

International workshop “Nature and the supernatural in Ottoman culture” (Istanbul, December 14-15, 2019): a report

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The international workshop “Nature and the supernatural in Ottoman culture”, the first of a series to be organized in the context of the research project “GHOST: Geographies and Histories of the Ottoman Supernatural Tradition: Exploring Magic, the Marvelous, and the Strange in Ottoman Mentalities” (funded by the European Research Council, CoGr2017 no. 771766), took place in Istanbul on December 14-15, 2019, at the hospitable premises of Columbia Global Centers | Istanbul (<https://globalcenters.columbia.edu/istanbul>).¹

From the point of view of cultural history, reality can be described as a continuum, ranging from tangible objects to natural phenomena, from

1 See <https://globalcenters.columbia.edu/news/nature-and-supernatural-ottoman-culture-workshop>

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matters of everyday experience, to things felt but unseen, as well as to things (commonly) unfelt and unseen but, nevertheless, considered to exist. Each of these categories are divided by most human cultures into different spheres, some explicable, some ordinary, but with causes unattainable for the human intellect, and some completely inexplicable as pertaining solely to the will and actions of a supreme being. We name these spheres, whose borders and extent shift in history (e.g. through a “disenchantment” process) or even within a given culture at a given moment, as nature, the preternatural and the supernatural; and Islamicate cultures have seen the world through similar categories (*ajā'ib*, *ghara'ib*, *al-ghayb*, *kharik al-'ada* and so forth). Furthermore, diverse cultures throughout history have developed technologies aiming to exercise some control over things considered beyond the grasp of the ordinary mind (magic, divination and other occult sciences).

European as well as non-Ottoman (and especially pre-Ottoman) Islamicate perceptions and techniques dealing with the supernatural have been the object of intense study for more than a century. However, very little work has been undertaken with respect to Ottoman culture. No more than a handful of scholars have touched upon questions related to perceptions on what is supernatural and what is not, what can be explained and controlled and what is dependable only on God's will, to what extent everyday reality is intermingled with supernatural elements. Nor do we have more than very few studies of Ottoman occult sciences; while it is true that historians of Islamic magic often reach as far as Taşköprüzade and Kâtib Çelebi, they only do so through their works in Arabic and without examining their historical context.

The workshop sought to explore this research potential, gathering together scholars interested in the topic with the aim of future collaboration. Fifteen scholars from all over the world, representing Ottomanists, Arabists, and Neohellenists, explored topics related to wonders, the supernatural, and occult practices in the pre-Tanzimat Ottoman world.



The first session was devoted to wonders and marvels. In his paper, entitled “Bewitched and bewildered: wonder in early modern Ottoman society”, **Ido Ben-Ami** (Tel Aviv University, Israel) addressed Barbara H. Rosenwein's notion of “emotional communities”, in order to discuss how the early modern Ottoman elite society of Istanbul formed a community, whose members were encouraged

to practice a unique sense of bewilderment at both natural and supernatural phenomena. Such bewilderment (*hayrat/hayret*) was understood by the Ottomans as wonder. A theory dealing with this emotion was first introduced to this emotional community in various medieval Islamic cosmographies, written on the Wonders-of-Creation. Readers were expected to experience this feeling when they were unable to understand the cause of a thing or how it was supposed to influence them when they witnessed it for the first time. As such, cosmographies encouraged their potential readers to turn sights of aesthetics experiences into an insightful experience of bewilderment/wonder. Analyzing various textual and pictorial sources, Ben-Ami highlighted how this group encouraged the occurrence of wonder, further illustrating how individuals (such as Evliya Çelebi, for instance, attempted to introduce themselves as having had such experiences. Therefore, he argued that for the early modern Ottoman elite, the scientific importance of cosmographies lay within the social function they conveyed, and not necessarily with the veracity of their content. Nevertheless, this mentality did not persist beyond the seventeenth century, as from then on, with the influence of modern geographical studies, members of the elite (e.g. Kâtib Çelebi) abandoned the cosmographic theory of wonder and thus the need to contemplate God in the beauty of nature.

