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THE YAZICIOĞLUS AND THE SPIRITUAL VERNACULAR
OF THE EARLY OTTOMAN FRONTIER

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CARLOS GRENIER

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NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION

Arabic: The *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES)* system is used for Arabic and Persian. *Al* is written as *al-*, regardless of the vowel or consonant to follow. Diacritics are preserved in all personal names and titles of books and articles. Diacritics are not used in common toponyms.

Persian: *IJMES* is also the basis for Persian transcription. However, the Persian final *o*, when representing a vowel, is rendered as *e* rather than *ih*, *eh*, or *ah*, and for Persian words *v* is used instead of *w* to represent *g* when appropriate. Diacritics are likewise preserved in personal names and titles of books and articles. Diacritics are not used in common toponyms (*ie.* Khurasan).

Ottoman Turkish: Ottoman Turkish transliteration also follows the *IJMES* scheme in its main points. Long vowel marks are written only in elements that are of Arabic or Persian origin, while consonants are always given full diacritics. However, this dissertation's scheme departs from *IJMES* in its use of *q* for *ق*, *h* for *ح*, and *ġ* for *ġ*. Personal names and titles of books and treatises, when built out of Arabic grammatical constructions but appearing within an Ottoman context, are rendered using Ottoman conventions as follows: Şeyh Bedre'd-dīn, *Envāru'l-Āṣiqīn* (rather than Shaykh Badr al-dīn, *Anwār al-Āshiqīn*, or Şeyh Bedr el-Dīn, *Envār el-Āṣiqīn*). For instance, the name of al-Qazwīnī's Arabic geography is written as *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt*, while Aḥmed Bīcān's Ottoman Turkish version of this text is written as *'Acāibü'l-Mahlūqāt*. Anatolian and Rumelian place-names, unless otherwise noted, are rendered as in modern Turkish (*ie.* Konya, not Qonya). Greek names aim to comply with Library of Congress guidelines, using *k* for *κ* and *ch* for *χ*.

Distinguishing Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish contexts from each other calls for arbitrary decisions. For Anatolians and Rumelians living in prior to the fourteenth century, the Arabic system described above is used, while for those living in the fourteenth century and later the Ottoman system is used. For instance, Şadr al-dīn Qūnawī [d. 673/1274] is named using the *IJMES* Arabic system, while Cemālu'd-dīn Aqsarāyī [d. 791/1388-1389] is named with the Ottoman Turkish system. Individuals migrating between regions in which different languages are dominant are usually denoted according to the language of their place of origin and education. The titles of works are always written using the scheme corresponding to the language of their contents.

When possible, dates are written as "826/1422-1423", using both Hijrī and Common Era years. The abbreviations AH and CE will not be used unless necessary for clarity. If only one set of dates is given, it is Common Era date unless otherwise specified.

INTRODUCTION

By the early fifteenth century, the Ottoman conquests had brought Islamicate culture across the Dardanelles into new lands on the northern shores of the Mediterranean and in the Balkans, at the same time as the rest of the Islamic world faced complex religio-political upheavals. This study proposes to address an important family of writers active in Gelibolu (Gallipoli), precisely on the crossroads between the fifteenth-century Islamicate intellectual ferment and the experience of the frontier – and who were, from this position, able to profoundly shape the epistemic contours of nascent Ottoman intellectual life. The Yazıcıoğlus, represented by “Yazıcı” Şālih and his two sons Meḥmed (d. 1451) and Aḥmed (d. ~1466), wrote on cosmology, mysticism, and religious instruction, and with each work contributed to the Ottoman world of ideas as it was to develop in later years — all despite the fact that they spent their lives in a provincial port city without any definite connection to patronage networks of the Ottoman courts in Bursa and Edirne.

Şālih, while employed as a scribe, wrote the *Şemsiyye* (“Solar [Poem]”) in 826/1423, a Turkish composition on the planets and stars that was read and until at least the seventeenth century. Meḥmed, the older son, composed an Arabic religious treatise entitled *Maḡhārib al-Zamān* (“The Setting-Places of Destiny”), which he then rendered into Turkish verse in 853/1449 as *Kitāb-i Muḥammediyye* (“The Muhammedan Volume”) — a work that reached such an unbelievable readership and diffusion as to rank as one of the most popular books ever to be produced in Ottoman Turkish, venerated in provincial cities almost in the Ottoman Empire and beyond almost as scripture. Equally noteworthy was the *Envārü’l-‘Āşiqīn* (“The Lights of the

Lovers”) by Meḥmed’s younger brother Aḥmed (known to posterity as Aḥmed Bīcān, “the Lifeless” for his ascetic dedication), a work of Turkish prose based on his brother’s works. The numerous manuscripts of both texts that are preserved in archives across the Ottoman lands and elsewhere demonstrate their durability as components in *medrese* and domestic religious curricula.

The success of the Yazıcıoğlu’s other works is less remarkable only by comparison. Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu, prompted by conversations spanning the breadth of Islamic world at the time, composed a commentary in Arabic on a central Sufi text, the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* of Ibn al-‘Arabī. Aḥmed Bīcān, working closely from the *‘Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt* (“The Wonders of Creation”) by the 13th-century Persian geographer Abū Zakariyā Qazvīnī, authored a *Maḥlūqāt* of his own, describing the characteristics of the world’s seven climes. In 857/1453, Aḥmed finished the first edition of his *Kitābū’l-Müntehā*, (“The Utmost”) a translation and drastic expansion of his own brother’s commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, completing another version of this text in 870/1465. The *Müntehā* is the most diverse of the brothers’ texts and its most advanced in its philosophical register. Around that date he also adapted a very old genre of natural-philosophical writing on jewels and precious stones into a short Turkish *Cevhernāme* (“Jewel-book”), authored a brief introduction to the principles of macrocosmic mysticism entitled the *Rūḥu’l-Ervāḥ* (“Spirit of Spirits”), and then, not long before his death, composed the *Bustānū’l-Haqāiq* (“The Garden of Truths”), a prose edition of his father’s *Şemsiyye*.

The incredible variety of the writings of the Yazıcıoğlu family, which encompasses tracts of basic religious instruction, popular summaries of natural-philosophical traditions, arguments on apocalypse and piety, and learned commentaries on theoretical Sufism, is one of the most

interesting and innovative things about it. In a single body of work a world-encompassing epistemological panorama was thus presented. When viewed in in light of the immense popularity of almost all of these works and the fact that many of them were among the first works in Turkish in their genres, it is perhaps no exaggeration to call the Yazıcıoğlus the true creators of Ottoman popular Islam and the first articulators of an Ottoman approach to various other intellectual and literary traditions. They comprehensively expressed an Ottoman spiritual vernacular for the first time.

I. Who were the Yazıcıoğlus?

While the above is a compelling argument for the important place of the Yazıcıoğlu family within Ottoman and Islamic intellectual history, this kind of description, in which the Yazıcıoğlus are identified with their works and their works with them, threatens to contain the family within the history of Ottoman and Turkish genres and literary forms. Rather than proceeding in this direction, this study hopes to engage these figures as individuals who wrote for certain motivations, with specific sources and ideas, for a specific fifteenth-century audience. Their ideas grew out of the geography of Gelibolu from the material of their intellectual heritage, guided in their growth by the demands of their peers. In their lives, their concerns, and their responses to them, the members of the Yazıcıoğlu family were images of their era because they attempted in their writings to summarize it, to illuminate its complexities, and to take value from its contradictions. The effort to historicize the Yazıcıoğlus as individuals, then, is rewarded with a deeper understanding of their works.

In the closing chapters of *Kitābū'l-Müntehā*, Aḥmed Bīcān's spiritual manual written the year of Constantinople's conquest, we read of the events of the Last Day. After the righteous are distinguished from the sinners and unbelievers at the end of time, they are to assemble in the heavenly sanctuary before the presence of God as his absolute self. God will greet the collected believers and say, "*I am your God whom you worshipped without seeing. Behold, I am your God.*" He welcomes them with direct speech:

"O my servants, welcome! ... You are the believers who held on to faith, and I am God, the Caring, the Protector, the king... You are my friends and intimates and visitants and the people of my affection... May peace be upon you, my servants. You are the Muslims (*müslümānlar sîñiz*) and I am the king of peace (*selām*), and my abode is the abode of peace... from now on I am your familiar, sitting with you, and I have forever absolved you of the material world (*mülk-i kebîr*), and the blessings and graces you deserve from me are many. Take pleasure and embrace your wives. And eat of many types of food and drink of many drinks! And enter your palaces and spend time in your gardens, diversely decorated."¹

Aḥmed Bīcān relayed this divine promise to a crowd of new Muslims, sailors, soldiers, and humble townsmen of Gelibolu, the focal point of the fifteenth-century Ottoman naval frontier. Above the cave-cell beside the Dardanelles where legend claims Aḥmed wrote these words was a marble open-air mosque that served as a mustering-place for soldiers bound for distant Balkan fronts and sailors who manned the galleys that fought Venetian ships in those waters. Its *miḥrāb* faced the Straits, just north of the harbor neighborhoods where in 1402 the Castilian ambassador refused to disembark, fearing a city ravaged by bubonic plague. There also, in 1420, a Byzantine general and an Ottoman pretender negotiated for control of the town in mutual fear of the Ottoman sultan Meḥmed I; it remained this kind of frontier for the following decades as the Yazıcıoğlu brothers lived there. Because of its strategic centrality Gelibolu was never secure in the *dār al-islām*. This anxiety was heightened by a further commitment of Aḥmed's audience:

1 *KM857* p. 113a. his address alludes to Qur'an 89:27-30, "Oh, soul at peace! Return unto thy Lord, content in His good pleasure! Enter among my servants! Enter my garden!"

their dedication to this distinct faith that was so new to the Rumelian lands, a dedication that entailed, for some of them, cutting ties with the past and with their families and orienting their hearts towards an abstract future. They served a God they could not see, whose absence they were continually reminded of. So Aḥmed's vision of heaven, where the "king of peace" alone reigned, was drawn against the violence and suffering of the frontier as its negation. To his flock of converts and soldiers, religion was salvation in its literal sense of a rescue from the world, a dream of being "forever absolved" of all that is in it. This kernel of faith that Aḥmed Bīcān strives to express was a piety that overcomes the world by transmuting war and hardship into the eternal peace of divine presence: "I am your familiar, sitting with you".

For Aḥmed Bīcān's audience this ray of piety illuminated the chaos of the early Ottoman borderlands and connected them to the heart of Islamic civilization. The borderlands were woven into the rest of the Islamic world by the transit of ideas and texts. In this regard the words of Aḥmed Bīcān and his brother Meḥmed were testimonies of a long historical process of the integration of Islamic religious knowledge into the intellectual culture of Muslim Anatolia and Rumelia. In his devotional poem *Muḥammediyye*, Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu thanks a few of his teachers: the local dervish Bāyezīd, the late Egyptian *ḥadīth* scholar Zayn al-‘Arab, and lastly one Ḥaydar-i Khvāfī. This Ḥaydar, better known as Haravī, was an established scholar of *ḥadīth* and Qur’an who traveled to the Rumelian marches with credentials from the renowned schools of Ḥanafī jurisprudence in Timurid Samarqand. He was part of the first generation of international ‘*ulamā* to make careers in the schools of the Ottoman capitals and an apt emblem of the metropolitanization of Ottoman intellectual culture. We see Meḥmed and his brother quote from and interpret texts from this environment, translating them into the idiom of their

Turcophone public. In fact, this directive – to translate and popularize – is crucial to the Yazıcıoğlu's mission. Ahmed writes “These books are in the Arabic language and some are in the Persian language. Not everyone can read them and be graced by their meaning. Few people know their expressions. I, this poor one, desired to create a book in Turkish out of this esoteric and exoteric knowledge, so that our people of this land may make use of this knowledge and may thus become knowledgeable and wise, and so that they hold law and truth in their hearts and their convictions and know the bond of Islam...” So, by and large, their writings can be characterized as lively Turkish anthologies of canonical Arabic writings.

The Yazıcıoğlu's approach to the Islamic canon that they inherited was discriminating. They chose to transmit a select group of writings that adapt to the demands of a frontier piety, and so had to adopt distinct positions within the polemical landscape of fifteenth-century Islamicate intellectual culture. The Yazıcıoğlus were particularly drawn towards ecumenical expressions that efface the differences between the schisms and schools of thought of Islam, presenting a uniform and harmonious model of a single “community of Muhammad” (*ümmet-i Muḥammed*) as distinguished from Christian and syncretic communities around them. They also showed an inclination towards a broadly uncontroversial Sufism that is characteristic of their time and place. The primary personal relationship that they choose to celebrate in their writings is with the Sufi leader Ḥācī Bayram Velī, whose community in Ankara was their ethical lodestone throughout their later lives. Through the Bayramīs, the Yazıcıoğlu brothers accessed the theosophical vocabulary of Ibn ‘Arabī, and in this way entered a wider conversation, simultaneously played out in Timurid and Turkmen lands, on its meaning and acceptability.

Adapting its message to an accessible sacred-historical framework, they contributed one more voice to the eventual Ottoman consensus of Akbarian orthodoxy.

Meḥmed and Aḥmed Yazııcıoğlu worked during the last years of Murad II's reign and the first years of the reign of Meḥmed II, a crucial inflection point in the development of the Ottoman state. During the eventful years of the 1440s and 1450s, fresh from victories at Varna (1444), Kosovo (1448), Karaman (1451), and the Morea (1452), the Ottoman state finally extended its dominion to the other major city on the straits, Constantinople. Aḥmed Bīcān alludes to it without hyperbole. It is doubtful that Aḥmed had ever been to the city, and he did not describe its grandeur as other contemporaries did; instead he saw the conquest as one attribute adhering to the world-historical personality of Meḥmed II, the *pādiṣāh* of an empire. Equally important to his political imagination was the 1444 Crusade of Varna. The venture of the king of Hungary deep into Ottoman lands at the head of an international Catholic army evoked, for Aḥmed Bīcān, the apocalypse of the Blond People who would push the Muslims back to Syria in the prelude to the End Times; its defeat, mentioned in the *Müntehā*, justified the Ottomans' extension towards Balkan frontiers in fulfillment of their own eschatological role. But despite this conscious enthusiasm for the Ottoman political experiment, Aḥmed and Meḥmed appear uninterested, or at least several degrees distant, from the state itself. Gelibolu, though geographically central to the empire, was seen less as a stronghold upholding the state than as a fortress at its edges, a "*dārü'l-cihād*" during the Yazııcıoğlus' lifetimes.

The idea of this moving frontier and Gelibolu's place at its center was crucial to the Yazııcıoğlu brothers' self-understanding. Making constant reference to their city as the "abode of holy war", the brothers even claim to have participated in *ğazā* themselves, though in a spiritual

capacity. “Praise god that we perform *ğazā*... sometimes the unbelievers come to us, and sometimes we come to the unbelievers,” Aḥmed writes, in reference not only to the Venetian ships that attempted to take the town, but to the spiritual combat between the two faiths taking place between believers in the region. A consequence of Orthodox Christian political and social presence in the Yazıcıoğlus’ border homeland is that philosophical conversations between members of the two confessional communities were inevitable. In fact, there survive many records of interconfessional dialogues on religious subjects took place in and around Gelibolu throughout the Yazıcıoğlus’ lifetimes. Some of these dialogues expressed a conviction that the two religious systems of Islam and Christianity were compatible and the lines between them unclear. In particular there surfaced a confusion, felt by both Muslims and Christians, as to the relative positions of Jesus and Muhammad in the hierarchy of prophets. In Latīfī’s *Tezkire*, for example, we hear of a preacher in Bursa’s largest mosque who advocated the superiority of Jesus over Muhammad. The Yazıcıoğlus wrote their texts in part as a response to these sentiments that tended towards religious union: confronting this, they aimed to differentiate Islam from Christianity, defining its identity for their frontier congregation, abolishing the confusion of the borderlands, fashioning it as a conflict between two distinct pious visions.

Aḥmed and Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu were born into the second generation of Ottoman Muslim settlers of Rumelia. Their father, Şālīḥ, typified the first generation. A scribe by trade, he arrived in Thrace during the last quarter of the fourteenth century, settling in Malkara and Gelibolu in the employ of the frontier warlord Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī. After the latter’s death Şālīḥ composed his only surviving text, an astrological compendium in the honor of his next employer, a Gelibolu notable. The *Şemsiyye* is one of the first astrological texts in Turkish, and as such it

prefigures the works of Şālih's sons in two ways. First, it is self-conscious in its use of the Turkish language, approaching Arabic and Persian textual heritage as lore that must be translated into the local vernacular. All of Meḥmed and Aḥmed's Turkish works would share this approach. Second, in its content Şālih deals with matters that would retain the interest of his sons – specifically, the intersection of natural philosophy and piety that Aḥmed would return to in his own adaptation of his father's work, the *Bustānu'l-Haqāiq*.

Şālih's two sons grew up in the orbit of Qaşşāboḡlu's household and subsisted in the service of the next generation of Gelibolu notables, a cohort more closely linked to the Ottoman state. From their Thracian home it seems the brothers ventured out only twice. It was in nearby Edirne where Şālih's older son Meḥmed learned religious sciences from Ḥanafī schoolmen, and in Ankara where both Meḥmed and Aḥmed forged an enduring devotional bond with the spiritual leader Ḥācı Bayram Velī, becoming a part of his Sufi community. By the 1440's both brothers, now probably middle-aged, had permanently settled in Gelibolu and, professing an awareness of their homeland's spiritual needs, they set out to compose their works.

The first of the brothers' known works is Meḥmed's *Maghārib al-Zamān*. Of all of the family's major texts this will be the least discussed in this study, partly because it is in Arabic and was far less widely read among its plebeian Turcophone audience, and, more importantly, because all of its content is repeated in Aḥmed Bīcān's *Envāru'l- 'Āşiqīn*, its Turkish translation. Aḥmed began this translation, a wide-ranging masterpiece of catechistics and dogmatics, the year of the 1444 Varna Crusade, and its content is accordingly marked by a sharp consciousness of confessional distinction with respect to Christianity. The *Envār* is a single narrative of Islam from Creation to Resurrection, encompassing the stories of the prophets from Adam to

Muhammad as well as information on the requirements of belief, piety, and (to a lesser extent) ritual. Simultaneously Meḥmed wrote the work for which the family is perhaps most famous, the *Muḥammediyye*, a *meṣnevī* made up of the same material.

Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu died in 855/1451. By the time of Aḥmed's next work one detects a certain change in the younger brother's attitude, a vague turn away from dogmatics in an interconfessional setting and towards a more distant mystical piety. The first artifact of this new attitude is his '*Acāibu'l-Maḥlūqāt*, which departs from its original geographical text by Qazwīnī in its concern for moral lessons and its even more explicitly Sufi basis. In 857/1453, Aḥmed translated his brother's Arabic commentary on Ibn 'Arabi's *Fusūs*, expanding it into the first version of his *Müntehā* to which were added discussions of a wide array of pious and mystical topics. After a gap in his written record, Aḥmed produced another version of the *Müntehā* in 870/1465 with a heightened eschatological intensity and a lengthy dedication to the reigning sultan. It is possible to assess this final *Müntehā* as the fulfillment of its title, "The Utmost" - the capstone of Aḥmed Bīcān's career. Around this time three more works survive in Aḥmed Bīcān's name. The *Rūḥu'l-Ervāḥ*, related to some of the *Müntehā*'s content, introduces the reader to macrocosmic cosmology. The *Cevhernāme* discusses jewels, and the *Bustānu'l-Ḥaqqāiq* transforms his father's *Şemsiyye* into prose. The circle of the Yazıcıoğlus' writings is thus nicely closed, with their last work reprising the first, the *Maghārib-Envār-Muḥammediyye* cluster of brothers' jointly-composed dogmatic texts being written just before Meḥmed's death, and the *Acāib*, *Müntehā*, *Cevhernāme* and *Bustān* comprising Aḥmed's independent works of a more speculative nature.

One text that will not be discussed as one of the Yazıcıoğlu's works is perhaps their most famous. The *Dürr-i Mekkūn* ("The Hidden Pearl"), an encyclopedic text on subjects related to the Yazıcıoğlu's concerns, has been attributed to Ahmed Bīcān since at least the seventeenth century. **Appendix I** will argue that this attribution is mistaken. For this reason alone this study departs sharply from other assessments of the Yazıcıoğlu, which strive to integrate the *Dürr* into the rest of the corpus.²

II. International Context

The Yazıcıoğlu fix a moment in the evolution of Ottoman religiosity that was to produce an enduring spiritual vernacular. They unite international currents with frontier demands, fuse Sufism with law and other religious sciences, and consciously aim to synthesize a faith for the Ottoman Muslim masses. In the wider Islamic world three scenes of intellectual activity exert an influence on the Yazıcıoğlu's environment. The first is local environment of the scholars of western Anatolia and the Ottoman Balkans, who were at that precise moment coalescing into the Ottoman scholarly hierarchies based in Bursa, Edirne, and then Istanbul. During the Yazıcıoğlu's lifetime, the figure at the head of this community was Molla Şemse'd-dīn Fenari and his lineage, who ranked high in prestige among native-born *'ulemā*. Arrayed around the Fenaris were migrant scholars from other parts of the Islamic world populating the teaching posts of *medreses* recently established by the Ottoman state. These scholars received a ready welcome in the Ottoman capitals because the local scholarly community, in the early and middle decades of the fifteenth century, labored under the shadow of more established centers of intellectual life in

² See **Appendix I**. The contention that the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* is not by Ahmed Bīcān may in the long run be the most contentious of this dissertation's conclusions.

Timurid Khurasan and Transoxania. Under the lavish patronage of Timur and his son Shāhrukh, a true flowering of Ḥanafī religious sciences took place in Samarqand and Herat headed by the senior scholars Sa‘d al-dīn Taftazānī and Sayyīd Sharif Jurjānī; their students formed the core of the community Ottoman migrants.

A third nucleus of activity, with a less direct relationship to the Yazıcıoğlu context, was Mamluk Egypt and Syria. Aleppo, Damascus, and Cairo were the world centers of Shāfi‘ī jurisprudence, and some of the products of this milieu found their way to the Ottoman lands. Cairo was also one of the symbolic centers of a fifteenth-century intellectual avant-garde that spanned the space from Transoxania to the Balkans. İlker Evrim Binbaş has recently written on this network of elite intellectuals, sometimes known as the “neo” *Ikhwān al-Şafā*.³ These individuals and those connected with them linked several notable radical ideologies and social movements, that include the movement Sayyid Nūrbakhsh; the Hurūfī movement of Fażlullāh Astarābādī; one of its intellectual pillars of the *Ikhwān*, Sa‘īn al-dīn Turka; the rebellion of Şeyh Bedre‘d-dīn; the latent political command that inhered in Shāh Ni‘matullāh, an important Sufi leader of Timurid Iran.

It does not seem to be the case that the Yazıcıoğlu brothers directly participated in these networks. The most proximate texts through which these networks can be reconstructed, such as ‘Abdurrahmān Bisṭāmī’s *Durrat Tāj al-Rasā’il* and the *Menāqibname* of Şeyh Bedre‘d-dīn by his grandson Ḥāfiẓ Ḥalīl, make not a single mention of the Yazıcıoğlu family. The Yazıcıoğlus’ writings also show little evidence of the kind of experimentation these elite luminaries engaged in. Yet they are not entirely disconnected from these dynamics. A proposography of the

3 İlker Evrim Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran: Sharaf Al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī and the Islamicate Republic of Letters* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Yazıcıoğlu brothers reveals two second-order connections to the *Ikhwān*, through their mystagogue into Sufi esotericism, Hācı Bayram Velī whose own teacher Şomuncu Baba was involved with the group, and secondly through Meḥmed’s instructor in the exoteric, Ḥaydar Heravī, whose position in the Edirne academic system put him into hostile contact with Şeyḫ Bedre’-d-dīn himself. So the Yazıcıoğlus do indeed trace the edges of the Islamic “republic of letters” and may have assimilated their concerns, if not their answers. Neither experimentation nor systematization was their purpose, even as their writing reveals preoccupations that reflect the same spirit that nurtured the international avant-garde.

It is impossible to doubt the centrality of another “intellectual network” in the Yazıcıoğlus’ lives: the complex interlacing of personal and institutional bonds that comprised the social body of Sufism. The brothers’ master Hācı Bayram connected them, through the past, to the lineage of Şafavī *shaykhs* who commanded the loyalty of a large community in eastern Anatolia and Azerbaijan. Through this medium the Yazıcıoğlus’ social world extended to the Sufi community of Ankara, and thence to the Bayramīs’ sister *ṭarīqa*, the Ḥalvetīs, a strong presence in the *khānqāhs* of Azerbaijan and Shirvan that would become politically influential in the Ottoman lands during the reign of Bāyezīd II. These vertical *ṭarīqa* connections, elaborated in internal Sufi histories, were certainly undercut and bridged by horizontal ones across *ṭarīqa* lines. A persistent tradition, for instance, links Eşrefoğlu Rumī, a Qādirī Sufi and poet, to the circle of Hācı Bayram. What these fifteenth-century communities all held in common, beyond their mystical approach to piety, was that they each grappled with the legacy of the influential theosophy of the thirteenth-century mystic and philosophy Ibn al-‘Arabī.

Biancamaria Amoretti,⁴ John Woods,⁵ Cornell Fleischer, İhsan Fazlıođlu,⁶ and others have noted the remarkable ideas that grew up during the fourteenth and fifteenth-century post-Mongol crisis of authority, stimulated by new discussions on prophecy, caliphate, rulership, reason and revelation, the phenomenal world versus text and intellection. These questions, from which Islamicate early modernity emerged as an answer, await extensive scholarly treatment to synthesize and relate together. Regrettably, these great issues of the age are ones the Yazıcıođlu brothers do not shed any particular light on. At the margins of more than one globe-spanning republic of letters, aware of much of it but ignorant of even more, the Yazıcıođlu brothers were occupied with a very immediate question – the nature of faith. As distinguished from questions of orthodoxy or heterodoxy, they worried about defining Islam through narrative and instruction. They express the broad bounds of a fideistic normative religion, a circle wide enough to embrace the variety of Ottoman frontier Islam but narrow enough to remain meaningful as a vehicle of communal commitment.

III. Sources

This study is held together by the works of the Yazıcıođlu family. I have attempted to use the oldest and most complete manuscript of each of these works, with occasional reference to later manuscripts when necessary. I have not, however, compared each manuscript of a given

4 Biancamaria Amoretti, “Religion in the Timurid and Safavid Periods,” in *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 610–55. This inspired article describes the flowering of religious thought in greater Iran during the fifteenth century and after.

5 The problems of fifteenth-century political theology are succinctly laid out in John E. Woods, *The Aqqayunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), pp. 3-10.

6 İhsan Fazlıođlu, “İlk Dönem Osmanlı İlim ve Kültür Hayatında İhvânu’s-Safâ ve Abdurrahmân Bistâmî,,” *Divan* 1, no. 2 (1996): pp. 229–40.

work closely with each other manuscript, nor attempted to create any sort of manuscript genealogy. Each text is treated as a complete whole. The manuscripts used are as follows:

a. Yazıcı Şālih's *Şemsiyye*, written during or shortly after 811/1409. This astrological almanac in Turkish exists in a copy (Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Pertevniyal 766, henceforth *Ş*) completed in early Muḥarram 861 / December 1456, making this among the earliest dated manuscripts of any of the family's works. A second, slightly divergent manuscript preserved in Leiden (Leiden 1448), was also used to resolve discrepancies.

b. Meḥmed's *Maghārib al-Zaman*, written in Arabic, was accessed in a manuscript copy dated to early Sha'bān 1225 / September 1810 (Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Nuruosmaniye 2596, henceforth *MZ*). Of the few complete copies, this was the most readable.

c. Meḥmed's *Muḥammediyye*, written in Turkish verse, was accessed in two ways. First, I was able to access what is alleged to be Meḥmed's own autograph of this poem (Vakıflar Müdürlüğü 431-A). More often, however, I utilized Amil Çelebioğlu's critical edition, which relies on this same copy.⁷

d. For *Envārü'l-Aşiqîn*, Aḥmed Bīcān's prose compendium of dogmatics and prophetic narrative, I have used the earliest known manuscript, copied in the middle of Rabī' al-Awwal 918 / June 1512 (Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Pertev Paşa 229-M, henceforth *EA*).

⁷ Amil Çelebioğlu, ed., *Muḥammediyye* (İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1996).

e. Aḥmed's '*Acāibu'l-Maḥlūqāt*, his Turkish abridgment of Qazwīnī's Arabic work of the same name, is accessed through an undated, though most likely sixteenth century copy (Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ali Nihat Tarlan 100, henceforth *AM*).

g. Meḥmed's Arabic *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* was read in complete copy written in a much later hand (Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Pertev Paşa 293, henceforth *ShF*).

h. The 857/1453 *Kitābü'l-Müntehā* was read in a manuscript completed by one Meḥmed el-Sinobī on 26 Jumādā II 1003 / February 28 1595 (Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Kılıç Ali Paşa 630, henceforth *KM857*). This was also the manuscript used by Ayşe Beyazıt in her transliterated edition, which I also consulted.⁸

i. I used two manuscripts of Aḥmed's 1465 *Kitābu'l-Müntehā*. The oldest and most interesting, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi Hacı Mahmud Efendi 1657 (henceforth *KM870B*), in a very rough hand, preserves archaic vowelings and may date to a period soon after its composition. For convenience, however, a later, clearer manuscript was also used (Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Yazma Bağışlar 7585, henceforth *KM870A*).

j. The *Rūḥu'l-Ervāḥ*, previously believed to exist only in a single manuscript in Vienna (Staatsbibliothek Cod. N. F. 202, 204, Historische Sammelhandschrift), was supplemented by another copy found in Istanbul (Atatürk Kitaplığı, Nadir Eserler, OE Yazmalar 1744, henceforth

⁸ Ayşe Beyazıt, *El-Müntehā: Fusûsu'l-Hikem üzerine bir çalıma* (Güngören, İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2011).

RA). There is now a published transliteration by Siyabend Ebem, who has brought to light several further copies.⁹

k. The copy of *Bostānu'l-Ḥaqqāiq* used here was Millet Kütüphanesi, A. E. Şerire 561 (henceforth *BH*), which is missing its last page. A more complete copy is known to exist in the Topkapı Palace Library, but it could not be consulted for this study.

l. *Cevhernāme*, a short poem attributed to Aḥmed Bīcān, was read in Fatma Kutlar's published article, based on Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 3452.¹⁰

A range of other manuscripts and published sources from the period were utilized in this study. Beyond the works of the family, other works directly implicated in the Yazıcıoğlu environment were assessed. *Tahrīr* registries and *vaqf* records helped fix their lives and careers within the human environment of Gelibolu and Thrace. The writings of some of the Yazıcıoğlu's acquaintances and peers, such as Aqşemse'd-dīn, Ḥācī Bayram Velī, and Ḥaydar Haravī, were deployed in order to establish intellectual and personal relationships. Testimonies from travelers and other visitors to Gelibolu, including observers writing in Greek, Latin, Castilian, and Catalan, proved necessary to describe the atmosphere in which the brothers lived and worked. An important eighteenth-century commentary on the Muhammediyye, İbrāhīm Ḥaqqı Bursevī's *Ferahu'r-ruh*, furnished important information. And, as in most studies of the Ottoman centuries, the Ottoman biographical dictionary and chronicle traditions proved indispensable.

9 Siyabend Ebem, "Ahmed Bīcān'a Atfedilen Bir Eser: Rūhū'l-Ervāh," *Türk Dünyası İncelemeleri Dergisi / Journal of Turkish World Studies* XIV, no. 1 (2014): pp. 49–74.

10 Fatma Kutlar, "Ahmed-i Bican'ın Manzum Cevahir-Name'si," *İnsan Bilimleri Araştırmaları* 7 (2002): 59–68.

This study inherits an array of secondary literature on its subjects that is unwieldy for one simple reason: all scholarship until now has treated the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* as a work of Aḥmed Bīcān. The Yazıciöğlus have attracted scholarly attention, even in the West, from an early date. The French diplomat Joseph Brue translated passages from the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* in 1735. It was Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall who first made these texts widely known in Europe by translating portions of the *Muḥammediyye* and *Dürr-i Mekkūn*; in 1834 he remarked that the latter contained “more recondite learning, more entertaining history, more beautiful specimens of poetry than I ever saw collected in a simple volume”¹¹. E. J. W. Gibb includes the Yazıciöğlus in his anthology of Ottoman poetry and, about them, was more dismissive than his was Austrian predecessor: regarding the *Muḥammediyye*, he said, “the subjects of the book – the legends concerning the beginning and the end of all things and the mission of the Prophet – might, in the hands of a great poet, a Dante or Milton, be moulded into some splendid epic... But [Meḥmed’s] aim was neither artistry nor poetry, but simply to convey instruction in a pleasant way...”¹² He added that the book was popular “particularly with old ladies.”¹³ However, as the object of much of this early interest was the *Dürr-i Mekkūn*, most likely not by Aḥmed Bīcān, these discussions fail to cohere into an accurate picture of the family’s intellectual trajectory.

This same concern applies to most subsequent studies of the family. Franz Taeschner, in his work on Ottoman geography, placed Aḥmed at its head with his *‘Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt* and, predictably, the *Dürr-i Mekkūn*. Edith Ambros and Victor Menage then contributed short encyclopedia articles on Şāliḥ and Aḥmed¹⁴, while Barbara Flemming provided an overview of

11 Quoted in Kaptein, *Apocalypse*, p. 4.

12 Elias John Wilkinson Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, (London: Luzac, 1900), Vol. 1, p. 404.

13 Ibid. p. 405.

14 Edith Ambros, “Yazidji-Oghlu,” and V. L Ménage, “Bīdjān,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs.

catalogue descriptions of the *Dürr-i Mekkün* in 1968. Fahir İz published portions of the *Dürr-i Mekkün*, and the *Envārü'l-Āşīqīn* was modernized by Ahmet Kahraman and released serially by the Turkish daily *Tercüman* in 1973.¹⁵ In 1986, Amil Çelebioğlu and Kemal Eraslan, in an important contribution written for the *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, tried to enumerate the works of all three men and attempted a biography that, while brief, was still more detailed than any that had come before.¹⁶ Çelebioğlu advanced the field greatly with his published critical edition of the *Muhammediyye* is used here, that adds a detailed biographical exposition and comments on the work's literary qualities.¹⁷ He also published an article including some excerpts of the hitherto-unknown *Şemsiyye*.¹⁸ Most recently, Fatma Kutlar uncovered the *Cevhernâme*,¹⁹ and Ayşe Beyazıt, demonstrating the rising popular interest in Turkey in the legacy of Ibn 'Arabi, produced a romanized edition of the *Müntehâ*.²⁰

The first attempt to go beyond the bibliographic was that of Stéphane Yerasimos in 1990.²¹ Yerasimos' *Légendes d'empire: La Fondation de Constantinople et de Sainte-Sophie dans les traditions turques* that *Dürr-i Mekkün* is the first of the "anti-imperial histories" in Turkish. In doing so he put Ahmed Bīcān on the map as an object of serious literary and historical study. The depth and detail of his reading of the *Dürr* cannot be matched by any other piece of modern scholarship, and the work certainly ranks as one of the finest works of Ottoman

15 Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, ed. Orhan Şaik Gökyay et al. (Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1996).

16 Amil Çelebioğlu and Kemal Eraslan, "Yazıcı-oğlu," *İslam Ansiklopedisi*. Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı.

17 Çelebioğlu, *Muhammediyye*.

18 Amil Çelebioğlu, "Yazıcı Salih ve Şemsiyye'si," *Atatürk Üniversitesi İslami İlimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 1 (1976): pp. 171–218.

19 Kutlar, "Ahmed-i Bican'ın manzum Cevahir-Name'si."

20 Ahmet Bīcān, *El-Müntehâ: Fusûsu'l-Hikem üzerine bir çalışma* Ed. Ayşe Beyazıt (Güngören, İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2011).

21 Stéphane Yerasimos, *La Fondation de Constantinople et de Sainte-Sophie dans les traditions turques: légendes d'Empire* (İstanbul; Paris: Institut français d'études anatoliennes ; Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient J. Maisonneuve, 1990).

intellectual history in recent decades. Yet, because of questions of the *Dürr*'s authorship, the Yazıcızoğlus' place within the sociology of Ottoman critics of empire is not as clear as Yerasimos hopes, and his work, while illuminating, is of limited relevance to a study of the family's thought.

The scholar who currently most closely identified with the study of the Yazıcızoğlus is Laban Kaptein, whose critical edition and German translation of the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* is a great resource.²² His other major contribution, *The Apocalypse and the Antichrist Dajjal in Islam*, is a meticulous analysis of the apocalyptic chapters of the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* in view of the long tradition of Islamic apocalyptic literature based on Qur'an and *ḥadīth*. Parts of this text operate as a useful biography of Aḥmed Bīcān. Yet Kaptein remains focused on the text's apocalypticism, continually advancing the point of view that Aḥmed Bīcān's work displays "eschatological images straight from the traditional Islamic stock..."²³, and that apocalyptic or messianic qualities ascribed to sultans like Meḥmed II and Süleymān were "not tailor-made to suit a unique situation or personage"²⁴. More recently, Kaya Şahin disputed this interpretation. Attention to the prognosticatory elements of Aḥmed Bīcān's authentic *Müntehā*, a text used by neither Kaptein nor Yerasimos, allow Aḥmed's apocalypticism to be read in a new light as an argument for the Ottoman state as the unique beneficiary of God's grace in the end time ushered in by the 1453 conquest. Şahin thus defends the views of Fleischer, Barbara Flemming, and others, while rejecting Yerasimos' assertion that apocalyptic writing necessarily constitutes a form of social criticism. Yet Yerasimos, Kaptein, and Şahin mainly concern themselves with the contents of the *Dürr-i Mekkūn*, and chiefly with its legend of Constantinople's foundation and its

22 Ahmed Bican, *Dürr-i Mekkūn: kritische Edition mit Kommentar*, ed. Laban Kaptein (Asch [Niederlande: Selbstverl. Laban Kaptein, 2007).

23 Kaptein, *Apocalypse* p. 53.

24 Ibid. p. 56.

apocalyptic sections. Mehmed and Şalih are excluded. Thus a contextualization of the Yazıcıoğlu's writing as a body that *excludes* the *Dürr-i Mekkün* – how each remaining component relates to each other and to the lives and experiences of their authors – is yet to be attempted.

Most recently, Tobias Heinzelmann has published a study on the uses of the Yazıcıoğlu's texts as part of Ottoman book culture of the centuries after its composition.²⁵ Abdullah Uğur is also at work dealing with the contexts of the Yazıcıoğlu's texts, paying close attention to manuscript histories and marginalia. Aynur Koçak produced a textual study on aspects of Ahmed Bican's writings, outlining themes and images in the *Envār* and *Müntehā*.²⁶ This dissertation differs from these projects in its close attention to the contemporary context of the Yazıcıoğlu themselves. Here I deliberately avoid considering the later fate and usage of the Yazıcıoğlu writings, opting to interpret them as part of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century world.

This wider world of the Yazıcıoğlu, that is, the Islamic religious thought of the fifteenth century, is still scarcely understood. Prior to the last decade, scholars of this time period ventured with trepidation into a disorienting wilderness, some paths have by now been cleared. Shahzad Bashir's work on the Nurbakhshis²⁷ and, later, his outline of the Hurufi movement of Fazlullah Astarabadi²⁸ have become vital reading; the study of Hurufism has been recently enhanced by Fatih Usluer²⁹ and Orkhan Mir-Kasimov.³⁰ Two works of the last few years have deepened our

25 Tobias Heinzelmann, *Populäre religiöse Literatur und Buchkultur im Osmanischen Reich: eine Studie zur Nutzung der Werke der Brüder Yazıcıoğlu* (Würzburg: Ergon-Verl., 2015).

26 Aynur Koçak, *Ahmet Bican'in eserleri üzerine bir inceleme* (Istanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, 2003).

27 Shahzad Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions: The Nurbakhshīya between Medieval and Modern Islam* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003).

28 Shahzad Bashir, *Fazlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005).

29 Fatih Usluer, *Hurufilik: ilk elden kaynaklarla doğuşundan itibaren* (Topkapı, İstanbul: Kabcı Yayınevi, 2009).

30 Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, *Words of power: Hurufi teachings between Shi'ism and Sufism in medieval Islam: the original doctrine of Faql Allāh Astarābādī* (London: I. B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2015).

knowledge of the intellectual concerns of cosmopolitan fifteenth-century elites: Matthew Melvin-Koushki's study of the Timurid intellectual Sa'īn al-dīn Turka,³¹ and Evrim Binbaş's work on Timurid intellectual networks from the point of view of one of its key players, Sharaf al-dīn 'Alī Yazdī.³² Christopher Markiewicz's recent dissertation and forthcoming book deals with Idrīs Bidlīsī, a bureaucrat of the following generation whose career sums up political thought across the duration of the long century between the death of Timur and the accession of Sultan Süleyman.

The diversity of Ottoman pieties of the fifteenth century also remains understudied. Since its modern beginnings in the work of Fuat Köprülü³³ and Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı,³⁴ and despite the important studies of Irene Melikoff³⁵ and many others, the field has at times seemed restrained by the puzzle of the contemporary Turkish political landscape. The study of Ottoman Sufism of the early period has only recently moved beyond an overtly politicized preoccupation with orthodoxy and its enemies, notably in the works of Ahmet Karamustafa³⁶ and Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, whose monograph on Ottoman heresies reframed the study of heterodoxy in the empire.³⁷ Dina Le Gall described the Ottoman Naqshbandis³⁸, and Hasan Karataş and John Curry have reconstructed the complex history of the Ḥalvetiyye.³⁹ Zeynep Yürekli has used material culture

31 Matthew S. Melvin-Koushki, "The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of Sa'īn Al-dīn Turka Isfahani (1369--1432) and Intellectual Millenarianism in Early Timurid Iran" (Ph.D., Yale University, 2012).

32 Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran*.

33 Mehmet Fuat Köprülü, ed. and trans. Gary Leiser and Robert Dankoff, *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006).

34 Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı, *Melâmîlik ve melâmîler*. (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1931).

35 Irène Mélikoff, *Hadji Bektach: Un Mythe et Ses Avatars: Genèse et Évolution Du Soufisme Populaire En Turquie* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

36 Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994).

37 Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Zındıklar ve mülhidler yahut dairenin dışına çıkanlar: 15.-17. yüzyıllar* (Istanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1999).

38 Dina Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandīs in the Ottoman World, 1450-1700*, SUNY Series in Medieval Middle East History (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

39 Hasan Karataş, "The City as a Historical Actor: The Urbanization and Ottomanization of the Halvetiye Sufi Order by the City of Amasya in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries" (Ph.D., University of California,

to assess the history of the Bektaşî community.⁴⁰ Scholastic Sunnî piety has also been approached anew. A recent dissertation by Abdurrahman Atçıl, building upon classic works by Richard Repp⁴¹ and Ismail Hakki Uzunçarşılı,⁴² has provided the first general picture of the fifteenth-century Ottoman scholarly hierarchies with an eye towards their own ideologies and that of the state.⁴³

This literature clearly calls for a detail-oriented study of Ottoman popular piety with a close textual focus. The Yazıcıoğlus, personally distant from the state but responsive to the ideas it represented, provide an ideal vantage from which to understand the Ottoman spiritual vernacular.

Comments

This study, in attempting to inhabit the mentalities of the Yazıcıoğlu brothers, hopes to balance the broad scale of their intellectual world with the much narrower scope of their personal horizons, preoccupied as they are with their own hometown of Gelibolu. Here the “international” is represented by their texts’ content – their sources in the canon of Arabic religious sciences, as well as the Ibn ‘Arabî elements of their Sufism. Their local setting is represented, on the other hand, by the structures they raise up out of these sources – the Islam they present, its themes and its images, and its presentation in Turkish. They were local architects building with imported timber. This relationship between local and supralocal is a major feature, not only of the subjects

Berkeley, 2011). John Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire : the Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350-1750* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

40 Zeynep Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire the Politics of Bektashi Shrines in the Classical Age* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).

41 R. Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul: A Study in the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy* (London: Published by Ithaca Press for the Board of the Faculty of Oriental Studies Oxford University, 1986).

42 Ismail Hakki Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı devletinin ilmiye teşkilâtı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1965).

43 Abdurrahman Atçıl, “The Formation of the Ottoman Learned Class” (University of Chicago, 2010).

of this dissertation, but of the Islamic world in the late medieval and early modern period. Though united by a what Marshall Hodgson calls the “common Islamic social pattern”, a sense of communal identity colored but not fractured by the requirements of individual political situations, the region grew increasingly defined by the individual styles early modern empires as the Islamic Middle Period progressed. The Yazıcıoğlu’s spiritual vernacular can be seen as a perfect exemplar of the localization of an Islamic discursive tradition.

The Yazıcıoğlu can also help the scholar access something very elusive in the study of the intellectual culture of the Islamic world: a non-elite perspective. Never close to the seat of power and not, apparently, well-traveled, the Yazıcıoğlu were in a real sense provincial. Though their work was drawn from very standard materials, it was in its form and preoccupations nevertheless “popular”, and one can read in it a certain distrust of established *‘ulemā* and their various hypocrisies. This non-elite perspective does not, however, extend to a distrust of the Ottoman state. Though they depended not on the first rank of Ottoman functionaries but on local *begs* for their sustenance, they do seem to have acquired a sense of legitimacy in their dogmatic elaborations from the expansion of the Ottoman enterprise in the Balkans and Mediterranean. They epitomize a class of provincial writers attached to the Ottoman idea but several degrees removed from the state itself.

As such, the Yazıcıoğlu’s doctrines themselves express what scholars may call “popular religion”, as distinguished from a “high” faith developed by elite schoolmen. This vernacular piety is not iconoclastic or antinomian. Rather, the popular religion of the Yazıcıoğlu – the dogmatic content of early Ottoman Sunnism – builds its emotional weight out of the psychological materials of the narratives of sacred history, such as the examples of the righteous

prophets, like Job, who remained committed to belief in the face of injustice. It makes full use of powerful scriptural imagery to invoke of the reverent fear of judgment after death, a feeling that goes along with a politically quietist appreciation of the union of God and creation. What made this piety “popular” was its unconcern with doctrinal and legalistic nuance, and its appropriately frontier-oriented embrace of a simply Muslim identity.

This dissertation will express the Yazıcıoğlus’ embrace of alternately local and supralocal horizons and constraints by means of its chapter structure. **Chapter 1** will attempt to create a biography of the Yazıcıoğlu family rooted in the turbulent social ecology of Thrace in the years from the 1370’s to the 1460’s. Although the careers of Aḥmed, Meḥmed, and their father Şāliḥ take place in an era scarcely lit by documentary evidence, it becomes possible, by reading clues scattered throughout their works and in archival sources such as endowment deeds and tax registries, to add significant detail to the biographical sketch worked out by Amil Celebioglu, and discern the patterns of a local patronage network centered on the naval frontier city of Gelibolu during the decades before the conquest of Constantinople. While Şāliḥ, as part of a very early wave of Turkish Muslim settlement in Europe, followed the households of warlords who autonomously fought on the Balkan frontiers, his two sons found themselves attached to various Ottoman notables and military men from Gelibolu. Thus the “Ottoman” character of this network evolves over time as the set of the Yazıcıoğlus’ patrons transforms from self-sufficient clique of warlords to men who bear distinct Ottoman pedigrees by 1450.

Chapter 2 integrates the Yazıcıoğlus with the wider world by elucidating how their own library and intellectual heritage represents the spread of scholarship from distant parts of the Islamic world. Using the methodology of source criticism, I identify and analyze the works that

comprised the Yazıcıoğlu's essentially anthological output, with the hope of representing the library available to provincial scholars of a frontier state that would soon become a world empire. I found that most of their sources were from a relatively narrow and highly canonical set of writings that were carried into Ottoman lands by established scholars from Timurid Iran. We see, in the Yazıcıoğlu's library, Qur'an commentaries, collections of prophetic traditions, legal compendia, and mystical treatises that correspond to the curriculum of a mid-level student of orthodox Ḥanafī orientation, just as that tradition began to dominate instruction in Ottoman *medreses*. The most popular expositors of Ottoman vernacular Sunnism, that is to say, composed their works using a conventional set of sources that straightforwardly reflects their middling educational attainment.

Having established the biographies of the members of the Yazıcıoğlu family and the bounds of their literary horizons, **Chapter 3** returns to Gelibolu, rehistoricizing them in the town in which they spent their whole lives. I show that the atmosphere of this contested city fostered a cluster of intense debates, described in Ottoman, Byzantine, and Western European sources, between local Christians and Muslims on the nature of the difference between Islam and Christianity. From near this time and place testimonies survive, for instance, of a captive Greek archbishop engaged in inconclusive debates with Muslims in Ottoman camp, of a preacher in an Ottoman mosque who denies the superiority of Muhammad over Jesus, and of a circle of Ottoman religious scholars who speculate that Christians and Muslims are equal in God's sight. It is the ambiguities created by these dialogues that the Yazıcıoğlu attempted to counter with their vernacular catechisms that reinforced confessional boundaries. Though embedded in classicizing Islamicate forms, the Yazıcıoğlu's writings spoke directly to the uneducated new

Muslim, the convert, and the soldiers and sailors who were their audience. They endeavored to clarify confessional boundaries and affirm the religio-political identity of Muslims on this fluid frontier. Their influential form of Ottoman vernacular religiosity was, in this sense, a product not of the heartland but of the borderland.

Chapter 4 turns abroad again by attempting to describe what form of normative Islam the Yazıcıoğlu brothers raised up – the doctrinal content of their popular Ottoman Sunnism. I examine the positions advanced in their writings with respect to several long-term ideological frictions within Islamic intellectual history: between Sunnism and forms of Shi'ism, between mystical teachings and legalist conceptions of faith, and between various philosophical stances on the origins of religious knowledge. Here it has proven crucial to contextualize the brothers and their circle within the dogmatic structures of contemporary Sufi mysticism. I show that the Yazıcıoğlu brothers and the populist Islam they represented were largely unconcerned with distinguishing between Sunnism and Shi'ism and believed in the compatibility of mysticism with legalist orthodoxy. However, this synthesis was circumscribed by Sufi theories of the time, most specifically the tradition of Ibn 'Arabi and his commentators. I also discuss the Yazıcıoğlus' purported apocalypticism at length, concluding that Aḥmed Bīcān believed in an ahistorical, traditional apocalypse even as he ascribed an eschatological role to Sultan Meḥmed II and the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople.

Chapter 5 attempts to understand the Yazıcıoğlu family's preoccupation with natural philosophy. This proves trickier than expected, as Ahmed Bīcān does not seem to be interested in systematizing or harmonizing a few apparently contradictory systems of knowledge about the natural world. However, I find that, as in other cases, what is truly concerned with is personal

piety as an ordering principle in a disordered world. Man as microcosm, then, is the organizer of the natural cosmos.

The dissertation includes an **Appendix** in which I argue that *Dürr-i Mekkūn*, a famous Turkish cosmological and apocalyptic text that has been attributed to Aḥmed Yazıcıoğlu since the seventeenth century, is in fact not written by him but by an anonymous author. This intervention promises to be controversial, as several scholars have produced editions and studies of this work that depend on the traditional attribution. Nevertheless, I believe that my evidence is sufficient to show that this attribution is false. This argument must be made in order to assess the Yazıcıoğlus and their written corpus coherently and accurately in the future.

On behalf of the reader, I must express my frustration in finding real knowledge of the mentalities of this study's subjects and their social world elusive. My attempt at an intellectual biography of the Yazıcıoğlus has shown me the limitations a historian faces when studying individuals who are reticent about their lives, who live in a historical moment when documentary evidence is scarce. Ahmed Bīcān, in a parable about the journeys of Alexander across the Encircling Ocean, warns the reader of these limitations. Having learned of the existence of a country on the sea's far side, Alexander struggles for years to decipher the language of one of its inhabitants. Eventually he comes to understand the speech of this person from the far lands, who says: "There are many of Exalted God's creatures whom you do not know of and who do not know of you... It is necessary to know one's own incapacity... and to see or hear about the wonders of the world." Let this dissertation then affirm this incapacity as it invokes some curiosity and wonder in the reader.

CHAPTER 1: THE SCRIBE AND HIS SONS¹

“Praise God that Yazıcıoğlu Aḥmed Bīcān, white of beard and dark of face, completed this book in Gelibolu in the month of Muḥarram of the year 870 [1465],” writes the author at the close of his final major work, the second *Müntehā*.² Nearly eighty years stand between this moment and the beginning of his father’s scholarly career. In the last decades of the fourteenth century, Aḥmed’s own father was hired by a *ḡāzī* based in Malkara (Miḡalqara) in the same region, and for almost the entire duration of the intervening years, Şāliḥ and his two sons remained in the same two cities as the Ottoman frontier transformed around them. The Yazıcıoğlus, then, were witnesses and products of this Rumelian history, genuinely local observers of the formation of the Ottoman state and of the Turcophone Muslim community of Thrace. Their biographies, about which they are reticent, and their setting in early Ottoman Thrace – an environment scarcely lit by documentary evidence – is the silent dramatic backdrop of the Yazıcıoğlus texts. This obscure scenario is illuminated only by scant allusions they offer on the circumstances of their material existence. But nevertheless it is possible to learn something of the facts of the Yazıcıoğlus’ origins, their personal relationships, their manner of subsistence, and the course of their educations.

This chapter will serve two purposes. It will establish a chronological outline of the Yazıcıoğlus’ lives – a compilation of basic biographical data – which the rest of this study will rely upon for proper contextualization. At the same time, this chapter will dwell upon the social connections the Yazıcıoğlus benefited from throughout their lives. These two tasks are the same

1 This chapter title is borrowed from E. J. W. Gibb on the Yazıcıoğlus. Elias John Wilkinson Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, (London: Luzac, 1900).

2 *KM870B* p. 234b.

task, since a biography can only be constructed through these connections: the sole points of departure for this biography are the names of teachers and patrons listed in Şālih's *Şemsiyye* (826/1423) and Meḥmed's *Muḥammediyye* (853/1449). Admittedly, the limitations of these sources means that this study is destined to partially recapitulate the findings of the pioneering Amil Celebioğlu, who also attempted to reconstruct a biography of his subject in the introduction to his 1996 critical edition of *Muḥammediyye*.³ However, important additions to his reconstruction can now be made, and it is now also possible to dispute several of his conclusions.

A theme that emerges in the lives of Şālih, Meḥmed, and Aḥmed is their dependence upon multiple generations of Thracian frontier lords, rather than any direct connection to the Ottoman sultan or his court. Between the 1380's and 1456, the three men worked for or were otherwise paid by four different political-military notables who lived in the region of Malkara and Thrace – Qaşşāboğlu 'Alī, İskender b. Hācı Paşa, Qaşşāboğlu Maḥmud, and Aḥmed-i Hāşş. The Yazıcıoğlus, by serving them, represented a second, sub-courtly tier of provincial litterateurs bound to local leadership. Only briefly in Meḥmed's *Muḥammediyye*, and more extensively in Aḥmed's *Müntehā* of 1465, do the Yazıcıoğlus write words in praise of the Ottoman sultans. The brothers thus attest to the decentralization of literary patronage during the period.

Yet in terms of their proximate intellectual community the Yazıcıoğlus enjoyed a position of greater centrality. Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu, in the 1410's or 1420's, appears to have been educated at least in part by one of a group of international scholars who convened in the Ottoman capital of Edirne and were associated with the schools of Ḥanafī jurisprudence of Timurid Iran and Central Asia. Just as importantly, both Meḥmed and Aḥmed were disciples of Hācı Bayram Velī

3 Amil Çelebioğlu, ed., *Muḥammediyye* (İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1996), p. 1-42. Çelebioğlu gathered a substantial array of sources on the Yazıcıoğlus and, perhaps admirably, refrains from collating them into a proper biographical narrative. This chapter is, in large part, an attempt to harmonize Çelebioğlu's findings with their context, while adding several new pieces of documentary evidence.

of Ankara, the focus of an Anatolian Sufi community that would grow into the geographically widespread Bayramī and Melāmī *ṭarīqas*. This community included individuals such as the poet Şeyhī and the Sufi tutor of Sultan Meḥmed II and “patron saint” of the conquest of Constantinople, Aqşemse’ d-dīn. The brother Aḥmed and Meḥmed reserve their strongest statements of identity for this community of Hācı Bayram Velī, whose spiritual guidance trumps all other influences over their lives. Through these two affiliations, the Yazıcıoğlus, despite their peripheral political and material positions, were able to participate in the prestigious center of Anatolian and Rumelian intellectual life. And, in the story of their lives, one perceives echoes of changes in the way of life of Muslims of the borderlands of Gelibolu: the reeling-in of *ġāzī* lords such as Şaruca Beg and their replacement by Ottoman viziers like Qaşşāboğlu Maḥmūd or regular officers like Aḥmed-i Hāşş; the appearance of mainstream Ḥanafī scholarly networks with an international scope the branching-out of Anatolian Sufi communities such as the Bayramīyye into Thrace and the rest of Rumelia.

I. Yazıcı Şālih and the *ġāzīs* of Rumelia

We are certain of few things in the life of Şālih, father of Meḥmed and Aḥmed Yazıcıoğlu. He was born a Muslim and was raised in a Turcophone environment in Anatolia, an origin that is shown clearly in the kind of erudition on display in his sole surviving work, the *Şemsiyye*. When, for example, he discusses the solar months and gives their Turkish, Greek, and Syriac names, his Greek clearly comes through the medium of Arabic renditions of classical terminology rather than the Greek of fourteenth-century Anatolia or Rumelia (“Filuris” for *Febrouarios*).⁴ Following the same logic, it is clear that Yazıcı Şālih could not avail himself of

4 *Şemsiyye*, Süleymāniye Ktp. Pertevniyal 766 (henceforth Ş), p. 44a.

Greek sources with which to supplement his *Şemsiyye*. His primary source, rather, was the *Usūl al-Malāḥim* of Abu-Ḥubaysh al-Tiflisī, written in Persian. He clearly makes use of Arabic sources as well, as his work is suffused with Qur’anic terminology and references, indicating that Yazıcı Şālih benefited from something resembling the typical Arabic and Persian education of a Turcophone Muslim scholar. Beyond this, his *Şemsiyye*, as a non-narrative verse compilation of astrological and meteorological wisdom, withholds any evidence indicating Yazıcı Şālih’s place of birth or ancestry. There are, however, three external clues that point towards an origin in Ankara.

Ankara?

Şālih dedicates his work to one İskender b. Ḥācī Paşa b. Nāşiru’-d-dīn b. Ḥüsrev Şāh, a wealthy notable of Gelibolu around the turn of the fifteenth century. İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, in a brief discussion of the Yazıcıoğlu family in his *Osmanlı Tarihi*,⁵ asserts that İskender and his forefathers were members of the Devlethān family, one of the most powerful aristocratic families of Ankara, known as temporary beneficiaries of Timur’s defeat of the Ottoman army in 1402. Uzunçarşılı’s evidence for this is, unfortunately, not cited, nor can this author find any trace of where this assertion may have come from.

A more compelling hint of an Ankara origin is the fact that Şālih’s two sons were disciples of Ḥācī Bayram Velī who spent nearly his whole life in Ankara, where he built and lived in a still-extant *tekke* in the city’s center. As I argue subsequently, Aḥmed and Meḥmed’s relationship to Ḥācī Bayram Velī is so substantive that it necessitates the brothers’ physical residence in Ankara for a period of time prior to Ḥācī Bayram’s death in 1429. The account

5 İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1947. p. 282.

given in Sarı ‘Abdullah’s *Şemerātü’l-Fuād*, which claims that Hācı Bayram instructed the Yazıcıoğlu brothers over the course of a few days as he passed through Gelibolu en route to Edirne for an audience with Sultan Murād II, cannot account for the depth of attachment that the brothers developed toward the master Sufi.⁶ Did Yazıcı Şālih know of Hācı Bayram Velī and introduce his sons to him? Did the brothers have other business in Ankara, perhaps related to their father’s family, and encounter the Sufi there incidentally? All of these possibilities remain viable.

Lastly, Gelibolulu Muşafā ‘Ālī, in his *Künhü’l-Aḥbār* written at the close of the sixteenth century, states that “it is probable that his birthplace was Ankara or one of the towns of the province of Rum.”⁷ ‘Ālī’s origins in Gelibolu give this statement some added weight.

Ġāzīs of Rumelia: Qaşşāboĝlu ‘Ali and İskender b. Hācı Paşa, ~ 1388-1423

Yazıcı Şālih thus enters into the light of history only with this *Şemsiyye*. A manuscript at Leiden seems to provide a clear date of 14 Jumādā I 826 AH (April 24, 1423 CE) with these chronogrammatic lines: “The day was Saturday, when I finished this book... This worthy book was written / on the fourteenth of Cemāzī-i Evvel... To all who ask of its date, give / *mesned baḥr ‘aṭā şāhib ‘eyyār*”.⁸ The *abjad* sum of these final words totals to 826, providing what appears to be a secure fixed point upon which to hang the rest of Şālih’s biography. However,

6 Sarı ‘Abdullāh Efendi, *Şemerātü’l-fuād fi’l-mebde ve’l-me‘ād*. Istanbul: Matba’a-i Amire, 1288 [1871-82], p. 233-238. The *Şemerāt*, an Sufi history of the Ḥalvetī order, states that “since [Meḥmed] was confused by some things and disturbed by the contamination of wine, he continually caroused and drank. Hācı Bayram Velī, recognized his gifts, and when he saw him, turning this clouded droplet into a precious jewel, he invited him into his noble presence... and banished the love of all that was *other than God* from his heart, and, his heart and soul grew intoxicated and bewildered by the wine of divine love... Yazıcızāde Efendi was released from the dark dungeon of nature into the space of the light of belief, and was counted among the saved ones.” This tale follows a redemptive template that is extremely common Sufi biographies, and does not need to be given special credence.

7 Muşafā bin Aḥmed ‘Ālī, *Künhü’l-Aḥbār* (Istanbul: Darü’t-Tıba‘ati’l-āmire, 1277).

8 *Şemsiyye*, Cod. Or. 1448, Misc. Turkish Manuscripts, Leiden University Library, pp. 136b-146n.

this runs counter to the conclusions of Amil Çelebioğlu and Atilla Batur, who date the work to 811/1408-1409 on the basis of a line found elsewhere in the work – the only date present in the more widely-used Pertevniyal 766 manuscript.⁹ But upon examining the context in which this date is provided, it becomes clear that it simply serves as an example for the specific hemerological prognosticatory technique.¹⁰ The 826/1423 date also makes more sense for historical reasons. Elsewhere in the *Şemsiyye Şālih* discusses his thirty-six years of service to his master Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī Beg. If one counts backwards from 1408-1409, then he would have begun serving Qaşşāboğlu in 1372 or 1373 CE at the latest – when Gelibolu was out of Ottoman hands. If, on the other hand, the 826 AH date is used, then his service must have begun only before 789-790/1387-1388, a decade after the Gelibolu was retaken. This conclusion appears far more likely. Şālih, then, arrived in Gelibolu within a decade of the end of its ten-year occupation by Amadeo of Savoy and the Byzantines, and was thus part of the first generation of Turkish and Muslim settlers to occupy the city, and then spent thirty-six years serving Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī in Thrace. He describes his years of service fondly:

I shall tell news of the [my state]
 Listen with love, O master of art.
 This Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī Beg, immaculate in faith,
 pure of heart, liberal in trust,
 disposed towards perfect generosity and intellect,
 a person of companionship, who listens and speaks,
 God’s elect, a leader of men,
 his heart is full of light, jewel of the begs –

 Though I was neither a beg myself, nor clearly a slave
 I was accepted in whatever I would say or do.

⁹ Ş p. 121b.

¹⁰ In this particular passage, the 811 was used to demonstrate a technique by which the year is to be divided by eight, with the remainder (in this case, three) used to refer to a prognosticatory table labeled by letter. This kind of hemerological technique was common in both the West and the Islamic world, inherited from a common Hellenistic science. The study of Islamic magic is to an extent still framed by Toufic Fahd, *La divination arabe: études religieuses, sociologiques et folkloriques sur le milieu natif de l’Islam* (Paris: Sindbad, 1987), p. 483-488.

