ Mîm the unhelpful all faces bow down before that Life and Trust.” The word of his excellency Ali: “I met with Hızır.” I told him: “Teach me something with which I will find victory against my enemy.” He taught me this prayer, which goes like this: “Oh Allah elif lââm mîm and elif lââm mîm and elif lââm mîm sâd and elif lââm ra and elif lââm ra and elif lââm ra and elif lââm mîm ra and elif lââm ra and elif lââm ra and kef ha ya ‘ayn sâd and tâ ha and tâ sîn mîm and tâ sîn and tâ sîn mîm and elif lââm mîm and elif lââm mîm and elif lââm mîm and elif lââm mîm yâ sîn and sâd and hâ mîm and hâ mîm and hâ mîm ‘ayn sîn kaf hâ mîm hâ mîm hâ mîm hâ mîm and kâf and nûn and yâ Hû yâ help me and protect me for the sake of those who have no gods but Him.” His excellency Ali says that “I said it and with the blessings of this prayer, I made many expeditions even on the day of Badr.”<sup>12</sup>

The chapter commences with the presentation of two examples of talismanic prayers, both intertwined with one of the Prophet Muhammad’s most pivotal victories over the Quraysh in the town of Badr.<sup>13</sup> Subsequently, the narrative shifts its focus to Ali, a central figure and hero of the Battle of Badr.

This excerpt provides insight into a lineage of mystics endowed with profound knowledge of the mystical properties of letters and words. Preceding Ali in this chain of spiritual guidance is none other than Hızır. Much has been speculated and written about this enigmatic figure who transcends the confines of space and time. Often referred to as “the Green One,” Hızır is depicted as immortal sage who appears in moments of spiritual intensity or crisis to offer resolution. In Ottoman literary tradition, his most renowned intervention of this nature took place during the siege of Istanbul, where he miraculously appeared to Sultan Fatih Sultan Mehmed’s tutor, Akşemseddin.<sup>14</sup>

Ali’s encounter with Hızır provides insight into practices often utilized as additional instruments in times of war. Beyond military preparations and strategic planning preceding battles, rulers were compelled to undertake further actions to ensure decisive victory over their adversaries. The extensive lettrist talismanic prayer depicted in the text offers a vivid depiction of how warfare and

<sup>12</sup> *Düstur*, 113a–113b.

<sup>13</sup> This battle, which took place in March 624, constituted one of Muhammad’s great military triumphs against his local political and economic antagonists. See *TDVİA*, s.v. “Bedir Gazvesi” (M. Fayda).

<sup>14</sup> The incident is described in Akşemseddin’s biography; See M. Çelik (ed.), *Akşemseddin Hazretleri ve Yakın Çevresi: Menakıb-i Akşemseddin*, (Istanbul 2016), 64–65.



politics intersected with talismanic, divinatory knowledge, and occultism in general. Concerning the Ottomans, similar depictions are dispersed throughout various texts, primarily chronicles and other narrative sources recounting their significant triumphs against both Christian and Muslims adversaries.<sup>15</sup>

These abovementioned observations concerning the miraculous interventions of Hızır in times of peril are further substantiated through his second and final appearance in *Düstur*. This occurrence follows immediately after the talismanic section of the chapter, and notably, it is not Ali who engages with him on this occasion. Instead, it is Necmeddin Kübra, a revered sheikh and prominent figure in Islamic mysticism, who interacts with Hızır. Necmeddin Kübra, was an illuminationist renowned for his expertise in interpreting visions and dreams. He was also the founder of the Kübreviyye Sufi brotherhood and operated primarily in what is now Uzbekistan.<sup>16</sup> His life was cut short during the Mongol capture of his hometown.<sup>17</sup> Similar to Ali and Akşemseddin, Kübra possessed knowledge of lettrist divination, which he harnessed to prophesy the outcomes of war.<sup>18</sup>

When Şeyh Necmeddin Kübra met Hızır and asked for a blessing, Hızır sent this couplet as a blessing to those who belong to him. Every person who has a strong desire and eagerness for the expedition and recite this couplet about him he will, with the help of Allah, reach to his goal and return to his place with health and peace. This is the couplet: “Wherever you are directed, your helper is peace, and the Most Merciful watches over you from everywhere.”<sup>19</sup>

15 The most famous and probably most powerfully symbolic among these cases of military occult lettrism is not of talismanic but of divinatory nature and happened during sultan Selim I's military expedition against the Mamluks. See M. Melvin-Koushki, “Toward a Neopythagorean Historiography: Kemālpaşazāde's (d. 1534) Lettrist Call for the Conquest of Cairo and the Development of Ottoman Occult-Scientific Imperialism”, in L. Saif, F. Leoni, M. Melvin-Koushki and F. Yahya (eds), *Islamic Occultism in Theory and Practice* (Leiden 2019), 380–419.

16 Information regarding his life is drawn mainly from a famous biographical dictionary by Molla Jami in the second half of the fifteenth century

17 *TDVİA*, s.v. “Necmeddin-i Kübrâ” (H. Algar).

18 This information is found in a lettrist treatise by the great Persian philosopher Celaleddin ed-Devvani, cited by M. Melvin-Koushki, “The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of Şā'in al-Dīn Turka İsfahānī (1369–1432) and Intellectual Millenarianism in Early Timurid Iran”, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Yale University, 2012, 255.

19 *Düstur*, 117b.

## The talismans in the text

One of the distinctive features of *Düstur* is the inclusion of four illustrations of talismans. These drawings represent a unique aspect of the text, as they are not present in any other extant *siyasetnames* from the Ottoman period. Found in both surviving copies of *Düstur*, these illustrations remain consistent without variation. They are seamlessly integrated within the chapters alongside other prayers, lacking any separate introduction. Among these drawings, the first depicts one of the most renowned Islamic talismans:

The Seal of Süleyman: whoever has this seal engraved on gold, and wears it on the sundial, he will restrain all his enemies and whoever sees him will be afraid. Its phlegm is also beneficial for the sick and protects its owner from sludge. This is the seal and it is permissible to be in this form.<sup>20</sup>

Süleyman's seal is arguably one of the most intercultural occult talismanic symbols. This star typically manifests with six edges and was employed as a signet ring, embroidered into garments, or inscribed as a talismanic script on paper. In pre-Ottoman Anatolia, it was recognized as the emblem of the Karamanids, while in the sixteenth century, it adorned the battle standard of the Ottoman Grand Admiral, Barbaros Hayerddin Paşa.

The remaining talismans exhibit greater complexity both in their visual form and interpretive significance. They materialize as visual representations of Qur'anic verses imbued with talismanic qualities. Consider the description of the second talisman:

Benefit: For every difficult work to be easy and for good and blessing to be abundant, it is necessary to recite this verse: "God will bring ease after hardship".<sup>21</sup> And if they write it on the skin of a gazelle with musk, saffron and rosewater those whose name is pronounced and whose talisman is made will be able to fulfil many desires immediately while every action will be easy. With the help and grace of God this is his picture.<sup>22</sup>

20 *Düstur*, 115b ; Dokuzlu, "Alâî", 139. Unfortunately, I was denied permission to reproduce any illustration from the manuscript. Moreover, the relevant pages are no longer available online..

21 Surah *At-Talaq* verse 7.

22 *Düstur*, 116a ; Dokuzlu, "Alâî", 140.

The extracted circle is this Qur'anic verse: Let the man of wealth provide according to his means. As for the one with limited resources, let him provide according to whatever Allah has given him. Allah does not require of any soul beyond what He has given it. After hardship, Allah will bring about ease. Gold Almighty said: Muhammad is no more than a messenger; other messengers have gone before him. If he were to die or to be killed, would you regress into disbelief? Those who do so will not harm Allah whatsoever. And Allah will reward those who are grateful.<sup>23</sup>

In examining the second talisman, Alai begins by elucidating its qualities before presenting delving into its presentation and analysis. Unlike Süleyman seal, this talisman remains unnamed, suggesting perhaps a lesser degree of familiarity. The verses and letters adorning it are encrypted, requiring considerable effort from the reader to decipher what initially appears as disordered words, lines and symbols. This talisman is purportedly designed to ward off various adversities in an individual's life.

The third talisman shares similar characteristics with the second. It also utilizes, as its medium, a body part of a creature—the wings of a bird—demanding specialized scribal and calligraphic expertise:

Whoever repeats this Qur'anic verse will be safe from the evil of all the jinn and will his words will be accepted and he will be protected in the sight of the sultans. And if they paint this verse on a bird's wing, then Muhammad's holy name should be written in Kufic script and the names of the four angels, namely Jabrail, Mikail, Israfil and Azrail should be engraved around "Muhammad" like this.

According to the transliterator of the texts, the Qur'anic verse inscribed on the talisman corresponds to the verse 144 of Surah Al-Imran.<sup>24</sup> An observation worth noting is the inclusion of another name alongside that of the Prophet, rendered in Kufic script. This name is none other than that of Ali, reintroducing itself within the context of the talisman and potentially carrying significant symbolism. In a related text, Gelibolu Mustafa Ali's *Menâkıb-ı Hünerverân*, written just a few decades prior, Ali is depicted as a master of the Kufic script. Moreover, in the same text, Kufic script stands out as one of the most esteemed scripts in the annals of Islamic calligraphy.<sup>25</sup> From these insights, one might

23 *Düstur*, 116b ; Dokuzlu, "Alâî", 141.

24 Bozoklu, "Alâî b. Muhibbî", 70 n219.

25 Gelibolu Mustafa Ali, *Mustafa Âli's Epic Deeds of Artists*, ed. E. Akın-Kıvanç (Boston 2011),

speculate that the utilization of this specific script on this or any other talisman could bestow additional protective attributes upon it. The presence of the names of the four angels surrounding that of Muhammed is also noteworthy, as their misalignment could potentially impact the efficacy of the talisman. Lastly, regarding the talisman's intended purpose, while a talisman designed to ward off evil spirits may not appear particularly novel, one tailored to safeguard a statesman or prominent figure such as Lala Mustafa Paşa, against the malevolent intentions of rulers might have held immense popularity within the highest echelons of society were not immune to wrath of the sultan, such as protective talisman would likely have been in high demand.

The fourth and final talisman exhibits analogous attributes to its predecessors, as it also provides protection against malevolent jinn. Additionally, it purportedly guarantees victory in battle and safeguards against various forms of misfortune, whether encountered on land or at sea:

Whoever takes this form will be victorious over enemies in battle and will be protected and hidden from the harm of all jinn and disasters. All the people will be obedient and there's no doubt about it: "It is He Who causes the dawn to split forth, and has ordained the night for repose, and the sun and the moon for reckoning time. All this is determined by Allah the Almighty, the All-Knowing."<sup>26</sup> Whoever draws this verse of the Qur'an in this way and places it at the head of the ship or draws it on the ship's board, the ship will be protected from the disasters of the sea, and if they draw it and tie it to the knot of the person tied to it, it will be done immediately by the permission of Allah.<sup>27</sup>

While talismans offering protection in maritime environments, such as that depicted above may seem like a rarity, they are documented in historical sources. An Indian tradition recounts that the renowned mystic Maruf-i Kerhi once provided a merchant sailor with a paper with a prayer inscribed on paper, offering safeguard against storms.<sup>28</sup>

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179–181. The special talismanic qualities of Kufic have also been observed by Guy Burak, "Alphabets and "Calligraphy" in the Section on Prayers, Special Characteristics of the Quran and Magic Squares in the Inventory of Sultan Bayezid II's Palace Library", *Journal of Material Cultures in the Muslim World*, 2 (2021), 32–54.

26 Surah Al-An'am verse 96.

27 *Düstur*, 117a ; Dokuzlu, "Alâi", 142–143.

28 This story is related only once in an Indian Sufi treatise, cited by A. Gallop, "The Amuletic

## Conclusion

Although relatively concise, Alayi's counsel treatise encompasses a breadth of subject matter. In this study, ours focus has been confined to a specific section of only one of its three chapters. The talismanic and lettrist wisdom imparted by this sixteenth-century Sufi polymath to an emerging notable offers a representative glimpse into the intellectual currents prevalent in the Ottoman Empire, dating back to the era of Mehmet II and his father, Sultan Murad, in the mid-fifteenth century. The significant military conflicts, personal, political and apocalyptic concerns characteristic of this earlier period persisted throughout the Selimian and Suleymanic eras, fostering the production of semi-political/semi-occult literature. Such literature enjoyed widespread popularity among the major political figures of the time.

When considering the written form of such works, one could contend that talismanic and amuletic knowledge constituted the most obvious manifestations of occultism within the Ottoman realm. Regrettably, critical editions for the majority of these often extensive texts, exclusively dedicated to this undoubtedly intricate and occasionally technical field of knowledge, remain absent.<sup>29</sup> Conversely, tangible objects such as talismanic shirts, jewelry, and magical squares inscribed on parchment circulated within the confines of vizierial residences, behind the formidable walls of the sultan's palace, and within the esteemed confines of prominent Sufi shrines. As scholarly inquiry progresses, it is hoped that we will continue to gain a deeper understanding and a clearer depiction of the various forms and expressions, as well as the underlying motivations driving the production of these captivating texts.

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Cult of Ma'ruf al-Karkhi in the Malay World", in R. M. Kerr and T. Milo (eds), *Writings and Writing from Another World and Another Era. Investigations in Islamic Text and Script in Honour of Dr Januarius Justus Witkam, Professor of Codicology and Palaeography of the Islamic World at Leyden University* (Cambridge 2010), 167–196.

29 An example of such an Ottoman text belongs to Abdurrahman el-Bistami and bears the title *Şemsü'l-âfâk fî 'ilmi'l-ḥurûf ve'l-evfâk*. It is a multipage lettrist and talismanic treatise which survives in many manuscript collections.

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# Between Practice and Allegory: Ottoman Perception of Alchemy\*

FEZA GÜNERGUN

When studying the history of science in the Ottoman Empire, the following questions come to the fore. Did the Ottomans engage in experiments to comprehend the workings of Nature? For instance, did they conduct experiments to explore the properties of metals or salts? Alchemy, beyond its occult aspects, was a practical science par excellence. Processes such as distilling, melting, evaporating, dissolving, and sublimating were among the many techniques known to alchemists who acquired this technical knowledge through the ages. It is known that alchemists in the medieval Islamic world conducted experiments: the Jabirian corpus attributed to Jabir b. Hayyan al-Sufi (8th – early 9th c.) attests this fact.<sup>1</sup> In Europe, alchemical/chemical operations were performed either in laboratories that were set up in the late 16th century or in artisans' workshops

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\* This text is based on research made for the following article: F. Günergun, "Convergences In and Around Bursa: Sufism, Alchemy, Iatrochemistry in Turkey, 1500–1700," in P.H. Smith (ed.), *Entangled Itineraries — Materials, Practices, and Knowledges across Eurasia* (Pittsburgh 2019), 226–257.

1 E.J. Holmyard, "Jabir ibn Hayyan," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine, Section of the History of Medicine* 16 (1923), 46–57 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/003591572301601606>

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which predate them.<sup>2</sup> The laboratory of the German physician and alchemist Andreas Libavius (1550–1616) is a well-known example.

The questions I am attempting to answer are: ‘Did Ottoman scholars who wrote about alchemy engage in practical experiments?’ and ‘Can the use of the term *gayet mücerreptir* (thoroughly tested and attested) by the Sufi alchemist Ali Çelebi el-Izniki (16th century) be considered as evidence of his involvement in practical alchemy?’ Answering these questions is challenging, given the limited studies on Ottoman alchemical texts. I am hopeful that the papers presented in the ‘Knowing and Controlling Nature in Ottoman Culture’ will offer new insights into the Ottomans’ exploration of Nature, and help to answer the above questions.

Ottoman alchemical texts differ significantly from other Ottoman scientific texts in two key ways. Firstly, they were produced in relatively small numbers when compared to astronomical and mathematical texts written or copied by madrasa students or scholars. The main reason for this lies in the fact that alchemical knowledge was considered unorthodox despite it was qualified a noble, subtle and prophetic science (*ilm-i şerif ve latif ve nebi*) by Sufi mystics. Unlike the orthodox sciences such as astronomy and mathematics, which were taught in madrasas and were essential for tasks like calculating time, solving inheritance problems, and tax accounting, alchemy was excluded from the madrasa curriculum. While there are alchemical texts written or copied by madrasa members, the overall number of extant alchemical treatises remained limited.

Secondly, alchemical texts have received less attention from present-day Turkish historians, historians of science, or linguists compared to other Ottoman scientific texts. There are, of course, exceptions, including studies conducted by Tuna Artun,<sup>3</sup> Akif Yerlioğlu,<sup>4</sup> and a few other researchers. Has this neglect emerged due to the complexity and ambiguity of alchemical texts? Or

2 P.H. Smith, “Laboratories,” in K. Park and L. Daston (eds), *Cambridge History of Science*, vol.3 (Early Modern Science), (Cambridge 2008), 290–304; P.J. T. Morris, “The History of Chemical Laboratories: A Thematic Approach,” *ChemTexts* 7, 21 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40828-021-00146-x>

3 T. Artun, “Hearts of Gold and Silver: The Production of Alchemical Knowledge in the Early Modern Ottoman World,” unpublished PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2013; T. Artun, “Bâyezid-i Kimya’î: Osmanlı Kimya Metinlerinde II. Bayezid,” *JTS*, 39 (2013), 181–186.

4 A.E. Yerlioğlu, “Paracelsus Goes East: Ottoman ‘New Medicine’ and its Afterlife,” unpublished PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2020; idem, “May Those Who Understand

should we consider historians' preference for studying orthodox sciences, potentially driven by a desire to glorify madrasa teaching and highlight the productivity of Ottoman scholars, while alchemical texts may suggest involvement in potentially fraudulent activities?

## The Sufi Mystic's Motivation in Dealing with Alchemy

The Ottoman alchemical literature in Anatolia was predominantly produced by Sufi mystics, locally known as dervishes, who were regarded as heterodox Muslims. These mystics arrived in Asia Minor from Khorasan, Transoxiana, and Iran alongside nomadic Turkoman tribes, establishing their presence on its fertile plains starting from the 11th century (following the Battle of Manzikert of 1071). Consequently, Anatolia became a melting pot for various Sufi doctrines originating from Central Asia, Iran, and the Middle East. The Mongol invasion later compelled them to migrate further westward, reaching up to the Byzantine border.<sup>5</sup>

Did Sufis compile or copy alchemical texts with the intention of producing gold to increase their revenues? The early Sufi mystics of Anatolia sustained their livelihoods through cultivating lands provided by authorities, as well as through their livestock. Additionally, they possessed various practical skills, including constructing lodges, building and operating watermills, digging wells, tanning leather, and engaging in silk farming. As dervish lodges (*tekke*) functioned as pious foundations (*waqf*), the founder would meet their expenses in accordance with the deed (*waqfiyya*). Consequently, the lodge could sustain its activities with the endowed revenues<sup>6</sup> and also received donations.

The late 16th-century monetary crisis does not appear to have directed Sufi mystics toward practicing transmutation. The few alchemical texts studied so far do not suggest that Sufi mystics were involved in the transformation of base metals into silver and gold. Although these operations might have been carried out clandestinely, adulterating silver and gold coins was technically

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What I Wrote Remember This Humble One': Paratextual Elements in Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Medical Manuscripts," *YILLIK: Annual of Istanbul Studies*, 2 (2020), 35–51.

5 A.C.S. Peacock and S.N. Yıldız (eds.), *Islamic Literature and Intellectual Life in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Anatolia* (Würzburg 2016).

6 Ö.L. Barkan, "İstila Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zaviyeler / Les Fondations pieuses comme Méthodes de Peuplement et de Colonisation," *Vakıflar Dergisi*, 2 (1942), 279–304.

easier than transforming base metals into gold, an uncertain process difficult to achieve. Therefore, the crisis seems to have encouraged forgery rather than transmutational practices. Forgery was conducted by professional forgers, including blacksmiths, locksmiths, goldsmiths, and primarily by the employees of the State's mint, who possessed the necessary technical expertise.<sup>7</sup>

The motivation of Ottoman Sufis to engage with alchemy appears to be similar to that of other Sufis in medieval Islam. The ultimate goal was to become a perfect man (*insan-ı kamil*) and, in doing so, attain union with God. An aspirant (*talib*) was supposed to pass through a series of stages (*maqams*) of spiritual development, striving to purify their soul and shed worldly concerns. At the culmination of this arduous journey (*tariqa*), they reached the state of spiritual truth (*marifat*) and the divine reality (*haqiqa*). Sufi mystics thus perceived an analogy between the transformation of the aspirant into a perfect man and the alchemical transmutation of base metals into gold. In essence, the alchemical purification of base metals, a crucial operation to realize transmutation, was considered equivalent or similar to spiritual purification.<sup>8</sup>

### Allegorical Poems in Turkish Imbued with Alchemy (14th – 15th c.)

The introduction of alchemical knowledge to Anatolia appears to have occurred through allegorical poems. An early example is the *Risale-i Aşık Paşa*,<sup>9</sup> written by the Sufi poet Sheikh Aşık Ali Pasha (1271–1332), renowned for his masnavi *Garibname*, and a member of the Wafa'iyya community in Amasya. This Turkish poem is directed towards aspirants eager to embark on the spiritual path. The chapters cover oils and waters (*dühn u ab*), spirits/tinctures/essences (*er-vah*), the creation of metals (*ecsad*), the science of the elixir (*ilm-i iksir*), the making of whitening and reddening waters (*tedbir-i ebyaz* and *tedbir-i tahmir*).

In the 15th century, Safiüddin Efendi (d. 1513), the sheikh of the Zayniyye order in Bursa, composed the *Kaside-i Şeyh Safi* (The ode of Sheikh Safi)<sup>10</sup> in which he drew an analogy between alchemical processes and the transfor-

7 O. Kılıç, "XVI. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Osmanlı Devleti'nde Kalpazanlık Faaliyetleri," in C. Güzel, K. Çiçek and G. Eren (eds), *Osmanlı*, vol.3, (Ankara 1999), 180–187.

8 Günergün, "Convergences In and Around Bursa", 241–242.

9 Sheikh Aşık Ali Pasha, *Risale-i Aşık Paşa*, İstanbul, Atatürk Kitaplığı, MS Muallim Cevdet K.180/16.

10 Sheikh Safiüddin, *Kaside-i Şeyh Safi*, İstanbul, Süleymaniye Library, MS Karaçelebizade 359/10.

mations an aspirant must undergo to become a spiritual guide (*mürşid*) of the order. The text is rich in operative terms such as *hak* (pulverizing), *tahmir* (reddening), *tebyiz* (whitening), *tesvid* (blackening), *taš'id* (sublimation), *tekliš* (calcination), *taktir* (distillation), *tathir* (purifying), *tedbir* (treating, making), *hall* (dissolving), *akd* (congealing), and mentions chemical substances such as *kibrit* (sulphur), *zibak* (mercury), *ukab* (sal-ammoniac), *pulad* (steel), *dübn* (oil), *şeb* (alum), and *barud* (saltpeter). Notably, the term 'elixir' is not used, and there are no recipes for making silver and gold. The text employs analogies, such as birds with green wings, to describe the lengthy process of transformation awaiting the aspirant.

### Al-Jildaki's Works Permeate the Ottoman Alchemical Literature (16th c.)

Experimental knowledge, prevalent in the texts of Jabir b. Hayyan al-Sufi (8th–9th c.) and al-Razi (9th c.), began to permeate Anatolia from the 16th century, if not earlier. This infiltration occurred through the works of 'Izz al-Din Aydamir al-Jildaki, who flourished in Mamluk Egypt in the 14th century.<sup>11</sup> In the footsteps of Jabir b. Hayyan, al-Jildaki described numerous experiments in his works without forsaking his allegorical vision. This dualism had a profound impact on Ottoman alchemists. Ottoman Sufis praised al-Jildaki's works due to the extensive quotations he made from previous alchemists such as Zosimos (3rd c.), Jabir b. Hayyan, al-Razi, and al-Tughra'i (11th–12th c.). Consequently, by studying al-Jildaki's works, the reader could gain insights into the views of alchemists prior to the 14th century in one comprehensive study. The theory of the 'Science of the Balance' (*ilm al-mizan*)<sup>12</sup> developed to explain the formation of metals and their transmutation was introduced to Anatolia by Mohammad b. Omar al-Hanefi al-Antaki (d. 1531), also known as Mullah Arab. He epitomized al-Jildaki's encyclopedic work titled *Al-burhan fi asrar ilm al-mizan* (Demonstration of the secrets of the science of the balance) in 1512. This epitome<sup>13</sup> in Arabic delves into chapters portraying the relationships between the

11 E. J. Holmyard, "Al-Jildaki," *Iraq*, 4 (1937), 47–53; G. C. Anawati, "Jaldaki," in R. Rashed (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the History of Arabic Science*, vol.3 (London 1996), 874.

12 For the theory of the "Science of the Balance" see S. O. Moulave Ahmed, *L'apport scientifique arabe à travers les grandes figures de l'époque classique* (Paris 2004), 162–166.

13 Mohammad b. Omar al-Antaki, *Talhis al-Burhan*, 1512, Zeytinoglu Library (Tavşanlı, Kütahya) MS 631/2.

planets, the zodiacal signs, and the metals, conceived as the causes determining the 'balance' of natures. It attributes each metal its characteristics in its formation from sulfur and mercury.