The paper by **Feray Coşkun** (Özyeğin University, Turkey), “Wondrous and strange in fifteenth century Ottoman cosmographies” took up the same category of cosmographical texts, focusing on a corpus of early specimens, all dated before the sixteenth century: namely, Ali b. Abdurrahman’s late fourteenth-century *Acaibü’l-Mahlukat*, Rükneddin Ahmed’s text of the same title, and the famous *Dürr-i Meknun*, attributed to Ahmed Bican. After discussing the main theories and taxonomies concerning this genre (or even its very existence, as in the case of Syrinx von Hees), Coşkun examined each text focusing on the use of terminology and concepts, as well as with the motivation each author provides for embarking on the composition of his work. As she demonstrated, the theme of personal, sensory experience was a strong focus of this literature, which also stresses the fact that wonders such as the ones described are not to be denied, as they constitute a specimen of God’s omnipotence. Although the terms *aca’ib* and *ghara’ib* are not used consistently according to al-Qazwini’s classification (on whose work, nevertheless, all these texts were based), the places filled with such marvels and wonders are univocally located in certain more or less mythical places, such as Mount Qaf or the islands of the Encircling

Ocean. Moreover, Coşkun highlighted some exemplary passages in these works concerning emotional reactions to such phenomena (e.g. terror, fear, admiration, curiosity, excitement, disgust, astonishment, delight), in order to demonstrate situations in which each of those reactions appear and how they are all associated with divine omnipotence.

The paper by **Güneş Işıksel** (Medeniyet University, Turkey), “Hamza in the realms beyond the mountain Kaf. Marvellous, magic and some minor chronotopes”, dealt with a particular kind of the Ottoman romance genre (*destân*, *kışsa* or *hikâye*), the *Hamzanâmes*. The written and oral romances performed by *meddâhs* represented an enchanted world populated by sorcerers, demons, jinns, fairies as well as other marvelous beings, supported by worldviews in which divine power was omnipresent, and “occult” practices and the supernatural phenomena were ubiquitous. Just as in the other popular romances, *Hamzanâme* consists of a great mass of episodes, loosely or closely connected and interrelated to various degrees. The main hero is Hamza b. ‘Abdu’l-Muṭṭalib, paternal uncle of the Prophet Muḥammed; however, action takes place during the reign of Sasanian shah Ḥusrev I Anuşirvân (r. 531-579), but more or less, in a dominantly Islamicate cultural context. In the end, Hamza not only conquered almost all of the inhabited quarters of the Earth (*rûb‘-i meskûn*) but he also subdued the non-human inhabitants of magic realms. In his paper, Işıksel analyzed *Hamza’s Adventures in the Land of the Fairies at Mount Qaf*. The mountain is full of strange species, monsters and demons, with their realms, kings and queens, which are described in detail. Işıksel analyzed this fascinating story using the Bakhtinian concept of chronotope, explaining how the alienation of the hero from his surroundings provided a vehicle via which to describe a world full of wonders. In turn, this rendered his alienation more tangible to the audience. Thus, in these texts the *mirabilia* functioned as an mark of authentication, the specific task of which was to create plausibility and to imbue the narrated stories with realistic credibility.

Moving to a more scientific period of Ottoman geography, **Kaan Üçsu** (Istanbul University, Turkey) dealt in his paper with “*Ajâ’ib in Abu Bakr al-Dimashqî’s geography*”. When Joan Blaeu’s (d. 1673) *Atlas Maior* was presented to Mehmed IV as a gift by the Dutch ambassador to Istanbul in 1668, Abu Bakr al-Dimashqî (d. 1691), mudarris and geographer, embarked upon its translation by favour of Grand Vizir Fazıl Ahmed Pasha (1661-1676). This ten-year endeavour resulted in an eleven-volume book called *Nusrat al-*

Islam va'l Surûr fi Tahrîr Atlas Mayor. Upon its completion, al-Dimashqî also prepared an amended version of the translation in two volumes, *Mukhtasar Nusrat al-Islam*. Even the eleven-volume work, however, was not a word-for-word translation. Abu Bakr abridged and altered some parts of *Atlas Maior*. His alterations, predictably, were for the most part based upon Islamic sources and especially his predecessors Katib Çelebi's and Aşık Mehmed's works. In his paper, Üçsu sought to answer whether Abu Bakr differs in approaching *ajâ'ib* phenomena from his predecessors; whether he included different motifs of *Ajâ'ib* and if so, what his sources were; whether he added any supernatural motifs from Blaeu's atlas to the Ottoman corpus and so on. Üçsu's analysis showed that, as it so often happens with Ottoman sources, Abu Bakr's approach to wondrous and marvelous narratives does not adhere to a pattern: sometimes he disregards Kâtib Çelebi's skeptical comments, at others he seems to return to the Islamic tradition of *ajâ'ib* cosmographies or inserts information from unidentified sources.