For thirty-six years he never left me.
Not for one day did he intentionally hurt my heart.
Nor was I lacking in my service.
I came to him day and night.
Happy or grim, however time passed,
Together we turned sadness into joy.¹¹

This passage gives us a few clues as to the nature of this service. It tells us, for example, that Şāliḥ was no aristocrat (“I was neither a beg myself...”), nor was he, as already suspected, of the non-Muslim origin required to be “clearly a slave”. Rather, he joined Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī’s service as an employee. In his company he had the duties of a scribe, a *kātib* or *yazıcı*, the profession that gave him and his sons the names by which they are most known. Şāliḥ would have been charged with drafting correspondence from Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī to other *begs*, and also perform administrative bookkeeping of all kinds. We can get some idea of what a *yazıcı*’s job consisted of from the historian Yazıcıoğlu ‘Alī, who, though probably unrelated to our subjects, acquired his identical name performing the same service at around the same time for Sultan Murād II. In his *Tevārīḥ-i Āl-i Selcūq* he glorifies the “swift-handed scribes [*yazıcılar*] and accountants who can take the measure of the sea in its greatness and in their smallness discern a miniscule speck or atom of dust or grain of barley.”¹² ‘Alī then lists a scribe’s duties: “An accountant, to be skilled in his art / must be capable of arithmetic and numeric shorthand [*sıyaqat*]”, and with this skill,

Account for the requirements of the troops
and record it in a book for the king.
Let not a farm plot or arable field
be excluded, for certain,
but written in some register.
The scribe is needed for his writing.
Every year soldiers come forth
to each have their own *timar* granted.
The administrators’ intellect sees
what the income of each one is.

11 Ş p. 9a-9b.

12 Yazıcızâde Ali, *Tevârîḥ-i Āl-i Selçuk*, ed. Abdullah Bakır (Istanbul: Çamlıca, 2009). p. 386-389.

Yazıcı Şālih, whose task may have been considerably less onerous than that of the sultan’s scribe who shares his name, certainly performed some of these duties, and in so doing joined the ranks of the “scholar-bureaucrats” who provided an important service to Turkic *amīrs* in the late medieval and early modern period.

Turning again to Şālih’s verses on his service to Qaşşāboğlu, one is struck by the subjective sense that these verses transcend the customary expressions of praise for a patron and indicate a strong personal friendship between the two men. It is likely, too, that Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī employed Şālih for a second duty – the education of his own son Qaşşāboğlu Maḥmūd, later the patron and friend of Yazıcıoğlu Meḥmed. The thirty-six years of service sufficed, in any case, to establish a multi-generational bond between Şālih “the scribe” and the Qaşşāboğlu family, which would later be renewed.

Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī, Şaruca Beg, and the Civil War

Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī is invisible in the chronicles. However, he was clearly an important man. We know this on the basis a piece of information that unlocks the Thracian context of Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī and Şālih’s lives, an entry of a *tahrīr* registry from the region of Gelibolu and Malkara in 1519/925.¹³ This entry, in describing a Thracian village, Qırıq-‘Alī, whose income is entrusted to the *vaqf* of an ‘*imāret* in the Yedikule neighborhood of Istanbul, mentions that the income of this village was at one time at the disposal of Qaşşāboğlu Meḥmed, who later sold

13 “*Vaqf-i Muştafā Paşa İstanbulda Yedikule cāmbında vāqī’ olan ‘imāretine şarf olunur. Qariye-yi Qırıq-‘Alī tābi’-i Abrī mezkūr qariye aşlda Qaşşāboğullarından Meḥmed vālidesi Şaruca Beg qızı Cevher Ḥatunuñ mülki olub Qaşşāboğlu ‘Ali Begüñ mezkūr Meḥmed Begden Muştafā Paşa bey’-i şer’iyye ala-şatun alub vaqf etmişdir.*” Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Tapu Tahrir Defterleri 75, p. 279, quoted in M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, *XV.-XVI. asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa livâsı: vakıflar, mülkler, mukataalar* (İstanbul: Üçler Basımevi, 1952), p. 443.

it. The entry goes on to make clear that this Meḥmed was the son of both Qaşşābođlu ‘Alī and a woman named Cevher Ḥatun, daughter of Şaruca Beg, a military-political leader of the first rank.

Şarīmu’d-dīn Şaruca Beg (d. 1415), who is not to be confused with the later “Terzi” Şaruca Paşa (d. 1454), was one of the foremost *ğāzī* lords of Murād I and Bāyezīd II’s reign. He conquered the Thracian town of Çirmen (modern Ormenio in Greece) from the Serbs and ruled its hinterland as a personal fief with the title of *şancaqbegi*; in 1386 he brought soldiers from Çirmen to fight for Murād in Karaman, and in 1388 led infantry in a battle at the Danube. Then, in the first battle of Kosovo of 1389, commanded Aydınlı and Şaruhanlı soldiers on Murād I’s behalf. At Ankara in 1402 he led the wing of the Ottoman army that was comprised of Rumelian soldiers.¹⁴

In addition to all of these exploits, Şaruca was perhaps most famous to history as an early figure in the history of the Ottoman navy, one of the first figures to hold the title of *qapudān-i deryā*.¹⁵ In 790/1390 he took charge of captured Byzantine vessels and set up Gelibolu as the base of the first Ottoman fleet. To do so required a restructuring of the town’s urban plan: the city’s outer walls were torn down and its inner fortress enhanced with two towers protecting the harbor. Before he died around 818/1415, he built a *hammam*, kervanseray, and other buildings in Gelibolu, similar buildings in Hasköy, and two mosques, one in Çirmen and another in Yeni Zagra. Şaruca Beg, during the reigns of Murād I and Bāyezīd II, was, then, one of the most powerful men in Rumeli, and was particularly identified with the city of Gelibolu and the Thracian hinterland.

14 İdris Bostan, “Şaruca Paşa,” *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı).

15 İsmail Hami Danişmend, *Osmanlı devlet erkânı: sadr-ı-a’zamlar (vezir-i-a’zamlar), seyh-ül-islâmlar, kapdan-ı deryalar, bas-defterdarlar, reîs-ül-küttâblar* (İstanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1971), p. 172. See also İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı devletinin merkez ve bahriye teşkilâtı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1948).

If Şaruca gave his daughter Cevher H̄atun in marriage to Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī as the *tahrīr* says, then one can infer ‘Alī had reached a high position within the hierarchy of frontier lords. This also reveals where Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī and his employee Şāliḥ were living during the period after 1388. To be precise, they were attached to the enterprise of Şaruca Beg in Thrace, a venture comprised of the twin activities of inland conquest, centered on frontier regions such as Çirmen, and maritime-naval development, focused on Gelibolu. One can imagine Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī accompanying Şaruca Beg along the axis of the latter’s activities: from the frontier regions of Kavala, Serez, İškeçe, Dimetoka and Çirmen in western Thrace, through Ipsala, Keşan and Malkara, where the Via Egnatia passed, to the port of Gelibolu with its new fleet, from whence one could cross to Lapseki and pass overland to Bursa. Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī, as a component of Şaruca’s coalition, would have provided troops for his father-in-law and campaigned alongside him. Did he bring along with him his scribe, Şāliḥ, as Lala Muştafā Paşa, centuries later, brought along another resident of Gelibolu, the scribe Muştafā ‘Ālī?

Şaruca’s power on the Rumelian frontier may have been self-sufficient, but this does not mean that the Ottoman sultan was absent from the picture. For much of the period in question, sultans Murād and Bāyezīd were based in Edirne, not far from Şaruca’s strongholds in Gelibolu and Çirmen. Indeed, the sultans continually passed through Gelibolu and Malkara with their armies. It is known, for instance, that Murād I passed through Gelibolu and Malkara multiple times, lastly in 1389, the year of his death, when Neşri records that “it so happened that at that time it was quite cold and a contrary wind blew; the emperor stayed a few days, and then left the ships in the hands of the lord of Gelibolu, Yence Beg...[Prince] Bāyezīd also came, crossed at

Gelibolu, and joined up with the Emperor.”¹⁶ Şaruca, too, seems to have been a loyal soldier for the Ottoman house: no trace of conflict appears in the sources, even as he was entrusted with important duties on behalf of the sultans at Kosovo, Ankara, and several other battles.

Matters of loyalty to the state become more complex after 1402. The party of Şaruca Beg, which included Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī and his entourage, occupied a definite place within the factions of the Ottoman Civil War that followed the Battle of Ankara in 1402. When Timur captured Yıldırım Bāyezīd there and set the sultan’s sons fighting amongst each other, the Rumelian provinces fell into the domain of Bāyezīd’s oldest living son Süleymān under the terms of a *yārliĝ* vassalage granted by Timur. Emir Süleymān continued to control most of the Ottoman Balkans for eight years, and Şaruca Beg clearly served him, as did most other Rumelian begs. The chronicler Konstantin the Philosopher writes that in 1410 Şaruca Beg was serving as Süleymān’s governor in Yambol in what is now south-central Bulgaria when he was defeated at the hands of Süleymān’s younger brother Mūsā, “snatched up”, and carried to Edirne.¹⁷ There his presence as a hostage seems to have opened up the gates of that city. Without the help of his general, the fall of Süleymān to Mūsā was assured. Mūsā held Rumelia until his brother Meḥmed was ultimately able to defeat him and reunite the Ottoman realms under its pre-Ankara borders. Şaruca, Qaşşāboğlu, and the scribe Şāliḥ were thus participants in a losing faction within the war.

Some time during the period of service to Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī, Şāliḥ’s older son Meḥmed was born. Three much later sources may preserve a memory of the precise location of Şāliḥ’s residence in Thrace. Writing in the early eighteenth century, Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqı Bursevī asserts that

16 Neşri, *Kitâb-ı cihan-nümâ*, ed. Faik Reşit Unat and Mehmet Altay Köymen (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1995), p. 239. Yence Beg must have been the administrator of the city prior to Şaruca’s arrival in 1390.

17 Dimitris J. Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid: Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War of 1402-1413* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), p. 143. Kastritsis’ work is by far the most detailed reconstruction of this tumultuous Civil War period.

Meḥmed “was not born of his mother in Gelibolu, but rather was raised in a village called Kadıköyü attached to the town of Malkara.” A page inserted at the beginning of some nineteenth-century printed editions of the *Muḥammediyye* repeats this information, stating, “The one known as Yazıcıoğlu Meḥmed Efendi... was born in a village called Kadıköyü attached to a town called Malkara in Rumelia, and settled later in Gelibolu...” Finally, Bursalı Mehmed Tahir, in ‘*Osmanlı Mü’ellifleri*, repeats this a third time: “Though his birthplace is Kadıköyü in the district of Malkara, it is accepted that his place of residence was Gelibolu.¹⁸” The fact that the latter two statements probably all grow out of the Bursevī’s original assertion does not necessarily detract from the historicity of that claim; Bursevī was a famous member of the Bayramīyye Sufi *ṭarīqa* of that upholds the Yazıcıoğlus’ legacy and may have had access to evidence we no longer possess. If we trust Bursevī, then it is possible that Şālīḥ and his wife, beginning sometime in the 1380’s, lived in the still-extant village of Kadıköyü a short distance away from Malkara, and served Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī from there¹⁹.

The village of Kadıköyü is a unique one in political geography of southern Thrace. This village served as the *tīmār* of the *qāḍı* (judge) of Gelibolu – that is, the income of the village was managed by the *qadı*, who would partially use it for the upkeep of his own household and deliver a certain quantity as tax. The *taḥrīr* registry of the environs of Gelibolu from 879/1475 also mentions that in Kadıköyü there was a *zāviye*, already well in ruins, bearing the name of *Qāḍı Şalāḥu’d-dīn*. We are left now with a suggestive possibility. Was Yazıcı Şālīḥ serving – at Qaşşāboğlu ‘Alī’s request – as judge of the Gelibolu region?

18 Mehmed Tahir, *Osmanlı Müellifleri* (İstanbul: Matbaa-’i Amire, 1914), p. 194.

19 Muştafā ‘Ālī of Gelibolu advances a different thesis. He states that Yazıcıoğlu Meḥmed “was born in Ankara and settled in Gelibolu, and passed away after composing the *Muḥammediyye*.”

As for the identity of Şālih's wife, the mother of Meḥmed and Aḥmed, there is only a single apocryphal clue, this time from oral sources recounted to Amil Çelebioğlu: she was a woman from Müctebe, another village in the area. The inability of this study to establish more information on the mother and wife of its subjects is a lamentable omission.

İskender b. Hācı Paşa

The chaos of the civil war, along with a compensatory faith in the redeeming power of scholarship, may be perceived in Şālih's lines,

Great is war and altercation in the land of Rum
[but] with knowledge, people have a path to all things.²⁰

It was during the civil war period that Qaşşāboğlu 'Alī passed away. It is possible, though unverifiable, that Qaşşāboğlu 'Alī perished in one of the numerous battles of the period – for instance, in the 813/1410 battle at Yambol that led to Şaruca Beg's final demise, or in Emir Süleymān's bloody campaigns for Bursa and Ankara, or during the course of his generals' feuds with Mūsā in Rumelia. In any case, after the passing of his friend and employer, Şālih the scribe describes himself as a wanderer, destitute, in search of a new patron. If we take his poetic expressions literally, the death of his patron sent him into a genuine personal crisis:

Since my separation from him, I have felt no joy.
Always occupied, I found no repose.
I tried to make my heart understand, and be happy,
and to be freed from sadness, and at ease.
Eventually, I came to know my intellect again.
I told my heart to come back to life.
I told it, what can we do?
What is the remedy, where should we go?²¹

20 § 9a.

21 § 9b-11a.

Şālih’s expression of grief reflects the limited market for scribes writing in Turkish. Şālih frames these “lost years” as a dialogue between his despairing heart and the methodical optimism of his intellect. The intellect reassures his heart by saying that destiny is unchangeable, and that God will eventually provide him with a new patron. “For God’s decree is destiny’s path. / Why sigh with pain at whatever it holds?” Eventually, Şālih rouses himself and begins a difficult search for a new patron. “I inquired extensively and searched. I swallowed my fears and encouraged myself. I thought, ‘I wonder what I’m doing.’ and, ‘I don’t know where I’m going!’” Şālih says, describing the confusion of his journey at the edge of destitution and in the midst of war.

Şālih’s account of this search is worth quoting in full:

The intellect joined with the heart and left,
 And went searching for a while in the world.
 among city-dwelling *qāḍıs* and *ḥocas* and *sipāhīs*,
 Seeing all of them, both strangers and locals.
Kethüdā, notable [‘*ayān*], *beg*, king [*şāh*] and *vezīr*,
 The head of the merchant guild, the worker, the scribe [*debīr*]
 [I] saw some *şubaşıs*,
 and asked how could they favor me.
 I traveled the world from end to end,
 [Until] a dear one bestowed a privilege...²²

Here Şālih gives us a view of the classes of elite Ottoman society who were in a position to employ a scribe. In addition to betraying the incidental fact that Şālih truly was in genuine financial straits – enough to include administrative scribes and workers in this list – it also traces the classes of those who held resources in Şālih’s environment. His world was an urban world, in which local scholars (“city-dwelling *qāḍıs* and *ḥocas*”) occupied positions of respect in cities, and in which urban taxpaying classes (merchants, workers, administrative scribes) also held

22 Ş p. 10b

some measure of independent wealth and power. And though a political structure attached to the Ottoman state was represented by the “*ketḥüdā*, notable, *beg*, king [*ṣāh*], and *vezīr*”, the manner in which each of these titles are listed, mingled with each other and with the lower classes, somehow suggests a decentralization of power, as if each social class operated with some degree of independence. The formation of the political world is a sequence of notables, each with wealth and power enough to employ a scribe, but also without a visible hierarchy or myth of state.

After this search, Şālih finds a patron named İskender b. Ḥācī Paşa. This individual is not a complete cipher, though his family is more obscure than the Qaşşāboğlus. We know, first of all, İskender’s parentage:

He bears the name of Sikender, and his name is well-known.
His company is desirable; he is perfect, kinglike.
His father is Ḥācī Paşa, pole of the age,
The son of Naşīru’ d-dīn, without doubt.
Ḥoca Naşīr was a moon in the world,
and his father was Ḥüsrev Şāh.²³

To some early readers of the *Şemsiyye*, the name Ḥācī Paşa suggested Ḥācī Paşa of Germiyan (d. 1424), a contemporary who studied in Mamluk Egypt with Ottoman luminaries such as Molla Fenari, Şeyḥ Bedre’ d-dīn, and the poet Aḥmedī, before returning to the Aegean cities of Ayasuluk and Birgi where he wrote works of medicine on behalf of the Aydınoğlu lord ‘İsā Beg and then later for Murād II. Though this fascinating individual fits with Şālih’s biography in terms of chronology, prosopography and even intellectual interests, Ḥācī Paşa’s own autographed manuscript of his *Kitāb al-Sā’ada wa al-Iqbāl* lists his own name as “Ḥācī Paşa b. Ḥoca ‘Alī b. Murād b. Ḥoca ‘Alī b. Ḥüsāme’ d-dīn el-Qūnawī.”²⁴ Since one cannot presume that

23 Ibid. 11a.

24 Cemil Akpınar, “Hacı Paşa,” *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı).

either H̄acı Paşa of Germiyan wrote his father’s name incorrectly, or that Şālih was mistaken as to the lineage of his own employer, then these cannot be the same H̄acı Paşa.

Only one other possibility has been advanced. When Şālih begins his praise of İskender and says, “and his forefathers [*ebā-‘an-cedd*] were viziers”, it appears possible that İskender is the son of another H̄acı Paşa, this one an Ottoman vizier who held his post in 1348-1349 under the reign of Sultan Orhan.²⁵ Unfortunately, this vizier is not listed in the historical calendars or anywhere else, and, Danişmend insists, “his real name is not even clear.” To identify the vizier H̄acı Paşa as the father of Şālih’s patron is to follow the claim of Ismail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, who also goes one step further, using unknown sources to identify H̄acı Paşa with the Devlethan family of Ankara. Based on Uzunçarşılı’s assertion of an origin in Ankara, others have inferred that the vizier H̄acı Paşa was from an “*aḥi*” background, or was a scholar.²⁶ Yet without the information to which Uzunçarşılı was privy, we can go no further in pursuing this avenue of inquiry. It is, at least, certain that this vezireal H̄acı Paşa was a real person, as his name appears in a *temlīknāme* given by Orhan to a soldier named Ferzende during time of his purported vezirate.

Whether or not İskender’s father was this H̄acı Paşa or some other, we know that he was important in Gelibolu during these precise years. In the Hamzaköyü neighborhood of the city there stands an elegant marble prayer platform overlooking the Dardanelles, very close to cave-cell of where Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu, in later tellings, composed the *Muḥammediyye*. This *namāzgāh*, described by the architectural historian Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi as “the finest of the

25 Danişmend, *Osmanlı devlet erkânı*, p. 8.

26 Aydın Taneri, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun kuruluş döneminde vezir-i a’zamlık, 1299-1453* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi, 1974); Ismail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1947).

country's extant *namāzgāhs*,"²⁷ was built in 1407 in an idiosyncratic Persianate style, in order to serve the needs of 'azab infantry soldiers passing through Gelibolu to campaigns in Rumelia and Anatolia. It provided a site where, under good weather, they could congregate and pray as they begin or end their march or embark or disembark from their ships. In this way it is a perfect architectural comment the ethos of maritime *ğazā* that Gelibolu was the center of. Most importantly, an Arabic inscription on the left *minbar* reads, "this constructed structure [*al-'imārat al-ma'mūra*], a *qibla* for the 'azabs, was completed by İskandar ibn al-Ḥājj Basha". This is clearly Şāliḥ's patron.

What can this treasure of early Ottoman architecture tell us about its builder İskender b. Ḥācı Paşa? İskender must have held the idea of *ğazā* close to his heart. Another inscription in the *namāzgāh* invokes "God, opener of doors / O You of secret graces – protect us from what we fear!", calling up a familiar description of Gelibolu as the "door" of Rumelia and Anatolia that would be repeated by Meḥmed II's construction of the immense Dardanelles fortress of Kilidü'l-baḥr ("the sea's key") at the tip of the peninsula. Şāliḥ's own verses corroborate this image of a patron of soldiers and military men: "He grants the partaking of food and drink / His gifts perfect, his words without error / Inwardly and outwardly a commander of his intellect, love, and enthusiasms / And, as head of the [skillful ones], a fine commander."²⁸ This is the extent of our knowledge of İskender b. Ḥācı Paşa. It is for him that Şāliḥ wrote the his astrological poem *Şemsiyye*.

Of Şāliḥ's final years and death there is no trace in any source.

27 Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, *Osmanlı mi'mârîsinde Çelebi ve II. Sultan Murād devri, 806-855 (1403-1451): II* (İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1972).

28 Ş 10a.

II. Meḥmed and Aḥmed, Sons of the Scribe

The tradition that Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu was born in Kadıköyü south of Malkara has already been mentioned. The provenance of this tradition from İsmā‘īl Ḥaqqı Bursevī’s eighteenth-century commentary, as well as its particular plausibility in light of the fact that it was most probably during this period that Şāliḥ worked for a Thracian *ġāzī* under Şaruca Beg who was often based in Malkara, is reason to extend it some provisional credence. Beyond this, it is hard to establish any sort of chronology of the early life of Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu and his younger brother Aḥmed. Just as the *Şemsiyye* was the only tool for studying the life of Şāliḥ, the *Muḥammediyye* mentions a handful of acquaintances in the opening and closing sections of the work and is thus the only means for piecing together the brothers’ lives. Additionally, both Aḥmed and Meḥmed also discuss literary works written by living individuals and thereby implicate themselves in contemporaneous intellectual networks. In the absence of external narratives on their lives, these comprise the raw material for the prosopographical chronology that follows.

Early Years

We can definitively link the context of Meḥmed and Aḥmed’s early life to Qaşşāboğlu Maḥmūd, the son of ‘Alī. Maḥmūd, as we will see, grew up in later years to become an important historical personage in his own right – a vizier to Murād II – and is discussed in chronicles and documentary records. By his death, which occurred before 1456, he was the proprietor of dozens of properties around Gelibolu and earned many thousands of *aqçe* a year.

But before 1423, when Meḥmed and Aḥmed were children, adolescents, and young men, Maḥmūd (and his own brother Qaşşāboğlu Meḥmed) was as young as them. It is then likely that Şālih, employed by Maḥmūd’s father, served as the boys’ tutor and instructed him alongside his own children. It is not unreasonable to suggest, as Çelebioğlu does, that Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu and Qaşşāboğlu Maḥmūd were childhood friends. By 1449, when Meḥmed writes *Muḥammediyye* and indicates his financial dependence on Maḥmūd, the bond between the two men had endured at least forty years, an even longer stretch of time than the bond that had united their fathers.

Dervīş Bāyezīd

In adolescence or later, Meḥmed must have left the household of his father and the Qaşşāboğlus and struck out on his own path. The next individual mentioned by Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu is someone named Dervīş Bāyezīd, described with the following ambiguous lines:

To the tomb of the trustworthy one, the shaykh, Dervīş Bāyezīd
Comes ever-increasing exaltation.
How in his time, he made the earth smile,
When Dervīş Bāyezīd was entrusted with it.
Because of him Gelibolu became Bişām,
And Bişām again found its Shaykh Bāyezīd.

Meḥmed here plays upon name and reputation of the 9th-century figure Bayazid of Bişām as an archetype of Sufi wisdom. In fact, in these lines Dervīş Bāyezīd of Gelibolu is so overshadowed by the timeworn image of Bāyezīd Bişāmī, the Sufi of myth, that one may be forgiven for assuming that the former does not exist at all – were it not for the fact that Dervīş Bāyezīd of Gelibolu is attested in multiple biographical and documentary sources as a prominent resident of Gelibolu during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Dervīş Bāyezīd is mentioned in Taşköprüzāde’s biographical dictionary, which asserts that “this able, wise person was appointed

as teacher to prince Sultan Meḥmed Ḥan, son of the Ottoman Sultan Bāyezīd.” The 870/1475 *taḥrīr* from Gelibolu adds corroborating evidence, namely, that someone named Dervīṣ Bāyezīd founded a Sufi lodge in a village near Gelibolu named Seydī Kavaḡi, and that the funding for this *zāviye* came from three *kervānsarāys*, two *hammāms*, a pasture with fifteen cows, one farm, one salt mine, and several other properties in the vicinity of Gelibolu and nearby Bolayır. By 1475, the *taḥrīr* adds, many of these properties had been sold or had fallen into ruin, and in the *taḥrīr* registry in 1519, neither the *zāviye* nor its properties are mentioned. All of this implies that the foundation of the *zāviye*, took place in the 1390’s, so that its founder could have been acquainted with prince Meḥmed Çelebi before his father’s death and to have instructed Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu during his youth.²⁹

Without this we are left only with speculations. At least we know that Dervīṣ Bāyezīd was one of the region’s early Sufi figures and a man of considerable means and access to royal power. Did Dervīṣ Bāyezīd introduce Meḥmed and his brother to the concepts of Sufi doctrine and practice?

Zayn al-‘Arab

The historicity of the next name mentioned by Meḥmed in the *Muḥammediyye* is much more problematic.

29 Amil Çelebioğlu suggests that this Dervīṣ Bāyezīd of Gelibolu is the same as Dervīṣ Bāyezīd, author of a work entitled *Sırr-ı Cānān* that survives in the Millet Library in Istanbul (Çelebioğlu, *Muḥammediyye*, p. 36.). This long *meṣnevī* of Sufi aphorisms and prophetic narratives does appear at first sight to participate in the same Sufi setting as the Yazıcıoğlus themselves. However, Çelebioğlu’s conclusion is revealed to be incorrect by the final pages of *Sırr-ı Cānān*, which repeatedly make mention of Sultan Selim’s confrontation with the Mamluk sultan (referred to as “the Circassian”) using of verses that function as chronograms for 922 AH (1516-1517 CE), the year of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt and Syria (“Sırr-ı Canan”, Millet Kütüphanesi, Manzum 937.3, p. 227). This definitively establishes *Sırr-ı Cānān* as a work written a century after the time of Dervīṣ Bāyezīd of Gelibolu.

My teacher was Zayn-i ‘Arab
Who was cultured both inside and out.
He directed my ambitions,
until I reached Ḥaydar-i Khvāfi.
...Intercede, O beloved of God, lord,
and give them unto highest heaven.

Çelebioğlu, Yerasimos, and all other scholars of Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu have taken this name to refer to ‘Alī b. ‘Abdullāh Zayn al-‘Arab al-Nakhchivānī al-Miṣrī, a fourteenth-century scholar of *ḥadīth* famous for his commentaries on the medieval traditionist al-Baghawī’s *Maṣābīḥ al-Sunna*. In support of this identification, Çelebioğlu also cites an architectural historian who situates the tomb of this Zayn in Gelibolu proper³⁰. This building seems to be no longer extant. Yet this identification poses significant chronological and contextual problems. Firstly, Kātib Çelebi, and the Arabic and Ottoman bio-bibliographical tradition in general, insists that Zayn’s major works were written around 1350. Secondly, it is believed on the basis of evidence internal to Zayn al-Miṣrī’s works that he built his career in Mamluk Egypt, not in Rum, as his work is dedicated to the Mamluk Sultan Badr al-dīn Ḥasan. Beyond the supposed tomb which is now unrecoverable without the aid of archaeology, there is nothing to indicate his residence in Gelibolu whatsoever, or even in Rum or Rumelia. So it is hard to imagine a time during which the famous Zayn could have physically instructed Meḥmed. The so-called tomb of Zayn may have been retrospectively attributed to him after the rise to fame of the *Muḥammediyye* and the names within it.

What, then, does Meḥmed mean when he brings up the name of Zayn al-‘Arab? It will subsequently be argued that Meḥmed read, studied, and extensively used Zayn’s commentary on the *Maṣābīḥ al-Sunna* in his own *Maghārib al-Zamān* and *Muḥammediyye*. Citing Zayn as his

30 Çelebioğlu cites Serap Özler, *Gelibolu’daki Türk Mimari Eserleri*. Thesis 4563, İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1967. This book could not be consulted for this study.

“first teacher” is then an acknowledgment of his own intellectual debt to Zayn’s work, though not, it seems, to Zayn’s literal tutelage.

The Scholars of Edirne

In the above verses Meḥmed asserts that his period of academic study, which began with the works of Zayn and the *Maṣābīḥ* tradition he represented, ended with his “last teacher”, Ḥaydar-i Khvāfī. This figure marks an important endpoint to this stage of Meḥmed’s life, and, as we will discover, integrated him fully into the world of the internationally-minded intelligentsia of Rum. At first glance the identity of Ḥaydar-i Khvāfī appears ambiguous. No Ottoman biographical sources refer to a scholar of this name, and the name also is absent from the *tahrīr* and *vaqfiyye* registries that help us populate so much else in the Yazıcıoğlu family’s biography. Thankfully, Ismā‘īl Haqqı Bursevī, as he likewise attempts to discover who this Ḥaydar is in the early eighteenth century, concludes with a clue that can lead us to his identity. “What is intended by this [name],” Bursevī says, “is Ḥaydar Haravī, who was one of the students of Sa‘d al-dīn Taftazānī and gave the *fetvā* for the killing of Şeyḫ Bedre’d-dīn the Executed.”³¹

This assertion is an interesting one. This Ḥaydar Haravī, properly known as Burhān al-dīn Ḥaydar b. Muḥammad al-Harawī al-Khvāfī (d. 1427), is described by Mecdī as “a student of Sa‘d al-dīn Taftazānī. He was learned and virtuous and wise and scrupulous and excelled among the ranks of high virtue. I saw his annotations of the *Sharḥ Kashshāf* of his teacher Molla al-‘Allāma Sa‘d al-dīn Taftazānī... And he has a commentary on the *Īdāḥ al-Ma‘ānī* and I heard that he has a commentary of the *Farā’id al-Sirajīyya*...” Mecdī adds that “He drafted annotations

31 *Bundan murād Ḥaydar Hereviden ihtirāzdır ki ol Sa‘de’d-dīn Taftazānī şāgirdlerindedir ve Şeyḫ Bedre’d-dīn el-maṣlūbuñ qatlına fetvā vermişdir. İsmail Hakkı Bursevī, Şerh ul-muhammediye el-müsemma bi-Ferah ür-Ruh* (İstanbul: Elhac Muharrem Efendi Bosnavî Matbaası, 1877).

to Sa‘d al-dīn’s *Kashshāf* commentary and composed replies to Sayyid Sharīf [Jurjānī]’s criticisms,” and extends his entry to claim that “it is recorded that this virtuous one studied with Mevlānā Muḥammad Kāfiyajī and Mevlānā Hüsrev.”³² Kātib Çelebi also records Ḥaydar’s commentaries on the *Sharḥ Kashshāf*, the *Īḍāḥ*, the *Farā’id al-Sirajīyya*, as well as al-Ījī’s *al-Mawāqif*.³³ Each of these works of Ḥaydar survive to the present and were read and reproduced many times.

According to this biographical dictionary tradition, Burhān al-dīn Ḥaydar Haravī was a Khurasānī intellectual with roots in Khvāf near Nishapur, or in Herat. In the last quarter of the fourteenth century he moved to Timur’s Samarqand for schooling, where he became part of the circle of Ḥanafī scholars that orbited around the central figures of the rivals Sa‘d al-dīn Taftazānī and Sayyid Sharīf Jurjānī.³⁴ From the perspective of subsequent Ḥanafī jurisprudence, this cadre constituted the absolute apotheosis of their own Ḥanafī scholarly tradition and the models for generations of Ḥanafī legists in the Ottoman Empire as in Central Asia and India. Many of their works, such as Jurjānī’s dictionary (*Ta‘rīfāt*) and Taftazānī’s *Sharḥ Kashshāf* and *Sharḥ Talkhīs*, functioned as mandatory components of Ḥanafī *madrassa* curricula across the *dār al-islām* of the early modern period.³⁵ This enduring legacy is in part owed to the tendency of many of the students of Taftazānī and Jurjānī to migrate out of Khurasān and Transoxania and, using the pedigree of the schools of Timurid Samarqand as a means to quickly climb to the top of local

32 Aḥmed Isameddin Taşköprüzade and Meḥmed Mecdi Edirmeli, *Hadaik üs-sakaik* (Istanbul: Dar üt-tibaat ül-amire), p. 83.

33 Kātib Çelebi, *Kitāb Kashf al-Zunūn ‘an Asāmī al-Kutub wa al-Funūn* (Istanbul: Maṭba‘at al-‘Ālem, 1892), p. 408.

34 ‘Īsamu’d-dīn Ebu l’hayr Aḥmed Efendi Taşköprülüzade, *al-Shaqaiq al-nu`maniyah fi `ulama al-Dawlat al-Uthmaniyah* (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basimevi, 1985).

35 Shahab Ahmed and Nenad Filipovic, “The Sultan’s Syllabus: A Curriculum for the Ottoman Imperial Medreses Prescribed in a Fermān of Qānūnī I Süleymān, Dated 973 (1565),” *Studia Islamica*, no. 98/99 (January 1, 2004): 183–218.

scholarly hierarchies. In the Ottoman realm during the reigns of Çelebi Meḥmed and Murād II these Timurid scholars forged close connections with native Rumi *‘ulemā* such as Meḥmed Şāh Fenārī, and, out of this union, what was to become the Ottoman scholarly establishment would grow.

Burhān al-dīn Ḥaydar Haravī was part of this process. After studying with Taftazānī and the Māturīdī-aligned scholars of Samarqand, he traveled to Rum and Rumeli, where he taught Molla Ḥüsrev and possibly Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu and others. His fellow-migrants included Fakhr al-dīn ‘Ajāmī, one of the earliest Ottoman *şeyḥü’l-islām*s and a student of Jurjānī, Sayyid ‘Alī ‘Ajāmī, also a student of Jurjānī, and Molla Tūsī, a later *şeyḥü’l-islām*. Edirne was their base, where, for instance, Fakhr al-dīn was appointed to preach at the Dārü’l-ḥadīş mosque complex built by Murād II and, as Taşköprüzāde notes, in 1444 decreed the execution by fire of a Ḥurūfī missionary. Edirne, too, was the place where Haravī must have been residing when he was called to issue a *fetvā* for the execution of Şeyḥ Bedre’d-dīn Simavī.

Returning to the life of Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu, we may conclude that he traveled from the Gelibolu-Malkara region to Edirne between approximately 1410 and 1425 in order to further his studies in the religious sciences, and found instruction with the Khurasani schoolman Ḥaydar Haravī who had arrived from the Timurid east. This instruction most likely was conducted entirely in Arabic and focused on the works of Ḥanafī jurisprudence that Heravi had learned from Taftazānī, specifically the *Kashshāf* of al-Zamakhsharī and its various commentaries. The ample discussion of these works in the Yazıcıoğlus’ own writings, including those of Taftazānī himself whose lifetime may have even overlapped with Meḥmed’s, as well as those of Jurjānī

who died somewhat earlier, comprises further evidence of the scholarly connection between the senior Khurasānī *‘ālim* and the provincial student from the Rumelian frontier.

We see, then, that Meḥmed Yazıciöğlü was in contact with the germinating radicle of Ottoman orthodox scholarship. Within one degree of separation from Haravī, and two from Meḥmed, was the Fenari family, the founding family of the Ottoman *‘ulamā* system, as well as Musannifek, a Khurasānī scholar of approximately the same age as Meḥmed Yazıciöğlü who served as instructor to Sultan Meḥmed, the *muftīs* Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Ajamī and Molla Ṭūsī, the Rumi student Molla Ḥüsrev who would become a prominent scholar in Meḥmed II’s reign, Muṣliḥu’d-dīn Ḥocazāde Rūmī, a famous scholar of natural philosophy famed in both Transoxiana and Rum for his expertise in logic, astronomy, and mathematics, and Molla Gürānī, who came from the Kurdish regions and then Cairo to found a *madrassa* in newly-conquered Istanbul.³⁶ All of these scholars spent considerable time in Edirne when Ḥaydar Haravī was there and when Meḥmed Yazıciöğlü may have been his student.

The Bedre’-d-dīn Question

Now one must address the most controversial segment of the biographical profile of Burhāne’-d-dīn Ḥaydar Haravī: his role in the execution of Şeyḫ Bedre’-d-dīn Simavī in 1420 at Serez. Our sources on this famous event– the culmination of several years of political insurrection on the part of Bedre’-d-dīn, former *qāḍi-‘asker* and famous international scholar of

³⁶ This cohort of Jurjānī and Taftazānī’s migrant students in the Ottoman lands deserves a comprehensive study. These scholars have been studied in individual monographs, dissertations, and in encyclopedia articles, without having been treated as a unit. Perhaps the closest to a synthetic picture is Giv Nassiri, “Turco -Persian Civilization and the Role of Scholars’ Travel and Migration in Its Elaboration and Continuity” (Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley, 2002).

Rumelian origin – attribute the execution to a *fetvā* issued by Ḥaydar Haravī at the request of Sultan Meḥmed and his powerful vizier Bāyezīd Paşa of Amasya.³⁷

The unanimity of these sources may tempt the scholar to posit some stark ideological contrast between Şeyḫ Bedre'd-dīn and his followers and Haravī and his Timurid Ḥanafī peers. This is indeed the thrust of some secondary scholarship, which attributes the execution to a fundamental incompatibility between Bedre'd-dīn's insurrectionary "heterodoxy" and collaborationist orthodoxy.³⁸ However, it is worth pausing to remember a series of facts: that Bedre'd-dīn studied in Cairo with Sayyid Sharīf Jurjānī ; that in Edirne he met 'Abdurrahmān Bişāmī, the famed occultist of the reign of Murād II; he was also closely acquainted with the Fenarī family there and in Rum; that he taught theology in Edirne along with several Timurid immigrants, including, perhaps, Haravī himself; that he participated in the Ottoman Balkan regimes of Süleymān Çelebi and then Mūsā Çelebi, as did Şaruca Beg and his entourage which included Şālih Yazıcı and the Qaşşāboğlus; and that sources record a certain amount of dismay among the 'ulemā at the news of his death.³⁹ In short, Şeyḫ Bedre'd-dīn's life story and education parallels and intersects with Ḥaydar Haravī's at several points, and also with the lives of the Yazıcıoğlus; all of these men shared the same social and intellectual context. Therefore it is difficult to divide up this context into "camps", each with distinct ideologies and political agendas that may somehow be read out of the opposition between Çelebi Meḥmed and Şeyḫ Bedre'd-dīn. Haravī's role in the events of 1420 tells us little of the political-intellectual

37 Michel Balivet, *Islam mystique et révolution armée dans les Balkans ottomans: la vie du cheikh Bedreddin, le "Hallâj des Turcs", 1358/59-1416* (Istanbul: Editions Isis, 1995), p. 88-89. Taşköprüzade writes that Bedre'd-dīn was executed at the command of "Molla Haydar, a scholar recently arrived from Iran."

38 Ibid., p.88. According to Balivet, the chronicler İdris Bidlisi claims that the 'ulemā accused him of violating the law, of heresy (*zindīq*), and of atheism.

39 Ibid. p. 89.

alignment of the Yazıcıoğlus. This is indeed part of the message of Ahmet Yaşar Ocak's comments on Bedre'd-dīn, who argues for the conflict's fundamental economic basis.⁴⁰

While no works of the Yazıcıoğlu family mention Bedre'd-dīn by name, the Bayramī-Melāmī Sufi community that counts the Yazıcıoğlus as founding members cultivated a diversity of opinions on the shaykh over the centuries. 'Azīz Meḥmed Ḥūdāyī, founder of the Celvetī offshoot of the Bayramīyye, said that Bedre'd-dīn's famous *Vāridāt* "damaged the faith of believers and contradicted the doctrine of the community of Sunnis." Yet, the *Muḥammediyye* commentator İsmā'īl Ḥaqqı Bursevī, coming from the same Celvetī offshoot of the Bayramīs, writes words of praise for Bedre'd-dīn and even brings his ideas into play with those of Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu.⁴¹

In conclusion, Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu seems to have studied with scholars who lived at heart of early Ottoman intellectual life as its learned hierarchies were growing up. His own works, as will subsequently be discussed, carry the mark of the intellectual style of the Ḥanafī Timurid schoolmen who occupied the pinnacle of the educational hierarchy of Edirne during the late 1410s and 1420s. But, it must be noted, Meḥmed did not strictly imitate them: he would later characterize people like Haravī as "interpreters, legists, and theologians" and juxtapose their views against the Sufis who would dominate the next phase of his life. There is some truth to Bursalı Mehmed Tahir's insight that "While [Mehmed], in order to bring his education to completion, benefited from well-known individuals such as Haydar Khvāfī and Zayn al-'Arab ... he took his essential spiritual nourishment from Ḥācī Bayram Velī."⁴²

40 Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Zındıklar ve mülhidler yahut dairenin dışına çıkanlar: 15.-17. yüzyıllar* (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1999), p. 159-232.

41 İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Şerh ul-Muḥammediyye el-müsemma bi-Ferah ür-ruh* (İstanbul: Elhac Muharrem Efendi Bosnavî Matbaası, 1877).

42 Mehmed Tahir, *Osmanlı müellifleri*, p. 195.

Anatolian Sufism: Hācī Bayram Velī

Before 1429, Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu came face to face with Hācī Bayram Velī of Ankara, who would profoundly change his life and leave an indelible stamp on his biography and that of his brother. The Yazıcıoğlus imply that this meeting offered each of them profoundest spiritual illumination. Meḥmed says he considers him “the sultan of *shaykhs* and the seal of the shaykhs – the moon Hācī Bayram, pole of the world, the *shaykh* of the world, its king Hācī Bayram.” Aḥmed introduces him as “sultan of the *shaykhs*, threshold of thresholds, pole of the truth-seekers, the most perfect of the proximate ones, guide to the people, Hācī Bayram.” It seems impossible to overstate the centrality of this Sufi *shaykh* to the lives of both Yazıcıoğlu brothers. To put the brothers’ first meeting with their teacher in the context it deserves, one must locate Hācī Bayram’s life within late fourteenth and early fifteenth century Anatolia.

Hācī Bayram Velī of Ankara was the most renowned mystical figure of the region during his lifetime. Around such a figure it is natural for biographical information to become ornate and unreliable as later writers levy the saint’s prestige in the service of local interests. Accordingly, many of his putative associations, such as the story of his friendship with the poet Eṣrefoğlu Rumi of Iznik, seem to be based only on much later sources of dubious reliability.⁴³ Yet all these hagiographical sources preserve a core story that varies little.⁴⁴ According to common narrative elements shared by several sources, Hācī Bayram born around 1350 in the town of Şolfaşl (*Dhū al-faḍl*) near Ankara. His Sufi teacher was Ḥamīdu’-d-dīn Aksarayī, a student of Khvāje ‘Alī Ardabīlī, grandson of Şafī al-dīn Ardabīlī, the founder of the Şafavī Sufi order that would

43 Nihat Azamat, “Hacı Bayram-i Veli”. *DİA2*, v. 14 pp. 442-447

44 The most comprehensive attempt at a biography of the *shaykh* is Fuat Bayramoğlu, *Hacı Bayram-ı Veli: yaşamı, soyu, vakfi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1983).

become so important to global history over the following centuries. Of origin in south-central Anatolia, Ḥamīdu'd-dīn studied in Ardabil in Azerbaijan, then ruled by Timur, in a pattern also shared by the founders of the Ḥalvetī order. The *Mir'ātü'l-ıṣq* refers to Ḥamīdu'd-dīn's migration from Ardabil to Rum with the phrase, "in the time of Khvāje 'Alī Ardabīlī *the secret of love* flew [from Iran] to Rum" in his person.⁴⁵ In that city he became known as Şomuncu Baba, the "Loaf-making father," for the bakery he operated there. Leaving Bursa for reasons attributed to Timur's invasion – or more likely, considering the direction of travel, because of possible competition with the Naqshbandī-aligned Sufi leader of the city, Emir Sultān Buḥārī – Somuncu Baba spent time in a certain village in the Çukurova region near Sis and Adana called Nebī Sūfī, where Ḥacı Bayram met him around 1402, addressing him as "my sultan".

Ḥacı Bayram himself had spent the previous years as a teacher in the Melike Ḥatun *medrese* in Ankara; the *Semerāt* asserts that he then rose to serve as *qapucubaşı* a high courtly office for Sultan Bāyezīd I – but this assertion is not upheld by any other evidence. Similarly dubious is the claim, advanced by both Michel Balivet and Fuat Bayramoğlu, that the elderly Muslim *müderri*s encountered by Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos in Ankara in 1391 and immortalized in his record of their lengthy mutual debate, the *Dialogues with a Persian*, was Ḥacı Bayram himself.⁴⁶ Both scholars accept Manuel's claim that his Turkish interlocutor was "the most famous scholar of the land" and "acquainted with the sultan", and conclude from this that he could be none other than the famous saint before his Sufi initiation. However,

Palaiologos' *müderri*s mentions having recently arrived from Babylon – in Manuel's archaicizing

45 Abdurrahman Elaskerī, ed. İsmail E Erünsal, *XV-XVI. asır Bayrâmî-Melâmîliği'nin kaynaklarından Abdurrahman Elaskerî'nin Mir'ātü'l-ıṣk'ı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003), p. 35.

46 The origins of this claim are in Bayramoğlu, *Hacı Bayram-i Veli*. The dialogues themselves have been published in Erich Trapp, *Manuel II. Palaiologos; Dialoge mit einem "Perser."* (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Kommission für Byzantinistik, Institut für Byzantinistik der Universität Wien; In Kommission bei H. Böhlau Nachf., Graz, 1966).

idiom this could mean Baghdad, Tabriz, or Cairo – and that he was already an old man. In 1391 Ḥācī Bayram was neither old nor had come from abroad.

After Şomuncu Baba gave Ḥācī Bayram the red *tāc* of his own parent order the Şafaviyya, they traveled together to Syria and the Hijaz, performing the Hajj jointly, before Şomuncu Baba sent Ḥācī Bayram to Ankara to continue his mission. According to the *Mir'ātü'l-ıṣq*, Bayram asked Ḥamīdu'd-dīn, “But how shall I earn my keep there? I know no arts. What should I do?” Ḥamīdu'd-dīn told him to raise crops, particularly legumes.⁴⁷ By the time Şomuncu Baba died around 1412 in Aksaray, Ḥācī Bayram's community had grown to a significant size, a growth given architectural form in the construction of a major mosque-*zāviye* complex for his followers in Ankara.

This mosque-*zāviye*, which still stands today, shares its site with the Roman temple of Augustus, constructed in 25 BCE to celebrate the emperor's conquest of Galatia; throughout the pre-Christian Roman period the temple served as focus of the imperial cult. Ḥācī Bayram Velī's own foundation, by contrast, seems to have evoked the *aḥī* history of Ankara alongside resistance to the imperial cult of Murād II.⁴⁸ According to the *Şemerāt*, Ḥācī Bayram had even spent a period in spiritual retreat alongside Şeyḫ Bedre'd-dīn Simavī. Having grown alarmed at the growing following of a Sufi in an independent city outside of his central lands, Murād summoned him to Edirne in 825/1422, sending, according to this text, a *subaşı* to retrieve him. In the *Şemerāt*'s telling, by the time they had crossed into Rumeli the *subaşı* had become Ḥācī Bayram's disciple, and when they reached Edirne, the sultan, seeing the shaykh's forthrightness,

47 Abdurrahman Elaskerī and Erünsal, *XV-XVI. asır Bayrâmî-Melâmîliği'nin kaynaklarından Abdurrahman Elaskerî'nin Mir'ātü'l-ıṣk'ı*, p. 203.

48 See G. G. Arnakis, “Futuwwa Traditions in the Ottoman Empire: Akhis, Bektashi Dervishes, and Craftsmen,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 12, no. 4 (October 1, 1953): pp. 232–47, and Franz Taeschner's comments quoted there.

apologized for troubling him and requested that he give a sermon at the Eski Cāmi‘. He also made the Bayramīye exempt from taxes.

The *Seṃerāt* states that it was during this journey that Ḥācī Bayram passed through Gelibolu and made the acquaintance of Meḥmed and Aḥmed Yazıcıoğlu. There is some plausibility to this legend – the date of 825/1422 seems appropriate, Gelibolu was a likely transit point, and Meḥmed was probably in Gelibolu at this time. However, a look at the Yazıcıoğlu’s own writings makes this seem less likely. Aḥmed Bīcān, in the final edition of his *Müntehā*, written in 870/1465, uses a phrase that makes such a brief meeting seem highly implausible: “[My brother Meḥmed] held the secrets of Şeyḥ Ḥācī Bayram. And this his wretched one would often say to their presences [*ben meskīn her dem anlarıñ ḥazretlerine eydürdüm ki*] that the world has no permanence and destiny has no fixity...”⁴⁹ Though there is considerable grammatical ambiguity here, this sentence seems to imply two things: first, that there was a moment when Aḥmed, Meḥmed, and Ḥācī Bayram were all three together, and secondly, that these moments occurred more than once. Meḥmed uses similar words in the *Maghārib al-Zamān*. The depth of Sufi attachment signals that the education of the brothers under the famous saint of Ankara was serious and sustained and more than the work of few days or weeks in Gelibolu.⁵⁰

The most likely conclusion is that it was Ankara where the brothers studied with Ḥācī Bayram. We already know two other threads linking the Yazıcıoğlu family to that city – namely, the possible connection of Şālīḥ’s second patron İskender b. Ḥācī Paşa to the Devleḥan family of Ankara, and Muşṭafā ‘Ālī’s assertion that Meḥmed was born there. Although it is established

49 *KM870A* p. 3a.

50 E. J. W. Gibb comes to the same conclusion in *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, p. 391.

that Şālih was in Thrace as early as 790/1388, an Ankara family origin remains possible; if this is the case, an attractive hypothesis is that Meḥmed and Aḥmed maintained some family links to that city and returned there in the late 1410s or early 1420s, becoming involved in Ḥācī Bayram’s thriving community. Nowhere else could the brothers have lived as students and disciples of Ḥācī Bayram in a sustained way.

The Meaning of Ṭarīqa

What did this connection that they held so dear signify in the brothers’ daily life? The fifteenth century was a time of growth for Sufi groups, and saw, from Central Asia to Rumelia, a deepening of their social significance. The institutionalization of Sufi commitment can be clearly seen in the *Ṭarīqatnāme* of Eşrefoğlu Rumī of Iznik, a contemporary of the Yazıcıoğlus who wrote a well-known *divan* and several widely-read Sufi works. He was probably not a true Bayramī Sufi; although later stories insist that he married Ḥācī Bayram Velī’s daughter, his works do not mention this and instead show a deep connection to the distinct tradition of the Qādiriyya. In any case, his *Ṭarīqatnāme* expresses the bond of the *ṭarīqa* in words that may implicitly underlie the relationship between Meḥmed and Aḥmed Yazıcıoğlu and their common master:

The great *shaykhs*, those guides who are said to ‘have command’ (*ulū’l-amr*), are deputies in the Prophet’s place... And those who ‘have the power’ after the Prophet are those who are the finest among the people and are perfect in knowledge in [either] the exoteric and esoteric. Being thus, those who exoterically ‘have command’ are the *begs*, while in truth those who ‘have command’ are the guides [*mürşidler*]. So, it being so, it is incumbent upon the believers not to rebel against their *begs*, and to follow their guidess, for the Messenger declared, *he who has no guidance has no religion*, that is to say, that person who has no guide has no religion.⁵¹

51 Eşrefoğlu Rumi, “Tarikatname,” Hacı Mahmud Efendi 4667, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi. pp. 1b-2b.

Here Eşrefoğlu ventures into Qur'anic exegesis in order to theoretize the idea of Sufi guidance, and in a manner more explicit than is to be found anywhere in the Yazıcıoğlu's works. He states that a Sufi shaykh, as the primary inheritor of the Prophet's powers, was not simply a source of instruction and knowledge, but a leader to whom loyalty was bound as if as by the law of a temporal lord. Like a kind of head of state, the fifteenth-century *mürşid* regulates the activity of a group of hierarchically-organized subordinates, directing their individual actions towards the interests of the community. To disobey, it is implied, is tantamount to betraying one's faith. The Yazıcıoğlu brothers accordingly treated their *shaykh* as their ultimate leader. Nowhere in their works is any other leader, not even a sultan, accorded such a role.

Early Bayramī texts such as Aqşemse'd-dīn's *al-Risālat al-nūriyya* and later ones like 'Abdurrahmān el-'Askerī's *Mir'ātü'l-ıışq* tell us something of the roster of those who participated in this Bayramī community in Ankara in the 1420's.⁵² The innermost core of disciples was made up of those who remained for most of their lives in the Ankara region even after the death of their master. Aqşemse'd-dīn, as is well-known, was closely associated with Sultan Mehmed II and joined him the conquest of Constantinople in 1453; after returning to Göynük outside Ankara he composed numerous important works of Sufi theory which will be discussed extensively in later chapters for their comparative value. Dede 'Ömer Sikkīnī broke off from Aqşemse'd-dīn's faction to lead the Melāmiyye order, which was to be a perennial fount of religious dissent in subsequent Ottoman centuries.

Not so far afield was another famous Bayramī, the famous poet Şeyhī of Kütahya, the most important Turkish poet of the middle of the fifteenth century. According to the *Menaqıb* of

52 A. İhsan Yurd, *Fatih Sultan Mehmed Hanın hocası, Şeyh Akşemseddin: hayatı ve eserleri* (Istanbul: Yurd, 1972); İsmail E. Erünsal, *XV-XVI. asir Bayrâmi-Melâmiliği'nin kaynaklarından Abdurrahman El-askeri'nin Mir'âtü'l-ısk'i*.

Aqşemse'd-dīn, Şeyhī, once a physician, was guided to the poetic arts and even given his pen-name by Hācı Bayram himself. Aqşemse'd-dīn was said to claim that in his own spiritual journeys to heaven he saw that even the angels love to recite Şeyhi's Turkish verses.

Additionally, in Bursa, two disciples named Aqbıyık and Hızır Dede practiced; Aqbıyık would accompany Sultan Murād II in the 1444 Battle of Varna and, around 1465, found a *tekke* in the Istanbul neighborhood of Cankurtaran below Aya Şofya. In Bolu, a certain Şālahu'd-dīn (occasionally confused with Yazıcı Şālih) taught students, as did Molla Zeyrek, a notable scholar favored by Sultan Meḥmed II who studied and collaborated with many of the *'ulemā* already mentioned, and so, like the Yazıcıoğlus and perhaps Bedre'd-dīn, is himself a point of intersection between the academic scholars of the capitals and the currents of Anatolian Sufism. Fātiḥ Meḥmed allowed Zeyrek to transform Constantinople's Church of Christ Pantocrator into his own *medrese*. Finally, the notable Hūrūfī poet Seyyid Nesīmī, whose quatrains are arguably of the finest specimens both of Hūrūfī expression and of early fifteenth-century popular Turkish poetry, is alleged in more than one source to have studied with Hācı Bayram.

Considering this geographic distribution, one notes that it is strictly north-central and northwestern Anatolia that was the home for the first generation of Bayramī disciples, with the Yazıcıoğlus of Gelibolu constituting a kind of near Rumelian outpost. Other major Sufi communities occupied somewhat different geographies. Rum proper, that is, the region centered on Amasya, Sivas, and Tokat, was a cradle of the Hālvētī order that would thrive there during the 1460s; like the Bayramīyye, the Hālvetiyye were also a sister order of the Şafaviyya with a *silsila* extending to the *shaykhs* of Ardabīl. Non-Ottoman Karaman, with its capital at Konya and reaching the port city of Antalya and the inland centers of Kayseri and Aksaray, produced

Şomuncu Baba and as well as later individuals belonging to the Zeyniyye order; it also was the region of the birth of the Bektaşiiyye. Finally, there are the “Ottoman” cities of Bursa and Edirne, centers without an ancient Sufi tradition. In some sense the *ṭarīqa* dynamics of the early fifteenth century was that of contest between regional Sufi groups over the allegiances of these new capitals.

This bond of *ṭarīqa* did not only imply a geographically localized political community, but also an intellectual one. Again, a comparison with the words of Eşrefoğlu bears fruit. Eşrefoğlu, as a Qādirī Sufi and not clearly a Bayramī despite later attributions, discusses his own intellectual influences in the *Ṭarīqatnāme* and his *Müzekki’n-nufūs*, which lists the canon of the Qādiriyya order founded by ‘Abd al-Qādir Gīlanī in the twelfth century.⁵³ By contrast, one observes that the Yazıcıoğlu brothers list individuals such as ‘Aṭṭār, Ibn ‘Arabī, al-Qūnawī, and Jandī as their Sufi forbears – a list exactly adhered to by Aqşemse’ d-dīn in the chronologically earliest Bayramī text, *al-Risālat al-Nūriyya*, who also adds a number of famous names (the Turkish poet ‘Āşiq Paşa, the Persian poet ‘Irāqī, and several others) that are not to be found in Eşrefoğlu’s Qādirī list.⁵⁴ Though it is certain that, sociologically speaking, the Bayramīs and Qādirīs and other orders, shared a common environment, they seem to have preserved private “reading lists” for their initiates. This is to say nothing of the canon of those orders that were more strikingly ideologically distinct, such as the Bektaşiiyye, among whom these tendencies must be even more marked.

The Ottoman Administrators

53 Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tariqatname*, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hacı Mahmud Efendi 4667. For information on the Qādirī intellectual canon, see Thierry Zarcone, *The Qādiriyya Order* (İstanbul: Simurg, 2000).

54 A. İhsan Yurd, *Fatih Sultan Mehmed Hanın hocası, Şeyh Akşemseddin: hayatı ve eserleri* (İstanbul: Yurd, 1972).

Hācı Bayram died in 1429, and it is impossible to know what the two brothers did next. Because all of their works, written from 1448 onwards, claim to have been composed in the city of Gelibolu, one may conclude that they moved there within a few years of the passing of their *shaykh* and lived as teachers of religious sciences and mysticism. It was during this period that Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu may have married and had a child, as an amusing story in Muştafā ‘Ālī’s *Künhü’l-aḥbār* relates:

It is recounted that the *shaykh* [Meḥmed] was famous for his poverty. One hungry day when he and his young children’s rations were scarce, his wife went out with the little children to the bath. And she put a bit of broth into a pot [to boil] and indicated, “watch it, so when I come back I can put in a bit of rice.”... After some time a beggar came by saying “anything for God?” and looked straight at the pot through the saint’s doorway. Yet though the pot was reserved for his offspring and children, the kitchen of the *shaykh*’s trust in God was full of all kinds of bounties. Because of this he was not happy to see the beggar leave unsatisfied, and took the pot by its handle and gave it to him, without remarking how his children would fare that night. He viewed the kind consideration of a beggar as a good thing in every respect. But when his wife came back from the bath she inquired about the pot. The saint told her point by point about the coming of the beggar and that he gave him the pot. But this woman, lacking in intellect, showed her total vexation, saying “But this is unfair – now what will the little children eat tonight?”⁵⁵

Advising patience, Meḥmed later opens his front door to see that an envoy from the sultan, passing through Gelibolu on campaign, has given him a basket full of all kinds of “delicious and sweet foods,” thus illustrating the wisdom of the Qur’anic dictum, “He that does a good deed shall be repaid tenfold.”⁵⁶ Admittedly, this is not solid evidence that Meḥmed had children, and the text of the *Muḥammediyye* is equivocal on this point. In this connection it is worth remarking that Evliyā Çelebi claims that he met a descendant of Meḥmed in Yenice-i Vardar in southern Macedonia. More concretely, in both Gelibolu and Bursa are presently families who claim the Yazıcıoğlus as ancestors and preserve cognate surnames.⁵⁷

55 ‘Ālī, *Künhü’l-Aḥbār*, v. 5 p. 236

56 Qur’an 6:160, trans. N. J Dawood, *The Koran: with a parallel Arabic text*, London: Penguin Books, 2014.

57 Private correspondence.

The brothers' residence in the city during the later 1440s and 1450s was sustained by the goodwill of two prominent Gelibolu political figures. We have already met one of them: Qaşşāboğlu Maḥmūd Paşa, son of Qaşşāboğlu 'Ali. By 1449, when Meḥmed mentions him, Maḥmūd Paşa (d. ~860/1456) had become a major figure in the court of Murād II in Edirne and Bursa. He is remembered in chronicles for having personally delivered a letter from assembled *begs* requesting that Murād II return from retirement in 1444 as the Byzantine emperor threatened to release the captive Ottoman prince Orhan to contest the throne against the young Meḥmed II. He is portrayed here as a loyal vizier possessing the full trust of Murād II and his son Meḥmed as well as the *begs* of Rumelia.⁵⁸

It is no surprise that a man of such prominence was a great builder of public buildings in Malkara, the hometown of his family. Documentation of one of his constructions survives in a *vaqfiyye* from 860/1456, which approximates the year of his death. It describes Maḥmūd's construction of a *zāviye* and lists several properties whose incomes were set aside for its upkeep: a *hammām*, a *kervansaray*, a few shops, and a small orchard. This *zāviye*'s expenditures included the daily wages of an imam, a muezzin, a cook, and the purchase of a considerable amount of foodstuffs.⁵⁹ Furthermore, two villages presumably named after their founders – Qāsim-veled-Şofu and Qaraca Beg – along with part of the village of Qırıq-'Ali already mentioned as being in the hands of his brother Meḥmed, also contributed to the trust of this *zāviye*. Considering the uncertain boundary between a *zāviye* and a mosque in this period and especially in Rumeli, this *zāviye* mentioned in the *vaqfiyye* is probably the same as the mosque recorded in the *tahrīr* of

58 Colin Imber, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443-45* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), p. 42.

59 Gökbilgin, *XV.-XVI. asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa livâsı*. p. 292-293.

1475 as “the mosque of Maḥmūd Beg son of Qaşşāb” in Malkara, which also mentions a salaried “*imam* and *müderris*” as well as a müezzin.⁶⁰

Maḥmūd, the man who may be a childhood friend of the Yazıcıoğlu brothers, was funding public buildings in the Malkara-Gelibolu region as he simultaneously functioned as a vizier for Sultan Murād II. Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu makes explicit that he he moved to Gelibolu on his behalf:

He was a vizier, a light of munificence.
His name was Maḥmūd Paşa ibn Qaşşāb.
For the sake of his love I settled.
Gelibolu I made my home.

It is likely that Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu returned to Gelibolu to renew the long-term connection between the Qaşşāboğlu family and his own. The *Muḥammediyye* describes it only in the vaguest of terms. It is possible that Maḥmūd employed Meḥmed as a scribe, repeating the arrangement held by both of their fathers. It is equally possible that Maḥmūd allotted Meḥmed or his brother a stipend attached to one of Maḥmūd’s foundations, such as the *zāviye* described above. It is even possible that this connection was amounted to nothing more than an informal renewal of friendship. But friendship with such a powerful man as Maḥmūd was certainly remunerative in some way.

The next figure mentioned in the *Muḥammediyye* is more obscure. Aḥmed-i Ḥāşş is discussed in the following five couplets, asking for God’s blessings on his behalf:

Especially [bless] Subaşı Aḥmed-i Ḥāşş
Everyone’s king, leader Aḥmed-i Ḥāşş

60 It is tempting to infer that the “Mevlānā Aḥmed” listed as this “*imām* and *müderris*” of Qaşşāboğlu Maḥmūd’s mosque in the 879/1475 *tahrir* is Aḥmed Bīcān himself. This conclusion cannot be borne, however, because for this to be the case Aḥmed must have extremely old – far over seventy – and because he also stated as recently as 1465 that his place of residence was Gelibolu, not Malkara where this mosque is located. “Tapu Tahrir Defteri T.T. 0012” (Istanbul), T.T. 0012, Başbakanlık Arşivi.

When the Opener created the land of Rum,
 he made Gelibolu into its key.
He put this key in his hand,
 His hands reached from the earth to the sky.
In this way he is the dearest of the world,
 the sultan of all the *ġāzīs*.
So distinguish him among your friends,
 may he be an intimate in your presence.

These couplets establish Aḥmed-i Ḥāṣṣ as the *subaşı* of Gelibolu, the commander of its garrison.

In emphasizing the imagery of *ġazā* and evoking the continued importance of Gelibolu as “the key” to Rum, Meḥmed shows himself to be attached to a later generation of *ġāzīs*. Whereas Şaruca Beg and those of his generation the conquest of Thrace from the Byzantines, the following generation of Aḥmed-i Ḥāṣṣ grew up in a more thoroughly Ottoman environment.