Al-Jildaki's most enthusiastic Anatolian follower was the Sufi mystic Ali Çelebi el-Izniki (d. 1607), a descendant of Eşrefzâde / Eşrefoğlu Abdullah Rumi (d.1469), the founder of the Ashrafiyya order, a branch of the Qadiriyya, established in Iznik (Western Anatolia).<sup>14</sup> Claiming to have traveled for many years across Maghreb, Arabia, Persia, India, and China, Ali Çelebi reported to have served scholars and sheikhs as a "slave" in his quest to learn the secrets of alchemy. As similar statements appear in al-Jildaki's works, one wonders if Ali Çelebi identified himself with al-Jildaki. He claimed to have learned the science of the philosopher's stone (*ilm el-hacer el-mükerrem*) from an Anatolian master who was a disciple of Sheikh Ali al-Marjushi al-âmâ (the blind). Al-Marjushi is believed to have flourished in Cairo and visited Anatolia during the reign of Bayezid II.<sup>15</sup>

Ali Çelebi informs that he collected various Islamic alchemical treatises over the years. These texts probably allowed him to compose the twenty-eight alchemical works that are listed in the epilogue of his *Durar al-anwar fi asrar al-ahjar* (Gleamy pearls of the secrets of the stones). Additionally, more than fifty alchemical texts in Arabic and Turkish are attributed to him.<sup>16</sup> Most of his texts are based on al-Jildaki's works. In the preface of *Sirr al-rabbani fi ilm al-mizan* (Divine secrets of the science of the balance), he explicitly mentioned al-Jildaki's *Kitab al-burhan fi asrar ilm al-mizan* (Book demonstrating the secrets of the science of the balance) and *al-Taghrib fi asrar al-tarkib* (The elimination of the secrets of compounding).

## Mecmuatü'l-mücerrebat: Ali Çelebi el-Izniki's "Laboratory Manual"

Ali Çelebi's most intriguing work is *Mecmuatü'l-mücerrebat* (A collection of tested and attested recipes), resembling a laboratory manual in Turkish.<sup>17</sup> This

<sup>14</sup> Artun, "Hearts of Gold", 102–185.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 33–62.

<sup>16</sup> For works attributed to Ali Çelebi see C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, Zweiter Supplementband (Leiden 1938), 667–68; E. İhsanoğlu, R. Şeşen, M. S. Bulut et al. (eds), *Osmanlı tabii ve tatbiki bilimler literatürü tarihi*, vol.1 (İstanbul 2006), 53–81.

<sup>17</sup> For a 17th century copy see *Mecmuatü'l-Mücerrebat*, Millet Kütüphanesi (İstanbul), MS Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa 541/1.

practical guidebook on alchemy is devoid of mysticism and rich in recipes and technical information, such as the intensity of fire required for the operations. The preface notes that the work is based on symbols and signs (*rumuz u işaret*) that Ali Çelebi recorded on sheets of paper while working with his master. It also draws upon the knowledge (*kemalat*) he acquired through trial and labor over the years. He aimed to explicitly name all substances and describe operations as clearly as possible, eliminating the need for consulting a master to practice alchemy. This book raises the following questions: Did Ali Çelebi practice alchemy? Did he have a laboratory in which he realized the recipes he described in *Mecmuatü'l-mücerrebat*?

Ali Çelebi occasionally used the term *gayet mücerrebdir* (thoroughly tested and attested). While he primarily employed the optative or imperative mood (*döşeye, saklıya, edesin, soğudasın, kızdurasın*) in most descriptions, he also utilized the first person singular, stating “I put a piece of iron in this water, I took it off, one-half was melted”.<sup>18</sup> Although Ali Çelebi does not mention where he conducted these operations, these features suggest that he personally conducted at least some operations. However, the absence of graphic proof, artifacts, and apparatus for chemical experiments from the period under study prevents us from making reliable assessments. However, a copy made in the 17th century is accompanied by a Turkish translation of a text that appears to be al-Razi’s *Kitab al-asrar*, a work on practical alchemy.<sup>19</sup> It suggests that someone with an interest in alchemical experiments might have brought these two manuals together. *Mecmuatü'l-mücerrebat* was not widely copied, especially when compared to Ali Çelebi’s some other alchemical works. The lack of mystical overtones in this work might be a reason for its relative unpopularity. Therefore, it is challenging to assert that practical alchemy was highly esteemed in Anatolia during the 16th century. Nonetheless, further studies are necessary to substantiate the practice of alchemy in Ottoman Turkey during the 16th century and thereafter.

### Sufi-Physicians Blending Alchemy with Iatrochemistry (17th c.)

In the 17th century, the alchemical knowledge embedded in Ali Çelebi’s texts was enriched with drawings of alchemical utensils and apparatus,<sup>20</sup> as well as

18 Günergun, “Convergences In and Around Bursa”, 237–238.

19 *Mecmuatü'l-Mücerrebat*, Millet Kütüphanesi (İstanbul), MS Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa 541.

20 The absence of drawings of chemical instruments in pre-17th century Ottoman alchemical





Fig. 1 Two different distillation processes are depicted in Salih b. Nasrullah's *Ghayat al-itqan fi tadbir badan al-insan* (The highest perfection in the treatment of the human body) written in Arabic. The copying date is 1722). The figure above illustrates a process in a sand bath, while the one below shows a process using a briquette oven. Süleymaniye Library (Istanbul) MS Ayasofya 3682, 26a.

recipes borrowed from European iatrochemical texts<sup>21</sup>. Notably, these included the formularies of Daniel Sennert (1572–1637), Oswald Crollius (1563–1609), and other established European iatrochemists. These European medical formularies were initially translated into Arabic under the initiatives and supervision of Salih b. Nasrullah ibn Sallum al-Halebi (d. 1669), a physician at the court of Mehmed IV (r. 1648–1687).<sup>22</sup>

The Sufi physicians, heirs of the alchemical literature accumulated by their Sufi forebears, were drawn to these new therapies and recepies, and sought to disseminate them by compiling formularies in Turkish. One such figure was Ömer b. Sinan el-Izniki, a Mawlawi physician who flourished at the end of the 17th and early 18th century. In his work *Künuz el-Hayat* (Treasures of Hu-

texts may have originated from the fact that the medieval Islamic manuscripts from which the Ottoman Sufis drew were devoid of illustrations.

21 The Ottoman Turkish equivalent of the term iatrochemistry was *tıbb-i kimyâî* (chemical medicine) or *tıbb-ı cedid* (novel medicine). These terms were used because the new recipes included inorganic compounds, such as minerals, not widely used in traditional Islamo-Galenic medicine.

22 N. Bachour, *Oswaldus Crollius and Daniel Sennert in frühneuzeitlichen Istanbul – Studien zur Rezeption des Paracelsismus im Werk des Osmanischen Arztes Salih b. Nasrullah ibn Sallum al-Halebi* (Freiburg 2012).





Fig. 2 Alchemical utensils and apparatus depicted in Ömer b. Sinan el-Izniki's *Künuz-i hayat el-insan* (Treasures of human life), written in Turkish in 1695. Istanbul University Library (Istanbul) MS T7083, 345b.

The *imbik el-hayye* (serpentine alembic) on the upper right was used for fractional distillation to separate components with different boiling points and for purifying spirits, like aqua vitae, requiring repeated distillations.

man Life),<sup>23</sup> Ömer bin Sinan states that Paracelsus transformed alchemy, which aimed to transmute common metals into gold, into the spagyric art that seeks to cure diseases. This statement clearly indicates his effort to establish a connection between alchemical practices and medical therapies.

### Ongoing Interest in Alchemy in the 18th Century: The Sufi Physician Ömer Şifai Dede

One of the most popular Sufi alchemist-physicians of the 18th century was Ömer Şifai (d. 1742). After receiving training as a physician in Bursa, he traveled to Egypt to learn *ulum-i garibe* from the Khalvati sheikh Hasan Efendi. Serving as the chief-physician at the *dariüşşifa* of Bursa, he is reputed to have mastered French and Italian medical literature. Ömer Şifai compiled more than 15 treatises in Turkish, playing a crucial role in popularizing iatrochemical recipes in Anatolia.<sup>24</sup> The dedication of *Mürşid el-muhtar fi ilm el-esrar* (An excellent guide for occult sciences) to Sheikh Hasan Efendi, along with the ti-

23 Ömer b. Sinan el-Izniki, *Künuz-i hayat el-insan*, 1695, Istanbul University Library (Istanbul), MS T7083.

24 For a list of Ömer Şifai's works see E. İhsanoğlu, R. Şeşen, M. S. Bulut et al. (eds), *Osmanlı tıbbi ilimler literatürü tarihi*, vol.1 (Istanbul 2008), 365–374.

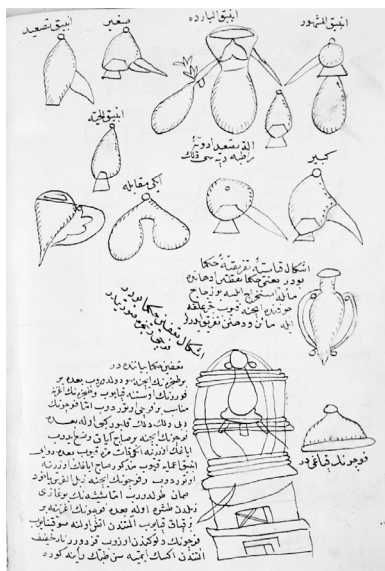


Fig. 3 Ömer Şifai's work, *Cevher el-ferid fi tıbb el-cedid* (The unique gem of the new medicine), written in Turkish in 1698. Süleymaniye Library (Istanbul), MS Hamidiye 1020, 98b.

The treatise comprises 70 figures of chemical utensils and apparatus, primarily alembics used for the production of oils, spirits, and herbal decoctions. The simplicity of the figures suggests that the author himself drew them.

tle of his book, reflects an enduring correlation between occult sciences and iatrochemistry

## Concluding Remarks

Alchemical texts compiled in the 15th and 16th centuries demonstrate Sufis' efforts to introduce medieval Islamic alchemy to Anatolia. They achieved this by drawing primarily from the works of al-Jildaki, Jabir b. Hayyan, and al-Razi. The primary channels for transmitting alchemical knowledge ran between Anatolia and Egypt, as well as Transoxania and the Iberian Peninsula until the mid-17th century. From that point onward, Sufi physicians became acquainted with European iatrochemical formularies.

The alchemical activities of Ottoman Sufi mystics appear to have been limited to spiritual practices. They studied alchemical texts to gain insights into the transformative process of aspirants, aspiring to become perfect individuals. This process was perceived as analogous to the alchemical transmutation of common metals into gold and silver.

Reliable evidence is lacking concerning Ottoman patronage of alchemy. Accounts of regular alchemical experimentation within the palace have not been found yet. Ottoman rulers or wealthy Ottomans did not financially support al-

chemical activities as Caliphs and wealthy families did in the medieval Muslim World, or the rulers did in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries to increase their revenues. In periods of monetary crisis, the Ottoman rulers simply debased the coinage and did not resort to alchemy. Consequently, there is no evidence of the existence of “laboratories” similar to those established in Europe in the early 17th century, complete with distillation apparatus, assay furnaces, and chemical utensils.

Copying and studying alchemical texts enabled Sufi mystics to amass valuable information about metals, minerals, and chemical substances, as well as on chemical processes. In the second half of the 17th century, when iatrochemical recipes were introduced, Sufi physicians, as heirs of this literary alchemical tradition, made these recipes accessible by compiling formularies in Turkish. In doing so, they introduced a practical dimension to what had initially been a seemingly purely textual tradition.

Despite the negative attitude of madrasa scholars who viewed alchemy as a harmful practice, the *ulema*’s dedication to theology, and the absence of noble patronage, the esoteric tradition of alchemy thrived among 15th- and 16th-century Ottoman Sufis of Anatolia, giving rise to a textual tradition. Given the discouraging atmosphere surrounding the practice of alchemy and the lack of both material and literary evidence, proving that Ottoman dervishes conducted experiments in search of God’s reflection in Nature is challenging.

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# Picturing the New World Marvels: Ottoman Paintings of Flora and Fauna and Political Discourse in the *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi* (1583/4)

GÜNSELİ GÜREL

*Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi* (also known as *İklim-i Cedid*) is a remarkable manuscript completed in January 1583/84, containing the earliest extant version of a text, the first one detailing new worlds and European explorations in a non-European context.\* The manuscript now held in İstanbul Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi (Beyazıt State Library) under the shelfmark MS. 4969 (hereafter IBDK 4969) was most probably the presentation copy intended for the Ottoman sultan Murad III (r.1574–1595).<sup>1</sup> It is generally attributed to one madrasa professor and

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1 There is still some debate surrounding this attribution. Thomas D. Goodrich suggests that he is the editor of the presentation copy of 1584, and Giancarlo Casale seems to agree with him as he considers it anonymous. Baki Tezcan argues convincingly that Su'ûdî, who claims to be the author in this copy, should be accepted as the author: T. Goodrich, "Sixteenth Century Ottoman Americana or a Study of *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi*", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1968, 68–70; G. Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*

poet, Seyyid Muhammed b. Emir Hasan, known by his penname Su'ūdī.<sup>2</sup> Drawing on European sources most of the work is concerned with these explorations and Americas or the “New India” referred to in this manuscript. At the same time, the introductory section provides information on the known world by using sources of Islamic geography and cosmography, including Zakariyya b. Muhammad al-Qazwini's *ʿAjā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa Gharā'ib al-Mawjūdāt* (*Wonders of Creation and the Oddities of Existence*).<sup>3</sup> This section contains comments on the limitations of traditional sources, on which geographical discoveries of this era casted some doubt.<sup>4</sup> But this does not mean that the book is devoid of marvels, which populate the seas and oceans as well as the New World—the most exotic and faraway lands not only in Ottoman and but also in the European imagination. In a similar manner, wonder and wonders remained significant in early modern European intellectual culture, especially in the context of encounters with the new worlds.<sup>5</sup>

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(Oxford 2010), 160; B. Tezcan, “The Many Lives of the First Non-Western History of the Americas: From the New Report to the History of the West Indies,” *OA*, 40 (2012) [Other Places: Ottomans travelling, seeing, writing, drawing the world — A tribute to Thomas D. Goodrich, edited by G. Hagen and B. Tezcan, Part II], 1–38 at 33–36. On the life and works of Su'ūdī see also *TDVİA* s.v. “Mehmed Su'ūdī Efendi” (C. İzgi).

- 2 Tezcan, “Many Lives,” 24: “the decorations of the frontispiece (zahriye) of the royal presentation copy are in fact incomplete, suggesting that the final presentation of the codes to Murad III may not have taken place.”
- 3 Goodrich, “Sixteenth Century Ottoman Americana,” 71–79.
- 4 IBDK 4969, fol.5a. For other examples see M. Sariyannis, “*ʿAjā'ib ve gharā'ib*: Ottoman Collections of Mirabilia and Perceptions of the Supernatural” *Der Islam*, 92/2 (2015), 442–467 at 452–459.
- 5 The literature on European travel literature in the context of encounters with new worlds is vast. See for example, S. Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: the of the New World* (Oxford 1991); D. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, 2 vols (Chicago 1965); F. Chiapelli and A.J.B Michael, *First Images of America: the Impact of the New World on the Old* (Berkeley 1976); A. Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Text: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Cambridge 1992); idem, *European Encounters with the New World from Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven 1993); A. Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America: An Intellectual History of English Colonization* (Cambridge 2003); J.-P. Rubies, *Travel and Ethnology: South India through European Eyes, 1250–1625* (Cambridge 2004); M. B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400–1600* (Ithaca 2018); C. R. Johnson, *The German Discovery of the World: Renaissance Encounters with the Strange and Marvelous* (Charlottesville 2008); S. Davies, *Renaissance Ethnography and the Invention of the Human: New Worlds, Maps and Monsters* (Cambridge 2016).

IBDK 4969 was part of a sizeable corpus of illustrated manuscripts containing Turkish prose works on wonders, miracles and the occult as well as romances with stories of monsters, charms and talismans set in distant times and lands. Furthermore, these manuscripts are related to each other in terms of particular aspects of image-text relationship as well as physical and visual characteristics. The majority of the texts are translations from Arabic and Persian, of which, some had been translated earlier in the 15th century, but have not been illustrated at the Ottoman court prior to the mid-1580s.<sup>6</sup>

Thomas Goodrich's extensive work on *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi*, including a critical translation based on a copy in Newberry Library, Chicago dated to around 1600, had laid the foundation for scholarly discussion. Goodrich identified Spanish and Italian sources on the New World and presented a list of known manuscript copies.<sup>7</sup> Building on his contributions, scholars have explored the book's place in early modern geographical literature, delving into the distinction of the presentation copy intended for the sultan and its underlying political messages.<sup>8</sup> In particular, historians Giancarlo Casale and Baki Tezcan argue that the manuscript presented to Murad III should be considered as a Book of Wonders that satisfied the curiosity for exotic and foreign while inviting the sultan and the ruling elite to be more politically active in the distant seas and lands explored and conquered by the Spanish and Portuguese. However, a closer examination of the remaining pictures together with the text indicate that the two aspects may not have been mutually exclusive.

How did the visual representations of wonders of the New World influence the political messages of the book? In addressing to this question, I draw on the emerging scholarship on Ottoman interest in the outside world. Scholars like Giancarlo Casale, Emine Fetvacı and Baki Tezcan have chronicled

6 For an overview of the manuscripts see S. Bağcı, F. Çağman, G. Renda and Z. Tanındı, *Ottoman Painting* (Istanbul 2006), 186–211.

7 Goodrich, "Sixteenth Century Ottoman Americana", 71–79.

8 G. Hagen, "Kâtib Çelebi and *Târih-i Hind-i Garbi*", *Güneydoğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 12 (1998), 101–115; R. Murphy, "Review of Thomas D. Goodrich, *The Ottoman Turks and the New World*," *ArchOtt*, 12 (1987–1992), 277–280, esp. 279–280; Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 160–163; idem, "Global Politics in the 1580s: One Canal, Twenty Thousand Cannibals, and an Ottoman Plot to Rule the World," *Journal of World History*, 18/3 (2007), 267–296; Tezcan, "Many Lives"; idem, "Law in China or Conquest in the Americas: Competing Constructions of Political Space in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire" *Journal of World History*, 24/1 (2013), 107–134.



how sixteenth-century Ottomans participated in the 'Age of Exploration' and demonstrated that their representations of various 'others' were linked to contemporary political dynamics.<sup>9</sup> Following these scholars, rather than questioning the authenticity of Ottoman knowledge about the new worlds, I use the depictions to discuss how wonder mediated geographical imagination vis-à-vis motives and agendas of the manuscript's makers. This inquiry builds on the scholarship on early modern Europe, exploring the significance of 'marvels of India' for European perceptions of peoples and places previously unknown in the Americas and Indian Ocean. Furthermore, it studies in detail the role of the representation of the 'marvellous' in European notions of conquest and appropriation. However this interaction is still approached primarily through a Eurocentric lens, and non-European perceptions of marvels remain little-explored.<sup>10</sup> By studying Ottoman visual representations of a realm that early modern Europeans considered exotic, my aim is not only to draw attention to the manifestation of interests and sensibilities associated with Renaissance Europe in what is seen as a non-European culture but also to discuss their particular meanings in historical context.

## Contextualising IBDK 4969

In order to begin to understand the meanings and functions of the depictions of the wonders of the new world in IBDK 4969, we must attempt to situate the illustrated manuscript into its broader cultural and socio-political context.

9 Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*. For an alternative argument about the centrality of the Mediterranean in early modern Ottoman policies and imperial imagination as well as the perception of the Indian Ocean and New World as 'peripheries' see P. Emiralioğlu, *Geographical Knowledge and Imperial Culture in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Farnham 2014); B. Tezcan, "The Frank in the Ottoman Eye of 1583", in J. G. Harper (ed.), *The Turk and Islam in the Western Eye, 1450–1750* (Routledge 2011), 267–296; E. Fetvacı, "Others and Other Geographies in the Şehnâme-i Selīm Hân", *OA*, 40 (2012), 81–100. See also A. Ekşigil, "Ottoman Visions of the West (15th–17th Centuries)", unpublished MA thesis, McGill University, 2014.

10 Exceptions include S. Subrahmanyam and M. Alam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400–1800* (Cambridge 2007). See also S. Subrahmanyam, "Taking Stock of the Franks: South Asian views of Europeans and Europe, 1500–1800" *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 42 (2005), 69–100; V. Gupta, "Wonder Reoriented: Manuscripts and Experience in Islamicate Societies of South Asia (ca. 1450–1600)", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, SOAS University of London, 2020.

The presentation copy intended for Murad III was made at a time when the Ottoman state underwent a profound socio-political transformation one that amounted to a regime change.<sup>11</sup> An important aspect of this transformation was the growing political importance of the sultan's close—and often unofficial—companions and members of the harem, namely royal women and palace eunuchs. Concomitantly, members of the inner court empowered by their proximity to the sultan, played a major role in its cultural activities.<sup>12</sup> Their empowerment was accompanied by a redefinition of the roles of members of the imperial council headed by the grand vizier and those of the members of the inner palace, ushering in a period of intense factional strife.<sup>13</sup> As argued by Emine Fetvacı, illustrated manuscripts played an active role in advancing the claims and interests of different court factions.

In the case of IBDK 4969, the significant figures shaping its messages and concerns are ambiguous. Giancarlo Casale proposes a potential connection with the 'Indian Ocean faction.'<sup>14</sup> Although it is difficult to identify who oversaw the illustrated manuscript's contents, the statements within the book regarding the Suez Canal project align with the political agenda of the 'Indian Ocean faction', led by the grand vizier Koca Sinan Pasha. Sinan Pasha, a patron of illustrated manuscripts with political undertones, may have played a role in the manuscript's creation.<sup>15</sup>

11 For a designation of the period between 1580 and 1826 as the "Second Empire," and a thoughtful analysis of its political structures see B. Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge 2010). For relevant aspects of crisis and change see e.g. C. H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541–1600)* (Princeton 1986); L.P. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford 1993). On the implications of period's transformations on architectural patronage, see G. Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton 2005), 506–520.

12 Z. Tanındı, "Bibliophile Aghas (Eunuchs) at Topkapı Saray", *Muqarnas*, 21 (2004) (Essays in Honor of J. M. Rogers), 333–343; E. Fetvacı, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court* (Indianapolis 2013).

13 This development is reflected, among other things, by Mustafa 'Ali's depiction of the reign of Murad III, which starts with an account of the close circle around the sultan. This has not been done for the description of the reigns of previous sultans. Mustafa 'Ali, *Künhü'l ahbār*, fols. 286a–91a; see Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 294–95 for a summary and 176–77 for analysis of the rise of the circle around the sultan.

14 Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 160–163.

15 Fetvacı, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court*, 218–237.

Alternatively, the manuscript's association with Damad Ibrahim Pasha, who acted as a patron to Su'ūdī is worth considering.<sup>16</sup> He was married to Ayşe Sultan, a daughter of Murad III and his powerful concubine (and later Queen Mother) Safiye Sultan. Ayşe Sultan and her sister Fatma Sultan were the owners of a remarkable Turkish miscellany of astrology, talismans, and divination with a series of single images of wonders of the world prepared in two richly illustrated copies for Sultan Murad III's daughters in 1582. Entitled *Maṭālī' üs-sa'āda ve menābi' üs-siyāde* (*Ascensions of Felicity and Sources of Ascendancy*), the manuscripts now in the Piermont Morgan Library (New York) and the Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris) contain an adopted translation of a late 14th and early 15th-century Jalayirid Book of Wonders, *Kitāb al-Bulhān* (the Book of Surprises) made by Su'ūdī.<sup>17</sup> Su'ūdī's connection to Ibrahim Pasha raises intriguing possibilities. While it remains speculative, he may have presented his works to the sultan through the mediation of Ibrahim Pasha.

### Making sense of the illustrations of the New World:

Creating a manuscript within and around the court involved a process of careful planning that evolved through drafts, suggesting that illustrations were not haphazardly selected merely for aesthetic appeal. While draft versions of *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbī* do not appear to have survived, insights gained from studying the production processes of manuscripts like the *Shāhnāma-i Selim Khān* (an illustrated historical account of the reign of Selim II completed in 1581) and *Dāsītān-ı Ferruḥ ve Hümā* (a romance completed in 1601/2 and dedicated to

16 Tezcan, "Law in China or Conquest in the Americas," 131; idem, "The Many Lives of the First Non-Western History of the Americas," 33–37.

17 Ayşe Sultan's copy is Morgan Library, New York M.788: B. Schmitz, *Islamic and Indian Manuscripts and Paintings in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1997), 71–84. Fatma Sultan's copy is BnF, Paris Suppl. Turc 242. For a catalogue entry, E. Blochet, *Catalogue des Manuscrits Turcs de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris 1932–33), 279–280. The manuscript has been digitalised and can be accessed via <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8427189w> For a facsimile edition published with a translation and accompanied by a volume of essays, see M. Miró (ed.), *The Book of Felicity* (Barcelona 2007). I thank Prof. Serpil Bağcı for sharing with me her copy of this rare source, which is not available in the libraries in England and Turkey. Bağcı et al., *Ottoman Painting*, 191–192. On the Arabic original see, S. Carboni, *Il Kitāb al-bulhān di Oxford* (Torino 1988). This manuscript is available online: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/5c9da286-6a02-406c-b990-0896b8d8bbb0/surfaces/af-05c73f-f70b-4c4c-afc9-d7dcdec42366/>

Mehmed III) reveal that the subject matter and articulation of the paintings mattered for their creators. Far from being arbitrary *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbî*, like other Ottoman illustrated books wonders, resembles a visual cabinet of curiosities in two dimensions.<sup>18</sup> Much like collectors, the creators of an illustrated book of wonders carefully curated selections from wondrous phenomena described in the text, choosing how to visualise and represent them. This deliberate selection process underscores the creators' intentions to portray faraway lands in specific and intentional ways.