Turning now from distant or even mythical places to the very heart of the Ottoman realm, what was the place of the occult in the early modern Istanbul? **Aslı Niyazioğlu's** (Oxford University, United Kingdom) paper on "Urban talismans and early modern Istanbul" addressed this question by exploring what Ottoman cosmographers, geographers and historians wanted to tell about Istanbul's talismans from the late fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries. Early modern Ottomans often described ancient sculptures and columns of Istanbul as talismans. Following medieval Islamic and Byzantine traditions, they wrote how these monuments warded off danger and brought prosperity. Some of their stories are well-known and much repeated in the current scholarship. Yet, there has not been any in-depth analytical study of the occult's place in the city. Stories about the talismanic properties of ancient monuments have often been regarded as curious folkloric beliefs, tales of entertainment, or mere superstition and not viewed as legitimate subjects of "history." Many Ottoman writers, however, paid special attention to Istanbul's monuments. When presenting stories about urban talismans, they frequently urged the reader to approach the subject with utmost care. For them, stories of talismans offered a unique perspective on the city's past and the future. Through a study of five selected stories from cosmologies, chronicles and treatises on talismans produced in Ottoman Turkish from the late fourteenth to late seventeenth-centuries, Niyazioğlu explored the changing meanings of

the occult and its place in early modern Istanbul. As she demonstrated, while in texts composed in the mid-fourteenth to early fifteenth centuries we often encounter stories about statues mostly as a warning about the transitory nature of power, in the late fifteenth century texts we find Istanbul's monuments teeming with occult power. These stories suggest the spread of the interest in lettrism in this period. By the mid-sixteenth century, however, stories about the lettrist talismans wane and the depictions of talismans which unite celestial and terrestrial forces emerge in treatises on talismans and universal histories. Still, as Niyazioğlu remarked, different stories do not necessarily replace each other. On the contrary, diverse accounts of Istanbul's talismans circulated together in the late sixteenth-century geographical works.



The second session turned to Ottoman visions of the world, focusing in the relation with the Hereafter in its various forms. **Aslıhan Aksoy-Sheridan** (TED University, Turkey), in her paper on “Taming the *nefs*: metempsychosis (*tenâsüh*) as recorded in a 17th-century *mecmû'a*”, studied a late-seventeenth-century miscellany (*mecmû'a*) of the collection of the University of Michigan, containing a variety of texts ranging from poetry to stories and from lists to prayers. Among these texts, a particular story (based on a *hadith* tradition) describes twenty different animals and two stars, presented together with colourful anecdotes about how each of these beings had once been flawed humans before undergoing metempsychosis or *tenâsüh*—a belief that, while utterly contrary to Sunnite Islamic doctrine, had clearly taken deep enough root in popular belief systems as to survive and be recorded. In her analysis, Aksoy-Sheridan showed how this text, particularly when considered in conjunction with the compilation's other texts, can be seen as a mental exercise on the overarching theme of taming the *nefs* (the appetitive soul), guiding the *mecmû'a*'s owner, compiler, or reader in terms of how the appetitive instincts of the *nefs* may be controlled. Thus, the *mecmû'a* served as something akin to a mantra, transforming apparently diverse and quite unrelated texts into a kind of practical spiritual handbook, thereby reshaping it into a significant historical source for early modern Ottoman popular beliefs about the *nefs* and, more broadly, the supernatural.