Aḥmed-i Ḥāṣṣ leaves a documentary trail similar to that of Maḥmūd, and he seems own even more property. The 1475 *tahrīr* mentions a *zāviye*-mosque bearing his name in Gelibolu with an income of 18,000 *akçe*,⁶¹ while his own *vaqfiyye* document, also from 860/1456 (which must postdate the year of his death), says that “the deceased Ḥāṣṣ Aḥmed Beg built a *zāviye* in Gelibolu proper and to it are attached two apartments and a mosque, and besides this he built another mosque,” before listing the many properties that supplied these with income.⁶² These included half of the Topçu (cannoneer’s) *hammām* in a neighborhood where soldiers were quartered (‘*azebler maḥallesinde*), several shops (including three grape-sellers and four perfumiers), a few storage rooms, a *kervānserāy* “near the docks”, and many agricultural plots of various kinds scattered throughout the region. His two mosques employed two imams and two muezzins while his *zāviye* employed a cook, a keeper of the pantry, a baker, and a few other staffers. This *vaqfiyye* confirms a total income of 18,800 *akçe*, a considerable sum.

61 “Defter-i esāmī-i sancaḡ-I Gelibolu (Awā’il Şhawwāl 879/February 1475)”, Cevdet Collection no. 79, Atatürk Kitaplığı.

62 Gökbilgin, *XV.-XVI. asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa livâsı*, p. 231

Another, later *vaqfiyye* mentions that Sultan Murād II bestowed upon Aḥmed-i Hāşş a large farm called Tekfurpınarı as a gift of private property (*hibbe ve temlik*) in the year 855/1451-52. We also learn here that his own son was named Muştafā Çelebi, that his second mosque was in the neighborhood of Çuqurbostan, and that the Topçu *hammām*'s income was split between Aḥmed-i Hāşş's *vaqf* and that of the contemporary "Terzi" Şaruca Paşa – a Gelibolu political figure and naval captain of the mid-15th century not to be confused with the *gāzī* Şaruca Beg. It is quite obvious that Aḥmed-i Hāşş was a very wealthy *subaşı*, and, to judge by the location and name of his *hammam* and his association with Terzi Şaruca Paşa, considered himself a patron of the soldiers and sailors of Gelibolu. His wealth seems to far outstrip that of Qaşşāboğlu Maḥmūd, at least in texts relating to Malkara-Gelibolu.⁶³

Aḥmed-i Hāşş, as commander of the Ottoman garrison of Gelibolu, was a representative of the Ottoman state around the time of the conquest of Constantinople, a position that earned him wealth and power. This wealthy officer performed some important service for the Yazıcıoğlu brothers that stimulated Meḥmed's effusive praise in the *Muḥammediyye*. But just as in so many other cases, we cannot say what this service was – employment, material gifts, protection and advocacy, or even spiritual discipleship are possible.

Writing and Seclusion

It was only three years before Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu's 1451 death that he completed his earliest written work, the *Maghārib al-Zamān* from which both the *Muḥammediyye* and his brother's *Envārü'l-Āşiqīn* were derived. Regarding these remarkably prolific years, when his

63 Çelebioğlu notes a story involving Aḥmed-i Hāşş in *mecmū'a* of Gebrekzāde Hāfiz Ḥasan. Çelebioğlu, *Muḥammediyye*, p. 35.

fame was greatest and his legacy cemented, oral legends and later accounts describe a period of seclusion. Evliyā Çelebi, traveling in Gelibolu in 1658-59, says that “Meḥmed Efendi entered into a cave in a rock at the seaside and fasted there. There he composed the *Muḥammediyye* [CV 320],” adding, “it was this cave in a single rock at the sea’s edge that Meḥmed Efendī fasted and composed the book *Muḥammediyye*. Still the noses of those who enter this cave smell his verdant herbal musk and amber. It is a place for the soul’s comfort.” Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqı Bursevī adds more detail: “His will chose seclusion and isolation, since those who find unity’s secret find it by first cutting away multiplicity... For this reason the author of the *Muḥammediyye* dismissed himself from the people and performed pieties and [*çileler*] in his own cell in Gelibolu at the seaside, and in this state of isolation composed the *Muḥammediyye*...”⁶⁴ A modern oral tradition that now enjoys the support of the Gelibolu municipality identifies this *çilehane* with a two-by-two-meter hand-dug cave located at the base of a cliff within view of the Dardanelles and the Gelibolu *namāzğāh* built by İskender b. Ḥācı Paşa. Both the *çilehane* and the *namāzğāh* are prominent tourist attractions in Gelibolu today.

Before Meḥmed died he set up a *tekke* of his own. The 925/1519 *tahrīr* of Gelibolu discusses a *tekke* of “Muḥyū’d-dīn Yazıcıoğlu”, clearly an error for Meḥmed, with four warehouses and two stores attached to its *vaqf*. Interestingly, one of these warehouses was said to be “close to the *hammām* of Aḥmed Beg-i Ḥāşş”.⁶⁵ Evliyā Çelebi says that “the Yazıcızāde *tekke*

64 İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Şerh ul-Muḥammediyye el-müsemma bi-Ferah ür-Ruh* (İstanbul: Elhac Muharrem Efendi Bosnavî Matbaası, 1877), p. 15. This story has been repeated by nineteenth and twentieth-century commentators. Aḥmed Rif‘at’s *Luğat-i Tarihiyye ve Coğrafiyye* repeats this story: “Yazıcıoğlu, a great *shaykh* of the Bayramiyye and author of the famous *Muḥammediyye*, passed away in the year 855 (1451). In a stone cave he had hollowed out himself by the seaside in Gelibolu, he secluded himself in a corner and was peerless in worship. Instead of a house, he built a *medrese* in the city center. And there was also a place of worship dug by his brother in the same area.” Ahmet Rifat, *Luğat-i tarihiyye ve coğrafiyye* (Istanbul, Mahmut Bey Matbaası 1881).

65 Yusuf Sarıınay, Abdullah Sivridağ. *75 numaralı Gelibolu livası mufassal tahrir defteri (925/1519) : dizin ve transkripsiyon*. Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2009. İbrahim Sezgin, “Gelibolu Kazasının sosyal ve ekonomik tarihi” (Ph.D. Thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi,

was a great hearth and its dervishes of the Bayramī path were numerous”⁶⁶, clearly implying that it was the Bayramī Sufi *tariqa* that was carried on there. Taşköprüzāde writes that Meḥmed “built a mosque. And they call this place the place of Ḥızır and İlyās, and the following Turkish excerpt was composed in this regard: ‘This is the place of Ḥızır and İlyās / He prayed and they give their greetings / Yazıcızāde saw them here / and this is why he made this exalted place.’” This legend is consistent with remarks by Muştafā ‘Alī that claim, “while he composed [*Muḥammediyye*] he was visited by, and in some aspects consulted with, Ḥızır himself.” According to the oral sources of Celebioğlu, between 1940 and 1945 this building, the “place of Ḥızır and İlyās” and an early Bayramī center, was sold by the municipality of Gelibolu for 250 lira and destroyed by its new owner.

Whether in seclusion in his cell or present in his *tekke*, Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu composed, in sequence, his three major works. Each are prompted by a specific stimulus: the *Maghārib* came about in a conversation with his brother and friends, the *Muḥammediyye* was encouraged by not just one, but three dreams of the Prophet, and the *Sharḥ Fuşūş al-Ḥikam* was written after the Prophet appeared in another dream and promised to teach him the contents of Mu‘ayyad Jandī’s *Sharḥ Fuşūş*.

Aḥmed’s Later Years

Meḥmed passed away “the same year as the death of Sultan Murād II” in 1451. A tomb in Gelibolu purports to hold his remains, and as early as the time of Taşköprüzāde this tomb was a site of pilgrimage (“The people regard his noble tomb as a site of prayerful visitation [*mezār-ı*

1998).

66 Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, ed. Orhan Şaik Gökyay et al. (Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1996), vol. V, p. 163-166.

icābet-i ed‘iyye]”). With Meḥmed’s passing his brother Aḥmed Bīcān moves out from under his older brother’s shadow by writing works of his own. These works give only very scant information on his life or activities before his death shortly after 1466. Aḥmed lists no names of associates as his brother did in the *Muḥammediyye* or his father in the *Şemsiyye*. His datable statements refer only to major political events – the Crusade of Varna, the second battle of Kosovo, the regnal periods of Murad II and Mehmed II, and the latter’s conquest of Constantinople and other area – rather than to any local configurations. Any biography of Aḥmed Bīcān between 1451 and 1466, then, is strongly conjectural.

Yet even as Aḥmed Bīcān provides no hard data on his life or personal connections, he is also more forthcoming with personal comments on his life and times. Aḥmed says, for example, that in around 1449 he “sat with his brother” and conversed with him about their respective literary legacies; about Sultan Meḥmed II and his specific conquests in Constantinople, Bosnia, Albania, and the Aegean he says “in history none will match these achievements”. In *Envārü’l-‘Āşiqīn* he mentions the hypocrisy of the ‘*ülema* and the value of poverty. For now two general statements should suffice to characterize Aḥmed vis-a-vis Meḥmed. Aḥmed Bīcān, perhaps more than his brother, lived a life centered on the practice of Sufism. He expanded his brother’s main Sufi work, the *Sharḥ Fuşūş*, twice over as the *Müntehā*, once in 1453 and once in 1465. He composed his own original *Rūḥu’l-Ervaḥ*, a short distillation of anthropocentric aspects of Sufi theory. His exaltation of poverty and condemnation of worldly vanity is a constant feature. The omnipresence of Sufi ideology in the works written after his brother’s death makes it likely that he continued living or working in the *tekke* founded by his brother in Gelibolu, or in the cave-cell nearby.

A second special trait of Aḥmed Bīcān is a new proximity to the Ottoman state. While it is true that Meḥmed includes some lines of praise for Sultan Murād II in his *Muḥammediyye*, Aḥmed Bīcān, in his 1465 edition of the *Müntehā*, is effusive in his gratitude to Meḥmed II, “Sultan of the World and King of Kings”, in pages not devoid of of apocalyptic expectation. In addition, it is suspected that Aḥmed visited Istanbul at least once after its conquest, as in the 1465 *Müntehā* he states “many fine mosques and ‘*imārets* [were built] within it, which nothing resembles in the Arab lands and in Persia.” Indeed, Fātiḥ Meḥmed’s conquests, “especially of Istanbul, which, with force and sword, he took from the unbelievers”⁶⁷ seem to have deeply affected Aḥmed Bīcān, perhaps marking an inflection point of his intellectual arc towards more original speculations. After 1453 lies Aḥmed’s retreat from the themes of prophet stories and religious instructional material that his brother favored and his movement towards the natural philosophy of the 1466 *Bostānu’l-Ḥaqā’iq* and the theoretical Sufism of the 1453 *Müntehā*, the undated *Rūḥu’l-Ervāḥ* and the abridged 1465 *Müntehā*.

After the 1465 *Müntehā*, Aḥmed completed his last known work, the *Bostānu’l-Ḥaqā’iq*, an adaptation of his father’s *Şemsiyye*, in 1466. We cannot say what in Aḥmed’s life occupies the moments between these works’ composition. We only know that sometime after the completion of the *Bostānu’l-Ḥaqā’iq*, over a century after the birth of his father, a *ġāzī*’s scribe, Aḥmed Bīcān, a dervish writer, passed away in what was now not a frontier but the *sancaq* capital of Gelibolu. His tomb still stands there.⁶⁸

Summary

67 *KM870A* pp. 2a-4b.

68 See Çelebioğlu, *Muhammediye*, pp. 40-42, for information the later fate of tombs associated with Mehmed and Ahmed.

This list, though certainly falling short of a complete prosopography, tells a clear tale. Yazıcı Şālih fell into the service, at Malkara, of a *ġāzī* beg who was a client of one of the most powerful of all fourteenth-century Thracian frontier lords, Şaruca Beg. When this personal arrangement with Qaşşāboġlu ‘Alī was annulled by the latter’s death before 1408, Şālih drifted into the employ of İskender Paşa, another Gelibolu beg of similar, though less prominent profile. Meanwhile, his sons grew up around the *ġāzī* household of the Qaşşāboġlus and associated with local Sufi notables like Derviş Bāyezīd, before traveling to Edirne for introduction into another social sphere, that of scholars. There Meġmed, through his teacher Ĥaydar Haravī, came into contact with the circle of Ĥanafī scholars that included many migrants from Timurid Iran and Central Asia, as well as men of Rumī, origin. In Ankara both brothers were inducted into the central body of Anatolian Sufism, the circle of Ĥācı Bayram. Returning to Gelibolu some years after 1429, they renewed a relationship with the Qaşşāboġlu family, specifically with ‘Alī’s son Maġmūd, by then a vizier of Murād II. There too the wealthy Ottoman officer Aġmed-i Ĥāşş played a role in their lives. After Meġmed’s passing in 1451, and after the death of Aġmed-i Ĥāşş and Maġmūd around 1456, Aġmed Bīcān continued to live near his brother’s *tekke* and *çilehāne*, and occupied himself with writing and mystical endeavors of an increasingly independent nature for at least the following ten years.

III. Problems

Several unsolved issues problematize this chronology and require separate comment.

1. ‘*Abdurrahmān Bisṭāmī and the neo-Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*: It is alleged, based on a section in the *Dürr-i Meknūn* that discusses the works of ‘Abdurrahmān Bisṭāmī and acknowledge his recent death, that Aḥmed Bīcān and Bisṭāmī were acquaintances or friends. The *Dürr-i Meknūn*, however, is probably not a work by Aḥmed Bīcān. Separately, it is indeed possible to construct a chain of acquaintance by which Aḥmed (or rather his brother) could have known Bisṭāmī – through Ḥaydar Haravī, who taught alongside several of Bisṭāmī’s known acquaintances, notably Meḥmed Ṣāh Fenarī and Molla Güranī, or, equally likely, through Ḥācī Bayram Velī and one of his disciples such as Molla Zeyrek. Yet this likelihood is balanced, and perhaps even outweighed, by Bisṭāmī’s own writings, namely the contents of *Kitāb Durrat Tāj al-Rasā’il wa Ghurraṭ Minhaj al-Waṣā’il*, a record of people he met in his travels across Rumelia, Anatolia, Syria and Egypt in the years 1402 to 1442. This book has served modern researchers İhsan Fazlıođlu⁶⁹ and İlker Evrim Binbaş⁷⁰ as a template for reconstructing the hypothetical fifteenth-century intellectual network of the “Ihwān al-Ṣafā” – named after the medieval Basran intellectual circle – which centered on Bisṭāmī and Ḥusayn Akhlāṭī in Cairo. Yet out of the over forty individuals Bisṭāmī mentions as having shared words and ideas with during these forty years, individuals whose homes stretched from the Balkan frontier to Aleppo to Cairo – not one of them is a first-order acquaintance of any member of the Yazıcıođlu family. Though the Yazıcıođlus may have known Bisṭāmī, they were neither enough or nor interesting enough for Bisṭāmī to have discussed them. Thus to posit a direct connection of the Yazıcıođlus to the international Ihwān al-Ṣafā network is not yet tenable – provided that, as **Appendix I** will insist, the *Dürr-i Meknūn* was not written by Aḥmed Bīcān.

69 İhsan Fazlıođlu, “İlk Dönem Osmanlı ilim ve kültür hayatında İhwānu’s-Safā ve Abdurrahmān Bistāmī,” *Divan* 1, no. 2 (1996): 229–40.

70 İlker Evrim Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran: Sharaf Al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī and the Islamicate Republic of Letters* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

2. *Meḥmed's travels outside of Rum*: Certain nineteenth-century printed editions of the *Muḥammediyye* include a biographical notice in which it is claimed, “In pursuit of knowledge and art he went to the kingdoms of Iran and Transoxania and for the acquisition of wisdom and the comprehension of truths he traveled throughout the world [*geṣt ü güzār*] and shared food and conversation with the *shaykhs* of the era such as [Zaynu’d-dīn] Khvāfī and Zayn al-‘Arab and found what he sought.”⁷¹ Evliyā Çelebi also asserts that Meḥmed traveled to Bukhara and Balkh. The provenance of this claim is unclear, but may perhaps derive from the *Muḥammediyye*’s statement that “Whatever wonders there are in the world / I looked for them in the Arab and Persian lands and in Rum.” As this statement could be easily taken to mean that Meḥmed scanned a broad literature of works in various languages, and because in the Ottoman lands a Sufi’s travels to Iran, Khurasan, and Central Asia had already become a well-worn trope, the claim that Meḥmed traveled outside of Rum cannot be readily accepted.

3. *Aḥmed's Ḥājj*: The final pages of Aḥmed’s 1453 *Müntehā*, in the 1003/1594-95 manuscript considered the most complete by Ayşe Beyazıt, present the following narrative:

The reason for writing this book is this: One day I was coming from the Ka’ba and on the road I dreamed that I saw the Prophet. He said to me, ‘Struggle so that knowledge and wisdom and love may come from you.’ On account of these blessed words I assembled this book over three years. And in the year 857 [1453 CE] when Sultan Meḥmed b. Murād Han...conquered Istanbul, I completed this book on the twentieth day of Jumādā’l-Ūlā⁷²

This seems to say with very little ambiguity that Aḥmed Bīcān performed the Hajj to Mecca in the year 854 AH (1450 or 1451 CE), three years before the completion of the 1453 *Müntehā*. Yet

⁷¹ See, for instance, the lithographed *Kitab-i Muḥammediyye*, Istanbul: Bosnavî Hacı Muharrem Efendi’nin Taş Destgâhı, 1280 [1863], p.1a.

⁷² *KM857* p. 116b.

this not an easy claim to accept. The 1465 *Müntehā*, present in a manuscript that appears to be written much earlier than the 1453 *Müntehā*'s copy from 1003/1594-95, omits all mention of the pilgrimage in its closing paragraphs which are otherwise closely analogous. Additionally, Aḥmed dates the completion of two of his major works, the '*Acā'ibu'l-Maḥluqāt* and *Envārü'l-Āsiqīn*, to 1451; this is when he would have been on the Hajj and not at work on them. It is hard to reconcile these two facts with the 1453 *Müntehā*'s claim of a pilgrimage.

This story should be read alongside another at the beginning of his brother Meḥmed's earlier Arabic *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, the work upon which Aḥmed's *Müntehā* is based. Here Meḥmed says that "I saw the Prophet in all his good tidings in the year 853 [1449-1450]. He was sitting and in his hand was a book. He raised his head and looked at me and said to me, 'I shall teach you.' Then I found my heart illuminated with his light. He said to me, 'My heart is "the bezels" [*al-fuṣūṣ*], and these are elevated signs for the hearts of the righteous and trials for the hearts of the treacherous.'" ⁷³ The Prophet handed Meḥmed the book, which was the *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ* of Mu'ayyad al-dīn Jandī, an early commentary of Ibn 'Arabi's *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. The *Muḥammediyye*, written slightly earlier, discusses three similar dreams.

This raises the likelihood that Aḥmed – or later copyists – produced a formulaic vision of the Prophet's appearance for the younger brother in imitation of the vision of the older one, in order that the former's commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* may match the latter's. This does not settle the issue of the Hajj, but increases the likelihood that it is a later fabrication.

Conclusion

73 *ShF* p. 1b.

We have seen how an Anatolian scribe, entering into the service of a second-tier Thracian *gāzī* before 1372, was the first of a family of scholars who would continue working for Thracian notables until we lose sight of them after 1466. Four distinct social groups that had a hand in the Yazıcıoğlus' story:

I. An early generation of Thracian *gāzī* begs, represented by Qaşşāboğlu 'Alī, his superior Şaruca Beg who conquered part of western Thrace, and later by İskender b. Hācı Paşa who built a *namāzghāh* for soldiers. All three of these men connected to Gelibolu and Malkara in the years before the reign of Murād II, siding, with Emir Süleymān in the Ottoman Civil War, and were oriented towards the frontier.

II. The international Timurid intellectuals of Edirne and Bursa of the reign of Murād II. Like Meḥmed's teacher Ḥaydar Haravī, this cadre of primarily Ḥanafī scholars helped structure the early Ottoman scholastic hierarchy.

III. The Anatolian Sufi community of Hācı Bayram Velī of Ankara. Claiming spiritual heritage in the early Şafavī *ṭarīqa* of Ardabil, the Bayramī community united many Turcophone scholars and writers of north-central and northwest Anatolia; throughout the 1420s we must consider these individuals to be the Yazıcıoğlus' closest peers. There is also the mysterious Sufi figure of Derviş Bāyezīd who played some role in Meḥmed's early life.

IV. A later generation of Gelibolu notables represented by Aḥmed-i Hāṣṣ and Qaṣṣāboĝlu Maḥmūd. These two men were wealthy and powerful in Gelibolu during the 1430s, 40s, and 50s, and were, unlike the earlier *ġāzīs*, directly appointed by the Ottoman state: Maḥmūd was a prominent vizier for Murād II and Aḥmed a *subaşı* of Gelibolu. After both of their deaths around 1456, we know nothing of Aḥmed's associations.

The sequential association of Şāliḥ, Meḥmed, and Aḥmed with local *ġāzīs*, international intellectuals, Anatolian Sufis, and Ottoman officials teaches us that the three lived at arm's length from the Ottoman sultan and the center he represented. Instead, the Yazıcıoĝlus enjoyed the favor of four separate lords arrayed at a remove from Edirne, Bursa, and Istanbul – with this remove decreasing over time. This pattern of patronage from Qaṣṣāboĝlu 'Alī through Aḥmed-i Hāṣṣ was consistent and multi-generational. Though their location was peripheral, the Yazıcıoĝlus' local roots were deep and stable. And, despite their location at a distance from political and economic centrality, the Yazıcıoĝlus came into contact with two of the most vital groupings of scholars and writers of the region – the elite jurists of Edirne and the Bayramīyye of Ankara. That the Yazıcıoĝlu brothers, provincial men, came to be involved with both, and felt free to move from the Gelibolu region to Edirne to Ankara and back without special pedigree or official dispensation, suggests a degree of personal independence. It also shows us that the circles they moved in were not mutually exclusive, attesting to a kind of social fluidity. Of all of these groups, the brothers placed expressed their sincerest loyalties in Hācī Bayram and his Sufi community. The worldview of the Yazıcıoĝlus is to be understood in terms

of the way they were able to channel the rest of their intellectual and political activity into a Sufi framework.

CHAPTER 2: THE YAZICIOĞLUS AND THE TEXTUAL GENEALOGIES OF OTTOMAN SUNNISM

To an Ottoman of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was, after the Qur'an itself, arguably no book as holy as Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu's devotional poem, the *Muḥammediyye*. Evliyā Çelebi tells of the *Muḥammediyye*-reciters (*Muḥammediyye-ḥvān*) who sung the poem to audiences throughout Anatolia and Rumelia. The work's autograph, kept where it was written in Gelibolu, was considered to be a relic worthy of pilgrimage. Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu's younger brother Aḥmed Bīcān, too, gained a saintly reputation, since his *Envārü'l-Āşīqīn*, a Turkish prose rendition of the same basic text, was almost equally potent in the popular imagination. It was read and memorized, according to Evliyā, in primary schools across Anatolia.¹ In the seventeenth century it was studied by Muslims in Hungary,² and, in the nineteenth century, printed and read as far as Kazan and Kashgar. Both brothers, disciples of Ḥācı Bayram Velī in Ankara and formally educated in Edirne during the reign of Murād II, transcend their provincial upbringing by producing what would become a kind of international codification of populist Ottoman Sunnism.

Seemingly inseparable from these books' holiness was the notion that they emerged *ex nihilo* from a process of saintly inspiration and divine guidance. According to Evliyā Çelebi, the younger Aḥmed Bīcān used only three mythical and occult tomes to compose his work:

“[Bisṭāmī's] *Kitāb-i Cifr-i Camī'* and the wisdom of 'Ali and the *jafr* of Muḥyū'd-dīn [ibn]

al-'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ* and from them signs and secrets were revealed as the book

- 1 Evliya Çelebi, *Evliyā Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, ed. Orhan Şaik Gökyay et al. (Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1996)., Vol. II, p. 225.
- 2 Gábor Ágoston, “Muslim Cultural Enclaves in Hungary under Ottoman Rule,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 44 (1991): pp. 203–4.

Envārü'l-‘Āşiqîn...” The early commentator Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqı Bursevî, for his part, says that Meḥmed “dismissed himself from the people and performed self-discipline in his own cell in Gelibolu at the seaside, and in this state of isolation composed the *Muḥammediyye...*”³ These statements grow out of a kind of collective memory that is symptomatic of public remembrance of Ottoman pious history – its protagonists are sacralized into archetypal figures and their views fossilized into a timeless and universal wisdom. In fact, the reality of the Yazıcıoğlu’s intellectual heritage is much less dramatic. The Yazıcıoğlu used a conventional library of chiefly Arabic and Ḥanafî sources that reflect their own upbringings as fifteenth-century intellectuals of Gelibolu and, by extension, the intellectual horizons of the first generations of Ottoman scholars writing in Turkish.

Here I aim to understand the textual origins and intellectual pre-history of these texts that came to epitomize Ottoman popular piety. An account of the sources of the Yazıcıoğlu’s texts allows one to understand what was read and valued in Gelibolu during the 1440s and contribute some detail to our knowledge of the fifteenth-century scholarly culture in which the brothers lived – what, at this crucial period of Ottoman history, did a provincial scholar’s repertoire encompass? And, because of the works’ intense popularity, this account will also help teach us what in fact were the constituent components of the populist Sunnism that is so visible in the history of the Ottoman centuries from Qāḍizāde to Nursi. Ottoman historians have yet to perform a serious analysis of the materials out of which fifteenth-century piety – the immediate ancestor of the Sunnî consensus of the age of Kānūnî Süleymān and Ebū’s-Sü‘ūd – was fashioned. Nonwithstanding several excellent recent studies on the social and legal articulation of Ottoman

3 Âmil Çelebioğlu, ed., *Muḥammediye* (İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1996).

Sunnism in subsequent periods, its basic textual provenance,⁴ especially as it relates to piety on the vernacular register, remains largely unexplored. There are obvious reasons for this neglect. The Ottoman frontier polity, and especially a provincial center like Gelibolu, was during the fifteenth century still somewhat marginal in the academic landscape of the Sunnī religious sciences centered in Timurid and post-Timurid Iran and Central Asia and in Mamluk Egypt and Syria. Alongside the linguistic isolation of Anatolian Turkish pious writing, its relative marginality often discourages Arabists and general Islamicists. Conversely, the necessity of imagining early Turkish vernacular writing as, among other things, the adaptation of an Arabic corpus, has deterred specialized Ottomanists. As a result, we know something of *‘ulemā* hierarchies, and of the patterns of proliferation of Sufi *ṭarīqas*,⁵ and have a (very) general image of fifteenth-century political and mystical philosophy, but possess limited information on what was read and believed by ordinary Ottoman Muslims in newly conquered lands.

Rather than exploring the library and bibliography of the brothers Aḥmed and Meḥmed throughout their whole lives, this chapter will focus on the intellectual heritage of only their earliest and most enduring works, written between 1449 and 1451. The *Maghārib*, *Envār*, and *Muḥammediyye* were closely interrelated products of the same process of composition and design, conceived as translations, abridgments, and expansions of each other. We are lucky to possess a passage in Aḥmed’s *Envār* where he candidly describes how he and his brother worked together to write their masterpieces:

[My brother Meḥmed said] ‘O Aḥmed Bīcān, obeying your suggestion, I [Meḥmed] collected all

4 See, for instance, Derin Terzioğlu, “How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization”, *Turcica*, 44, 2012-2013, p. 301-388, and Guy Burak, *The Second Formation of Islamic Law: The Hanafi School in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

5 See Dina Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandis in the Ottoman World, 1450-1700* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); John Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire : The Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350-1750* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

of the world's laws and truths in one place. You should come too and translate this book, which is the *Maghāribu'z-zaman*, into the Turkish language, so that the people of our land may thus gain wisdom and make use of the light of knowledge.' I, this wretched one [Aḥmed], in compliance with his blessed words, completed this book called the *Envārü'l-Āşiqîn* in Gelibolu, finest of towns, abode of *jihād*. Now both my *Envārü'l-Āşiqîn* and my brother's book of verse, called the *Muḥammediyye*, emanate from the *Maghārib*. That book is in verse, and this book is in prose, and thus they were written in two ways – one was versified so that it may be sweet, and the other was written in prose so that it may be easily understood. And both styles are fine and respected by the righteous. It is as if the Encircling Ocean boiled up and overflowed on both sides and made visible whatever kinds of pearls there may be. If you seek the 'hidden pearl' [*dürr-i meknûn*], study the *Envārü'l-Āşiqîn*, and if, unhappy, you seek further satisfaction [*ecr-i ğayr-ı memnûn isterseñ*], study the *Muḥammediyye*. Praise God that we have compiled these two books, for we have suffered many frustrations on this path so that the people may say, 'Have mercy upon the Yazıcıoğlus!'⁶

There is no reason to doubt this story, for the three works truly do parallel each other in their source base, structure, and message. Aḥmed in this way makes it clear that with substantively identical but formally varied content these three works targeted three different audiences: those who preferred to read in Arabic, in the case of the *Maghārib*, those who seek the pleasure of a "sweet" Turkish poetic expression, in the case of the *Muḥammediyye*, and those Turkish-speakers who, in the *Envār*, would find a clear prose rendition of religious sciences that could be "understood".

The three books are difficult to classify in generic terms, so it is easier to say what they are not than what they are. They possess a certain relationship and a shared Ghazālian heritage with the 'aqā'id catechistic literature and its Anatolian manifestation, the so-called 'ilm-i hal texts, but they are not 'ilm-i ḥāls. The books are also not strictly about the history of the Muslim community, nor solely about the end of time, nor alone concerned with heaven or the cosmos. They are neither collections of *ḥadīth* nor of folk or Sufi argumentation. What alone can be said is that all three are works are texts of "catechistics and dogmatics" (to use the term favored in the

6 EA pp. 2b-3b.

recent study by Tobias Heinzelmann⁷), outlining in terms suitable for a general – though not utterly basic – understanding of the beliefs and practices necessary for the salvation of an ordinary Muslim.

The *Maghārib* and *Envār* are divided into five major sections. The first and shortest deals with the creation of the world, systematically describing the traditional cosmology of God's throne and footstool and the pen and tablet, which lie above the levels of heaven, hell, the celestial spheres; this is followed by a briefly-sketched geography of the earth. The second and longest section is a chronological account of twenty-six prophets, stretching Adam to Muḥammad and including ambiguous figures like Dhū al-Qarnayn and Luqmān. This section culminates in lengthy heroic biographies of Muḥammad and his righteous successors (in the *Muḥammediyye*, this section is the work's focus and eclipses some of what follows). The third section discusses angels. The fourth section, by far the most complex, unites a kind of primer or manual for a pious Muslim, outlining the requirements of prayer, fasting, charity, and so on, before ending with elaborate and detailed narrative of the events of the Day of Judgment. The final section is a geography of heaven that discusses its various gardens, terraces, trees, rivers, fine foods and beautiful beings. Thus, in a rough sense, this structure constitutes a chronology from creation to the end of time. It also has a protagonist: the righteous person who, created by God in his image, is represented by the sequence of prophets, obeys the Law they receive, and enjoys the benefits of heaven for eternity. The works create, out of a complex patchwork of source material, a clear cosmic narrative containing an assigned role for the believer within it.

As this variegated structure indicates, the *Envār*, *Maghārib*, and *Muḥammediyye* are

7 The process of use and readership of the Yazıcıoğlu's works is discussed in a recent monography by Tobias Heinzelmann, *Populäre religiöse Literatur und Buchkultur im Osmanischen Reich: eine Studie zur Nutzung der Werke der Brüder Yazıcıoğlu* (Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 2015).

highly synthetic and the two prose works especially have the aspect of a lively compilations rather than original argumentation. As such they yield easily to the kind of basic source criticism I will perform. The compiled source materials can be grouped into several primary categories. Some sources serve as narrative patterning texts – the templates from which the *Maghārib* and *Envār* derived the structure and content of their narrative sections. Another cluster of source-texts can be considered their reference materials: the *ḥadīth* collections and Qur’an commentaries that they used to give these narratives additional meaning and to provide the narrative with moral lessons – sources that were used time and time again. We can presume that they sat by the Yazıcıoğlu brothers’ side as they composed their works, and that their pages were heavily marked and dogeared. Indeed, most of the *Maghārib* and *Envār* is comprised of strung-together narrations from these sources. Thirdly, a small but important set of texts of philosophical and mystical argumentation were made use of – texts like al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* – that systematically present original discussions of certain topics. Finally, the Yazıcıoğlus employed many other miscellaneous texts, ranging from legal theory (*fiqh*) and legal rulings (*fetāvā*) to manuals of preaching (*va‘z*). These texts may not have been always present at the time of composition but furnished important quotations and passages.

With their components so easily seen, it becomes impossible to agree with the testimonies of Evliyā and Bursevī, because the Yazıcıoğlu brothers’ writings draw almost exclusively from a moderately sized and hyper-canonical set of Arabic *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, and *fiqh* writing, a library that uncomplicatedly reflects the brothers’ own educations received from of the ‘*ulemā* of Edirne and the urban Sufi community of Ḥācı Bayram Velī of Ankara. The horizons of these provincial intellectuals extended to the legal and exegetical works of a certain Ḥanafī

canon, and not far beyond. Though one has a right to be skeptical of Meḥmed’s claim that he “studied 3,999 books,”⁸ the Yazıcıoğlu wrote using the library of competent, if unexceptional *ḥadīth* and Qur’an scholars, which I will now outline.

I. Narrative Texts

a. *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā*

The Yazıcıoğlu’s writings, as a subsequent chapter will discuss, are not true *‘ilm-i ḥāls*, but rather slightly more intermediate textbooks with a focus not on praxis but on creed, especially dogmatics embodied in narrative. One article of belief they intended to communicate is faith in sequential prophetic dispensations culminating in the moment of Muḥammad’s revelation. The first half of the *Envār* and *Maghārib*, encompassing its first two chapters on creation and the prophets, presents an episodic narrative from the beginning of time until the deaths of Muḥammad and the first generation of his Companions. This is not a history of kings and nations but of mankind’s sequential covenants with God enacted in the lives of the pre-Islamic prophets, and until the birth of Muḥammad this narrative is based upon a single exclusive source: the literary genre of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā*, or stories of the prophets. Together the *qiṣaṣ* stories draw from the body of Islamicized Biblical apocrypha and legend that was retrospectively classified as *isrā’īliyyāt*, or “Israelite lore”. The path by which this lore enters Islamic *ḥadīth* tends to pass through two figures: Ka’b al-Aḥbār and Wahb ibn Munabbih, the former a learned Jewish convert from Yemen and the latter a Yemeni Persian familiar with Judaic lore. Because of these alleged origins in the words of these two early converts who had been educated in Jewish learned environments, *isrā’īliyyāt* had long been viewed suspiciously by

8 MZ p. 4

ḥadīth-oriented Muslims.⁹ Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal condemned their use by implying that they have no *asl*, or revealed basis, and Ibn Ṭaymiyya, centuries hence, levied a similar charge. In response to these objections, a *ḥadīth* was often cited which claimed that the Prophet said, “Narrate [traditions] concerning the Children of Israel and there is nothing objectionable [in that].”

The Yazıcıoğlus have no qualms in using *qışaş* that proceed from the *isrā’īliyyāt* narrations of Ka‘b al-Aḥbār and Wahb ibn Munabbih. This is one clue that the brothers made use of a particularly populist compilation of prophet stories, and did not draw from, for example, Ibn Kathīr’s very orthodox version of the prophet stories, *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, which studiously avoids all dubious *isrā’īliyyāt* narrations. To determine which of the remaining major *qışaş* compilations was the one used by the Yazıcıoğlus requires an examination of a particular story. In the Yazıcıoğlus’ account, the story of Şāliḥ, a Qur’anic prophet that is not shared by Judaic or Christian tradition, rests on the authority of Ka‘b al-Aḥbār. He recounts that the people of Thamūd asked Şāliḥ to produce, out of a certain stone, “a she-camel... whose body is of gold and feet of silver and head of emerald and eyes of ruby and tail of coral and a hump that is a dome of pearl, and all adorned with square rubies of various kinds. If you bring a camel of this description out of this stone, we will believe you.” Şāliḥ, perplexed, was relieved when Gabriel came and informed him that God had already placed such a camel inside that particular stone forty years earlier, on the day of Şāliḥ’s birth. Şāliḥ then prayed and, as “the day of Bayram began”, the stone moved and a majestic she-camel came out of it, made out of precious stone “seven hundred cubits from nose to tail, and five hundred between its hooves.” Before the

9 Ahmad ibn Hanbal condemned their use by implying that they have no *asl*, or revealed basis, and Ibn Ṭaymiyya, centuries hence, levied a similar charge. In response to these objections, a *ḥadīth* was often cited which claimed that the Prophet said, “Narrate [traditions] concerning the Children of Israel and there is nothing objectionable [in that].” M. J. Kister, “*Haddithu ‘an Bani Isra’ila wa-Ia haraja: A Study of an Early Tradition,*” *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972).

wonder-struck populace the camel loudly testified, “There is no God but God, and Ṣāliḥ is his messenger!” The people of Thamūd then came to faith, but soon thereafter they turned away from it and killed the camel. Ṣāliḥ cursed them and called for their punishment in hellfire: “The first day your faces will turn yellow, and on the second they will turn red, and on the third day they will turn black...” God called for Gabriel to destroy them, saying “Raise up the fires of hell and scatter them upon it.” Gabriel destroyed Thamūd “with his shouts”, and Ṣāliḥ, having lost his tribe but retained his faith, retired to Mecca, where he died.

When one compares this account to a medieval *qiṣaṣ* collection in wide circulation across the Islamic world in the fifteenth century, the *Arāʾis al-Majālis fī Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā* by Abū Ishāq Aḥmad al-Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1036), one encounters huge differences.¹⁰ al-Thaʿlabī mentions dozens of proper names for various members of the tribes of Thamūd, none of which appear in the Yazıcıoğlu’s account. A few pages, rather than a few sentences, are given over to a description of the torments God then inflicts upon the tribe. There are also many details found in Yazıcıoğlu but absent from al-Thaʿlabī. Most strikingly, the image of the giant bejeweled camel that confronts the reader so forcefully in the Yazıcıoğlu’s version is absent from al-Thaʿlabī. Nor does Ṣāliḥ’s curse appear anywhere in the *Arāʾis*.

A side-by-side comparison shows that of the many *qiṣaṣ* produced from *israʾiliyyāt* materials between the eighth and fourteenth centuries, the particular one the Yazıcıoğlu have chosen is an especially populist and vivid *qiṣaṣuʾl-anbiyā* by one al-Kisāʾī, composed shortly before 1200.¹¹ One can clearly observe a relationship with the Yazıcıoğlu’s stories at fine-grained textual level. For example, while Ahmed Bīcān writes, “the tribe of Thamūd inhabited

10 William M. Brinner, “*Arāʾis al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā*” or “Lives of the prophets” (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

11 Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Kisāʾī, *The Tales of the Prophets of Al-Kisāʾī*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978).

(‘*imāret*) the earth, to the extent that they became ten tribes. And each tribe was 70,000 people,” al-Kisā’ī writes that “the tribe of Thamūd inhabited (*ammarat*) of the earth and became ten tribes, and each tribe was comprised of ten thousand men.”¹² Excusing the discrepancy in the size of the ten tribes, the passages are identical. al-Kisā’ī’s camel is likewise marvelous: “In her eyes were rays of light, on her were reins of pearl; from her hump to the tip of her tail was seven hundred cubits.” Yet the Yazıcıoğlu’s version is heavily abridged. The brothers leave out many of the original’s details, those that were perhaps superfluous to the story, while preserving the original’s colorful passages, such as Şālih’s prediction that the faces of Thamūd’s tribesmen “turned red; and the morning after their faces were black as coal.”

The nature of the dependence on al-Kisā’ī is demonstrated not only in the sequence of prophet stories, but also in both works’ introductory section on the scope of creation. Compare, for instance, al-Kisā’ī’s description of the seven parallel planets God created besides our own, with the one written by Aḥmed Yazıcıoğlu:

al-Kisa’i ¹³	Yazıcıoğlu
The first is called Ramaka, beneath which is the Barren Wind, which can be bridled by no fewer than seventy thousand angels. With this wind God destroyed the people of ‘Ād. The inhabitants of Ramaka are a nation called Muwashshim, upon whom is everlasting torment and retribution.	The first one’s name is Demakad, and there is a barren wind beneath it. God destroyed the tribe of ‘Ād with this wind. There is a tribe in it, its name is Tamis, and some of them eat each other.
The second earth is called Khalada, wherein are the implements of torture for the inhabitants of Hell. There dwells a nation called Tamis, whose food is their own flesh and whose drink is their own blood.	The name of the second world is Ḥalada, and to punish its unbelievers there are various implements there. And there is one tribe there named Buşim, and there is reward and punishment for them.

¹² Thackston, al-Kisā’ī, *The Tales of the Prophets of Al-Kisā’ī*, p. 117.

¹³ The translations of al-Kisā’ī come from Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Kisā’ī, *The Tales of the Prophets of Al-Kisā’ī*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978).

<p>The third earth is called ‘Arqa, wherein dwell mulelike eagles with spearlike tails. On each tail are three hundred and sixty poisonous tails. On each tail are three hundred and sixty poisonous quills. Were even one quill placed on the face of the earth the entire universe would pass away.</p>	<p>The name of the third world is ‘Arq, and there are scorpions there like mules that bite with their tails. If one of the people of this world were to be bitten, the whole world would perish.</p>
<p>The fourth earth is called Ḥaraba, wherein dwell the snakes of Hell, which are as large as mountains... The inhabitants of this earth are a nation called Jilla, and they have no eyes, hands or feet but have wings like bats and die only of old age.</p>	<p>The fourth world’s name is is Cerebe, and there are snakes there, and there is a people there named Cülhüm. They have wings and fly, but have no eyes.</p>
<p>The fifth earth is called Maltham, wherein stones of brimstone hang around the necks of infidels...The inhabitants are a nation called Halja, who are numerous and who eat each other.</p>	<p>The fifth world is called Mülşe, and for the heathens there there is a mountain of brimstone. There is a people there, given the name Mahutat. They eat each other.</p>
<p>The sixth earth is called Sijjīn. Here are the registers of the people of Hell, and their works are vile... Herein dwells a nation called Qatat, who are shaped like birds and worship God sincerely.</p>	<p>The sixth world is named Siccīn. The deeds of the people of Hell are recorded there. There is a people given the name of Qatat, who conduct worship, taking the form of a bird.</p>
<p>The seventh earth is called ‘Ajiba and is the habitation of Iblis. There dwells a nation called Khasum... It is they who will be given dominion over God and Magog, who will be destroyed by them.</p>	<p>The seventh world’s name is ‘Aj’ba. There is a tribe there named Cüşüm. In the end times the people of Gog and Magog will come out of there, and subsequently another tribe will come out from under the earth. Gog and Magog will perish and then Satan will be imprisoned.</p>

These passages are substantively identical. This should suffice to establish Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu’s close dependence upon al-Kisā’ī’s work. This conclusion, however, does not completely solve the issue of provenance, because al-Kisā’ī’s *qiṣaṣ* is itself a highly variable work. The variability of the *qiṣaṣ* alongside the anonymity of the mysterious al-Kisā’ī leads some modern scholars to believe that, rather than being the work of a single man, it “reflects Arabic folk literature in the 12th and 13th centuries.”¹⁴ Distortions such as Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu’s reduction of the population of the tribe of Thamūd from al-Kisā’ī’s ten tribes of one hundred thousand to ten tribes of seventy thousand, is certainly the kind of distortion that may occur across chains of oral transmission.

14 Brinner, “*Arā’is al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā*” or “*Lives of the prophets.*”

b. *Sīra sources*

The *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā* sequence of the *Envār* and *Maghārib* ends with the ascent of Jesus to heaven. After some brief comments on the esoteric significance of each prophet’s mission that are indebted to Ibn ‘Arabī’s in *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (a foretaste of both Mehmed and Ahmed’s commentaries on that work), the Yazıciöğlus turn to the life of the Prophet Muḥammad and the story of the first Muslims. This section differs from the previous by its habit of not citing sources at all. Instead, they pull the narrative away from an academic style, recasting it as a heroic epic. Far from this being a new invention, this is inherited from the well-known genre of *sīrat al-nabīy*, a biography of the Prophet and the Companions. This genre is an outgrowth of early *maghāzī* (“battles”) texts on the campaigns of Muḥammad and his successors. Once refashioned into biography and supplemented by stories from contemporaries and even the Qur’an, the *maghāzī* became *sīra*, the life of Muḥammad, whose classic expression was the *Sīrat al-Nabīy* by Ibn Ishāq, preserved for posterity in the version of Ibn Hishām (d. 833). From the *sīra* of Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām a diverse array of derivative texts grew, ranging from commentaries on the *sīra*, to tracts on the “signs of prophethood” (*dalā’il al-nubūwwa*), that is to say, prophetic miracles.¹⁵ Turkish adaptations of the life of Muḥammad had already been produced by the Yazıciöğlus’ time. The *Mevlīd* of Süleymān Çelebi, written in 1409, which will be discussed later in this study, is perhaps the most familiar *sīra* narrative in Turkish vernacular, but there is an earlier example.¹⁶ The first known Turkish life of Muḥammad was produced by Mustafa

15 Particularly famous compilations include the *Maghazi* of al-Zajjaj (d. 923), the *Ṣifat al-Nabīy* of Muḥammad al-Busti (d. 965), the *Sīra* of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) and the *al-Durar fī ikhtisari al-maghāzī wa al-siyar* of ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (d.1071). See M. J. Kister, “The Sīrah Literature,” in *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*. (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 352–67.

16 Süleymān Çelebi, *Mevlid*, ed. Neclâ Pekolcay (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1993).

Ḍarīr, a writer from Erzurum who wrote in Turkish while under the employ of the Mamluk Sultan Barqūq in Cairo. Ḍarīr’s *Sīretü’n-nebiy*, written around 790/1388, contributed part of the text of the *Mevlīd*.¹⁷ When the Yazıcıoğlus used *sīra* elements they drew from a genre that was alive in Turkish.

In any case, it is a very mixed assortment of *sīra*-type stories that enlivens the Yazıcıoğlus’ version. The *Envār/Maghārib*, and *Muḥammediyye* do not enter the conventional *sīra* narrative from the beginning. Rather, Yazıcıoğlu skips the first part of Ibn Hishām’s story, which describes the history of Mecca and the Quraysh, as well as the discussion of Muḥammad’s early life. We learn nothing of Muḥammad’s birth as the *sīra* describes it, or of his childhood and his wetnurse Amina, or of marriage to Khadīja. In place of the mass of details narrated and carefully sourced by Ibn Hishām, the Yazıcıoğlus transmit tales a different and scattered provenance. The following passage will suffice to indicate both the general flavor of this section, and reveal some of its antecedents:

When God’s beloved [*ḥabībi’llāh*] came into the world, the people of the seven levels of heaven all came to see him... That day the domes of a thousand churches fell to the ground, and the arch of King Khusraw [*Kisrā padiṣāh tāqı*] cracked and was destroyed and Lake Sāwa dried up and the flames of the fire-worshipping Magi were extinguished. [Muḥammad] cast no shadow because from his head to his feet he was light – certainly light casts no shadow. Above his head was a fragment of a cloud. Wherever he would walk, it would go with him. Just as he could see what was before his eyes, in the same manner he could see what was behind him. At the same time he could see the east and the west. And just as his ears can hear while awake, his ears could hear while he was asleep. And the miracle of his nose was as follows: when Gabriel would come to give him [divine] inspiration, he could perceive a scent from heaven. His teeth shone light that illuminated paths at night. If one were to lose something it could be found with this light. On his back was the mark of prophethood, the size of a dove’s egg. When he sweats his sweat has the odor of rosewater and musk... One day the moon descended from the sky and rocked his cradle.¹⁸

17 Mustafa Erkan, “Mustafa Darir,” *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı); Yorgo Dedes, “Süleymān Çelebi’s Mevlid: Text, Performance, and Muslim-Christian Dialogue,” in *Şinasi Tekin’in anısına: Uygurlardan Osmanlıya* (İstanbul: Simurg, 2005), pp. 305–49.

18 EA p. 166b-167a.

These details each have diverse origins. The story of the itinerant cloud comes directly from Ibn Hishām's *sīra* where it is attributed to the monk Bahīra.¹⁹ The egg-sized mark of prophethood appears in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*,²⁰ as does the prophet's ability to see what is behind him. Narrations on the pleasant smell of the prophet's sweat appear in *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*.²¹ The light from Muḥammad's teeth is described in al-Tirmidhi's *Shamā'il* and also in the *dalā'il al-nubūwwa* genre. Each no doubt reached the Yazıcıoğlus through intermediary texts, some of which will be discussed below. The essential *sīra* story is in this manner both condensed and embellished.

II. *Ḥadīth* and *Tafsīr* Sources

After this Turkish redaction of al-Kisa'i's *qışaṣ* and the synthetic life of Muḥammad that follows, the Yazıcıoğlus turn away from narrative. Upon the conclusion of the Prophet's mission and the deaths of the first generation of Companions the Yazıcıoğlus abandon narrative storytelling for good and give over the second half of the *Maghārib* and *Envār* to a series of loosely-linked conversations on angels, on salvation, on orthodox praxis, on Resurrection, and on the rewards of heaven and the torments of hell. The structure of all of these discussions is largely the same: they are built out of brief *ḥadīth* narrations and short pieces of Qur'anic exegesis each connected by a certain loose logic to the ostensible subject matter of the chapter. It is in these more disorganized sections that they incorporate the most particular and personal mix of source-texts, using writings that most characteristically conform to local scholarly fashions.

Here I hope to highlight the most important of the Yazıcıoğlus' *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr* sources, the

19 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *The life of Muḥammad*, trans. A Guillaume (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 80.

20 Muslim Ibn al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ al-Quṣayrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Liechtenstein: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000), XXX 5789, IV p. 856.

21 Muḥammad ibn Ismā'il, *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Liechtenstein: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000). IV, 6.

ones that must have accompanied the scholars throughout their compositional process.

c. *al-Baghawī's ḥadīth and tafsīr*

Of these, the most frequently referenced source in the *Maghārib* and *Envār* is one described as “*tefsīr-i Baḡevī*”, which can only be the *tafsīr* and *Maṣābīḥ al-Sunna* by the traditionist Abū Muḥammad al-Baghawī (d. 1117 or 1122), a Shāfi‘ī of Marv. Specifically, citations of al-Baghawī most likely refer to one of the commentaries and extensions of al-Baghawī’s work, which were much more widely read than was the work itself. We have already encountered, in the previous chapter, the author of one such text: Zayn al-‘Arab al-Nakhchivānī al-Miṣri (fl. 1360), the name mentioned in the *Muḥammediyye* as “my teacher” of “inner and outer knowledge”. Zayn apparently influenced Meḥmed through his own well-read *Maṣābīḥ* commentary, his *Sharḥ Maṣābīḥ al-Sunna*, a capacious volume of which many copies still survive; Kātib Çelebi writes that this extant *Sharḥ* is only one of three written by Zayn, each for a different audience. Zayn’s *Sharḥ Maṣābīḥ al-Sunna* was widely read until at least 1565, when it appeared in a *medrese* syllabus endorsed by Sultan Süleymān.²² For the Yazıcıoğlu, the body of al-Baghawī’s corpus, read through Zayn’s commentary, functioned as a basic framework for exegesis and *ḥadīth* interpretation.

Zayn’s *Sharḥ Maṣābīḥ* was only one of a long tradition of works based upon al-Baghawī’s *Maṣābīḥ*. Walī al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tabrīzī’s *Mishkat al-Maṣābīḥ*, written contemporaneously with Zayn’s work, was among the most widely-copied works of *ḥadīth* commentary in the Sunnī world after the fourteenth century. A specific and common feature of

22 Shahab Ahmed and Nenad Filipovic, “The Sultan’s Syllabus: A Curriculum for the Ottoman Imperial Medreses Prescribed in a Fermān of Qānūnī Süleymān, Dated 973 (1565),” *Studia Islamica*, no. 98/99 (January 1, 2004): 183–218.

works such as the *Mishkat* and *Sharḥ Maṣābīḥ* coming from the al-Baghawī tradition is that they each seem to have written for the use of the layman, synthesizing a kind of simplified consensus out of the mass of *ḥadīth* sciences. Unlike other, similar works, the *Maṣābīḥ* and its commentaries omit long *isnāds* for the traditions they transmit, and, in the service of readability, only discuss a subset of them that is deemed *ṣaḥīḥ* (sound) or *ḥasan* (good). It seems, then, that Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu's own introduction to religious sciences was provided by Zayn's commentary on the *Maṣābīḥ*, a comprehensive but nevertheless simplified and readable summary of uncontroversial *ḥadīth* narrations.

d. *al-Şamarqandī's tafsīr*

Another common *tafsīr* quoted in the *Maghārib* and *Envār* is the *tafsīr* of the Ḥanafī scholar Abū-Layth al-Şamarqandī (d. 373/983 or 393/1002-3). It too enjoys a long commentary tradition, though it is less clear in this case as to which particular commentary the Yazıcıoğlu were using, citing him only with the phrase "it is transmitted by Abū-Layth". Yet there were many possible options. Not far the time and place of the Yazıcıoğlu's writing, the famous Damascene historian Shihāb al-Dīn ibn 'Arabshāh (791/1392-854/1450) translated al-Şamarqandī's *tafsīr* into Turkish at request of Sultan Meḥmed I in Edirne and produced a Turkish commentary of it; upon the sultan's death in 1420 he returned to Syria and then Egypt, where he served the Mamluks and finished his major history.²³ Ibn 'Arabshāh's edition was not the only Turkish translation of al-Şamarqandī circulating in Ottoman lands at the time of the Yazıcıoğlu's writing. One Mūsā İznīqī (d. 838/1438), a Sufi who, like Yazıcı Şālīḥ and his sons,

23 Robert McChesney, "A Note on the Life and Works of Ibn 'Arabshah," in *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East: Studies in Honor of John E. Woods*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer, Sholeh Quinn, and Ernest Tucker (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), p. 226.

worked for various Rumelian and Anatolian begs during the reigns of Çelebi Meḥmed and Murad II, completed a Turkish translation of al-Şamarqandī's *tafsīr* as well.²⁴ This work is often confused with another Turkish *tafsīr* of al-Şamarqandī, that of Aḥmed-i Dā'ī, a famous poet of a similar sociological profile who died in Bursan the 1420's.²⁵ Aḥmed-i Dā'ī's record of service was complex, having been employed to write in many different genres by the beys of Germiyan, by Emir Süleymān, by his victorious brother Çelebi Meḥmed, by the grand vizier Ḥalīl Paşa, and finally by Murād II. His Turkish translation of the *tafsīr*, written for the Ottoman warlord Umur b. Demirtaş, was, however, translated from a Persian edition rather than from the Arabic original.

What the above makes clear is that the early and mid-fifteenth century Ottoman lands, as the Yazıcioğlus were writing, witnessed a kind of golden age for the production of commentaries and translation on the *tafsīr* of al-Şamarqandī.²⁶

e. *Al-Zamakhsharī's Kashshāf*

Only slightly less prominent *tafsīr* in the *Envār* and *Maghārib* is the famous *al-Kashshāf* of the Ḥanafī scholar Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1144). The strikingly successful *Kashshāf* reigned as a pre-eminent Qur'anic exegesis for centuries, even despite its slightly controversial reputation. It was believed by scholars such as Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī and

24 Yaşaroğlu, M. Kamil. "Mûsâ İznikî". *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı). Vol. 31, pp. 218-219

25 For details on Da'ī, see İsmail Hikmet Ertaylan, *Aḥmed-i Dâ'î: hayatı ve eserleri* (İstanbul: Üçler Basımevi, 1952).

26 Yet while patronage of al-Şamarqandī translations came to a halt, the work's relevance never ceased: the 16th-century Ottoman reformist scholar Meḥmed Birgivi not only relied heavily upon al-Şamarqandī's *tafsīr* for the composition of his *al-Tariqa al-Muhammediyya*, but also upon other works by Abū-Layth, especially the paraenetic *Bustan al-'arifin* and *Tanbih al-ghafilin*, which were so extensively that they may be considered Birgivi's "source of inspiration and model". See Katharina Anna Ivanyi, "Virtue, Piety, and the Law: A Study of Birgivi Meḥmed Efendi's *Al-Tariqa Al-Muhammediyya*" (Dissertation, Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Princeton University, 2012).

Abū al-Fidā that “Mu‘tazilite doctrine appears clearly within it,” with regard to the polarizing issues such as the createdness of the Qur’an.²⁷ However, as Andrew Lane has persuasively argued, it is unclear how the *Kashshāf* acquired its Mu‘tazili reputation, as this is not supported by the text itself. Al-Zamakhsharī’s *Kashshāf*, rather, is a “traditional” *tafsīr* with limited theological argumentation, largely composed of philologically-oriented exegetical passages supplemented by eclectic set of *ḥadīth*. Compared to other *tafsīrs* it is rather short, condensed into two volumes in order to serve as madrasa instruction.

It is not difficult to guess how the Yazıcıoğlu brothers accessed the *Kashshāf* of al-Zamakhsharī, as a local tradition of Anatolian commentaries emerged in the wake of *Anwār al-Tanzīl*, Qādī al-Bayḍāwī’s (d. 685/1286) popularizing (and Shāfi‘ī) abridgment of *al-Kashshāf*. Specifically, in the fourteenth century a gloss on *al-Kashshāf* was written by Cemālu’d-dīn Muḥammed al-Aqsarayī (d. 791/1388-89), a native of the *beglik* of Karaman centered at Konya.²⁸ Aqsarayī gained wide fame in his lifetime, even traveling to Cairo and befriending Sayyid Sharīf Jurjānī, a meeting that presaged the enduring connection between Khurasani schools and Ottoman ones. His legacy was long-lasting: the most famous of his own students was Molla Şemsü’d-dīn Fenarī, the man described as the founder of the Ottoman ‘*ulemā* and probably an acquaintance of the brothers, while his own great-grandson Çelebi Ḥalīfe was to found the Cemālī branch of the Ḥalvetī Sufi order, one of the region’s most vital brotherhoods.

Scholarship on *al-Kashshāf* reached the Yazıcıoğlus another way as well – straight from Iran and Transoxania. Sayyid Sharīf Jurjānī (d. 816/1413) of Samarqand produced a commentary

27 For an excellent overview of al-Zamakhsharī and his thought, see Andrew J Lane, *A Traditional Mu‘tazilite Qur’an Commentary: The Kashshāf of Jār Allāh Al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144)* (Boston; Leiden: Brill, 2006), His Mu‘tazilism is disputed on p. xxi.

28 Mustafa Öz, “Cemaleddin Akarayi”, *DİA2*, vol. 2 pp. 308-309. Mélikoff, I. "Ḍjamāl al-Dīn Aqsarayī." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*.

himself, which did not prove to be as popular as the *Kashshāf* commentary written by Jurjānī's rival in Timur's court, the renowned Sa'd al-Dīn Taftazānī, whose *Hāshiya al-Kashshāf* was perhaps the most widely-copied of all *Kashshāf* commentaries within the Ottoman realms, and the one cited often by the Yazıcıoğlu brothers. These works of scholarship were brought to Anatolia by migrant students of Taftazānī and Jurjānī in the early and mid-fifteenth century, who, under the leadership of Aqsarayī's student Molla Fenarī, comprised the faculty of the first elite Ottoman *medreses* of Bursa and Edirne. It is most significant, for the purposes of this study, that one of these migrant students of Taftazānī was Ḥaydar Haravī, suggested in the previous chapter as the teacher of Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu in Edirne: he himself authored a commentary upon Taftazānī's *Hāshiya*. Fenarī, too, produced his own *Ta'līq 'alā Awā'il al-Kashshāf*, as did Musannifek, the Persian scholar favored by Meḥmed II who served as teacher and jurisconsult in Istanbul. Molla Ḥüsrev, an important Ottoman *qaḍī*-*asker*, *müderriş*, and finally *şeyḫü'l-islām* during the same period wrote a gloss on al-Bayḍāwī's commentary on *al-Kashshāf*. It is through the Yazıcıoğlus' own extensive use of al-Zamakhsharī, as well as their citations of Taftazānī's *Hāshiya*, that we are able to see most clearly their involvement in the international intellectual network of led by the Ḥanafī scholars of Timurid Khurasan.²⁹ All three of these *tafsīrs* indicate the Yazıcıoğlu brothers' genuine – if unadventurous – contemporaneity, their conformity with the trends of their time and place.³⁰

29 The outline and history of the early Ottoman intellectual hierarchy is discussed in a recent dissertation by Abdurrahman Atçıl, "The Formation of the Ottoman Learned Class" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2010), as well as in the classic works by Ismail Hakki Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı devletinin ilmiye teşkilâtı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1965), and Richard Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul: A Study in the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy* (London: Ithaca Press, 1986). All of these rely heavily upon the Ottoman biographical dictionary tradition headed by Taşköprüzade's *al-Shaqā'iq al-Nu'māniyya*.

30 For comments on the continuing relevance of *al-Kashshāf* and of *tafsīr* writing in the Ottoman system, see Susan Gunasti, "Political Patronage and the Writing of Qur'an Commentaries among the Ottoman Turks," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 24, no. 3 (September 1, 2013): 335–57.

f. *al-Rāzī's Tafsīr al-Kabīr*

Though not as frequently cited as the above three, the *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* of the twelfth-century Shāfi'ī scholar Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī is an important source for the Yazıcıoğlu brothers. The *Mafātīḥ*, known to the Yazıcıoğlus by its common name of *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, is a massive work of Ash'arī exegesis with a strong influence in many realms from *kalam* disputation to the theology of Ibn Sīnā. It apparently contains enough departures from conventional orthodoxy – as in his insistence that God's actions are unmotivated – to stimulate the criticism of Ibn Ṭaymiyya, who connected him with Mu'tazilism, just as he did al-Zamakhsharī. Nevertheless he fell squarely into the post-Ghazālī Ash'arī mainstream of *tafsīr* argumentation. In fact, the abovementioned Cemālu'd-dīn Muḥammed al-Aqṣarayī claims personal ancestry from al-Rāzī. The Yazıcıoğlus use the *Mafātīḥ* chiefly as a reference for clarifying terminology.

g. *al-Saghānī's Mashāriq al-Anwār*

The Yazıcıoğlus say that “God created the earth and mountains on Sunday, the trees on Monday, the skies on Tuesday, the Light on Wednesday, animals on Thursday, and Adam at mid-afternoon on Friday”, and cite *al-Mashāriq al-Anwār* by Raḍīy al-Dīn Ḥasan al-Saghānī (d. 1252) as the basis for this claim. Al-Saghānī, in his lifetime primarily a scholar of Arabic linguistics, is famous for being one of the first major authors of a *ḥadīth* work from the Indian subcontinent.³¹ The *Mashāriq* is chiefly noted for its attempted synthesis of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's two *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth* collections, and was immediately copied far beyond India. In patterns

31 Baalbaki, Ramzi, “al-Ṣaghānī”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs.

of textual transmission, seems to move alongside al-Baghawī's *Maṣābīḥ*: in the late sixteenth century the Ottoman scholar Bergamalī İbrāhīm used the *Maṣābīḥ al-Sunna* as the basis of his super-commentary on another *Mashāriq* commentary.³²

This source would not be considered a major source worth mentioning except for the fact that Kātib Çelebi writes that Meḥmed's *Maghārib* is "based on the *Mashāriq* of Saghānī." This claim merits criticism, since the *aḥādīth* of al-Saghānī's text, as befits the work of a lexicographer, are listed simply according to the word that begins them and thus its organizational scheme it cannot be compared to Aḥmed or Meḥmed Yazıçioğlu's.³³ This does not mean that the Yazıçioğlu made no use of the work, however; in fact, considering al-Saghānī's practice of conveniently organizing the major *aḥādīth* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim in two slim and handy volumes, *al-Mashāriq* is a good candidate for an intermediate text between the Yazıçioğlu and these two basic collections. Many of the brothers' unattributed narratives that are found in Bukhārī and Muslim – including parts of description of the Prophet discussed above – may proceed from al-Saghānī's *al-Mashāriq*.

h. Fetvā collections

Certain short but important passages in the Yazıçioğlu's works are indebted to readings of legal argumentation (*fiqh*) and collections of legal opinions (*fetāvā*). Their interest is in three specific works: the *Fatāwā* of Fakhru'd-in Hasan Qāḍīkhān (d. 1196), *al-Fatāwā al-Zāhiriyya* of Muḥammad al-Ḥanafī al-Bukhārī, and a work entitled the *Jawāhir al-Fiqh*, probably the book of that name by Niẓām al-Dīn al-Marghinānī. Of the three, Qāḍīkhān's is the most well-known and

32 Yurdağūr, Metin. "Bergamalī İbrahim". *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*. Vol. 5, pp. 495-496.

33 al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad Şaghānī, *Mashāriq al-anwār* (Dersaadet [Istanbul]: Matbaa-yı Reşadiye, 1911).

would endure as a basic set of legal precedents in the later Ottoman period. As volumes of Ḥanafī legal scholarship, these works probably reached the Yazıcıoğlus circulating alongside the likewise Ḥanafī al-Zamakhsharī and al-Şamarqandī. These citations are concentrated in the fourth chapter on the Day of Resurrection that comprises a highly abbreviated *fetvā* rulings on the subject of who is a believer and unbeliever, taking forms such as “He who scorns the Qur’an, who belittles it and who places his feet above the Scripture, is an unbeliever,” or “He who knows the direction of the *qibla* but turns to pray in another direction is an unbeliever,” or “He who says that a mosque is the same as a wine-house, and that to disbelieve is the same as to believe, is an unbeliever.” The relevance of these abbreviated *fetāvā* to the broader question of confessional-building will be returned to and dealt with at length in **Chapter 4** of this study.