The copy of *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbî* intended for the sultan, which has two world maps and five illustrations on the remained pages, depicting the flora and fauna of the New World. As Goodrich, who reconstructed this illustrated manuscript, remarks, it originally contained more images.<sup>19</sup> He points to a missing folio in the first section, describing India and the Indian Ocean region, likely featured an image of the famous WaqWaq tree, given the similar introduction style used for the remaining illustrations.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, a folio is missing after the account of a half-man, half-fish creature (a "merman" if you will) near Cubagua island near modern-day Venezuela. The description reads: "In that sea, there is a kind of fish that sometimes appears. Its upper half is like a man's; it has hair and a beard. Its arms are also like a man's, but it is hairy. It is in this form."<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, both images are found in a version that is in the Topkapı Palace Library and illustrated slightly later than the presentation copy (figure 1).<sup>22</sup> While identifying the European sources that the Ottoman text draws on, Goodrich remarks that the image of a merman is not found in the *Historia general le Las*

18 O. Impey and A. MacGregor (eds.), *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Oxford 1985); P. Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley 1994).

19 Goodrich, "Sixteenth Century Ottoman Americana", 54–56.

20 BDK, fols. 7b–8a. Also noted in Tezcan "The Many Lives", 7.

21 BDK, fol. 56b–57a. Quoted in Goodrich, "Sixteenth Century Ottoman Americana", 197. For the merman see, TPL R.1488, fol.63b.

22 TPL R.1488, fols. 18a, 63a. A facsimile of the Revan manuscript (without marginalia) is published: Istanbul Research Center, *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbî veya Hadîs-i Nev (A History of the Discovery of America)*, ed. S. Artemel (Istanbul 1987). The institution also published a version that contains a transcription and Turkish and English translations, see, F. Yavuz, R. Bragner et al., *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbî veya Hadîs-i Nev – History of the West Indies known as the New Hadith* (Istanbul 1999).

*Indias*, which was the foundation of this part.<sup>23</sup> It appears that here the makers of the Ottoman manuscript drew inspiration from the depiction of such a creature in the section on sea creatures in *Wonders of Creation* manuscripts, which were among the sources of the *Tarīḥ-i Hind-i Ğarbi*.<sup>24</sup>

Such a scenario finds a parallel in the image on folio 133b that depicts birds of the New World (figure 2). Notably, the illustration features the legendary Simurgh or phoenix, which is not mentioned in the text. Significantly, the marvellous bird is represented snatching a naked figure. Although the figure is unfortunately severely damaged, Bağcı et al. connect this depiction to an episode from the *Shahnama*. As they note, the drawing may have been inspired by the scene of Simurgh carrying Zal back to his father, Sam, illustrated in various copies of the work.<sup>25</sup> It appears that old marvels and myths had a role in shaping Ottoman perceptions of the new worlds and their flora and fauna, as had the stories known as marvels of the East or, more precisely, India did in European and Persian imaginations.<sup>26</sup>

The remaining images emphasise the New World's flora and fauna, as exemplified by the image accompanying the wonders of Uraba and Darien ("acā'ib al-Ūrāba and Ṭāryān") (figure 3).<sup>27</sup> The text under this heading details various animals, tapirs, parrots, turkeys, and abundant fruit trees, like avocado, mamme, guava and one that resembles jujube.<sup>28</sup> An ethnographic account follows, covering physical features, lifestyle, marital, social and religious practices, as well as the trade of the locals. Despite possessing some traits of barbarity, they lead partially civilised lives with men typically going about naked, except for nobles, who wear a gold ring over their genitals, and women wearing a loin cloth from waist to knees. They worship the sun, create idols and establish simple towns.<sup>29</sup>

23 Ibid, 197.

24 For early versions of Qazwini manuscripts containing an image of waterman, see S. Carboni, *The Wonders of Creation and Singularities of Painting: a Study of the Ilkhanid London Qazwini* (Edinburgh 2015), 156.

25 Bağcı et al., *Ottoman Painting*, 203, fn 44 and 204.

26 Subrahmanyam, "Monsters, Miracles"; Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, Cosmos*, 170. On topographical wonders associated with India, see also Gupta, "Wonder Reoriented."

27 IBDK 4969, fol. 51b–54b. Quoted in Goodrich, "Sixteenth Century Ottoman Americana", 368–373.

28 Quoted in *ibid.*, 368–370.

29 IBDK 4969, fol. 53b–54b: ...*Ve ol diyārın halkınıñ elvānı çok şarudur. Ve kâmetleri vasaṭ ve saçları kaçları çokdur. Ricālī üryān gezerler. Ama begleri altundan bir mücevvef nesne*

However, the depiction in the manuscript intended for the sultan notably excludes the inhabitants and their customs. Instead, it focuses on several tapirs among trees and grass, together with colourful parrots and turkeys. This preference for showcasing natural wonders over wonders pertaining to human agency is not an isolated occurrence in the manuscript. In other instances, too, the makers of the manuscript appear to have highlighted the natural wonders over customs and traditions, as seen in the second image of the remaining portion of the manuscript, accompanying the description of the unique qualities of Hispaniola (figure 4).<sup>30</sup> The image depicts the island's peculiar animals, namely the manatee (or sea-cow)—a hybrid creature depicted in the lower right corner of the composition—and cocuyos, a type of bird with illuminated wings, as the Spanish embark on a nightly expedition to witness these marvellous animals. It also provides insight into the island's abundant natural resources, including logwood, cassia trees, and a mountain that boasts a lapis-lazuli, salt, gold, silver, and copper mine, as detailed in the accompanying text. Nevertheless, the text also delves into the physical characteristics of the indigenous people, including their skin colour and facial features, as well as their customs, such as clothing, marriage and burial practices, and religious beliefs involving the worship of idols and divination practices.<sup>31</sup>

The emphasis flora and fauna in IBDK 4969 was not an inevitable visual choice by the manuscript's creators. In contrast, another illustrated Turkish prose work on wonders, found in the British Library under the shelf mark

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*peydâ idüb zekerlerine geçürürler. Ve bunları bellerinden dizlerine dek tennüre tutarlar. Ve murçe şeklinde bir nev' hayvân vardır. Anı tutub bir nev' nebât ile hâlt iderler. Ve bedenlerine tılâ iderler...ve kulaıklarına keşeler ve tudaıklarına ikiyeş halka taşarlar. Begleri ne kadarsa 'avret isterse alır. Ama gayrisi ikiden artuk almaz. Ve herkes akâribinden evlenir... Hışarları küçükdür... Tâ'ife-i mezbûre şemse 'ibâdet iderler. Ve şeytân la'în ba'zı ezmânda anlara zâhir olur. Her ne şekilde zühûr iderse anuñ misâli bir şanem peydâ idüb aña taparlar...* Quoted in Goodrich, "Sixteenth Century Ottoman Americana", 371–373.

30 The account in IBDK 4969 is incomplete; the manuscript breaks off at fol. 45a. Goodrich, "Sixteenth Century Ottoman Americana", 342–347. The image is on IBDK 4969, 43b.

31 IBDK 4969, fol. 44b describes the physical attributes and clothing of indigenous people: ... *Ve cezâ'ir-i mezbûrede sâkin olan eşhâşın elvâni kestâne gibidir. Ve gözlerinin nûru azdır. Ve fehm ve idrâkları kâşîrdir. Ve beynleri dirâz ve sürâbları vâsî' ve derun ve devrikdir. Ve cebheleri büyük ve kati bekdir her yarak te'sir eylemez. Saçları bellerine dek inmiştir. Ve cümlesi üryân gezüb ekserî miyânlarından zânûlarına dek bir hırka ile setr ederler. Ve güşlarına ve beynlerine halkalar taşarlar...* For a translation the remainder of the account see Goodrich, "Sixteenth Century Ottoman Americana", 345–347.



Harleian 5500 (ca. 1595–1600), sharpens its focus on the wonders of human world. Man-made monuments, customs and practices form the majority of manuscript's remaining paintings. This emphasis on cultural geography is evident in an entry on folios 42a–42b, which relates both a strange sea creature and a ritual. It starts with a description of the monstrous creature, evidently a centaur, which is half man and half horse.<sup>32</sup> It then shifts to a festival with religious undertones, which forms the subject of the accompanying image rather than the peculiar creature (figure 5). This departure from the emphasis on natural wonders indicates a diverse array of visual choices made by makers of the Ottoman manuscripts within the genre.

In addition to strange creatures, the image in IBDK 4969 related to Hispaniola Island prominently features the Spanish conquerors (figure 4). They are depicted experiencing the natural wonders of the otherwise “empty” lands, the island they possessed, suggesting a symbolic connection forged by the manuscript's makers between marvelling and possession. This association is similarly evident in the first image of the manuscript, portraying Spanish King Ferdinand's audience with Columbus. In this scene, Columbus recounts the riches of the Americas, presenting specimens of precious minerals, exotic flora and fauna as gifts (figure 6).<sup>33</sup> As a result, the King names the newfoundland “New India,” appointing Columbus as its governor, and then sends him on another expedition.<sup>34</sup>

Goodrich deems the illustration at this point in the text, somewhat redundant, as the source did not have one in this place.<sup>35</sup> Baki Tezcan notes that the

32 Harleian 5500 fols. 42 a–b.

33 IBDK 4969, fol. 25a.

34 IBDK 4969, fols. 24b–25a: ...mülākāt idüb pîş-keşlerini çekdi. Ve ol cezîreniñ evşâf ve ahbarını beyân ve māl ve metâ'ını 'ayân eyledi. Otuz 'aded tûtiler getürmüş idi ki ba'zı yâkût misâl ahmer ve ba'zı levn za'ferânda şufret-i şâfiye ile mülevven ve ba'zı otuz 'aded elvân-i muhtelif ile münakkaş ve müzeyyen idi. Ve nice 'aded hurda hurda ernebler ki kuş ve zenbleri fâr misâl levnleri âbî ve peşmleri sincâbî idi. Ve 'ğâlîpâos' nâm bir mürğ bōş-birâm getürmüş idi ki laḥmî tâūsdan leziz idi. Ve üşûl-u nebâtdan bir aşl nesne ki ḥalâvetde şekere beñzer. Ve bahâr kısmından bir şey 'acîb ki ta'amı tarçınıya karîb idi. Pes rûy bed-nihâd bu kıssalardan katî mesrûr ve şâd olub kûluna çok ri'âyet eyledi. Ve ol diyâra 'Hind-i Cedîde' deyü nâm virüb ol vilâyetin hükümetini kûluna tefvîz takallüd eyledi... ve yine bin beş yüz adam alub on yedi pâre keştî ile tekrâr Hind-i Cedîd semtine gide...”  
Quoted in Goodrich, “Sixteenth Century Ottoman Americana”, 329–330.

35 Goodrich, “Sixteenth Century Ottoman Americana”, 329–330.



depiction suggests the manuscript makers' desire to draw the attention to Spanish gains in the New World.<sup>36</sup> He points out to the unusual depiction of Ferdinand as a mighty ruler comparable to an Ottoman monarch in terms of costume and pose. The architectural setting, including circular arches, dome and decorative details aligns with contemporary Ottoman architecture and representation of architecture in manuscript paintings. The fountain in the middle, a common feature in Ottoman enthronement scenes, aids to familiarise the foreign ruler. As such, the audience scene portrays the Spanish ruler in a manner, Tezcan proposes, worth considering as an example particularly in aspects, like undertaking expeditions to faraway lands.<sup>37</sup> Parrots and hutias depicted in the image, also featured later in the manuscript's final section on the Americas, signify the fecundity of the New World and its conquest.

The emphasis on the fecundity of the faraway lands becomes clear when comparing the illustrations of the presentation copy with later illustrated versions of the text, especially the Newberry Library manuscript as Goodrich establishes a close correlation between this copy and the original Spanish version. Returning to the image illustrating the natural wonders of Uraba and Darien, this picture, like the others, is introduced by the remark, "among the trees that have been mentioned above, they depict the animal in this way," referring to the depiction in the European source.<sup>38</sup> The image in the Newberry Library manuscript shows a couple of animals against three trees with tufts of grass.<sup>39</sup> This suggests that the image in IBDK 4969 copy made for Sultan Murad III, depicting various tapirs, colourful parrots and turkeys departs from the original, and later Ottoman versions of the text for that matter, in terms of detail and variety of animals. The same can be said about image regarding the New World's animals, namely jaguar, anteater, and armadillo (figure 7).<sup>40</sup> The Newberry copy's image depicts the three abovementioned animals in three registers without distinguishing the levels with landscape elements.<sup>41</sup> Again the image in IBDK

36 Tezcan, "The Frank in the Ottoman Eye of 1583," 265–296, esp. 281–283; idem, "The Many Lives", 23–29; idem, "Law in China or Conquest in the America", 125–126.

37 Tezcan, "Law in China or Conquest in the America", 125.

38 Goodrich, "Sixteenth Century Ottoman Americana", 370.

39 For a black and white reproduction see, *ibid*, 135 and 135–137.

40 IBDK 4969, 132a. For comparison see black and white copies of the interpretations of the illustration in later manuscripts reproduced in *ibid*, 171–174.

41 *Ibid*, 172, 174.

4969 provides a richer interpretation with different animals depicted in pairs, in the words of Goodrich, “like a parade to Noah’s ark,” against a background of rocky hills with several trees.<sup>42</sup> Despite featuring predatory animals, the scene exudes a sense of peace and harmony, portraying, much like the previous image, an idyllic setting where different species coexist.

Highlighting variety and diversity as well as peace and tranquillity, the images of IBDK 4969 present the New World as a place of abundance and wealth, a paradise on earth so to speak. This perspective becomes evident in the illustration of the wonders of Darien, where a tree with water at the centre echoes the imagery of the tree of life found in religious-themed images with flowing water at its roots (figure 8). For example, it is found in a depiction of the prophet Muhammad near the spring of paradise integrated into the Persian *Fālnāma* (H.1702). This manuscript seemingly originated in a Shi’i milieu in the porous Ottoman-Safavid border during the last quarter of the 16th century, but it is unclear when this manuscript entered the palace collection.<sup>43</sup> More significantly, we find a similar figure in an illustration depicting Adam and Eve with their twin children in the copy of the *Zübdetü’l-tevārīh* presented to Sultan Murad III in 1583, that is around the same time as the IBDK 4969 (figure 9).<sup>44</sup> In another copy of the text dated 1586, we find the figure illustrating the water of life (ab-i ḥayāt) in the story of Alexander’s search for the marvellous spring with the prophet Khidr, who is shown by its side in the painting (figure 10).<sup>45</sup>

“The marvellous”, writes Stephen Greenblatt in the context of Christopher Columbus’ explorations, “has little or nothing to do with the grotesque or outlandish,” denoting, “to be sure, some departure, displacement, or surpassing of the normal or the probable, but in the direction of delicious variety and loveliness.”<sup>46</sup> Columbus and subsequent European explorers, like Bartolome de Las Casas, presented the Americas as a sort of earthly paradise to encourage colo-

42 Ibid, 174.

43 The image is on folio 26b of the album. Farhad and Bağcı eds. *Fālnama: the Book of Omens* (London 2009), 53: “The volume must have entered the Ottoman royal collection some time before the reign of Ahmed III (reigned 1703–1730), whose seal appears on the flyleaf and offers a *terminus ante quem* for its acquisition.” The binding dates to the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876–1909), which is when the folios were bounded or rebounded.

44 TIEM 1973 fol. 18b.

45 TPL H.1321, fol. 24b.

46 Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*, 76.

nial activities.<sup>47</sup> Maybe, we can assign a similar role to the images of the presentation copy of *Tarīḥ-i Hind-i Ġarbī* dedicated to Murad III, helping the Ottoman ruler to develop a political interest in the region blessed with copiousness.

Highlighting a concern for the natural world, in the presentation copy of *Tarīḥ-i Hind-i Ġarbī*, pictorial messages added to the narrative, portraying the New World as a land of abundance and wealth. This portrayal is but one of ways in which Ottomans engaged with distant lands. The depictions of wonders of the world have often been overlooked as curious fancies, entertainment or mere superstition. Engaging with this material requires us to move away from our post-Enlightenment empiricist ways of thinking about ‘reality’ vs. ‘fantastic.’ Seen in this way, a detailed examination of Ottoman illustrated Books of Wonders, paying attention to their images and text together with contexts of production and consumption, as this hinted by the case of IBDK 4969 in this short paper, are crucial sources to better understand political and intellectual interests in the non-Ottoman world.

To conclude, I would like to point that there are intriguing parallels between the visual and verbal presentation of the marvels of the New World at the Ottoman court as reflected in the *Tarīḥ-i Hind-i Ġarbī* and Renaissance European contexts—a point that requires further research. While tentative suggestions for a possible patron have been made, further research will unravel the individuals who shared the ideas and agendas expressed in the manuscript concerning Ottoman activities and interests in distant lands.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 52–85; Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World*, 165–255.



Fig. 1 The WaqWaq Tree in India. *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi*, TPL R. 1488, ca, 1580-1590, fol. 18a.



Fig. 2 Birds. Su 'udî, *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi*, 1583/84, IBDK 4969, fol. 133b.





Fig. 3 Wonders of Uraba and Darien. Su'ûdî, *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbî*, 1583/84, IBDK 4969, fol.53a.



Fig. 4 Haiti. Su 'ūdī, *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi*, 1583/84, IBDK 4969, fol.43b.





Fig. 5 Ritual and the smoking tree. BL Harl. 5500, fol. 42a.



Fig. 6 King Ferdinand receiving Columbus. Sü'üdî, *Tarîḫ-i Hind-i Garbî*, 1583/84, IBDK 4969, fol. 25a.



Fig. 7 New World's fauna. Su'udî, *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbî*, 1583/84, IBDK 4969, fol. 132a.





Fig. 8 Tree and water (detail). Su'ūdī, *Tarīḥ-i Hind-i Ġarbī*, 1583/84, IBDK 4969, fol.53a.



Fig. 9 Adam and Eve with their twin children. Seyyid Lokman, *Zübdetü't-tevārīh*, 1583, TİEM 1973, fol. 18b.

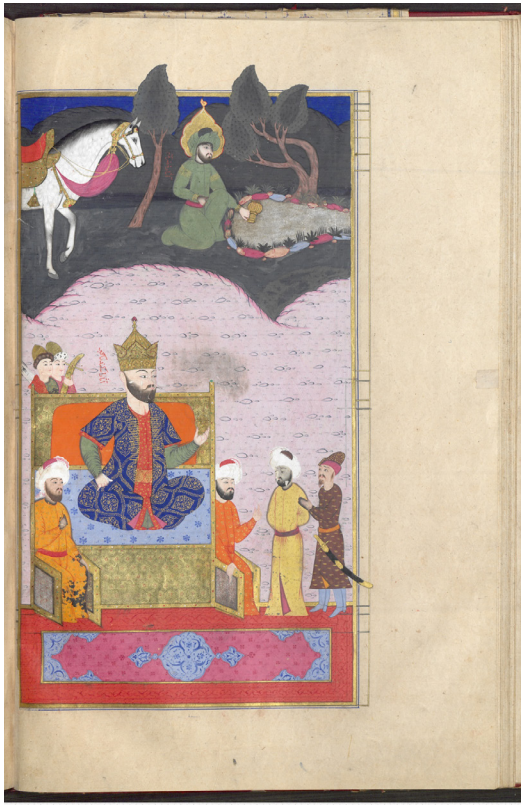


Fig. 10 Alexander in search for the Water of Life. TPL H.1321, fol. 24b.

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# L'harmonie des affaires d'Orient et d'Occident.

## Un aperçu sur la cosmovision ottomane et la théorie musicale du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle

GÜNEŞ IŞIKSEL

Au tournant du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, spécifiquement après la défaite cuisante contre l'armée timouride en 1402, le beylicat ottoman devient un centre névralgique de conflits internes. Ces luttes concernent non seulement les fils de Bayezid pour le trône, mais aussi des tensions plus larges entre la dynastie et les seigneurs des frontières, les militaires et les lettrés, ainsi que la cour et les confréries soufies. Ces groupes concurrents, caractérisés par des perspectives intellectuelles et des ambitions politiques divergentes voire souvent opposées, cherchent non seulement à forger leur propre identité, mais également à redéfinir les catégories socioculturelles existantes et à imposer leur cosmovision<sup>1</sup>. Bien que les perturbations initiales de l'Interrègne (1402–1422) aient représenté un défi pour l'ordre politique établi, ils ont graduellement créé les conditions propices à l'émergence de nouvelles form(ul)ations et synthèses. Ces dernières, affectant divers champs

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1 Sur les visions du monde, autrement dit cosmovisions, médiévales v., entre autres, C. D. Pennock et A. Power, « Globalizing Cosmologies », *Past & Present*, 238, suppl.13 (2018), pp. 88–115.

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tels que le social, le culturel, et l'artistique, ont contribué à l'émergence de nouveaux idiolectes politiques ainsi que de formes symboliques innovantes. Ma contribution au projet GHOST se concentre spécifiquement sur l'analyse des discours autour des visions (et divisions) légitimes du monde, depuis l'Inter-règne jusqu'au premier quart du siècle suivant. Cette présentation vise à exposer de manière succincte les premiers résultats de cette recherche, en soulignant le lien entre la vision du monde dominante et l'élaboration d'une nouvelle théorie musicale<sup>2</sup>.

Il est crucial de préciser d'emblée que mon objectif est l'étude de l'interconnexion entre les concepts musicaux et les perspectives cosmologiques. Partant, cet analyse se focalise sur la manière dont les théoriciens ont conceptualisé le lien entre la musique et l'univers, plutôt que de s'immerger dans les détails de la théorie musicale en elle-même, les modes de composition, l'apprentissage et la pratique (*meşk*), ou encore les spécificités des instruments musicaux contemporains. Je propose, dans un premier temps, un résumé extrêmement condensé des cosmovisions populaires des XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles. Je me penche ensuite sur un type spécifique de calendriers astrologiques, révélant les tentatives d'harmonisation de phénomènes naturels et surnaturels ainsi que des événements ordinaires et extraordinaires. Enfin, mon attention porte sur la théorie musicale et son interaction avec le champ politique.

## Les premiers modèles

L'importance des cosmovisions au sein des communautés tardo-médiévales sous l'administration ottomane ne saurait être trop soulignée. Ces paradigmes, en tant que systèmes de représentation, définissaient comment ces communautés interprétaient leur rapport avec la nature, le monde social et à l'univers

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2 Mes sources principales sont : H. Tekin, «Ladikli Mehmed Çelebi ve er-Risâletü'l-Fethiyye'si», Université de Niğde, Thèse de doctorat non-publiée, 1999; B. B. Çelik, « Hızır Bin Abdullah'ın Kitâbü'l Edvâr'ı ve Makamların İncelenmesi », Université Marmara, Thèse de doctorat non-publiée, 2001 ; Seydî, *Seydî's Book on Music: A 15th Century Turkish Discourse*, E. Popescu-Judetza et E. Neubauer, éd. (Frankfurt 2004) ; A. Ghrab, « Commentaire Anonyme du Kitab al-Adwar Édition critique, traduction et présentation des lectures arabes de l'œuvre de Şafî al-Dîn al-Urmawî », Université Paris-Sorbonne, Thèse de doctorat non-publiée, 2009 ; Ahmed Oğlu Şükrullah, *Şükrullah'ın risâlesi ve 15. yüzyıl şark musikisi nazariyatı*, M. Bardakçı éd. (İstanbul 2012) ; Kırşehirli Yusuf bin Nizameddin, *Risâle-i Mûsikî*. trad. U. Sezikli, O. M. Öztürk éd. (Ankara 2014).

dans son ensemble. Chaque système, en structurant la perception de la vision et de la division du monde, établissait un ordre qui reflétait non seulement les spécificités de son écosystème, mais servait aussi à justifier une répartition inégale du pouvoir entre différents groupes sociaux et entre les genres, mais elles incarnaient également les principes régulateurs sous-jacents.

Ces cosmogonies, loin d'être perçues comme des limitations, légitimaient les pratiques sociales et renforçaient la confiance collective en validant l'ordre établi et en formant les bases du lien social. Les communautés étaient donc contraintes de se conformer, de respecter les interdits et de maintenir cet équilibre pour éviter les maladies, la mort, les agressions ou les conflits. Ces modes de pensée établissaient aussi un continuum et une affiliation entre les individus et leur environnement, entre l'ordre cosmique et l'ordre humain. La prépondérance de la notion d'harmonie ou d'équilibre était patente. Les discours dominants, souvent empreints d'images, de métaphores et de paraboles, gravitaient autour de cette notion centrale<sup>3</sup>.

Les *melhames*, un genre littéraire populaire de l'époque, offrent un aperçu des croyances, des peurs, des espoirs et contraintes prévalant dans ces communautés. Ces textes adoptent divers systèmes de corrélation pour classer les jours de l'année selon qu'ils soient propices, défavorables, voire interdits pour les activités quotidiennes. Leur objectif principal est de prédire des événements futurs, notamment des catastrophes sociales et naturelles, en se basant sur des phénomènes astrologiques, climatiques et géophysiques, mais sans recourir à des méthodes de calculs complexes. Ils s'appuient sur des observations élémentaires de signes célestes, tels que l'ascension de Sirius, la configuration astrale des sept planètes dans les signes du zodiaque, et les éclipses lunaires ou solaires. Ces pronostics sont formulés comme des augures, et exprimés en termes de clauses hypothétiques, pouvant être mathématiquement représentées par une implication simple de la forme  $x \rightarrow y$ . Elles ont une portée générale et contribuent à faire accepter les défis et les transformations subis par les communautés locales en période de profonds bouleversements politiques et sociaux. Force est de noter que la teneur des prédictions concerne la société dans son ensemble, sans jamais se focaliser sur des individus<sup>4</sup>.