The paper by **Side Emre** (Texas A&M University, USA), with the title “A preliminary study of mystical cosmologies in the early modern Ottoman

world: authorship, esoteric content and inspirations in quest for a new type of learning”, follows a discussion of illustrative diagrams by Ahmet Karamustafa.² Emre argued that early modern Ottoman Sufi poets/authors—in particular, members of the Khalwatiyya and its offshoots—and their literature surprise us with an unexpected phenomenon: narratives with diagrams, letters, numbers, illustrations, and tables with esoteric content. Emre focused on the *Daire-i Cihannuma* by the sixteenth-century Khalwati poet Shaykh Bayezid, but, as she showed, similar diagrams are present in various Sufi works of the Ottoman period. As her research indicated, Ottoman Sufis drew diagrams to depict a knowledge that combined “science”, as in the scientific study of letters and numerology, with that of Islamic mysticism (*tasawwuf*), as in the study of the Divine and “the sacred”. Relying only in part on Ibn al-Arabi’s influence, this eclectic methodology aimed to achieve a harmonious understanding of the mechanics of the Universe. These Sufi authors prioritized drawing diagrams with esoteric content to prove their points: a novel and unstudied phenomenon, which we do not see in the mainstream Islamic religious literature of the period produced in the Ottoman domains. Investigating the mystical and visual cosmologies in historical and textual context, Emre’s paper opened paths to exploring new formations of knowledge in the early modern Ottoman world, formations that harmonized Neo-Platonic and Aristotelian “scientific” knowledge with Islamic (and especially Akbarian) mysticism and Qur’anic teachings.

In his paper, **Irvin Cemil Schick** (EHES, France) investigated “The legitimation of occult practices of dubious orthodoxy: a review of physiognomy, oneiromancy, and magic in Islam”. The central question he sought to answer was the following: with a multitude of verses, the Qur’ān makes clear its opposition to the practice of occult sciences by ordinary mortals. And yet, they were practiced widely and not by any means as marginal traditions. Indeed, the caliph ‘Uthmān and the imam Shāfi‘ī were celebrated as expert physiognomists, and the prophet Muḥammad himself—let alone Yūsuf and Danyāl—was said to be a gifted oneirocrit. How can the *sharī‘ah*’s distaste for divination be reconciled with the latter’s widespread acceptance, from the dawn of Islam

2 A. Karamustafa, “Cosmographical Diagrams”, in J. B. Harley and D. Woodward (eds), *The History of Cartography*, Vol. 2, Book 1: *Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies* (Chicago 1992), 71–89.

to the present day? Schick offered to answer this question by reviewing the various means in which such practices were legitimated throughout history, as they appear in extant treatises. That many such texts begin with lengthy lists of citations from the Qur'an and the ḥadīths which can, often with some effort, be interpreted as sanctioning practices such as physiognomy and oneirocriticism suggests a path for the legitimation of occult practices; yet, according to Schick, this is only one of several ways in which they were historically justified. He suggested that a careful reading of treatises from the Middle Ages to the modern era reveals other, subtler means by which occult practices were legitimated. Occult sciences in Islam, Schick argued, are viewed basically as reading and writing practices: divination corresponds to a reading of divine signs (including features of the human body) or of supernatural entities such as the Preserved Tablet, whereas in the same way magic can be conceptualized as a writing practice. Thus, given the doctrinal centrality of reading and writing in Islam, many Muslims considered occult sciences as part of the theory and practice of Islamic faith.

Marinos Sariyannis (Institute for Mediterranean Studies, Greece) spoke on "Knowledge and control of the future in Ottoman thought". Sariyannis chose to focus on foretelling the future as a *par excellence* occult practice of knowing the *ghayb* or "hidden" and sought to conduct a survey of the ways by which Ottomans attempted to predict future events; of the discussions on whether this is possible for ordinary human beings. Although there were "secular" or "historical" interpretations that claimed to be able to predict future events on the basis of historical experience, most of such discussions emphasized the possibility of human access to knowledge of the supernatural or preternatural world. Sariyannis categorized these ways into three large categories: predictions based on a direct contact with the *ghayb*, through dreams or visions or, at any rate, miraculous epiphanies; predictions based on occult sciences connecting the Written Word, the Qur'an, with the world, namely the science of letters; and predictions based on a more materialistic (yet occult) perception of universal hierarchies, namely an astrological conception of the world. Sariyannis argued that belief in historical laws, which had permeated intellectual circles throughout the eighteenth century, led to a shift of "foretelling" theories and practices from a supernatural to a natural, historical and markedly secular sphere. This rejection of any links between natural phenomena and historical events appears to have prevailed by the second half of the eighteenth century.