III. Miscellaneous Sources

Many other sources remain unidentified or were used for only one or two direct quotations and never appear again. Though the influence of al-Ghazālī runs deep, his name is only mentioned a handful of times; the same can also be said of the writings of Ibn al-‘Arabī and Naşīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (although, in the case of Ibn al-‘Arabī, this silence may be explained by the fact that the Yazıcıoğlus reserved separate works, most importantly, Ahmed’s *Kitābü’l-Müntehā*, for the interpretation of that mystic’s thought). The *Envār* and *Maghārib* are intruded upon at many points by aphoristic digressions with a popular flavor. Pious exhortations, often numbered or classified as “sacred words” (*qudsī kelīmeler*) exalt the virtues of poverty and self-abnegation and call for a constant attention to God’s strict demands. As no names of other works or writers accompany them, it is next to impossible to ascertain the sources of all of these anecdotes. One

presumes that some of them were part of the body of orally-transmitted knowledge taught by Ḥācī Bayram Velī or other Sufi figures in the Yazıciöğlus' environment. Others may be original paraphrases of Qur'anic text or *ḥadīth* narrations.

The Yazıciöğlus are also familiar with a select few sources of a more argumentative and belles-lettristic nature. The *Mahabbatnāme* of Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, a section of his famous *Iḥyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (apparently read in Persian, to judge by the use of the above Persian title), furnishes an important quotation near the beginning of *Envārü'l-Āşiqīn* on the necessity of Sufi love for faith's completion. Excerpts from the *Iḥyā* appear several more times in an often technical role: Ghazālī's arguments, for instance, are quoted in regard to the issue of the immortality of the body after death and prior to Resurrection. He appears again to claim that patience is a primary virtue, because "to patiently endure suffering is a particularity of man."

Most of the above sources never fell out of favor with Ottoman religious writers of later centuries. However, not all the Yazıciöğlus' sources would remain part of the Ottoman Sunnī canon. Perhaps the most interesting of the minor sources is a quite obscure one: a mysterious preachers' manual *Zahrat al-Riyāḍ*, cited by Meḥmed and Aḥmed repeatedly throughout the *Maghārib*, *Envārü'l-Āşiqīn* and both versions of the *Müntehā*. The author of this long and heterogeneous Arabic text refers to himself as "Sulaymān ibn Dawūd al-Saqṣīnī" or sometimes "al-Sūwarī". These two *nisbas* appear in Maḥmūd al-Kashgharī's *Diwān lughāt al-Turk*: Saqṣīn is a city near Bulghar and Suwar the tribe that inhabits it as one of the components of the Bulghar confederacy. Zeki Velidi Togan, on this basis, concludes that Sulaymān ibn Dawūd was from Saqṣīn and wrote for Muslims of the steppes.³⁴ Al-Saqṣīnī's text itself is a fascinating

34 Büchner, V.F. and Golden, P.B., "Saksīn", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, citing A.Z.W. Togan, *Ibn Faḍlān's Reisebericht*, Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, xxiv/3, 1938, Leipzig.

manual on the art of preaching that compiles various stories on diverse subjects (“Fish” or “Stones”) that can be used as rhetoric for the pulpit.³⁵ Kātib Çelebi, writing in the seventeenth century, compared the *Zahrat al-Riyāḍ* to the famous Ḥusayn Vā‘iz Kāshifī’s *Majālis-i Va‘z*, adding that unlike Kāshifī’s work the book was “famous, but not valuable.”³⁶ This comparison does seem to be a valid one, as Kāshifī’s much later work shares the same explicit aims as well as organizational logic. But perhaps the most interesting feature of the *Zahrat al-Riyāḍ* is that it is strongly influenced by Shī‘ism. From the *Zahrat al-Riyāḍ*, the Yazıcıoğlus chose the following excerpt:

And it is transmitted in *Zahrat al-Riyāḍ* that Ja‘far-i Şādiq said that when Adam was living with Eve in heaven, God spoke to Gabriel and said, “Take Adam’s hand and circumambulate heaven.” So Gabriel and Adam together circumambulated heaven until they came to a fine palace. One brick was gold and one brick was silver and its balconies were green emerald. There was a throne in that palace of ruby. Above that throne was a dome of light, and in the midst of that dome there was a fine figure [*şūret*], and there was a crown of light on its head, and two earrings in its ear, made of pearl, and around its waist a belt of light. Adam saw it and was amazed and forgot Eve’s beauty. And Adam said, “O Lord, what kind of figure is this figure?” God said, “It is the figure of Fāṭima, and on her head is the Crown of Muḥammad Muşṭafā, and around her waist [the belt is] is ‘Alī, and the two earrings are Ḥasan and Ḥusayn.”

And Adam saw that there were five doors in this dome, made of light, and [on each] a word was written. On the first door, “I am the Praised, and this is Muḥammad (*anā al-Maḥmūd, wa hādhā Muḥammad*).” On the second door, “I am the Exalted, and this is ‘Ali (*anā al-‘Alīy, wa hādhā ‘Alī*).” On the third door, “I am the Creator, and this is Fāṭima the Brilliant (*anā al-Fātir, wa hādhā Fāṭimat al-Zahrā*).” On the fourth door, “I am the Benefactor, and this is Ḥasan (*anā al-Muḥsin, wa hādhā Ḥasan*).” On the fifth door, “And of me is the Excellent One— this is Ḥusayn (*wa minnī al-Aḥsan, wa hādhā Ḥusayn*).” Gabriel said, “O Adam, preserve these names. One day you will need them.” When Adam went down to earth, he cried for three hundred years. A voice came that said, “O Adam, look at the Protected House.” Adam looked at it and saw that those noble names were written there. Adam bowed and said, “O Praised One, I am a trustee for the sake of Muḥammad, may he accept my repentance.” God said, “O Adam, if all of your descendants repent, I will forgive you out of respect for these names.”

Though this is not indicated in the Yazıcıoğlus’ text, the *Zahrat al-Riyāḍ* claims that this story comes from “one of the sayings of Ja‘far-i Şādiq”, the sixth Shī‘ī imam. This story uses his

35 Süleyman b. Davud es-Suvari, *Zehretü’r-riyad*, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Aya Sofya 4329. The text is common in Istanbul’s manuscript libraries.

36 Kātib Çelebi, *Kitāb Kashf Al-Ẓunūn ‘an Asāmī Al-Kutub Wa-Al-Funūn* (Istanbul: Maṭba‘at al-‘Ālem, 1892).

authority to make the strikingly Shī‘ī claims that Fāṭima in Heaven prior to the Fall of Man, and that her existence and that of her husband and sons ‘Alī and Ḥasan or Ḥusayn (incarnated as jewelry), take priority, both temporal and moral, over the rest of creation.

Another Shī‘ī speech comes from the Twelver scholar Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, who claims that “On the day of judgment, four people will be first before the throne and four people last before the Throne. Of the first-comers, one is Noah, one is Abraham, one is Moses and one is Jesus. Of the last-comers, one is Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, one is ‘Alī, one is Ḥasan, and one is Ḥusayn.” The issue of Shī‘ism in the Yazıcıoğlu’s works will be explored in a subsequent chapter.

IV. Notes on Compositional Method

With our image of the brothers’ sources and library beginning to take shape, a few comments on the process of its composition are called for. A particular chapter of *Envārü’l-‘Āşiqîn*, one that is representative of the brothers’ style, may serve as a good example how they used their library to create an enduring work of catechistics and dogmatics. This third chapter, somewhat misleadingly entitled “On the words with which God inspired the angels”, is composed of discrete transmissions of *ḥadīth* testimonies and *tafsīr* interpretations of Qur’anic verses, usually beginning with the phrases “it is transmitted” or “it is said.”³⁷ Over twenty-two pages, the number of separate transmissions is approximately ninety. Of these ninety narrations, forty-four are fully unattributed, while thirty-five are attributed to first-order *ḥadīth* transmitters of the generation of the *ṣaḥāba*, most commonly Ibn ‘Abbās, followed closely by Abū Ḥurayra, with ‘Alī, ‘Āisha, ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Umar, Ka‘b al-Aḥbār and others some distance behind. Because these do not indicate the source from which the narrations were taken, they can be considered

37 EA pp. 230a-252b.

essentially unattributed as well. Nine narrations are assigned named attributions from the by now familiar names of al-Baghawī, al-Rāzī, al-Ghazālī, and al-Saqṣīnī, and al-Saghānī; several unattributed passages are also likely taken from al-Ṣamarqandī.

The chapter on angels opens with an overview of the four archangels Michael, Gabriel, Israfil and ‘Azrā’īl; they are each described with short narrations. As this theme broadens we begin to realize that the theme of angels serves to unite the chapter as a whole, even as several subjects are broached. For instance, Yazıcıoğlu cites a *ḥadīth* describing an enormous angel God places under his celestial throne, which has seventy thousand wings on each side; he then cites another *ḥadīth* describing seventy thousand angels that sit in front of his throne and eternally recite the *Ṣūrat al-Fātiḥa*, adding that the Muslims who recite it will also be forgiven in the afterlife. Then Ahmed Bīcān mentions a third *ḥadīth*, describing a column of ruby that bisects the cosmos and supports the Throne, which trembles each time the *shahāda* is recited; the column, personified, refuses to be still unless God forgives those who affirm God’s unity, so God forgives them and calls upon the angels to bear witness. The thematic continuity of these three *ḥadīth*, moving smoothly from the Throne to the *Fātiḥa* to forgiveness, each with a reference to the angels that are ostensibly the chapter’s subjects, should be clear. By stringing together ordered narrations around a certain thematic center – in this case, angels – they are able to circle all of the subjects they wish to include, and guide the reader on a kind of pious tour up and down the space between the lowly human soul and God’s immediate presence.

This tour ends, appropriately, with the image of ‘Azrā’īl, the Angel of Death. ‘Azrā’īl seems to serve as a convenient excuse to allow the Yazıcıoğlus to ruminate broadly on death and the afterlife, engaging matters such as the resurrection of the body in the End Times, the

permanence of the both the higher spirit and the carnal soul, and son on. An emotional sermon, from al-Saqṣīnī , describes how God transforms angels into the image of a dying traveler’s family in to comfort him on his deathbed. And the final line of this chapter is especially well-chosen:

And it is transmitted that God created an angel. It circumnavigates the Throne. Since the moment the universe was created it has been saying *lā ilāha*. When at last he says *illā Allāh*, the Day of Resurrection Day will arrive. Thus it is that the beginning and end of the world’s duration is in the single breath of an angel.³⁸

The Yazıcıoğlu’s compositional method should by now be visible. First, he establishes theme and purpose, which in this case was an overview of pious topics with the idea of the angel as its unifying center. Meḥmed then approaches each of his source-texts. He then scans the relevant *aḥādīth* and other discussions, copying them each down separately. In this particular case, Aḥmed and Meḥmed searched for all discussions of angels (the *tafsīrs* of al-Baghawī and al-Şamarqandī are organized in such a way as to make this search easy; the structure of al-Saqṣīnī and al-Saghānī must have made this considerably more difficult). With these *aḥādīth* and arguments in hand, the brothers’ task was to string them together meaningfully, and he did so in the way we can see above.

Patterns

This completes an overview of the sources at the Yazıcıoğlu’s disposal as they wrote the *Maghārib al-Zamān*, *Envārü’l-‘Āşiqīn*, and *Muḥammediyye*. What patterns can be discerned? All of the works in the apparent bibliography of the Yazıcıoğlu were written in Arabic, with the possible exception of al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā*, which may have been read in Persian translation, parts

38 EA p. 252b.

of the *sira* narrative, and uncited Sufi sources. The geographical distribution of the Yazıcıoğlu's library also shows a striking asymmetry. A clear majority of their chief sources were written by authors who lived and died in Khurasan and Transoxania. The earliest were from Marv, others from the area of Tus and Nishapur, and the largest contingent from Samarqand. The rest of the Islamic world is very sparsely represented. Only Ṭūsī and Ghazālī had careers in western Iran or in Iraq; only al-Saghānī is from India, and only Zayn al-‘Arab died in Egypt, wherever he was from. Amazingly, Ibn al-‘Arabī appears to be the only named source with a career in Syria. Molla Fenārī's *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns* alone represents Anatolian Arabic writing.

Yet even this minority of the Yazıcıoğlu's major sources that come from other regions seem to exist on the margins of this main Khurasani cluster. Al-Saghānī's *Mashāriq* is a Ḥanafī work that compiles the aḥādīth of the Khurasanis Bukhārī and Muslim, while the author himself, though Punjabi, was educated in Transoxania. Zayn al-‘Arab, perhaps an Egyptian (or, alternately, from Nakhchivan), was a commentator upon the text of the Khurasani al-Baghawī. Even Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, though he worked elsewhere, has origins in Khurasan. The only true exceptions to this geographic rule are Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-‘Arabī, an Anadalusi, the contemporary Molla Fenārī of Bursa, and the mysterious al-Saqṣīnī of the Bulghar steppes. The majority of the books that the Yazıcıoğlu were able to study, and which they then valued highly enough to use as source materials for their major works as they composed them in Gelibolu, were from the lands between central Iran and the Syr Darya.

This overall homogeneity owes itself to two historical events: the first is the legacy of the importation of Seljuq Ḥanafism into Anatolia, which came along with Islam itself in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Unlike the Bukharan scholar Maḥmūd al-Faryābī studied by Shahab

Ahmed, whose bibliography consists of books entirely from his own region, the Yazıcıoğlus did not write from a local tradition of religious scholarship rooted in their homeland of Thrace and western Anatolia.³⁹ They could benefit from no preexisting regional *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr* literature (but rather were among the first generation of western Anatolian and Balkan Muslims to create this literature themselves), there was no option but to look to Khurasan, the region that is the source of Anatolian Islam. As Anatolia was Islamized and governed by elites who came behind the Seljuq armies from cities such as Nishapur and Bukhara, the region inherited these scholarly preferences. In this regard it is useful to address the question of *madhhab*. The Seljuq state, since its earliest expansion into Iran, adopted and attempted to promulgate the Ḥanafī school of law and suppress the Shāfi‘ī in the lands under its control. Ḥanafism came to dominate the Seljuq schools set up in Konya, Sivas, Kayseri and other Anatolian cities, and its scholars preserved a durable intellectual partnership between the heartland of Ḥanafism, Khurasan and Mawara’n-nahr, and Rum, a region that was once, under the early Seljuqs, its political extension.

A second, more immediate cause of this Khurasani Ḥanafī tendency was the transit of scholars and texts from Timurid Iran and Transoxania during the decades in which the Yazıcıoğlus lived, who, as the pages of Taşköprüzāde’s *al-Shaqā’iq al-Nu‘māniyya* make clear, revitalized the Ḥanafism of Anatolia when they migrated into the centers of Edirne and Bursa.⁴⁰ The “classical” Ḥanafī writers like al-Şamarqandī and al-Zamakhsharī were often studied by means of a later set of “post-classical” Ḥanafī scholars, namely the Timurid “school of Samarqand” of the late fourteenth century led by Jurjānī and Taftazānī. This international

39 Shahab Ahmed, “Mapping the World of a Scholar in Sixth/twelfth Century Bukhāra: Regional Tradition in Medieval Islamic Scholarship as Reflected in a Bibliography,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): pp. 24–43.

40 Pertinent comments on mobility as made visible in Taşköprüzade are found in Ökten, Ertuğrul. “Scholars and Mobility: A Preliminary Assessment from the Perspective of *al-Shaqā’iq al-Nu‘māniyya*.” *Journal of Ottoman Studies* 41 (2013): pp. 55–70.

Timurid connection, a kind of second wave of Ḥanafī scholarship to sweep over Rum, is in this instance embodied in the person of Ḥaydar Haravī Khvāfī. Thus it is no surprise that six of the nine Khurasani sources of the Yazıcıoğlu were of the Ḥanafī *madhhab*, and the only sources dedicated to the highly *madhhab*-specific field of legal reasoning were Ḥanafī ones of Khurasani or Transoxanian provenance – Qāḍīkhān, Marghīnānī and Bukhārī.⁴¹ It is thus unsurprising that the Yazıcıoğlu's bibliography bears many similarities with the curricula current in Khurasan during the reign of Shāhrukh (~811/1409-850/1447), as reconstructed by Maria Subtelny and Anas Khalidov on the basis of *ijāza* documents.⁴²

The almost complete lack of texts connected to Egypt and Syria requires some explanation, though none can here be confidently offered. The scholars of these two Shāfi'ī regions may have simply not been carried along with the “Ḥanafī migrations” and had not reached currency in western Anatolia and Rumelia at this time. More remarkable is the fact that the brothers appear *not* to have been a party to the known intellectual transit between the Mamluk lands and Anatolia and Rumelia in the early and middle fifteenth century. A figure who typifies this commerce is Shaykh Ḥusayn Akhlāfī of Cairo, about whom little information is known, but who remarkably figures in the biographies of two individuals within the broad orbit of the Yazıcıoğlu, ‘Abdurahmān Bisṭāmī and Bedre’d-dīn Simavī. The scholar Kāfiyajī, who was born in Anatolia but lived and died in Cairo, is another visible representative of this pattern.

41 Yet their *madhhab* consciousness was not of an exclusive sort. Some of the very most important of the Yazıcıoğlu's sources – al-Baghawī's *Maṣābīḥ*, Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī's *tafsīr*, and al-Ghazālī's *Ihya*, for example – are explicitly Shāfi'ī in *madhhab* orientation. So is the *tafsīr* of Qadi Bayḍāwī, admittedly a somewhat less-used source.

42 Subtelny notes that a core part of the Timurid curriculum consisted of al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf*, al-Baghawī's *Maṣābīḥ al-Sunna*, al-Saghānī's *Mashāriq al-Anwār*, al-Marghīnānī's *al-Hidāya*, all of which the Yazıcıoğlu also use. Maria Eva Subtelny and Anas B. Khalidov, “The Curriculum of Islamic Higher Learning in Timurid Iran in the Light of the Sunni Revival under Shāh-Rukh,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115, no. 2 (1995): p. 223.

However this pattern of scholarly exchange may have taken shape socially, it is not visibly represented in the texts read by the Yazıcıoğlus. All of this should serve as a powerful reminder that Anatolia – and now Rumelia – was even in the fifteenth century a kind of outpost of Khurasani academic culture, as it had been since the Seljuq conquests.

A second feature of this library is that, out of the vast Khurasani Ḥanafī inheritance, the brothers used only the most basic and agreed-upon works, almost never (except in the case of al-Saqṣīnī’s Shī‘ī-tinged preachers’ manual) straying outside the bounds of *shar‘ī*-minded Sunnism. In other words, their library is an extremely conventional one, even by the standards of the time. In this regard it is interesting to note how similar the brothers’ library is to the official medrese curriculum of Sultan Süleymān’s schools, codified a century after the Yazıcıoğlus’ lifetimes, in 1565. This list, discussed by Shahab Ahmed and Nenad Filipovic, enumerates a long sequence of textbooks that largely overlap with the Yazıcıoğlus’ reading materials: al-Zamakhsharī is paramount, and al-Baghawī, Zayn al-‘Arab, and Taftazānī are also to be found on the sultan’s list.⁴³ But the Yazıcıoğlus’ list is both smaller and more narrowly canonical, omitting, for example, the many super-commentaries on the *Kashshāf* and al-Bayḍāwī that dominate the royal curriculum.

Keeping these two features in mind, we can conceive of the Yazıcıoğlus’ intellectual heritage both as part of the regional inheritance of Khurasani Ḥanafism as renewed by the influx of Timurid scholars, and as a forerunner of the Ottoman standard *medrese* culture as it was to crystallize in the following century. But what we do not see is what Evliyā Çelebi and Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī Bursevī saw when they reminisced about these two saints of Gelibolu: two hermit-dervishes crafting masterpieces using only their inspired imaginations. I instead offer the

43 Ahmed and Filipovic, “The Sultan’s Syllabus.”

vaguely counterintuitive proposal that some of the most celebrated mystics in Turkish history, and the authors of some of popular Ottoman Islam's most vital dogmatic texts, assembled their works out of utterly conventional materials. Their writings, in this sense, serve as a more or less perfectly reflective mirror of a provincial, *shar'ī*-minded scholar's intellectual world. And this world was exactly what one would expect it to be.

The brothers' uniform "orthodoxy" may call upon us to make an important historiographical revision, by reassessing what has now become almost conventional wisdom in the study of fifteenth-century global Islamic intellectual history: that this period was an era of rampant doctrinal experimentation empowered by the introduction of Sufi, Shi'i, and philosophical ideas into new contexts. While this was certainly on display in the writings of elite international intellectuals like 'Abduraḥmān Bisṭāmī of Bursa, Sharaf al-dīn 'Alī Yazdī of Herat and Sa'īn al-dīn Turka of Isfahan, this experimentation is not in evidence in the works of the humble brothers of Gelibolu, preachers and Sufi guides to a crowd of sailors and recruits. In transmitting the heritage of Islamic scholarship to this frontier congregation, they drew from the acceptable core of that heritage and not its margins. The inclusion of al-Saqṣīnī's text about Fatima and her family is perhaps the only reminder that the Yazıcıoğlus wrote during a period of looser doctrinal policing than what was to emerge in the sixteenth century.

If the brothers did not innovate or notably re-synthesize, it remains to be asked why their works were so enduringly popular in the sixteenth century and after.⁴⁴ As a preliminary and personal answer, I suggest that these works wildly succeeded because they happened to reinforce the sensibilities of those later centuries, while bearing the valuable pedigree of the heroic age of

44 Without being primarily concerned with this question, Tobias Heinzmann, *Populäre religiöse Literatur* (2015) deals with the readership and uses of the Yazıcıoğlus' works. In Turkey, the Yazıcıoğlu manuscript tradition is the subject of ongoing work by Abdullah Uğur of Yalova University, to whom I am grateful..

the early Rumelian frontier. In their straightforward popular Sunnism grown out of strictly canonical sources, the Yazıcıoğlu brothers are in this sense the fifteenth-century Ottoman exemplars of the famous aphorism of Jules Michelet: “Each epoch dreams the one to follow.”

CHAPTER 3: RELIGION ON THE FRONTIER

Let us return to the *çilehâne* where Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu, in popular legend as in Evliyā Çelebi's *Seyāhatnāme*, composed the *Maghārib* and *Muḥammediyye* between 1444 and his death in 1451. Through a small window carved into its inner room Meḥmed could see the Dardanelles plied by Ottoman warships and Italian traders, and across it Asia and Lapseki whose fortress, first raised by Murād I in 1376, he saw destroyed by Murād II on the eve of a battle with Venice's fleet. Above and behind him loomed Gelibolu's own castle with its garrison recently held by the pretender Muṣṭafā's Byzantine allies, where now men like Meḥmed's patron Qaşşāboğlu Maḥmūd Paşa gathered and set out for the now-distant Balkan frontiers. To the west, near the harbor, spread out the large neighborhoods of Greek oarsmen, workmen and sailors recorded in the 879/1475 *taḥrīr*.¹ To the east, a few hundred yards from Meḥmed's cave and atop another cliff facing the Straits, was a marble open-air mosque commissioned by İskender, the man for whom his father spent his final years in scribal service; it was built for soldiers and seamen to pray in as they marched from the garrison to their ships to war in Anatolia and Rumelia.² Along the ridge that led to the new Muslim quarter of town behind these cliffs were the tombs of warriors: Bayraqlı Baba (d. 1410), who in legend swallowed Sultan Orḫan's banner to prevent its desecration, Emīr 'Alī Baba (d. 1356), the captain who ferried the daughter of John VI Kantakouzenos from Constantinople so she could be Orḫan's wife, and the admirals Terzi Şaruca Paşa and Sinān Paşa. Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu's own *tekke*, and later, his own tomb and that of his brother, was to grow up among them. This heroic landscape, today extended by the

1 "Defter-i esāmī-i Sancağ-ı Gelibolu (Awā'il Şhawwāl 879/February 1475)" (Istanbul), Cevdet Collection no. 79, Atatürk Kitaplığı.

2 For information on this beautiful structure, see Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, *Osmanlı mi'mârîsinde Çelebi ve II. Sultan Murad devri, 806-855 (1403-1451): II* (İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1972).

peninsula's monuments to 1915, was taking shape as Meḫmed worked in his cave to write the works that gave him and his family enduring fame.

The writing of Sunnī catechistics and dogmatics amid this geography so defined by a semi-legendary history of holy war situates the YazıCIOĞlu brothers and their works, historiographically speaking, at the intersection of two debates in the study of the first Ottoman centuries. From the perspective of the “*ġāzī* thesis” debate, which has energized Ottoman scholars since Paul Wittek's *Rise of the Ottoman Empire* in 1939, we are made to wonder how the YazıCIOĞlu brothers affected, and themselves took part in, the political and ideological dynamics of frontier warfare and reflected this in their works. From the perspective of the debate on the consolidation of an Ottoman form of Sunnism often called “confessionalization” in a borrowing from the terminology of Reformation historiography, we are prompted to assess how the brothers' and their writings comprised a stage in the growth of this religious consensus – a consensus born, in part, out of this unique frontier environment.

Along the dimensions of both the “*ġāzī* thesis” debate and the confessionalization discussion, we see the YazıCIOĞlu brothers working in the same direction, in a single process. They participate in centripetal impulse of early Ottoman ideology, aiming to resolve the ambiguities of borderland life by drawing out a matrix of a popular piety that could be nourished in the hearts of ordinary Muslims, aiming to sweep away the confusion of earlier conceptions of religious difference and of *ġazā* and replace it with a clear proscriptive understanding of the Muslim-Christian confessional border. The YazıCIOĞlus, that is to say, write a “*ġāzī* theology” that could render this ceaseless warfare for control of the straits, and the lives of its martyrs, sensible.

Scholarly debate on Ottoman origins has been reanimated by the 1996 publication of Cemal Kafadar's *Between Two Worlds*.³ Kafadar argues that the very concept of *ğazā*, often translated as “holy war”⁴, in fact masks several historically distinct ideologies across the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries – even as it remained a defining term of the Ottoman political culture throughout the whole period. Not all *ğazā* was for Islam, while not all Muslims believed in the same kind of *ğazā*. Furthermore, he argues that the evolution of the moving concept behind the term *ğazā* followed the dynamics of Ottoman political practice, transforming, across the period from the reigns Bāyezīd I to Meḫmed II, from a discourse serving the *ğāzī* begs of the frontier, to one responding to the centralizing demands the sultan of Istanbul. This broadest possible definition of *ğazā* – that it was not just fighting for Islam against the Christians, and not just the “feigned cooperation” called *mūdārā*, but a general and mutable style of borderland coexistence – is the definition that will be used here.

In lieu of reviewing the theories of Ottoman origins⁵ with which his thesis is in dialogue - Rudi Lindner's anthropologically informed revision of the organization of Osman's tribe⁶, the works of Heath Lowry,⁷ the influential tribal theory of Fuad Köprülü,⁸ and the original *ğāzī*

3 Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

4 Much has been made of the semantic distinction between *ğazā*, the religiously-defined fighting on the frontier, and the term *jihād*, a more general term denoting all kinds of religious warfare and struggle, including even the internally-directed struggles of the mind of the believer. This study will not linger on this difference, as the Yazıcıoğlus themselves seem to use both terms interchangeably.

5 Linda T. Darling, “Reformulating the Gazi Narrative: When Was the Ottoman State a Gazi State?,” *Turcica* 43 (2011): pp. 13–53, is a comprehensive and useful review of this debate. See also Linda T. Darling, “The Mediterranean as a Borderland,” *Review of Middle East Studies* 46, no. 1 (July 1, 2012): pp. 54–63. Ottoman *ğazā* has been studied in comparison with the *ğazā* of Babur in Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam: A Comparative Study of the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, vol. 9, Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern History ; (London: Routledge, 2009).

6 See Rudi Paul Lindner, *Explorations in Ottoman Prehistory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007); Rudi Paul Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia* (Bloomington: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1983).

7 Heath W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

8 Mehmet Fuat Köprülü, *The Origins of the Ottoman Empire*, trans. Gary Leiser (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

thesis of Wittek – I will merely state that a point of departure of what follows is Kafadar’s important insistence that “An ideological commitment to *ğazā* was in all likelihood common to [1300 or 1330 or 1360 or 1410], but its character and intensity kept changing, just as inclusivism was never fully abandoned by the Ottomans but was constantly redefined.”⁹ To paraphrase, different phases of early Ottoman history called for different conceptions of what defined the frontier and different theories of religious difference. By the 1440’s and early 1450’s when the Yazıcıoğlus were writing, the factors presiding over borderland ideologies had undergone important transformations already. These include the victory in the Ottoman Civil War of the most Anatolian and least Balkan of Bāyezīd’s sons and the marginalization of the state’s Balkan elites, the defeat, soon thereafter, of Şeyḫ Bedre’d-dīn’s ecumenical Sufi movement, and Murād II’s defeat of the Hungarian expedition of Varna, which was commemorated in the *ğazavātnāme* as a victory of *ğazā* over crusade.¹⁰ One factor affecting the development of *ğāzī* ideology is comparatively undersung. This is the entry of the Ottoman Empire, for the first time, into the mainstream of Islamic intellectual life. The vehicle of the integration has already been described in **Chapter 2**: the group of scholars chiefly from the Timurid centers of Iran and Central Asia but also from Egypt and Syria, who found careers in the schools of Murād II’s Edirne and Bursa. They brought arguments of a legalist character, that had long ago been worked out in *fiqh* and other religious sciences, into the Ottoman frontier.

The Yazıcıoğlus themselves were of the first generation of Ottoman intellectuals who could participate in this wave of Timurid and Mamluk scholarship, and accordingly they

9 Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 120.

10 Ottoman writers were conscious that the joint Byzantine-Catholic Crusade of Varna of 1444 entered the realm of possibility only with the ecumenical Council of Ferrara. *Ğazā* was posed as its response; see the anonymous *Ğazavātnāme* translated in Colin Imber, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443-45* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 41-106.

propagated an orthodox, traditionally Islamic ideology of confessional identity that they received from their teachers. Nevertheless, they were not simply repeating an Ottoman-Ḥanafī consensus indiscriminately. Rather, they were also participating in another, more local discourse that transpired at the same time – an interconfessional one, actualized in the innumerable conversations Christians had with Muslims and vice versa about what their respective faiths meant. While the brothers are informed by a strictly Islamicate set of texts, the questions that they answer are, I will argue, local to the frontier and to Gelibolu, and particular to their time. Out of this the Yazıcıoğlus created an ideology of confessional difference. The emergence of this ideology out of Muslim-Christian frontier dialogue will be the focus of this chapter.¹¹

In order to demonstrate this, I will dwell on the nature of the Gelibolu frontier and the Marmara region in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, initially focusing on its role as a center of naval military activity. A consequence of this strategic vitality was the transformation of the city and region into one of dual character, deeply conscious of the politico-religious division that bisected it, but also profoundly heterogeneous in an ethno-religious sense. This, in turn, stimulated pattern of dialogue between Muslims and Christians structured by a discrete set of questions on the distinction between the two faiths that hung in the air on both sides of the Dardanelles.

The second part of this chapter will focus on the ideology of the Yazıcıoğlus themselves, seen as a response to these questions in this environment. Immersed in these frontier conversations even as they received orthodox Islamic educations, the brothers display a preoccupation with countering the dogmatic fixed points of Christianity and try to rectify

11 This dynamic is not unique to this particular frontier. See Pfeiffer, Judith. “Confessional Ambiguity vs. Confessional Polarization: Politics and the Negotiation of Religious Boundaries in the Ilkhanate.” In *Politics, Patronage, and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th-15th Century Tabriz*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer, 129–68. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2014.

ambiguities between Islam and Christian belief. A major feature of this apologia is an extraordinary defense of the superiority of Muḥammad over Jesus, which directs the subterranean flow of much of the texts' narrative. Following this, I will delineate the what brothers attempted to raise in the face of this ambiguity – the foundations of a kind of lay Muslim catechism. The mechanisms by which this basic “textbook Islam” gained traction with the ordinary believer include of the raising up to the status of arch-metaphor the acquisition of *sevāb*, or divine favor, and a drawing to the foreground of the imagery of death and the rewards and punishments of the hereafter. Finally, I will bring this discussion back to the tangible life of Gelibolu, a city that was by then sustained by the industry of naval *ğazā* for the Ottoman enterprise.

I. The Nature of the Borderland

“Gallipoli, the Muslim throat that gulps down every Christian nation,
that chokes and destroys the Christians...”

Since the publication Frederick Jackson Turner's *The Frontier in American History* in 1893, historians have seen the value in treating the borderland as a distinct geography united more to itself than to the heartlands on either side. It has become commonplace, for example, to oppose the frontier Turkoman polities of medieval Anatolia, such as the Danişmend state, to the Seljuq kingdom at Konya: while the latter, recognizing a common sedentary and bureaucratic culture, usually made common cause with the Byzantines, the former pursued its own aims raiding the large parts of the peninsula with a motley convert army, providing an outlet for marginalized elements of the interior.¹² Frontiers were also porous. The Ottoman marches of the

¹² Claude Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey: a General Survey of the Material and Spiritual Culture and History, C. 1071-1330*. (New York: Taplinger Pub. Co., 1968), has long provided the definitive narrative of these dynamics.

early modern Mediterranean, argues Linda Darling, may be reinterpreted rather as inclusive borderlands than as fortified frontiers.¹³ It is clear that the city of Gelibolu shared the characteristics of both a separating frontier and a uniting borderland. The sites of contact and exchange were also the sites of religio-political polarization, and the repelling and attracting impulses of interlocutors on both sides of the Byzantine-Ottoman frontier gave it its character. What follows explores the nature of the Gelibolu frontier until the time of the Yazıciöğlü brothers as they wrote in the middle decades of the fifteenth century on the eve of the conquest of Constantinople. Gelibolu, it can be said with no exaggeration, was the city that embodied these frontier characteristics most typically.

The meaning of the name of the Byzantine city of Kallipolis, “the fine town”, was apparently preserved as one of the Arabic epithets the Yazıciöğlüs use for their city: *aḥsanu’l-bilād*, “finest of towns”. The fortress, situated on a natural harbor at one of the Dardanelles’ narrowest points had, by the by the medieval period, outgrown the older stronghold of nearby Abydos, where in the fifth century BC Xerxes built his bridge of boats in order to attack the Greek states. In the twelfth century the Spanish Jewish traveler claims that Kallipolis was large enough to have a resident community of “two hundred Jews”.¹⁴ Yet despite its prosperity, for centuries its political fortunes were subsidiary those of its mother city Constantinople and fell under its jurisdiction or that of inland Adrianople.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century the city would come to earn another of the Yazıciöğlüs’ favorite epithets: *dārü’l-cihād*, “abode of holy war.” In 1305 the Catalan Grand Company of mercenaries entered Byzantine service and occupied Kallipolis, bringing with them

13 Linda T. Darling, “The Mediterranean as a Borderland,” *Review of Middle East Studies* 46, no. 1 (July 1, 2012): pp. 54–63.

14 Benjamin of Tudela, *Itinerary*, quoted in Joshua Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 641-1204*. (New York: B. Franklin, 1970), p. 231.

a number of of Turkish mercenary allies from across the straits, the so-called *tourkopoloι*.¹⁵ Both, instead of serving Emperor Andronikos II, held fast to the city and used it as a base to plunder Thrace and march west, pillaging, to Thessaloniki. With the Turcopole presence Gallipoli and the straits, instead of separating the Byzantines from the contested terrain of Anatolia, became a gateway that opened it up to its nomadic populations, as a prelude to the ultimate Ottoman invasion of inland Thrace. The *Crónica* of Ramón Muntaner, a Valencian soldier who took part in this campaign and himself served as the town's garrison commander, says that the city was the key to the mainland territories: "Gallipoli is the maritime capital of Macedonia, just as Barcelona is the maritime capital of Catalonia and Lérida of the hinterland."¹⁶ During his seven-year adventure, when Gallipoli was the administrative center of "the Host of Franks who are ruling the Kingdom of Macedonia," he says that the city was the site of incessant intrigues among Aragonese nobles, exiled Constantinopolitans, and mercenary Turks. The "Turks and Turcoples" in particular got along well with the Catalans, "and they never called me anything else than *ata*, which in Turkish means father."¹⁷ In 1312, more *tourkopouloι*, led by one Ḥalīl Paşa – whose name suggests that he may have remained Muslim – occupied the peninsula and were only ousted when Emperor Michael IX summoned a Serbian army.

15 This venture was typical of the politics of the late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Aegean, riven between the political aims of the Byzantines, Venice, western mercenaries, and Turkish *begliks*. The most complete picture of this can be acquired from the work of Elisavet Zachariadou, esp. Elisavet A. Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade: Venetian Crete and the Emirates of Menteshe and Aydin (1300-1415)*, vol. no. 11, Library of the Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies ; (Venice: Istituto ellenico di studi bizantini e postbizantini di Venezia per tutti i paesi del mondo, 1983); and Elisavet A. Zachariadou, *Romania and the Turks, c.1300-c.1500*, vol. CS211, Variorum Reprint ; (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985). For information on pre-Ottoman Byzantine-Turkish political and social contact, see also R. Shukurov, *The Byzantine Turks, 1204-1461*, vol. volume 105, The Medieval Mediterranean, Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400-1500 ; (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

16 Ramón Muntaner, *Cronica Catalana de Ramón Muntaner: Texto Original y Traducción Castellana*, trans. Antonio de Bofarull (Barcelona: Jaime Jepsu, 1860), p. 402.

17 *Ibid.* p. 441.

While the Ottoman *beglik* was still confined to Bithynia, another regional power showed an interest in Kallipolis and its peninsula: the Aydınoğulları of the region of Ephesus and Ayaşuluk (Theologos), whose naval exploits under their leader Umūr Beg were commemorated in the fifteenth-century epic *Düstūrname* by Enverī. Umūr’s father Mehmed Beg, in 1332, raided Kallipolis and confronted the Thracian governor Andronikos Asen in what Enverī, using terminology of religious warfare that anachronistically reflects his time, describes as a great battle. At the point of defeat, Aydın’s general dismounted from his horse in the thick of the fighting and prayed: “O Creator, pity us / we are hopeless and lost and afflicted. If you don’t help us at this moment / we will not repel these many unbelievers.” But God heeded his call: “The wind blew dust upon the unbelievers / earth struck and filled their eyes / The unbelievers were defeated in disarray / and the *tekfūr* Asen was shamed / The plain was filled with the bodies of unbelievers / in one *dönüm* there were five thousand dead...”¹⁸

Though the *Düstūrname* makes it clear that the forces of Aydın won the day in 1332, they were unable to control the fortress itself and soon crossed back to Anatolia. By 1352 Kallipolis and its peninsula were in the hands of the embattled emperor John VI Kantakouzenos. In a historically consequential sequence of events whose precise chronology remains in dispute, Kantakouzenos invited Ottoman forces to Thrace in order to help him in his struggle against John V Palaiologos. After occupying Tzympe (Çinbe) castle up the peninsula from the city, the Ottoman troops refused to return to Anatolia once Kantakouzenos had consolidated control; in 1354 a fortuitous earthquake cast down the walls of Kallipolis’ fortress and allowed Sultan Orhan’s son Süleymān Paşa to occupy it and convert it into an Ottoman base for Rumelian

18 Irène Mélikoff, *Le Destan d’Umur Pacha: Düsturname-i Enveri* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), pp. 61-63.

conquests. The historian George Arnakis, citing a Bulgarian chronicle from 1561, proposes that this was a gradual process in which Turkish soldiers and colonists over time overwhelmed the Greek population and garrison.¹⁹ Regardless of the nature of this changeover, Gelibolu immediately acquired central importance to the Ottoman state. The new *sancaq* was named *Paşa sancağı* as a testimony to the memory of Süleymān Paşa, whose own residence was at nearby Bolayır.

When Süleymān Paşa predeceased his father in 1357, Gelibolu became a residence for the future sultan Murād I. During the ten years between the first Ottoman conquest of Gelibolu in 1354 under Süleymān Paşa and its fall to Amadeo VI of Savoy in 1366 Gelibolu was one of the preeminent Ottoman strongholds in Rumelia – only Dimetoka (Didymoteichon), conquered in 1361, and Edirne (Adrianople), conquered in 1362, surpassed it as population centers of the early Ottoman realms in Europe. It is doubtful, however, that most of these Turkish settlers were “Ottoman” in a meaningful sense. The Turks of the former *beglik* of Karesi, which bordered the Ottoman heartland to the west and populated the Asian side of the Dardanelles until the Ottomans took it 1345-1346, were the best-positioned to colonize Gelibolu and its peninsula once Süleymān Paşa opened it up to settlement.²⁰ The populace of the old *beglik* of Saruḡan, further south, may have also taken part: The 879/1475 *taḥrīr* records a neighborhood of “*Saruḡanlu*” residents in nearby Malkara.²¹ The Ottoman chronicler ‘Āṣıqpaşazāde mentions

19 George Arnakis, “Gregory Palamas, the Hionos, and the Fall of Gallipoli,” *Byzantion* 22 (1952), p. 311.

20 For more on the early interactions between Karesi and the Ottoman *beglik*, see Zachariadou, Elisavet A., “The Karesi Emirate” in Elisavet A Zachariadou, ed., *The Ottoman Emirate (1300-1389): Halcyon Days in Crete 1 : A Symposium Held in Rethymnon 11-13 January 1991* (Rethymnon: Crete University Press, 1993), pp. 225-236. A slightly more recent monograph-length study of this polity is found in Zerrin Günel Öden, *Karası Beyliği* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999).

21 “Tapu taḥrīr Defteri” (Istanbul), T.T. 0012, Başbakanlık Arşivi, p. 42.

“families of recruits” (*‘azeb evleri*, often read as *‘arab evleri*) sent from Anatolia to repopulate Rumelia, which were likely from these same western *begliks*, rather than from inland Bithynia.²²

This era came to an abrupt end with Amadeo’s arrival in 1366 at the head of a minor crusade against both Murād I and Tsar Ivan Alexander of Bulgaria. Taking the city back from the Ottomans in a battle that goes unremarked in the Ottoman chronicles, Amadeo returned Gelibolu to Emperor John V Palaiologos, who ruled the city in relative tranquility for a decade. This conquest effectively cut off the Ottoman frontier domains in Rumelia from the Anatolian heartland, setting the former upon a separate trajectory for a time, causing a decade-long break in the continuity of the city and region’s Islamizing social fabric. The young *beglik* was now effectively two and was thus less capable of concerted expansion. This situation stimulated the Byzantine intellectual Demetrius Kydones to compose *De Non Redenda Gallipoli* in Latin for a Western audience, in which he urged all Christian powers to ensure that Gelibolu never be returned to the Turks on account of its immense strategic value for the whole of Christendom. “We have long considered Gallipoli,” he writes, “the most precious of our possessions and the most able to be of assistance in the war against the barbarians.”²³ Until the conquest of Constantinople, similar expressions of the precarious dependence of Ottoman expansionism upon control of the Dardanelles and its fortress were to become a sort of refrain on both sides of the political border.

In 1376 Andronikos IV, revolting against his father John V, handed the city and fortress of Gelibolu to Sultan Murād. With this second reconquest, logistical coordination across the straits could resume and along with it the process of cultural Islamization and political

22 Aşıkpaşazade, *Tevarih-i Âl-i Osman’dan Aşıkpaşazade tarihi*, ed. ‘Ali Bey (Istanbul: Matba‘a-yı Âmire, 1332/1914), p. 49.

23 Judith R. Ryder, *The Career and Writings of Demetrius Kydones: A Study of Fourteenth-Century Byzantine Politics, Religion and Society* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), pp. 59-60.

Ottomanization of the city and its Thracian hinterland. Certain figures appear in the scene on Gelibolu during this time. One was Şaruca Paşa; attached to his household was Qaşşābolu ‘Alī, the patron of Yazıcı Şāliḥ. This moment of Turco-Muslim stability was also the period during which Yazıcı Şāliḥ moved to Thrace. While most of the first generation of Thracian settlers were from the western *begliks*, Şāliḥ, who may be from Ankara, is perhaps a token of a newer wave of settlers from central Anatolia who came at this time.²⁴ Gelibolu had become an Ottoman town and its region an Ottoman province, and Yazıcı Şāliḥ, father of Aḥmed and Meḥmed, was among its settlers.

It was at this time that the city’s centrality to the wars of Ottoman expansion on both land and sea seems to have given rise to a certain polarizing atmosphere, illustrated in contemporaneous European travel accounts. Johannes Schiltberger, a Bavarian soldier in Hungarian service taken captive after King Sigismund’s defeat at Nicopolis in 1396, describes how he, along with hundreds of other captives (including Duke Phillip of Burgundy) was confined for two months in the tower of Gelibolu’s citadel. Testifying to the adversarial outlook of many in this military city, Schiltberger says that when King Sigismund’s ship passed through the straits, “[the Turks] took us out of the tower and led us to the sea, and one after the other they abused the king and mocked him, and called to him to come out of the boat and deliver his people; and this they did to make fun of him...”²⁵ A sectarian consciousness, political in its origins and expression, and sustained by a military presence, is evident here.

24 For a discussion of the date of Şāliḥ’s migration, see Amil Çelebioğlu, “Yazıcı Şāliḥ ve Şemsiyye’si,” *Atatürk Üniversitesi İslami İlimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 1 (1976): pp. 171–218, as well as Çelebioğlu’s remarks in his edition of Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu’s *Muhammediye* (İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1996). My own conclusion, elaborated in **Chapter 1** of this study, is that Şāliḥ moved to Rumelia in the late 1380’s.

25 Johannes Schiltberger, *The Bondage and Travels of Johann Schiltberger, a Native of Bavaria, in Europe, Asia, and Africa, 1396-1427*, ed. Filip Jakob Bruun, trans. J. Buchan Telfer (London: Hakluyt Society Publications, 1879), p. 6.

This tense atmosphere persisted throughout the period following the Battle of Ankara and the Ottoman Civil War. In 1402 the Castilian diplomat Ruy Gonzáles de Clavijo was sent from Madrid to Samarqand to serve as ambassador to Timur; his account gives us a glimpse of Gelibolu at the moment immediately following Bāyezīd's defeat, with a particular focus on the city's military and logistical capabilities. "Here the Turks have all of their fleet of galleys and other ships where also they have made a great arsenal... the castle of Gallipoli is very strongly garrisoned with many troops and a large guard...It was through [taking Gallipoli] that the Turks conquered all the Greek lands that they had won: and should they ever come to lose Gallipoli, they would indeed lose all the lands they have conquered in Greece. Since they have come to possess this port, where they station their fleet of galleys and other ships, this for them is the passage across from the Turkish homelands both for their troops, and for supplies; and this fortress of Gallipoli is the base by which the Turks oppress the empire of the Greeks."²⁶ One wonders whether Clavijo, in expressing the city's strategic value to the Ottoman enterprise, may have become aware of Kydones' earlier statements, which were after all written in Latin.²⁷ Indeed, during and after the Ottoman succession war, the city was the target of Byzantine and Venetian raids in 1410 and 1416 – well within the lifetime of the Yazıcıoğlu brothers.

Though the facts of these battles and the testimonies of Kydones, Schiltberger and Clavijo play up the rigidity of the politico-religious border, it is clear from other sources that the population of the region itself, when viewed domestically, was characterized by mixture.

Illustrating both of these dimensions is the account given by Doukas of the cooperation between

26 Ruy González de Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlán. Estudio y edición de un manuscrito del siglo XV*, ed. Francisco López Estrada (Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, Instituto Nicolás Antonio, 1943), p. 53.

27 The French traveler G. de Lannoy, in 1422 made a nearly identical remark: "Et qui auroit dit chastel et port les Turcs n'auroient nul sçeur passage plus de l'un à l'autre et seroit leur pays qu'ilz ont en Grèce comme perdu et deffect." İnalçık, Halil, "Gelibolu", *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs.

Düzme Muştafâ, the pretender to the throne of Murâd II, and the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos along with Cüneyd, ruler of Aydın. Doukas describes how in 1420 Muştafâ, Cüneyd, and the emperor's general Demetrios Leontarios fought side-by-side to conquer Gelibolu from Murâd's troops. When a stalemate was reached, Demetrios and Muştafâ returned to their triremes and, standing together at the stern of their ships in the harbor, addressed the gathered population of Gelibolu in Turkish and in Greek. The population and its soldiers, persuaded, surrendered to the "force of heavily armed Romans and Turks" and acclaimed Muştafâ ruler with Demetrios as his lieutenant. However, several months later, when Muştafâ agreed to hand the city over to Emperor Manuel's full control, Cüneyd noted that "the Turkish populace was thrown into a state of confusion and turmoil at the unwanted and unexpected Roman takeover." Using words that precisely echo the earlier remarks of Kydones and Clavijo, Muştafâ then argued, "As for surrendering this city, that is, Gallipoli, the Muslim throat that gulps down every Christian nation, that chokes and destroys the Christians, never could such an absurdity enter my mind!" and claimed that a he could in good conscience "[deliver] the pious into the hands of the impious, by making a free people slaves, and by putting the nation which is consecrated to God into the hands of the infidels who do not know the One God of heaven and earth."²⁸

Nevertheless, the operational alliance between Manuel Palaiologos and these two Muslim lords persisted until it was defeated near Gelibolu by Murâd II, who had himself allied with the Genoese and other Italians. This history is meaningful. We see that the life of the city permitted cooperation between "Romans and Turks" within a certain permissible range, before it transformed into a discourse of opposition, and again into a complex cooperation. This paradoxical combination represents the essential character of the Gelibolu frontier.

28 Doukas, *The Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, pp.143-144.

The *taḥrīr* registries provide more concrete evidence the heterogeneity of Gelibolu's population. The earliest of them, from 879/1475, notes many groups of Greeks organized into legally-overseen workers' associations attached to the Ottoman navy in the city, including rowers and arbalesters, and in the neighborhood of Manyas. Greeks seem almost as common in this *taḥrīr* as Muslims or Turks; when names such as "Yorgi son of Yannis," or "Teodoris son of Kosta" appear as leaders of naval workmens' regiments, we can be sure that Gelibolu's navy and the rest of its military was an integrated force. A "mosque of the church" appears here as well, indicating architectural re-use.²⁹ A later *taḥrīr*, from 925/1519, separates Greek neighborhoods into those pertaining to individual churches such as St. Nicholas, St. Demetrios, and many others, that had certainly existed before Ottoman occupation.³⁰

The famed Italian humanist Cyriaco of Ancona disembarked in Gelibolu on January 29, 1444 during his long investigations of the remains of classical antiquity. Reminding us that the city was a mercantile as well as military center, he meets two Genoese and one Anconan trader who "happened to be doing business with the barbarian settlers [*i.e.* Turks]." His attention was then drawn by re-use of a piece of ancient inscribed marble within an Ottoman mosque. "I found this inscription on a marble altar of the barbarian superstition, that you might see a sample of the venerable antiquities of this ancient town...", he states, before quoting the ancient Greek text of this inscription in honor of a long-gone Roman administrator.³¹ This mosque, whatever it was (perhaps the Ulu Cāmi', which contains spolia), was certainly known to the Yazıcıoğlu brothers who were living in Gelibolu at the time. It is a pleasing historical coincidence that Cyriaco and

29 "Defter-i esāmī-i Sancağ-ı Gelibolu (Awā'il Shāwwāl 879/February 1475)" (Istanbul), Cevdet Collection no. 79, Atatürk Kitaplığı, p. 9.

30 TD Defter 725.

31 Cyriac of Ancona, *Later travels*, trans. Edward W Bodnar and Clive Foss, I Tatti Renaissance Library 10, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 95-97.

the Yazıcıoğlu brothers – one the prototype of the Italian humanist, and the other of an Ottoman populist litterateur – walked the same streets for a time that winter.

This particular combination of political polarization invoked by incessant warfare, with cultural mixture and transit, gave rise to a characteristic phenomenon of frontier zones: dialogue, requiring both a strong sense of difference and an intimacy of contact. While countless conversations on the differences between Islam and Christianity certainly occurred across individual fourteenth-century encounters – in the conversations, for example, between Ramón Muntaner’s Catalans and their Turkish comrades-in-arms, or between Christian and Muslim members of ‘Osmān and Orhan’s forces – perhaps the first with a clear written testimony is that of Gregory Palamas, archbishop of Salonica and one of the foremost intellectuals of the Orthodox Church.³² In 1354, Palamas, while traveling between Constantinople and Salonica, was captured aboard his ship outside of Gelibolu. His Ottoman captors held him in Gelibolu (which had recently “come under the yoke of the Achaemenidae”) for a few days, and then allowed him to preach in a church across the straits in Lapseki before leading him across Ottoman Bithynia into Bursa. There, and later in Orhan’s camp further inland and in İznik (Nicaea), Palamas was made to engage in a dialogue on religious fundamentals with a set of learned Muslim interlocutors. He calls these men *chiones*, a disputed term that Arnakis has argued refers to members of Sufi-like tradesmen’s brotherhoods, the *āḥiyān*.³³ The archbishop writes, first, that the Muslims had lost their virtues “since they have known Christ and have not glorified and worshiped him as Christ.” Alternately pleased by the Turks’ unexpected gentility and disappointed by their continued adherence to a “barbaric faith”, Palamas tried to comport himself

32 George Arnakis, “Gregory Palamas among the Turks and Documents of His Captivity as Historical Sources,” *Speculum* 26, no. 1 (January 1, 1951): pp. 104–18.

33 Arnakis, “Gregory Palamas, the Hiones, and the Fall of Gallipoli.”

as an ambassador for his dispersed people and give succor to these Greek Christians he continually encountered in Ottoman lands.

It is possible to see in Palamas' dialogue a summary of the topics of conversation that were current between Christian and Muslim all across the frontier during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The first is the incarnation of God in Christ – the *chiones* asked Palamas, “how do you call Christ a God since he was born a man?” Secondly, the Muslims sought to dispute the virginity of Mary, asserting its redundancy. “God simply ordered and there was Christ,” they said. Thirdly, and most importantly, the Muslims were dismayed that Palamas and the Christian faith he represented refused to acknowledge the prophethood of Muḥammad while Muslims acknowledged that of Jesus. As the veteran Ottoman warlord Balaban, senior of Orḡan and companion of ‘Oṣmān, asked Palamas, “We believe in your prophet, why don't you believe in ours?” The Muslims here insisted that the forewarnings of Muḥammad's final prophethood were effaced from the Gospels (*tahrīf*) by corrupt “monks”. Finally, the Muslims charged that Christians engaged in idolatry in violation of the Second Commandment, which, if we believe Palamas' telling, the Turkish interlocutor was able to cite verbatim; Palamas answered carefully, expounding on the valid use of created objects to glorify God. Both Palamas and “a Turk” brought the conversation to a close by voicing hope for some kind of reconciliation between the faiths, stating “there will come a time when we will agree with each other.”

These points, as well as the conciliatory sentiment that closes the dialogue – all embedded in a broadly common rational theology and framework of Abrahamic prophetology – would recur, over and over again, across the coming century. In 1391 the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos was transported, in his role as Ottoman vassal, to Ankara to assist in

Sultan Bāyezīd’s fight against the ruler of Sivas. According to his own *Dialogues*, it was there that he spoke at great length with a “learned Persian” *müderriş* on the incompatibilities as well as sympathies between his faith and the Islam of his interlocutor, recording these dialogues into an account that is by now well-known in the history of Muslim-Christian polemics.³⁴ Over the course of several days and nights the two peaceably discussed “the Muslim conception of Paradise, the nature of plants, animals and human beings, Muḥammad and his doctrines, the prophets and Moses, the Holy Spirit, the substance of faith, considerations of the Holy Trinity or polytheism by the Muslims.”³⁵ The arguments of both Manuel and the “Persian” encompass these same typical issues of Christian-Muslim polemic: they ask each other, for instance, about the sequences of revealed law – how is your Law better than the detested Law of the Jews? How can the doctrine of the Trinity be reconciled with monotheism? The respectful tone of the argument between the emperor and the scholar with whom he is lodging suggest common points of departure. There was, it appears, a widespread feeling for the possibility of reconciliation – or, more deeply, a merging – between the two faiths, a peace that appears to prepare the way for an Abrahamic ecumenical, post-sectarian confession. Plethon manipulated these same ideas, when he felt obliged to integrate his idiosyncratic Hellenic system (in which Zeus and Zoroaster both

34 Erich Trapp, *Manuel II. Palaiologos; Dialoge mit einem “Perser.”* (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Kommission für Byzantinistik, Institut für Byzantinistik der Universität Wien; In Kommission bei H. Böhlau Nachf., Graz, 1966). For Emperor Manuel’s comments on intra-Islamic affairs, see Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, “Manuel II Palaeologos on the Strife between Bāyezīd I and Ḳāḍī Burhān Al-Dīn Aḥmad,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 43, no. 3 (January 1, 1980): 471–81.

35 Yorgo Dedes, “Süleymān Çelebi’s Mevlid: Text, Performance, and Muslim-Christian Dialogue,” in *Şinasi Tekin’in anısına: Uygurlardan Osmanlıya* (İstanbul: Simurg, 2005), p. 334, quoting Zachariadou, Elisabeth, “Religious Dialogue between Byzantines and Turks during the Ottoman Expansion,” in Bernard Lewis and Friedrich Niewohner, eds., *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, Wolfenbütteler Mittelalter-Studien. Weisbaden: Harrasowitz, pp. 290-304.

have roles to play) with the historical sequence of Abrahamic revelation. Such were the contours of regional religious experimentation.³⁶

In fact, this prospect of a common faith emerging out of the areas of overlap between Islam and Christianity – a kind of revived philosophical Abrahamism grown from a mixed community of native Christians, Anatolian migrants and converts – arises as a separate and powerful theme across multiple contexts in the first decades of the fifteenth century, when the Yazıcıoğlu brothers were growing up. Sharing a broad structure, linguistic register, and pattern of subsequent popularity with Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu’s *Muḥammediyye* is the *Mevlid* of Süleymān Çelebi, a story of the Prophet’s life written in 1409.³⁷ According to the account preserved by the biographer Laṭīfī regarding its composition, in Bursa’s Ulu Cāmi’, the largest mosque of what was then the Ottomans’ most important city, a preacher claimed that Muḥammad was not superior as a prophet to Jesus. An Arab in the congregation challenged this preacher, arguing that if this were the case, how could the Qur’anic line “And those Messengers, some We have preferred above others”³⁸ be understood? The people of the Ottoman capital, however, sided with the preacher, while the Arab went back to Syria to get a ruling supporting his argument, returning with an order for the preacher’s death. But the Bursans still upheld the arguments of their preacher that Jesus was equal to Muḥammad, until the Arab predicted that if the preacher did not retract his views, the land of Rum would be overrun by infidels.

36 Gemistos Plethon has been the subject of extensive scholarship, notably in C. M. Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: the last of the Hellenes* (Oxford [Oxfordshire: Clarendon Press, 1986), and more recently, Niketas Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Plethon’s connection to Ottoman intellectual culture has finally been explored in Maria Mavroudi, “Plethon as a Subversive and His Reception in the Islamic World,” in D. Angelov and M. Saxby, eds., *Power and Subversion in Byzantium* (Ashgate Variorum, 2013), p. 177–204.

37 Süleymān Çelebi, *Mevlid*, ed. Neclâ Pekolcay (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1993). Yorgo Dedes, “Süleymān Çelebi’s *Mevlid*: Text, Performance, and Muslim-Christian Dialogue,” in *Şinasi Tekin’in anısına: Uygurlardan Osmanlıya* (İstanbul: Simurg, 2005), 305–49.

38 Qur’an, 17:55.

The biographer writes that Süleymān Çelebi composed these lines in Turkish in response to the dangerously Christian sympathies of the Bursa's congregation:

And Jesus did not die but rose to heaven
That was so that he be of this community. [i.e. Islam]
...
They pleaded with God
That they might be of Muḥammad's community
For they have messengers too.
But Aḥmed [i.e. Muḥammad] is most perfect and superior,
for he is the most deserving of superiority.
Only a simpleton [*ahmaq*] does not know that.³⁹

So it seems that even in Bursa, the oldest and most significant Ottoman city, Muslims were generally curious about the relative rankings of Jesus and Muḥammad, and unwilling to demarcate anathematizing lines between the two confessional communities. Also worth noting is the fact that this narrative is attached to an entry dealing with the composition of Süleymān Çelebi's *Mevlid*. Just as was the case with the Yazıcıoğlu, an atmosphere of confessional fluidity prompted the production of popular Turkish vernacular writing as a way to dispel the misconceptions of a naive population.⁴⁰

From another witness we hear of a similar conversation among Muslims. In 1455 a Serbian soldier named Konstantin Mihailović was captured by Ottoman forces and then joined them. In his memoirs he tells how a preacher in a mosque rejects the claim that Christ was crucified, saying "You must not believe that. Jesus was of such holiness nobody could really touch him." He was raised to heaven and, on judgment day, will look with dismay at both Christians and Jews, saying to the former 'You called me God,' and to the latter, 'You wanted to

39 This translation is based on that of Yorgo Dedes, "Süleymān Çelebi's *Mevlid*".

40 This kind of incident would recur in the centuries to follow in the form of the "Hub Mesîhî" movement, as well as the pseudo-Christian preachers Molla Qābiz and Ḥakīm Ishāq. See Colin Imber, "A Note on 'Christian' Preachers in the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Ottoman Studies* X (1990): 59–67; and Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Zındıklar ve mülhidler yahut dairenin dışına çıkanlar : 15.-17. yüzyıllar* (Istanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1999), pp. 268-284.

torture and crucify me.” In another instance, Mihailović witnessed a gathering of what he calls “monks” under the leadership of a *shaykh* in the presence of the vizier Maḥmūd Paşa. They argued over whether Jesus was just a prophet or “an archprophet alongside God the Creator,” and whether some good Christians have “faith but no religion” and thus may still be registered alongside Muslims on Judgment Day. Mihailović says that this argument got so heated that “having raised a cry one against another, they began to throw books at one another. Indeed I thought they would give each other blows to the head with those books.”⁴¹ It is significant that Maḥmūd Paşa was the one to convene this gathering – a vizier of Greek and Slavic aristocratic origin who certainly held in his heart his own questions as to the connections between his adopted faith and the faith of his childhood.

In fact, what is perhaps the most complete dialogue of this type comes from Maḥmūd Paşa’s own cousin, the philosopher George Amiroutzes of Trebizond (1400-1470). Almost an exact contemporary of the Yazıcıoğlu brothers, Amiroutzes was a well-known philosopher and attendee of the Council of Florence who later rose to high office within Comnenian Trebizond. When Meḥmed’s troops took the city in 1461, Amiroutzes began a second career as companion and advisor to the sultan. For Meḥmed he composed panegyric poems that emphasize the continuity between the Roman tradition and the Ottoman sultanate, describing Meḥmed as Emperor of the Greeks, as *autocrator* and *basileus*, and comparing him to Alexander and Hercules. One of his two Ottomanized sons took the name İskender Paşa.⁴²

Most relevant to this discussion is the fact that the sultan and philosopher engaged in theological debate during the 1460s in a conversation that is arguably the most complete and

41 Konstantin Mihailović, *Memoirs of a Janissary*, trans. Benjamin Stolz (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1975), p. 17.