3 M. Balivet, *Romanie byzantine et pays de Rûm turc. Histoire d'un espace d'imbrication gréco-turque* (Istanbul 1994); G. Hagen, « Chaos, Order, Power, Salvation: Heroic Hagiography's Response to the Ottoman Fifteenth Century », *JOTSA*, 1/1-2 (2014), pp. 91-109.

4 Cf. Ş. Boyraz, *Fal Kitabı (Melhemeler ve Türk Halk Kültürü)* (Istanbul 2006); C. Grenier,

Dans de théories cosmologiques plus complexes du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, on retrouve généralement l'idée d'une Terre sphérique, immobile et située au centre de l'univers. Les corps célestes, tels que la lune, Vénus, Mercure, le soleil, Mars, Jupiter et Saturne, sont décrits comme orbitant autour de la Terre selon des trajectoires circulaires et régulières. Ces objets sont considérés comme immuables en termes de substance et de taille, à l'instar des étoiles fixes en termes de position. Par conséquent, tout changement observé dans le ciel est supposé se produire dans la sphère sublunaire aux niveaux physiques, sonores, et autres<sup>5</sup>. Une caractéristique fondamentale de cet univers est l'amour mutuel entre ses entités créées, exprimé sous forme de concorde, qui forge une unité protégeant contre toute vulnérabilité potentielle. Cette harmonie repose sur des structures quantitatives et proportionnelles qui se retrouvent partout dans le monde : dans les éléments, les mouvements planétaires, les saisons, les organismes vivants, *etc.* En dépeignant le cosmos comme un ensemble ordonné et harmonieux d'entités interconnectées, la théorie elle-même reflète cet ordre de manière mimétique. Elle possède une qualité esthétique qui captive, séduit, incite et convoque une réponse émotive.<sup>6</sup>

## La théorie musicale

La cosmovision du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle trouve une de ses expressions les plus notables dans la théorie musicale, particulièrement dans le système des douze *maḳām* qui ont émergé au sein de l'univers mongol et post-mongol au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Ce

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« The Yazıcıoğlu and the Spiritual Vernacular of the Early Ottoman Frontier », Université de Chicago, Thèse de doctorat non-publiée, 2016, pp. 230–236.

5 Cf. A. Koyré, *Du monde clos à l'univers infini* (Paris 1973), pp. 17–24.

6 W. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabī's Cosmology* (Albany 1998); Ph. Descola, *Par-delà nature et culture* (Paris 2005), pp. 101–108. L'une des formulations plus élaborées de cette cosmovision se trouve dans le *Sept Beautés* de Nizāmī où le roi-protagoniste ordonne à son architecte de construire sept dômes pour ses sept épouses. Son architecte conseille d'orner chaque dôme avec la couleur associée au climat de provenance et à la planète de chaque princesse. Une fois les dômes construits, le roi visite chaque princesse les jours successifs de la semaine : le samedi, la princesse indienne, gouvernée par Saturne, dans le dôme noir, le dimanche, la princesse grecque, gouvernée par le soleil, dans le dôme jaune, et ainsi de suite. Chaque princesse régale le roi d'une histoire tout en explorant les thèmes de la couleur, de l'astrologie et de l'amour mondaine ainsi que transcendante. J. Scott Meisami, *The Haft Paykar, A Medieval Persian Romance* (Oxford 1995).

système s'insère dans la continuité de la tradition musicologique helléno-ara-be. Un élément central de cette théorie, surtout dans la synthèse de Şafî al-Dîn Urmavî (1216–1294), est la structure mélodique basée sur douze modalités de hauteur. Les *şedd* représentent des gammes d'octave intégrées dans divers cycles (*edvâr*), offrant des configurations de tétracordes et de pentacordes consonantiques.

Deux aspects principaux définissent ce système : les douze modalités primaires et les six modalités secondaires, nommées *âvâz*, qui fondent les modalités sur une dérivation systématique via les branches (*şu'be*).<sup>7</sup> Au cours du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, en Anatolie, cette théorie subit une transformation significative. Öztürk suggère que cette évolution transcende les aspects techniques pour s'immerger dans le symbolisme hermétique. Il propose que la classification des modes musicaux ne découle pas seulement d'une analyse technique, mais qu'elle soit en réalité enracinée dans une symbolique plus profonde.

Dans cette perspective, les modes musicaux sont interprétés comme étant en correspondance avec les douze signes du zodiaque, les sept planètes et les quatre éléments, établissant ainsi une connexion entre la musique et les principes cosmologiques. Cette classification évoque l'harmonie des sphères, une idée héritée de la tradition (néo-)pythagoricienne. Dans le contexte soufi-ottoman, cette idée acquiert une dimension particulière, s'inscrivant dans une conception totale où la musique devient un outil d'exploration et de compréhension des correspondances mystiques entre le cosmos et la nature humaine. De ce fait, la théorie musicale transcende son rôle de simple structure technique pour devenir un langage symbolique, riche en significations ésotériques. Elle contribue à une appréhension plus profonde de la réalité, selon la perspective soufi-ottomane du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>8</sup>. Les sultans commencent à commander la traduction d'œuvres portant sur la musique théorique (ou la recomposition/adaptation) de ceux-ci en turc ottoman, tel Murâd II demandant à son courtier Şükrullâh

7 O. Wright, « A Preliminary Version of the 'Kitâb al-Adwâr », *BSOAS*, LVIII/ 3 (1995), pp. 455–78.

8 O. M. Öztürk, « The Concept of Şube ('Branch') as a Tetrachordal Classification Method in the 15th Century Ottoman Makam Theory », dans J. Elsner, G. Janichen, et J. Talam éd., *Maqam: Historical Traces and Present Practice in Southern European Music* (Cambridge 2014), pp. 20–42.

de lui fournir une traduction des ouvrages d'Urmavî (*Türk dilince tercüme olub yazıla ve Rûm halkınıñ 'ibâreti üzerine düzüle*)<sup>9</sup>.

Le traité *Risâle-i Mûsîkî* (1411) de Kırşehirî, un soufi de la voie *mevlevî* marque un tournant dans la conceptualisation de la musique, passant d'une approche systématique de l'acoustique, de la mélodie, des intervalles, des tétracordes et des gammes à une perspective plus ésotériques. Bien que ce traité contienne des descriptions détaillées des *maḳām* et de leurs cycles, il accorde une importance particulière à leur correspondance avec les signes du zodiaque, les moments propices pour leur exécution, des récits légendaires sur les origines de la musique, ainsi que sur les rythmes et l'accordage de certains instruments.

En référençant mais en modifiant considérablement les idées d'Urmavî, Kırşehirî propose que les douze *maḳām* sont dérivés des douze signes du zodiaque, les sept *âvâz* des sept planètes, et les neuf *ḍarb* des neuf sphères célestes. Il insiste sur le fait que l'établissement d'une homologie entre les douze signes du zodiaque, les sept étoiles, les quatre éléments et les vingt-quatre heures nécessite une compréhension approfondie de la sagesse, de l'astrologie et la médecine<sup>10</sup>.

Dans son *Kitâbü'l Eḍvâr* (1441) dédié à Murâd II (1420–1451), Hızır bin 'Abdullâh, explore la fondation de la science musicale sous un angle ésotérique. Les vingt-sept premiers chapitres constituent un compendium sur les relations homologiques, couvrant des sujets tels que l'astronomie, les signes du zodiaque, et leur influence sur les êtres humains et les *maḳām*. Les chapitres cinq, six et sept présentent des paires homologiques, établissant des liens entre les signes et les éléments, décrivant leur nature et les planètes associées.

Le seizième chapitre traite des mouvements des sphères, classifiant le Soleil et la Lune comme constants et les cinq autres comme variables (*mütehayyire*). Les chapitres dix-sept et dix-huit détaillent les limites des planètes dans le ciel, analogues aux limites sonores des *maḳām* pendant la performance. Les chapitres vingt et un à vingt-sept établissent une corrélation entre les *maḳām* et les quatre humeurs, les saisons, les directions, ainsi que les couleurs et organes variés.

En outre, l'auteur discute de l'impact émotionnel des *maḳāms* et les associe à différentes races, classes socio-professionnels et villes. Ce faisant, le traité souligne les liens intrinsèques entre musique, astronomie et symbolisme ésotérique, attribuant à chaque *maḳām* une multitude de significations universelles. La mu-

9 Bardakçı, *Şükrullah'ın risâlesi*.

10 Kırşehirli Yusuf bin Nizameddin, *Risâle*.

sique devient ainsi une représentation sonore du cosmos, invitant l'auditeur à une expérience qui va bien au-delà de la simple écoute, en intégrant es aspects d'astrologie et de médecine pour révéler les profondeurs mystiques de l'art musical.<sup>11</sup>

Mode musicale	Signe du Zodiaque	Élément naturel	Humeur	Couleur	Partie de corps	Direction
Râst	Bélier	Feu	Bile jaune	Jaune	Tête	Est
Zengüle	Taureau	Terre	Atrabile	Bleu	Cou	Sud
'Uşşâk	Gémeaux	Air	Sang	Vert	Bras	Ouest
'İrâk	Cancer	Eau	Phlegme	Rose	Poitrine	Nord
Hicâz	Lion	Feu	Bile jaune	Pourpre	Cœur	Est
Büselik	Vierge	Terre	Atrabile	Blanc	Abdomen	Sud
Zîrefkend	Balance	Air	Sang	Jaune clair	Reins	Ouest
Rehâvî	Scorpion	Eau	Phlegme	Noir	Sexe	Nord
Buzurg	Sagittaire	Feu	Bile jaune	Ambre	Cuisses	Est
İşfahân	Capricorn	Terre	Atrabile	Rouge	Genoux	Sud
Nevâ	Verseau	Air	Sang	Vert	Jambes	Ouest
Hüseynî	Poissons	Eau	Phlegme	Mixtion	Pieds	Nord

Le tableau (abrégé) de correspondances homologiques dans le Kitâbü'l Edvâr<sup>12</sup>

Quant à Mehemmed Çelebi de Lâdik, figure importante de la cour princière de Bâyezîd à Amasya, il se distingue non seulement pour ses contributions significatives dans les domaines de la logique et de la rhétorique, mais également pour sa position critique vis-à-vis des évolutions contemporaines dans la théorie musicale. Dans l'introduction de son œuvre *Fetḥiyye*, dédiée à Bâyezîd

11 Suivant la tradition de Galien, la musique intervient fréquemment afin de traiter, au sens thérapeutique, un certain nombre de malaises. Elle exerce son influence sur l'âme, pouvant même se projeter sur le corps, particulièrement sur les passions. Conformément aux conceptions médicales et médico-musicales de l'époque, les passions modérées sont susceptibles d'être façonnées par l'éducation, tandis que les passions indomptables requièrent de soins médicaux, entre autres, la purge. E. Işıldak, « IX. –XIX. Yüzyıl Edvârlarında Müzik-Sağlık Konusuna İlişkin Bir Literatür Analizi », Université Gazi, Thèse de doctorat non-publiée, 2022, pp. 81–115.

12 Cf. D. Çiçek & N. Doğrusöz, « Hızır bin Abdullah'ın Kitab'ü-l Edvar'ında Müzik ve Kozmogoni », *Turkish Studies – Language and Literature*, 16/ 4 (2021), pp. 2123–2143 et en particulier pp. 2138–2139.



II, Meḥemmed Çelebi articule son opposition au nouveau paradigme musical qui gagnait en popularité à cette époque. En se confrontant aux courants dominants de la théorie musicale, il offre un aperçu unique des débats intellectuels et culturels qui animaient les cercles savants de son temps. Son œuvre se présente donc non seulement comme une contribution significative à la logique et à la rhétorique, mais également comme un témoignage précieux des tensions et des transformations au sein du paysage musical et culturel de l'époque :

Ayant constaté que parmi toutes les sciences mathématiques, celle considérée comme la plus noble, tant par les plus modestes que par les plus éminents serviteurs du vrai Créateur, est la Musique, j'ai également observé que les sources actuelles de cette science sont incapables de satisfaire ceux dont le cœur brûle du désir de la comprendre dans tous ses détails. En effet, elle est désormais entre les mains d'une catégorie de personnes dont la clairvoyance est obscurcie par le voile du parti pris, un voile qui n'a jamais disparu suffisamment pour permettre à quelque chose de vrai et de précis de pénétrer leur sens naturel et leur conscience. Face à cette réalité, j'ai décidé de rassembler les meilleures opinions sur le sujet et de les présenter à tous. J'ai ressenti le besoin de rédiger une lettre qui engloberait le meilleur de ce qu'il est utile de connaître dans cette science. Mon objectif est d'exposer tout ce qui a été dit de manière excellente sur ses diverses questions, tiré des enseignements des plus grands sages anciens. Cette lettre visera à regrouper toutes les formes de rythmes et de modes courants, en suivant une approche concise et élaborée par les esprits les plus distingués et les plus éclairés<sup>13</sup>.

Dans la préface, Meḥemmed Çelebi loue Bāyezīd II, destinataire de l'ouvrage ainsi : l'Empereur de tous les empereurs de son temps, le maître du mouvement de très grandes orbites ; l'organisateur de l'harmonie des affaires d'Orient et d'Occident ; le souverain servi par tous les rois<sup>14</sup>. Le premier volet du traité

13 Tekin, «Ladikli Mehmed Çelebi», p. 45 et facsimilé, fol. 3 r–v.

14 Le titre de cet article est tiré de la dédicace de l'auteur au sultan (Tekin, «Ladikli Mehmed Çelebi», facsimilé, fol. 2 r.). Cette dédicace est précédée par un louange à Dieu qui fait un usage subtile des termes musicaux : « Allah nous a fait savourer la splendeur de sa beauté, aussi harmonieuse que le chant des rossignols de la roseraie, qui se manifeste dans les jardins suivant leur cycle, couvrant toute la Terre : réalisation de sa Toute-Puissance et de sa parfaite Clémence. Dans les intervalles entre les prairies en étages de son Paradis verdoyant, il a réservé pour chacun de nous, comme dans un bosquet d'arbres, un peu de son amour – pour révéler la grandeur de sa Grandeur et de son Omnipotence. Il a fait en sorte que l'animosité qui corrode les cœurs se dissipe grâce aux sensations sonores, sous l'influence des

est composé de six sections, qui se consacrent à une étude approfondie de la musique et de ses divers éléments constitutifs. Cette section aborde de manière détaillée l'objet de la science musicale, en commençant par sa définition, puis en explorant son inventeur —Pythagore—, son objectif, ses caractéristiques distinctives, et même l'origine étymologique du terme «musique.» Le deuxième volet de ce préambule se focalise sur les principes physiques sous-jacents à l'art. Quant au troisième volet, il traite des principes d'arithmétique, incluent des domaines tels que l'optique, la science de la perspective, l'ingénierie, ainsi que de la cosmographie, englobant l'étude des tables astronomiques et des cartes géographiques, et de géométrie, couvrant des sujets comme l'algèbre et l'arpentage. Le traité procède ensuite à diviser la musique en deux sous-disciplines majeures : la composition, qui examine la modalité des notes, et le rythme. Ces deux éléments constituent l'essence de la musique. Plus spécifiquement, la composition se concentre sur la dissonance et la consonance des notes, tandis que le rythme s'intéresse au tempo, qu'il soit régulier ou irrégulier. L'objectif final de ces deux disciplines est la création de mélodies harmonieuses<sup>15</sup>.

Il est cependant important de constater que la structure élaborée par Mehemmed Çelebi, fervent adepte de l'école musicale fondée par Urmavî, ne parviendra pas à s'imposer de manière significative dans les siècles suivants. Son influence s'atténuera progressivement, tandis que la culture musicale ottomane poursuivra son évolution (développement), s'orientant davantage vers une perspective cosmovisionnaire axée sur l'harmonie.

## La théorie et la pratique musicale dans la cour ottomane

L'adoption généralisée des concepts musicaux de tendance néo-platoniste voire néo-phytagoricienne, reflet de la propagation de la cosmologie corrélative dans diverses couches de la société, a aussi posé les jalons de nouvelles stratégies administratives voire d'une idéologie. Cette dernière idéalise et utilise un discours politique centré sur l'ordre de l'univers (*nizâm-ı 'âlem*). Les liens établis entre les sphères céleste et humaine ont ainsi transformé la dynamique du pouvoir, favorisant l'apparition d'une vision conservatrice de l'espace politique — en ver-

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notes murmurées et des percussions rythmées – de même qu'il permet à la terre morte des rigueurs de l'hiver de renaître, provoquant l'action bienfaisante du printemps qui ramène à la vie les morts ».

15 Ghrab, « Commentaire Anonyme », pp. 20–23.

tu de laquelle (*içün*), par exemple, on pouvait même justifier la fratricide. L'idée de l'ordre comme principe unificateur se reflétait tant dans l'organisation de la cour que dans la structure de la société, où différents éléments devaient coexister de manière hiérarchique et ordonnée (*yerli yerinde*). Durant ce processus, diverses interprétations islamiques, qu'elles soient traditionalistes ou soufies, ont convergé vers cet idéal<sup>16</sup>.

Cette expertise était réservée à une classe instruite, possédant un capital culturel conséquent. Dans le domaine musical, l'accès à la compréhension théorique et à la pratique était déterminé par une structure hiérarchique claire qui distinguait les initiés et des amateurs — ces derniers étant tributaires de l'enseignement dispensé par leurs maîtres<sup>17</sup>. Par exemple, la formulation des *maḳām* et de leurs branches, ainsi que des rythmes (*uṣûl*), impliquait l'usage de diverses méthodes de notation présentant des similitudes avec le système métrique de la poésie. De termes tels que 'pied,' 'piquet,' 'syllabe,' 'scansion,' et 'intervalle' étaient couramment employés pour décrire le rythme musical. Une telle approche requérait une connaissance approfondie du *'arûz* et la capacité à démontrer le système métrique poétique sur papier, rendant ainsi la musique théorique une sphère presque exclusivement réservée aux lettrés et aux individus hautement éduqués.

Parallèlement, le soutien accordé par le souverain à certains musiciens et compositions jouait un rôle crucial dans la consolidation des alliances, la promotion de l'unité culturelle et le renforcement de sa position en tant qu'arbitre suprême de l'expression artistique. L'interaction entre la musique harmonieuse et l'État a culminé lorsque la cour du souverain est devenue un lieu privilégié pour représentation et la célébration de cet art. En parrainant et en valorisant la musique, le souverain ne se contentait pas de mettre en avant son goût raffiné et sa magnificence ; il affirmait son engagement pour préserver l'ordre et l'harmonie dans son royaume. Dans certains cas notables, les sultans eux-mêmes se sont investis dans la création poétique et/ou musicale, avec Sultan Bâyezîd II (1481–1512) en tant que figure de proue<sup>18</sup>. Cette implication personnelle du

16 A.E. Topal, « Order as a Chronotope of Ottoman Political Writing », *Contemporary Levant*, 5:1 (2020), pp. 24–32.

17 Cf. C. Behar, *Aşk Olmayınca Meşk Olmaz. Geleneksel Osmanlı/Türk Müziğinde Öğretim ve İntikal* (Istanbul 1998).

18 L'attribution des compositions musicales à lui demeurent encore controuvée: B. Aksoy, « Preliminary Notes on the Possibility (or Impossibility) of Writing Ottoman Musical

souverain accentuait le lien étroit entre la musique et l'exercice du pouvoir. Sous son règne, le système musical a été davantage intégré dans un éventail plus large de domaines de connaissances<sup>19</sup>.

## Conclusion

La convergence des domaines de savoir avec les concepts musicaux illustre la manière dont les Ottomans ont stratégiquement utilisé la musique comme une analogie pour leur paradigme cosmologique. Dans cette perspective, la musique symbolisait l'ordre en tant que force unificatrice, capable d'harmoniser des éléments hétérogènes en un tout cohérent et homogène. Bien que les musiciens aient été les pionniers dans l'articulation des cosmologies corrélatives, ce sont les lettrés dans les cours de Murād II, Meḥmed II et surtout de Bāyezīd II qui ont véritablement intégré ces systèmes dans une vision du monde impériale et unifiée, en tant qu'architectes de l'empire naissant.

Au-delà de leur simple possession du pouvoir politique, les empereurs ottomans ont commencé à incarner le rôle de « pivot cosmologique (*‘ālem-penāh*), » un point de convergence pour les tensions politiques et les dynamiques de pouvoir<sup>20</sup>. Comme on l'a vu Meḥmed Çelebi formule aussi cette idée dans sa préface. Toutefois, il est crucial de souligner que cette interdépendance entre la cosmologie et le pouvoir n'est pas exclusivement propre au contexte politique ottoman du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Des processus similaires sont observables dans d'autres cadres temporels et géographiques, comme le modèle galactique des royautes sud-est asiatiques pré-modernes étudié par Tambiah, ou dans la Chine des dynasties Qin et Han, explorée par Aihe Wang et Erica Fox Brandley<sup>21</sup>. Cette re-

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History », dans M. Greve (éd.), *Writing the History of "Ottoman Music"* (Würzburg 2016), pp. 15–31: 22. V. néanmoins la liste de manuscrits sur la musique de sa bibliothèque: A. T. Şen et C. H. Fleischer, « Books on Astrology, Astronomical Tables, and Almanacs in the Library Inventory of Bayezid II », dans G. Necipoğlu, C. Kafadar, C. H. Fleischer (éds), *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)* (Leyde 2019), pp. 767–821 : 817–819.

19 H. İnalçık, *Has Bağçede Ays u Tarâb: Nedîmler, Şâirler, Mutribler* (Istanbul 2011), pp. 153–225; 343–415.

20 Cf. A.A. Moin et A. Strathern (éds), *Sacred Kingship in World History: Between Immanence and Transcendence* (New York 2022).

21 S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror & World Renouncer. A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background* (Cambridge 1976) et idem, « The Galactic Polity : The Structure of Traditional Kingdoms in Southeast Asia », *Annals of the New*

lation intriquée met en exergue la nature des phénomènes complexes tant culturels que politiques, transcendant les frontières historiques et géographiques spécifiques et invitent à des comparaisons transversales.

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*York Academy of Sciences*, 293 (1977), pp. 69–97 ; A. Wang, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China* (Cambridge 2000); E. F. Brindley, *Music, Cosmology, and the Politics of Harmony in Early China* (Albany 2012).

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# Navigating the Currents: Exploring the Esoteric Threads in the Greek Orthodox Church of the 15th to 18th Centuries

MARKOS LITINAS

Gerhard Podskalsky (1937–2013) was a distinguished theologian and historian focused on academic study of the Greek Orthodox Church. His scholarly endeavors were dedicated to examining its evolution, spanning the four centuries from the fall of Constantinople to the Greek War of Independence. Podskalsky's meticulous analysis portrays the Greek Orthodox Church as a resilient and adaptive institution, profoundly influenced by its interactions with the Catholic Church and Protestant movements<sup>1</sup>.

Podskalsky delineates the span of 1453–1821 into four discernible periods, each characterized by its distinct features and external influences. This structured framework forms the basis for our examination of the intricate undercur-

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1 G. Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie in der Zeit der Türkenherrschaft (1453–1821). Die Orthodoxie im Spannungsfeld der nachreformatorischen Konfessionen des Westens* (Munich 1988), tr. as *Η ελληνική θεολογία επί Τουρκοκρατίας 1453–1821* [Greek Theology under Turkish rule, 1453–1821], tr. G. Metallinos (Athens 2008).

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rents within the Greek Orthodox Church throughout this period. The four periods identified by Gerhard Podskalsky are as follows:

- a) Between 1453 and 1581, in what is commonly referred to as the 'Commitment to Tradition' period, the Orthodox Church, reeling from the fall of Constantinople, responded by re-embracing its traditional beliefs and practices. This period was marked by concerted effort to seek stability and continuity in the face of the historic challenge posed by the city's conquest.
- b) The period of 'Religious Humanism' (1581–1629), witnessed a notable convergence of cultures and theological dialogues, coinciding with the Reformation in the West. During this era, there emerged a significant interchange of ideas between the Orthodox Church, Catholics, and Protestants. Western endeavors to gain recognition and endorsement from the "venerable" Orthodox Church fostered theological exploration and facilitated the infusion of Western theological and esoteric currents into Eastern Greek Orthodoxy.
- c) During the 'Orthodox Church in the Conflict of Western Doctrines' period (1629–1723/1727), a significant schism emerged within the Greek-speaking scholarly community. One faction staunchly defended the purity of Orthodox doctrine, resisting Calvinist and Latin influences, while the other faction exhibited a more accommodating attitude toward these Western theological currents. This divergence of perspectives illustrates the intricate theological discourse that characterized Eastern Orthodoxy during this era.
- d) During the period of 'Conflict with Enlightenment: Return to Tradition' (1727–1821), the Orthodox Church grappled with the intellectual challenges posed by the Enlightenment. Opting to revert to its traditional Orthodox doctrine, the Church decisively repudiated Western influences and esoteric currents that had permeated its theology in preceding centuries. This period marked a deliberate effort to reaffirm the Church's doctrinal foundations and maintain continuity with its traditional teachings.