Furthermore, as argued by Sariyannis, this shift may be connected both to the Kadızadeli who rebutted the (Halveti) Sufis' claim of a marked presence of the supernatural in everyday life, and to the Nakşbendis who with their emphasis on "particular will" and human agency seem to have been pivotal agents for what may be referred to as a "disenchantment of the world".³

Finally, **Guy Burak's** paper (New York University, USA) concerned "Materiality and 'calligraphy' in the section on invocations, prayers and magic squares in the Palace library of Bayezid II". Using as source material the section of Bayezid's library dealing with invocations, qualities of the *Qur'an* and of the Names of God, prayers and magic squares, as described in the librarian Atufi's catalogue,⁴ Burak pinpointed the librarian's interest in calligraphic styles and calligraphers, drawing attention to scripts and alphabets as a means of reaching the divine, but also to the materiality of talismanic objects using letters and alphabets. He highlighted the connection of calligraphy and scripts with al-Bistami's lettrism, and through it also to other talismanic practices. Indeed, al-Bistami's work, along with introducing Ibn Arabi's and al-Buni's earlier lettrist theories to the Ottoman world, included an elaborate theory on the writing process, with its various tools and stages corresponding to specific faculties of the soul and the mind, but also on the various historic alphabets and their secret attributes. Burak emphasized the compatibility of these alphabets to one another and to the Arabic, as well as the ethnographic aspect of al-Bistami's work, in the context of a long Islamicate tradition, whose most well-known work is Ibn Wahshiyya's treatise on alphabets. Talismanic qualities seem to have been attributed to certain types of alphabets, Burak suggested, especially to the kufic script, which was predominantly used in panels, pages in albums, and other objects. According to Burak, calligraphy, one of the major forms of artistic production in Ottoman culture, may be regarded from a different perspective, as the calligrapher was perhaps considered someone who could produce his own specific "alphabet" endowed with talismanic qualities.



3 See the extended version of the paper published in this issue.

4 G. Burak, "The Section on Prayers, Invocations, Unique Qualities of the *Qur'an*, and Magic Squares in the Palace Library Inventory", in G. Necipoğlu, C. Kafadar and C. H. Fleischer (eds), *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)*, 2 vols (Leiden 2019), 341–366.

The third session focused on occult practices and their place in politics and everyday life. **Jean-Charles Coulon** (IRHT-CNRS, France) opened this session with his paper “The occult response to the Black Death: ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī’s *Kitāb Waṣf al-dawā*””. Coulon examined the vocabulary relating to plagues (*ta’un* refers to disease in a general sense and that which corrupts bodies, whereas *waba’* refers to that which corrupts the air) as well as the typology of Islamicate medicine in this period (*tibb*, prophetic medicine—*tibb nabawi*—and spiritual medicine, *tibb ruhani*). Following this, Coulon presented a small treatise on the subject of plagues by al-Bistami, the early Ottoman occultist *par excellence*, who had evidently experienced some episodes of plague during his life. Coulon sought to put al-Bistami’s treatise against both some predecessors, namely a treatise by al-Buni and other similar texts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries containing invocations against plague, and some contemporaneous treatises. He illustrated that, whereas jinn as agents are important in al-Bistami’s contemporaries (such as al-Shushtari), they are not present in the two treatises of al-Bistami on plague. Importantly, al-Bistami makes allusions to Prophets, philosophers like Plato and other figures like Hermes, linking the science of letters and magical squares to the ancient Delian problem (also connected with the plague in the Hermetic tradition); thus, as Coulon demonstrated, he aimed to reconcile the ancient (primarily Greek) tradition with the Islamic one.

Taking the lead in studying natural- and supernatural-minded responses to the plague, **Kostas Sarris** (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany) gave the workshop a glimpse of the Greek Orthodox world with his presentation on “Magical amulets, dried toads and confession: healing the plague between *iatrosophia* and Paracelsianism in the late 17th century Ottoman Ioannina”. Sarris’ focus was on a Greek text dated to the last quarter of the seventeenth century and originating from the region of Ioannina (Yanya). This *Brief Interpretation about the pestilence, that is the plague*, written by the “priest Michail” (later known as Meletios of Athens), contains information concerning the possible ways of contagion, as well as various advice regarding both precautions against the disease or even its cure. Although this short treatise seems, at first glance, to originate from the long-lasting, popular iatrosophic tradition of “medical wisdom”, Sarris showed that its content has almost nothing to do either with that tradition or with its coeval medical practice in the peninsula. Instead, the *Brief Interpretation* introduces into the broader Ottoman medical knowledge

preternatural elements (magical amulets, miraculous medicaments and powders), which derive directly from the early European Paracelsianism and its occult medical science.