42 For further context, see John Monfasani, *George Amiroutzes, the Philosopher and his Tractates* (Leuven; Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2011).

sophisticated dialogue of this type. The record of this conversation, preserved only in Latin as *De fide uel Philosophus*, had not been generally regarded as authentic until the recent work of Óscar de la Cruz Palma, who uses newly found manuscript evidence to argue that it is.⁴³ Mehmed's arguments do, in fact, read like authentic and informed fragments of Islamic rational apologetics. A thorough study of this dialogue by an Islamicist would be truly valuable.

The subject matter of this dialogue is familiar, comprising attacks and defenses of the Incarnation, Virgin Birth, and Trinity. Here Sultan Mehmed takes on the role, interestingly enough, of rationalist interlocutor opposed to the notion of miraculous and arbitrary divine intervention in the world, almost showing what in centuries past would have been called a Mu'tazili tendency. This calls for reasoning about God from rational principles alone and denying the meaning or even possibility of direct divine intervention, as he declares in this remarkable passage:

If your ideas ... are proven not from principles customarily known, but from your own suppositions, how will we know those which are true and those which are invented? Even the pagans, just as the Jews, Christians, *and Arabs*, can specifically prove the items of faith of their religion by using things they suppose [to be true].⁴⁴

Here, with remarkable commitment to rational method, the sultan explicitly places the Islamic revelation on par with those of the Christians and Jews, thereby implying a certain interchangeability between all religions that believe in a God that can be deduced through reason. Amiroutzes, after again defending revealed knowledge, tries to defuse this tension by returning to a principle upon which he suspects both would agree. "Doubtless, sultan," the

43 George Amiroutzes, *El diálogo de la fé con el sultán de los turcos: edición crítica*, ed. Óscar de la Cruz Palma, Nueva Roma (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2000), XXVIII-XXVI. See also John Monfasani's review of the above, "Jorge Ameruzes de Trebisonda, El Diálogo de La Fe Con El Sultán de Los Turcos, Ed. and Trans, (into Spanish) Oscar de La Cruz Palma." *Speculum Speculum* 79, no. 04 (2004): 1024–25.

44 de la Cruz Palma, *El diálogo de la fé*, p. 51. Emphasis mine.

philosopher says, “we consider Man to be the noblest of all creations produced by God that can be perceived by the senses. And on behalf of Man all other things have also been created...” The sultan replies, “I easily affirm that it is so. On this matter we believe the same thing.”

The common ground, then, was substantial. The sultan and the philosopher share a debating mode as they jointly acknowledge a tension between prophecy and rational theology – and, unlike the figures discussed thus far, they also affirm an anthropocentrism. From the direction of contemporary Sufism, one finds echoes of this aspect of Meḥmed’s Maturidism and Amiroutzes’ Aristotelianism in the principle of *al-insān al-kāmil*, “the Perfect Man”, developed out of the works of Ibn ‘Arabī and his immediate successors; it posits that Adam and his descendants microcosmically embody universal creation and constitute the polar focus of divine self-consciousness. It has been suggested by Marshall Hodgson that the anthropocentrism of the Ibn ‘Arabī school, ubiquitous among Sufis of the period, stimulated experimentation in the arena of religious and political thought generally during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, rendering permissible expressions of universalism in novel ways.⁴⁵

Through anthropocentrism appears another well-known opening towards an Islamochristian fusion. This is the insurrectionary ecumenical Sufi movement led by the Ottoman scholar and Sufi Şeyḫ Bedre’ d-dīn in 1416. Bedre’ d-dīn’s movement is a subject that for several generations of scholars and for several reasons has proven difficult to approach with any semblance of scholarly rigor. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, who reserved a chapter for Bedre’ d-dīn in his important work on Ottoman heretical movements, remarked that characterizing the nature of his rebellion still presents an unsolved historical problem on account of the extreme ideological

45 This is a major contention of Marshall Hodgson in *The Venture of Islam, Volume 2: The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods* (University Of Chicago Press, 1977). Indeed, the task of addressing this hypothesis has been a tacit aim of many recent studies on the Islamicate late medieval and early modern period.

variety in evidence in the *shaykh*'s own texts, those of his followers, and in contemporaneous historical accounts.⁴⁶ While Bedre'd-dīn's own surviving writings leave the movement's ideological basis somewhat obscure, the actions of his disciples, according to the writings of Doukas and those of the *shaykh*'s grandson Ḥāfiz Ḥalīl, hint that its appeal rested on the proposal of shared monistic basis of a common piety, a universalism that existed side-by-side if not in tension with a legalistic piety.⁴⁷ Thus the rebellion Bedre'd-dīn led against the rule of Meḥmed I seems to constitute an actual fusion between the *shaykh*'s own academic Sufism and the pieties of first-generation Muslims and native Christians of Thrace and the Aegean littoral. Within the flexibility afforded by Bedre'd-dīn's Sufi framework, the frontier's ecumenical feeling found yet another expression.⁴⁸

Thus, we can see that in a general sense Gelibolu and its Marmara and Aegean hinterland was a central and contentious node on the political frontier, in which curious parties on both sides conversed in an atmosphere of heightened sectarian consciousness. These conversations, in multiple extant accounts, took the form of disputation about the rudiments of faith in a manner that shared common outlines. And several times within the Ottoman domains, the outcome of these dialogues revealed a degree of ambiguity regarding basic religious tenets – and how the two faiths were compatible and incompatible. By the time the Yazıcıoğlus were able to intervene in this conversation, debate had not yet died down.

46 Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Zındıklar ve mühlidler yahut dairenin dışına çıkanlar : 15.-17. yüzyıllar* (Istanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1999).

47 See Michel Balivet, *Islam mystique et révolution armée dans les Balkans ottomans: la vie du cheikh Bedreddin, le "Hallâj des Turcs", 1358/59-1416* (Istanbul: Editions Isis, 1995), p. 17. This point is made especially by İlker Evrim Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran: Sharaf Al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī and the Islamicate Republic of Letters* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2016), pp. 124-125. See also Ayhan Hıra, "Şeyh Bedreddin'in Fıkıhçılığı." (Ph.D. diss., Marmara University, 2006).

48 For Sufi movements along the Balkan frontiers during this period and later, see Antov, Nikolay. "Imperial Expansion, Colonization, and Conversion to Islam in the Islamic World's 'Wild West': The Formation of the Muslim Community in Ottoman Deliorman (N.E. Balkans), 15th-16th Cc." (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 2011).

II. “To know the bond of Islam”: From Sacred Knowledge to Communal Identity

Turn this into Turkish so that the people of our land may see the benefit of wisdom and of the lights of knowledge...⁴⁹

The stance of the Yazıcıoğlu brothers with respect to the confessional ambiguity of their place and time was one of reaction. Where Palamas, Mihailović’s scholars, Meḥmed II, the Bursan preacher, and Bedre’ d-dīn saw the potential of reconciliation, agreement, and even a union of faiths, the Yazıcıoğlus were alarmed and feared that their own religion would disappear into incoherence and with it all that gave their community identity and meaning. All of the frontier’s conversations, and all of its potential for syncretism, were dangers that could “send astray” (*azıtmaq*, a favorite word of the brothers) followers of the *şirāt-ı mustaqīm*. For this specific reason they write directly to the population of the frontier and provide them with dogmatic truths that reaffirm the distinctness of Islam.

In the introduction to his *Envārü’l-‘Āşiqīn*, Aḥmed Bīcān writes that his brother told him to “Turn this into Turkish so that the people of our land may see the benefit of wisdom and of the lights of knowledge...”⁵⁰ It is of crucial importance that Aḥmed Bīcān uses the phrase “our people of this land” (*bizüm ilüñ qavmı*). For a pre-modern, and especially an Islamicate author, to target an explicitly local population suggests that the author discerns a particular local problem, specifically that the religious needs of Gelibolu and its frontier hinterland were not being met. That their community, “our people of this land”, was not well-defined, and was in fact permeable to what was around it, seems to lie beneath the Aḥmed’s wording; by the time of their writing,

49 EA, p. 3a.

50 EA, p. 3a. “Bunı Türk diline döndürgil tā kim bu bizüm ilüñ qavmı daḥı ma‘ārifden ve envār-ı ‘ilmden fāida görsünler.”

that is to say, the bonds of language and political membership had begun to loosen in the almost fully sedentarized Ottoman state, raising an Islamic identity as the best option for communal unity. In this sense “our people of this land” was both the audience of the *Envār* and *Muḥammediyye*, and its object.

Their strong sense of the disintegrating boundaries of the Turkish Muslim community of their border region can be seen in the third “reason for composition” of the *Envārü’l-‘Āşiqîn*. Aḥmed writes, “A group of God’s people said to me that in these times there are many who advance ignorance and imitation. Some of them are occupied by whims, while I am law-abiding... Some abandon the arguments of Law and Truth and do not discern faith and *madhhab*, and say ‘*all people know their drinking-place* [mashrabahum].”⁵¹ But [in doing so] they lead both themselves and the people astray [*azıtdılar*] from God’s path, and with vain imaginings debar themselves from truths. Thus it is necessary that a book be written and that in it the ways of the prophets [*aḥvāl-i enbiyā*] and the rulings of law [*aḥkām-i şer‘*] be exoterically explained, and these truths and mandates esoterically affirmed...”⁵² He then transitions into a passage from al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā*.

Upon initial reading, it seems that the target of this address is the familiar figure of the hypocritical schoolman, and that the Yazıcıoğlu brothers, along with other Ottomans on the same frontier, participated in a kind of *ġāzī* anti-clericalism. However, this identification cannot be sustained if we remember that Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu was himself the student of Ḥaydar Haravī, a true member of the international ‘*ulemā*, a scholar trained in Timurid Samarqand by leading figures of global Ḥanafī jurisprudence.⁵³ Upon closer inspection it seems that the brothers are

51 Qur’an 2:60, 7:160.

52 EA 3b-4a.

53 This was first suggested by Amil Çelebioğlu in his edited *Muḥammediye* (1996), on the basis of the eighteenth-century conclusions of the text’s most famous commentator, İsmā‘īl Ḥaqqı Bursevī; see **Chapter 1**.

instead addressing another group with the phrases “those who advance ignorance and imitation,” and “abandon the arguments of Law and Truth and do not discern faith and *madhhab*.” When the Yazıcıoğlus charge that these “hypocrites” employ the Qur’anic phrase “All people know their drinking-place,” which ostensibly describes the way the twelve tribes of Israel drank from Moses’ spring, to allude to the validity of all styles of worship and behavior (*mashrab*), they seem to indicate that it is irreligiosity and an antinomian piety that is their great worry. Alongside 17:84, “each works according to his manner”, the phrase could be easily used to defend a pluralistic approach to religious practice.

Here Aḥmed Bīcān appears to be targeting individuals and groups with a local, even syncretistic understanding of Islam, like those Ottoman scholars Mihailović saw in the presence of Maḥmūd Paşa, who argued that Jesus was superior to Muḥammad, or the masses of Bursa who did not object to when similar comments were made during Friday sermons. Just as Süleymān Çelebi was moved by the incident in Bursa to draft verses arguing Muḥammad’s superiority over the other prophets, it appears that the Yazıcıoğlus were prompted by the conversations of the frontier to clarify the Islam of Gelibolu and turn the beliefs of its people into doctrines and practices that were in line with the Ḥanafī Sunnism they had learned. Recalling the points of objection enunciated by Muslims over and over again across frontier debates – the doctrine of the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the superiority of Jesus over Muḥammad, and the use of images in worship – it becomes possible to read much of the Yazıcıoğlus’ *Envāri’l-‘Āşiqīn*, and *Muḥammediyye* as a set of apologetics intended to counter these points of Christian dogma and deepen the convictions of wavering or new Muslims. As Aḥmed says, he wished for the people

of his land to “hold law and truth in their hearts and their convictions and know the bond of Islam.”

It would be easy to mistake the brothers’ writings for simple instruction manuals on the daily duties of a pious Muslim. This kind of text in fact already existed under the genre label ‘*ilm-i ḥāl*, the name given to a family of writings concerned with basic doctrinal elaboration and guidelines for ritual practice. This Turkish genre in fourteenth and early fifteenth-century Anatolia grew out of the older ‘*aqā’id* tradition and proliferated across the early Ottoman centuries, as Derin Terzioğlu discusses at length.⁵⁴ Terzioğlu shows how the genre began to expand rapidly in the fifteenth century, when it acquired its generic identity. Around 1403, Qutbu’-d-dīn İznîqî, the author of one of the earliest such texts in Turkish, the *Muqaddime*, describes his own ‘*ilm-i ḥāl* as “an introduction to the knowledge of obligatory duties in Turkish ... that is read by the novice and to the boys and girls who are about to reach maturity, until they retain the commands of law...”⁵⁵ İznîqî’s ‘*ilm-i ḥāl* is concerned, above all, with these obligatory duties and their technically proper performance – the motions of prayer, the timing of fasting, the rules of pilgrimage, and the like. The fifteenth century saw a flowering of similar works, each with particular generic variations. *Ṭarīq-i Edeb* (“The Path of Propriety”), a fifteenth-century text by one ‘Alāe’-d-dīn el-Amasī, is apparently a kind of primer of basic religious knowledge for parents to teach to their children. Furthermore, it seems to be aimed at new Muslims or those who had only a very vague understanding of legalistic faith, containing advice that could scarcely have been relevant for any other audience. “Three things are necessary in order that

54 Derin Terzioğlu, “Where ‘İlmihal Meets Catechism: Islamic Manuals of Religious Instruction in the Ottoman Empire in the Age of Confessionalization,” *Past & Present* 220, no. 1 (August 1, 2013): 79–114.

55 Kutbe’-d-dīn İznîkî, *Mukaddime*, ed. Kerime Üstünova (Bursa: T.C. Uludağ Üniversitesi, 2003), also quoted in Tijana Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 25.

male child about to be born become a monotheist believer [i.e. Muslim]”, ‘Alae’d-dīn writes. “One is that he be given a name from one of the Most Beautiful Names [of God]. The second is that he be circumcised. The third is that he be sent to school to study knowledge.”⁵⁶

In contrast, the Yazıcıoğlu brothers aimed at an audience of a slightly higher educational attainment than İznîqî and el-Amasî, though perhaps one of with equally shallow roots in orthodox Islam. The brothers, with their deep and broad educations, aimed to communicate doctrinal truths that extended beyond praxis, turning the merely practicing Muslims who had read texts like İznîqî’s and el-Amasî’s and knew how to pray and act like Muslims, into Muslims who also understood the sequence of prophets and believed in the sacredness of the Qur’an, in the inevitability of the Day of Resurrection, and other basic tenets of a Muslim orthodoxy. As Aḥmed states, “in this book I have scattered and strung all the pearls of Revealed Law [teşri’].” That the Yazıcıoğlu brothers consciously wrote the *Envār* and *Muḥammediyye* in order to deepen the practical proscriptions of the ‘ilm-i ḥāl into lessons on dogma and the meaning that lies behind ritual is demonstrated by an interesting transformation in the parallel passages at the beginning of İznîqî’s *Muqaddime* and Aḥmed Bīcān’s *Envār*. In this passage, which is also derived from the introduction to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā ‘Ulum al-Dīn*, İznîqî writes, “Know that there are differences of opinion regarding obligatory duties [*farz-i ‘ayn*]. The theologians say that knowledge of obligatory duties is known by the signs of God’s unity and attributes. The jurists say that it is obtained by knowing the science of law, that is, the things God obligates and what is forbidden and allowed...” Aḥmed Bīcān repeats this paragraph almost identically, but replaces the term “obligatory duties” with a much more interiorizing term: “the

56 Alae’d-dīn el-Amasî, “Tariq-i Edeb” Laleli 1876, Süleymāniye Kütüphanesi, pp. 1a-4b.

basis of knowledge” (*aşl-ı ‘ilm*).⁵⁷ And while İznîqî continues quoting from al-Ghazālî as he elaborates the differences between esoteric and exoteric and between belief and praxis, the Yazıcıoğlus depart from al-Ghazālî and charge into a discussion of the origins of the universe and the nature of God’s unity. By heightening *‘ilm-i ḥāl*’s concern with duties to a more intellectual intent to regularize religious knowledge, the Yazıcıoğlus hoped that their readers would “hold truth in their hearts and convictions.”

How, then, do the Yazıcıoğlu brothers describe what it means to be Muslim? They do so by writing a “salvation history,” to use a term favored by John Wansbrough. In his studies of the *sîra* (prophetic biography) of Ibn Ishāq in the ninth-century recension of Ibn Hishām, Wansbrough emphasizes how the story of the Prophet provides the faithful with a dynamic set of stories to that can link to and then animate the grid of the Qur’an.⁵⁸ This historicizing narrative that complements the scripture portrays salvation as a the outcome of a historical process, so that the Muslim could identify himself, politically and personally, as member the *umma* of their time. The Yazıcıoğlus, as editors and commentators of the very same *sîra*, share some of these traditional preoccupations while adapting them to the circumstances of fifteenth-century environment. They extend the scope of salvation history from the *sîra* through the popular medieval compilations of prophet stories known as the *qişaş al-anbiyā*, in particular the popularizing and colorful edition attributed to the anthologist al-Kisā’î; each prophet story, including that of Muḥammad, shares a common template that establishes the stages of prophetic time. This extended salvation history allows the brothers to to address in more detail, for example, the divine intention behind the prophethood of Jesus, and also to expound upon the

57 *EA-PP* 4a-5b.

58 See John E. Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

status of Muḥammad according to the understandings that had emerged during the course of Islamic theological debate since its first centuries. All of these are supplemented by elements taken from several branches of Islamic literature that bring sophistication and topicality to this salvation history.

The question of Muḥammad's primacy over Jesus is addressed at the very beginning of the *Maghārib*, *Envār*, and *Muḥammediyye*. In fact, one of the most important themes of all three works, and certainly the primary theme of the *Muḥammediyye*, is that the person of Muḥammad is more worthy of respect than all other created things (Yorgos Dedes, writing about similar qualities in Süleymān Çelebi's *Mevlid*, wonders whether such a preoccupation with Muḥammad "may be related to the contacts between Muslims and Christians..."⁵⁹). The brothers open each of their three works with a grand cosmology of heavenly objects that emphasizes how the prophethood of Muḥammad is in fact the purpose of all the rest of creation and is pre-existent to it. The Pen which writes the world's destiny first wrote first upon God's throne, "There is no God but God and Muḥammad is His messenger." In this cosmology there is a subtle opposition between the figure of Muḥammad and that of Adam, with the latter relegated to a subordinate place. Whole universes of angels were created "who do not know who Adam or Iblis are," but continually recite Muḥammad's name.⁶⁰ The brothers recite the extra-Qur'anic *ḥadīth* story of a "white handful" of luminous earth brought by Gabriel for God to mold into the body of Muḥammad before even creating Adam – a story that figures into the earliest *mawlid* texts on Muḥammad's birth.⁶¹ Adam even said to God, "Lord, do not withhold from me the love of Muḥammad, for which you have created all of Creation.... O Lord, I saw Muḥammad's name

59 Dedes, "Süleymān Çelebi's *Mevlid*: Text, Performance, and Muslim-Christian Dialogue."

60 EA 9b-10a.

61 Marion Holmes Katz, *The Birth of the Prophet Muḥammad: Devotional Piety in Sunni Islam* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 16.

written at the foot of the Throne and at the base of the Tablet, and from this I knew that there is none more beloved than him.” And it was Muḥammad who, at the time of Adam’s fall, interceded to on his behalf give him a place on earth rather than in hell. The figure through which Islam and Christianity are distinguished becomes the center of creation.

History thus starts and ends with Muḥammad, and what structures the sacred history in between the Fall and Resurrection Day are the stories of each of the righteous prophets who parallel and sometimes prefigure the outlines of his own prophetic mission. In each, from Seth to Zacharias, a sinful or idolatrous population first rejects the newly-sent prophet in favor of a corrupted law, or worse, a false god. Ultimately, however, this community either perishes or accepts the new dispensation. The stories of Noah and Moses enact this drama on a grand scale, but it can be seen in simplest outline in the stories of the “minor prophets”. The story of Hūd, prophet of the tribe of ‘Ād, a people whose name persists in Islamicate thought as a symbol of impiety and tyranny, is perhaps the starkest: Hūd preaches that “beside God there is no god,” the tribe of ‘Ād refuses, and, without further ado, God vanquishes them with “a barren wind” (*rīḥ-i ‘aqīm*).⁶² All of these share a strong structural congruence with the story of Muḥammad’s life – first rejected at Mecca, then victorious – in a manner that is certainly intentional. And while the prophethoods of Abraham, Moses, and Solomon follow more elaborate plotlines, their essential pattern is similar: each prophetic dispensation enacts, with greater or lesser grandeur, the dramas of Mecca and Medina, and foretells it.

This becomes explicit once the narrative arrives at the prophethood of Jesus. After Jesus proves his authenticity to the skeptics by bestowing life to a clay bird or bat, God reminds him that he is not His own most beloved, and that this honor belongs to “the heart of my messenger

62 EA pp. 72a-74a. The phrase is Qur’anic (51:41).

Muḥammad”. Jesus then advises his apostles to instruct the people to await the coming of the final Prophet foretold by his own Gospel, saying “Muḥammad’s community will come. They will be wise, just, and God-fearing people.” It is noteworthy that these details are *not* found within al-Kisā’ī’s *qışaş*, the Yazıcıoğlu’s source for this section: *this is the Yazıcıoğlu’s own addition*. By inserting this material that is extraneous to the brothers’ library betrays their underlying preoccupation with countering Christian points of belief by whatever means necessary. In this context, also, Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu’s *Muḥammediyye*, by focusing primarily upon the Prophet’s miraculous biography, may intend, like Süleymān Çelebi’s *Mevlid*, to aggrandize the Prophet so as to argue against the lingering devotion, among new Muslims, to Jesus. This and countless other moments would suffice, to a fifteenth-century reader, to drive home the point that seems to have confused the congregants in Bursa, or the book-throwing dervishes that Mihailović saw, and affirm the distinctness of what the brothers consistently call “the community of Muḥammad” (*ümmet-i Muḥammed*).

Just as they exalt Muḥammad, these prophet narratives also replay the experience of the convert – a significant part of the Yazıcıoğlu’s audience – and thereby heighten the power of the reader’s own conversion. One can see this in many of the early and late prophets, and especially in the story of Abraham, but perhaps this narrative is clearest in the tale of Shu‘ayb, another of the so-called “Arab prophets” not present in the Biblical tradition. Shu‘ayb is given the burden of prophethood to the idol-worshipping tribe of Madyan.⁶³ Shu‘ayb, a Madyanite himself, preaches to the lords of the tribe, whose names – Abjad, Ḥavvāz, Huttī, Kalamān and Qarīshat – are

⁶³ It may not be coincidental that the tyrannical and heretical founder of Constantinople according to the *Dürr-i Mekkun* was one idol-worshipping Yanqo ibn Madyan, a name Stéphane Yerasimos attributes to a folk derivation combining the name of the city Nicomedia (*İznikmid*) with Yanqo, the contemporary nickname of the Hungarian general Jan Hunyadi. See Stéphane Yerasimos, *La Fondation de Constantinople et de Sainte-Sophie dans les traditions turques: légendes d’Empire* (Istanbul; Paris: Institut français d’études anatoliennes ; Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient J. Maisonneuve, 1990).

formed of the letters of a magical alphabet. They refuse to believe his call and persist in the worship of idols, so God sends Gabriel to suggest that he “depart from among them, and consider [God’s] wrath against them.”⁶⁴ God casts a shadow over the tribe, and then a hot wind, and the caves they had fled to did not protect them from the heat, and then they convened in a plain where a cloud rained fire upon them. Shu‘ayb saw what had happened to his former people and thanked God, “crying for three hundred years”, that he was spared on account of having left his tribe for the righteous faith. It is easy to see how this story theatrically enacts the heroic self-narrative of a convert to Islam on the Ottoman frontier, who is compelled by his convictions to leave the people of his birth. Righteousness, in the story of Shu‘ayb and others, is pared down to a matter of changing identity and initiating social separation.

Many of these arguments are not new to the era, but are rooted, like the Yazıcıoğlu’s own sources were, in long-established Muslim responses to Christian doctrines. A lengthy portion of *Envārü’l-‘Āşiqîn*, for example, discusses Jesus’ ascent to heaven in the manner established in the Islamic tradition. Interestingly, Ahmed Yazıcıoğlu uses this occasion to a present very anachronistic typology of Christian sects – drawn, through his source-texts, from the religious landscape of ninth- through twelfth-century Syria and Iraq. This typology, which does not distinguish Catholic from Orthodox, also becomes a way for him to address the doctrine of the Trinity. Nestorians, he says, believe that Jesus is God’s son; Jacobites believe that Jesus is God himself, while the Melkites (Chalcedonians) believe that God is the third of three, as Jesus and Mary are the other two. One does wonder how, despite his own no doubt easy contact with Chalcedonian Christians in Gelibolu who could have corrected him, he did not remove Mary from this trinity. In any case, all three christologies are refuted in a time-honored way, by

64 EA 45b-46b.

referring to the Qur'an's *Şūrat al-Mā'ida*, which states unequivocally that “there are unbelievers who say ‘God is the third of three’”, and the *Şūrat Maryam*, which says, “it is not for God to take a son unto Him.” With these and similar arguments, the brothers provide to the reader a scripturally-established refutation of both the doctrine of the Trinity and the Virgin Birth.

Subtle warnings appear in the story of Solomon, whose building of the Temple becomes a complex metaphor for worldly power. Solomon first took the daughter of “the lord of the land of Saydon in Europe [*Firengistān*]” as a wife, and this European princess crafted an idol (*şūret* or *resm*) in the shape of her own father that she would worship in secret. Solomon discovered this, broke the idol, banished her, and fled to the desert for forty days to mourn. As Stéphane Yerasimos has argued with respect to the contemporary *Dürr-i Mekkūn*, which contains a similar story, this idol-worshipping European princess is a topical to the story of Solomon.⁶⁵ Some of its details are not found Yazıcıoğlu's source for the rest of this section, al-Kisā'ī's *qışaş*, and for this reason should be considered a special comment on themes, such as the veneration of images in churches, that were sensitive and divisive the Mediterranean frontier. Or is this a comment on the taking of unconverted Christian wives?

The brothers are interested not only in addressing interconfessional ambiguities, but also in countering the notion that ambiguity should even exist within the faith of the righteous; simply entertaining a confusion as to the nature of Islam, they seem to argue, is a departure from Sacred Law. One of the most remarkably topical passages in the combined writings of the Yazıcıoğlu brothers also comes from the *Envārü'l-‘Āşiqīn*, in one of the work's later sections ostensibly concerned with the trials of Judgment Day. The author compiles a list of abbreviated

65 Stéphane Yerasimos, *La Fondation*. While Yerasimos, following a longstanding tradition, attributes the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* to Aḥmed Bīcān, this unsigned work departs from Aḥmed's style in several respects, and so the question of this attribution must be revisited (see **Appendix I**).

fetvās, or legal opinions, using several classical Ḥanafī *fetvā* compilations, including the *Fatāwā* of Qāḍīkhān and the *Jawāhir al-Fiqh* of al-Marghīnānī.⁶⁶ The *fetvās* chosen out of the many contained in these volumes appear to be selected in order to address ambiguities in basic confessional allegiance. Several of them essentially answer the question of how to determine if the questioner is a Muslim or non-Muslim, the clearest of which baldly declares, “If a person says, ‘I don’t know if I am a Muslim or an unbeliever,’ then they are an unbeliever”. Some address the position of other faiths, as in, “If a person says, ‘The religions of the Jews and Christians are the truth,’ then he is an unbeliever.” More than one abridged *fetvā* says something to the effect of, “If a person says that he is both Muslim and an unbeliever at once, then he is an unbeliever.” Another, alluding to Christian practice, asserts, “If a person knows the prayer direction but worships in another, then he is an unbeliever.” An amusing *fetvā* seems to refer to the presence of people who openly mocked the seriousness of the faith: “If a person, while drinking alcohol, climbs to a high place and makes as if to preach... and laughs, whoever hears him and laughs too are all unbelievers.” One last *fetvā* hints that existential doubts may have run even deeper than the matter of confusion between the faiths: “If someone says, ‘Now is the era of unbelief: faith has been taken away’, then they are unbelievers.” All of these *fetāvā* recall the words Aḥmed uses in *Envār*’s introduction: “Some abandon the arguments of Law and Truth and do not discern faith and *madhhab*, and say ‘All people know their drinking-place.’” By rejecting the confusions of the frontier, turning their back upon points of harmony between Islam and Christianity, and directly countering many these points in the form of a targeted prophetic history, the brothers became a part of a traditionalist reaction.

66 EA pp. 266a-270a.

A Simple Islam

We have discussed one role of the brothers' writings in their frontier context, their inter-confessional boundary-drawing stimulated by the encounter with Christian interlocutors. Behind these clear boundaries, they raise up a vision of what being a Muslim entails and express this content in a certain simplified manner. The prophet stories, pared down to their identity-affirming cores, pave the way for a dogmatic discussion of the beliefs required for salvation. Importantly, the structure and content of the *Maghārib*, *Envār* and *Muḥammediyye*, as it seeks to reassure the faithful of their attachment to the "bond of Islam", emphasizes the *ease*, rather than difficulty, of the "straight path". This too may betray the implicit presence of Christian dogmatic disputation in the Yazıcıoğlus' milieu: by making Islam also about salvation, predicated on an set of easy beliefs and practices that are valid without clergy, the Yazıcıoğlus advertise the simplicity of Islam to the convert, and reassure the common reader that he is in fact a good Muslim. Salvation, for Aḥmed and Meḥmed, is in fact quite easy, and, as this amusing narration shows, often a simple *shahāda* is enough:

The Prophet said that when one says *lā ilāha illā'l-llāh, Muḥammadun rasūlu'l-llāh*, a white bird comes out of this person's mouth, with two wings of pearl and ruby. That bird goes to heaven. It buzzes like a bee. [The angels] tell the bird, "be quiet", and the bird says, "I will not, until the person who said *lā ilāha illā'l-llāh, Muḥammadun rasūlu'l-llāh* is saved." God says, "I have saved this person." Then God gives this bird seventy tongues with which to ask the servant's forgiveness until Resurrection Day. And on Resurrection Day [the bird] takes this servant's hand and guides him to heaven.⁶⁷

Yet despite God's liberality towards his believers, the brothers find it necessary to advance a straightforward understanding of the essentials of Islamic dogma, with the stipulation that these requirements be followed conscientiously. This mandate appears in many formulations through the works, and is most definitively enunciated by the structure of chapter ostensibly on

67 EA pp. 242a-242b.

Resurrection Day. Here the brothers number Friday prayer, praying in mosques, giving *zekāt*, Ramadan and supererogatory fasting, Hajj, *jihād*, and *zīkr* as requisite duties, in addition to the *shahāda*. It is unsurprising that to the traditional Five Pillars the Sufi *zīkr* is added, having become an indispensable component of even the most this-worldly forms of piety – Aḥmed Bīcān dwells considerably upon *zīkr* in the first sections of the *Envār*, claiming that “*zīkr* is the greatest form of worship,” and the greatest of *zīkr* formulae is that sanctioned by Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī in his *Tafsīr: lā hūwa illā hūwa*, “there is no He but He.” Each of these recommendations are expressed compilations of *ḥadīth* narrations advising each practice, and are said to be each rewarded with various numbers of *ṣevāb*, or units of divine compensation.

In fact, *ṣevāb*, and the straightforward way a believer can acquire it by satisfying ritual obligations, seems to be a consistent principle of the Yazıcıoğlu’s catechistic impetus. Providing a simplified, quantitative metric for proper behavior, *ṣevāb* turns religion into a proscriptive habit and restructures it as a matter of obeying any set of the many directives arrayed across hundreds of *ḥadīth* narrations. With enough *ṣevāb* accumulation, even the most half-hearted of believers could gain an assured place among the saved elect and bypass the rigors of ascetic renunciation as well as the externalizing legalism of the traditionally orthodox. Even the act of reading the *Envār* apparently gives *ṣevāb*: “God gives ten *ṣevāb* for every letter of those who learn and read, and every day [of learning] gives the *ṣevāb* of one thousand circumambulations of the Ka’ba.”⁶⁸ Religion was to be felt as a matter of private ritual and prayer, the more frequent the better. Salvation was within everyone’s reach.

Dealing with Death

68 EA pp. 242a-242b.

The above discussion has run the risk of trivializing the Yazıcıoğlus and their pious impulse into a shallow “national” ideology with none of the depth of real religion. This is far from the case. The brothers, with genuine poetic sensitivity, address the problems of living in a time of turmoil. To take as one illustrative example, a primary theme of the three writings under discussion here is the inevitability of death and the nature of the afterlife – and there may be a reason for this. Uli Schamiloglu has proposed that the fourteenth-century global bubonic plague pandemic, as it spread across the Eurasian steppe, had profound cultural and political effects upon the Turkic world, stimulating the creation of vernacular pious literature in particular. “As in Europe, there is evidence of an increase in religiosity as seen from a vernacular literary work entitled *Nehcü’l-Ferādis* (whose Turkic subtitle *Uştmaxlarnıñ açuq yolu* may be translated as ‘The Clear Path to Heaven’), a work produced during a plague year in the Golden Horde (1358)”, he writes.⁶⁹ Fascinatingly, Schamiloglu draws an analogy from “The Clear Path to Heaven” not only to Boccaccio, for whom the plague famously provided a setting for his vernacular masterpiece, but also with Süleymān Çelebi’s similarly-named *Vesiletü’n-necāt* (“The Path of Safety”), which under the more common title *Mevlīd* we have encountered repeatedly as a peer of the Yazıcıoğlus’ *Envār*, *Maghārib*, and *Muḥammediyye*.

It is perhaps possible to extend Schamiloglu’s insights. We know, first of all, that the bubonic plague struck Gelibolu intensely around the time of the Yazıcıoğlu brothers’ birth, when Clavijo writes that in 1402 a Marmara merchant ship avoided the city because “the plague was raging in Gallipoli, and with very great mortality.”⁷⁰ The plague that struck Bursa in 1429 and

69 Uli Schamiloglu, “The Rise of the Ottoman Empire: The Black Death in Medieval Anatolia and Its Impact on Turkish Civilization,” in *Views From the Edge: Essays in Honor of Richard W. Bulliet*, ed. Nequın Yavari, Lawrence G. Potter, and Jean-Marc Oppenheim (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 255–79.

70 González de Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlán: Estudio y edición de un manuscrito del siglo XV*, p. 31.

1430 most likely reached Gelibolu as well.⁷¹ A major epidemic struck the whole region in 1466, devastating Istanbul before passing to Gelibolu and across the Dardanelles into Anatolia: Kritovoulos writes that in Istanbul the dead were so numerous that sometimes coffins would have to hold two.⁷² Plague was not the only avatar of indiscriminate death. We have already seen the way war never left Gelibolu alone for long between the Catalan invasion and the reign of Mehmed II. Enveri's *Düstürnâme* and Doukas' history both reference the depopulations that occurred with each conquest of the city.

The Yazıcıoğlu, living at the epicenter of all this disease and violence, dwell upon the omnipresence of death and strive constantly to make it intelligible. A heavy, funereal atmosphere suffuses large parts of the texts. 'Azrā'īl, the Angel of Death, is described in vivid detail:

'Azrā'īl has four faces. One face is fire, and with that face he takes the souls of the unbelievers; one face is made of darkness, and with that face he takes the souls of the hypocrites; and one face is made of flesh, and with that face he takes the souls of the believers, and one face is made of light, and with that face he takes the souls of the prophets and the righteous.... His voice shakes the heavens, his breath is like the fiercest of winds.

The passing of a soul into death is likened to the falling of leaves off a tree one by one, and "the name of every person is written on these leaves. When a person passes to eternity, one of those leaves trembles and then falls, and it falls before 'Azrā'īl. 'Azrā'īl takes it and reads it." Because death is random, one must be mindful, the Yazıcıoğlu insist, of the existential judgment it brings. "The Angels said, 'If the sons of Adam were to know Death, they would never eat or drink or laugh and would never occupy themselves with the world.' God replied, 'Endless desire makes them forget about Death.'" There is even a long technical discussion, again connected to

71 Nükhet Varlık, "Disease and Empire: A History of Plague Epidemics in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire (1453-1600)" (University of Chicago, Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 2008), pp. 42-49. This dissertation has since developed into Nükhet Varlık, *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World: The Ottoman Experience, 1347-1600* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

72 Ibid. p. 27.

al-Ghazālī, on the permanence of the body in the tomb – does literally reconstitute on Resurrection Day, is it created again of new material, or does only the spirit rise? Does a soul in the tomb feel pain? It is interesting that this precise topic was discussed by Amiroutzes and Sultan Meḥmed II, with the sultan advancing noncorporeal resurrection and the philosopher believing in the literal rising of bodies, agreeing with the Yazıcıoğlu.

The brothers' narrative of the End Times finishes with the unusual image of "The Strangling of Death", this time personified not as 'Azrā'īl but as a man. With those deserving of heaven in heaven, and those of hell in hell, God summons the angels "to take Death and strangle him in a place between Heaven and Hell." With Death now dead, the End Times come to a close and God draws creation into eternity.

Confession and ġazā

Why would Aḥmed and Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu participate in such a discourse, in which each of their interventions seem designed to strengthen confessional boundaries and heighten the distinctions between Muslim and Christian – while also reinforcing the qualities of Islam as a mass faith? I suggest that their apologia responds to a certain mid-fifteenth-century moment on the Mediterranean frontier and within Ottoman cultural history, when the opportunistic interconfessionalism hinted at in certain Ottoman chronicles was giving way to a more theoretically conceived ideology in which the notion of religious distinctiveness was a strong ideological pillar. We may follow Cemal Kafadar in naming the mid-fifteenth century and the decades to follow one of the final developmental stages of the so-called "ġazā ideology" as it evolved from a frontier-oriented discourse to a centralizing one. We may also cite as a parallel

the chronicles of Neşrî or Şükrollâh that efface the complex negotiations of early Ottoman political development and present a uniform image of the Ottomans as fighters for the expansion of Islam. In the Yazıcıoğlus' case, the matter to be revised was not the religious naivete of the early Ottoman begs, but the confessional ambiguity of the Mediterranean frontier itself. The Yazıcıoğlus hoped, with their apologia, to close this frontier.

In their half-Greek hometown of Gelibolu, dependent on its fleet manned by converts and new Muslims, the Yazıcıoğlu brothers certainly shared the state's concern with ordering identity and ideology and integrating it into the structure of religiously-construed warfare. We can see this in the way the brothers endorse the concept of *ğazā* itself, by connecting proper religious belief and practice with the execution of frontier warfare. "This poor one...finished [this book] in the finest of towns, the abode of *jihād*, Gelibolu...", Aḥmed writes in the final pages of *Envārü'l-Āşīqīn*. He goes on to say, "For in Gelibolu there are two groups of people. One of them are the *ğāzīs*, and one of them are the martyrs. And of this first group, the *ğāzīs*, there are two classes. One of them are those who conduct *ğazā* against the unbelievers, and one of them conduct *ğazā* against their own carnal souls. And of the martyrs there are two kinds. One of them are those who are martyred at the hands of the unbelievers [*kuffār*], and one of them are those who bear witness to the hand of the Forgiver [*ğaffār*]. May God, in the hereafter, not hold them to account." *ğazā* seems to fundamentally organize the brothers' sense of subjective time. In *Envārü'l-Āşīqīn*, Aḥmed connects his act of writing to Ottoman victory at Varna in 1444: "The date [I started] this book is the time when the sultan son of sultans, Sultan Ġāzī Murād Ḥān, cut off the head of the lord of Hungary and sent it to the sultan of Egypt..."⁷³ Aside from the

73 EA pp. 396a-396b. This sentence presents a problem. The beheading of King Vladislav occurred at Varna in 1444, yet some manuscripts add "at Kosovo" here, referring to the 1448 battle against Jan Hunyadi. The *hijri* date Aḥmed Bīcān gives, 850, coincides with neither battle and falls almost exactly between them. In this context the 1444 date seems the most likely one, because of the detail chosen to commemorate Varna. The

conquest of Constantinople mentioned in the 1465 *Münteha*, this battle is the only contemporary event mentioned in the brothers' corpus.

When we recall that the brothers lived and worked in a seaside neighborhood, and that their audience may have been comprised primarily of sailors who prayed in the *namazgah* of their father's patron, it comes as no surprise that they consider the truest *ğazā* to be naval war. A section of the *Maghārib* and *Envār* entitled "A chapter on *jihād*" is primarily a defense of naval warfare as it was practiced in Ottoman Gelibolu, delineating the sea as the greatest field of battle against the unbeliever. The brothers write, "To conduct *ğazā* at sea is worth ten times *ğazā* on dry land."⁷⁴ "God's most favored kind of war is war at sea. God grants seventy Hajj *sevabs*," the brothers declare, and extend this claim using dozens of similar sayings and *ḥadīth*. One *ḥadīth* even insists that one who dies at sea, unlike a soldier who dies on land, is not even judged by his beliefs and deeds but sent directly to heaven. When Aḥmed lists different categories of martyrs – those who die of plague, those who die in fire, those who die in childbirth, and so on – he remarks that "But more so than all of these, a person who dies at sea in the territory of the unbeliever is a martyr." The enterprise of warfare on the maritime frontier is perhaps most evocatively expressed in the lines with which they close the chapter:

"Praise God that in Gelibolu there is frequent war with the unbelievers and we perform *ğazā*. Sometimes the unbeliever comes to us, and sometimes we go to the unbeliever."

The connection between boundary-drawing in the field of religious ideology with the defense and justification of maritime expansion conceived as *ğazā*, is implicit here.

English traveler Jehan de Wavrin attests that Vladislav's head was shown to the Venetian official Pietro Loredan in Gelibolu as passed through en route to Cairo. I consider it more likely that Aḥmed Bīcān accurately remembered the passage of the king's head through the city and erred on the date, than vice-versa (Colin Imber, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443-45* [Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006], p. 133). See also Halil İnalçık, "Gelibolu," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs.

74 *EA* pp. 285a-285b.

Conclusion

The brothers' anti-Christian polemic embedded in salvation history, their dogmatics and existential evocations of death, and their defenses of naval expansion, may seem like an arbitrary combination of literary ingredients. But the above has hopefully shown that this configuration was appropriate to the needs of fifteenth-century Gelibolu. As such, it becomes clear that the *Maghārib*, *Envār*, and *Muḥammediyye* together create a small canon of what may be aptly described by the term “*ġāzī* theology”. The three works gave the new Muslim reader of the city of *jihād* just enough knowledge of their faith and what made it distinct to sustain the enterprise of Ottoman expansion that was increasingly being defined in religious terms. Muslims or half-Muslims, “*ġāzīs* against the unbelievers... or against their carnal souls”, could in them find their allegiances to the enterprise of the house of ‘Osmān – and, by the end of this process, to Islam itself – clarified, deepened, and defended.

The relationship of the attitudes of the Yazıcıoğlus to the early modern process of confession-building across the Mediterranean and Europe, twinned to the rise of centralizing states and their expanding payroll, may be an attractive subject for comparative scholarship. What is certain is that the brothers' writings, originally reactions to the political and confessional flux of the early and middle fifteenth century, grew to become key texts of populist Ottoman Sunnism for hundreds of years to come, even after the dynamics of the frontier had changed completely. Even in the world empire of the Ottoman sultans, the *ġāzī* theology of this period, imbued at the site of its origin with the heroic mystique of pre-1453 Gelibolu, remained attractive and relevant to ordinary Muslims. In 1626, in one chapter of the long and storied

afterlife of these texts, Gábor Bethlen, a Calvinist prince of Transylvania, which was not then under Ottoman rule, requested that his scribe János Házi translate into Hungarian a work all his Muslim subjects were reading, “in order to show the wise the light of righteousness so that they can differentiate it from the dark abyss of false teachings.”⁷⁵ This book was Aḥmed Bīcān’s *Envārū’l-‘Āṣiqīn*, and it was printed in Hungarian in Košice in what is now Slovakia.⁷⁶ The frontier having moved this far, it is remarkable to find this text still being used for its intended purpose, two hundred years hence.

75 Gábor Ágoston, “Muslim Cultural Enclaves in Hungary under Ottoman Rule,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 44 (1991): pp. 203–4.

76 János Házi, “Machumet propheta, vallásán levő egy fő irástúdo doctornac irásából” (Cassan, 1626), BMV 1795, Lucian Blaga Central Library, Cluj-Napoca.

CHAPTER 4: THE YAZICIOĞLUS WITHIN ISLAM

The Yazıcıoğlu brothers relayed only a fraction of their religious ideas within the *Muhammediyye* and *Envārü'l-‘Āşiqîn*. We have seen how these Turkish catechistic masterpieces presented the truths of Islam as a surface that could be traced by an outsider, just as the *sira* and *Qışaş* once did for earlier generations of Muslims. This was the *face* of the new religion of the Rumelian marches: respect for the Law delivered by the final prophet Muḥammad, belief in a strictly unitary God, and a sense of propriety expressed by quantifiable pious actions. Beneath this surface lie the depths of their personal faith with all of its tensions and contradictions. The Yazıcıoğlu brothers were embedded participants in their own theological-dogmatic tradition, and had developed, in Edirne and in Ankara, sophisticated opinions and arguments as to what lies beyond the outer presentation of the *dīn-i muḥammedī*. Once “submerged” within the sea of faith, precise guidance was still necessary so that even committed, educated believers could move towards not only religious correctness, but subjective proximity with the divine. Expressed as both theology and as Sufi mystical practice, the Yazıcıoğlus’ Islam was situated within the discursive traditions of Islamic dogmatics.

Elaborating and resolving dogmatic tensions is the motive for the composition of the family of texts that is the brothers’ most capacious and wide-ranging: the *Müntehā* works, which consist of Meḥmed’s 1449 *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣu’l-Ḥikam* (“Commentary on *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*”), written in Arabic, and Aḥmed’s two distinct Turkish editions with the same title, the *Kitabü’l-Müntehā* (“The Utmost”) of 1453 and 1465. As the name of Meḥmed’s original text suggests, the stated intent of these compositions is to serve as a commentary on the famous *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (“The

Bezels of Wisdom”) of Muḥyī al-dīn ibn ‘Arabī, a late medieval source-text of mystical philosophy that had already generated a specifically Anatolian (though not linguistically Turkish) commentary tradition. But if the *Müntehā* works are commentaries, then they are highly eccentric ones with a circumscribed relation to the *Fuṣūṣ*. In fact, the *Fuṣūṣ* structures only a section of the works, which otherwise integrate elements seen already in the *Envār* and *Muḥammediyye* and many other features as well. Aḥmed Bīcān’s two editions of the *Müntehā* also retain the vernacularizing approach of the *Envār*. Repeating a passage from his earlier work, Aḥmed writes, “I, the helpless Bīcān, saw that the scholars have prepared many books of exoteric and esoteric knowledge. But some of those books are in Arabic and some in the Persian language. Everyone who studies them cannot extract their fine meaning... This poor one desired to prepare a book in translation, so that the people of our land may benefit from exoteric and esoteric knowledge and become wise...” The application of this vernacularizing method to more advanced subject matter makes the text especially valuable. The *Müntehā* drifts in and out of proximity to the difficult Akbarian text, while remaining, as always, sensitive to the contemporary problems facing the Muslims, old and new, of Anatolia and Rumelia. Not for the novice, yet still not for the true specialist, the *Müntehā* texts are the Yazıcıoğlu brothers’ most developed works on religious subjects.

This chapter aims to use the *Müntehā* to unravel the Yazıcıoğlu’s views on four polemicized religious topics of their era: (i) the Ibn ‘Arabī tradition, (ii) the lineages of Sufi communities, (iii) the question of Sunnism and Shī‘ism, and (iv) apocalypticism.

I. The Meaning of the Ibn ‘Arabī Tradition

In choosing Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣu’l-Hikam* as the vehicle for expressing their most advanced religious opinions, the Yazıcıoğlus made themselves participants in a textual lineage that was two hundred years old. To commentators both modern and medieval, the *Fuṣūṣ* was a work that is defined by difficulties and its controversy. Among the moderns, no less a scholar of Sufism than A. J. Arberry said it exemplifies “the confusion of the mental universe of Ibn ‘Arabi” along with “his heterogeneous and incoherent technical vocabulary”; Clement Huart called it a “disordered fantasy”;¹ R. J. W. Austin, a specialist on Ibn ‘Arabī and translator of the *Fuṣūṣ* into English, admits that the *Fuṣūṣ* suffers from a “general lack of organization,” and the work’s themes “occur again and again from chapter to chapter in a rather haphazard way.”² The Yazıcıoğlus themselves acknowledge its difficulty when they state in the *Müntehā*’s introduction that “Although the *Fuṣūṣ* is to be highly valued by steadfast intellects, it is highly discordant to gullible hearts, according to whom some of its words contradict the Law and its ways are not the ways of the Prophets.”³

An initial source of confusion in the *Fuṣūṣ* regards its structure, composed of chapters that correspond to the lives of twenty-seven prophets. However, with the exception of the first (Adam), and the last (Muḥammad), these prophets are not arranged according to a traditional chronology, such as that of the Yazıcıoğlus’ *Envārü’l-‘Aşıqîn*, *Muḥammediyye*, nor that of their model, al-Kisā’i’s *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā*. Furthermore, in most cases the connection between the lives of each prophet and the metaphysical discussion that ensues is quite obscure. In the chapter on Abraham, for example, Ibn ‘Arabī uses the patriarch’s common epithet *al-khalīl*, “the friend”, as an occasion to elaborate upon the inseparability of God and the cosmos: God permeates

1 Both of these characterizations are cited in Michel Chodkiewicz, “The Diffusion of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Doctrine,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society*, no. 9 (1991): 36.

2 Ibn al-‘Arabī and R. W. J. Austin, *The Bezels of Wisdom* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 20.

3 *KM870A*, p. 1b-2a. *KM857*, p. 1b-2a.

(*yatakhallal*) his Cosmos like color permeates a colored object, just as “Abraham was so called because God permeated his form.”⁴ The opacity of this presentation has not, however, impeded a general comprehension of the work’s three central theses that have served as starting points for all later interpretations of the *Fuṣūṣ*. The first is its monism: all of creation – encompassing the physical world, the world of forms, the world of spirits, and other kinds of universes – is a manifestation of God, so that there exists neither substance, nor form, nor action that is not some aspect of God’s own Being. A reconciliation of the apparent contradictions between this absolute unity of all reality within God’s self (which later commentators have customarily referred to as *wahdat al-wujūd*, the Oneness of Being), and the visible multiplicity of the universe as it is differentiated into attributes, substances, forms, space, time, and so on, is the crux of many of Ibn ‘Arabī’s arguments and those of his followers.

A second major message of the *Fuṣūṣ* is the role of mankind, and more particularly, the of the prophets and saints within this comprehensive divine reality. The *Fuṣūṣ* makes it clear that God “manifested” mankind within Himself as a microcosm of reality as a whole; in a classic image, creation as a whole is for God/Reality an “unpolished mirror” disclosed by His innermost self (*dhāt*), and mankind was the “polish” on that mirror that enabled creation to become an image of Himself. Because mankind alone, in the sum of its capabilities and limitations, participates in each of the Divine Names and attributes (unlike, for instance, the angels, who through their absolute obedience only represent a set of them) he serves the sole locus of divine self-disclosure. As Ibn ‘Arabī claims in the *Fuṣūṣ*’ chapter on Adam, “For God, [man] is as the pupil through the eye through which the act of seeing takes place.” As microcosmos that both embodies and perceives the whole of reality, man is entrusted with mastery over creation, acting

4 Ibn al-‘Arabī and Austin, *The Bezels of Wisdom*.

as God’s vicegerent (*khalīfa*) within the created world. Yet while all mankind shares in this general vicegerency, only this potential can only be actualized insofar as it is focused in one specific individual at any given time, the so-called *al-insān al-kāmil*, the Perfect Man.

Thirdly, the means by which one comes to know these metaphysical truths and simultaneously ascend in degrees towards closeness with God and sainthood is fully supra-rational. Metaphysical knowledge, such as Ibn ‘Arabī claims to possess himself, is only earned experientially through a process of “discovery” (*kashf*) and “verification” (*taḥqīq*) that resists rational description. As an early student of Ibn ‘Arabī stated in very simple terms,

Meanings are there
that cannot fit into fancy –
reason grasps nothing
but a fable.⁵

While one can acquire a vague sense of these three cornerstones of Akbarian doctrine from an initial reading of the *Fuṣūṣ*, students have traditionally learned its finer points through interpreters and commentators. One of the first generation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s students is usually credited with systematizing the Andalusian’s complex writings: an Anatolian of Persian origin, Ṣadr al-dīn Qūnawī, from the Seljuq metropolis of Konya. Qūnawī was the architect of a vast resynthesis, essentially a companion systematization of Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought, in his influential *Miftāḥ Ghayb al-Jam‘ wa Tafsihi* and other works.⁶ When Qūnawī chose to comment upon Ibn ‘Arabī’s works directly, it was the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* to which he turned rather than the master’s more capacious and opaque *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*. When his chief student, Mu‘ayyad al-dīn

5 William C. Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam: Three Thirteenth Century Sufi Texts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 48. Chittick’s work is on the whole the best English-language introduction to the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī. See William C Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1989).

6 Richard Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man: Ṣadr Al-Dīn Al-Qūnawī’s Metaphysical Anthropology*, Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Science: Texts and Studies ; (Leiden: Brill, 2014) is a perceptive new approach to Qūnawī that views him as an independent philosopher in his own right.

Jandī, built upon Qūnawī’s synthesis, he chose also to focus on the *Fuṣūṣ*, and this *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, two generations from Ibn ‘Arabī, became the archetype of its genre.⁷

Jandī writes that it was during Qūnawī’s instruction of the *Fuṣūṣ* that his deepest spiritual experience took place.

At that moment [Qūnawī] exercised a mysterious influence with me, by virtue of his theurgy, such that God thereby granted me an immediate understanding of all that is contained within the entire book, simply through this elucidation of the preamble [of the *Fuṣūṣ*]. The Shaykh told me that he too asked his master – the author of the *Fuṣūṣ* – to expound to him its secrets, and that while he was explaining to him the preamble he exerted a wondrous influence within him, by virtue of his theurgy, such that he thereby grasped all that the book contained.⁸

Jandī here uses the *Fuṣūṣ* to represent the transmission of Akbarian metaphysics as a whole.

Personal instruction of the *Fuṣūṣ*, he implies, allows one to arrive at an inner realization of Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought – furthermore, its embodiment in the *Fuṣūṣ* is what allows this realization to be transmitted across generations by means of an “initiation by the book”. The *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, that is to say, was the package by which Ibn ‘Arabī and Qūnawī’s mysticism could be most efficiently perpetuated. This transmission was dependent upon the personal tutelage of a master of the *Fuṣūṣ*; just like other forms of esoteric knowledge, the *Fuṣūṣ* could be handed down in a chain of mystical initiation.

Jandī’s own *Sharḥ* and Qūnawī’s reformulation proved to be the most influential carriers of Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought in the post-Mongol period. By the fifteenth century, it had become customary for a certain broad class of mystically-inclined intellectuals to produce a *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ* of their own on Jandī’s model. Jandī’s student ‘Abd al-Razzāq Qāshānī (d. 1329)

7 For Chittick’s work on the relationship between Qūnawī and his master, see Chittick, William, “Sadr Al-Din Qunawi on the Oneness of Being.” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (1981): pp. 171–84; “The Last Will and Testament of Ibn ‘Arabi’s Foremost Disciple and Some Notes on Its Author.” *Sophia Perennis* 4 (1978): 43–58; “Şadr Al-Dīn Muḥammad B. Işḥāk B. Muḥammad B. Yūnus Al-Kūnawī,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Brill Online, 2016).

8 Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man*, p. 25

wrote a *Sharḥ* that is famous for having clarified much of the terminology that had become used in a technical fashion by Qūnawī and Jandī. One of Qāshānī’s students was another Anatolian, Dāvūd-i Qayseri, who met his teacher in the Iranian city of Sāva. Qayseri too was the author of a well-known *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ*, one with a particular connection to Rum. It was Dāvūd-i Qayseri who was installed with a thirty-*aqçe* salary a *medrese* in Iznik by Sultan Orḥān in 1336, thereby becoming the first prominent expositor of Akbarian commentary in the western Anatolian borderlands.⁹ Molla Fenari, who emerged later to become central figure of the early Ottoman academy, composed the *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns*, a commentary on Qūnawī’s *Miftāḥ al-Ghayb*, that acquired a place as “one of the premier texts for the teaching of theoretical gnosis” in Iran during the Safavid period and afterwards.¹⁰

Meanwhile, at the other end of the plateau, in Azerbaijan and its political center Tabriz, the *Fuṣūṣ* had by the Yazıcıoğlu’s lifetimes begun to signify something political and social. A 16th-century hagiography of Ibrāhīm-i Gülşenī (d. 1534), founder of the eponymous branch of the Khalwatiyya Sufi order in Cairo, alleges, unsurprisingly, that the saint’s teacher, Dede ‘Umar Rawshanī of Tabriz (d. 1487), was a devotee of the *Fuṣūṣ*. However, in his setting this was apparently not thought of as harmless: Rawshanī was accused by scholars at the Aqqoyunlu encampment in Qarabāğ of unbelief, a charge to which he acquitted himself.¹¹ Later, during the 1470s, Rawshanī again faced this charge, when his accusers condemned him using the

9 Mehmet Bayraktar, “Dāvūd-I Kayserī,” *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1994).

10 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Theoretical Gnosis and Doctrinal Sufism and Their Significance Today,” *Transcendent Philosophy* VI (2005), p. 5.

11 Alexandra Whelan Dunietz, “Qadi Ḥusayn Maybudi of Yazd: Representative of the Iranian Provincial Elite in the Late Fifteenth Century” (University of Chicago, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1990), pp. 53, 136-139. This has since developed into a book, Alexandra Whelan Dunietz, *The Cosmic Perils of Qadi Ḥusayn Maybudi in Fifteenth-Century Iran* (Boston; Leiden: Brill, 2016).

apparently negative label of “*Fuṣūṣī*.”¹² According to the hagiographical account, in this instance his student Gülşeni stepped in to demonstrate the orthodoxy of the *Fuṣūṣ*. It seems that by this time, at least in the Aqqoyunlu lands under the period of influence of the reformist administrator Qādī ‘Īsā, to be a *Fuṣūṣī* was to be a member of a faction facing consistent opposition. Yet this opposition was, in the long run, ineffective: the Khalwatiyya order, to which the Yazıcıoğlu were connected more distantly, maintained a strong tradition of *Fuṣūṣ* scholarship.

In Khurasan and central Iran, the *Fuṣūṣ* commentary tradition was just as strong. Shah Ni‘matullāh Valī (d. 1431), founder of one of the most widespread and enduring Sufi brotherhoods of Iran, was the author of a *Fuṣūṣ* commentary. Sa‘īn al-dīn Turka, a polymathic intellectual of fifteenth-century Isfahan, was immersed in the *Fuṣūṣ* tradition and wrote a commentary himself.¹³ Perhaps most enduringly, the tradition of *Fuṣūṣ*-related writings persisted in the Naqshbandiyya Sufi order, whose early systematizer Muḥammad Pārsā (d. 1419), wrote yet another *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ*. As has been persuasively shown, the Naqshbandiyya, commonly perceived as ultra-orthodox, held an important place within its doctrines for Akbarian teachings prior to its reformation under the order’s “renewer” Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624).¹⁴ No less a figure than the great litterateur ‘Abdurrahmān Jāmī, a devoted Naqshbandī, produced a commentary of the Qūnawī’s *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* entitled *Naqd al-Fuṣūṣ*.¹⁵ Like many others before him, including

12 Side Emre, *İbrahim-i Gülşeni (CA 1442-1534): Itinerant Saint and Cairene Ruler* (University of Chicago, Department of History, 2009), pp. 140-143.

13 Matthew S. Melvin-Koushki, “The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of Sa‘īn Al-dīn Turka Isfahani (1369--1432) and Intellectual Millenarianism in Early Timurid Iran” (Ph.D., Yale University, 2012). See also İlker Evrim Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran: Sharaf Al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī and the Islamic Republic of Letters* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 140-149.

14 Hamid Algar, “The Naqshbandī Order: A Preliminary Survey of Its History and Significance,” *Studia Islamica*, no. 44 (1976): 144; Hamid Algar, “Reflections of Ibn ‘Arabi in Early Naqshbandī Tradition,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* X (1991): pp. 45–57.

15 Nūr-ad-Dīn ‘Abd-ar-Rahmān Ibn-Aḥmad Jāmī, *Naqd an-nuṣūṣ fī ṣarḥ naqṣ al-fuṣūṣ*, ed. William C Chittick (Tihārān, 1977); Jami’s intellectual involvement with waḥdat al-wujūd is discussed substantially in Ertugrul I. Ökten, “Jami (817-898/1414-1492): His Biography and Intellectual Influence in Herat” (Ph.D., The University of Chicago, 2007).

the Yazıcıoğlu brothers, Jami first encountered the original and was baffled by it, needing to turn to a commentary, in this case Qūnawī's. Having studied this for years, Jāmī found that "there remained no ambiguous points... and some of the works that drew criticism for their apparently anti-*shar'ī* stand, shone like the sun."¹⁶ In Herat in the latter decades of the fifteenth century, Jāmī became a tireless defender of the doctrines of *wahdat al-wujūd*, as did many of his fellow Naqshbandīs. Like the Khalwatiyya and the Ni'matullāhiyya, the Naqshbandiyya grew into a vital conduit for Ibn 'Arabī and Qūnawī's ideas across the whole of their geographical scope.¹⁷

Needless to say, the spread of these ideas, within and without the structures of the *turuq*, called for strong polemical responses in each of the areas in which they were popular. Extending what we have already seen regarding Dede 'Umar Rawshanī's reception among the scholars of Azerbaijan, Alexander Knysh discusses the evolving reception of the doctrines contained in the *Fuṣūṣ* from Ibn 'Arabī's lifetime within the '*ulamā*' class, distinguishing several lineages of critical response. Of these, the most central to the long-term shape of anti-Akbarianism were the criticisms articulated by the famous Ibn Ṭaymiyya of thirteenth-century Damascus.¹⁸ However, neither Ibn Ṭaymiyya nor his intellectual affiliates in the Mamluk lands appear to have had an influence in the Anatolian and Rumelian intellectual world by the mid-fifteenth century, when the Yazıcıoğlus were writing.¹⁹ No references to Ibn Ṭaymiyya have been discovered in the Yazıcıoğlus works, nor in those of their Anatolian and Ottoman peers. Instead, a more relevant lineage of anti-*Fuṣūṣ* writing is that which came from eastern Iran and Central Asia, that which

16 Ökten, "Jami (817–898/1414--1492)." p. 307.

17 Algar, "Reflections of Ibn 'Arabi in Early Naqshbandī Tradition."

18 Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).

19 Katharina Anna Ivanyi, in "Virtue, Piety, and the Law: A Study of Birgivi Meḥmed Efendi's *Al-ṭarīqa Al-Muḥammadiyya*" (Princeton University, 2012), pp. 81-82 disputes the implied influence of Ibn Ṭaymiyya on the thought of Birgivi Meḥmed, a sixteenth-century pietist. In doing so she finds no influence that the former was read in the Ottoman sixteenth century or earlier.

emerged from the critical tradition of Māturīdī *kalām* argumentation. A clear expositor of this sort of criticism was the Māturīdī intellectual Sa‘d al-dīn Taftazānī, whom we already know to have exercised paramount influence in the early Ottoman intellectual zone (and the rest of the Ḥanafī world) through the wide diffusion of his students – one of which was Ḥaydar Khvāfī Harawī, probable teacher of Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu.