Within the framework established by Gerhard Podskalsky, this paper endeavors to elucidate the emergence and proliferation of esoteric currents, encompassing alchemy, astrology, hermeticism, and Neoplatonism, within the Greek Orthodox Church over a span of four centuries. Central to this inquiry is the exploration of the pivotal role played by esotericism within the Church. It be-

comes apparent that esotericism was not merely an extraneous or incidental influence, but rather an integral component of Orthodox theology. Evolving and adapting in response to the diverse epochs and influences emanating from both Western and Eastern contexts, esotericism became deeply intertwined with the fabric of the Greek Orthodox Church. While steadfastly preserving its foundational traditions, the Church remained receptive to change, actively engaging with the Catholic Church, Protestant movements, and the Ottoman theology. Each interaction left an indelible imprint on the development of esoteric thought, yielding intriguing outcomes.

### ‘Commitment to Tradition (1453–1581)’

Esotericism, encompassing domains such as alchemy, astrology, and magic, thrived during the Byzantine era. Notably, belief in phenomena such as the evil eye, the efficacy of magical talismans, rituals and magical manuscripts were common among the lower Byzantine strata. They were embraced by the general populace, as evidenced by numerous sources of lesser quality.<sup>2</sup> These sources, geared towards lay readers, provided insights into magical rituals and practices aimed at achieving various objectives. The widespread embrace of esoteric practices is further underscored by the incorporation of numerous Nomocanonical passages addressing magic and astrology.<sup>3</sup> Often, these passages prescribed punitive measures against such practices. These legal provisions were designed to offer guidance to the clergy in managing instances of magic and astrology, with the overarching aim of discouraging public engagement in these pursuits.

Nonetheless, it would be remiss to presume that Byzantine scholars and academics avoided esoteric currents. Esteemed figures like Michael Psellos (1018–1078),<sup>4</sup> Michael Italikos (1090–1157),<sup>5</sup> and Plethon Gemistos (1355–

2 Many examples of low quality magical manuscripts can be found in A. Delatte, *Anecdota Atheniensia* (Liège 1927).

3 Many examples of nomocanonical passages condemning magic and esotericism can be found in N. I. Pantazopoulos and D. S. Gkinis, *Νομοκάνων Μανουήλ Νοταρίου του Μαλαξού του εκ Ναυπλίου της Πελοποννήσου: μετενεχθείς εις λέξιν απλήν δια την των πολλών ωφελείαν* (Thessaloniki 1985), 106, 107, 142, 412, 420, 457–460.

4 J. Bidez, « Michel Psellus, L'Épître sur la Chrysopée », *Catalogue des Manuscrits Alchimiques Grecs*, vol. VI (Brussels 1928).

5 H. Maguire, *Byzantine Magic* (Washington 2009), 83–98.

1453)<sup>6</sup> exhibited a distinct interest in esoteric subjects, delving into topics such as alchemy (*chrysopoieia*), magic, and neoplatonism. The scholarly endeavors of these individuals underscore that esotericism was not confined solely to the lower echelons of society; rather it permeated the realms of scholarly discourse, contributing significantly to the intellectual production of the Byzantine era.

In the wake of the fall of Constantinople, a discernible downturn in academic production pertaining to esotericism ensued, a consequence of the significant exodus of Orthodox academics and scholars who sought sanctuary in Italy and other regions. Despite this scholarly exodus, it is pertinent to highlight that esoteric manuscripts addressing a broader audience did not vanish; rather, they persisted and proliferated. A plethora of magical manuscripts and grimoires emerged within primary sources, continuing to delve into esoterica. Among these, notable examples include the works of Spyridon Miliars<sup>7</sup> and Theodoros Pelekanos<sup>8</sup>, which encompassed a spectrum of astrological and alchemical themes. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that these works functioned primarily reproductions of earlier Byzantine works, lacking substantial additions or innovations within the domain of esotericism.

Within the realm of Byzantine esotericism, numerous historians and scholars have devoted their research to exploring the various currents within the Byzantine and early Post-Byzantine periods. Henry Maguire's *Byzantine Magic* and the edited volume by Paul Magdalino and Maria Mavroudi's on Byzantine occult sciences<sup>9</sup> represent significant contributions, offering comprehensive examinations of magical practices prevalent from the early days of the empire through to the fall of Constantinople. Another scholar, Maria Papathanasiou<sup>10</sup> has focused her scholarly endeavors on Byzantine esoteric currents, particularly investigating alchemical and astrological manuscripts within the Byzantine corpus. Within this corpus, Armand Delatte's work in *Anecdota Atheniensia*<sup>11</sup> provides a valuable collection encompassing a wide range of astrological, her-

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6 N. Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon* (Cambridge 2011), 3.

7 A. Colinet, *Les alchimistes grecs* (Paris 2010), 1–42.

8 Codex Parisinus graecus 2327.

9 Maguire, *Byzantine Magic*; P. Magdalino and M. Mavroudi (eds), *The Occult Sciences in Byzantium* (Geneva 2006).

10 M.K. Papathanasiou, "The Occult Sciences in Byzantium", in S. Lazaris (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantine Science*, c. 400–c. 1500 (Leiden 2020), 464–495.

11 Delatte, *Anecdota Atheniensia*.

metical, magical, demonological, and alchemical manuscripts spanning from the early empire to the 18th century. Additionally, the contributions of Richard Greenfield<sup>12</sup> merit attention, particularly his thorough exploration of Paleologian magic and the post-Byzantine esoteric currents within Greek Orthodoxy during the late 15th and early 16th centuries.

### ‘Religious Humanism (1581–1629)’

The second period, spanning from the 16th to the early 17th centuries, emerges as a pivotal era marked by two significant factors. Firstly, there was a resurgence of Neoplatonism and Neo-Aristotelianism within Western Catholicism and Protestantism across Europe, particularly in Italy. This revival sparked renewed interest in the realms of astrology, alchemy, and hermeticism. Consequently, Western academics were incentivized to reengage with these esoteric subjects.

The second influential factor can be attributed to the emergence of Protestantism, which prompted both the Catholic Church and Protestant denominations to seek recognition and endorsement from the venerated Orthodox Church. This outreach resulted in an exchange of ideas between Orthodoxy and the Western world, reigniting interest in esotericism in the Orthodox circles. Furthermore, Greek Orthodox scholars and clergy found themselves pursuing higher education in Greek-speaking universities, primarily in Italy. These individuals acquired firsthand knowledge of esoteric topics and brought this newfound wisdom back to their Orthodox communities. This exchange led to a revival of scholarly Greek Orthodox esotericism, characterized by a proliferation of erudite scholars and clergy producing numerous manuscripts. These manuscripts delved deeply into the topics of hermeticism, alchemy, and magic, interwoven with Neo-Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophies. Notable examples include the works of Theophilos Corydalleus (1563–1646)<sup>13</sup>, who exhibited a profound interest in astrological divination and the manuscript

12 R. P. Greenfield, *Traditions of Belief in Late Byzantine Demonology* (Amsterdam 1988).

13 V. Tsiotras, «Κλαύδιος Πτολεμαίος και Θεόφιλος Κορυδαλλεύς: Τα αστρολογικά κείμενα» [Claudius Ptolemy and Theophilos Korydalleas: the astrological texts], *Συναϊτικά Ανάλεκτα*, vol. 1 (Athens 2002), 171–208; idem, *Η εξηγητική παράδοση της γεωγραφικής υφηγήσεως του Κλαυδίου Πτολεμαίου. Οι επώνυμοι σχολιαστές* [The exegetical tradition of Claudius Ptolemy’s geographical introduction] (Athens 2006).

*Meteorologica*<sup>14</sup> by Gerasimos Vlachos (1607–1685), which entwined Neo-Aristotelian philosophies with hermetic astrology.

Authored by erudite scholars who had ascended to high ranks within the clerical hierarchy, these works represent a distinctive period marked by original creations rather than mere reproductions of Western or historical works, as observed in preceding eras. They expand upon the topics of alchemy and astrology while integrating them with established Orthodox doctrine and theology.

While the focus on the post-Byzantine centuries remains comparatively underdeveloped within academic and historical circles, there are dedicated scholars and historians committed to this period. Their contributions, though fewer in number, carry significant weight. Particularly, historians of science have embarked on studies concerning alchemy and iatrochemistry in the Greek Orthodox world under Ottoman and Venetian rule.<sup>15</sup> Among the notable scholars who have ventured into this field is Remi Franckowiak, whose research uncovered the interests of Athanasios Rhetor in alchemy.<sup>16</sup> Franckowiak provided insights into Rhetor's involvement in 17th-century Greek chemistry within the Ottoman Empire, thrusting these two alchemical manuscripts to the forefront of academic research. Despite these revelations, Rhetor's alchemical manuscripts remain relatively unexplored, lacking in-depth exploration within the broader context of Greek Orthodox esotericism. Georgios Koutzakiotis is an

14 Σχολαστικά ζητήματα εἰς τὸ Α', Β' καὶ Γ' Βιβλίον τῶν Ἀριστοτέλους Μετεωρολογικῶν. Library of the Greek Parliament 49. Cf. M. Litinas, "The Views of Gerasimos Vlachos on Astral Influences: Aristotelic, Hermetic, and Astrological Approaches to the Heavenly Bodies", *Aca'ib: Occasional papers on the Ottoman perceptions of the supernatural* 2 (2021), 147–168. <https://doi.org/10.26225/2mpd-7x13>

15 See E. Nicolaidis (ed.), *Greek Alchemy from Late Antiquity to Early Modernity* (Turnhout 2018). On Ottoman Muslim alchemy and iatrochemistry in the same period, see F. Günergun, "Convergences in and around Bursa: Sufism, Alchemy, Iatrochemistry in Turkey, 1500–1750", in P. H. Smith (ed.), *Entangled Itineraries: Materials, Practices, and Knowledge across Eurasia* (Pittsburgh 2019), 227–257. On Ottoman alchemy see also T. Artun, "Hearts of Gold and Silver: The Production of Alchemical Knowledge in the Early Modern Ottoman World", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2013.

16 R. Franckowiak, "Athanasios Rhetor: a Greek in Paris, a Priest in Alchemy", in G. Katsiampoura (ed.), *Scientific Cosmopolitanism and Local Cultures: Religions, Ideologies, Societies Proceedings. 5th International Conference of the European Society for the History of Science (Athens, 1–3 November 2012)* (Athens 2014), 95–100; Idem, "Athanasios Rhetor and the Greek Chemistry in the 17th Century Ottoman Empire", in Nicolaidis (ed.), *Greek Alchemy*, 131–148.

other historian who has directed his academic focus towards esoteric currents in the Greek Orthodox context. His research has illuminated the perceptions and beliefs of Greek Orthodox laity and scholars regarding celestial phenomena, particularly comets. By delving into historical records, Koutzakiotis has uncovered valuable insights into the role of astrology and celestial events in shaping the esoteric worldview within the Greek Orthodox tradition.<sup>17</sup>

### ‘Orthodox Church in the Conflict of Western Doctrines (1629–1723/1727)’

The third period, catalyzed by the Calvinistic “Confessio” of Patriarch Cyril Lucaris, marked the zenith of the theological conflict within Greek-speaking Orthodox communities. This schism was characterized by one faction staunchly defending the purity of Orthodox doctrine, rejecting Calvinistic and Latin influences, while the other faction adopted a more receptive stance toward Western theological currents, often intertwined with esoteric matters.

Amidst this turbulent era of discord, notable scholars distinctly aligned themselves in the theological confrontation. Theophilos Corydalleus pursued his studies in Padova under the tutelage of Neo-Aristotelian professor Cesare Cremonini, a figure renowned for his interests in astrology and esotericism. Concurrently, Gerasimos Vlachos spent a significant portion of his life in Venice and Rome, immersing himself in academic circles and being exposed to various esoteric currents prevalent in Western Europe.

It is plausible that such Greek-speaking scholars, given their substantial exposure to Western European esoteric trends, would demonstrate a greater receptivity to their influence. Nonetheless, despite facing accusations of Western-

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17 G. Koutzakiotis, *Αναμένοντας το τέλος του κόσμου τον 17ο αιώνα. Ο εβραϊός Μεσσίας και ο Μέγας Διερμηνέας* [Awaiting the End of the World in the 17th Century. The Jewish Messiah and the Great Interpreter] (Athens 2011); French translation by D. Morichon, *Attendre la fin du monde au XVIIe siècle. Le messie juif et le grand drogman* (Paris 2014); idem, “La kabbale et l’érudition grecque (XVIIe–XIXe siècles)”, unpublished paper presented in “Jewish and Non-Jewish Cultures in Contact: New Research Perspectives”, Xth Congress of the European Association of Jewish Studies, European Association for Jewish Studies (Paris, 20–24 July 2014); idem, “Μηνύματα στον ουρανό: ελληνική «κομητογραφία» (15ος–19ος αιώνες)” [Messages in the Sky: Greek ‘Cometography’ (15th – 19th c.)], in K. Dede – D. Dimitropoulos – T. Sakellaropoulos (eds), *Φόβοι και ελπίδες στα νεότερα χρόνια* [Fears and Hopes in Modern Times] (Athens 2017), 13–28.



ization and even Calvinism from Orthodox scholars and theologians, notably directed at figures such as Theophilos Corydalleus, these scholars persisted in their commitment to Orthodox doctrinal principles. They adeptly integrated Hermetic and alchemical esoteric currents into Orthodox theological discourse while upholding their fundamental beliefs.

### ‘Conflict with Enlightenment: Return to Tradition (1727–1821)’

In the last period examined by Gerhard Podskalsky, it became apparent that Orthodoxy adopted a confrontational stance towards scholars and intellectuals espousing “modernist” viewpoints aligned with Renaissance ideals. Rather than engaging in scholarly dialogue with the burgeoning Renaissance movement, Greek Orthodoxy opted for outright rejection, retreating to traditional Patristic teachings. Consequently, avenues for discussions and exchanges of ideas with Western churches were effectively severed.

Within the realm of scientific discourse, the Orthodox Church maintained allegiance to a worldview rooted in Aristotelian philosophy. The introduction of novel scientific paradigms from Europe posed a formidable challenge to this entrenched worldview. Considered a cornerstone of Orthodox tradition, any attempt to revise it was regarded not merely as a scientific matter by the Church but also as a threat, jeopardizing the very foundations of Orthodoxy itself. In response to this challenge, the ecclesiastical authorities assumed a stance characterized by scientific obscurantism, firmly opposing the encroachment of innovative ideas. The Church, as the primary authority in doctrinal matters, reacted assertively to what it perceived as not only a scientific inquiry but also an existential threat to the foundational principles of Orthodoxy.<sup>18</sup>

This rejection of Renaissance ideals had significant implications for the fields of astrology, alchemy, and hermeticism within Orthodox theological discourse. Given the categorical rejection of magic and astrology in Patristic teachings, manuscripts produced during this period reflect a wholesale dismissal of these fields. Scholars of the era often characterized astrology and alchemy as diabolical pursuits aimed at leading the faithful away from orthodox doctrine. Notably, Nicodemus Hagiorite emerges as a central figure in this pro-

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18 V.N. Makrides, “Science and the Orthodox Church in 18th and Early 19th Century Greece: Sociological Considerations”, *Balkan Studies: A Biannual Publication of the Institute for Balkan Studies*, 29 (1988), 265–282.

cess of “demonization” of esotericism. His seminal work, “Against the various sorts of magic”,<sup>19</sup> places alchemy and astrology within the broader category of magic or math, disavowing their efficacy and attributing their study to the devil’s machinations to mislead the faithful. Parallels can be drawn between Nicodemus Hagiorite’s stance on esotericism and the perspectives espoused in the Nomocanonical manuscripts from the initial period under investigation. Another contributing factor to the decline of Orthodox esoteric manuscripts lies in the nature of the Renaissance itself. Scholars redirected their focus towards alternative subjects or embraced more empirical and scientific research methodologies, leading to either the rejection or transformation of esotericism. Notably, there was a shift from astrology to astronomy and from alchemy to chemistry. Consequently, the production of academic esoteric manuscripts experienced a decline during the period spanning 1727–1821. While lower-quality astrological and magical manuscripts intended for the lay and lower social strata persisted in popularity until the early 20th century, scholarly inquiry into alchemy, astrology, and hermeticism reached a standstill.

## Conclusion

The framework established by Gerhard Podskalsky provides a comprehensive overview of the theological trajectory of the Orthodox Church the four centuries under examination. This framework adeptly navigates the internal dynamics of Orthodoxy while also acknowledging the manifold external influences that have contributed to the evolution of Greek Orthodoxy. We have employed this framework to illustrate how the study of esotericism within the Greek-speaking world parallels the theological shifts delineated by Podskalsky. Greek Orthodox esotericism, far from existing in isolation, emerges as a distinct subfield offering a unique lens through which to explore knowledge within the broader spectrum of Greek Orthodoxy. It is imperative to note that Greek Orthodox esotericism diverges from its Western counterpart. While Western ideas undoubtedly left their mark on Greek esotericism, and conversely, Greek Orthodoxy garnered interest from Western esoteric circles during periods of flourishing esoteric studies, Greek Orthodox esotericism maintained its distinct identity. This differentiation was achieved through a process of adaptation and evolution firmly

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19 Nicodemus the Hagiorite, *Χρηστοθήδεια των Χριστιανών* [Good morals for Christians] (Ioanina 1803), 160–195.

rooted within the context of Orthodox theology, thereby establishing itself as a separate and autonomous entity from its Western counterpart.

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# Cosmic Histories: Chronology as a Basis for Ottoman Astrology

MARYAM PATTON

“At all events, Scaliger knew perfectly well, and expected his readers to know, that astrology and chronology had lain, like twins, in the same ancient cradle.”<sup>1</sup>

In the historiography of the early modern European scholarly tradition, the links between the *ars historica* and astrology have been relatively well defined. Two main lines of argumentation have emerged: one perspective has highlighted the incredible expansion in astrological views of history in the 16th century as coinciding with the emergence of professional chronology in part because of the extraordinary outburst of new astronomical ideas, techniques, and data. For these historians, astronomical data offered a kind of conclusive record of phenomena that could be used to date ancient events with newfound precision. Others have shown that even early modern trailblazers like Joseph Scaliger (d. 1609) were, in true humanist fashion, merely reviving what they believed was an

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1 A. Grafton, “Some Uses of Eclipses in Early Modern Chronology,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 64/2 (2003), 213–229.

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ancient practice.<sup>2</sup> Whichever intellectual tradition one subscribes to, it is clear that astronomy and history as disciplines were intertwined for centuries.

This paper is not about the European historical tradition, but because of the Islamic world's shared inheritance of Hellenistic astronomy and astrology, similar debates surrounding the utility of astrology and the role of historians in forming official chronologies also flourished east of the Mediterranean. As Antoine Borrut and Dimitri Gutas have demonstrated, the Abbasids employed astrologers to demonstrate that their power was written in the heavens. Astrology thus became a legitimating tool, and the astrological histories written during this period also illustrate how astrology served as a driving force for historical thinking.<sup>3</sup> Scholars have yet to explore these astrological histories fully as sources for Islamic historiography. Still, I wish to consider this idea that astrology could affirm historical developments in the context of the Ottomans, except in the opposite direction. Namely, I am interested in how the historical record could offer evidence for astrologers to cast future predictions, not merely provide retroactive proof of the value of astrological pursuits.

To explore the use of chronologies for astrological purposes, I focus, in particular, on an early genre of Turkish historical texts that listed major events from creation to the present and which usually appeared in the first few folios of astrological almanacs. Over a dozen of these 'historical almanacs'—my preferred translation of their common title *taḳvīm-i tevāriḥ*—survive from the 15th and 16th centuries.<sup>4</sup> This finite but valuable collection of manuscripts offers us a new way of understanding the relevance of chronology for astrologers. These

2 A. Grafton and N. Swerdlow, "Technical Chronology and Astrological History in Varro, Censorinus and Others," *The Classical Quarterly*, 35/2 (1985), 454–65.

3 D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsid Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th Centuries)* (London 1998); A. Borrut, "Court Astrologers and Historical Writing in Early 'Abbāsid Baghdad: An Appraisal," in J. Scheiner and J. Damien (eds), *The Place to Go: Contexts of Learning in Baghdad, 750-1000 C.E* (Gerlach Press, 2021), 455–502.

4 The current number of these medieval historical almanacs appears to be fourteen, based on the thirteen that appear in the appendix in A. Tunç Şen's dissertation, to which we can add the manuscript from Chester Beatty that I highlight in this disussion. More are likely to be uncovered, and quite a few of them are incomplete, likely due to the unfortunate fact that dealers can fetch higher prices selling individual sheets from calendars. See A. T. Şen, "Astrology in the Service of the Empire: Knowledge, Prognostication, and Politics at the Ottoman Court, 1450s–1550s", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2016, 353–363.

historical almanacs also happen to contain some of the oldest examples of Ottoman chronological writing, so they are also essential sources for studying the emergence of Ottoman historiography.<sup>5</sup>

While the influence and importance of astrology for the Ottomans is a growing field, the connection between history and astrology with which I prefaced this discussion is somewhat nascent amongst Ottomanists.<sup>6</sup> This is despite many references among highly significant Ottoman historians, such as İbrahim Peçevi (d. 1649)<sup>7</sup> and Naima (d. 1716), who peppered observations of astrologically meaningful moments throughout their works. Naima went so far as to lay out a philosophy for how historians should act: the historian should be honest, not gossip, evaluate people fairly, abstain from undeserved praise, and write clearly. The seventh item in his list of advice was that the historian, if he is skilled in *‘ilm-i ahkām* (the science of prognostications), ought to provide information about future affairs and record their signs to make their significance apparent.<sup>8</sup> Naima heeded his own advice and included references to

5 For more on the links between historical writing as a genre and the dating of events (the original meaning of the root ‘a’riḳh’), see F.C. De Blois, B. Van Dalen, R.S. Humphreys, et al., “Ta’riḳh” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam Second Edition Online* (Leiden 2012). See also N. Sigalas, “Des histoires des sultans a l’histoire de l’État. Une enquête sur le temps du pouvoir ottoman (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles),” in *Les Ottomans et le temps* (Leiden 2012), 99–127.

6 A. Tunç Şen is also making important advances on the relationship between chronology and astrology among the Ottomans.

7 İbrahim Peçevi (d. 1649), for example, dedicates a paragraph in his history to justify the efforts of the astrologers on the grounds that, so long as they don’t argue it is the stars that cause the effects rather than God’s will, then there is no harm. He then explains that the reason he brings this up is because of a strange coincidence where, on the day Hafız Paşa became grand vizier the astrologers “according to their experience” suggested the moon indicated complete misfortune. This misfortune showed itself before long. Hafız Paşa was killed on the 100th day of his tenure. The day he died, the moon showed no change in its unlucky signs. The same day, Recep Paşa became grand vizier and Hüseyin Efendi became şeyhülislam. Recep Paşa was killed 97 days later, and Ahizade Hüseyin Paşa too died by drowning 2-3 months later. After Recep Paşa was drowned, the moon entered a lucky sign and Recep Paşa’s replacement Mehmet Paşa served for over five years. See İbrahim Peçevi, *Peçevi Tarihi*, ed. B. S. Baykal, vol. 2 (Ankara 1999), 429.

8 “‘İlm-i ahkāmı vākıf ise, kıranan, tahvîl-i sinîn (seneler) ve küsûflar vesair tavalîin usul-i fen üzere ahkāmını zaptedip, ecsâm-ı süflîye üzerine olan tesirlerini ve devlet bünyesi üzerindeki hallerini arayıp bularak beliren delilleri vekayîin arasında kaydedebilirse, ehliyetini meydana çıkarmış olur. Bu târihin yazarı, bazı yerlerde buna riâyet etmiştir.” *Naimâ Târîhi*, vol 1. (Istanbul 1967), 31–32.



such astrological signs throughout his work. A final, notable example might be Müneccimbaşı Ahmed Dede (d. 1702), who was better known for his universal history, *Cāmi' al-Düvel*, than he was for his efforts as chief astrologer (*müneccimbaşı*) for the sultan.<sup>9</sup> Even those scholars known for critiquing astrology, such as Kâtip Çelebi (d. 1657), acknowledged the debates between astrologers and historians over chronological matters such as the fall of Adam:

“when it comes to how much time has passed between the fall of Adam PBUH and the hijra of the Prophet, the historians and astrologers (lit. people of history and the stars) differ greatly on this matter.”<sup>10</sup>

This paper concerns the relationship between astrology and history for Ottoman scholars in the 15th and 16th centuries but in the reverse direction. Namely, I consider the presence and utility of the historical chronicles within the earliest Ottoman astrological texts and wish to suggest that the Ottoman chronological discipline emerged hand in hand with astrology. These historical almanacs reveal the value chronology held for astrologers and expand the context for situating the development of Ottoman historical writing overall.

Although scholars such as Osman Turan and Nihal Atsız have shed important light on these texts, even producing modern Turkish editions, they completely disregarded their astrological contents.<sup>11</sup> They brought attention to them as texts that have been neglected as historical sources of early Ottoman history, only to neglect, somewhat ironically, what constituted the bulk of the

9 It is telling that Müneccimbaşı Ahmed Dede has no entry in the astrology volume of the biobibliographical series of Ottoman scientific literature edited by E. İhsanoğlu. See *Osmanlı astroloji literatürü tarihi ve Osmanlı astronomi literatürü tarihi zeyli = History of Ottoman astrology literature and supplement to the history of Ottoman astronomy literature* (İstanbul 2011).