Ahmet Tunç Şen's (Columbia University, USA) paper was on "Manuscript fragments of everyday divination and tracing the Ottoman history of emotions". Şen's source material for this presentation consisted of various kinds of shorter or longer notes, varying from invocations to God for the help of the hidden saints to methods of predicting the duration of a judge's post and so forth, which can be found scattered in various collections of texts. As he demonstrated, such notes can be read as emotional outbursts of individuals and give us valuable glimpses on their authors' spiritual and actual worries and emotions. Furthermore, Şen presented a mid-sixteenth century miscellany with similar notes, authored by the scholar Za'ifi, and with a painstaking study of the author's life and career, as well as of the names mentioned in these divinatory texts, he tried to associate the texts to key moments of his life. Thus, Şen highlighted the fact that such texts can reveal the particular moment and anxiety which might have led an author to search and produce them, thus showing the potential of notes of this kind for a microhistorical study and especially one focusing on the history of emotions.

Harun Bekir Küçük (University of Pennsylvania, USA) spoke about "The power of prayer in early eighteenth-century Ottoman chronicles". Focusing on a case from the mid-seventeenth century recorded in Na'ima's work, where the power of prayer is juxtaposed with the pragmatic use of expenses, Küçük sought to trace the actual role and functionality of prayer in eighteenth-century Ottoman mentalities. Küçük's analysis questioned what is usually perceived as the dominant role of religion, as opposed to pragmatism; instances of *waqf* money used for military purposes, for instance, indicate that Ottoman administrators at the time were less inclined to be led by pious considerations than we usually tend to think. Furthermore, Küçük drew a distinction between general prayer (*hayr duası*) and *beddua* or "curse", the latter connected with tyranny (*zulm*) and seeming perhaps more effective for eighteenth-century chronicles. Küçük illustrated the importance of such cases for the current discussions on disenchantment and rationalism in the Ottoman culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Finally, **Ethan L. Menchinger** (University of Manchester, United Kingdom) presented a paper titled "The battle of Haçova/Mezőkeresztes (1596):

myth, miracle, and political theology in the Ottoman Empire". This particular battle was noted for its unexpected turn and final outcome, when the seemingly routed Ottoman forces rallied and won a total victory against the Habsburgs. Menchinger employed the concept of "political theology", i.e. of the use of theological concepts to interpret or legitimize political systems and actions, in studying the different representations of this battle, which had acquired miraculous dimensions from the very beginning. Contemporaneous and later chroniclers spoke of armies of angels, spirits or the "hidden ones" (*rical-ı gayb*), which helped drive back the enemy. What is perhaps more interesting is the presence of the Prophet's relics, carried onto the battlefield by the sultan; as Menchinger showed, these relics began to play a significant role in later narrations, when the personal role of the Sultan Mehmed III was highlighted. In eighteenth century histories, other ways of interpretation also appeared, connected with the current discussions on the role of "particular will" or Ottoman exceptionalism.



As we stated in the beginning, the aim of the workshop was to map the field, to gauge how much the *problématique* raised by the GHOST project is relevant and present in the Ottomanist scholarship. Without doubt, the result was beyond expectation. Not only were all of the papers of extraordinary scholarly quality, but the organizers were forced to reject many more valuable contributions due to financial and time restraints. The workshop highlighted the dynamics of the field, and it is hoped that it marks the beginning of a renewed interest on Ottoman perceptions of nature, of occultism, of the role of the supernatural factor. Among the issues raised by the papers and the discussions that ensued, we must pinpoint the need to include various sociocultural strata (especially the underrepresented vernacular culture) and ethnolinguistic or religious groups to the study, as well as the importance of describing the expected audiences of the works studied and what they can show us for Ottoman society; in addition, the significance of locating—and explaining—parallels with developments in other cultural regions has also been evident. Thus, after a decade or so of more or less intensive studies of occultism and esotericism in Islamicate cultures from the Maghrib to Iran and Central Asia, the workshop seems to have opened a new path by highlighting the potential of such studies in the Ottoman context.