In his *Risāla fī waḥdat al-wujūd*, Taftazānī takes aim at ‘Ibn Arabī and his students.²⁰ What is interesting about the thrust of his criticisms is that they are based strictly upon the arguments of rational theology (*kalām*) and seek to defend the *kalam* approach against the Ibn ‘Arabī school, which generally rejects rational inquiry in favor of an epistemology that is freed from “shackled intellect” (*al-‘aql al-muqayyad*). Strikingly, he believes that these epistemological foundations the Unity of Being *limit* possibilities for human understanding of God’s Law by constraining the value of empirically-based knowledge in general. In the following sarcastic passage Taftazānī argues that, if rational inquiry can say nothing about an entirely unitary existence about which we can learn only through mystical experience, then we can discover nothing about the nature of creation or even of man.

Earth is identical with heaven, heaven is identical with water, water is identical with fire, fire is identical with air, air is identical with a human being, a human being is identical with a tree, a tree is identical with a donkey, a donkey is identical with man.²¹

Taftazānī takes this *reductio* to be self-evidently absurd, representing a dead end to all paths for inquiry – and furthermore, he asserts that it blasphemes against the idea that God has willed the world and its objects into discrete existence. Taftazānī insists that insofar as a *Fuṣūṣī* would trust the primacy of his unitive visions that indicate a general union among all things that is

20 The following discussion of Taftazānī’s refutation of the *Fuṣūṣ* is based on Knysh, *Ibn Arabī in the Later Islamic Tradition*, pp. 143-158.

21 *Ibid.*, 157.

consubstantive with God, he would be misled into ignoring the world's multiplicity that is sustained by particularities of God's will.

Taftazānī also criticizes Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics directly. He finds absurd the *wujūdī* claim that Absolute Existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), that is identified with God, is present in all perceptible objects of Creation, without itself dividing into that multiplicity. When God permeates all particularities, as the *wujūdīs* claim, then how can his Unity be maintained? Furthermore, he questions the mechanism by which the world is both causally derived from and consubstantial with God; one does not follow from the other. Finally, he criticizes the notion that God, while being all things, can influence the world, since a thing cannot influence itself.

The Yazıcıoğlus Among Fuṣūṣ Critics

Keeping in mind the debates the work had by then stimulated, how did the Yazıcıoğlu brothers participate in the *Fuṣūṣ* commentary tradition? They explicitly acknowledge the controversial character of the *Fuṣūṣ* and of the lineage of commentaries to which they are adding. From the very beginning of the *Müntehā* works, Aḥmed and Meḥmed position themselves within the almost global debate on the validity of Akbarian doctrine, and propose to convince readers of its validity.

Although the *Fuṣūṣ* is to be highly valued by steadfast intellects (*'uqul-i rāsīḥīn*), it is highly discordant to gullible hearts (*qulūb-i nāsīḥīn*), according to whom some of its words contradict the Law and its ways are not the ways of the Prophets. This is why the opinions of masters of [both] reason and received tradition (*'uqūl ve nuqūl*) have abandoned it, to the extent of claiming that if one trusts in its external aspects, one becomes an unbeliever, and if one trusts its esoteric aspects, one needs to ask forgiveness. This poor one was very puzzled (*ḡāyet müteḥayyır*) by this.²²

The two *Müntehās* of Aḥmed Bīcān, from 1453 and 1465, resolve this puzzlement by providing a narrative. In the earlier text, Aḥmed Bīcān describes the sudden arrival of a stranger from

22 *KM870A*, pp. 1b-2b.

Iranian lands who “held a book” in his hands (the resemblance of this story to Ibn ‘Arabī’s own description of how he received the *Fuṣūṣ* from the Prophet in a dream, is probably not coincidental). This book, which is not precisely named, appears to have been a derivative of the *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ* of Mu‘ayyad al-Dīn Jandī by an otherwise obscure Jalāl al-dīn Khujandī Uzjandī. Aḥmed studied this book and found within it a passage that put his doubts on Ibn ‘Arabī’s orthodoxy to rest. This dialogue must be quoted here in full, because it contains the kernel of Aḥmed’s refutation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s critics:

I found in this book that Jalāl al-dīn Khujandī Uzjandī testifies that Mu‘ayyad al-dīn Jandī testifies and recounts that Muḥyī al-dīn Maghribī [*ie.* Ibn ‘Arabī] said to one of his companions, “Do you not know that I have said that some of what I have written in the *Fuṣūṣ* and other books of mine contradicts the Law?”

“I did not know,” said the dervish.

The *shaykh* said, “This is because the Messenger gave me to the *umma* as both mercy and scourge (*rahmet ü belā*), in order to test its convictions. Thus I have become the means to distinguish a *mulḥid* from a monotheist – to send he who is a believer to journey to God on the path of the Law, and to send the *mulḥid* astray from guidance towards the obedience of fancy.”

“O Shaykh, how is it permissible to guide in this way?” asked the dervish.

The *shaykh* said, “I am appointed, and the appointee is excused. I am like those angels whom God commanded at Resurrection to say, *I am your Lord Most High*, so as to test the ideas of the wise (*efkār-i ‘uqalā*). Did those angels become unbelievers? I am just like them.”

So, in finding this authentic testimony, I found success in my aim.²³

The later text omits the story of the book, but retains the rest of the conversation between Ibn ‘Arabī and his disciple. The message in both cases is clear. Aḥmed believes that the *Fuṣūṣ* and Ibn ‘Arabī’s “other books” deliberately skirt the edge of heresy without crossing into it, and that to study them will separate believer from unbeliever. As a sensitive marker for of orthodoxy and heresy, those who understand the *Fuṣūṣ* while remaining properly faithful reaffirm religion deeply and securely, while those who harbor tendencies towards heresy use that same text to fall even farther from God into lawless decadence. The *Fuṣūṣ*, deliberately provocative, contains within it a temptation into heresy that can only be avoided by a proper education, by a guide, in

²³ KM857, pp. 2a-3b.

the text’s inner realities. Aḥmed Bīcān, with this manoeuvre, thus excuses the most problematic aspects of the *Fuṣūṣ* and detours around the epistemological and metaphysical criticisms leveled by the likes of Taftazānī, at the same time as he calls for education in the *Fuṣūṣ* commentary lineage. While Māturīdī critics may in some sense be correct in their arguments, they understand the Akbarian corpus as in the same extremist sense that a putative *Fuṣūṣī mulḥid* (heretic) would, not a *Fuṣūṣī mū’min* (believer) should, and thus miss the point. To defenders of the *Fuṣūṣ* like the Yazıcıoğlu brothers falls the task of explaining the narrow road of true orthodoxy – of understanding the *Fuṣūṣ* within the orbit of proper monotheism.²⁴

So in describing what it is to be a *mū’min* who understands Ibn ‘Arabī, they require the utter rejection of rationalist criticism like Taftazānī’s, which is likened to the literalism of calling unbelievers angels whom God commanded to say “I am the Lord Most High”. Accordingly, without engaging in any sort of preemptive defense, the brothers begin to summarize the essence of the Unity of Existence in the a series of short sections entitled “articles of praise” (*temḥīd*), just as in Qūnawī’s *Miftāḥ*. The first begins with the core claim of *waḥdat al-wujūd*: “*Existence is none other than He* [wujūd min ḥaythu hūwa],’ who requires no preconditions; it is this absolute Reality that we call the ‘hidden of hiddens’ and the ‘truths of truths’”. The second *temḥīd* tells us that all sensible objects are sensible only by virtue of God’s own self-knowledge, in which “the knower and the known are one”, and lays out a chain of being in which causal agency rests, at every juncture, with God as Being’s sole source. The Yazıcıoğlus then proceed to briefly mention the third major feature of the ideology of the *Fuṣūṣ*, the concept of *al-insān al-*

24 Aqşemse’-d-dīn writes to similar effect in *al-Risālat al-Nūriyya*. Distinguishing some kinds of *wujūdī* from others, he says the heretical ones fail to distinguish Creation from the Creator, saying that “God is omnipresent like Nature,” and that the “*mulḥids*” among them, whom he calls “monists” (*ittiḥādīler*) identify themselves with God. The proper *muḥaqqiqs* – whom he calls the “Sufis” – are those who assert God’s independent existence and Creation as an emanation (“shadow”) of it within His domain. A. İhsan Yurd, *Fatih Sultan Mehmed Hanın hocası, Şeyh Akşemseddin: hayatı ve eserleri* (Istanbul: Yurd, 1972), p. 78.

kāmil: “For the Muḥammedan Truth is manifest and is the lord of the temporal world, and manifests the truth of mankind [*ḥaqīqat-i insāniyye*]. We call this ‘the Great Man’. On account of this, mankind merits the vicegerency [*ḥilāfet*].”²⁵ They open a subsequent section with a clear statement, “Intellect is inadequate... The external aspects [of Truth] cannot be comprehended as objects of intellect.”²⁶

Within only a few pages, we have received a summary of three core elements of Akbarian thought that differentiate it from Avicennan *falsafa* or Māturīdī *kalām*: a gnostic epistemology, the Unity of Existence, and the anthropocentric principle of the Perfect Man. This rapid run-through of core *Fuṣūṣī* beliefs indicates for us how *little* the Yazıcıoğlu actually cared to argue directly against Taftazānī’s refutations. The doctrines emerge without defense, as pure, confident explication, using for this text portions of Jandī and Qūnawī and making full use of terminology that is favored by the Ibn ‘Arabī textual tradition. The Yazıcıoğlu, also drawing from Jandī, then outline another controversial doctrine, that of the “immutable essences” (*a’yān-i ṣābite*) that constitute a formal blueprint for the items of creation – a doctrine which critics have accused of undermining the idea of God’s omnipotence. A technical discussion ensues of the “Five Presences”, or categories of existence, that descend from the world of immutable essences and divine knowledge, down through the world of “hidden presences” and spirits, then to the world of exemplary forms and dreams, then the world of visible forms, and finally the ultimate “hidden presence of the absolute, which is all-encompassing.” These fit closely with the Five Presences of Qūnawī.²⁷ Likewise the rest of this section remains firmly within Qūnawī and Jandī’s framework.

25 *KM857* p. 3a.

26 *Ibid.* p. 10a.

27 Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man*, p. 98.

However, we do perceive a certain defensive anxiety about *wujūdī* beliefs in the following chapter which, despite its initial appearances, amounts to a very coherent apologia for Akbarian doctrine. This second chapter, organized into “observation-places” (*mirṣad*), misleadingly deals at the outset with highly obscure matters of the directionality of God’s relationship with creation. Yet the arc of this chapter differs from the previous in that it moves “downward” from high Akbarian theology and its abstract equations into more familiar Yazıcıoğlu territory: testimony from various historical religious authorities and miscellaneous *aḥādīth*. Aḥmed Bīcān, in a tremendously revealing passage, states his motivation for entering into this discussion.

O seeker of divine secrets! If you ask us, ‘what is the basis of this knowledge? And why be submerged in the Unity [*tevhīd*] of His Essence [*zāt*]?’ These many truths have been told, but in the time of the Prophet and his Noble Companions and followers they did not speak thusly...’

The answer is this: How much have the notable scholars and the pillars of wisdom said about the Truths of Unity! Their knowledge is the most exalted knowledge and a foretaste of [divine] Glories [*eclā*]. The sign of this, first of all, God’s own Word; and after that the word of the Prophet, and then the word of ‘Alī, and then the word of the verifiers [*muḥaqqıqlar*] whose perfections of knowledge are trusted by the scholars of the East and West...²⁸

The sentiment that is here expressed by the questions of a hypothetical reader – that the vocabulary of Akbarian theology deviates from Prophetic practice – is an entirely different sort of criticism from the philosophical objections of the Ḥanafī critics. Rather, it holds more in common with Ibn Ṭaymiyya’s suspicion that the Sufism of the post-Mongol period constituted a rejection of the practices of the righteous early Muslims and an example of innovation without foundation in religious sciences. Ibn Ṭaymiyya’s *al-Şūfiyya wa al-Fuqarā*, for example, is a sustained argument that the Qur’anic terminology used by contemporary mystics – words like *faqīr* and *walī* to describe themselves, and the concepts of intoxication and self-annihilation to

28 *KM857* p. 8a.

describe their mystical states – was understood in the Qur’an and in the time of the Prophet in very different, less radical ways.²⁹ For instance, the word *walī* signified not the saints whose spiritual power, earned through knowledge and devotional exercises, brought them into a proximity with God, but simply “the pious believers, whether called *faqīr*, Sufi, legist, scholar, merchant, soldier, artisan, *amīr*, governor, or something else.”³⁰ In short, Ibn Ṭaymiyya alleges that the whole Sufi, and by extension, Akbarian conceptual world was based on wishful thinking and would be alien to the world of the Prophet and his companions. It seems that some of the Yazıcıoğlu’s audience, despite the fact that they were probably unfamiliar with Ibn Ṭaymiyya, held similar views that called for the Yazıcıoğlu’s response. We may venture to call this a kind of ‘fundamentalist’ objection to *wujūdī* teachings.

The Yazıcıoğlu have a ready and effective response to the ‘fundamentalist’ objection. They state that all respected masters of religious knowledge, beginning with the Prophet himself, have, sometimes clearly and sometimes obscurely, expressed the doctrine of the Unity of Existence, and provide quotations from these figures. According to them the Prophet himself said, “In matters knowledge there are things like a hidden body [*hey’et-i meknūne*]. Those things are known by God and cannot be denied; however, the resisting ones [*ehl-i i’tirāz*] deny this.” ‘Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib, for his part, claimed, “Reality [*ḥaqīqat*] is a light that shone at the dawn of pre-eternity upon the forms that had no being. All action and attributes were made manifest by means of that Reality.”³¹ Ja‘far al-Şādiq said, “God illuminated his servants with his Word, but the people did not see it.” This argument is further developed with quotations from Bāyazid Bisṭāmī, Abū Ṭālib Makkī, Junayd Baghdādī, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghāzalī, and others, with the latest

29 Th. Emil Homerin, “Ibn Taimiya’s Al-Sufiyah Wa’l-Fuqara,” *Arabica* XXXII (1985): pp. 219–44.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 236.

31 These words attributed to ‘Alī are a clear expression of the idea, dominant in Islamic philosophical piety since Avicenna, that being precedes form.

being allegedly *wujūd*ist statements by the famous Samarqand rival of Taftazānī, Sayyid Sharīf Jurjānī: “Truly the necessary of existence is absolute existence, and by absolute existence what is meant is essence (*māhiyyet*), without any faults.... Existence lacks for nothing.”³² Finally, they cite an exegesis by Fakhr al-dīn Rāzī in which the Qur’anic phrase “Had there been within [the heavens and earth] gods besides God, they both would have been disordered”³³ is taken to imply that all existence must have only one divine source that is unshared and direct.

Over the course of this set of quotations, each of these great figures of the past is taken to verify a specific aspect of the Ibn ‘Arabī legacy in its contemporary context. The Prophet asserts that esoteric knowledge is real and important; ‘Alī implies the strong monism of Ibn ‘Arabī and the priority of being over form and attribute; al-Şādiq predicts that not all will be able to understand it, while the latter-day scholars corroborate Akbarian metaphysics. It is interesting that all of these figures are called *muḥaqqiqs*, “verifiers”, the term used by Qūnawī and others to refer to the Ibn ‘Arabī school – whether or not they predate the *shaykh*.³⁴ The implication here is that *wujūdī* mysticism is as old as Islam, and was part of the esoteric knowledge of all generations of the righteous. A fundamentalist critique like Ibn Ṭaymiyya’s is then rendered invalid.

This argument is appears as well in the writings of the Yazıcıoğlu’s closest peers within their own Sufi community, the Bayramiyye of Ankara. In Aqşemse’ d-dīn’s writings in particular one can detect the same kind of concern with countering the perennial objection that Sufi

32 *KM857* 8b-9a.

33 Qur’an 21:22

34 In Ahmed Bican’s thought this is a consistent division. For instance, he writes in the *Envār*, “The exotericists [*ehl-i zāhir*] say that for God to love one of his servants is a metaphor, an expression for God’s mercy. And for a servant to love God is an expression for worship. But the verifiers [*ahl-i taḥqīq*] say that for God to love his servant is to be close to Him, and to purify esoteric nature [*bāṭin*], instead of loving the world, and to remove the veil from the heart. For the servant to love God is to incline towards this perfection.”

practice was a groundless innovation. Yet his focus is quite different. Aqşemse’ d-dīn, though using many of the Yazıcıoğlus’ same sources (Suhrawardī’s *‘Awārif al-Ma’ārif*, Fakhr al-dīn Rāzī’s *Tafsīr*, al-Baghawī’s *Maşābīh*, and others), draws from them far more practical information, dedicating more attention to the matter of what color undergarments a Bayramī should wear or how to fold the cloth that makes up the Bayramī headgear than to the subtle polarities of God’s presence throughout creation. Nevertheless it seems that his critical interlocutors (whom he calls “slanderers” [*maṭā’in*]) are of a familiar type, charging that there is no prophetic precedent for mystics’ beliefs and habits. In one typical example of many in his *al-Risālat al-Nūriyya*, Aqşemse’ d-dīn writes,

A slanderer alleges, “[Sufis] hold a staff in their hands. For Sufis to carry a staff is an innovation (*bid‘at*).” [On the contrary], to carry a staff is *sunna*... as is seen in the *Büstānu’l-faqīh* [sic] of Abū Layth [Şamarqandī], which says that it is transmitted from Ibn ‘Abbās that “to carry a staff is the *sunna* of all the prophets, and is a sign to the believers”; and Ḥasan al-Başrī also said “to carry a staff has six benefits...”³⁵

Though this reference to a respected early pietist may not have silenced all critics, it implies that for practicing mystics like the Yazıcıoğlus and Aqşemse’ d-dīn, a turn to *ḥadīth* and to the heroic characters of early Islam like Ibn ‘Abbās and Ḥasan al-Başrī served as an appropriate response to those who charged that Sufi practice was an innovation of later days. It is now possible to speculate upon the climate of popular religious debate in the context of these two Bayramīs. For the Yazıcıoğlus’ audience just as Aqşemse’ d-dīn’s, learned *kalām* argumentation in the style of Taftazānī’s was less important; rather, perhaps there existed a popular sensibility in these west Anatolian and Rumelian circles that judged the validity of religious traditions based upon ideas about what existed in the Prophet’s time. The *Fuṣūṣ* fell within the purview of this criticism, and thus required a traditionalist defense.

35 Yurd, *Fatih Sultan Mehmed Hanın hocası, Şeyh Akşemseddin*, pp. 32-33.

Having invested so much energy in defending the *wujūdī* worldview, it may come as a surprise that the bulk of the Yazıcıoğlu's *Fuṣūṣ* commentary retreats from the abstraction of the Qūnawī-Jandī tradition and returns to their most familiar source of inspiration, a very literal narrative of the sequence of prophets. This creates a dramatic contrast with both the *Fuṣūṣ* and its other commentaries. First, each of the *Fuṣūṣ*'s chapters are reordered into a chronological sequence, so that it comes to resemble the *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā* structure of the *Envār* and *Maghārib al-Zamān*. Instead of following the arbitrary order of the *Fuṣūṣ* – that places, for example, Jesus in the fifteenth chapter and Moses in the twenty-fifth – the Yazıcıoğlu's *Fuṣūṣ* commentary matches the traditional chronology, with Jesus as second-to-last.

More importantly, the metaphysical discussion occasioned by the invocation of each prophet in Ibn 'Arabī's and Jandī's text is often shortened, summarized, or even omitted entirely in the Yazıcıoğlu's texts. In its place the brothers revisit their *Qiṣaṣ* sources and outline amusing or edifying anecdotes from each prophet's life. The chapter on the prophet Joseph is typical. Several pages, following Ibn 'Arabī's precedent, meditate on the "light" which is evoked by Joseph's famed physical beauty; the created cosmos is like a shadow of God's all-encompassing light for which Joseph's beauty is a symbol, and which Muḥammad witnessed at the height of his *mi'rāj*. Yet this commentary soon transforms into the familiar narrative of the life of Joseph, in which his brothers abandon him to be eaten by wolves, he makes his way to Egypt, and then deals with the Pharaoh and Zulaykhā. Most of this section is identical to the *qiṣaṣ* recounted in the *Maghārib al-Zamān* and *Envārü'l-Āṣiqīn*. As such, the *Müntehā* turns long sections of the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* into even longer sections of al-Kisā'ī's *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā*.

This pattern is not uniform. The chapter on the relatively minor prophet Shu‘ayb does not deal with the prophet at all, but, like the *Fuṣūṣ* and its commentaries, expounds upon Ibn ‘Arabī’s views of man’s gnostic capacity as represented by the heart, before discussing the nature of an individual’s belief in God, and finally dealing with God’s continual renewal of creation. The Yazıcıoğlu greatly expand upon this discussion in several directions, by, for instance, listing many pairs of words that represent in their pairing the capacity for divine understanding – the most important of which is *‘ışq* and *ma‘şūq*, lover and beloved.

On the whole, however, the Yazıcıoğlu literalize the text of the *Fuṣūṣ*, using their commentary to give the reader contextual background rather than laborious exegesis of Ibn ‘Arabī’s philosophical argumentation. It is dangerous to responsibly speculate on the motivations for turning theology back into prophetic narrative. What is certain is that this literalization is not due to any lack of understanding or interest in the finer points of Akbarian metaphysics, which is amply demonstrated throughout the work. This author may only suggest that this approach to the *Fuṣūṣ* tradition is reflective of the needs of an audience who may not be familiar with all of the extra-Qu’anic lore that is taken as common by learned readers of the *Fuṣūṣ*.

Insofar as some Ottomans objected to Meḥmed and Aḥmed’s works, they did so because of its position on the *Fuṣūṣ* and Ibn ‘Arabī. A late seventeenth-century Ottoman *fetvā* by one ‘Ālim Meḥmed (Emīrzāde) records the following question-and-answer:

Some scholars approve of the book *Muḥammediyye* by ‘the *Muḥammediyye*’s author’ Yazıcıoğlu, and count it among accepted books. And some get ahold of it and do not like it... and claim on your authority that ‘Ālim Meḥmed Efendi does not approve of it. If in fact the *Muḥammediyye* contains some words that contradict the Law. Please grace us with your pronouncement...

The answer: Yazıcıoğlu, author of the Muḥammediyye, is of the carnal soul's *wujūdī* school. It is the school of the author of the *Fuṣūṣ*, Ibn 'Arabī. He commented on the *Fuṣūṣ* and in his *Muḥammediyye* there are many forged *ḥadīths* and falsehoods.³⁶

II. Sufi Lineage and Community

We have seen the way the Yazıcıoğlus navigate the controversial subject of Ibn 'Arabī and the *Fuṣūṣ*. This may have been at the time the most contentious, but it is by no means the only pietistic theme of the Yazıcıoğlu brothers; the *Müntehā* is not simply a manifesto of *Fuṣūṣī* doctrine. The brothers had to navigate many other doctrinal and sociological divisions within the imagined history of mystically-inclined communities. The *Müntehā* offers several sections by which they are able to depict themselves as part of ancient and venerable lineage of Sufi figures and institutions going back to the time of the Prophet, and also distinguish their own identities within that continuity. A section immediately following their narrative of the prophet's life (largely identical with that presented in *Envārü'l-Āşiqīn*) consists of an unattributed extract from 'Abd al-Razzāq Qāshānī's *Istilāḥāt al-Şūfiyya* ("Sufi Terminology"), a glossary written specifically to clarify difficult Arabic terms and concepts from the *Fuṣūṣ* and other mystical texts. The Yazıcıoğlus' version is highly abridged in an idiosyncratic manner, focusing on specifically Akbarian concepts such as *a'yān al-thābita* or *barzakh*, but without diverging in each definition from Qāshānī's original. In any case, Aḥmed Bīcān, in his 1453 edition, writes that he provided this glossary for the following reason:

Now, O revealers of the secrets of truth! O, he who encounters the lights of subtleties! Let it be known that for each student who studies these sagely words... and accepts these words into their hearts, there is no doubt that they will reach their goals and accomplish their aims! For there are two types of *shaykhs*. One they call the "Easterners" [*meşārīqa*], and the other they call the "Westerners" [*meğāribe*]. All those who are Easterners say, "For all students, asceticism and

36 Mehmed Emirzade, "Majmu'a 1694-1716", MS Arab 292. Houghton Library, Harvard University. I thank Nir Shafir for drawing this to my attention and for providing me access to this manuscript.

seclusion are necessary, until their souls are rescued from the world of darkness and reaches the light of lights.” But the Westerners say, “There is no doubt that asceticism and monasticism have their effects, but those who know our wisdom do not have much need for asceticism and seclusion. Asceticism, a demanding path, gives no peace to those who do not deserve it, while wisdom is the most proximate path, the path of annihilation and permanence. Sometimes immediate emanations [of wisdom] reach [a student] in a year or a month or a week and they achieve their aim. And a very talented student can do so in a day or an hour; it is even true that a perfect teacher [*ṣeyḥ-i kāmil*] can guide one and cause one to arrive [at proximity to God] in a single moment.” This is why I, caller to faith, Aḥmed Bīcān, have summarized these terms and brought them as an offering to the mystics [*‘uṣṣāq*], so that, with God’s permission, they may quickly reach [God’s Presence].³⁷

Aḥmed presents here a simple taxonomy of *shaykhs*, dividing them into East and West. The so-called *mashāriqa* (easterners) emphasized ascetic practice and seclusion as prerequisites for gnosis, while the *maghāribā* (westerners) recognized wisdom itself as the only necessity. In the “western” view, the especially talented student, under the guidance of an accomplished mystagogue, could reach gnosis in a single moment of illumination with no need for rigorous self-denying practices. One must inquire about the imagined historicity of this binary. It is reasonably clear that by “westerner”, Aḥmed refers to Ibn ‘Arabī and his disciples; the *shaykh*, coming from far al-Andalus, brought a discrete body of highly difficult, but still linguistically accessible truths to his disciples in Anatolia and Syria. Along with most other Andalusī mystics, Ibn ‘Arabī did not create or participate in the structure of a *ṭarīqa* which could organize the practices of ascetic devotion. The “easterners”, on the other hand, probably represented the rigorous institutional Sufism that grew out of the Khurasani Malāmātiyya of the ninth and tenth century – the *ṭarīqa* tradition properly understood. In the Yazıcıoğlu’s day, this was best exemplified by the Ḥalvetiyye and Şafaviyya of Anatolia and Iran, the Mevleviyye of Anatolia, the Naqshbandiyya-Khvājagān, and various other orders, all of which were characterized by specific devotional practices such as *khalwa* (seclusion), *samā’* (musical performance and dance) and *dhikr* (recitation), respectively. There then emerges a contradiction. Aḥmed Bīcān seems to

37 KM857 80a-80b.

imply that he follows the western, and not eastern practice, even as he claims membership in the Bayramiyye that is explicitly linked to an “eastern” lineage through the Şafavī *shaykhs* and their forbears.

It is also difficult to contextualize this preference for the so-called “western” mystical tradition in light of passages elsewhere in the *Müntehā*. An illuminating chapter is entitled *Tezkiret-i Evliyā*, “A Registry of the Saints”, where the brothers present a chronological list of holy personages after Muḥammad’s time that serves as a kind of internal history of the Sufi tradition they considered themselves a part of; based on particular individuals listed, its entries appear to be extracted from Farīd al-dīn ‘Aṭṭār’s work of the same name.³⁸ Aḥmed Bīcān claims that the Prophet’s Companions have been written about elsewhere, so “I myself will write about the *shaykhs*.”³⁹

Following ‘Aṭṭār, the first such *shaykh* is the sixth Shī‘ī imam Ja‘far al-Şādiq, who, as “sultan of the nation of Muştafā”, is “perfect in knowledge of truth and wisdom, the foremost of the people of discernment and leader of the people of Love (*zevq ehline muqaddem ve ‘ışq ehline pīşvā*).” We need not take this dedication as an expression of Shī‘ī tendencies as they would later to be understood: praise of Ja‘far as-Şādiq was common in the Ottoman lands and elsewhere for centuries before and after the Yazıcıoğlu’s time. Following Ja‘far as-Şādiq, a list of well-known figures revered among *ṭarīqa* Sufism is presented: Uways al-Qaranī, Ḥasan al-Başrī, Mālīk b. Dīnār, Muḥammad b. Wasi‘ (d. 751), Ḥabīb al-‘Ajamī, Abu Hāzīm Madanī, ‘Uqbat al-Ghulām, Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya, Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ, Ibrāhīm b. Adham, Bishr al-Khwāfī, Dhū al-Nūn al-Mişrī, Bāyazīd Bisṭāmī, ‘Abdullāh b. Mubārak, Şufyān Thawrī, Abū ‘Alī Shaqīq, Jihād al-

38 Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, trans. and ed. Paul E. Losensky, *Farid Ad-Din ‘Attār’s Memorial of God’s Friends: Lives and Sayings of Sufis* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009).

39 *KM857* pp. 96a-96b.

Kūfī, Imām Shāfi‘ī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Dāvūd al-Ṭā‘ī, Sariy al-Saqāṭī, and Junayd al-Baghdādī. To close this sequence, Aḥmed Bīcān praises his own Sufi master Ḥācī Bayram Velī, citing his *silsila* which runs from the Ṣafavī *shaykhs* through Aḥmad al-Ghāzalī, Junayd, Sariy al-Saqāṭī, Ḥabīb al-‘Ajāmī, and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī to ‘Alī and Muḥammad. “Dervish Bīcān’s *shaykh* is Ḥācī Bayram,” he writes, “and his *shaykh*’s *shaykh*’s *silsila* and gnostic knowledge is that of Sultan Bāyazīd [Bisṭāmī], and his robe and headgear are from Junayd of Baghdad.” Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj is invoked at the close of the chapter. Each personage is described with one or two anecdotes illustrating their piety.⁴⁰

Though the figures in this list are not obscure – indeed, almost all were universally revered in the Sunnī world as Sufis and scholars – their union here, insofar as it shortens ‘Aṭṭār’s more comprehensive listing, represents a particular configuration of pious memory. Though Aḥmed Bīcān preserves ‘Aṭṭār’s broad framework of the history of sainthood – from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Uways to al-Ḥallāj – it is worth noting how exclusively his list harkens to the mythical genesis of Sufism in the community of *zāhids* (renunciants) of late Umayyad and ‘Abbasid ‘Iraq. Aḥmed Bīcān repeats only the first twenty-one figures of ‘Aṭṭār’s *Tazkira*, the majority of whom were Baghdadi renunciants, while omitting all of ‘Aṭṭār’s later pious figures with the sole exception of al-Ḥallāj. Nor are any post-Ḥallāj individuals included in this list. There is a deliberate archaic quality to his memory of his Sufi forbears.

It appears, in other words, that Aḥmed Bīcān was at pains to situate his Bayrami Sufi heritage within classical *zuhd*. His own *silsila* is presented the same way, passing with few links from the contemporary Ṣafaviyya backwards in time to Junayd al-Baghdādī and Saqāṭī. Neither the Ṣafavī *shaykhs* who taught the teachers of Ḥācī Bayram, nor the revered Ibrāhīm Zāhid

40 *KM857* pp. 96b-100b.

Gilānī out of whose mystical circles emerged the Şafaviyya and Khalwatiyya, are mentioned more than in passing. An interesting consequence of this emphasis is a corresponding de-emphasis on another strand of medieval Islamic piety: the Malāmiyya of Khurasan. Ahmet Karamustafa has characterized late medieval *ṭarīqa* Sufism as, in part, a merging of the ethos of early *zuhd* piety of early Baghdad Sufism with the social-mindedness of somewhat later Khurasani tradition of the Malāmiyya, “The Path of Blame.”⁴¹ Malāmī ideology remained current as a strand of Persianate Sufi thought through the Yazıcıoğlu’s time – indeed, in 1429 the name Melāmiyye was revived by Dede ‘Ömer Sikkīnī (Bıçaqçı), one of the primary disciples of none other than Hācı Bayram Velī, as a name for one of the Bayramīs’ successor communities.⁴² Thus it is striking that the Yazıcıoğlu make no mention of the original Malāmī shaykhs in their *Tezkiret-i Evliyā*, but rather focus exclusively on the earlier *zāhids*. The absence of symbolic Melāmīs like Hāmdun al-Qassār and Abū Hāfs al-Haddād, who are prominent in ‘Aṭṭār’s *Tazkira*, shows a revision of the historical memory of the Malāmiyya. Incidentally, the philosophy expounded is also anti-Melāmi in its explicitly renunciatory attitudes.

Any interpretation of this *tezkire* ventures into the realm of untestable hypothesis. Aḥmed Bīcān, by drawing a direct line from the early Sufis of Baghdad to the present day *shaykhs* of the Bayramiyya while skipping over post-‘Abbasid spiritual figures, perhaps intended to ground his own Bayramī heritage in the unimpeachable prestige of the early period. The universal respect

41 Ahmet Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). On the Malāmiyya, see pp. 48-51. “The encounter of Iraq Sufism with Malāmiyya led to a merger of the two in which Sufism... emerged as the dominant party”, writes Karamustafa, p. 173.

42 The latter-day Melāmī order, an outgrowth of the Bayramī community, was one of the Ottoman Empire’s most successful Sufi groups. For an overview of its history, see Nathalie Clayer, Alexandre Popović, and Thierry Zarcone, *Melāmis-Bayrāmīs: études sur trois mouvements mystiques musulmans* (Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1998). One of its key texts has been edited as İsmail E. Erünsal, *XV-XVI. asır Bayrāmī-Melāmīliği’nin kaynaklarından Abdurrahman El-askerî’nin Mir’âtü’l-işk’ı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003); an older study is Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı, *Melāmîlik ve melāmîler*. (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1931).

enjoyed by these politically quietist ascetics, distant from the controversies of the era of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, may have been appealing to the Yazıcıoğlu brothers, in effect placing the Bayramiyya upon a stable island of sound authority in uncertain times. In another sense, this is akin to a traditionalist tendency to privilege the opinions and manners of the Companions or early jurists over latter-day interpreters, especially in times of upheaval. We have seen already how “fundamentalist” criticism of Sufi practice called for a response from the likes of the Yazıcıoğlus and Aqşemse’ d-dīn (the latter made special note of the extension of his Sufi lineage to the unimpeachable first generations of Muslims, and even drew his own familial lineage back to Shihāb al-dīn Suhrawardī, Shaqīq al-Balkhī. and ultimately to Abū Bakr). It seems that the Yazıcıoğlus and their community stood at an interface between a *ḥadīth*-centric traditionalism and the novelty of the post-Akbarian religious sciences, always aware of an everpresent “past-oriented” discourse on religious fundamentals that must be either participated in or defended against.

On the question of Sufi practice, there is no evidence that the Yazıcıoğlus advocated anything unusual. They discuss practice in a section of the *Müntehā* claiming to be an abridgement of the *Manāzil al-Sā’irīn* (“Travelers’ Stopping-Places”) of the eleventh-century Khurasani mystic Abū Ismā‘īl ‘Abdullāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī (possibly accessed through the *Sharḥ Manāzil* of ‘Abd al-Razzāq Qāshānī).⁴³ Aḥmed Bīcān presents this enduring spiritual guidebook as a manual for good Sufi devotional practice that presumably reflects contemporaneous Bayramī teachings. We see Aḥmed, through the *Manāzil*, exalt such practices as ascetic penitence (*tevbe*), pious contemplation of God’s unity and its verbal commemoration (*tefekür* and *tezekkür*), renunciation and abandonment of worldliness (*i’tiṣām* and *firār*), self-

43 *KM857* pp. 80b-88b.

discipline (*riyāzet*), auditory or music-related devotion (*sema*'), extra-sensory perception of hidden qualities (*baṣīret* and *firāset*), and fasting. 'Abdullāh al-Anṣārī also describes and thereby endorses the advanced stages of a mystic's inner development, designated by terms such as *ğarq* (submersion) and *vecd* (ecstasy), *sekr* (intoxication), and ultimately *maḥv* (eradication) and *fenā* (annihilation), with each such term denoting a specific place (*maqām*) along a mystic's route of spiritual passage.

The *Manāzil*, because it is so universal, cannot be used to differentiate the practices of the Yazıcıoğlus and the Bayramīs with respect to other contemporary Sufi groups. The most that can be done is to suggest affinities with other Sufis for whom the *Manāzil* was also canon, such as the Naqshbandiyya who hold al-Anṣārī in especially high esteem. Like the Naqshbandiyya, Aḥmed Bīcān's Sufi community seems to have used the *Manāzil* as a guide to a moderately renunciant Sufism that held open the possibility, but not ubiquity or even necessity, of gnosis (however, unlike the Naqshbandiyya, the Yazıcıoğlus and the Bayramīs upheld vocal, not silent, *zīkr*). For further details on contemporary Bayramī practice, such as their sartorial requirements, specific prayers, and guidelines on of ritual purity, the writings of Aqṣemse'd-dīn continue to be a better source, though they lie beyond the scope of this study.

III. The Shī'ī-Sunnī Question

We have been able to place the Yazıcıoğlus at particular juncture within the controversies of the *Fuṣūṣ* and among the competing lineages of fifteenth-century Sufism. What remains to be discussed is the sectarian consciousness of the Yazıcıoğlu brothers. Fifteenth-century Persianate societies in Timurid, post-Timurid Turkmen, and Anatolian domains have been characterized as

being both pre- and post-sectarian, embodying a kind of Shī‘ī-Sunnī interconfessionalism that was ruptured only by the Safavid revolution of Shah Ismā‘īl at the century’s end. Tokens of this state of affairs are the evolution of the Kubraviyya order along doctrinal lines intermediate between the classical expressions of the two faiths while trending, in the long term, towards Twelver Shī‘ism,⁴⁴ and the more famous Shī‘itization of the Şafavī order of Ardabil in the latter half of the century.⁴⁵ For clear examples from Timurid territories we need look no further than Sulţān-Ĥusayn Bayqara in Herat calling for a *khutba* in honor of the Twelve Imams (while otherwise displaying a Sunnī orientation) or Abū al-Qāsim Bābur’s minting of coins with the names of the imams; further west one encounters ‘Alid poetry of Jihānshāh, sultan of the Qaraqoyunlu domains, and any number of examples recounted in Biancamaria Amoretti’s classic article on the subject.⁴⁶ In the Ottoman case, evidence of such philo-‘Alidism is harder to come by, but the sparsity of evidence should not lead one to conclude the absence of these tendencies. Among the few data points that have been studied, the rapid spread of Bektaşism into western Anatolia during the whole of the fifteenth century, and the long-term presence of social elements like the Tekke tribe of southwestern Anatolia who, through the Şāh-Qulu movement, would make common cause with Ismā‘īl’s religiously-motivated insurrection at the beginning of the sixteenth century, indicate, at least, that strongly Shī‘ī or ‘Alid-loyalist doctrines had some foothold in the Ottoman lands and bordering regions at that time.⁴⁷ In any case, whatever

44 Marijan Molé, “Les Kubrawiya Entre Sunnisme et Shi’isme,” *Revue Des Etudes Islamiques* 29 (1961) and “Profession de foi de deux Kubrawis: ‘Alī Hamadānī et Muhammad Nūrbakhsh.” *Bulletin D’études Orientales* 17 (1962 1961): pp. 133–204. For the order’s later developments, see Devin DeWeese, “The Eclipse of the Kubravīyah in Central Asia.” *Iranian Studies* 21, no. 1/2 (1988): pp. 45–83.

45 Classic works on this subject are Adel Allouche, *The Origins and Development of the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict (906-962/1500-1555)* (Berlin: K. Schwarz Verlag, 1983); Michel M. Mazzaoui, *The Origins of the Şafawids; Şī‘ism, Şūfīsm, and the Gulāt* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1972).

46 Biancamaria Amoretti, “Religion in the Timurid and Safavid Periods,” in *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 610–55.

47 Overviews of these aspects of Anatolian Turkish society are given in Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Zındıklar ve mülhidler yahut dairenin dışına çıkanlar: 15.-17. yüzyıllar* (Istanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1999).

experimental sectarian syntheses emerged in the continuum between what would become modern Sunnism and Twelver Shi'ism were highly constrained by sixteenth-century doctrinal entrenchment on both sides of the Ottoman-Safavid frontier.⁴⁸

An original motivation for this investigation of the Yazıcıoğlu brothers and their pious vision was to see if it may show evidence of a “pre-classical” Ottoman Sunnism displaying what modern eyes would see as Shī'ī characteristics. The results of this inquiry are mixed. On one hand, the Yazıcıoğlus, with total consistency, stick to markers of Sunnī affiliation, such as a scrupulously equivalent reverence for the four Righteous Caliphs, Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, and 'Alī. On the other hand, they appear remarkably *unconcerned* with refuting Shī'ism or even identifying it as a heresy, as would become standard within a half-century of their writing. And in a more subtle sense, they show evidence of having grown up in in a sea of Shī'ī-influenced argumentation on the issue of religious leadership, and of having absorbed such argumentation, through intermediaries, into their core beliefs. That is to say is to say that the stamp of late medieval Shī'ism indelibly marks their works, despite their non-Shī'ī gestures.

It is easy to scan *Kitābū'l-Müntehā* and find statements that rule out doctrinaire Shī'ism. Aḥmed says, “The ‘*āṣere-i mübeṣṣire* [the ten who are promised paradise] are in heaven. They are Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī, Ṭalḥa, Zubayr, 'Abdurraḥmān [b. 'Awf], Sa'd b. Abī Waqqās, Sa'īd b. Zayd, and Abū 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrāh,”⁴⁹ a list that includes figures, like 'Umar and Sa'd, that are anathema to most Shī'īs. In the narrative portion, the Prophet is quoted as finding Abū Bakr and 'Umar “the most appropriate for the imamate”. The episodes of the Sunnī

and Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994).

48 See Allouche, *The Origins and Development of the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict (906-962/1500-1555)*.

49 *KM857* p. 112b.

origin story, such as ‘Uthmān’s death “while reading the Scripture,”⁵⁰ are relayed in typical ways. The four Rāshidūn are to sit, in sequence, on a throne of ruby in heaven that is “twenty miles in length”.⁵¹ There is no doubt that in the broadest self-declared sense, Aḥmed Bīcān’s sectarian inheritance conforms to conventional Sunnism.

However, and perhaps surprisingly given their consistent Sunnī signals, the Yazıcıoğlu’s appear to be completely disinterested in defining Sunnism vis-a-vis any other form of Islam. Not once do they refer to the term *ehl-i sūnnet ve’l-cemā’at*, the conventional term for the Sunnī orthodox. Nor does *taṣayyu’* appear. What does appear once is the derisive term for Shī’ism, *rāfizi* (“refusers” of the agreed-upon caliphal succession). Yet the context in which this word appears is non-polemical, not resembling at all the anathematizing stridency of later Ottoman sectarian documents such as the *fetvās* of Kemālpaşazāde and Ebū’s-Su’ūd. The term *rāfizi* only appears in a short excerpt of a passage from the heresiographical tradition exemplified by Nawbakhtī, Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Talbīs Idrīs*, ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī’s *al-Farq Bayn al-Firaq*, and above all Shahrastāni’s *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, and reads as follows:

The Prophet said, ‘Just as the Tribe of Israel is comprised of seventy-two groups, my community is comprised of seventy-three groups.’ One of them are the *Khārijīs*, one the *Rāfiziyya*, one the *Qadariyya*, one the *Jahmiyya*, one the *Jabriyya*, and one the *Murji’a*. And each of these are comprised of twelve groups, seventy-two in total.

The architecture of this passage is dictated by the famous *ḥadīth* that Muḥammad’s community will be divided into seventy-three groups, all but one of which will be misguided – a tradition that affected the totality of Islamic heresiography by forcing writers to invent spurious sects until they reach that number. What is relevant are the six classifications (which, incidentally, contain an error by including both the Jabriyya – those who believe that God’s will encompasses human

50 Ibid., p. 73a.

51 Ibid., p. 111b.

will in every case – and the Jahmiyya, which is commonly considered a faction of the Jabriyya). All are typical classical heresies following the model of the early heresiographers,⁵² and among these the *rāfiẓī* are placed among them without any special salience. It is not drawn out as more relevant or contemporary than, for example, the Jabriyya, whose disavowal of human moral culpability did not exert significant influence in fifteenth-century philosophy, or the universally disdained Khārijīs, remote from Anatolia and Iran. This passing reference to the *rāfiẓīs* indicates that refutation of Shī‘ism was not a particular concern of the Yazıcıoğlu brothers. Much more worthy of describing are the psychological subtleties of unbelief, which constitute the real sources of *kufr* and, accordingly, are more carefully classified. “One must know that there are four kinds of unbelief,” he says, listing the *kufr* of denial, abjuration, stubbornness, and hypocrisy.

In place of a sustained refutation of Shī‘ism, the Yazıcıoğlus display residues of the fifteenth-century confessionally intermediate outlook described by Amoretti. This is most visible in two passages of the *Müntehā* and *Muḥammediyye*, of which the more notable has already been described in **Chapter 2** but remains worth repeating. Under the heading of their ostensibly Jandī-style commentary to *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*’s section on the wisdom of Adam, the Yazıcıoğlus once again insert the *Qiṣaṣ* content of *Envārü’l-‘Aṣiqīn*, which contains an excerpt from *Zahrat al-Riyāḍ* of al-Saqṣīnī describing Adam’s tour around heaven – a tour whose prime attraction was the holy personage of Fāṭima and representations of her sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn.

And it is transmitted in *Zahrat al-Riyāḍ* that Ja‘far-i Ṣādiq said that when Adam was living with Eve in heaven, God spoke to Gabriel and said, “Take Adam’s hand and circumambulate heaven.” So Gabriel and Adam together circumambulated heaven until they came to a fine palace. One brick was gold and one brick was silver and its balconies were green emerald. There was a throne in that

52 See Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions: The Section on Muslim Sects in Kitāb al-Milal wa’l-Niḥal*, trans. A. K. Kazi and J. G. Flynn (London: Kegan Paul International, 1984).

palace of ruby. Above that throne was a dome of light, and in the midst of that dome there was a fine figure, and there was a crown of light on its head, and two earrings in its ear, made of pearl, and around its waist a belt of light. Adam saw it and was amazed and forgot Eve's beauty. And Adam said, "O Lord, what kind of figure is this figure?" God said, "It is the figure of Fāṭima, and on her head is the Crown of Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, and around her waist [the belt is] is 'Alī, and the two earrings are Ḥasan and Ḥusayn."

The provenance of this anecdote in al-Saqṣīnī's manual of sermons is, admittedly, distant from traditional sources of Imāmī lore. Yet the idea that Fāṭima, 'Alī, and their sons form a tableau at the center of heavenly geography and, in their persons, constitute a primeval promise to Adam of mankind's eternal guidance, is a notion clearly emerging from Shī'ī or 'Alid-loyalist popular piety. We can find expressions of a similar tone in both the historical narrative and the apocalyptic section of the Yazıcıoğlu's other works as well. In Meḥmed's *Muḥammediyye*, in the context of Ḥusayn's death at Karbalā, we see a defense of the practice of cursing the name of Yazīd as an innovation appropriate to the moment:

Yazīd, in ancient times, was not cursed,
But those of us who of latter days distance ourselves [from him].
For God's Messenger cursed his family,
And cursing is appropriate because they blasphemed against God.⁵³

The remainder of the passage is filled with elements proceeding from Imāmī imagination. Meḥmed Yazıcıoğlu describes how Muḥammad hoisted his grandson Ḥasan on his shoulders, granting him *isnād*. The Prophet then said,

He whom I love, then, O God, love as well!
What you deduce from this is guidance [*irṣād*].
He said again that Ḥusayn is from me, and I am from Ḥusayn.
He who loves him loves God, for He loves the saints [*evṭād*].⁵⁴

In structure these remind the reader of the *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr Khumm, in which the Prophet is alleged to have said, "Of whomever I had been lord [*mawlā*], then 'Alī is his lord."

53 *Muḥammediyye*, ed. Âmil Çelebioğlu (İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1996), p. 433.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 434-435.

In their remembrance of Karbalā, they demonstrate not an avowed Shī‘ism but rather an emotional resonance with the figural centers of Shī‘ī piety – in other words, they hold very typically to the “*ahl al-baytism*” that pervaded the Yazıcıoğlu’s whole era. In this vein, alongside Meḥmed’s eulogy for Karbalā, we may consider another *maqtal* produced in the generation just preceding Yazıcı Şālih’s in his probable home-region of north-central Anatolia: the 1361-62 *Destān-i Maqtal-i Hüseyin* by one Şāzī of Kastamonu.⁵⁵ Though far less enduring than the *Muḥammediyye*, it displays the same elements. And, from over a century later, we may liken these two to the classic *maqtal* work *Rawḍat al-Shuhadā* by the late Timurid polymath Ḥusayn Vā‘iz Kāshifī, written in the officially Sunnī environment of Herat – or to its revered Turkish adaptation, the *Hadīqat al-Sü‘edā* by Fuḏūlī, himself a product of the diverse sectarian environment of early sixteenth-century Ottoman-Safavid border country of Iraq. Indeed, the scenes in the drama of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn that the Yazıcıoğlu emphasize in the *Muḥammediyye*, *Envār*, and *Müntehā* are the same as those of these later *maqtals*, such as the descent of the angel Gabriel to Muḥammad to warn him of the future deaths of Ḥasan by poison and Ḥusayn by sword – by bestowing upon each child a yellow and red scarf, respectively – show that the *maqtals* are the clear ancestors and descendants of the Yazıcıoğlu’s Karbalā narrative and as such their commemoration is embedded in contemporary currents of *ahl al-baytism* that stand outside of Sunni-Shī‘ī frameworks. Yet, as a note of caution, it is possible to too readily read any mention of the Prophet’s family as pertaining to this tendency, when in fact such statements were more general across the Islamic world. When, for instance, in the apocalyptic section of the *Müntehā* Aḥmed Bīcān claims that “the Maḥdī will be of the offspring of Fāṭima”, he shares a

55 Şeyma Güngör, “Maktel-i Hüseyin,” *İslam Ansiklopedisi*. Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı.

position common in the post-Mongol Islamic world, however, even among the most anti-Shī‘ī of Sunnī commentators.⁵⁶

So, in keeping with the spirit of their time, the Yazıcıoğlus are not dedicated to differentiating the “*ehl-i sünnet*” from an unacceptable Shī‘ism, nor even of articulating a form of Sunnī ‘Alidism in specific opposition to anything else, though this *ahl al-bayt*ism certainly characterizes their general standpoint towards the Prophet and his family and companions. This is not an incoherent position. Lamenting Karbalā and praising the ‘*aşeretü’l-mübeşşire* at the same time signifies, as so much else does in the Yazıcıoğlus’ oeuvre, a generally ecumenical and “omnivorous” vision of Islam that incorporates without rejecting ideological elements that would, in centuries to come, be seen as incompatible; they write to delineate an Islam that is unitary within itself while being distinct against Christianity and other faith communities. In other words, the concept of *ümme-i Muḥammed* overshadows and dominates, in every case, that of *ehl-i sünnet*.

IV. Apocalypticism

A final subject that must be addressed with respect to the *Müntehā* is its purported apocalypticism and its contemporary – or, alternatively, ahistorical – character. This is a thematic current of the Yazıcıoğlus’ works that must be approached with great caution. As scholars have come to recognize the perennial importance of apocalyptic thought as a connecting tissue between religious sciences and political ideology, they also place themselves at risk of over-historicizing apocalyptic expressions that are fundamentally of a formulaic nature. For this

56 Madelung, W.. "al-Mahdī." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs.

reason care must be taken to ascertain the precise nature of premodern apocalyptic pronouncements, which may mean different things in different contexts.

Apocalyptic writing must be understood within a taxonomy of apocalypses. Norman Cohn attempts to create one in his landmark 1957 *Pursuit of the Millennium*.⁵⁷ Cohn charts millenarian and messianic movements across the late medieval and early modern Western world, from the Peasants' Crusade to Anabaptists of Münster, and represents them as the violent expressions of the lower clergy and peasantry's resentment against the high Church and nobility. For Cohn, the essence of apocalypticism was an egalitarian critique ("mystical anarchism" or "anarcho-communism"), and its goal was invariably upheaval of a social order headed by clerical classes. Bernard McGinn, writing twenty years later in *Visions of the End*, disputes this thesis, arguing that the typical medieval Christian apocalypticist was, more often than not, an elite intellectual, and that their apocalypticism was "not primarily a movement from below."⁵⁸ Rather, apocalypses were attempts by religious scholars to "interpret the times, to support their patrons, to console their supporters..."⁵⁹ According to McGinn, apocalypticism has an oblique relationship with political or social unrest: "It is not so much crises in itself, as any form of challenge to established understanding of history, that creates the situation in which apocalyptic forms and symbols... may be evoked." Apocalypses must then be treated like a kind of cryptic historiography or as contemporary commentary shrouded in the language of End Times. In 1968, Paul J. Alexander, in an essay on the methodological challenges of approaching apocalypse, advocated a similar reading of apocalypses as "chronicles written in the future tense."⁶⁰

57 Norman Rufus Colin Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957).

58 McGinn, Bernard, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*, *Records of Civilization: Sources and Studies*, no. 96 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

59 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

60 Paul J. Alexander, "Medieval Apocalypses as Historical Sources," *The American Historical Review* 73, no. 4 (April 1, 1968).

There have been several attempts to apply these theoretical insights to Islamicate letters and culture. Mohammad Masad provides an analysis of apocalyptic thought and related occult sciences among thirteenth-century *‘ulemā* figures of the Mamluk lands.⁶¹ David Cook presents, in his *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, a thorough analysis of the elements of classical Islamic apocalyptic.⁶² Especially useful for this investigation is his classification of Islamic apocalyptic narrative elements into four types: a) historical, b) metahistorical, c) messianic, and d) moral apocalypses. Historical apocalypses are those apocalyptic traditions that describe “recognizable historical personalities, and a historical sequence of events that leaves reality at a particular point...”⁶³ In the category of historical apocalypse Cook places apocalyptic traditions on the Muslim invasions of Christian lands and Christian counter-invasions, the cycle of apocalyptic stories centering on the Syrian valleys of A‘māq and with Egypt, and apocalypses dealing with the invasion of far-eastern Turks into the Arab lands. Each of these, Cook shows (following Alexander’s methodology), emerge from specific historical moments in the first few centuries of Islam and often represent adaptations of earlier Christian and Jewish apocalyptic. Some of these cycles of historical apocalyptic, especially those classified by apocalypticists under the rubric “Signs of the Hour” (*ashrāt al-sā‘a*), will be discussed shortly and in greater detail, with particular reference to the Yazıcıoğlu’s writings.

Metahistorical apocalypses, by contrast, are those “unconnected with historical events... set in the eschatological future.”⁶⁴ These metahistorical apocalypses constitute the heart of

61 Mohammad Ahmad Masad, “The Medieval Islamic Apocalyptic Tradition: Divination, Prophecy and the End of Time in the 13th Century Eastern Mediterranean” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington University in St. Louis, 2008).

62 David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 21 (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2002).

63 Ibid., p. 34.

64 Ibid., 92.

Islamic apocalyptic, including the narrative of the appearance of the false messiah Dajjāl – usually likened to the Antichrist – and the return of Jesus to combat him, the demonic child al-Şayyād, the emergence from the land of the Dābbat al-Arḍ (the Beast of the Earth), and the second false messiah al-Şufyānī. As each of these narratives occur largely outside of historical time, they aim for Qur’anic justification and integration with the rest of the religious sciences. Though Cook separates messianic apocalypse from this classification, it is strongly connected with the metahistorical cycles as well. The appearance of the Maḥdī, who will return at the end of time, is rarely separated from the similar narrative of Jesus, with whom he will join forces, or the Dajjāl, which he will help defeat. Betraying the origins of Mahdism in the ferment of proto-Shī’ism and as a reworking of Johannine and Jewish apocalypse, diverse and contradictory traits are ascribed to this messianic redeemer.

Finally, Cook identifies the “moral apocalypse” as one in which the writer laments the corruption of the present day and calls for renewed piety in preparation for the coming end. This has its textual origins in the writings of the *zāhids*. Apocalyptic writing is thus a listing of the sins of contemporaries – avarice, sexual impropriety, hypocrisy – and an invitation to the world-renouncing virtues that reject them totally. Divine retribution is an important part of these moral apocalypses. Using to Cook’s classification, the Yazıcıoğlus wrote both historical and metahistorical apocalypse with a moral component; by focusing on one and not the other, it is easy to make the brothers into very different kinds of apocalypticist. Lurking around this discussion are the problems raised by my contention that the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* is not a work by either of the Yazıcıoğlu brothers (see **Appendix I**). How this alters prior interpretation will be raised as the issue arises.

Arguments for the ahistorical quality of the Yazıcıoğlu's statements about the End Times have rested upon evidence from their metahistorical apocalyptic writings. The chief expositor of this thesis is Laban Kaptein, whose *Apocalypse and the Antichrist Dajjāl in Islam* is a focused effort to unravel the content of the apocalyptic portions of the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* (which he ascribes to Aḥmed Bīcān), supplementing this analysis with Aḥmed and Meḥmed's other writings on eschatology in the *Envāru'l-Āşīqīn*, *Muḥammediyye*, and *Müntehā*.⁶⁵ Kaptein suggests that the apocalyptic segments of Aḥmed's works (including the *Dürr-i Mekkūn*) should not be taken to represent any particular "Doomsday fever" on the part of Ottoman or Turkish society during the fifteenth century – Aḥmed's eschatological images, rather, are "taken straight from the traditional Islamic stock, with stereotypical complaints added to them and the ubiquitous longing for the good 'ole days." Directly disputing Cornell Fleischer, who has written about apocalyptic thought as social criticism in the Ottoman fifteenth and sixteenth century,⁶⁶ Kaptein argues that Aḥmed Bīcān's apocalypse is a standard Islamic one, and a demonstration, among countless others in Islamic, Christian, and Jewish literature, of eschatology as an integral aspect of an Abrahamic historical sense of piety. Kaptein suggests that if such imagery were to be generally taken to reflect a contemporary message, one would need to "suspect apocalyptic motives... in al-Tabari, al-Mas'udi, Muslim, and al-Yaḳuti,"⁶⁷ and indeed over-politicize pious discussion of End Times throughout Islamic literature. Kaptein is indeed correct to insist that apocalyptic segments similar to those in the *Dürr* and *Envār* are extremely common in Islamicate letters across many

65 Laban Kaptein, *Apocalypse and the Antichrist Dajjal in Islam: Aḥmed Bijan's Eschatology Revisited* (Asch: privately published, 2011).

66 See especially Cornell H. Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleyman," in *Soliman Le Magnifique et Son Temps: Actes Du Colloque de Paris, Galeries Nationales Du Grand Palais, 7-10 Mars 1990, Rencontres de l'Ecole Du Louvre*. (Paris: Documentation française, 1992), 159–77 and Cornell Fleischer, "Seer to the Sultan," in *Cultural Horizons: A Festschrift in Honor of Talat S. Halman*, ed. Jayne L. Warner (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press; Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2001), 290–99.

67 Kaptein, *Apocalypse and the Antichrist Dajjal in Islam*, p. 53.

centuries. If apocalyptic expression is so ubiquitous, that is to say, then what use is it as a tool for learning about a society that produced it?

For this reading Kaptein interprets the *Dürr-i Meknün* and *Envār*'s apocalyptic narrative in view of classical Islamic apocalyptic literature, especially that contained within the genres of *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth* interpretation – a reading amenable to the metahistorical apocalyptic sections that come at the end of these works. This End Times narrative, which the *Dürr* and *Envār* largely hold in common, consist of an initial moral apocalypse, a listing of the Signs of the Hour, and chapters on the coming of Jesus, the Mahdī, and the Dajjāl, the emergence of the Beast of the Earth, the sun's rising in the west, the trials and tribulations of the earth and its cities, and the Resurrection and Judgment. These are, in short, the typical metahistorical apocalyptic elements identified by Cook, which are not suitable in the first place to historicized readings. Kaptein embeds these metahistorical narratives, quite adeptly, within the classical apocalyptic tradition, and thus disarms them of any contemporary apocalyptic urgency.

Oppositely, to see the Yazıcıoğlu's apocalypticism as critical commentary on contemporary events requires privileging their historical apocalyptic writings at the expense of their metahistorical writings. An example is Kaya Şahin's "Constantinople and the End Time", which discusses components of the *Dürr-i Meknün*'s (and to a lesser extent the 1465 *Müntehā*'s) eschatological comments in view of a purported proliferation of End Times speculation and occult prognostication surrounding Meḥmed II's conquest of Constantinople.⁶⁸ Şahin asserts that the *Dürr-i Meknün*, again attributed to Aḥmed, can be fruitfully interpreted as a kind of summary of different strands of the fifteenth-century Ottoman apocalyptic discourse, and above all as a

68 Kaya Şahin, "Constantinople and the End Time: The Ottoman Conquest as a Portent of the Last Hour," *Journal of Early Modern History* 14, no. 4 (January 1, 2010): pp. 317–54.

topical revival of the tradition of historical apocalyptic writing on the Muslim conquest and Christian re-conquest of the Second Rome. Şahin argues that Aḥmed in this work expresses with utmost urgency the immediate fulfillment, with the Conquest, of historical apocalyptic prophecy.

Yet Şahin's masterful contribution is rendered problematic by his assumption that Aḥmed Bīcān was the author of the *Dürr-i Mekkūn*. As I show in **Appendix I**, the remarkable *Dürr* dares in its anonymity to be more contemporary and political than anything written by the authentic Aḥmed Bīcān or his brother. By means of this misattribution Şahin connects the vivid and sustained moral and historical apocalypticism of the *Dürr* to the person of Aḥmed Bīcān of Gelibolu. For instance, Şahin takes the section at the end of the *Dürr*, where the author says that he has taken Bisṭāmī's *jafr* and translated it into Turkish, to imply that Aḥmed Bīcān himself took part in the Bisṭāmī's numerological style of End Times prognostication, of which one notable conclusion is that one Maḥmūd or Meḥmed will be the sultan at the time of the final tribulations. The preoccupation, by the *Dürr*'s author, with astrological-calendrical cycles ending in End Times is taken to mean that Aḥmed expected the Signs of the Hour to appear shortly, at a definite time, and in fixed relation to the cycles of the historical apocalypse. Regrettably, while all of these features indeed describe the apocalyptic fervor of the *Dürr*'s author, they cannot be connected specifically to Aḥmed Bīcān. Thus the message of Şahin's article remains intact as commentary upon the End Times preoccupations of the *Dürr*'s author – but not of Aḥmed Bīcān.

In light of these two opposing theses one must then inquire as to the actual nature of Meḥmed and Aḥmed Yazıcıoğlu's apocalypticism. If Kaptein is correct to deny the historical relevance of the metahistorical cycles of the Yazıcıoğlu's eschatology, and Şahin's comments are largely misdirected at the *Dürr*, then what is left of the Yazıcıoğlu's apocalypse? The bulk of the

apocalyptic writings of the Yazıcıoğlu brothers are condensed into the final chapters of the *Muḥammediyye*, *Envār*, and *Müntehā*, and follow similar outlines in each. As Kaptein correctly argues, these apocalypses are strictly metahistorical. They are presented as the final episode in their chronological narrative of cosmic history, the ultimate end of the story that begins with Creation. As such they are presented as an integral part of the religious sciences, and not as some separate political statement. Aḥmed, in the *Müntehā*'s final pages, describes his own metahistorical apocalypse as a companion text to the apocalyptic writings of the famous Ottoman *medrese* scholar Şemsu'd-dīn Meḥmed Fenari:

Meḥmed Ibnu'l-Fenari has expressed in a concisely-styled summary the Apocalypse [*qiyamet*], from the Gathering to Hell and Heaven to the appearance of God's visage... I too have gathered into my book the events [*aḥkam*] of the Apocalypse so that its conceptualization be simple, so that students may understand it in a simple manner [*tālibler āsān vechle añlayalar*].⁶⁹

The events that precede this summary statement are part of classical religious knowledge, extending from the Signs of the Hour to the Dajjāl, Jesus, the Beast, the Gathering, and culminating in the final Resurrection and the drawing up of mankind into God's presence in Heaven or the torments of Hell. These very same events are found in Fenari and in many of the Yazıcıoğlu's other well-known sources, including *Zamakhsharī*, *Baghawī*, *Bayḍāwī*, and *Ghazālī*. Nothing about the Yazıcıoğlu's metahistorical apocalypse stands out. It is with regret that one must discount the relevance of the Yazıcıoğlu's metahistorical apocalypse.

Yet a historical and contemporary apocalypse emerges nonetheless. Amid this lengthy metahistorical segment in the 1453 *Müntehā*, one encounters a section on the Signs of the Hour.⁷⁰

The *ḥadīth* scholars have said: First the Blond People [*Beniyü'l-Aşfer*] will come from the west in alliance with the Franks, and gather eighty banners with twelve thousand people under each

69 *KM857* p. 115b.