10 “hübût-ı Âdem Aleyhi's-selâm'dan hicret-i Nebeviyye'ye gelince ne mikdâr zemân geçmişdir andan bahs olunup ehl-i târîh ü nücûm bu müddette dahı azîm-i ihtilâf idüp” from Kâtip Çelebi's *Takvîmü't-Tevârih*, quoted from this transcription by O. S. Başar, “Kâtip Çelebi'nin Takvîmü't-Tevârih'i (Metin-inceleme)”, unpublished MA thesis, Istanbul University, 2021, 77. Kâtip Çelebi's *Takvîmü't-Tevârih* is a fascinating work in its own right given that its style and format is inspired by the historical almanacs under discussion here, but it was written in the mid-17th century, long after these historical almanacs went out of fashion.

11 N. Atsız, *Osmanlı tarihine ait takvimler* (İstanbul 1961); O. Turan, *İstanbul'un fethinden önce yazılmış tarihî takvimler* (Ankara 1954).

manuscript.<sup>12</sup> Even the attention they paid to the explicitly historical sections was marked by a blatant positivist attitude toward the factuality of the provided calendrical dates. Turan, for example, noted, “the chronological lists that the almanac gives about the old dynasties have no historical significance.”<sup>13</sup> I should specify again that for the purposes of this discussion, I am not referring to the genre of astrological almanacs as a whole, of which there are copious surviving manuscripts, but the specific corpus of almanacs that contained historical chronologies, i.e., historical almanacs.<sup>14</sup>

For the remainder of this discussion, I will focus on just one of these manuscripts: Chester Beatty MS Turk 402, which escaped the attention of both Turan and Atsiz.<sup>15</sup> MS Turk 402 is a beautifully presented manuscript featuring elegant calligraphy, colored inks including gold, ample ornamentation, tables, and diagrams throughout, as well as a world map, which Karen Pinto suggests may be the oldest Ottoman depiction of the world.<sup>16</sup> The manuscript is dedicat-

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12 This was likely simply a reflection of the longstanding disdain for the occult sciences within both the history of science and the historical discipline more generally, a disdain that has begun to wane only in the last twenty years.

13 “takvimin eski sülâleler hakkında verdiği kronolojik listelerin tarihî hiçbir ehemmiyeti yoktur,” Turan, *ibid.*, p. 6.

14 The current number of these medieval historical almanacs appears to be fourteen, based on the thirteen that appear in the appendix in Tunç Şen’s dissertation, to which we can add the manuscript from Chester Beatty that I highlight in this discussion. More are likely to be uncovered, and quite a few of them are incomplete, likely due to the unfortunate fact that dealers can fetch higher prices or selling individual sheets from calendars. See A. T. Şen, “Astrology in the Service of the Empire: Knowledge, Prognostication, and Politics at the Ottoman Court, 1450s–1550s,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2016, 353–363.

15 “Historical Calendar (Taqwim-i Tarikhi), with Astrological Advice and a World Map.” n.d., MS T 402, Chester Beatty Library, Dublin. Turan highlighted two other similar manuscripts from the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (BNF Turcs 180, MS Huntington Donat. 16) which were dedicated to Murad II and thus presumed to be written in the 1440s. I have studied all three and observed discrepancies between the dates given for certain events, like the fall of mankind, which complicate the picture and highlights how chronology was not at all straightforward in this era. One interesting aspect of the Chester Beatty MS, however, is the total absence of the solar month calendar pages with the annual prognostications, something that was extremely common in later astrological almanacs into the 18th century (but which lacked the historical chronologies at the beginning).

16 K. C. Pinto, *Medieval Islamic Maps: An Exploration* (Chicago 2016), 249.



Left: fol. 1r, the dedication. Right: fol. 1v, the start of the chronological section. Red headings denote the first word of a new chronological entry. CC BY-NC. Chester Beatty, Dublin.

ed to an unnamed figure, referred to only by the title “*ḥusām al-milla wa al-dunya wa al-dīn* = the sword edge of the [Muslim] community and the [earthly] world and the faith.”<sup>17</sup>

The text proper begins straightaway with two folios (four pages) of historical information presented as brief statements that express the number of years that have passed since the event in question, starting with Adam’s fall from paradise, *hubūṭ*. Not surprisingly, the main events of interest from this period are the births and deaths of the Abrahamic prophets. The chronological appearance of astrology is noteworthy:

O ye mankind!<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> It seems extremely likely however that it was intended for Murad II (d. 1451), like the other two manuscripts from the BNF and the Bodleian, given the dating of the concluding line of the historical section, which I discuss further below.

<sup>18</sup> “Eyu al-baṣar:  
ādem peygamber ‘aleyhi al-salam hubūṭ itdi altı biñ tokuz yuz otuz dōrt (6934)

6934 years since the Prophet Adam fell  
 6697 years since the Great Kaaba was built  
 6037 years since the Prophet Seth was born  
 5627 years since the science of the stars was taught to the Prophet Idris (Enoch)  
 5520 years since the Prophet Idris ascended to the highest level of heaven...

This “ancient” section occupies a quarter or one of the four pages. It concludes with the lives of other notable sages and wise figures, though with some dates that might have modern readers scratching their heads, like the timing of Aristotle’s life, which may be a scribal error given the vastly greater magnitude of time. The fact that some of the dates do not adhere to a strict chronological order is also curious:

1370 years since the Prophet Jesus ascended to the sky<sup>19</sup>  
 3433 years since the philosopher Aristotle  
 306 years since the philosopher Jamasp  
 1995 years since the philosopher Luqman  
 1722 years since the philosopher Eflatun (Plato)  
 896 years since the philosopher Batlamyus (Ptolemy) and the people of the elephant came to Mecca and were destroyed<sup>20</sup>  
 890 years since Khosrow I (Nowshirvan), and God knows best. [end of this section]

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ka‘be-i mu‘azzama şerrefe allahu bunyād oldu altı bin altı yüz toksan yedi (6697)  
 şişt peygamber ‘aleyhi al-salam toğdı altı bin otuz yedi (6037)  
 idris [note above: mu‘aḥḥer] peygamber ‘aleyhi al-salam nakl itdi firdevs a‘lāya beş bin beş yuz yiğirmi (5520)  
 ‘ilm-i nücüm [note above: muḳaddem, these two events are out of order]  
 idris peygambere indi ‘aleyhi al-salam beş bin altı yüz yiğirmi yedi 5627  
 19 ‘isā peygamber ‘aleyhi al-salam göğē çıkdı bin üç yüz yetmis (1370)  
 aristo ḥakīm üç bin dört yüz otuz üç (3433) [sic: 1343?]  
 cāmāşp ḥakīm üç yüz altı (306)  
 loḳmān ḥakīm bin tokuz yüz toksan beş (1995)  
 eflātūn ḥakīm bin yedi yüz yiğirmi iki (1722)  
 batlamyus ḥakīm ve ashabi filuñ geldiği mekkeye şerrefe allahu ve helāk oldılar sekiz yuz toksan altı (896)  
 padişahlığı neşirravan ‘ādil al-kisiri ḥaffafa allahu ‘anhu al-‘adhāb sekiz yüz toksan (890)  
 ve allahu ‘alem b’il-şevāb”

20 The reference to the people of the elephant is likely the story of the Companions of the Elephant often said to have occurred in the same year the Prophet Muhammad was born (thus his being born in the year of the Elephant). This manuscript reports the birth of the prophet as occurring ten years later (fol 2a: “Viladet-i seyyid al-murselin... sekiz yüz seksen

The somewhat questionable dating in some of these affairs, such as the supposed 400-year distance between Aristotle and Plato, may be to blame for the general disdain with which some scholars have treated these chronological tables, especially in the later sections that deal with events of more immediate consequence for Ottoman history.<sup>21</sup> The plain and straightforward style continues even into the contemporary era when our anonymous author would presumably have had access to more details:

9 years since the cities of Aydın and Menteşe were conquered by order of the king of kings<sup>22</sup>

7 years since Ya'kub Çelebi of Germiyan died

5 years since the city of Lās was conquered by the aforementioned sultan

[0 years since] the city of Selnun and Yevan were conquered, and the Sultan of the Gazis and the Mujahidin, the fortress conqueror and exhauster, Sultan Murad Han, son of Sultan Mehmed Han, son of Bayezid Han, may God make his sultanate perpetual and apparent/clear over the two worlds. Finished. On the 5th of Rajab in the year 833<sup>23</sup> of our prophet, and God knows best. [end of this section and the chronology]

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altı,” or 544 CE rather than the accepted 570 CE. The dating for Ptolemy (d. 170 CE) in the 6th century is also odd, but so are all the dates given for the other philosophers.

21 Turan for example, when discussing the Oxford and BNF manuscripts, notes “While examining a roughly contemporary chronicle, Ménage noted with no twinge of remorse: ‘and all but one (829) of these dates are patently wrong.’” I suspect it was more likely that there was something different about the way that this chronicler was measuring time, than that he was wrong about every single date. See V. L. Ménage, “The ‘Annals of Murād II,’” *BSOAS*, 39/3 (1976), 570–84 for the original quote cited by Turan.

22 “bi-hukmi malik al-muluk [previous entry makes clear this is Sultan Murad] Aydın vilayeti ve Menteşe vilayeti fath itdi tokuz (9) merhum meğfur sa'id şehid ya'kub çelebi germiyan oğlu vefat buldi yedi (7) fath oldu lās vilayeti sultāni mezkur elinde izz naşrahu beş (5) selnun şehri ve yevān vilayeti fath oldi hem sultan al-ğazza ve al-mücahidin kala'a guşayı fersayı sultan murad han bin sultan muhammed bin bayezid han hallada allahu sultane ve evzah? 'ala 'ālamīn temmet receb ayının beşinde peygamberimiz tarihinin ? 833 yılında ve allahu 'alem.”

23 This concluding sentence and date corresponds to the 30th of March 1430 (Julian year) which was near the vernal equinox that year on March 12th (Julian). The vernal equinox marked the start of the new solar year and eventually became the time when the Ottoman chief astrologer (müneccimbaşı) would present the annual almanac with his prognostications to the sultan. See S. Aydı, “Osmanlı Devleti'nde Münecimbaşılik Müessesesi,” *Belleten* 70, no. 257 (2006): 167–264.

The plain, chronological style is not the most exciting way of presenting history and invites the least analysis from historians regarding narrative devices, analogies, etc. But I wish to remind readers that, two hundred years later, Kâtip Çelebi wrote his own version of a historical almanac (*Takvim-üt Tevarih*), which clearly imitated this plain chronological format, tables and all.<sup>24</sup> His historical almanac was one of the first Ottoman texts to be translated and printed in Europe around the same time as his more famous *Kashf-i Zunûn*, and Nabil Al-Tikriti theorized that this objective style devoid of literary flair was one reason why it appealed to Enlightenment-era readers.<sup>25</sup>

To return to our astrologer historian, the other key detail besides the plain style is, of course, the dating in terms of years that have passed since an event. Atsız suggested that this method, which also appears in the other historical almanacs from this era, is explained by the prevalence of dates from the era before the Hijri calendar's epoch (622 AD).<sup>26</sup> There was no Hijri calendar equivalent for dating events before 'year 1', like BC (*before Christ*) or ACN (*ante Christum natum*) for the Gregorian calendar.<sup>27</sup> If it were not for the abundant astrological content that populates the rest of the manuscript, which relied on all manner of calendrical computation and concordances between the Egyptian, Alexandrine, and Yazdigerdi eras, there might be something to Atsız's claim. But rather than explaining this dating in terms of absence, I propose some reasons for its possible utility.

For one, this form of backdating necessitates a recalculation every year. While inconvenient, one might be inclined to view this practice in terms of its need for courtly patronage for a scholar and a sign of the efforts and calculations that went into preparing such a document. Second, and arguably far more significant, is that this kind of dating implies an apparent teleology leading ineluctably to the era in which the text was written. That is to say, the author's

<sup>24</sup> See footnote 11.

<sup>25</sup> N. Al-Tikriti, "An Ottoman View of World History: Kâtip Çelebi's Takvîmü't-tevârih," in T. Gökçe, M. Acıpinar, İ. Kokdaş and Ö. Küpeli (eds), *International Kâtip Çelebi Research Symposium Proceedings / Uluslararası Kâtip Çelebi Araştırmaları Sempozyumu Bildirileri* (Izmir 2017), 127-149. For the Venetian edition, Katip Çelebi, *Cronologia historica scritta in lingua Turca, Persiana, & Araba, da Hazi Halifé Mustafâ, e tradotta nell'idioma Italiano da Gio. Rinaldo Carli* (Venice 1697).

<sup>26</sup> Atsız, *Osmanlı tarihine ait takvimler*, 11.

<sup>27</sup> I find it curious that we use the Latin phrase 'Anno Domini' for AD years, but the English expression 'Before Christ' for BC years.



‘present day’ is placed in an inevitable chronology where the spacing of the events in the past is meaningful precisely because it bears a numerical relation with the present. Had these events been dated according to a calendar instead, then their specific *relationship* with the present day would have lost temporal significance. This relative, or perhaps *relational*, method for dating the time when events occurred takes on even greater significance when viewed in light of the astrological content of the work as a whole. This relational method for dating these events vis-à-vis how many years have passed ought to be understood, I believe, in light of conjunction theory, which pervaded the remainder of the astrological sections of the manuscript.

Conjunction theory argued that whenever certain planets visually coincided along the ecliptic, significant historical events unfolded. For example, some form of conjunction between Saturn and Jupiter occurs every 20 years. The more symbolically charged conjunctions occurred even more infrequently, such as every 240 or 960 years when a full cycle shifted through the triplicities.<sup>28</sup> What is important to note about conjunction theory is the emphasis on the repetitive cycles and patterns that reappear throughout history according to fixed chronological intervals. This is where I believe there may be more to the reverse chronological dating in these historical almanacs than meets the eye if we understand them in relation to patterns of years that have passed and not as attempts to date events according to a socially constructed calendar. In addition to using astrological signs as a source of cosmological legitimation or as a helpful dating mechanism for the historian, these historical chronologies offered the kind of raw data that astrologers could draw on to lend credence or historical evidence to their prognostications.<sup>29</sup> For an astrologer, what mattered was less the arbitrary numerical value of the specific calendar year and more the length of time between events. I believe conjunction theory, which endows cosmological significance to events based on their temporal coincidence with

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28 For more regarding conjunction theory, see E.S. Kennedy and D. Pingree, *The Astrological History of Māshā'allāh* (Harvard 1971); K. Yamamoto and C. Burnett (eds), *The Great Introduction to Astrology by Abū Ma'shar*, 2 vols. (Leiden 2019).

29 Şen presented a similar argument during the conference in which this paper first appeared, entitled “The Role of Experience in Astrology and an 18th-Century Ottoman Court Astrologer’s Take on Experiential Knowledge.” For the chapter he published soon after, see A. Tunç Şen, “The Science and Politics of Chronology in Late Medieval and Early Modern Ottoman Almanacs,” in *Osmanlı’da İlm-i Tarih* (Istanbul 2023), 47–71.





Left: fol. 3v: 1st page of the tables of caliphal rules, each row contains two entries. Right: fol. 5v: 1st page of the table of conjunctions. CC BY-NC. Chester Beatty, Dublin.

celestial conjunctions, helps to explain the method of chronologizing found in this and the other historical almanacs that dated events in measures of years passed. To give further credence to the explanatory value of the conjunctionist view of history in these almanacs, let us briefly examine the remainder of this manuscript.

The subsequent two folios, 3v and 4r, also contain primarily historical information and include neat tables that list the durations of the lives and regnal years of the caliphs in a double-column format. The right column lists the name of each caliph, while the middle column contains the lengths of their lives, and the left column lists regnal years. A similar table appears on the following folios for the ancient kings of Iran up to Yazdigerd I (r. 399–420), but only for their regnal years. Some of the information on the duration of reigns is precise to the level of the day. Like the backdated events in the initial chronology, these regnal and life periods are given without reference to a calendrical date, rendering them more meaningful in relation to each other than to any external

chronological ordering. What follows after these tables of rulers are multiple tables of auguries for the moon and its conjunction with each of the planets. The rightmost column on folio 5v lists the twelve zodiac signs (one for each solar month), and the four column headings to the left are organized according to the different astrological aspects, measured as the angular distance between the selected celestial bodies:

*al-muqārana*: conjunction (0 degrees, conjunction as a term is sometimes used as a general category for the Ptolemaic aspects)

*tathlith wa tasdis*: trine and sextile (120 and 60 degrees)

*al-tarbiʿ*: square (90 degrees)

*al-muqābala*: opposition (180 degrees)

The entries in this table then offer suitable auguries like “good to hunt,” “good to travel,” etc. These tables of conjunctions, a standard feature of astrological manuals, represented a view of the cosmos that was not tied to calendar dates but operated according to the repeated patterns of conjunctions and planetary arrangements. Like the backdated chronologies in the first few folios, the moon’s (or any of the other planets’) location in these augury tables draws its meaning from its position relative to the other planets. Altogether, this information represented an internal system of relations that repeated indefinitely and in which the relational positioning of events was more valuable than the specific calendar date.

I would also like to draw attention to the original meaning of the word *taqwīm/takvīm* as another clue towards the significance of conceiving of the events presented in the chronicles in terms of spatial relations. Although today *taqwīm* is almost synonymous with “calendar,” its original meaning denoted a tabular presentation of information, and its Arabic root had more of a spatial meaning related to the idea of standing up, erecting, or raising.<sup>30</sup> I suspect the tabular emphasis on the information contained in *taqwīms*, including the one under discussion, might still be appreciated in a spatial sense if we understand the day on which the calendar was prepared (30 March 1430) as establishing the terminus toward which all the events in the historical chronology led. Otherwise, the temporal significance of the years that have passed since that specific point in time is lost.

30 Şen, “Astrology in the Service of Empire,” 241–242.

As a final symbolic illustration of the idea that these historical almanacs viewed time and space in a similar relational setting, I would like to conclude by showcasing another feature of this manuscript from Chester Beatty that sets it apart from all the other historical almanacs that survive. About two-thirds through the manuscript is a full-page spread of a world map. Karen Pinto suggests this is the first “Ottoman” world depiction; it is accompanied by the standard description of the seven climes according to the Ptolemaic tradition.<sup>31</sup> There is much more that ought to be written about this world map. For now, I can focus solely on the idea that including a world map such as this one in an astrological and historical almanac further suggests that our author viewed himself as situating historical events in both time *and* space by situating events relative to the present moment. Though such a map is unique compared with the remaining manuscripts among the corpus of historical almanacs, it offers a lovely metaphor for the unity of time and space in the premodern Ottoman worldview.

The Chester Beatty MS is a wonderfully illustrative example of a genre of historical almanacs that we find in the 15th and occasionally in the 16th centuries.<sup>32</sup> The chronicles that appeared at the beginnings of such almanacs have so far been dismissed as useless for any historiographical purposes. However, I think focusing on their role in the astrological text as a whole allows us to revisit the value that history and chronology offer an astrologer tasked with predicting the future. Far from being relegated to the annals of history, these chronological records, though dry compared to the detailed narrative histories that eventually replaced them, offered another source of experience for the Ottoman astrologer to draw upon for his prognostications. This could be especially useful given the prevailing notion that astrology was a conservative discipline with limited room with which to invent prognostications. The Ottoman *müneccim* had to be an expert chronologer who kept track of the dates and heavenly configurations of past rulers, battles, and notable events. He resembled the historian as a repositior of knowledge and for his belief that past events could inform one’s understanding of the present and the future. The method of backdating,

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31 Pinto, *Medieval Islamic Maps*.

32 Şen suggests that the disappearance of the chronological lists from astrological almanacs by the middle of the 16th century can be explained by shifting preferences at the Ottoman court and elite circles toward more analytical and linguistically elegant histories. See Şen, “Astrology in the Service of Empire”, 281–293.



World map on fols. 12v–13r. CC BY-NC. Chester Beatty, Dublin.

where events were listed in terms of how many years ago they happened, or the practice of organizing rulers and kings according to the duration of their regnal years, illustrated the underlying reliance on conjunction theory and a relational or spatial view of the how historical events were linked. It also added another dimension to what constituted a ‘calendar’ for the Ottomans.

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# The Ottoman Hermes: Notes on the Reception of the Hermetic Tradition in Ottoman Scholarship

MARINOS SARIYANNIS

Hermeticism encompasses a complex framework of philosophical and mystical ideas centered on the notion that profound insights into the interconnectedness of microcosm and the macrocosm, encapsulated in the maxim, “as above, so below,” were divinely revealed to the legendary figure of Hermes (also known as Trismegistus or *al-Muthallath*). Hermes, often conflated with figures such as Idris and Enoch, is credited with transmitting this form of occult knowledge, commonly referred to as Hermetic wisdom, to the elect. Originating in Hellenistic tradition, Hermeticism continued to flourish within the medieval Arabic milieu, before experiencing a revival in Europe during the Renaissance.<sup>1</sup> Her-

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- 1 The fullest account of Islamic hermeticism is to be found in K. van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: from Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science* (Oxford 2009); for a more concise description, see, e.g., idem, “Hermes and Hermetica,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three; EF*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. “Hirmis (Harmas, Harmīs, Hirmīs)” (M. Plessner); *TDVİA*, “Hermes” (M. E. Kılıç); M. M. Knight, *Magic in Islam* (New York 2016), 107–136; see also M. Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam* (Leiden 1972), 368–378, especially on the Arabic *corpus Hermeticum*. On Hermes and Hermetism in ancient and Western contexts see I. Merkel – A. G. Debus (eds), *Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in*

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meticism manifests through three primary dimensions within this tradition:<sup>2</sup> firstly, the *corpus Hermeticum*, a collection of texts including the renowned *tabula smaragdina*, which were transmitted to the medieval Islamic world through translations from Syrian sources; secondly, the philosophical tenets elucidated within these texts, which emphasize the interconnectedness of all phenomena, the hierarchical order of the cosmos encompassing planets, stars, spiritual entities, metals, plants, animals, and the assertion that the universe can be influenced through the manipulation of these hierarchies via magical means; and finally, the mythic figure of Hermes, revered as a saintly or even prophetic figure, whose teachings are regarded as sacred and exclusive to a select few initiates. This discussion primarily focuses on the third dimension of Hermeticism, namely the reverence and transmission of Hermes' teachings, which remain a central focus within the tradition.<sup>3</sup>

I propose that the establishment of a tradition tracing back to Idris/Hermes within Ottoman culture was significantly influenced by Illuminationist philosophy. However, it is important to note that not all authors who reference Idris, and potentially Hermes, necessarily subscribe to al-Suhrawardi's teachings. In Islamic tradition, the Prophet Idris is revered as a polymath bestowed with divine knowledge in various fields, conveyed either directly from God or through an angel in the form of sacred texts (*ṣuḥuf*).<sup>4</sup> This portrayal of Idris as

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*Early Modern Europe* (Washington 1988); W. J. Hanegraaff, "Hermes Trismegistus and Hermetism", in M. Sgarbi (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Renaissance Philosophy*, 2018, Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02848-4\\_180-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02848-4_180-1) with recent bibliography.

2 For the various uses of the term, see van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, 17–22.

3 The history of the first aspect, i.e. texts attributed to Hermes, and the second, i.e. correspondences between the natural realms and the microcosm-macrocosm analogy, as well as what is called hermetic (or natural) magic, is a strong desideratum. See, e.g. I. Nokso-Koivisto, "Summarized Beauty: The Microcosm-Macrocosm Analogy and Islamic Aesthetics", *Studia Orientalia*, 111 (2011), 251–269; C. Bonmariage – S. Moureau (eds), *Le Cercle des lettres de l'alphabet: Dā'irāt al-aḥruf al-abjadīyya. Un traité pratique de magie des lettres attribué à Hermès* (Leiden 2017); L. Saif, "A Preliminary Study of the Pseudo-Aristotelian Hermetica: Texts, Context, and Doctrines", *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wuṣṭā*, 29 (2021), 20–80. For the Ottoman times, see some remarks in M. Sariyannis, "Ottoman Occultism and Its Social Contexts: Preliminary Remarks", *Aca'ib: Occasional papers on the Ottoman perceptions of the supernatural*, 3 (2022), 35–66 at 51–53.

4 *EP*, s.v. "Idrīs" (G. Vajda); on his identification with Hermes, see van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, 155 and 164–167; on Idris/Hermes' identification with Enoch see the sources collected in J. C. Reeves – A. Yoshiko Reed, *Enoch from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, vol.



a repository of knowledge is well-entrenched in Islamic lore. In fifteenth-century almanacs and world chronicles (*takvim*), Idris is depicted as the recipient of astrological knowledge. One such detailed account, dating shortly after the fall of Constantinople, cites Beyzâvî asserting that Idris or Aḥnūḥ (Enoch) acquired astrology directly from the heavens, emphasizing that no physical sheets of paper originated from the stars themselves (*nücūmdan öndin ašla kitâb ve şubûfinmedi*). These sources attribute knowledge of the cosmos' origins to Idris through divine revelation.<sup>5</sup> In an early-fifteenth-century adaptation of a Persian cosmography, it is recounted that Idris beseeched God to alleviate the burden of the angel carrying the sun. In response, the angel facilitated Idris' journey to explore the sun; his soul remained there, while knowledge was transmitted to his 200,000 disciples.<sup>6</sup> Another version, cited by the anonymous author of *Dürr-i meknûn*, portrays Idris as the inventor of astrology, astronomy (*raşad*), and weaving. In his rendition, Idris forms a friendship with Azrail, ultimately requesting his own death. Upon divine intervention Idris is resurrected and ascends to paradise, opting to reside there indefinitely. Moreover, he is credited with the building of the indestructible pyramids, enhancing them with talismans to protect them from the Flood.<sup>7</sup> Idris stands as one among a succession of prophets bestowed with divine knowledge. According to Şükrullah Efendi, the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) acquired the secrets of God's names from a mysterious figure, later revealed to be Davud (David), brother of Hızır.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, in 1487, Uzun Firdevsî recounted that, besides the Qur'an, God conveyed 104

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I: *Sources from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Oxford 2018), 270–295; A. Hessayon – A. Yoshiko Reed – G. Boccaccini (eds), *Rediscovering Enoch? The Antediluvian Past from the Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries* (Leiden 2023) and, especially for the Ottoman case, K. Atanasova, “Enoch as Idris in Early Modern Ottoman Sufi Writings: Two Case Studies”, in *ibid.*, 397–412.