70 *KM857* pp. 102b-103a.

banner. That is to say, in total, [their numbers will be] ten times one hundred thousand minus forty thousand. To make a long story short, there is a village in Syria called A‘māq, and they will go as far as it. And from Medina the soldiers of Islam will arrive in three companies and fight with the unbelievers. One company will be defeated by the unbelievers, and one will break them and it is they that will be the finest of the martyrs, and one will defeat the unbelievers. Seventy people of the Bani Ishaq will come to Istanbul and, saying *lā ilāha illā’l-llāh wa Allāhu akbar*, destroy it from the direction of the sea; it will be again be destroyed from another side by a group saying the same thing, and again destroyed from another side. Constantinople will be plundered. Satan will come and cry out, “The Dajjāl has arrived. He has captured your sons and daughters...” Then they will go back to Syria and the Dajjāl will emerge, and then the signs of the Apocalypse will begin to be made clear.⁷¹

We see here the appearance of a primary feature of Muslim historical apocalyptic: the cluster of stories related to the Syrian valleys of A‘māq. The A‘māq cycle, as Cook describes it, is “fundamental to the study of Muslim apocalyptic, since the basic story line is repeated in most of the major traditions.”⁷² The many variations of this cycle usually include a truce between Syrian Muslims and Romans to battle a third party, a breaking of that truce, and subsequently a major Muslim invasion of the Byzantine Empire that ends in the conquest of Constantinople, the

71 The *Muḥammediyye* versifies this:

When the Blond People are broken in A‘māq,
The armies of Medina will rend and consume them.
Seventy thousand of the Bani Ishaq reach that city
that we call Constantinople...
With sword and arrow they are undefeated,
But they are destroyed only by reciting [God’s name]
They are entirely undone.
And in the end they recite *Allāhū ekber*.
They will be defeated by one side from the sea
And do the same from the other side
And from one more side they will be defeated.
The third time they recite God’s name
And the city is completely opened [to the armies of Muslims]
Hear of the plunder, how it was.
The Dajjāl’s voice will be heard.
Those who plundered will return
And go back to the land of Syria.
The historians have said this,
And it is told in the prophetic histories
That from the time between when Constantinople is taken...
it will be six years until the coming of the Blond People, doubtless,
And in the seventh year will come the Dajjāl...

72 Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic.*, p. 49.

ultimate symbol of Christian political power, as vengeance for the Roman destruction of Jerusalem's Second Temple (sometimes Rome itself is then taken by a Muslim army).

This conquest of Constantinople is the polemical center of this cycle, according to Cook. In some traditions, the Bosphorus parted to let the Muslims enter "as [it was] for Banū Isrā'īl." The city, "proud and tyrannical", is described in Muslim apocalyptic using images perhaps derived those describing Babylon in the Revelation of St. John; the extent of the justified plunder that follows the coming Muslim sack of the city is vividly depicted. As the story continues, the Romans respond with a counter-invasion through Syria that ends with the apocalyptic confrontation at A'māq or Dābiq. Here the A'māq cycle usually joins with the metahistorical narratives of the Dajjāl, al-Şufyānī or Gog and Magog.

Aḥmed Bīcān's rendition of the A'māq cycle attributes this Roman counterattack to the "Blond People," or Banū al-Aşfar. The origins of this term are intensely disputed, and even its referent appears highly variable.⁷³ What is certain is that the Banū al-Aşfar appear relatively early in Arabic apocalyptic writing – at a similar date to the rest of the A'māq cycle – and throughout the medieval period tend to generally refer to Romans or Byzantines. Additionally, the term's mutability allowed it to denote other groups, including Christians in general, "Frankish" Catholics, Slavs, or even Vikings. Perhaps because of this obscurity the motif of the Banū al-Aşfar remained relatively minor in the Islamic apocalyptic tradition, receiving little elaboration in major texts.

In the ninth century the image of the Blond People underwent a crucial cultural translation when, rendered as the "fair ones" or "blond-bearded ones", it found its way into

73 Maribel Fierro, "Al-Aşfar," *Studia Islamica*, no. 77 (1993): pp. 169–81; G. Levi Della Vida, "The 'Bronze Era' in Moslem Spain," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 63, no. 3 (1943): pp. 183–91; Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*; Goldziher, I. "Aşfar." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs.

works descending from the Syriac Christian apocalypse of one Pseudo-Methodius, which, like the Muslim apocalypses, were probably composed in northern Syria in ‘Abbasid times.⁷⁴ The Islamic apocalypses and Pseudo-Methodius are thus twins, and in Greek and Slavonic derivatives of the latter, appearing under the title *Visions of Daniel* and attributed the Old Testament prophet, the Blond People are described as restive allies of the messianic Last Roman Emperor. The Emperor “tames” the Blond Ones, and the two cooperate to defeat the “Ishmaelites” (i.e. Muslims or Arabs). In a massive campaign, the Emperor and the Blond Ones move towards Sofia and its hinterlands, and there proceed to a sortie pursuing the Ishmaelites into “their own country” and culminates in the Emperor’s victorious march from the west into Constantinople, “The City of Seven Hills.”⁷⁵ There is, in this text too, a Thracian borderland.

The *Visions* and the Muslim A‘māq cycle thus share a striking genealogical relationship, and a deep compatibility. In both the *Visions of Daniel* and the A‘māq cycle a Roman or Christian army, with or without the Blond People, rolls back the successful Muslim conquest of Constantinople, marches into Syria, and returns to dominate the City of Seven Hills. Christians and Muslims, in this sense, shared the same historical apocalypse. This concise demonstration of the idea, advanced by Cook and others, that Muslim and Christian apocalyptic drew from the same lore, raises a further question: why did Aḥmed Bīcān choose, out of all available options, this motif of the Banū al-Aṣfar and Constantinople, one of the most distinctive points of overlap between the *Visions* and the A‘māq apocalypse, as the Sign of the Hour?

The Blond People’s counterattack on Constantinople reappears in the sole indisputably historical apocalypse in the Yazıcioglus’ oeuvre. In Aḥmed Bīcān’s 1465 version of the *Müntehā*,

74 Paul Julius Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1985).

75 Ibid. pp. 71-73.

the author inserts a passage that again presents the drama the Blond People and Constantinople – but goes even further by matching it with the certain present of the Conquest and its conqueror Sultan Meḥmed II. Aḥmed makes Sultan Meḥmed into a figure destined by virtue of his battles against the Blond People to be a harbinger of the End Times:

Now: this Sultan Meḥmed Khan who is presently *pādiṣāh* took Galata and Sinop and Samsun and Trabzon and especially Istanbul – which he took from the unbelievers with force and sword, and within which he built fine *‘imārets* and mosques the likes of which are not to be found in the lands of the Arabs or Persia [*‘Acem*]. And by the lower sea [*aṣaḡı deñizi*, i.e. the Aegean], he took Mytilene and Bosnia and the Morea and Albania with his sword. He would obtain poll-tax [*bāc ü ḥarāc*] from the unbelievers. The *ġāzīs* would take the poll-tax. He is the king of the *ġāzīs* and the sultan of the martyrs. For the finest of the *ġāzīs* are those who would stand against the Blond People from the West and with the sword strike them and aim for Rome and Amorium [*Rūmiyye ve ‘Ammūriyye*] and the Blond People. For the End Times are near [*zīra qiyāmet yaqīn*]... Victory over the unbelievers will come from the West. The Blond People will come from the West. And behold, it is so that Sultan Meḥmed stood against the Blond People and defended against them and repelled them. Thus the finest of the *ġāzīs* are the offspring of ‘Osman [*‘Osmān oġlanları*], who go against the Blond People. May God have mercy upon them and preserve their princes until Resurrection, so that in their time Law and Truth and scriptural interpretation [*te’vīl*] be strengthened.⁷⁶

Before we turn to the heart of the matter a new element of this narrative must be clarified.

‘Ammūriyye, here paired with *Rūmiyye* (Rome or Italy), is another name closely linked to the conquest of Constantinople in the A‘māq cycle literature on the Signs of the Hour. In its original usage it referred to the Anatolian city of Amorium (located near Eskişehir), a major town, according to al-Idrīsī, until at least the eleventh century. The city’s starring role in the drama of End Times is owed to its conquest in 708 by the Arab general Maslama, a conquest that was considered his most notable victory en route to his failed siege of Constantinople in 711. Amorium was written into subsequent apocalyptic literature as one of the stages of the Muslim conquests of the period of the Signs – from Amorium, to Nicaea, to Constantinople, and thence to Rome.⁷⁷ It is in this sense, as part of a fixed apocalyptic landscape, rather than as a reference to the contemporary ruins of Amorium near Eskişehir, that Aḥmed invokes the place.

⁷⁶ KM870A pp. 2b-3a.

⁷⁷ Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, p. 58.

Far more important than Amorium is the invocation of Sultan Meḥmed, for whom this passage was written primarily as praise. Aḥmed states that Meḥmed and his victories are the sign by which he knows that “the End Times are near.” Yet from the point of view of the traditional Islamic historical apocalypse the role of Meḥmed appears here in somewhat ambiguous manner. In the ordinary the A‘māq cycle – including Aḥmed’s presentation in the 1453 *Müntehā* above – the Christians or Blond People appear from the West as a force expected to *retake* Constantinople after its first conquest by the forces of Islam. The nameless leader of the Muslims who, prior to this, takes Constantinople in a reenactment of the eighth-century sieges, is made to later suffer the indignity of losing the city to the coalition of Christian forces in which the Blond People lead or take part. Şahin notes that Meḥmed feared taking on the eschatological role of this doomed ruler as he deliberated his strike against the city, only to be reassured by Aqşemse’ d-dīn that the Blond Peoples’ reconquest would occur in the far distant future.⁷⁸

Yet here Aḥmed Bīcān draws Sultan Meḥmed II as ill-destined reenactor of Maslama’s conquests; he is not the Maḥdī. He “strikes” against the Blond People but requires prayer to assure that he be perpetually victorious against them. It is perhaps for this reason that Aḥmed praises Sultan Meḥmed II as merely “the finest of the *ǧāzīs*” because of his fight against the Banī al-Aşfar, and not as messiah, Maḥdī, or caliph. Fatih Sultan Meḥmed, by conquering the City and fighting the Banī al-Aşfar, is harbinger of the End and the legitimate master of the Muslim forces that inaugurate the Final Hour – though he is not, ultimately a sacred ruler of the eschatological final age. So Aḥmed’s final benediction – “May God have mercy upon their princes until Resurrection...” – appears, in this sense, to voice a small amount of trepidation rather than total confidence in any Ottoman’s messianic purpose.

78 Şahin, “Constantinople and the End Time,” p. 326.

The Blond People, by contrast, have a more definite correspondence. In Aḥmed Bīcān's telling they strongly appear to denote the recurring coalition of European enemies that threatened the Ottoman realms throughout the reign of Meḥmed II and his father Murād II. The Blond People who "come from the west" and are "in alliance with the Franks" bear a genuine similarity to the crusading coalition of Hungarians and Venetians and other Catholics defeated in the at 1396 at Nicopolis, in 1444 at Varna, and in 1448 at Kosovo, the latter two so strikingly evoked by Aḥmed in his *Envār*. The identification of the Blond People with a Western coalition receives unexpected corroboration in local Christian discourse on the *Visions of Daniel*. Paul Alexander cites a thirteenth-century Serbian redaction of the *Visions*, entitled *Zbornik Popa Dragolia* and perhaps representative of other redactions of the *Visions* circulating in the region, which claims that the Last Roman Emperor, as he assembles his coalition with the Blond People, will march from the West through Sofia and battle the Ishmaelites at a place called Perton, identified as one of "two hills on one side of Serdica [Sofia]." ⁷⁹ Here the very geography of the southern Balkans, where Sultans Murād II and Meḥmed II faced Hungarian, Vlach, Serbian, Venetian, and papal troops so many times, is written into the Blond People apocalypse. This identification was current enough to make it into broader Islamicate historiography as well. The chronicle of the Mamluk historian al-Sakhawi describes the events at Varna as follows: "On Monday, 16 Shawwal 848 [27 January 1445], news came from Murād Bey son of 'Uthmān, the so-called King of Bursa and other places in Rum, that there had been a great battle between himself and a faction of the Banū Aṣfar, and that nothing like it had been seen in this age..." ⁸⁰ The way Aḥmed repeatedly makes use of the phrase "from the west" may tell of the persistent geographical

⁷⁹ Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, p. 69. The *Visions'* tale of the Last Roman Emperor who redeems the City from the Ishmaelites may also bear some relation to Sultan Meḥmed's revived claims to be the "Caesar of Rome."

⁸⁰ Colin Imber, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443-45* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), p.187.

polarity of these military struggles, as we also see in Aşıkpaşazade's telling of the accord between King Vladislav of Hungary and Emir Ibrahim of Karaman that preceded the Varna campaign: "You [Vladislav] march from the west,' [Ibrahim] said, 'while I march from the east.'"

One final set of End Times commentary is found in the *Tale of the Taking of Tsargrad* by one Nestor-Iskander, a Russian claiming to have been captured by Ottomans as a youth and a witness of Constantinople's final siege. At the end of his account of Meḥmed II's conquest Nestor-Iskander invokes the "fair ones" (*rusii rod*), a force of messianic redeemers of the City: "For it is written: 'The fair [ones] are a race who, with former creations, will vanquish all of the Ishmaelites and will inherit Seven Hills with its former laws. The fair [ones] will rise to the throne of the Seven Hills and will hold it firmly..."⁸¹ Repeating the *Visions*' and A'māq cycle narrative in brief, Nestor-Iskander's description of these *rusii rod* entered Russian historiography of later eras as *ruskii rod*, "the Russian people", in this way "giving substance to [the Muscovite] political-religious notion of Moscow as the Third Rome."⁸² In Nestor-Iskander's account as in Aḥmed Bīcān's, the Banū al-Aşfar apocalypse of the *Visions* and A'māq cycle was precisely historicized.

Aḥmed Bīcān's historical apocalypse is thus textually distinct – it is a grandchild of the Balkan interpretations of the *Visions* like the *Zbornik* and the Islamicate historical apocalypse of the A'māq cycle – and also limited in scope. The Dajjāl is not imminent, nor is the Mahdī; Sultan Meḥmed and his conquest of Constantinople are eschatologically significant but exist in undefined relation to the metahistorical schedule of End Times. This reinforces, rather than

81 Nestor-Iskander, *The Tale of Constantinople: of its origin and capture by the Turks in the year 1453*, trans. Walter K Hanak and Marios Philippides (New Rochelle, NY: A.D. Caratzas, 1998), p.195.

82 *Ibid.*, p. 19, pp. 136-137.

disputes, Şahin's illustration of a cross-border sense of apocalyptic happening centered on the Conquest and the crusading armies of the Blond People. Ultimately, one cannot characterize Aḥmed's apocalyptic outlook any more clearly than Aḥmed did himself, when he simply stated "the End Times are near."

Conclusion

This heterogeneous discussion has attempted to flesh out the Yazıcıoğlu's nuanced religious sensibility by means of their most ambitious text, the two editions of Aḥmed's *Müntehā*. We find in them a series of conventional elements that together paint an idiosyncratic total portrait. Aḥmed Bīcān presents an Akbarian metaphysics in the style of Jandī and Qūnawī in a certain literalizing manner in response to traditionalist criticism. He asserts his membership in the Bayramī Sufi *ṭarīqa* while also dissociating his own heritage from contemporary Sufi *ṭarīqas* and harkening back to a timeless ascetic piety. He consistently identifies himself a Sunnī by bringing forth old sectarian markers, while at the same time he shows total disinterest in refuting the tenets of pro-'Alidism. And his specific sense of eschatology is marked by a fixed and theoretically inevitable schedule of a distant Judgment Day, shaded by an inchoate sense that the present is hurrying towards the End in the portentous confrontation of Sultan Meḥmed II and the Banī al-Aṣfar of Christian Europe. Aḥmed Bīcān, author of the *Müntehā* texts, was a scholar conscious of the way the innovations of his era called for criticism and also defense; he was likewise aware of the political and social undertones of modern Sufism, desiring to keep his own mystical practice apart from these controversies. For Aḥmed Bīcān the idea of being Muslim trumped any other sectarian division in the borderland setting. In his tumultuous times he

expected, somehow, the fulfillment of End Times prophecy – without knowing exactly what is happening.

There is, in all of this, as in so much of the Yazıcıoğlu's oeuvre, an interplay between universalist (or ecumenical) dogmatics with an archaicizing style on one hand, and local, frontier-oriented tendencies on the other. In fact, they may be two sides of the same coin. While Ahmed's universalism is explicit in his traditionalist defenses of Ibn 'Arabī, his extolling of *zuhd*, and his “Alid Sunnism”, a local particularity may also be perceived in this same aspect. That is to say, one must entertain the hypothesis that the universalism of the Yazıcıoğlu's Sunnī dogmatics is a specific necessity for the borderland Ottoman setting, a kind of “pan-Islamic” dogmatics that is at home only there, on Islam's edges. By presenting Islam, with all of its legalist and mystical approaches, as a unified totality and effacing its internal divisions, it becomes suitable as the creed of a new political – and more importantly, social – order on the Ottoman frontiers. An Ottoman epistemology, grown from a distinct combination of innovation with respect to the central Islamic lands and reaction against the chaos of the borderlands, was being born.

CHAPTER 5: MAN AND COSMOS AT THE WORLD'S EDGE

In 1466, in the rapidly changing Ottoman frontier town of Gelibolu, Aḥmed Yazıcıoğlu composed one of his last known works, the *Cevhernāme* (“Jewel-book”). It is a thirty-seven line poem on the magical properties of gemstones and metals, evoking, in its style and subject, an ancient discourse on talisman-making lying at the intersection of practical magic and natural philosophy, that had for centuries passed in and out of textual and oral tradition since the time of al-Bīrūnī. It opens,

He who dives for the pearl of meaning is wise.
Exalted God’s presence created
for man’s sake jewels of great value.
In each one God with his power placed
specific natures, remedies for affliction.
This discourse from the mouth of Aḥmed Bīcān
comes from the prophet Solomon...¹

These lines to the *Cevhernāme* call up, amidst a certain atmosphere of Solomonic and Alexandrine legend, the image of creation as a directional act in which God inherited essences in the matter and form of the cosmos for man’s special use. In the lines that follow, that list several jewels and their talismanic benefits, one sees a classification of the objects of the natural world along the axis between man and the Creator.²

A generation earlier, Aḥmed Bīcān’s father Yazıcı Şāliḥ was employed as a scribe in the same region. Gelibolu at that time was even more definitively located at the world’s edge, and

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- 1 Fatma Kutlar, “Ahmed-i Bican’ın Manzum Cevahir-Name’si,” *İnsan Bilimleri Araştırmaları* 7 (2002): pp. 65-66. See also Remzi Demir and Mutlu Kılıç, “Cevahirnameler ve Osmanlılar Dönemi’nde Yazılmış İki Cevhername,” *Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi*, 14 (14), pp. 1-64.
 - 2 In a typical verse we read, “If a person can’t sleep every night and day... and feels no respect among the people / and never finds the presence of his heart’s desire / let that man make a seal-ring of lapis / and never let it leave his finger / his respect will grow and his afflictions will be cured.” *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

Şālih accompanied his warlord patrons on campaign through the forests of the southern Balkans. In 1409, in a complex poem on meteorological and astrological omens entitled the *Şemsiyye* (“Solar [poem]”), Şālih describes how the variety of the physical cosmos is continually dependent upon the gift of divine grace: “All of the animals, the fish in the sea, man and beasts, and the monstrous folk, all of living creatures, the birds flying in the sky, the reptiles under the earth.... all of the world, the various *jinn* and angels and man – all these can never do without the tiniest grain of Your forgiveness.” The sense that is conveyed is that the existence, sustenance, and differentiation of the physical world, constantly dependent on the Creator, can be seen as an image of divine glory. These and related questions preoccupied Şālih and his sons for half a century, because in 1466 the now aged Aḥmed Bīcān (“white of hair, dark of face”) put his pen to rest on the *Bustānu’l-Ḥaqāiq* (“The Garden of Realities”), a prose edition of his father’s *Şemsiyye*.

These two astrological texts, the first and last works of the three scholars of Gelibolu, bookend two more natural philosophical writings of Aḥmed Bīcān. One is the undated *Rūḥu’l-Ervāḥ* (“The Spirit of Spirits”), a compact distillation of a Sufi philosophy of man based on the Andalusian philosopher Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrine of *al-insān al-kāmil* (“the Perfect Man”), that posits that the cosmos is fundamentally ordered by man within it. The second is by far the most capacious and substantive. In 1453 Aḥmed Bīcān completed an abridged Turkish edition of the 13th-century Arabic cosmological masterwork by the philosopher Abū Zakariyā al-Qazwīnī, *‘Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt wa Gharā’ib al-Mawjūdāt* (“The Wonders of Creation and the Oddities of Existing Things”), that aims to take its readers on a journey around the cosmos, from the heavenly spheres to the terrestrial climes, and from the majesty of the angels to the habits of

insects, each inspiring their own sort of wonder (*‘ajab*). Seen together, Şālih’s *Şemsiyye*, along with his son Aḥmed’s works – the *Rūḥ*, *‘Acāib*, *Bustān*, and *Cevhernāme* – arguably comprise the most vital body of popular natural-philosophical writings produced in Ottoman Turkish in the fifteenth century.

The question is then raised as to what connects them all – that is to say, what motivates this strong cross-generational interest in the structure of nature? Could these non-elite writers at the edge of what was for them the civilized world be said to have a coherent “philosophy of nature”? If what they write is science, then how did they imagine the science of the physical cosmos? There are several ways of addressing this. One is by searching for their writings’ common epistemological foundation, in reason or revelation, esotericism or externalist legalism, *kalām* or philosophy, Sufi vision or empirical observation. The validity of this approach rests upon the presupposition that, despite the different outward concerns of the writings, they are unified as a single project under a shared theory of knowledge.

A second way to connect these natural-philosophical investigations is in view of the *questions* posed by the projects themselves. One must ask what it was that Aḥmed Bīcān, *the person*, was trying to learn or solve, when he approaches the variety of the cosmos. To consider this issue is to wonder to what extent the *‘Acāib*, *Rūḥu’l-Ervāḥ*, and *Bustān* betray common concerns, with inquiries rather than answers patterning Aḥmed Bīcān’s own mentality. The result of this kind of investigation will not be a definitive metaphysical system, but rather a kind of existential problematic that can perhaps be historicized. In the following exploratory, tentative, and incomplete search for something uniting Aḥmed Bīcān’s natural philosophy, I found that the second approach is the only possible one. Contrary to my hopes, it appears difficult to admit all

of the works under discussion within a single philosophical rubric – and neither is Aḥmed Bīcān a scholar interested in building systematic consistency out of their heterogeneity. It is only by forcing the *Şemsiyye*, *Bustān*, *Rūḥu’l-Ervāḥ* and *‘Acāib* into a metaphysics that admits widely divergent epistemologies (such as the system of Akbarian Sufism with its comprehensive interpenetration of the cosmos and the divine) that such a unity could even be proposed at all.

Instead, what Aḥmed Bīcān more clearly shows in these works is a persistent concern with the position of man in the cosmos, and, as a result, a profound eclecticism as to the sources of knowledge brought to bear on this problem. Through an opportunistic rather than systematic approach to the sources of knowledge, he seeks to discover an elusive regularity to the specific question of the location of the human subject in a natural universe of overwhelming complexity. Like the mystical systems outlined in **Chapter 4**, Aḥmed Bīcān’s panorama of nature, irrespective of specifics, integrates his new Muslim reader (and himself) into an ethical realm a step beyond dogma and ritual. In his three texts on nature the human moral sensibility becomes a compass-point for navigating against the firmament of stars and the panorama of lands and phenomena. In the *‘Acāibu’l-Maḥlūqāt*, Aḥmed Bīcān, confronted with Qazwīnī’s mass of wondrous tales, reforms his encyclopedic source into a text of lessons of ethics and pietism along a world-tour; the *Rūḥu’l-Ervāḥ* dwells especially on the way human psychological features are projected macrocosmically upon the universe, implying as well that human moral consciousness is the orienting pole of cosmic order; the *Şemsiyye* and *Bustān* can be seen as attempts to establish human priorities, a realm for human action, against the secret of time.

Throughout all of these investigations into the natural world runs an impulse to bring a humane order to his disorientation brought on by an environment of actual political uncertainty.

Recently, Gottfried Hagen, in a sensitive and illuminating article, argues for historicizing the fifteenth-century Turkish hagiographic and heroic literary tradition against its backdrop of social chaos.³ The heroic or saintly figure, strengthened by the challenges he transcends with his exploits, becomes the hub from which the world's moral order extends. The humanity of the saint, and of the pious man, unites the Muslim seekers of the edges of the *dār al-islām* in a shared subjecthood.

The following addresses the three sets of Aḥmed Bīcān's natural-philosophical writings with these considerations in mind.

I. Wonder and Ethics in the *'Acāibü'l-Maḥlūqāt*

In mid- or late 1453, just after the conquest of Constantinople, Aḥmed Bīcān of Gelibolu completed a highly abridged Turkish edition of Abū Zakariyā Qazwīnī's thirteenth-century Arabic natural history *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt wa Gharā'ib al-Mawjūdāt* ("The Wonders of Creation and the Oddities of Existing Things"). Qazwīnī's work is vivid tour of the cosmos from the most to the least exalted of things, directed in the path of its gaze by the idea of *'ajab*, or "wonder." Aḥmed Bīcān, in choosing to translate the *'Ajā'ib* and abridge it (by two thirds), could not have opted for a broader canvas upon which to sketch the outlines of his own approach to the variety of the natural cosmos. It is in the *'Acāib* that Aḥmed Bīcān formulates his most complete vision of the natural world and is most forthright about his own philosophical commitments. In what follows I try to show that Aḥmed Bīcān's *'Acāibü'l-Maḥlūqāt* departs from its thirteenth-

3 Gottfried Hagen, "Chaos, Order, Power, Salvation: Heroic Hagiography's Response to the Ottoman Fifteenth Century," *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 1, no. 1–2 (2014): pp. 91–109.

century model – and thereby expresses its particular local, Ottoman and frontier character – when it turns the original into a pious, Sufi and ethically-focused text.

Here one enjoys the luxury of a rich secondary literature on the *‘Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt*, a text copied and modified from Qazwīnī’s original in countless variations across the centuries since its composition, to the extent that it almost comprises a genre in itself. The *‘Ajā’ib* has usually been understood as the most famous Islamicate example of “wonder literature” descending from the classical *mirabilia* tradition, that weaves popular geography together with pieces of folk tales, bestiaries of Plinian races, and narratives from epics and romances like the Alexander cycle. The term *‘ajab* is taken in this context to denote these works’ entertaining or unbelievable qualities, characteristics that have made some scholars label the *‘Ajā’ib* “medieval science fiction” or liken it to oral story cycles like *Sindbad* or *One Thousand and One Nights*.⁴

Recently this has been challenged in the context of growing scholarly interest in Arabic encyclopedism. Syrinx von Hees, who has written extensively on Qazwīnī,⁵ departs from the fixation on fantastic, unbelievable, and unscientific that had adhered to the genre label of *‘Ajā’ib*, seeing this classification as essentially incoherent.⁶ Against earlier generations of *‘Ajā’ib* scholars as well as theorists of wonder such Tzvetan Todorov,⁷ Von Hees calls Qazwīnī’s work – because of its systematic organization, its brevity, its didacticism, its accessibility, and its concern with scholarly justification – a “full-fledged encyclopedia in medieval terms.”⁸ Rather

4 Roy P. Mottahedeh, “‘Aja’ib in The Thousand and One Nights,” in *The Thousand and One Nights in Arabic Literature and Society*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian and Georges Sabagh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 29–39.

5 Syrinx von Hees, *Enzyklopädie als Spiegel des Weltbildes: Qazwinis Wunder der Schöpfung : eine Naturkunde des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002).

6 Syrinx von Hees, “The Astonishing: A Critique and Re-Reading of ‘Ağā’ib Literature,” *Middle Eastern Literatures* 8, no. 2 (2010): pp. 101–20.

7 Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic; a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre [By] Tzvetan Todorov. Translated From the French by Richard Howard*. (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973).

8 Syrinx von Hees, “Al-Qazwīnī’s ‘Ajā’ib Al-Makhlūqāt: An Encyclopædia of Natural History?,” in *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World*, ed. Gerhard Endress

than a collection of wondrous, unbelievable stories, it is “a highly scholarly text, measured according to the standards of medieval natural history.”⁹ Furthermore, Von Hees asserts that in keeping with the didactic aims of the encyclopedia genre, Qazwīnī’s scientific systematicity serves a program of personal edification wherein the astonishment or wonder of approaching nature through observation “is seen as stimulating research and ultimately involving the knowledge of God.”¹⁰ For Qazwīnī, she argues, wonderment at nature “embodies the beginning of the inquiring search that ultimately leads to the cognition of God... astonishment is the driving force for an alert mind and a living faith.” She notes that al-Ghāzalī used the term in a similar sense: “The way to the knowledge of God ... is through observing his creations and contemplating the wonders of his works.”

The art historian Persis Berlekamp takes these insights in a sophisticated direction in her recent landmark study on *‘Ajā’ib* illustrated manuscripts.¹¹ While accepting the viability of the wonders-of-creation genre, she uses the visual dimension of these manuscripts to investigate the relationship of the *‘Ajā’ib* to its evolving readership. Berlekamp places great importance upon the fact that Qazwīnī, in Iraq, was part of a circle of scholars working in the philosophical tradition of Ibn Sīnā, specifically under the renowned scholar Athīr ad-dīn al-Abharī. An *isnād* made of five links from Ibn Sīnā circulated among this community, certifying the transmission of Ibn Sīnā’s philosophical knowledge. Qazwīnī’s *‘Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt* must then be understood as a text grounded by Avicennan metaphysics and motivated by a desire to guide a reader to a process of learning about the world consistent with Ibn Sīnā’s framework.

(Leiden: Brill, 2006), p. 184

9 Hees, “The Astonishing: A Critique and Re-Reading of ‘Ağā’ib Literature.” p .112

10 Ibid. pp. 105-106

11 Persis Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2011).

For Berlekamp the key feature of Ibn Sīnā's cosmology as it relates to Qazwīnī's *'Ajā'ib* is an emanationist model of creation in which the world is instantiated and sustained in a continuous gradient from God. She argues that this is visible first in the *'Ajā'ib*'s structure, which moves from the celestial objects, located nearest to God, to terrestrial ones, further away, with these two classes in turn classified by their qualities. Wonder, in this Avicennan scheme, is a form of human participation in the outward radiation of God's sustaining power, that inspires one to investigate the causes and effects of those things closer and farther from God and thus ascertain their place within the order of created things. The wondrous things of the world draw up an ordered cosmos, and the reader, by feeling wonder towards them, inserts himself in a dynamic position within it.

Berlekamp's integration of Ibn Sīnā into our understanding of the *'Ajā'ib* is a starting point for assessing Aḥmed Bīcān's abridged Turkish *'Acāib* of 1453. Meanwhile, it is also important to note that Aḥmed's work follows a small amount of earlier Turkish Anatolian texts of this kind. Günay Kut finds that one 'Alī b. 'Abdurraḥmān composed a text of the same title, apparently derived primarily from the history of at-Ṭabarī and other sources. Another Turkish *'Acāib* was written by Rükne'd-dīn Aḥmed between 1413 and 1421, also containing substantial material extraneous to Qazwīnī.¹² As these texts have not been studied, any statements about them remain speculative.

I suggest that Aḥmed's *'Acāib* is indeed a reflection of an Avicennan worldview, and that it is also more than that: the Turkish *'Acāib* is a repository of nature knowledge circulating in the early Ottoman lands that is suffused with a pietist sensibility alien to the original. Aḥmed Bīcān transforms Qazwīnī's philosophical encyclopedia into a populist handbook on nature, imbued

¹² Günay Kut, *Acāibü'l-mahlûkât* (İstanbul: Simurg, 2010), pp. 4-7.

with local folktale material, medical knowledge, and, above all, with a particular Sufi ethics. It is illustrative of the place of Aḥmed's 'Acāib in Ottoman social memory that its manuscripts are sometimes bound together with mystical texts. In one such *mecmū'a*, preserved in a Sufi *tekke* at Sütlüce in Istanbul's outskirts and dated to the early seventeenth century, the 'Acāib is bound after a mystical text and immediately before a treatise on the numerological divinatory technique of magic squares (*vafq*).¹³ This may be an indication that the compilers of this *mecmū'a* considered Aḥmed's 'Acāib as a work not solely of compilation descriptive geography or cosmology but of hidden wisdom to be read in as a preparation for the kinds of occult wisdom represented by the numbers in the *vafq*. More than a "tour of the universe", the 'Acāib's text, in Aḥmed's summary, became a statement of a normative orientation towards the world.

The basis of the 'Acāib's moral program is a cyclical process of knowledge acquisition informed by Sufi ideas. Aḥmed, using words that are largely Qazwīnī's, describes his motivations for producing his own version of the 'Acāib, here quoted in full:

The reason for writing this book is that while studying created things, it occurred to my estranged [*ġarīb*] heart to compile some 'wonders of the world' [*'ālemiñ ba'zī 'acāibini*], especially those many kinds of oddities of the world [*ġarāib-i 'ālem*], from the Throne as far as the Carpet, that the worldly sages of the time of Alexander have described.

But this book [of Qazwīnī], being in the Arabic language, cannot be used by the populace of our country [*bizüm vilāyetimüz ümmileri fāida edemezlerdi*]. With filial servitude I put this book together in one piece for my *shaykh*, the sultan of *shaykhs*, the pole of the truth-seekers, Ḥācī Bayram. I hope that the reader may not forget prayers for this poor one, God willing.

First, one must know that it does not suffice to simply observe [*naẓar*] the world with one's eyes, for animals alongside man observe with the eyes. Rather, one is to think based upon the observation of particularities [*belki murād, maḥşüşāta naẓar etmekden fikr etmekdir*]. Truly, this knowledge of reality [*'ilm-i ḥaqāiq*] is the cause of both worldly pleasure and eternal enjoyment. No skills [*hünerler*] are acquired but by a person who is informed of intelligibles [*ma'qūlāt*] and by particularities [*maḥşüşāt*]. I composed this book when Sultan Gazi Mehmed took Istanbul. It was the year 857.

13 *Acaibü'l-mahlukat*, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Sütlüce Dergahı 108.

And one must know that by “wonder” [*‘aceb*] the people of wisdom [*ehl-i hikmet*] mean a kind of bewilderment [*ḥayret*] in which humankind is lacking [in understanding] on account of not knowing the cause of something or not knowing the nature of the consequence of something.

Now first: Observe the size and height of this world and the heavens that turn. Observe the differences in their motions, some like a water-wheel, some like a windmill, and some like a spinning wheel. And observe how the spheres stand without supports, and observe how each of them rise and set in a different place and with varying periodicities they each travel in their appointed houses according to their position. And observe the forms of the heavens, of which some are red and some white and some silver and some gold and some ruby and some formed of pearl, and observe the path of the sun in the fourth sphere - how in one year it travels through twenty-eight constellations and returns to its place, and how the night and the day are distinguished. And observe the moon - how it acquires the light of of the sun and at night is the sun’s deputy, and how it becomes crescent and full, and how the moon is eclipsed and reappears and how stars fall from the sky and lightning and thunder appears and it rains fire and stones and snow. And observe the different winds and the clouds that bring water to the earth’s surface and in accordance with wisdom make it rain upon the parts of the world...¹⁴

This lyrical passage continues in this style for several more pages, invoking plants, animals, stones and gems, serving double duty as a rapid run-through of the miracles of the cosmos and as the work’s only table of contents. Several features stand out. We see, first, that Aḥmed intended to produce an *‘Ajā’ib* that served the needs of a local population of Turcophone faithful (*vilāyetimüz ümmīleri*). We may take *ümmī* to refer to the most unlettered of that populace – those most in need of orientation within the Islamicate cosmos. He also claims that he was inspired to fulfill the posthumous request of his late Sufi master. Thus the text is locally situated and is intended both as a culmination of Aḥmed’s mystical education and as a means to grant that education to those who lack it.

The discussion of *‘ajab* that follows concatenates two much longer passages by Qazwīnī on this topic. Aḥmed writes that sense perception (*nazar*) is the beginning of the process of acquiring knowledge of truth. Our human intellect then must inquire using thought (*fikr*) into the causes and effects of these perceptions, basing this on a study of its specific particularities.

14 AM, pp. 1b-6a.

Apprehension of a single true thing is a result of these two steps of observation and cognition.¹⁵

Sense perception is the basic material for the acquisition of knowledge and the foundation of wonderment, but it is thought that transforms this material into useful understanding.

We understand more of this process as Aḥmed, following Qazwīnī closely, uses a simple phrase to define wonderment: “by ‘*ʿajab* the people of wisdom (*ehl-i ḥikmet*) denote a kind of bewilderment (*ḥayret*) in which man is lacking [in understanding] on account of not knowing the cause of something or not knowing the nature of the consequence of something.” This is a customary definition of wonderment across the medieval period in both the Christian and Islamic worlds. Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park encounter this definition of wonderment as an ignorance of cause and effect in the writings of Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, Francis Bacon, and Adelard of Bath.¹⁶ When Aḥmed Bīcān rests this definition on the authority of the people of “wisdom” (*ḥikmet*) he is most likely referring to the same classical philosophers that informed the thought of his Christian peers: Plato, who wrote, “Wonder is the feeling of the philosopher and philosophy begins in wonder,” and Aristotle, who expressed, “For it is owing to wonder that men... began to philosophize...”¹⁷

Yet “wisdom” as a source of lore also possesses a secondary meaning. Ibn Sīnā often uses *ḥikma* in the sense of “Oriental” (*ishrāqī*) philosophy, referring to an esoteric blend of his own scholastic thought with Sufism and theosophical wisdom of diverse sources. Combined with Aḥmed’s own Sufi affiliation and the depth of Sufism’s influence in his worldview, this opens the possibility for a mystical reading of the term *ḥayret* (“bewilderment”) that follows. As one of Sufism’s most ubiquitous concepts, *ḥayra* refers, in a simple sense, to human incapacity before

15 Note that reason and observation, in the *Rūḥu’l-Ervāḥ*, are symbolized by the two wings of the angels.

16 Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York; Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books; Distributed by the MIT Press, 1998).

17 Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam*, p. 23

divine transcendence. In a related but narrower sense, *ḥayra* is a subjective aspect of the Sufi spiritual moment of ultimate proximity to God, when the returning mystic, at a loss for all words, can only describe as “bewilderment”. Beyond thought and expression, the mystic in the state of *ḥayra* enacts Man’s ultimate contingency in the face of overpowering divinity. The ‘*ajab* of marveling at nature and the *ḥayra* of the mystics’ theophanic experience are thus closely related.

In this way the three concepts introduced by this passage – wonder, observation, and cognition, phrased in a way that resonate with the language of mystical experience – delineate a kind of dialectical process for the study of nature. One feels wonderment upon observing nature; then, upon pondering the causes and effects of this wonder and discovering them, one feels a new sort of ‘*ajab*, which in turn produces another paired process of observation and thought. It is ‘*ajab* and the Sufi’s bewilderment that drives this cycle forward, a mute praise of creation that compels the seeker up the steps of a ladder towards knowledge of the cosmos and of God. ‘*ajab*, *nazar*, and *fikr* are the components of a method of spiritual improvement. Qazwīnī, in a classic digression on the marvel that is the beehive, gives an example:

If a person sees a beehive, and has not seen one previously, he will become bewildered because he does not understand who made it. If he then learns that it is the work of a bee, he will be bewildered again by how this weak creature makes these hexagons, the likes of which a skilled engineer would be unable to make with a compass and ruler.

Qazwīnī then remarks how the wax, honey, and overall design of the beehive each prompt further wonderment. The more one learns, the more wonderment one feels. And it is not just beehives that are wondrous. “Everything is like this,” he adds.¹⁸

While the outlines of this process are explicit in Qazwīnī, the Sufi and scriptural dimension of this method rises to the forefront of Aḥmed Bīcān’s ‘*Acāib*. This is very clear in the

18 Cited in Berlekamp, pp. 40-43

chapter on time and its divisions, that comes following a section on the heavenly bodies and on the angels. At first sticking close to Qazwīnī, Aḥmed says, “the sages (*ḥukamā*) decree that by ‘time’ they mean the quantity of movements of the spheres,” and these movements divide time into ages (*qurūn*), years, and finer measurements.¹⁹ Yet while Qazwīnī, aiming for an even-handed comprehensiveness, describes not only the months of the Islamic calendar, but also the Persian and Roman months, adding for each a detail or two (usually a prophetic *ḥadīth*), in Aḥmed’s text only the Islamic months are discussed in entries of a very different template. Each of Aḥmed’s entries incorporate a moralizing story, usually drawn from the *isrā’iliyyāt* of the Biblical prophets or from the mythos of pre-Islamic Arabia, that explains the etymology of the name of each month. The month of Sha‘bān, illustrated by a few simple *aḥādīth* in Qazwīnī, is expanded by Aḥmed Bīcān into a story of Moses, Joshua, and the subsequent “branching-out” (*tasha‘ub*) of the Tribe of Israel. In the section on the month of Jumādā I, we are treated to a strange story of an ancient king named Melikṣāh who, in campaign against his rival Kiyāz, set up camp in a cold and snowy mountain region. There he and his tribe stayed the two months of Jumādā frozen in the cold (*cūmūd oldu*).²⁰ The month of Ṣafar is so named because the pre-Islamic tribe of ‘Adnān prepared for campaign (*sefer*) during that month. Aḥmed’s template then usually calls for the mention of a few edifying anniversaries from the heroic history of early Islam. “On the first day [of Ṣafar],” he writes, “the infidels took the head of Ḥusayn to Damascus.”²¹ The overall effect of these changes is to remake the calendar year into a dramatic matrix of wondrous stories of prophets, kings, tyrants, and saints. An ethical element is deeply embedded in the retelling of the wanderings of the Tribe of Israel and of the Prophet across the

19 *AM* p. 15b

20 *AM* pp. 19b-20a

21 *AM* pp. 17b-18b

landscape of the months. Its language is rich in opposing pairs – between infidels and believers, corrupters and holy men, tyrannical kings and pious subjects. In this calendrical material, wonder and piety are fused.

This sensibility extends throughout Aḥmed’s work. In a superficial sense, one can see this the ways the marvelous creatures of the world are described; Aḥmed deploys what can be seen as a specific style of the fantastic distinct from Qazwīnī’s, sometimes inserting scriptural imagery into the bestiary of bizarre creatures and Plinian races. The clearest example of this is a strange Mediterranean fish, one of only two wonders from his native sea preserved by Aḥmed out of Qazwīnī’s long list of them. “There are flying fish,” he writes. “Above their left ear is written *lā ilāha illā’l-llāh* [there is no god but God] and above their right ear is written *wa Muḥammad rasūlu’l-llāh* [and Muḥammad is God’s Messenger].”²² Qazwīnī relates this narrative skeptically as the unreliable testimony of a traveler who caught a brief glimpse of the fish as it swam by to catch a sinking object.²³ When Aḥmed piously repeats it, it becomes fact, as certain as whales and sharks. Likewise, in a passage on the *jinn*, scriptural history dominates, whereas in Qazwīnī, *jinn* lifestyle and behaviors are the focus. In Aḥmed’s version God sent eight hundred prophets to the *jinn*, but the ungrateful creatures killed them all. Angels sent to the *jinn* were captured by them, and Satan was born from the union of a *jinn* and captive angel. After he was returned to heaven and refused to bow before Adam, “God turned away from him” and cast him back down to earth, where he had five sons. “Some say they were born from eggs from his tail.”

Wonder stories that reinforce scriptural narratives are only part of the pious program of Aḥmed’s *‘Acāib*. Another aspect strongly emphasized with respect to its original is the practical

22 AM p. 27a

23 Zakarīyā ibn Muḥammad Qazwīnī, *‘Ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā’ib al-mawjūdāt*, ed. Fārūq. Sa’d, [al-Ṭab‘ah 1] (Bayrūt: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, 1973).

utility of domestic animals and useful plants – wonders of the world we would not presently call wondrous. At least one third of the text is given over to these matters, some of which are not related to material in Qazwīnī at all. These entries are generally lighthearted in tone and sequenced in such a way as to mix advice of tangible utility with unusual and amusing aspects of each animal or plant. We learn, for instance, that the jackal ruins gardens and orchards, but that one who eats its meat is cured of insanity. We read that rabbit meat promotes pregnancy and that a tincture made from the tooth of a rabbit cures toothaches. The horse is the most useful of animals, and God gave Adam the horse to serve him “so that he may reach his destinations.” Monkeys are so intelligent that an Indian king taught one of them to craft jewelry out of silver and to play chess, and taught another the trade of a tailor. Usefully, Aḥmed informs the reader that “if one keeps company with a monkey for ten days, melancholy departs from one’s nature.” Countless herbal remedies promise cures for sleeplessness and lovesickness. And, very poignantly, we learn that of all the creatures in the wondrous cosmos, “the camel is the strangest of all animals.”

By asking us to imagine the familiar camel as the most wondrous of all creatures – by drawing attention to its strange long neck and the way it can live for ten days without water or food – Aḥmed aims to defamiliarize the world of the reader and renew the world’s *‘ajab*. This key message is expanded in the form of an evocative Alexander tale, one of the few to survive from Qazwīnī’s section on the “wonders of the seas”:

King Alexander wanted to know the extent of the Encircling Ocean so he built a ship. He sent it from the west outfitted for a two-year journey under the command of an elite captain named *Deñizoğlu* [‘Son of the Sea’], crewed by seventy-two heart-entrusted men and one woman as well. That ship spent a year at sea and did not see a single thing. Then one day they saw a ship and pulled alongside it and fought with it, but could not take it. Then they conversed with each other and they did not know each others’ language. Alexander’s ship gave the other ship the woman, and took from that [other] ship one man, and turned back.

They came before Alexander and informed him of the wonders they had seen. They offered him that person [from the other ship], and Alexander commanded that they give that person a woman. From them a boy was born and that boy learned the language of his father and of his mother. They said to this boy, “Ask your father, ‘Where do you come from? And tell of your land of lands.’” The person said “We have a king. He equipped us for a two-year [journey] and said, ‘Travel for one year to see if there are any other Sons of Man besides us. And when we set out we encountered you,’” he said.

Then they asked, “What kind of king is your king, and what kind of kingdom is his?” The person said, “Our king is greater than King Alexander, and his kingdom and his army are greater than Alexander’s kingdom and his army. By God, what a great king he is.” Alexander said, “I rule the whole of the East and West there is no king greater than me.” And in the islands of the Encircling Ocean there is [also] a king who says he rules the whole of the East and West.

From these words it is understood that there are many of Exalted God’s creatures whom you do not know of and who do not know of you. The moral intention is that it is necessary to know one’s own incapacity, to affirm God’s magnificence, and to see or hear about the wonders of the world.²⁴

Stranded amid countless fragmentary and formulaic notices on odd fishes and islands inhabited by headless troglodytes, this artful fable is developed out of a bare Qazwīnī narrative into a cornerstone of Aḥmed’s *‘Acāib*. Its elegant moral conclusion, original to Aḥmed, transforms the story from one merely illustrating the immense physical size of the Encircling Ocean into a parable on the limits and potential of human knowledge. It seems to have been written with a personal attentiveness that brings into the story something of the air of the seafaring town of Gelibolu (the Turkish name of the captain is his own addition, as is his brief evocation of the crew and the dialogue between the stranger and Alexander). One imagines Aḥmed Bīcān reciting and embellishing the story of the strange ship to his audience of sailors and rowers at his seaside dervish lodge, flanked on one side by the roads to inner Rumelia and on the other by the Dardanelles and Aegean crowded with enemy triremes. At the very moment of its composition, in a city united to Gelibolu by the same sea, swept by the same breezes, Christopher Columbus was born.

24 “*Ḥaqq te’ālāniñ nice maḥlūqāt vardır ki ne sen anı bilürsin ve ne ol seni bilürsin. Pes maqşūd oldur kim kişi kendü ‘acından bilüb Ḥaqq ‘aẓāmetine iqrār eyleyüb ‘ālemiñ ‘acāiblerini görmek yāḥūd işitmek gerekdür.*” AM pp. 23b-24a.

So its message is not one of epistemological caution. Rather, it conveys with directness the urgent necessity of the bewildered unknowingness of *‘ajab* and *ḥayra*. The story of the greatest of all kings – moved by the immensity of the sea to venture into it, then ingeniously transcending the obstacle of language, before finally being confronted by the reality of “creatures whom you do not know of and who do not know of you” and the total revision of his image of the world that this calls for – works as a profound metaphor for the process of wonderment, perception and investigation, and then revived, deepened mystification that is the heart of *‘Acāib*. To “see and hear about the wonders of the world” in order to be continually reminded of human humility in the face of God’s transcendence is a morally imperative aspect of personal and spiritual development.

II. The *Rūḥu’l-Ervāḥ* and the Man-World

We see the outlines of another kind of philosophy of nature in Aḥmed’s undated work written near the end of his career entitled *Rūḥu’l-Ervāḥ* (“The Spirit of Spirits”). This short text derives from a very large body of Sufi literature that bases its claims to truth on the visionary “states” (*aḥvāl*) in which a mystical practitioner acquires direct experiential knowledge of metaphysical truth through his own proximity to God. In its textual heritage it is rooted in the works of Ibn ‘Arabī and later commentators of the lineage stretching from Ṣadr al-dīn Qūnawī through the Anatolian expositors of his school, especially Dāvūd-i Qayseri and Şemsü’d-dīn Fenari. Aḥmed Bīcān, familiar with these texts and also a member of the living Bayramī Sufi community, presents in the *Rūḥ* a Sufi philosophy of man. Its essential message is that man, his organs, and his mental faculties, as the centerpiece of the cosmos, correspond to features of other

levels of creation, such as the geography of the earth, the spheres of the heavens, and the events of the End Times. This anthropocentrism has explicit Akbarian roots in the doctrine of *al-insān al-kāmil* (“the Perfect Man”), as Aḥmed says in high theosophical language otherwise encountered only in portions of the *Müntehā*, his mystical magnum opus:

One must know that God, according to his essence, desired the Comprehensive Cosmos [*kevn-i cāmi*] that is the Perfect Man. And God manifested his mystery in the Perfect Man, for the world is like a seal and man is the image on that seal. God does not reveal Himself in His majesty [*tecellī eylemez*] but by means of the Perfect Man...²⁵

This Akbarian message is further communicated by means of a symbol: the “Man-World” or “World of Man” (*insān ‘ālemi*). Heaven and earth and the attributes of God appear in the *insān ‘ālemi* – that is, in man – as a one-to-one correspondence. In a simple instance of the Man-World correspondence, Aḥmed deploys one of his favorite subjects, the stories of the prophets. “For all that exists in the Hidden World (*‘ālem-i ḡayb*),” Aḥmed writes, “there is something that resembles (*beñzer*) it in Man. For example, in the World of Man, Abraham resembles the spirit (*rūh*), Gabriel the intellect, and Qūj the carnal soul (*nefs-i emmāre*).” In the same way, Aḥmed claims, “what is meant by Jacob in the *insān ‘ālemi* is the intellect, and what is meant by Joseph is the heart.”²⁶ It is clear that by this analogy Aḥmed Bīcān simultaneously communicates both a *metaphor* of man as a hermeneutic tool to facilitate our interpretation of the cosmos as a whole, and as the *reality* of microcosmic embodiment in the human being.²⁷

25 Until recently believed to survive in only one manuscript in Vienna’s Staatsbibliothek, three copies of the *Ruh* more have come to light. In 2014 Siyabend Ebem transcribed and published the text based largely on the recently discovered *Rūhu’l-Ervāh* in the Egyptian National Library in Cairo (Turki Talat 64/1). Siyabend Ebem, “Ahmed Bīcān’a atfedilen bir eser: *Rūhü’l-Ervāh*,” *Türk Dünyası İncelemeleri Dergisi / Journal of Turkish World Studies* XIV, no. 1 (2014): pp. 49–74. What follows is based on the *Rūhu’l-Ervāh* in Atatürk Kitaplığı, Nadir Eserler, MS OE 1744 (henceforth RA), p. 1b.

26 RA p. 6b.

27 This microcosmic systematization of the world against the human being, is distinct but related to the Sufi philosophy of the human body, recently the subject of a book-length study by Shahzad Bashir. See Shahzad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

Expanding this further, Aḥmed, in a sustained analogy, describes how physical geography of the cosmos resembles the life cycle of man:

In one aspect the soul resembles the Throne and the heart the Footstool and the heavens between them knowledge and wisdom, and the faculties of the soul resemble the angels, and their movements resemble those of the stars, and being born from a mother resembles the stars' rising, and death resembles the setting of the stars, and bones resemble mountains, and limbs resemble lands, and the front [of the body] resembles the east, and the flesh resembles the earth, and hair resembles plants, and the front [of the body] resembles the east and the back the west, and the carnal soul resembles the winds, and words resemble thunder, and the smile resembles lightning, and crying resembles the rain and wakefulness resembles life and sleep resembles death.²⁸

The angels correspond to a body part: “In the *insān ‘ālemi*... the eye is a manifestation (*mazhar*) of ‘Azrā’īl and the ear is a manifestation of Michael and the nose is a manifestation of Azrafil and the mouth is a manifestation of Gabriel. And the abilities of man are [contained] in their wings; one is the capacity for intellectual reasoning (*‘aql*) and the other is the capacity for observation (*nazar*).” The geography of Paradise, too, corresponds to aspects of the Man-World. The heavenly tree of the *Sidretu’l-müntehā* is the “holy spirit” (*rūḥu’l-quddūs*). Another monument in Paradise, the *Beytü’l-ma‘mūr*, is represented by “protected house” of the human heart, and just as the angels periodically circumambulate the *Beytü’l-ma‘mūr*, the heart beats with its own rhythm.²⁹ Each of the seven levels of Hell find counterparts in what one would call human psychological limitations – stubbornness, disbelief, and so on.

Aḥmed embarks on a unique reading of eschatological events according its meaning in the *insān ‘ālemi*. The apocalypse is internalized, here playing out as a form of spiritual psychology. One of the early stages of the apocalypse, the coming of the Blond People who inaugurate the wars of the End Times, represent “the coming apocalypse the triumph of the Satanic faculty (*quvvat-i şeyṭāniyye*) over spiritual power. Then the spiritual faculty (*quvvat-i*

28 RA p. 12b

29 RA p. 8b

rūḥāniyye) will triumph over the satanic faculty.” Including elements of historical apocalypse from his earlier *Müntehā*, Aḥmed then adds, “[in] the conquest of Istanbul one sees the faculties of belief (*īmān quvvetleri*) triumph and the greatness of Satan’s cities brought down and destroyed.” The coming of the “Smoke” among the events of the End of Days is the triumph of the “animal darkness” (*zūlmet-i hayvānī*) over the human soul, the arrival of the messianic Mahdi is the victory of the “holy reason” (*‘aql-i qudsī*) over it, the coming of the Antichrist Dajjal is the manifestation of the “commanding soul” (*nefs-i emmāre*) over the “contented soul” (*nefs-i muṭmā’inne*), that in turn prevails over it, as symbolized by the coming of Jesus, who is also the “exalted spirit” (*rūḥ-i a’lā*). The emergence of the Beast of the Earth is a manifestation of the “self-blaming soul” (*nefs-i levvāme*). The raining of fire from heaven is another appearance of the commanding soul, and the perishing of sinful humankind in this fire is, “in the *insān ‘ālemi*, an expression (*‘ibāret*) of the annihilation of the souls’ material embodiment in the light of Truth.” When the faces of the believers assembled for judgment turn white, signifying their salvation, this designates the illumination of the human heart with divine light; when the faces of the damned turn black, it is a sign (*iṣāret*) of “desiring the world and being denied God’s light.”³⁰

Several features of all of these sets of correspondences stand out. The first is that the verb linking the subject of these correspondences (the natural feature, angelic being or apocalyptic event) with the human object in the *insān ‘ālemi* (the human intellect, the carnal soul, the heart, the eyes) varies substantially, implying an unclear ontological priority between the two elements. The angels’ wings “contain” human intellectual faculties; hell is a “sign” of human obstinacy; the fires of the apocalypse are an “expression” of annihilation of the self in God. Sometimes the

30 RA 9b-11b

two elements “resemble” or “are like” (*gibi*) each other; other times they simply “are” each other. While the confusion of predicates may imply a certain unclarity on Aḥmed Bīcān’s part, it is more likely that it is a consequence of a rigorous deployment of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *waḥdat al-wujūd* metaphysics. If all Being is a derived aspect of God’s ultimate unity, then all subjects and objects are identical and all verbs relating them are reduced to superfluity. To emphasize a distinct form of relations between the *insān ‘ālemi* and the world around it would introduce a precarious directionality to God’s unity and thereby fracture it. The Man-World is not a lesser replica of nature – man and nature alike are parallel and corresponding reflections of the same divine blueprint. The image of man and the features of the cosmos ontologically coincide as the “Comprehensive Creation”.

A second salient feature is how the aspects of the *insān ‘ālemi* that map against present nature (or the stages of apocalypse) are most often not corporeal parts of a human, but rather *psychological* components, thus implying a theory of the mind. The Islamicate psychology Aḥmed Bīcān inherits is, like many other sciences, a hybrid of traditions. The main line of this theory of mind runs from Aristotle’s *De Anima* and passes through Ibn Sīnā. For Ibn Sīnā, just as for Aristotle, this soul is an interlocking set of “faculties” (*quwwat*) of reason, observation, memory, intuition, and others. To this Ibn Sīnā adds an intuitive capacity reserved for those of high spiritual development, that he calls the “holy reason” (*al-‘aql al-qudsī*) emanating from the Prime Intellect or “holy spirit” (*al-rūḥ al-qudsī*).³¹ By contrast, a different, Qur’anic model describes the individual as a hierarchy of souls, comprising the “commanding” (*ammāra*) soul

31 Avicenna, *Avicenna’s Psychology: An English Translation of Kitāb Al-Najāt, Book II, Chapter VI, with Historico-Philosophical Notes and Textual Improvements on the Cairo Edition*, trans. Fazlur Rahman (Westport, Conn.: Hyperion Press, 1981); For further discussion see Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna’s Philosophical Works* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), as well as Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

that desires evil things, the “self-blaming” (*lawwāma*) soul that identifies its imperfections, and the “contented” (*mutmā’inna*) soul that is at peace. A very thorough exploration of this Qur’anic psychology may be found in an important manual of fifteenth-century Turkish sciences of the mind, the *Müzekkī’n-Nüfūs* (“Purifier of Souls”) by the Qādirī Sufi poet Eşrefoğlu Rümī, who may have participated in the circle of mystic practitioners around Hācı Bayram Velī and was a public figure in Aḥmed Bīcān’s wider environment. The *Müzekkī’n-Nüfūs*, deeply Sufi and strictly non-philosophical in its orientation, approaches the science of the mind according to the directive of the well-known *ḥadīth*, “He who knows his soul (*nafs*) knows his Lord,” and encourages a believer to examine the parts of his soul that govern his deeds.

Aḥmed Bīcān, strikingly, has it both ways, employing both Avicennan psychological vocabulary, such as “holy spirit”, “holy intellect” and the pervasive term “faculty”, alongside the Qur’anic hierarchy of different types of *nafs*. We have already seen that this non-rigorous style of synthesis is typical of Aḥmed Bīcān, in this case most likely reflecting a form of integration passed along in Akbarian Sufi circles such as the Bayramīs of Ankara. Significantly, Aqşemseddin, Aḥmed Bīcān’s closest peer within the Bayramī order, advances a similar blend of Avicennan and Qur’anic psychology.³² We may venture to see in this coexistence of philosophical, Qur’anic, and Sufi terms a tension between an ever-shifting mapping of the microcosmic and macrocosmic levels of the mind, body, and world – in which the world is a kind of fractal repeating itself at different scales from a divine template, with the densest similitude in man – and the philosophical, model in which the soul and cosmos alike, in ordered classes, emanate from the Prime Intellect. These provide a dual set of compatible principles for

32 Ali Ihsan Yurd and Mustafa S. Kaçalın, *Aqşemseddin, 1390-1459: hayatı ve eserleri* (Istanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, İlâhiyat Vakfı, 1994).

Aḥmed Bīcān’s approach towards the philosophy of nature, one revealed in experiential mystical discovery, and the other in philosophical contemplation and observation.

Returning to the realm of Aḥmed’s concern with apocalyptic imagery, one may suggest that by making human psychology central to cosmic order, he intends to signal to readers that the individual struggles of the soul and triumph of its intellectual and spiritual faculties over its baser ones is an aspect of cosmic history. The moral imperative of the “purification of the soul”, that is to say, constitutes the very difference between the triumph of the “satanic faculty” or the “holy spirit” in the End Times. There is, in this sense, no more perfect instantiation of the idea of man as microcosmic embodiment than the individual’s own enactment of the cosmic cycle of creation and resurrection.

III. *Malḥama* and Esoteric Revelation

The two texts that bookend the whole corpus, the family’s first and last works, Ṣāliḥ’s 1409 *Ṣemsiyye* and his son’s 1466 *Bustānu’l-Ḥaqāiq*, are prognosticatory texts, concerned less with establishing a metaphysical relation between man, God, and nature than with the proper judicial application of a technical body of knowledge for practical aims. In their textual heritage the *Ṣemsiyye* and *Bustān* texts grow out of the *malḥama* tradition and the calendrical arts, as well as sundry astrological and occult writings then in fashion. The primary source is a version of the *Malḥamat Dāniyāl* (“The Omens of Daniel”), a family of divinatory writings on portents of days and months.³³ According to its usual claimed origin, the secrets of the *malḥama* were written on baked clay tablets by Adam in a cave in Sri Lanka (Sarāndīb) after his Fall, and cached there.

33 T. Fahd, *La Divination arabe: études religieuses, sociologiques et folkloriques sur le milieu natif de l’Islam* (Paris : Sindbad, 1987), pp. 408-410. The *Malḥamat Daniyal* is not to be confused with either the Greco-Syriac apocalyptic *Visions of Daniel* or the Hebrew Bible’s Book of Daniel.

Much later, in Jerusalem, the prophet Daniel heard of the legend of Adam’s tablets and traveled to Sarāndīb to find them, copying their contents onto “ink and papers”.³⁴ As Şālih and Aḥmed’s texts acknowledge themselves, the *malāḥim* do derive from pre-Islamic wisdom traditions, most likely passing through Syriac texts, then Arabic and Persian translations, en route to their encounter with the Rumelian borderlands. The scholar A. Fodor theorizes, on weak evidence, that the origins of all *Malḥama* are in Syriac literature of early medieval northern Mesopotamia, more specifically the plateau of Tur Abidin in the hinterlands of Mardin. More verifiably, Şālih’s proximate source is Abū al-Faḥr Ḥubaysh al-Tiflīsī’s twelfth-century *Usūl al-Malāḥim* (“The Principles of Omenology”), a Persian calendar- almanac collecting branches of this textual lineage into a single popular compendium.³⁵

Şālih speaks for *Malḥama* as a whole when he says his *Şemsiyye* aims to predict “feast or famine, plague or locusts / peace or war, security or uncertainty, joy or sadness / ... / the state of crop and animal and fruit / land and climate and country and kingdom.” The *Şemsiyye*, like its *Malḥama* models, is structured according to the twelve solar months under their Greek, Syriac, and even Turkish names. The day of the week when the first day of these months falls is accorded great prognosticatory import (“If [it falls] on Sunday the winter will be mild / honey and oil will be plentiful...”) bringing with it advisories on meteorological and agricultural outcomes for each of the seven days.³⁶ Following this, twenty-four or twenty-five celestial omens are listed for each month. Each prognosticatory section follows an identical form. If an eclipse

34 A. Fodor, “Malḥamat Daniyal,” in *The Muslim East: Studies in Honor of Julius Germanus*, ed. G. Kaldy-Nagy (Budapest, 1974), pp. 85–133.