5 Atsız (ed.), *Osmanlı tarihine ait takvimler* (Istanbul 2019), 68/69, 140–144/141–145, 152/153.

6 B. Sarıkaya (ed.), *Tercüme-i Acâ'ibül-mahlûkât (İnceleme – Metin – Dizin)*, ed. G. Kut, (Istanbul 2019), 138–139.

7 L. Kaptein (ed.), *Dürr-i meknun. Kritische Edition mit Kommentar* (Asch 2007), 127=404–405; A. Demirtaş (ed.), *Dürr-i meknun (Tıpkıbasım – İnceleme – Çevriyazı – Dizin)* (Istanbul 2009), 123–124; N. Sakaoglu (ed.), *Dürr-i meknun: saklı inciler* (Istanbul 1999), 48. On the pyramids (*Heram*) see *Dürr-i meknûn*, ed. Kaptein, 188=458; ed. Demirtaş, 155–156; ed. Sakaoglu, 74.

8 Şükrullah Efendi, *Behcetü't-tevârih: tarihin aydınlığında*, ed. H. Almaz (Istanbul 2010), 240.

books to humanity through the tongue of Cebra'il: ten to Adam, fifty to Seth, thirty to Idris, and ten to Ibrahim, alongside the holy scriptures granted to Moses, David, Jesus, and Muhammad.<sup>9</sup> Idris retains his status as a patron of science and wisdom in subsequent works. For instance, Lâtîfî's mid-sixteenth century ode to Istanbul lauds Idris in this capacity, whereas, an early eighteenth-century mufti of Athens credits him with the diffusion (*neşr*) of the occult sciences (*'ulûm-ı ğaribeyi ve nücûm ve talâsım ve havâş ilimleri*) throughout the Maghreb.<sup>10</sup> Sufi authors, such as the Bayrami/Melami Abdullah Bosnevi (d. 1644) and the Celveti Isma'il Hakki Bursevi (d. 1725), influenced by the writings of Ibn Arabi, recount Idris' ascent to the sun. The latter identifies him with Enoch and tentatively attributes the construction of the pyramids to him as a means of preserving knowledge from the flood, establishing further connection with the lineage of Sufi spiritual leaders.<sup>11</sup>

Scholarly analyses frequently equate Idris with Hermes from an early period. For instance, Manyasoğlu's early fifteenth-century encyclopedia recounts stories about the prophet Suleyman "related by Hermes".<sup>12</sup> Offering a more comprehensive examination, Şükrullah Efendi, a contemporary of Manyasoğlu, provides detailed insights. He identifies Idris, who initiated the second millennium cycle in the history of humanity, under the alternate names of Hânûh, Urmus (according to Greek tradition), Hermes (as recognized by Arabs).<sup>13</sup> Additionally, Şükrullah categorizes Hermes among the "wise men of old and first philosophers" in his own compilation:

9 Firdevsî, *Firdevsî-i Tâvîl and his Da'vet-nâme: Interpretation, Transcription, Index, Facsimile and Microfiche*, ed. F. Büyükkarcı (Harvard 1995), 144.

10 Lâtîfî, *Evsâf-ı İstanbul*, ed. N. Suner Pekin (Istanbul 1977), 34; Lâtîfî, *Eloge d'Istanbul, suivi du Traité de l'invective (Anonyme)*, ed. S. Yerasimos (Paris 2001), 84; Mahmud Efendi, *Bir Osmanlı müftüsünün gözünden Atina tarihi*, ed. G. Tunalı (Istanbul 2020), 360.

11 Atanasova, "Enoch as Idris", 404–411.

12 Z. Buçukcu, "Mahmud bin Kadı-ı Manyas'ın '*Acebül-üccab* adlı eserinin transkripsiyon ve dizini", unpublished MA thesis, Hacettepe University, 2017, 77; cf. C. Sucu, "The Marvelous Sciences in '*Acebül-üccab*: Disseminating and Reframing of Occult Knowledge for the Ottoman Audience in the Early Fifteenth Century", unpublished MA thesis, Central European University, 2020, 9, 54.

13 Şükrullah Efendi, *Behcetü't-tevârih*, ed. Almaz, 119. Şükrullah notes that Aristo (Aristotle) wrote *Uşnutas*, related to the science of magic (*sıbr*), as well as a commentary on the prophet Idris's book on the science of letters (ibid., 269). Remarkably, *Uşnutas* or *Ustutas* was usually attributed to Hermes (Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften*, 375).

[the wise men of old and the first philosophers] The first of them all is Hermes. He had all three degrees: prophecy, wisdom, and kingship. He visited the orbit of Saturn, orbited with Saturn for thirty years and learned the situation of the spheres. He returned to earth and taught [what he had learnt] to the people of the earth. It is said that it is he who organized the science of astronomy and who wrote the book *Kenzü'l-esrâr* on the science of letters. According to a story, Cebrail appeared to him in human form, greeted him and asked him: "Hey prophet of God, where is Cebrail?" He answered: "In the southern part of the earth, in this town and in this house, perhaps it is even you". Cebrail confirmed: "Yes, it is me". Hermes was holding his writings in his hands. Cebrail asked him to throw them all into the sea. He took some of them, Cebrail took the rest; those which he could hold in his hand, he threw them into the sea. But those grasped by Cebrail fell on the earth; from them, kings, wise men, teachers and philosophers benefitted.<sup>14</sup>

In the version of universal history presented by 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī's (d. 1454), Idris assumes a prominent role as the harbinger of the second millenium of humanity, under the dominion of Jupiter. A descendant of Seth, explicitly equated with the Hellenistic Agathodaemon, Idris is depicted as a master of letter magic or lettrism, and is credited with the invention of writing implements and astrology, as well as with the establishment of temples and the tripartite division of human society into priests, kings and flock. Additionally, Idris is associated with Enoch and Hermes.<sup>15</sup> Celalzâde Salih Çelebi (d. 1567), in a historical work on Egypt submitted to Sultan Süleyman in 1547, references "the first Hermes," who "according to some" is Idris. According to this account, Idris observed celestial movements to develop astrology, medicine, and various sciences. Anticipating the coming deluge, he purportedly constructed the pyramids to safeguard knowledge.<sup>16</sup> Mustafa 'Âlî (d. 1599) provides detailed insights into the life of Idris, also known as Enoch or Uḥnūḥ, and his contributions. While citing

14 Şükrullah Efendi, *Behcetü't-tevâriḥ*, ed. Almaz, 267. On *Kenzü'l-esrâr* see Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften*, 375–376.

15 N. Gardiner, "Lettrism and History in 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī's *Naẓm al-sulūk fī musāmarat al-mulūk*", in L. Saif, F. Leoni et al. (eds), *Islamicate Occult Sciences in Theory and Practice* (Leiden 2020), 230–266 and esp. 240. Seth is also identified "by the historians" with Zoroaster (ibid., 246).

16 A. Manav, "Salih bin Celaleddin'in *Tarih-i Mısır*'ı (Dil incelemesi-metin-dizin)", unpublished PhD dissertation, Pamukkale University, 2018, 90 (fols 11b–12a); on the identification of Hermes with Idris see also ibid., 169 (fol. 69a), 245 (fol. 120a), 247 (fol.

the epistles of the Brethren of Purity as a source regarding Idris' ascension to Saturn and the pyramid construction to preserve knowledge, 'Ālī does not delve into either tradition. He describes Idris as Ūriyā-i Ṣālīs, the "Third Ūriyā",<sup>17</sup> as he was "triple (*müselles*) in prophecy, knowledge and wisdom." Greeks, identifying him with "the Hermes of Hermes", likened him to the planet Mercury.<sup>18</sup> Taşköprüzade similarly identifies Idris with Enoch and Hermes:

Know that the source of the philosophical and speculative sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-ḥikmiyya wa-l-naẓariyya*), the master of all there is in them, is the Prophet Idrīs, peace be upon him. God gave him prophecy and wisdom (*nubuwwa wa-ḥikma*) and knowledge of the stars (*wa-ʿilm al-nujūm*, i.e. astronomy). God sent a book of thirty leaves down upon him, and He made him understand the number of years (*ʿadad al-sinīn*) and arithmetic (*al-ḥisāb*); and God taught him [all] the languages, even though the people of his time spoke 72 languages. He was born in Egypt and they called him "Hermes of the Hermes" (*harmīs al-harāmisa*), and in Greek "Er-mīs", that is to say Mercury (*ʿutārid*). It was arabicized into *Harmīs*. But his original name was Enoch (*hanūkh*), which was arabicized into *akhnūkh*. God Almighty called him Idrīs in His clear Arabic book (i.e. the Qurʾān) because of how much he had studied God's book. It is said that his teacher was Ghawthādhīmūn or Aghthādhīmūn, the Egyptian. The meaning of this is "the auspicious one, the good fortune" (*al-saʿid al-jadd*). It is said that he is Seth (*Shith*), peace be upon him...

[Idrīs's] time on earth lasted for 82 years. Then God lifted him up to a high place. He is the first one who sewed clothes and judged by the stars, [the first one] to give warning against floods, the first one to build temples and praise God in them, the first one who looked into medicine, and the first one who composed poems and verses of poetry. He is the one who built the pyramids of Egypt and illustrated in them (through paintings) all the sciences and arts and their tools, fearing that their records might be taken by the flood.<sup>19</sup>

121a), 339 (fol. 180a). In another point, this story is attributed to Idris, who ascended to heavens (a detail not mentioned regarding Hermes): 102 (fol. 19a).

17 This must be a corruption of the obscure designation of Hermes as "the third Ūrānī" by al-Mubashshir ibn Fātik (mid-eleventh c.), the other two being Seth and Agathodaemon: van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, 184–188.

18 Gelibolulu Mustafa Âlī, *Künhü'l-abbār. 1. Rükün (tenkitli metin)*, eds S. Donuk – D. Örs (Istanbul 2020), 1:519–529. Elsewhere Ali speaks of two cities called in the Egyptian (*Ḳibt*) language Hermes "i.e. the planet Mercury" (ibid., 611–612).

19 Tashkupri-zadah, *Miftāh as-Saʿādah wa misbāh as-siyādah fī mawduʿāt al-ʿulūm*, by Ahmad b. Mustafa (Tashkupri-zadah), ed. K. Bakry and A. Abu'l-Nur (Cairo 1968), 314–315; cf.

Kâtîp Çelebi's account further enriches the narrative surrounding Idris. According to him, Idris, under the titles Hermes al-Hirāmise and *al-muthallath bi l-ni'ma* (the thrice blessed, a version of Greek Trismegistos), prophesied the impending Flood and entrusted the entirety of knowledge's secrets to the Pyramids he constructed:

Idrīs... wrote with the pen and came to be known for the sciences in a way that no one else came to be known. He was called "Hermes of the Hermeses" (*hirmis al-harāmisa*) and "the one thrice blessed" (*al-muthallath bi-l-ni'ma*), because he was a prophet, a king and a philosopher (*hakim*). All of the sciences which appeared before the Flood came from him, according to many scholars. He was the first Hermes (*hirmis al-awwal*), i.e. Idrīs b. Yarid b. Mahlāyil b. Anūsh b. Shīth b. Ādam, peace be upon him, the resident in the uppermost part of Upper Egypt.<sup>20</sup>

As with Taşköprüzade, Kâtîp Çelebi assigns to Idris/Hermes the first knowledge of celestial phenomena, the construction of temples, and the development of medicinal practices. Furthermore, he credits Idris/Hermes with foreseeing the catastrophic Flood and erecting the pyramids out of concern for the potential loss of this accumulated knowledge:

He built the pyramids in the uppermost part of Upper Egypt and made images of all the arts and tools in them and sketched the descriptions of the sciences and perfections, in the desire to preserve them for eternity. Then the Flood came and the people perished, and no science remained, nor any trace except for those on the arch... Then it gradually began to recommence (*isti'nāf*) and return (*i'āda*). So what had been wiped out of science returned to its former place of virtue and elevation... It continues as a support of the Muslim community until the Day of Resurrection and Judgement.<sup>21</sup>

The narrative of concealing knowledge within the pyramids as a safeguard against the Flood is also echoed in Evliya Çelebi's account. However, in this rendition, it is Idris (not Hermes), portrayed as a disciple of Cebra'il and "a

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Taşköprülüzâde Ahmed Efendi, *Mevzuat'ül-ulûm (İlimler ansiklopedisi)*, tr. M. Çevik (Istanbul 2011), 1: 285–286.

20 This last sentence comes from al-Qazwini, who however has Akhnukh (Enoch) in the place of Idris: Reeves – Reed, *Enoch from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, I:76.

21 Kâtîp Çelebi, *Kesf-el-zunun*, eds Ş. Yaltkaya – K. R. Bilge (Istanbul 1941 [2nd ed. Ankara 2014]), 1:25–26; cf. *Kesfûz-zunûn*, tr. R. Balci (Istanbul 2007), 1:31.

prophet to the Sabian people,” who collaborates with King Surid in the construction of the pyramids and the preservation of his books and treasures.<sup>22</sup> In a somewhat divergent tradition, presented in Ömer Karakaşzâde's (d. 1637) historical narrative on wisdom, Hermes is not directly equated with Idris but rather depicted as his disciple:

And they say that the Hermes of Hermeses, who is the compiler of the rules of the stars and talismans and medicine, learned from Idris – upon whom be peace! Idris ascended to the sphere of Saturn and rotated with Saturn's sphere for thirty years, and having understood the conditions of the spheres he descended and proclaimed the knowledge of the stars and the other issues of the spheres.

Regarding Hermes, Karakaşzâde cites Bişâmî, indicating that “he began the revealing of the nature and quality of knowledge” under the guidance of a figure revealed to be his own “perfect nature” (*îbâ‘i tâmm*). Accordingly, Karakaşzâde recounts another story detailing Hermes' enlightenment by the angel Cebra'il.<sup>23</sup> It is worth noting that the initial story, along with references to Ag-

22 [Evliya Çelebi], *Ottoman Explorations of the Nile: Evliya Çelebi's 'Matchless Pearl These Reports of the Nile' Map and His Accounts of the Nile and the Horn of Africa* in *The Book of Travels*, eds R. Dankoff – N. Tezcan – M. D. Sheridan (London 2018), 91 (cf. *ibid.*, 53 for the sources of the Nile: bridge of Hermes the Philosopher/of Qibtim (first king of the Copts)/of Akhmumus/of Misrayim the Great/of Ptolemy the Philosopher/of Alexander/of Aristotle the Philosopher/of Ptolemy the King/of Marmir the Philosopher/of Simon the King/of Daniel); Evliya Çelebi, *Evliyâ Çelebi seyahatnâmesi, X. Kitap: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Bağdat 306, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi Pertev Paşa 462, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi Hacı Beşir Ağa 452 numaralı yazmalarının mukayeseli transkripsiyonu – dizini*, eds S. A. Kahraman – Y. Dağlı – R. Dankoff (İstanbul 2007), 11. The legend of the pyramids does not always carry connections with Hermes/Idris. According to a late fourteenth-century cosmography, “they depicted all kinds of plants and elixirs... the heavenly sciences... wonderful talismans, the books and knowledge of every magician (*kāhin*) and every sort of magic (*sıbr*); the likes and the acts of every doctor and magician (*her hekīm ve kāhin*) who lived in the world”: Ş. B. Al, “Acâ'ibü'l-mahlūkât (35.–70. varak) (Giriş, metin, inceleme, dizin – Sözlük)”, unpublished MA thesis, Sakarya University, 2010, 53 (f. 68a). On medieval attitudes against the pyramids and the idea that they were preserving ancient knowledge see H. Yücesoy, “Translation as Self-Consciousness: Ancient Sciences, Antediluvian Wisdom, and the ‘Abbāsid Translation Movement’”, *Journal of World History*, 20/4 (2009), 523–557 at 552–556.

23 M. Kurz, *Ways to Heaven, Gates to Hell: Fazlîzâde 'Alî's Struggle With The Diversity of Ottoman Islam* (Berlin 2011), 217–228; at any rate, he notes that “some people say that Idris is the Hermes of Hermeses” (*ibid.*, 223). On Idris/Hermes' ascension to Saturn, see van



athodaemon and other elements, appears to be influenced by al-Suhrawardi's writings.<sup>24</sup> A similar account of Hermes as a heir and pupil of Idris (*vaşisi ve halîfesi*), entitled to teach astrology to "people of his own religion" (*kendü ehl-i milletinden ve neslinden*), is found in a translation of an anonymous Arabic epic, completed in 1477 for Mehmed II.<sup>25</sup>

In brief, the lineage of esoteric wisdom revealed to Idris/Hermes, whether regarded as a singular figure or interchangeably referenced, permeates various textual sources during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Notably, Evliya Çelebi references Hermes, identified as Uhnūh (Enoch) in Hebrew and Idris in the language of angels (*Uhnūh ki Hürmüs'dür, lisân-ı İbrî'de Uhnūh'dur; ehl-i cennet lisânı üzre melâ'ikeler Uhnūh Hürmüs'e İdris dediler*).<sup>26</sup> This tradition often intertwines with sacred lineages; for instance, Uzun Firdevsî's 1487 grimoire, *Da'vet-nâme*, includes both Idris and Hermes (Hürmüz Hâkîm) within a lineage spanning Indian, Hebrew and Persian luminaries: from Idris to Tāmṭam-ı Hindî, Yoḥannās Hâkîm, Hermes (Hürmüz Hâkîm), Yūḥannā Hâkîm, and onward to Büzürcmihr, Avicenna, Ca'fer-i Sâdık and Nasîr-i Tusî.<sup>27</sup> Within such traditions the figure of the Prophet Daniel, prominent in divi-natory lore is often intertwined; a late sixteenth-century translation of a Persian *melheme*, or book of prognostication, traces the genealogy of the book to Daniel, followed by Hermes, Büzürcmihr (Anushirvan's vizier), Valis (Iskender's companion) and ultimately Ca'fer-i Sâdık.<sup>28</sup> Daniel is purported to have acquired such mystical arts, notably geomancy, from the angel Cebra'il, likely

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Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, 164–184; on Bisṭāmî's references to Hermes's "perfect inner nature" see Gardiner, "Lettrism and History", 246.

24 van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, 225. On the concept of "perfect nature", also connected with Apollonius from Tyana or Bālīnās, see Saif, "Pseudo-Aristotelian Hermetica", 25–26, 38, 61–63.

25 M. I. Güler (ed.), *Anonim: Kissa-i Anter – Anter destanı* (Istanbul 2023), v. 1, 273 (f. 5b). Nemrud finds out and forces the believers to reveal the secrets of astrology to him, in order to safeguard their liberty of religion.

26 Evliya Çelebi, *Evliyâ Çelebi seyahatnâmesi, X. Kitap*, eds Kahraman – Dağlı – Dankoff, 11. He gives the genealogy Adam > Seth > Enuş > Kīnān > Mehlā'il > Hūd > Enoch/Hermes/Idris, although in the same chapter, Idris is also mentioned as son of Enoch.

27 Firdevsî, *Firdevsî-i Tâvil and his Da'vet-nâme*, ed. Büyükkarcı, 113–114.

28 Ş. Boyraz, "Türk halkbiliminin yazılı kaynakları olarak melhemeler", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Hacettepe University, 2000, 341. The Ottoman text has Hürmüz and Üveys where the Persian text quotes Hermes and Vâlis (ibid., 366).

influenced by the Hermetic tradition.<sup>29</sup> Regarding talismanic practices, Apollonius of Tyana (Belinās Ḥakīm) stands out as a frequently invoked name.<sup>30</sup>

A notable observation regarding the pre-Ottoman Hermetic tradition is the absence of any mention of the “three Hermes” in Ottoman sources. While Arabic narratives synthesize diverse ancient traditions and provide historic context, inspired perhaps by the Greek epithet of *Trismegistos*, Ottoman sources primarily focus on the first Hermes. According to Arabic accounts, the first Hermes was a sage, who founded the sciences and safeguarded them in the pyramids before the Flood; the second Hermes, reputedly the teacher of Pythagoras in Babylon, revitalized these sciences post-Flood; and the third Hermes, an Egyptian physician and alchemist, instructed Asclepius.<sup>31</sup> Despite references by authors such as al-Shahrazuri and al-Suyuti (widely read by the Ottomans) to these narratives, Ottoman scholars largely ignore the second and third Hermes, adhering instead to the first, whom they equate with Enoch/Idris. They assert his ascent to the celestial sphere, prophetic prediction of the Flood, and concealment of all sciences within the pyramids — all elements associated with the antediluvian Hermes. While scant evidence suggests residual awareness of the “three Hermes” tradition — such as Celalzâde Salih Çelebi's mention in a marginal note within his mid-sixteenth century history of Egypt — Ottoman authors generally overlook the latter two Hermes.<sup>32</sup> Exceptions include Kâtib Çelebi's reference to “the first Hermes” and Evliya Çelebi's description of him as a “a prophet to the Sabian people,” a community linked with the “second Hermes” in tradition. Additionally, İsmâ'il Hakkı Bursevî's

29 E.g. in Evliya Çelebi, *Evliyâ Çelebi seyahatnâmesi, I. Kitap: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Bağdat 304 numaralı yazmanın transkripsiyonu – dizini*, eds R. Dankoff – S. A. Kahraman – Y. Dağlı (Istanbul 2006), 259 (f. 156b).

30 See e.g. L. Raggetti, “Apollonius of Tyana's *Great Book of Talismans*”, *Nuncius*, 34 (2019), 155–182; Firdevsî, *Firdevsî-i Tavîl and his Da'vet-nâme*, ed. Büyükkarcı, 149; B. Hallum, “New Light on Early Arabic *Awfaq* Literature”, in L. Saif – F. Leoni – M. Melvin-Koushki – F. Yahya (eds), *Islamicate Occult Sciences in Theory and Practice* (Leiden 2020), 57–161 at 110 and Kurz, *Ways to Heaven*, 237–241 (on the genealogy of the 100 x 100 magic square by Lutfi al-Ṭokâtî, or Molla Lutfi, back to Greek philosophers); M. Melvin-Koushki, “Taşköprizâde on the (Occult) Science of Plague Prevention and Cure”, *Nazarîyat*, 6/2 (2020), 133–168 at 160–161.

31 See van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, 121–163, for a thorough survey of the origins of this tradition.

32 Manav, “Salih bin Celaledin'in *Tarih-i Mısır*'ı”, 245 (fol. 120a). In a strange twist, the same work relates that “the second Hermes” is Idris (!): *ibid.*, 248 (fol. 121b).

(d. 1725) acknowledges Hermes as a master of alchemy, possibly hinting at the “third Hermes.”<sup>33</sup> Notably, there is a lack of significant Hermetic literature in Ottoman Turkish, with no attributed sayings, maxims, or treatises attributed to Hermes. Although Mustafa Ali and Bursevî mention maxims believed to belong to Hermetic literature, they attribute them to Idris rather than Hermes,<sup>34</sup> suggesting that while some Hermetic literature circulated, it did not exist as a unified *corpus Hermeticum* in Ottoman Turkish.

It could be argued that the Ottoman Hermetic tradition primarily drew from the Illuminationist rendition of the legend, which placed significant emphasis on the celestial and undisputed origins of the perennial wisdom attributed to Hermes. Scholars have observed that al-Suhrawardi overtly positioned Hermes as his predecessor, the initial figure in a lineage of sages culminating in his own revelations. Kevin van Bladel suggests that his tactic may have been employed to critique the philosophical traditions, particularly the “Peripatetics,” following Ibn Sina, by asserting a “more ancient, authoritative, and divine source than Aristotle.”<sup>35</sup> This inclination was so pronounced that in Ottoman times the influential Illuminationist al-Shahrazuri’s account of the Three Hereses appeared to diminish in prominence, supplanted by the potent imagery of Hermes as the recipient of perennial wisdom.<sup>36</sup> One may postulate the perhaps far-fetched suggestion that those Ottoman authors speaking of Hermes have links with the Illuminationist tradition. Figures such as Şükrullah Efendi, Taşköprüzade and Kâtib Çelebi, as well as Karakaşzâde align with this perspective. Conversely, authors associated with alternative intellectual traditions, no-

33 “God sent this science to Adam, to Hermes of Hermes and it reached the Prophet, passing from hand to hand through time”: İsmâil Hakkı Bursevî, *Tamâmü'l-feyz fî bâbî'r-ricâl: Atpazarî Kutup Osman Efendi menâkıbı (İnceleme – Çeviri – Tıpkıbasım)*, eds R. Muslu – A. Namlı (İstanbul 2020), 285. On Hermes and alchemy see also P. Carusi, “Harmis al-Harāmisa dans l’alchimie islamique. Une recherche par auteur et par sujet”, *Early Science and Medicine*, 5/2 (2000), 121–130.

34 İsmâil Hakkı Bursevî, *Tamâmü'l-feyz*, eds Muslu – Namlı, 178 (“Idris had said that whoever lives in a place devoid of a victorious sultan, a just judge, a wise doctor, a lively market and a running river has lost himself, his family, his wealth and his children”); Âlî, eds. Donuk and Örs, *Künhü'l-abbâr. 1. Rükün*, 1:528. For the motto, as transferred by al-Shahrazuri, see van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, 208.

35 van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, 223.

36 On al-Shahrazuri’s account see van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, 128.

tably Akbarian Sufism, often recount stories of Idris' ascent and inspiration, identifying him with Enoch, rather than Hermes.<sup>37</sup>

Illuminationist authors exhibited a preference for Hermes for a particular reason: his association with perennial knowledge bestowed by revelation aligned with the hermetic theory on knowledge, characterized by esotericism or the notion that knowledge should be reserved for a select few and withheld from the masses. From Taşköprüzâde to Ömer Karakaşzâde and Kâtib Çelebi, these authors underscored Aristotle's alleged method of imparting knowledge in a manner unintelligible to the common populace. Concurrently, the concept of a pre-Diluvian, perennial knowledge expanded the scope of authority beyond theology and legal interpretation. Alongside Hermes, ancient Greek sages such as Pythagoras or Plato, as well as Indian thinkers such as Ṭamṭam-i Hindī (who, as previously mentioned, linked Idris with the Hebrew Yoḥannās Ḥakīm and Hermes in Uzun Firdevsī's *Da'vet-nāme*), were believed to possess wisdom (*ḥikma*) predating Muhammad, encompassing the most profound secrets of nature, the order of the universe, and methods by which to manipulate them. Illuminationist philosophy, with its dual lineage of knowledge (Eastern and the Western), served as an ideal conduit for advocating the Islamicisation of pre-Islamic or non-Islamic wisdom without resorting to "imitating the infidel".<sup>38</sup> Marlene Kurz remarks that Kâtib Çelebi's conception of *ḥikma* is closely connected to his openness to infidel wisdom,<sup>39</sup> while Aslıhan Gürbüz recently highlighted that Mevlevī sheikhs of the seventeenth century, while favoring Illuminationism, also promoted a pluralistic outlook on religion and envisioned a society characterized by diversity and communal privacy.<sup>40</sup>

These perspectives must be contextualized within their intellectual and political milieu: the burgeoning of what can be termed Ottoman Illuminationist Hermeticism coincides with the ascent and flourishing of the Kadızadeli movement. As I and Baki Tezcan have argued elsewhere, the Kadızadeliis championed

37 See Atanasova, "Enoch as Idrīs", 404–411. Mustafa Ali or İsmā'īl Ḥakḳı Bursevī, both indifferent or dismissive of Illuminationism, attribute as we saw their Hermetic mottos to Idris (and not to Hermes).

38 See the remarks by C. W. Ernst, "The Limits of Universalism in Islamic Thought: the Case of Indian Religions", *The Muslim World*, 101 (2011), 1–19 at 7–8.

39 Kurz, *Ways to Heaven*, 204–205.

40 A. Gürbüz, *Taming the Messiah: The Formation of an Ottoman Political Public Sphere, 1600–1700* (Oakland 2023).

an egalitarian portrayal of Islam, wherein every, Muslim was deemed entitled to knowledge and reasoning. This vision inherently leaned toward uniformity and exhibited a strain of absolutism.<sup>41</sup> Illuminationist Hermeticism diverged from both of these perceptions: by advocating for gnosiological elitism over egalitarianism, it asserted the rights of ulema, scholars and sheikhs to lay claim to privileged access to truth. Simultaneously, by championing a plurality of avenues to knowledge as opposed to the uniformity of revealed prophecy, it favored the adoption of innovative concepts and imported knowledge. Consequently, one could argue that Hermetic ideas were instrumentalized to advance innovative policies and measures, including the adoption of "infidel" methods, often in a top-to-bottom direction, as shown by these authors' evident skepticism toward the egalitarian underpinnings of the fundamentalist project. However, this narrative, of course, is a distinct and multifaceted tale unto itself.<sup>42</sup>

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41 B. Tezcan, "The Portrait of the Preacher as a Young Man: Two Autobiographical Letters by Kadızade Mehmed from the Early Seventeenth Century", in M. Sariyannis (ed.), *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete IX: A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 9–11 January 2015* (Rethymno 2019), 187–250 at 238–241; M. Sariyannis, "The Limits of Going Global: The Case of 'Ottoman Enlightenment(s)'", *History Compass* 2020; e12623, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12623>.

42 Cf. M. Sariyannis, "Sources and Traditions of Knowledge: Revelation, Hermeticism, Reasoning in an Ottoman Context", in idem (ed.), *Enchantments and Disenchantments: Early Modern Ottoman Visions of the World. Halcyon Days in Crete XI: A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 14–17 January 2022* (Rethymno, forthcoming).

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## D. Sources

### Examples of translated materials for the study of Ottoman occultism IV

The mystic cosmology of a late eighteenth-century scholar. Excerpts from İbrahim Hakkı Erzurumî's (d. 1780) *Mā'rifetnâme*:

The components of the world of *melekût* and the world of bodies, that is the fourteen kinds of souls and the fifteen classes of bodies, amount to the twenty-nine letters. Just like names, verbs and words that form the foundation of human speech come from the arrangement of letters, so do from the arrangement of these components (*müfredât*) of the two worlds come three sorts of composite bodies (*ecsâm-i mürekkebe*): minerals, plants and animals. In their turn, the three composite bodies coming from the components of the two worlds form innumerable meanings in the book of the world...

The four elements turn first into smoke, vapour and dust (*edhîne ve buhârât ve 'aşârâta istiḥâle ve tebdil* eder). Smoke comes from the fineness of the earth, and under the sun's heat raises and mixes with the air. Vapour belongs to the fineness of water, of the seas and rivers, and under the sun's heat it raises and mixes with the air in its turn. Smoke and vapour are half-composite and form the atmosphere (*kâ'inât-i cevî-i semâ'*) ... As for the dust of the water, this is snow and rain. When they draw back to the interiors of the earth, they mix with its components (*eczâ'-yi arzîyye*)

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and thicken. With the sun's heat, which reaches the deeps of the earth, these thick fluids boil and form the material of minerals, plants and animals... Thus, the first degree of this universe is thick earth, whereas the highest one are the visible spirits [angels: *nefs-i zāhire*] and they are very fine. For the first of the minerals is adjoining the earth and water, its last adjoins the plants; the first of the plants adjoins the minerals and its last the animals; and as the first of the animals adjoins the plants, its last reaches man. The first human spirit adjoins the animal, while its last reaches angels and the pure spirit, and only there finds its perfection...

Until now we talked of the old astronomy (*he'yet-i kadīm*), being a means for man to know himself and to consider God's power and great wisdom. According to the wise (*hükemā*) who adhere to the second school [of the new astronomy], the sun is the most perfect of all material things and stands at the center of the world... Later on, some of the ignorant and mindless people started to attack and laugh at those scientists working to diffuse these views among the people. Because these scientists were saying that the earth is moving, which does not comply with what the ignorant people's eyes see and minds can perceive... However, in previous times as well such views were also expounded: in the last days of his life, Plato had said that the earth is moving. As the centuries passed, astronomy developed and observations helped clarify the state of the heavens; later scholars elaborated and used more their astronomical instruments and rules and, as this gave order to the state of the firmament, they considered the second view sufficient. Thus most of them adopted it and it became famous as the new astronomy. Those adhering to it even imitated the structure of the world (*he'yet-i 'ālem*) by lighting candles in their houses and churches.

It should not be forgotten that believing in and trusting the new astronomy is not one of the foundations of the religious matters nor one of the vehicles to increase one's firm belief (*yakīn*). Because no matter what is the shape and the form of the globe, no matter what is the arrangement of heaven and earth, no matter how the firmament revolves, it is impossible to deny that the universe was created and that no other than the Highest God, the creator of the most beautiful and perfect things, might have created it.

Erzurumî İbrahim Hakkı, *Mârifetnâme*, University of Michigan, Special Collections Research Center, Isl. Ms. 826, 2b–3a, 210, 199; cf. (with some misunderstandings) Erzurumlu İbrahim Hakkı, ed. Faruk Meyan, *Mârifetnâme (Tam metin)*, Istanbul: Bedir Yayınevi 2000, 13–17, 290, 270–271.

## Material on vampirism and revenants; ghost stories, marvels of the Ottoman world.<sup>1</sup>

The *fetvas* of Ebū's-su'ūd Efendi, SheikhuIslam between 1545–1574, on some incidents in the Balkans:

*Question:* Some people die and after they have been buried, they strip themselves of their shrouds, blood moves into their limbs, their bodies become reddish. Is there any reason for this phenomenon?

*Answer:* If this is true, it is caused by God's sacred will. There is a saying that "the wicked souls attach themselves to the corpses of those who, while still living, were connected to them in their morals and practice, using [these corpses] as instruments for evil actions". This is not improbable for the divine power.

Q: In case a corpse is found in the aforementioned state, what must be done with it?

A: It must be covered, no harm comes if the corpse is of a Muslim.

Q: Is it legally permissible to dig someone's body out of its grave and burn it?

A: It is not.

\* \* \*

Q: In a village near Salonica in Rumelia, an infidel from the class of Christians died. Some days after he was buried, he presented himself in the middle of the night to the door of some of his relatives and acquaintances. He said to them: "Hey you, come and visit So-and-So with me". Next day that infidel died in his turn, and after some days he also presented himself to another one, who died as well. In short, many infidels died in this way. If some of the Muslim inhabitants of the village, seeing the undoing of so many infidels, get scared and wish to flee the village, is this legally permissible?

A: It is not. More particularly, after they have observed [the situation] in the town of the infidels, the Muslims should do nothing but refer to the authorities.

Q: In the aforementioned case, please be kind to indicate its reason and cause, along with an efficient way of dealing with it.

A: The language falls short and the mind is inadequate to express the reason and cause of such phenomena, and this is not the place to delve into what has been investigated concerning them. The way to stop them is as follows: The same day this happens, people shall go and first nail [the body] to the earth with a

1 Most of the following translations were first published in H. T. Karateke – H. Anetshofer (eds), *The Ottoman World. A Cultural History Reader, 1450–1700* (Oakland 2021), 188–194.

single stake through his navel; hopefully the phenomenon will be repelled thus. If not, and if there is still pinkish color in the corpse, they shall cut off its head and throw it near the feet. [The following] is [also] mentioned in some books: If they find the body looking the same way as they have put it in the grave, they shall cut its throat and leave him that way. If the body has altered its position [later], they shall cut off the head and put it at the end of the feet. In any case, if these measures bring no result, they shall disinter the corpse and burn it. In the times of the righteous ancestors [in the early Islamic era], [corpses] have been burnt time and again.

Ebussuud Efendi. *Şeyhülislam Ebussuud Efendi Fetvaları*. Edited by Mehmet Ertağrul Düzdağ. Istanbul, 1983, 197–198 (nos 980–982); Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, İsmihan Sultan 223, fol. 297b–298a.

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An anonymous chronicler, writing shortly after 1704 on an incident dated 1701 or 1702:

Report by the judge of Edirne concerning the issue of vampires (*cadu*): What is requested by this well-wisher of your Excellence is the following: The inhabitants of the Maraş village, district of Edirne, declared before the religious court that some signs of evil spirits were observed upon the grave of the previously deceased Biyıklı Ali, in the graveyard of the aforementioned village. The inhabitants were filled with fear. Indeed, in the province of Rumili, when such signs are observed in some unbeliever's grave, his body has to be nailed with a stake through his navel. If [the signs] persist, i.e. when the grave is opened the corpse is found in a different position and with its color changed to reddish, then it must be beheaded and his head put next to his feet. If the signs are still not prevented, the corpse should be disinterred and burnt. Such was the fetva of the late Ebussuud Efendi concerning such a case among unbelievers; however, we cannot find such instructions in Arabic books. This is my request.

Copy of the governor's decree: Virtuous effendi, the judge of Edirne! In order to dissipate this fancy of the villagers, let the court send an experienced and knowledgeable inspector judge to the incident site, together with an appointed marshal. Upon inquiring with the inhabitants, if they agree that signs of evil spirits are still apparent, the inspector judge should open the grave and control whether the color and position of the dead has changed. You should report accordingly.

A decree written in a similar occasion: [To the] head of the police: The inhabitants of the Hacı Sarraf quarter in Edirne declared the following before the court: “In the Muslim cemetery signs of witchcraft appeared upon the grave of a woman called Cennet, who had died three months ago. Consequently, we are all overwhelmed with groundless fear”. The court sent an inspector judge who opened the grave. Four women examined the deceased woman’s limbs and reported: “Indeed, most certainly her corpse is not rotten and her face has turned red; such phenomena are signs of witchcraft”. You are to open the aforementioned grave and do whatever is accustomed in order to remove the horror and illusions of the inhabitants.

Markus Köhbach, “Ein Fall von Vampirismus bei den Osmanen,” *Balkan Studies* 20 (1979), 83–90; Abdülkadir Özcan (ed.), *Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi (1099–1116 / 1688–1704)*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu 2000, 148–149.

\*

Mustafa b. Mehmed Cinānī’s (d. 1595) stories on marvels, ghosts and jinn:

In front of the tekke of Sinanpaşa, near Başçeşme in Gallipoli, there is a poplar tree that, after falling to the ground and remaining there for some time, was found standing in its place one night; that is what they say ...

In the kaza of Lofça, in Rumelia, there is a water spring in the middle of a rock, no larger than the mouth of an oven. It is said that every year, at the beginning of the days of the month of Rebi‘ al-evvel, the water stops flowing for ninety days; during these days, one can hear the sounds of drums, flutes, and other musical instruments, as if a group of men were playing music. Whoever comes and listens, hears them for sure. But after ninety days, the water starts flowing again and one can listen to it ...

Mevlana Bistan-i Tirevī narrates that a few years ago, sweet and white water appeared near Tire. Water so sweet that it cannot be described. By chance, one day someone washed their handkerchief in it: it turned black. After that, everyone came to know about it and started blackening their clothes with this water. It is said to be such a beautiful dye that it has no equal ...

Some friends tell this story, that in Egypt there is a wolf called the sorcerer wolf (*ẓi’b-i sāḥir*). When it encounters a man, it stands upright in front of him to the right and left, in a well-known manner. The man gets up and immediately, by God’s

order, falls under the spell of this wolf; he loses his will and follows it to its lair. He becomes lost and bewildered. Then the wolf kills and eats him.

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A very strange event: Someone by the name of Ahmed Çavuş narrates the following: “In the castle of Dıraç (Durrës) in the province of Albania, if someone—be him infidel or Muslim—falls seriously ill and loses his mind, then, without his knowing and by God’s order, the soul of someone who died previously enters his body and starts telling its own troubles [ahvalini]. For instance, [the soul] says in the voice of the moribund: “Hey tyrants, why don’t you inspect my case? I am So-and-so, son of So-and-so; they torment me greatly in the Hereafter. I had committed this or that sin; my torment is off-limits, and you, you stay in my house and you wear my clothes and you spend my money: why don’t you have any prayers read for my soul. Why don’t you make any charity for my sake?” Those who know [him] understand.

Once an ill person became unconscious right next to me, and one of the dead entered the body and said: “I am the wife of So-and-So Çavuş; when I was alive I committed adultery with someone. Now they torture me a lot because of this. I am totally ruined. [My heirs] wasted away so much of my property and money, why don’t they [even] think of me?” Thus she was crying. After some time, the ill came back to his senses: we asked, he had no idea of what had happened.

Sometimes the soul of the dead comes on the roof of his house and cries: “You are sitting here in ease and possess my house and properties. You do not think of my situation, you do not once repent and give charity for me!” Now if [the ghost] is a Muslim, they bring a learned man, who reads some verses from the Koran and drives it away. If it is a Christian, they bring a priest who reads from the Holy Gospel. Or else, [the ghost] does not cease until the morning”. Thus he related.

Let this not be conceived as farfetched or marvelous, for it has often happened that the soul of a body or a spirit enters [a corporeal form] and speaks, with God’s permission. There are many trustworthy narrations about this phenomenon.

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And in the same vein: Someone named Mevlana Halil, a former assistant of the late [Grand Mufti] Çivizade Efendi and now a dervish, related to this humble one the following:



“I was once staying at somebody’s house in Cairo. One day, when I was sitting in the room, a man came telling me that my host was asking for me. I stood up and went inside. My host had a concubine who was epileptic. In order to save her, they had brought an expert exorcist. The exorcist was sitting, and the concubine was lying down. The host said to me: “This girl lying here is our concubine. Her epilepsy grasps her continuously, so looking for a cure we brought this exorcist. He just recited something, he made the concubine unconscious and he summoned the jinn that possesses her and put it into her body.

Once or twice he asked the jinn, ‘why are you torturing her?’. But the jinn who loves the concubine is Persian; it only speaks Persian! Since the exorcist is an Arab, he does not know Persian. This is why we summoned you, so that you translate the Persian words told by the jinn and tell the exorcist in Arabic. By God, you know both languages”. “Sure” I said. So I turned to the jinn and asked it in Arabic, *ayyüha l-jinn, li-ayy shay tasra hadha [!] l-jariyatahu ta’khudhuba*, which means “O jinn, why are you possessing and torturing this concubine?”. The jinn talked from inside the concubine’s body and with a high-pitched voice said: *Az-an sabab ki dost midaram o-ra*, that is “I love her, this is why I am possessing her”. Then, instructed by the exorcist, I said: “Leave this concubine or else the exorcist will punish you severely”. The jinn said: *Na-tavanam kardan yira ki basi dost midaram*, that is, “I love her a lot; I am unable to leave her”. Then, under the exorcist’s orders, they tied the concubine’s feet and started to beat her soles with a thin stick. The jinn, from inside her, cried out: *mazan mazan*, which means “don’t hit, don’t hit”.

Again, as instructed by the exorcist I asked: “O jinn, are you going to abandon this concubine from now on?” It answered again *na-tavanam kard* [I cannot do it]. Then the exorcist stood up, asked for a pen and wrote [something] on a paper; he rolled up this paper, burnt its edge and had the smoke enter the concubine’s nose and ears. She appeared to suffer and cried out very loudly; she could not stand still; [the jinn] did not stop crying: *masuz masuz*, that is “don’t burn me, don’t burn me! I left her alone and won’t possess her again”. The exorcist made him swear a very strong oath on the Prophet Salomon’s seal. The jinn took the oath to the effect that it would never again possess the concubine, and then went away. At that moment, the concubine’s mind came back to her head and she stood in her feet again. Her master asked her what had happened, but she took awesome and severe oaths saying: “I have not the slightest idea”. All this happened in my very presence and before my own eyes”. Thus he related.

There are many stories of this kind, and there is no need to tell them since they are

so famous. Many have related, and it cannot be denied, that wicked spirits cling to dead bodies, so that these become enchanted and make strange movements. It is even lawful to nail to the ground by the navel bodies enchanted like this, or to cut their heads, or –if those measures bring no result– to burn them. There are illustrious fetvas on this issue by the Grand Mufti Ebussuud Efendi.

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And in this vein, one of the strangest stories that I have heard is the following. A very strange event: Mevlana Seyyid Muhyiddin from among the equitable judges, who served at the time in the district of Morea (Peloponnese), narrated the following:

“It so happened that someone in the district of Morea died. As is the custom there, he had a maid-servant, who survived him. Three or four months after he was deceased, one day the aforementioned maid came crying and said: “My master came, he went to bed and had intercourse with me, just like he used to do when he was alive”. People who heard this laughed and did not believe her. The poor maid continued to protest: “My master comes to me every night, he destroys my flower and has intercourse with me; you don’t believe me!”. At last, she left that house and went to another; she was sleeping always with some other people beside her. Still, whenever she was alone, the master came again and had sex with her; there was no solution to be found. Finally, there was a man of knowledge by the name of Piri Dede, who was a madrasa graduate. The girl went to him and narrated the story.

The narrator says: The aforementioned Piri Dede narrated [the following] to me in a discussion face to face: “When the woman first came to me I did not believe her, but she swore strong oaths; so I decided to go there and stand guard. I told her: “Let me come together with the owner of the house you are staying in, and watch over you. When this dead man seeks to take you again, call us and we will come and help you, and we will see him with our own eyes”. The woman said “Well, okay” and left. She [also] called the owner of the house, and I went there.

We both kept watch outside, in a sofa, and sent the woman inside. It was afternoon and there was still daylight; the woman started to cry: “Help, my master came again!” We rose and ran inside. By the truth of God, who created the world with His power, I saw the man as I knew him in life—he was between the woman’s legs and had intercourse with her, like he did while he was alive. As soon as we saw him, we charged upon him; we thought of hitting him with a sword or a dagger, but could not find any. We searched behind the door and found an iron skewer, but when we took it and came back he had disappeared; we could see nobody any more. But what

had happened to the woman was manifest. Less than ten days later she died as well, and she was buried next to her master. Truly this is a story I saw with my own eyes, God be my witness. God only knows what the truth is.” Thus he related this story.

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A strange event: Someone called Mevlana Recayi, who lives near Sanduklı and is one of the assistants of the late Monla Efendi, narrated to this humble one the following:

“With God’s permission, in the tribe of the Yörüks who graze in the plateau of Gölcük near Sanduklı a jinn has settled in the body of a ten-years-old girl, and more particularly in her right thigh; it speaks in a strange voice, which resembles to the sound of a whistle, but the girl does not open her mouth. This girl has a brother; whenever someone comes to inquire for a matter, this boy calls the jinn saying “Hey beauty, have you come?” and speaks with it [as an intermediary].

The narrator says: At this time Monla Efendi had ordained me to construct some watermills on the river Gediz. I went to ask how many watermills can be built upon Gediz. The girl’s brother came and as soon as he asked “beauty, have you come here?” a voice was heard, saying: “First we need a cake in front of us”. What could I do, I produced a cake. Then the voice came again: “Five, the river Gediz five”. Upon this the boy said: “What are you saying, I didn’t understand a thing”. The jinn answered: “The inquirer understood my words, it is not necessary that I explain to you”. Indeed, I had understood these words: the meaning was that five watermills could be built on the river Gediz.

People of this area come and make a lot of inquiries and take answers according to their wishes. The girl does not open her mouth at all; she turns into a half-witted of sorts and stays silent and mute.” Thus he related. And God knows the truth of the matter.

Osman Ünlü (ed.), *Cinânî: Bedâyiü’l-âsâr*, Harvard: Harvard University 2009 [Sources of Oriental Languages and Literatures 92–93], II:329–337.

Translations by Marinos Sariyannis.

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## Ottoman occult practitioners in prison

The following Ottoman Turkish accounts reveal different destinies of two imprisoned occult practitioners: a successful escape in late fifteenth-century Istanbul and a firm punishment in mid sixteenth-century Kastamonu (Northern Anatolia). While the first celebrates the deeds of a sea captain who uses the science of properties (*havâs*) to escape from prisons, as narrated by a late-fifteenth century chronicler, the latter punishes a geomancer who allegedly tricked many by claiming to find treasure for them, as recorded in a sixteenth-century imperial register.

[Among the events of Year 901 (1495/1496)]

There was a captain (*re'îs*) named Kara Ali. He was among the famous captains. He caused tumult over the seas and the Frankish lands. He took infidel and Muslim ships. He devoured them like a dragon. When Euboea (in the Aegean) was taken, he was a captain and took part in that ghaza and conquest. Twice, he was a prisoner at the Fortress of Rhodes. He escaped. He saved himself in some way. He was a prisoner in Egypt and Belgrade too. Again, he escaped with a trick (*lu'b*). He was also a prisoner at our province twice and escaped. When he was a prisoner for the third time at the dungeon of Kostantin [ie. Istanbul], he again saved himself. He knew the science of properties (*havâs*). They said that he practiced the science of properties. They said that he saved himself with the power of science of properties. It is not a wonder that he was able to escape in this way. God (May His Glory be exalted and blessed) found a way. At the end, the appointed time of death arrived, and he perished in the hand of Sultan Korkud Çelebi.

Necdet Öztürk (ed.), *Oruç Beğ Tarihi (Giriş, Metin, Kronoloji, Dizin, Tıpkıbasım)*, Istanbul 2007, 170–71.

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So written.

Handed over to Âhmedi Mustafa.

On 9 Şevvâl, year 967 (3 July 1560)

Order to the commander of Kastamonu and the judge of Kastamonu: You are the commander. You sent a letter notifying that “Geomancer Mehmed, from among the Maghrebis, took goods and sustenance of Muslims saying ‘I shall teach the science of alchemy (*ilm-i kimyâ*) and you shall find treasures.’ He committed shameless acts with many people’s wives. Numerous Muslims came forth [with grievances against him]. Some demanded a hundred and some demanded two hundred gold coins [which he had taken from them]. Debts had to be paid off to creditors after deaths, some of them did not have the means. As he was a man who committed illicit acts (*harâm-zâde*), he was prisoned at the fortress of Kastamonu. Along with some criminals, he managed to unfasten his bonds, go down the castle walls, and escape. Men were sent and he was caught again. He was securely imprisoned firmly at the Fortress of Kangırı.” Now, I order for the above-mentioned to be securely imprisoned at a fortified castle and never to be set free. I order that you imprison the above-mentioned securely at a fortified castle. By no means you shall let him free.

*3 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri, 966–968/1558–1560, Özet ve Transkripsiyon*, Ankara 1993, Document number 1301, 577.

Translations by Aslı Niyazioğlu.