35 See Amil Çelebioğlu, “Yazıcı Şālih ve Şemsiyye’si,” *Atatürk Üniversitesi İslami İlimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 1 (1976): 171–218, also Atilla Batur, *Yazıcı Şālih ve Şemsiyye’si* (MA Thesis, EÜ Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü), 14–15; Sibel Sevinç, *Yazıcı Şālih’in Melhamesi (Kitabü’ş-Şemsiyye)* (MA Thesis, Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 1999).

36 Ş 2b-14a.

takes place during Tishrīn al-Awwal, for instance, “the enemies of the king will be weakened.” If, during the following month, a comet appears, “then for every commander the year will be joyous [*ṣād-kām*].” Some of these celestial omens are eerily supernatural (“If a human being is seen in the sky” “If a strange object is seen [flying] in the air...”).³⁷

Şālih adds several additional sections to his *Şemsiyye*. First, he provides verse comments on the solar months, and following this, detailed descriptions of the Islamic months, omens on the days of their beginning and ending, and a listing of events in sacred history taking place during these months. A passage establishes a numerological procedure by which one subtracts the value of the current Hijri year from 702 and divides the difference by seven, noting the remainder. This number corresponds to one of seven specific letters of the Arabic alphabet that in turn guide one to a table indicating what days of a month of that year are auspicious or ill-omened. Another section uses a gridded table to match the Islamic months to letters of the alphabet, and then of the days of the week to appropriate activities (for example, toenails should be cut on Sundays). A section of miscellany details the appropriate times for marriage and sexual intercourse and the prayers that are to be said on those occasions. The book closes with a section on divination (*fāl*) from the Qur’an. “Let it be known that I have versified the *fāl* in simple Turkish,” he writes. After performing ablutions, one is to recite several prayers and hold a question in mind. Opening the Qur’an at random, one is to take the first letter of the seventh line on the left facing page; repeating this seven times, the diviner is then to refer to another table, obtaining thereby a composite fortune relating to his or her question. Şālih’s text ends abruptly: after the *fāl* material for the letter *ya*, the scribe’s colophon appears.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 25a, p. 27a.

The *Şemsiyye* and *Bustān* construct a correspondence between the calendar and celestial omens – as predictors – and meteorological and social outcomes as predicted fortune. As such it is not clear that these *Malḥama* writings are underpinned by, or underpin themselves, any dogmatic philosophical understanding. This style of omen science implies only a non-specific, non-directional connection between the omen and the omened that functions isolated from Hellenistic cosmology. The authors’ awareness of the great antiquity of this lore is expressed here by its attribution to the prophet Daniel and by the continual reference to the Syriac months, much as the tenth-century Ibn al-Waḥshīyya based his *al-Filāḥa al-Nabaṭiyya*, a text of agricultural magic, on the authority of his own Chaldean ancestral rites. Indeed, scholars have speculated that the classical science of omens in general derives from Akkadian and neo-Babylonian religion; the omen sciences are, as it were, records of the intercessions of deities who enact their arbitrary preferences over a terrestrial world with which they are fundamentally entangled.³⁸ The *Malḥama*, here Islamicized, detached from its sacral context in the Mesopotamia of deep antiquity, and reproducible as verse, prose, or gridded table, turned the calendar and the sky into a sort of mechanical device for acquiring knowledge of a sequence of future events. As a system of correspondences based on a body of pre-Islamic lore, the *Malḥama* persisted intact because its promises of prognosticatory power were universal and technical, unperturbed by metaphysics across its its millennia of life.

On the other hand, Şāliḥ and Aḥmed lived in a post-Ptolemaic setting – even the Qur’an makes reference to the “seven spheres” nested within each other that are distinct in their regularity from the sublunary world.³⁹ For literate Muslims a mechanistic system determines the

38 F. Rochberg-Halton, “Elements of the Babylonian Contribution to Hellenistic Astrology,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108, no. 1 (1988): pp. 51–62; G. Vajda, “Quelques Observations Sur la ‘Malḥamat Dāniyāl,’” *Arabica* 23, no. 1 (1976): pp. 84–87.

39 Qur’an 41:12, 65:12, 67:3.

influence of the solar and lunar cycles upon sublunary fates, just as the sun’s apparent position across the solar year determines weather. This dependence of terrestrial events on the outer spheres was often phrased in terms of the intelligences of the eight heavenly spheres, whose motions each define those of the spheres below them in a sequence ending with earth. Şālih and Aḥmed try to reconcile this with the arbitrary correspondences of the *Malḥama*, feeling obliged to embellish it with details from Aristotelian cosmology. We can see this in the way each solar month is characterized by the rising and setting of a star, implying a dependence of the motion of the sun upon that of the outermost sphere of fixed stars.

This is one way among others that the *Şemsiyye* and *Bustān* teach us about the eclecticism of Yazıcı Şālih and Aḥmed Bīcān’s sources of knowledge on the natural world. Though the bulk of information provided in the *Şemsiyye* and *Bustān* proceed in actual fact from one source – Tiflīsī’s *Usūl al-Malāḥim* – the texts emphasize the heterogeneity of the lore found therein. Aḥmed Bīcān, in his later text, claims in typical style that the work is based upon “the science of Idrīs [Enoch/Hermes], the discourse of Daniel, the speech of Plato and Luqmān, the utterances of the people of wisdom, the affirmations of the calendar, the prophets’ speech and the sages’ experience.”⁴⁰ This is taken almost verbatim from Şālih, who also includes the authority of the central figure in early Islamic wisdom traditions, the sixth Shī‘ī *imām* Ja‘far al-Şādiq. Referring to the above sources, Aḥmed says, “God has revealed (*vaḥy*) to them, or otherwise Gabriel has come and inspired (*ilhām*) them.” Şālih asserts, “God (*Taḥrī*) revealed or Gabriel came / in person or ‘in a dream as few’⁴¹ / Or they were inspired otherwise in what they said...” The foundation of the *Malḥama* was construed to be Revelation like that of the Holy Book itself;

40 BH p. 2b.

41 Qur’an 8:43.

no rational calculations about the positions of the stars and planets along the arcs traced by heavenly spheres go into the writing of *Malḥama* lore. This lore becomes available to us after having been channeled through the human gift of prophecy, without which it would have rested silent in the hidden world. It is suggestive that when, in the seventeenth century, the Ottoman traveler Evliyā Çelebi praised Şālih’s *Şemsiyye* as the work of a “monotheist Pythagoras” (*Fisāgoras-i tevḥīdī*), he chose that particular classical sage whose wisdom, in the Islamicate imagination, was most related to that of a prophet or seer, as opposed to a philosopher, mathematician, or astronomer.

Conclusion

In these three writings Aḥmed Bīcān weaves about the world a dense web of semblances between the soul, man, the cosmos, and divinity itself. The hub of all of these is man, distinguished sharply from the rest of nature, from whom these connections are perceived, and for whose benefit they are elucidated. In this sense it is not only the *insān ‘alemi* doctrine in the *Rūḥu’l-Ervāḥ* that is microcosmic; in the *malḥama*’s esoteric omenology and in the *‘Acāib*’s geography, man is above nature, analyzing it and suffering from it, and is equally the measure of all things.

Michel Foucault, with reference to sixteenth-century European science, identifies as we have here that the focal point of this relational map – man as microcosm – had risen during the early modern period to become the prime principle of the ordering of knowledge, “one half of a celestial atlas”.⁴² In a perceptive passage he proposes that in this late medieval and early modern

42 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971), pp. 30-34.

epistemology, man-microcosm fills two roles. First, the body and soul of man “apply the interplay of duplicated resemblances to *all* realms of nature; it provides all investigation with an assurance that everything will find its mirror and macrocosmic justification on another... scale.” Man is a template and rationale for the rest. Secondly, the macrocosm limits and condenses the potentially infinite interplay of resemblances that intersect in the Man-World, guaranteeing that are limited by the perceptible scope of the human being: “however immense the distance from microcosm to macrocosm may be, it cannot be infinite; the beings that reside within it may be extremely numerous, but in the end they can be counted... the similitudes that... always rest upon one another, can cease their endless flight.” Man, by uniting in miniature all of the correspondences between the realms of nature and an end-point to this infinite regress of correspondences.

If man limits the cosmos and makes it intelligible, then perhaps the texts under consideration here each represent epistemological explorations that contend with, and circle around, all sides of this notion of man as microcosmic center. This is often expressed as a contradiction or uncertainty as to where man stands within the universal scheme – sometimes at the universe’s innermost core and other times in its most distant, shrouded periphery. In the ‘*Acāib* Aḥmed writes that God’s throne and each of the archangels are unfathomably large and that in comparison the earth and its people are pitifully small; in the *Rūḥ* man’s image is the very shape of the cosmos itself. With respect to other animals man is both greater and lesser - “in his knowledge of truth he resembles angels... in heroism he resembles lions... in his gathering of goods he resembles swine and in his howling to the people of the world he resembles dogs... and in his contentedness in ignorance he resembles donkeys, and in his rebelliousness Satan.”⁴³ Even

43 *AM* pp. 45a-47b.

the pragmatic *Malḥama*, neutral on the metaphysical structure of man and the universe but eager to find a predictable logic within it, expresses a worry about man's potential to control arbitrary fate and a reverent confidence that prophecy residing in man is a pole around which order can be fixed.

This image recalls the themes recently explored by Gottfried Hagen. Microcosmic man as an organizing principle, a finite point in a world of infinite semblances, finds a linguistic expression in the designation of the Sufi saint as *quṭb*, literally "axis". The *quṭb* was, in the fifteenth century, a real and mythic figure whose hagiographized presence, as Hagen argues, give a system to lawless nature without one. For Aḥmed Bīcān, the "pole of the world" (*cihāmiñ quṭbı*) was his *shaykh* Hāci Bayram Velī, who bridged in his holy person the worldly community and sacred knowledge on the earth on one side with unseen and cosmic realities on the other. It was in the *quṭb* Hāci Bayram's honor that Aḥmed composed the '*Acāibu'l-maḥlūqāt*, a fact that lays bare the convergence of his mystic vocation, natural history, man and microcosm, and the schemata of the world around him. That is to say, the *insān 'ālemi* of his Bayramī meditations taught to him by his master Hāci Bayram – the universe brought finite into human form – was what Aḥmed aspired to see delimiting and arranging his world, thus allowing for the pious self to subsist.

Indeed, Aḥmed Bīcān's world called out for an organizing principle. It certainly seemed that the potential for ethical, pious action, Aḥmed's perennial concern, was besieged by nature and circumstance. The bubonic plague struck Gelibolu and the region at least once a decade. The Ottoman Civil War that dominated Aḥmed's youth set different geographic and social visions of the Ottoman state against each other. The Straits brought the Mediterranean to Aḥmed's

doorstep, sometimes in the form of Venetian warships that battled Ottoman ones in front of Gelibolu's harbor. Diplomatic and mercantile encounters in and around Gelibolu brought even non-elite Muslims like Aḥmed and his brother into encounter with travelers from as far afield as France and Central Asia. Ottoman borders expanded into new climes, and what had once been wild lands of the Danubian frontier were now contained by a network of Ottoman vassals. An Ottoman scholastic hierarchy grew up in nearby Edirne, Bursa, and Istanbul, staffed largely by migrant scholars who brought Ottoman intellectual culture into contact with the fashions of Cairo, Tabriz, and Herat. The Ḥanafī jurisprudence of Timurid Khurasan, currents of heterodoxy from the cities of Iran and Anatolia, and local Sufi literature, competed inconclusively in Ottoman mosques and *medreses*. Over all of this, the new presence of empire gathered into newly conquered Istanbul, and as it did so aroused the distrust of pious Muslims of the region. Aḥmed Bīcān's peer and acquaintance Aqṣemse'd-dīn served as a spiritual advisor of Sultan Mehmed II at the time of the Conquest, but after a year retired to his rural Anatolian home. His Bayramī Sufi community was riven by a permanent schism.

But perhaps the most profound source of philosophical uncertainty was the kind that came about when the streams of Islamic academic and Sufi thought were made to flow together in the Straits with currents of Orthodox Christianity. As described in **Chapter 4**, the possible compatibilities between the two faiths and the feeling of uncertain priorities between Jesus and Muḥammad gave rise to a palpable sense of disorientation on the part of Aḥmed Bīcān and his brother, one that they aspired to dispel. This was not something that bothered Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, who, with this diverse and contradictory intellectual and aesthetic interests (that simultaneously encompassed an antiquarian philhellenism as well as an invocation of *ḡazā*) was

memorably characterized by Julian Raby as “the sultan of paradox.”⁴⁴ Aḥmed Bīcān, who was a subject of Sultan Mehmed, lived then under the rule of paradox – and, resisting it, sought an anthropocentric answer to cultural confusion.

The natural-philosophical studies of Aḥmed Bīcān and his father were not conservative or tradition-bound, but were truly exploratory. The occult *Malḥama* of the *Bustān*, the macrocosmic philosophy of the *Rūḥ*, and the devout itinerary across the universe of the ‘Acāib jointly represent an attitude of eager epistemological experimentation. Each draws from a different ultimate source of knowledge – the first from esoteric revelation, the second from Sufi experience and texts, and the third from the Avicennan classification of natural variety. Concerned with questions rather than systematic answers, they refrain from presenting a cohesive structure. Though all three epistemologies can surely be harmonized within a certain system, Aḥmed Bīcān was not such a systematizer. In this respect Aḥmed, like his sultan, accepted some paradox.

In the absence of a more definite way to comprehensively sum up the natural-philosophical outlook of Aḥmed Bīcān, let alone that of fifteenth-century Ottoman writing on nature in general, the words of another fifteenth-century Ottoman are appropriate. The anonymous author of the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* (“The Hidden Pearl”), writing around the same time as Aḥmed, expressed his own faith in the redemptive power of knowledge of nature in times of change: “Let us recount our knowledge, insofar as Exalted God... has given a bit of it to us, so that we may, from it, deduce God’s power and majesty – and so that during this meager lifetime passing in these times of discord, we may not miss seeing the world.”⁴⁵

44 Julian Raby, “A Sultan of Paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts,” *Oxford Art Journal* 5, no. 1 : pp. 3–8.

45 “*Pes Ḥaqq te‘ālā hazretinüñ qudretinden ve ‘azāmetinden ‘ilmümüz irdügi qadar bir mıqdār beyān eyleyelüm tā kim Ḥaqqüñ qudretin ve ‘azāmetin bundan qiyās edesin, bu azacıq ‘ömr içinde fitne zamānında cihāni geşt e*

edüb görmege ihtiyāc olmaya.” Ahmet Bican, *Dürr-i Mekkûn: inceleme, çevriyazi, dizin, tıpkıbasım*, ed. Ahmet Demirtaş (Istanbul: Akademik Kitaplar, 2009), p. 85. The text has traditionally, and in my view erroneously, been attributed to Aḥmed Bīcān; see **Appendix I**.

CONCLUSION

Students of early Ottoman history are challenged by blinding teleologies. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries seem to operate under the tension of major social and ideological changes that were to come in the future: a march towards classical Ottoman Sunnism, an Istanbul-based bureaucracy, and ideological leadership of Muslims of the eastern Mediterranean. Seen this way, Ottoman institutions and ideas of the fifteenth-century are only the germs and shoots of this classical formation. This study has attempted to bring the intellectual life and culture of these early centuries out from under the shadow of the Süleymanic age, by viewing the fifteenth century on its own terms, from its own location in space and time, through the eyes of those who experienced it. For this purpose the Yazıcıoğlus are perhaps not ideal subjects. As anthologists they spend few words on biographical description. Yet though they do not speak much about themselves, they were as they professed to be: keen diagnosticians of the spiritual needs of “the [common] people of our land.” It is in their assessment of the early Ottoman frontier’s ailments, and the medicines they applied to it – the volumes of religious sciences they held in their humble bookshelves – that the humors the early Ottoman period can be sensed. The spiritual vernacular of Turkish-speaking Ottoman Muslims had other origins and ancestors, to be sure. But the writings of these humble brothers of Gelibolu, a fusion of prophetic narratives, classical religious sciences, and mysticism, epitomize its style.

Scholars of Ottoman society may be disoriented by the apparent absence of the state in the world of the Yazıcıoğlus. For Aḥmed Bīcān and his older brother, the Ottomans were only vague symbols – distant notionally, if not physically – of the advancement of the Turcophone

Muslim community into Balkan lands; what actually existed for them was not the “Ottoman state” but the lords of Gelibolu. **Chapter 1** discussed the family’s multi-generational relationship with two members of the *ġāzī* Qaṣṣāboġlu family – first ‘Ali, then his son Mahmud – and in between the *subaşı* İskender whose legacy was secured by his building of the Gelibolu *namāzġāh*. By the middle of the fifteenth century, the family served men like Aḡmed-i Hāṣṣ, who were Ottoman functionaries. These benefactors, increasingly connected to the state, permitted Aḡmed and Meḡmed at the same time to study with the intellectual elite of their lands, represented by the nascent Ottoman academic community in Edirne and the Bayramī Sufis of Ankara. In their attachments to these “*ġāzī-a’yāns*” and to their teachers of religious sciences, the Yazıcıoġlus were deeply bound to their town of Gelibolu, and equally, to their community, which they conceived broadly: the Muslims of Rumelia. Their social horizons along this frontier gave them an audience of plebeian new Muslims; their intellectual horizons, enlarged by their time in Ankara and Edirne, gave them the international knowledge that could serve this audience and bind them to Islam.

Aḡmed and Meḡmed’s dual inheritance of the Edirne curriculum, Hānafi and orthodox, along with the Akbarian Sufi heritage of the Bayramīs, is straightforwardly reflected in their writings. **Chapter 2** details what kinds of books occupied the bookshelves of the Yazıcıoġlu brothers as they composed their catechistic texts. Here it is possible to see how the intellectual world of the frontier was a neither mere local instance of a classical canon nor a “Turkish” or “Ottoman” invention cut from whole cloth. It is, rather, a sensitive application of an inherited and very canonical set of texts and ideas to a unique arrangement of local needs. Very little of

their library can be said to be unique, or even specifically Ottoman. It was their usage of these texts that was particular.

A Marmara and Rumelian moment conditioned their writing – a society characterized by religious heterogeneity, under the sign of Ottoman military expansion. This study does not dispute the centrality of the idea of *ğazā*, the complex formulation of borderland confessional awareness that coexists, as a “metadoxy”, with heterodoxy and interconfessionality. **Chapter 3** shows that it was a specific environment of conversation about Islam and Christianity that motivated the Yazıcıoğlu’s dogmatics, a consciousness that the Turcophone Muslim community of Rumelia was both unique and vulnerable. While the brothers’ community of was sharply ascendant in a political sense, it was constantly in danger of losing its coherence. Ears pressed to the sources of wisdom and law, these provincial pietists were trying to hear, across the distance begun by the Dardanelles, the definitional center of the Islamic community. In *Envāru’l-‘Aşiqīn* Ahmed writes that Adam, cast out of Eden and living at the top of Mount Sarāndīb far from both Heaven and Eve, listened to the clouds as he pined for his lost communication with the divine:

When Adam stood up his head would reach up close to the heavens. He would hear the litanies of the angels. Then Adam grew a beard. Before this he was like a young boy. Adam could no longer hear the voices of the angels. He grew quite barbarous. He said, “O Lord, what has happened to me, that I cannot hear the voices of the angels?” God said, “You have debased yourself, you have fallen under the veil, and now you cannot hear their words.”

This story may have held power for Thracian Muslims because of their own sense of distance from the linguistic and spiritual heart of Islamic knowledge, hidden in Arabic and Persian and in the elaborate sciences of scriptural exegesis, law and theosophy. It was the Yazıcıoğlu’s duty to interpret these litanies of the angels into the language of living Rumelians, a common Turkish.

This communitarian project aimed to define and promote “Islam” as such, not any sort of Ottoman Sunnism or Ḥanafī legalism. Faith in a unitary God and in Muhammad’s prophetic mission was seen to suffice. **Chapter 4** outlines the boundaries of the Yazıciöğlus’ abstention from polemical debate on dogmatics. The Yazıciöğlus promote Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrines, ignoring its rationalist critics, while appealing to conservative pietists who worried that it was a latter-day innovation. Along another dimension, the Yazıciöğlus were not sensitive to the possibility of Shī‘i heresy, and in fact occasionally drew from Shī‘i lore even as they extolled the Sunnī model of caliphal succession. The Yazıciöğlus were also relatively noncommittal on the question of apocalypse: the End Times were on the horizon, and the Ottoman sultan would be central in the way it would play out, but its timing was vague and its outcome uncertain. Indeed, the only certainty would be that the faithful would be rewarded with salvation.

It is striking that both Yazıciöğlu brothers and their father all wrote on natural philosophy; **Chapter 5** explores the meaning of these natural philosophical writings, asking if they may coalesce not necessarily around some common epistemology, but around certain uncertainties and concerns. These “scientific” writings are each occupied with the role of man in the universe, using the model of the microcosm conceived in a Sufi way to delimit and order all things. The moral act of human faith and piety gave this world its center. Like their ecumenical Islam and their defenses of an irenic Sufism, this too was a remedy to the disorder and the social centrifugal forces that threatened the Yazıciöğlus’ precarious community.

This analysis requires an accurate roster of the Yazıciöğlus’ texts. For this reason **Appendix I** revisits the question of the authorship of the *Dürr-i Mekkūn*, a text of cosmology and legends traditionally attributed to Aḥmed Bīcān. On the basis of linguistic, structural, and

argumentative features, I conclude that Aḥmed Bīcān did not write this text, a revision that, unfortunately for the purposes of this study, robs Aḥmed’s intellectual biography of some of its most compelling material.

* * *

The reader must decide whether this study has succeeded in making accessible some fragments of the Yazıcıoğlu’s inner life and social world, a piece in the evolution of Ottoman piety and of early modern intellectual history. It has, at least, answered a few questions that puzzle historians of the early Ottoman period. Regarding the role of the state in early Ottoman intellectual formation, this study argues that, in instances like the Yazıcıoğlu, the Ottoman house was peripheral, but its venture of European expansion was central. The bounds of Rumelian Muslim non-elite intellectual culture, far from being restricted to “folk” material, are shown to extend to Khurasan – but not deeper than a basic canon. The worry about the integrity of Islam amidst widespread ecumenical feeling is shown to have had a profound effect on Ottoman popular piety. And, in the century prior to the Ottoman-Safavid conflict, the Islam of the frontiers was unsectarian, concerned only with faith and the order it brings.

Each of these lessons may apply to the study of religion in global early modern history in general. The combination of the frontier-centric particularity of early Ottoman pious culture with its fluent participation in a global cultural system (in the Yazıcıoğlu case, Ḥanafī religious sciences and Sufism carried by mystics and scholars from Iran, Syria, and Egypt) seems to be somewhat characteristic of enduring early modern pieties. It bears similarities with Spain, whose frontier Catholicism swept over the Americas and was encoded in the Counter-Reformation, much as the Yazıcıoğlu’s Sunnism that moved along with the Balkan frontier was later given the

mantle of high faith in the age of Ebū's-Sü'ūd. One must also consider the case of Muscovy, another frontier state whose pious forms were in the early modern period packaged (in texts like the *Domostroi*¹) and carried far beyond their original context. Finally it is important that the state Shī'ism of Safavid Iran was to emerge out of similar milieu of unsettled Turcophone populations caught between the edge of the *dār al-islām* and rising and falling post-Mongol Islamic empires. Meḥmed Yazıciöğlü's *Muhammediyye* shares its enduring sacral quality with the poetry of Shah Ismā'īl, another revered body of Turkish verse, but one from the opposite side of the Anatolian plateau; both live to the present, in their respective communities, as expressions of an unmediated piety.

By the same token, I hope that this study has helped to undermine the thesis that Ottoman Islam was a uniquely pure variant of orthodox Sunnism, masterminded by the pious aims of the sultans. The Yazıciöğlüs cobble together a popular creed out of medieval non-Turkish sources without the aid of the Ottoman state; what results is a spiritual vernacular melding Ḥanafism and Sufism, a blend that, though enduring, was essentially arbitrary. The things Ottomanists often praise about that imperial culture – that the Ottoman state's strength was its potential for organized militarization and its powerful bureaucratic capacity – have nearly nothing to do with the sensitive fideism of the Yazıciöğlüs, which only temporarily accompanied the priorities of the house of 'Osmān. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the pietism of the Yazıciöğlüs' intellectual heirs, Meḥmed Birgivī and Qāḍizāde, would instead be voiced as calls to reform

1 Carolyn Pouncy, *The "Domostroi": Rules for Russian Households in the Time of Ivan the Terrible* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

against the state.² Ottoman Sunnism was one of a number of early modern creeds born to address the needs of frontier populations.

Just as the Yazıcıoğlus' writings were intended to heal the souls of the believers, these preachers to a humble flock of sailors and soldiers wrote their books in order to save their own imperiled souls, so that their writings may be lasting tokens of their lives that call upon the reader to pray for their own salvation. Their books will be measured alongside their souls in the divine Balance that weighs one's virtue in heaven. The Balance, says Aḥmed Bīcān, does not measure material mass, but responds to the ethereal lightness of the soul's substance, wherever it inheres. In this respect, "the Balance is opposite the balances of this world." Its plates rise to approach God when the sublime is placed upon it, and fall in flight of divinity when given something as heavy as gold to measure. I submit this study in the hopes that, despite its limitations, when placed on the Balance, it might rise too.

2 See Madeline C. Zilfi, "The Kadizadeli: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45, no. 4 (1986): 251–69; Madeline C. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age (1600-1800)* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988).

APPENDIX I: REASSESSING THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE *DÜRR-İ MEKNÜN*

The *Dürr-i Meknün* (“The Hidden Pearl”), an encyclopedic Turkish text traditionally attributed to Aḥmed Bīcān, is most likely the work of an unknown author. This text is composed of eighteen chapters that, like the *Envārü’l-‘Āşiqīn*, begin with Creation and end with Resurrection, and also include several sections on other miscellaneous subjects. This unique mix of content, alongside its anxious, apocalyptic tone, has made the work a constant focus of interest since its first encounter by Western scholars in the eighteenth century. In the early nineteenth century Joseph Brue, praising the work, translated passages into French.¹ Around the same time, the work found an enthusiast in none other than Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, who, noting its colorful variety, compared it favorably with the *Dabistān al-Madhāhib*, an Indo-Persian encyclopedia of subcontinental religious practices.² Catalog and encyclopedia entries followed in both the Ottoman lands and Europe. In 1990, Stéphane Yerasimos published his analysis of the “anti-imperial” subtext of the *Dürr-i Meknün* and similar writings, exposing many of its textual ancestors;³ this was followed in 1991 by Necdet Sakaoglu’s popular edition.⁴ In 1997 Laban Kaptein first published (in Dutch, later translated into English) his study on the *Dürr-i Meknün*’s eschatology.⁵ He extended this in project with a masterful critical edition and

1 Laban Kaptein, *Apocalypse and the Antichrist Dajjal in Islam : Ahmed Bijan’s Eschatology Revisted* (Asch: privately published, 2011), p. 3.

2 Ibid. p. 3.

3 Stéphane Yerasimos, *La Fondation de Constantinople et de Sainte-Sophie dans les traditions turques: légendes d’Empire* (Istanbul; Paris: Institut français d’études anatoliennes ; Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient J. Maisonneuve, 1990).

4 Aḥmed Bīcān, *Dürr-i meknun*, ed. Necdet Sakaoglu (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfi Yurt Yayinlari, 1999).

5 Laban Kaptein, *Eindtijd en Antichrist (ad-Dağğāl) in de Islam: eschatologie bij Aḥmed Bīcān* (Leiden: Onderzoekschool CNWS, Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, 1997); Kaptein, *Apocalypse and the Antichrist Dajjal in Islam*.

commentary on the *Dürr* that stands as an exemplar of thoughtful editing and analysis.⁶ Finally, in 2009 Ahmet Demirtaş produced a thorough critical edition.⁷ All of these scholars have called Aḥmed Bīcān the *Dürr-i Meknūn*'s author.

I suggest that the authorship of the *Dürr-i Meknūn* must be reconsidered. The scholarly consensus ascribing the work to Aḥmed, brother of Mehmed and son of Yazıcı Şālīḥ, derives from traditional attributions that lack a strong evidentiary basis.

I. The Origins of the Traditional Attribution

Why did this attribution surface in the first place? There is, in the text itself, no immediate cause for it. The *Dürr-i Meknūn* is unsigned, bearing in its pages no reference to Aḥmed Bīcān, to Yazıcıoğlu Mehmed or Yazıcı Şālīḥ, to Ḥācī Bayram, or to the city of Gelibolu. Indeed, this author can find no text ascribing the *Dürr* to Aḥmed Bīcān that predates an entry in Kātib Çelebi's prestigious bibliographical dictionary compiled in the 1630's and 1640's, the *Kashf al-Dhunūn 'an Asāmī al-Kutub wa al-Funūn*. The following entry in the *Kashf al-Dhunūn* appears to be the foundation upon which so much later historiography rests: "The *Dürr-i Meknūn*, in Turkish, comprising eighteen chapters on some characteristics of the [Prophetic] birth and [religious] basics and their wonders, is by Aḥmad ibn al-Kātib, known as Bīcān."⁸ As far as this author is aware, no Ottoman scholar has sought to explicitly challenge Kātib Çelebi's attribution on either internal or external grounds. Only Şemse'd-dīn Sāmī's *Qāmūs al-Ā'lām*,

6 Ahmed Bican, *Dürr-i Mekkun: kritische Edition mit Kommentar*, ed. Laban Kaptein (Asch: Self-Published). Laban Kaptein, 2007).

7 Ahmet Bican, ed. Ahmet Demirtaş, *Dürr-i Mekkūn: inceleme, çevriyazi, dizin, tıpkıbasım*, (Istanbul: Akademik Kitaplar, 2009).

8 "Dürr-i Mekkūn turkī mushtamil 'alā thamāniyat 'ashar bāban fī ba'di khawāṣṣ al-mawālīd wa basā'it wa 'ajā'ibihā li-Aḥmad ibn al-Kātib al-shahīr bi-Bijān." Kātib Çelebi, *Kitāb Kashf al-Zhunūn 'an Asāmī al-Kutub wa al-Funūn* (Istanbul: Maṭba'at al-Ālem, 1892), p. 488.

notably, excludes the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* from Aḥmed Bīcān’s list of works.⁹ Aside from Sāmī, the general pattern is followed by the authors of all modern articles and monographs on Aḥmed Bīcān, the Yazıcıoğlu brothers, and the *Dürr-i Mekkūn*, including Stéphane Yerasimos, Laban Kaptein, and Kaya Şahin.

There are several reasons why Kātib Çelebi’s attribution seemed a plausible one. As we have seen, Aḥmed Bīcān’s works share certain unifying features, including a concern with prophetic history within a universal (or, in Kaptein’s words, “Ovidian”) framework. Most notably in the *Envārü’l-‘Āşiqān*, but also in the two versions of the *Müntehā*, a prophetic history is the source the narrative directionality in Aḥmed’s works. Another feature is an interest in ‘*ajā’ib*, or wonders, that, for Aḥmed Bīcān, bore fruit in his translation and abridgement of Qazwīnī’s ‘*Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt* that claims to compile the world’s marvels as related by “the sages of the age of Alexander.” Additionally, Aḥmed is clearly interested in eschatology and includes an apocalyptic section at the end of the *Envār* and *Müntehā*. All three of these features are also prominent in the *Dürr-i Mekkūn*. For a scholar skimming the contents of the *Dürr* while knowing something of the works of Aḥmed Bīcān, this *Dürr* appears much like a synthesis of the prophetic histories, eschatology, and Alexandrine wonder stories that Aḥmed favors in his signed writings.

There are structural similarities as well. The *Envār* moves from the story of creation to each of the prophets in sequence, then to the life of Muḥammad, to sundry matters of faith, and finally to an apocalypse; the *Dürr* begins with a likewise *qişaş*-derived narrative of creation and sacred history (less systematic in the *Dürr* than in the *Envār*) and ends with a related apocalypse.

9 Şemseddin Sāmī, *Kamus-ül alām: tarih ve coğrafya lûgati ve tabir-i esahhiyle kâffe-yi esma-yi hassa-yi camidir* (Ankara: Kaşgar Neşriyat, 1996).

In between, the author digresses into geography and wonder stories from the same body of lore Aḥmed uses in his translation of Qazwīnī. The *Dürr* even seems to participate in some of Aḥmed’s less universal interests. Aḥmed’s ‘*Acāib* and his *Cevhernāme* display, for instance, an interest in talismanic stones; the *Dürr* contains a chapter on that subject. The ‘*Acāib* and the *Dürr-i Meknūn* both contain a chapter on herbs, on islands, and on seas. These abundant congruencies make the *Dürr* resemble the book one would be left with if one shuffled the pages of Aḥmed’s *Envār* and ‘*Acāib* and bound them together. At this level of analysis the *Dürr-i Meknūn* truly seems like something that Aḥmed Bīcān could have written.

The *Envār* also contains a deceptive “clue” pointing in the direction of the *Dürr-i Meknūn*, a clue that may have misled bibliographers like Kātib Çelebi into the standard attribution. The opening of the *Envār* describes the genealogical link between that work and its parent, Mehmed Yazıcıoğlu’s Arabic *Maghārib al-Zamān*, and its sibling, Mehmed’s *Muḥammediyye*. The passage reads as follows:

Now both my *Envārü’l-‘Āşiqān* and my brother’s book of verse, called the *Muḥammediyye*, emanate from the *Maghārib*. . . . It is as if the Encircling Ocean boiled up and overflowed on both sides and made visible whatever kinds of pearls there may be. If you seek ‘the hidden pearl’ [*dürr-i meknūn*], study the *Envāru’l-‘Āşiqān*, and if the unhappy seek further satisfaction [*ecr-i ğayr-ı memnūn isterseñ*], study the *Muḥammediyye*. Praise God that we have compiled these two books, for we have suffered many frustrations on this path so that the people may say, ‘Have mercy upon the Yazıcıoğlus!’¹⁰

Here Aḥmed uses the expression *dürr-i meknūn*, with its lexical meaning of “the hidden pearl”, to denote the subtle truths alluded to in his prose text, differentiated as such from the advanced poetic virtues of his brother’s rendering of the Prophet’s life. In more than one manuscript and printed edition of the *Envār*, a reader has chosen to underline or otherwise highlight this phrase

10 EA p. 3a.

with their own pen, perhaps surmising that it constitutes a sly reference to the *Dürr-i Meknün*. It is not surprising that this passage was subjected to such a reading, given mystically-informed readers' general tendency towards esoteric hermeneutics.

Yet, unless primed to believe this by the *Kashf*'s attribution or some other, there is no reason for a reader to interpret this instance of the phrase “*dürr-i meknün*” as anything but an allusion to mystical secrets symbolized by the pearl that hides in an oyster. The phrase, used this way, was a common one in the vocabulary of Perso-Arabic belles-lettres. As Gibb notes, it is an echo of the Qur'anic phrase “*lū'lū' makhnūn*” of the same meaning.¹¹ Poetically, it is perhaps related, along with countless phrases of similar sense, to the pattern of the verbal object of the *ḥadīth qudsī* of the “Hidden Treasure,” in which the Divinity declares, “I was a Hidden Treasure (*kuntu kanzan makhfiyan*) and wished to be known.” Nor was it rare as a book title. The *Kashf* lists two other works with the title *Dürr-i Meknün* or some variation of it circulating Ottoman realms.¹² There is a compelling alternative, then, to the conclusion that Aḥmed's use of the phrase *dürr-i meknün* is his secret way of signaling that he wrote the *Dürr*. Sometimes a hidden pearl is just a hidden pearl.

The text's anonymity has also worked to reinforce the traditional attribution. Kaya Şahin, acknowledging the problem posed by this anonymity, maintains Aḥmed Bīcān's authorship of the *Dürr* with the logic that “anonymity... is an oft-encountered characteristic of an apocalyptic text”.¹³ While this may be true (the *Sā'atnāme*, a contemporaneous apocalypse, was unsigned), this does nothing to point in Aḥmed's direction. In fact it poses a deeper problem for the

11 See Elias John Wilkinson Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, (London: Luzac, 1900), p. 398. Qur'an 52:24, 56:23.

12 Kātib Çelebi, *Kitāb Kashf al-Ẓunūn 'an Asāmī al-Kutub wa al-Funūn*, , pp. 488-489.

13 Kaya Şahin, “Constantinople and the End Time: The Ottoman Conquest as a Portent of the Last Hour,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 14, no. 4 (January 1, 2010): p. 336.

traditional attribution, in that Aḥmed's *Envārü'l-Āşiqîn* and *Müntehā* are in fact *equally apocalyptic*, yet are signed and bear all the hallmarks of his authorship. Approximately one fifth of the *Envār* and several sections of the *Müntehā* deal with eschatology, while about fifteen percent of the *Dürr* does. All are "apocalyptic texts" to a comparable degree. Here relevant is a point argued in **Chapter 5**, namely, that none of these works should be considered strictly eschatological, but merely include the apocalypse as they describe the final phase of the cycle of Creation. It must be the case that the apocalyptic section of the *Dürr* has been the subject of greater scholarly scrutiny than the related apocalypses of the *Envār* and *Müntehā* not because it is relatively more prominent, but because it is more interesting, connecting a familiar Islamic metahistorical apocalypse to the occult art of *jafr*, thereby introducing into the realm of Ottoman eschatology a wider repertoire of esoteric wisdom traditions.

We are left with the conclusion that Kātib Çelebi, following some tradition (perhaps related to Aḥmed's use of the phrase *dürr-i meknūn*), attributed the work to Aḥmed Bīcān, and that this contention, based on only circumstantial evidence, has remained undisturbed to the present.

II. Why the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* is not by Aḥmed Bīcān

Once freed from the need to read the text as the work of Aḥmed Bīcān, there arise several features that indicate against this authorship. First (i), formulaic qualities of every known work of Aḥmed together comprise a diagnostic signature of this author; none of these are found in the *Dürr-i Mekkūn*. Second (ii), the textual sources and influences synthesized into the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* diverge from the known library of Aḥmed as discussed in **Chapter 2** of this study. Third

(iii), the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* deals with clearly distinct themes and ideas. All of these differences are visible when the texts are brought together into a close comparison of “parallel” passages of analogous content of *Dürr-i Mekkūn* and Aḥmed’s *Envārü’l-‘Āşiqīn* (iv). Such a comparison betrays a marked difference in linguistic register, in source base, and in ethical and philosophical content.

i. Aḥmed’s *sebeb-i te’lif* and *ḥātīme*

All of Aḥmed Bīcān’s signed works, from his *Envārü’l-‘Āşiqīn* and *‘Acāibu’l-maḥlūqāt* written in the 1440’s and early 1450’s, to the second version of the *Müntehā* and *Bustānu’l-Ḥaqāiq* written near the end of his life in the mid-1460’s, share introductory and concluding formulae. After an article of divine praise of variable length, Aḥmed tends to introduce his works with a *sebeb-i te’lif* (“reason for composition”). The *Envār*’s version is typical of the rest. It contains:

1. The first *sebeb*, in which Aḥmed asks for his own divine forgiveness, includes this phrase:

“Know that the compiler and translator of this great book and noble address is Yazıcıoğlu Aḥmed Bīcān... Praise God that this work was finished in Gelibolu...”¹⁴

2. The second *sebeb* begins with praise of his brother and his *shaykh* Hacı Bayram:

“I have a brother who is knowledgeable and wise and virtuous and perfect among God’s elect and a leader of heroic men, and he also bore the secrets of the Pole of the World *shaykh* Hacı Bayram. And I, this wretched one dervish Aḥmed Bīcān, always said, ‘O light of my eye, brother, this world has no permanence and destiny has no fealty [*dünyānuñ beqāsı yoq ve ruzıgārıñ vefāsı yoq*]. Prepare a memento [*yādigār*] that may be read the world.’ Praise God that we, these two brothers, have completed these books, because along the way we have suffered

14 EA p. 2b.

frustrations so that the souls of the mystics may be ennobled by these books and say, ‘Have mercy upon the Yazıcıoğlus!’”¹⁵

After a digression he returns to describe the text:

“This poor one brought together in this very book all of the sacred *ḥadīth* and holy words and whatever kinds of divine addresses are in the Torah and Psalms and Gospels and Qur’an, as well as whatever similar Lordly words may be in the texts of the Prophets, from the world of Jabarūt to the world of Mulk and Malakūt...”

3. The third *sebeb*, on the necessity of bringing knowledge to the ignorant, includes the passage:

And I, this weak Aḥmed Bīcān, saw that scholars of the esoteric and exoteric wrote many books on the esoteric and exoteric. But some of these books are in the Arabic language and some are in the Persian language... I, this poor one, desired to create a book in Turkish out of this esoteric and exoteric knowledge, so that our people of this land may make use of this knowledge and may thus become knowledgeable and wise, and so that they hold law and truth in their hearts and their convictions and know the bond of Islam and obtain wisdom.¹⁶

The conclusion of the *Envār* repeats many of these phrases, including the passage describing his brother, the invocation of Ḥācī Bayram and the request for the reader to pray for the author’s salvation and also for the forgiveness of “the people of Gelibolu” (*Gelibolu ḥalqı*). In the *Envār* we also see the city’s name in conjunction with *ğazā*, and the repeated appearance of its nicknames of *dārü’l-cihād* (“abode of holy war”) and *aḥsanu’l-bilād* (“finest of towns”).

These passages find their way into Aḥmed’s other signed works. The *‘Acāib*, opening with Aḥmed’s name, qualifying him as “beloved of the *‘ulemā* and servant of the poor (*muḥibb-i ‘ulemā ve ḥādimü’l-fuqarā*),” and following this with a passage referring to the wisdom of the sages of Alexander’s age, repeats a phrase from the *Envār*’s third *sebeb*: “But these books being in Arabic, are of no use to the people of our land.”¹⁷ The sentence that follows alludes, as the

15 EA p. 2b-3a.

16 EA p. 3b.

17 AM pp. 1b-2a.

second *sebeb* of the *Envār* does, to Ḥācı Bayram Velī. The work concludes, “may prayers for forgiveness be upon the preparer of this ‘*Acāibu’l-Maḥlūqāt*, Yazıcıoğlu Aḥmed Bīcān.” The 1453 *Müntehā* opens with passages identical to the *Envār*, with language from the ‘*Acāib* as well: “The beloved of the ‘*ulemā* and servant of the poor, Yazıcıoğlu Aḥmed Bīcān, was in Gelibolu...”¹⁸ The first *sebeb-i te’līf* opens, “One day my older brother Yazıcıoğlu said...” Identically to the *Envār*, Aḥmed writes here that he whatever kinds of divine addresses are in the Torah and Psalms and Gospels and Qur’an [*Furqān*].” The work closes with this same language as well. The 1465 *Müntehā* is largely similar, and it interpolates the phrase, “abode of holy war and finest of towns, lantern of the heavens and lamp of the lands, and key to Rum, city of the *ġāzīs*, Gelibolu”, and later “It is necessary to know that I had a brother. He was a knowledgeable and wise person. And he [shared in] the secrets of Ḥācı Bayram. And this poor one was often in their presence, for there is no permanence to the world and destiny has no fealty – prepare a memento which may be read in the world.”¹⁹ The *Bustānū’l-Ḥaqāiq* shares these signatures as well: “Yazıcı Şalāḥu’d-dīn’s son, dervish Aḥmed Bīcān says that ‘in Gelibolu, abode of holy war, finest of towns, I was busy with *ġazā*, and desired a memento (*yādıġār*)...”²⁰

The patterns are clear; all of Aḥmed’s signed works are united by these phrases. Aḥmed repeatedly mentions his own name, “beloved of the ‘*ulemā*”, his city of Gelibolu, “abode of holy war” and “finest of towns,” his brother Mehmed and his admiration for him, his *shaykh* Ḥācı Bayram, the desire to leave a “memento”, his mindfulness of the needs of “the people of this land”, his search for wisdom from the four scriptures, and a heartfelt prayer for personal forgiveness upon his family and his city. This does not come close to a comprehensive account

18 *KM857* p. 1b-2b.

19 *KM870A* p. 1b-3a.

20 *BH* p. 2b.

of the passages shared by Aḥmed Bīcān’s signed works, but suffices to enumerate a kind of diagnostic, a fingerprint of Aḥmed’s verbal patterns as he lays out the framework and context for his compositions. This consistent and distinct pattern of Aḥmed’s is as close to a uniform signature as it may be possible to find in a premodern author.

The *Dürr-i Mekkūn* displays no component of this fingerprint. Neither its *sebeb-i te’līf* nor its *hātīme* share a single point of overlap. Unlike Aḥmed, the author eschews a structured *sebeb-i te’līf*, then mentions no brother or *shaykh*, but justifies the work as a critique of the hypocrisy of the ‘*ulemā* and the abuses of the wealthy but ignorant, the powerful but sinful – an attitude that occasionally surfaces in the writings of Aḥmed, but never in such strident terms. The baroque Sufi honorifics Aḥmed gives himself, his brother, and his *shaykh* (*muḥibb-i ‘ulemā*, *sulṭānu’l-meṣāih*, *quṭbu’l-muḥaqqiqīn*, *resūluñ tamām vāriṣi*, *cihāniñ quṭbi*, and the like), keen to reinforce sociological patterning of an Anatolian and Rumelian pious public, contrast sharply with the fierce populist indictments of the equivalent sections of the *Dürr*, when the author says “They build so many ‘*imārets* and *zāviyes* and write their names and dates on its doorways, so that they say that ‘so-and-so person is good,’ and that they may say, ‘yea, what an excellent person this is (*vay, ne hayrlu kiṣi imiṣ söylesünler*)!’ This is hypocrisy...”²¹ How could this corrosive attack on the *zāviye* and the ‘*ulemā*, prioritized by its placement at the very beginning of the work, arise from the pen of the same author who consistently uses his *sebeb-i te’līf* to invoke and praise these very institutions? And if this were the case, then why would Aḥmed hide his true feelings?

Only one phrase in the *Dürr*’s introductory remarks resembles an Aḥmed Bīcān signature. The *Dürr*’s author says, “this world has no permanence and also that life has no fealty

21 Demirtaş, *Dürr-i Mekkūn*, p.90.

(*dünyānuñ beqāsı yoq ‘ömrüñ dahı vefāsı yoq*)”²², reminiscent of Aḥmed’s “the world has no permanence and destiny has no fealty (*dünyānuñ beqāsı yoq ve rüzigāruñ vefāsı yoq*)” repeated in the *Envār* and *Müntehā*. Yet the *Dürr*’s variant appears different enough from Aḥmed’s consistent rendition that it cannot serve as an argument for shared authorship.

ii. Sources and Influences

Of all the arguments against Aḥmed Bīcān’s authorship of the *Dürr-i Meknūn*, perhaps the strongest is the fact that Aḥmed and the *Dürr*’s author appear to use a different library of source material. In **Chapter 2** I reviewed the library that contributed to Aḥmed’s *Envārü’l-‘Aşiqīn* and his brother’s *Muḥammediyye*, a body of texts that embodies a specific contemporary Ḥanafī-Sunnī consensus. The *Dürr-i Meknūn*, as I will show, uses a set of writings that overlaps with Aḥmed’s but is different from it in consistent ways. It is hard to reconcile this divergence with the hypothesis of common authorship.

As detailed in **Chapter 2**, the Yazıcıoğlu brothers synthesize their writings out of a) the narrative sources of the *qişaş al-anbiyā* in the recension of al-Kisā’ī and the *sīra-maghāzī* writings, b) the *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth* works of al-Baghawī , al-Zamakhsharī , al-Şamarqandī , Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī , al-Saghānī , and a few others, c) Ḥanafī *fiqh* compendia, d) canonical pious source-texts of al-Ghazālī, Ibn ‘Arabī, Naşīr al-dīn Ṭūsī, and the like, and e) orally-transmitted Sufi knowledge of the Bayramī community. To this one must add the *‘Ajā’ib* of Qazwīnī and the many Sufi texts that contribute to in the *Müntehā* and *Rūḥu’l-Ervāḥ*. The *Dürr-i Meknūn* cites a few of these texts, but in a very different way. Two of Aḥmed’s favorite sources, al-Rāzī and al-Baghawī, are cited only once in the *Dürr-i Meknūn* and in the same passage, in order to furnish a

22 Ibid., p. 90.

minor detail on heavenly creatures.²³ Qāḍī Bayḍāwī, relatively minor for Mehmed and Aḥmed, appears more prominently in the *Dürr*.²⁴ Of all the exegetical works shared by Aḥmed Bīcān only al-Zamakhsharī's *Kashshāf* is cited more than once in the *Dürr-i Meknūn*.²⁵

Numerous are the texts in Aḥmed's library that the *Dürr-i Meknūn* makes no mention of. These include not only the works of canonized philosophers like al-Ghazālī and Ibn 'Arabī, but of later commentators on theoretical Sufism like Şadr al-dīn Qunawī, Dāvūd-i Qayseri and Molla Fenari and near-contemporary Ḥanafī theologians Sayyid Sharīf Jurjānī and Sa'd al-dīn Taftazānī. The figures populating the history of the Sufi orders from Ḥācī Bayram back through the *zuhhād*, a major part of both versions of Aḥmed's *Müntehā*, are entirely absent from the *Dürr-i Meknūn*. In the *Dürr* there appears no named figure chiefly famous for Sufi theory or practice except the foundational Bāyazīd Bisṭāmī, whose invocation can scarcely be said to imply anything specific about the author's mystical-social affiliations.²⁶

Several sources appear in the *Dürr-i Meknūn* and nowhere in the Yazıcıoğlu's corpus. Two such classical sources are the works of the Shāfi'ī legal scholar al-Māwardī and the *Rasā'il* of the Basran philosophical society known as the Ikhwān as-Şafā. In addition – betraying its origins in a very specific Ottoman milieu – the *Dürr-i Meknūn* not only cites but relies extensively upon the *Miftāḥ al-Jafr al-Jāmi'* of 'Abdurrahmān Bisṭāmī of Bursa, premier figure of the occult avant-garde of the fifteenth-century Ottoman lands, and whose name is absent from the Yazıcıoğlu's signed corpus.²⁷ The sixteenth chapter of the *Dürr* is based upon this *jafr* of

23 Ibid. p.100.

24 Ibid. p.95.

25 Ibid. p.98-99.

26 Ibid. p. 105.

27 Ibid. p. 210.

Biṣṭāmī, producing memorable and cryptic passages of “prognosticatory symbols” (*rumūz-i cifriyye*) alluding the present and future, incomparable with any passage of Aḥmed Bīcān.

Yea, the countries and cities of Rūm and the lands of Crimea [will be ruined] on account of their tyranny, their oppression, their malice, their evil. The scholars will perish. The hearts of the exiles will be destroyed. So prepare... There will be battle and killing and war and punishment. The knowledgeable will flee, the ignorant will stay put. That date is the year of pleasure and joy and folly and [foolish] plans. Do not forget, that Sufi who is exalted goes away, that swindler who is abased [stays].... I was told: soon the ox will bellow, the ass will shirk his work, and the wolf will be happy, the fox will sing, the rabbit will cry out. Delight will be raised. May the righteous come to righteousness and greet it... If you have understood these symbols then keep their secret concealed. Know that at the time of Resurrection the lamp will be extinguished, the wise men will hide, the boys will grow beards...²⁸

This is presented as the secret knowledge of ‘Ali, preserved on camel-skin parchments and transmitted across the lineages of a hidden elect to ‘Abdurraḥmān Biṣṭāmī. Unlike any portion of the apocalyptic sections of the *Envārū’l-‘Āṣiqīn* or *Müntehā*, this Biṣṭāmian apocalypse in the *Dürr* fortells in coded terms specific cataclysms of the near future.

Alongside the Biṣṭāmian *jafr*, no feature of the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* is as unique as its inheritance of the body of local lore of Byzantine origin so perceptively discussed by Stéphane Yerasimos in *La fondation*. Yerasimos argues that the *Dürr*’s author, which he takes to be Aḥmed Bīcān, builds an anti-imperial (or anti-Ottoman) network of allegories out of stories of Constantinople’s founding and conquest, using as material a combination Islamic geographical texts and Byzantine tracts. A unique product of this fusion is the legend of the founder of Constantinople, one Yanqo ibn Madyan, whose foundation of the city was cursed when a stork bitten by the snake that was its prey fell and disrupted the astronomical machinery set up to ascertain the proper hour for the beginning of the city’s construction. This occurs in tandem with numerous passages on monasteries, churches, statuary, and column-talismans that make the

28 Ibid., p. 211.

Dürr-i Mekkūn (and Yerasimos' analysis of it) so fascinating. This local, synthetic, but also original legendary composite, present also in the well-known Ottoman Anonymous Chronicle and in several later Ottoman treatises on Istanbul and Aya Sofya, is almost entirely absent from the writings of Aḥmed Bīcān and his brother. Indeed, the only text of Bīcān's with some relationship to the legends of Yanqo and Aya Sofya is his digression on the life of king Solomon, which has its own textual antecedents in the *qiṣaṣ* of al-Kisā'ī.

Another example of the works' uses of two separate sets of lore is in their treatment of 'ajā'ib and geography. I have shown in **Chapter 5** that Aḥmed's *'Acāibu'l-maḥlūqāt* is a selective abridgment of Abū Zakariyā al-Qazwīnī's work of the same name. Yerasimos, on the other hand, shows that some of the *Dürr*'s geographical information derives from Aghapios' *Kitab al-Unvan*, al-Mas'udi's *Murūj al-Dhahab* ("Meadows of Gold") and Ibrāhīm b. Wāsif Shāh.²⁹ This should be considered alongside another set of contemporary geographical knowledge used in the *Dürr-i Mekkūn*, one whose textual origins are less precisely determinable. The *Dürr-i Mekkūn* discusses specific Mediterranean and European geographical features using their contemporary names. We hear of *Portaqāl* and the sea beyond it, of *Alāmān* beyond the Danube, of the Baltic Sea and of Gibraltar. The Black Sea is made an object of particular focus when the author describes how before the coming of Adam the land where the sea now is was populated by idolatrous *jinn*. The angel Gabriel, with righteous rage, pulled a great rock from the earth and crushed them with it, leaving in the area of the present day Black Sea a hole that was reached "by an underground river from the Caspian Sea... and made into a sea."³⁰ Rather than

29 Yerasimos, *La Fondation de Constantinople et de Sainte-Sophie dans les traditions turques.*, pp. 63-69.

30 Demirtaş, *Dürr-i Mekkūn*. p. 181.

the notional geography of Aḥmed's *'Acāib*, the *Dürr-i Meknūn*'s geographical sense radiates out from a Marmara epicenter.

Unlike Aḥmed Bīcān, the author of the *Dürr-i Meknūn* seems to have been to Istanbul. In the *Dürr-i Meknūn* we come across this detailed description of the city:

And there is a city called Constantinople in Rum. It is a great city. In it are wondrous buildings and talismans. In it is a great church and beside it a square. There is a man-made column there. On it was a world-displaying mirror. When rain would come from the sea or an enemy appear from one side, it would [shine] from the west and be seen in it. ... And there is a column built from a single stone. It was raised and placed upon a four-sided bronze object, and upon it they carved various images of prophets and lords, those which have come and those which are still to come, and with the science of *jafr* have made known in Syriac who will rule this country and when... And there are three bronze serpents, each entwined with the other...³¹

As Yerasimos notes, this is recognizable as a contemporary description of Ottoman or pre-Ottoman Aya Sofya, the Hippodrome, the Column of Justinian (along with legends that accrued around the orb held by the equestrian statue of the emperor at its summit), the Obelisk of Theodosius, and the Serpent Column. In all of Aḥmed Bīcān's signed works there is no equivalent. The only appearances of Constantinople come when Aḥmed discusses its conquest by Sultan Mehmed, briefly in the *'Acāib* and more extensively in the *Müntehā* in either case furnishing no city-specific details. He simply writes, "This Sultan Mehmed Ḥan is now emperor in Rum and in other places, especially Istanbul, which by force and sword he took from the unbelievers, and built fine mosques and *'imārets* within it, resembling nothing in the Arab lands and in Persia." Remarkably, Istanbul is not mentioned in the *'Acāib*'s gazetteer. In the *Rūḥu'l-Ervāḥ* and *Müntehā* we only see how Istanbul is a symbolic object in an eschatological reading of the progress of the soul, an image entirely incompatible with the *Dürr-i Meknūn*'s eye of the observant tourist.

31 Ibid. p. 154.

In sum, whereas Aḥmed Bīcān's sensibility comes from the traditional religious sciences, is respectful of *ṭarīqa* Sufism, and international in his presentation of geographical and occult knowledge, the author of the *Dürr-i Meknūn* presents a denser mass of legendary material, is unconcerned with Sufi institutional consciousness, and is specifically local in his approach to occult arts and geographical data. These systematic differences in intellectual genealogy together form a strong argument against the *Dürr-i Meknūn*'s attribution to Aḥmed Bīcān.

iii. Past and Present: Tone and Message

Partly as a consequence of their different situations within the Islamicate intellectual tradition, there exist mutually incompatible ideas in Aḥmed Bīcān's signed works on one hand and the *Dürr-i Meknūn* on the other. Several items stand out: the *Dürr-i Meknūn*'s sense of imminent moral apocalypse, and its attendant, an idiosyncratic treatment of the ancient past as a set of object lessons.

Moral Panic

Through the *Dürr-i Meknūn* runs a strong current of moral panic. A deep alarm at contemporary moral decline is often voiced as an anxiety relating to sexuality and gender roles. Laban Kaptein has already drawn attention to the way the *Dürr-i Meknūn* seems preoccupied with this question, specifically as an apocalyptic sign: "There will be no sense of shame left in women," writes the author of the *Dürr*. "Women will prefer to lie with women and men will prefer to lie with men." Kaptein also cites a passage translated by Brue, where the author expounds on this idea at greater length:

Women will no longer have any restraint, nor any sense of shame, decency, reserve or modesty, and will allow themselves to slide to all sorts of vices and abandon themselves to all sorts of shameful and infamous, acts. The world will be upside down and changed (beyond recognition). Acts will be taking place between men, as well as among women, that are so infamous that the mere mention of them would be improper. Adultery will be very common indeed.³²

As Kaptein notes, this theme is present in other sections as well. The author dwells on several episodes, including the story of Lot, in which tribes and cities were punished in proportion to their sexual impropriety. When the Pharaoh's troops were drowned pursuing Moses, a surplus of widowed women roamed the world, becoming a tribe of itinerant prostitutes. One may sense a hint of sexual anxiety in the story of Solomon and Balkis, where we are repeatedly told that Balkis was "an intelligent woman" despite the *jinn*'s blood that runs within her, physically manifested in the fur that covers her lower body. Another passage appears in a geographical section:

There is a tribe called Kelūlī. They do not know what marriage is and take whomever they want. They are excessive in their adultery, but no one says anything. Their lifespans are short and rarely reach thirty, for adultery harms the lifespan. For in latter days plague spreads in those tribes among which adultery is widespread...

No trace of these themes can be found in the signed works of Aḥmed Bīcān.

The Distant Past

Whereas Aḥmed Bīcān's works, when bound to a narrative, tend to follow the outlines of creation, prophetic history, and eschatology, the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* is equally reliant upon the heroic epics of Baṭṭāl, Ḥamza, and Alexander as frameworks for pious lore. Alexander, reprising his role in Qazwīnī's *'Ajā'ib*, is presented less as a conqueror than as a traveler, encountering ruins, temples, tombs, and fortresses in all of the world's distant mountains, deserts, and islands. In

³² Kaptein, *Apocalypse and the Antichrist Dajjal in Islam*, p. 69.

contrast with Qazwīnī's Alexander, the purpose of Alexander's travels in the *Dürr* is not to convey 'ajab (wonder) at the scope of terrestrial space but to teach an 'ibret, or lesson, conveyed to Alexander through a ruin or tomb across time from unfathomably distant antiquity and across the barrier of death. Some of the Alexander stories exude an eerie mood as they use the repetitive trope of the tomb or sarcophagus of ancient giants. In one evocative story, Alexander, traveling in mountains of lapis at the edge of the world, discovers the remains of a grotesque giant with a pig's head and the body of a man, arrayed lavishly in gold, silk, and jewels. "Alexander saw this as a lesson, saying, 'If the world is valued by God, then what value does this have?'" whereupon, disgusted, he renounced the wearing of gold and silk.³³

In another story Alexander encounters an impenetrable, abandoned castle built of a kind of cement of dense, ground flint. After some struggles to enter, his men find a giant's sarcophagus inside containing a skeleton whose teeth were "larger than a millstone", and an inscription on its interior reading, "Here is the tomb of the builder of Ḥarman and Ḥirāmān castle....May he who claims to kingship build something like this – or else destroy it. We took pride in our lives and thought they would be long, so we built it. But we did not know that the hereafter was right behind us and that kingship would not remain faithful when it came. So look at us, and make a lesson of it: do not rely upon the world and do not take pride in your lives."³⁴ It is notable that these melancholy Alexander tales (as well as the above-mentioned story of the race of *jinn* who inhabited the lands of the Black Sea before man) strongly imply the existence pre-Adamic races subject, just like mankind, to cycles of prophecy and judgment. The idea that current dominion of man on the earth, inaugurated by the descent of Adam, is only the last of a

33 Demirtaş, *Dürr-i Mekkûn*, p. 194.

34 Ibid. p. 153.

very large number of previous earthly dispensations, is not presented in any obvious way by Aḥmed Bīcān (although it is implicit in the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī, who was fond of a Prophetic *ḥadīth* that “God created 10,000 Adams”, and is also native to Isma‘ilism).

Another distinctive feature of the *Dürr-i Meknūn* are its several fanciful descriptions of Rome (*Rūmiyye*, *Rūmiyye-i Kubrā*), passages that would surely have found some reflection in Aḥmed’s geographical writings had he been familiar with this material. In the *Dürr* Rome is a mercantile city of wonders, with a market for the sale of birds, a sculpture of Muḥammad that emits healing water,³⁵ and, separately, magical statuary depicting Muḥammad, Fāṭima, and ‘Alī riding camels, each sculpted and placed by Jesus to remind Romans of the coming of the Seal of Prophecy.

It is admittedly difficult to convey in the above section the profound distinction in tone and message between the *Dürr-i Meknūn* and Aḥmed’s works that the reader may intuitively sense. While Bīcān, in his *Envār* and *‘Acāib*, is animated by prophetic history as a guide to prophetic faith, taking the reader across a living landscape of Muslim scholars and Sufi practitioners who show the way to inner truth in an uncertain world, the author of the *Dürr-i Meknūn* pulls us across fantastic geographies of ruined cities and tombs bearing inscrutable testimonies of the deepest past, and draws from each a lesson on earthly vanities and sexual transgression – lest we become like the races of ancient giants who rest as skeletons without progeny, and our works like their empty fortresses.

iv. Some Final Comparisons

35 Ibid. p. 150.

To illustrate how these departures cohere into an image of distinct authorship, let us closely compare a few pairs of analogous passages in which both authors deal with the same subject matter. An area of extensive overlap between the *Envārü'l-Āşiqîn* and the *Dürr-i Meknün*, the stories of the prophets from Adam onward, is a natural place to start. Both texts contain a narrative of Adam and Eve's deception by Satan in the garden of Paradise. Aḥmed Bīcān's version in the *Envārü'l-Āşiqîn* reads as follows:

When Iblīs saw Adam and the manner in which he was glorified by God, he was envious and desired to remove them from Heaven. He entered the form of a snake and came and cried before the gates of Heaven. Adam and Eve did not know Satan [*Şeytān*], and said, 'Why are you crying?' He said, 'I am crying because of your longing [*ḥasret*]. So I advise you to eat of that tree. You will remain in Heaven forever.' So Eve, full of pride, went from him and came to Adam, and said, 'Let us eat of that tree. Let us remain in Heaven.' Adam said, 'God has forbidden [*neḥiy*] us that tree.' Eve, with a thousand kindnesses and charms [*biñ nāz ü luḥf ile*], said, 'If you love me then let us eat of that tree. Let us remain in Heaven forever.' Adam said, 'Eve, do not do this. I fear God's wrath.' Eve suggested, 'God's mercy is great,' and took a fruit [*yemiş*] and ate of that tree, and said, 'O Adam, nothing happened to me.' For by eating nothing did happen to Eve. This is because Eve follows, while Adam leads [*Ḥavvā tābi' idi Adem metbū' idi*], and so if the follower is righteous then the leader is also righteous, and vice-versa. Eve then took a fruit and gave it to Adam. When Adam ate the fruit, all of his adornments fell from his shoulders. Adam was left naked [*uryān*]. And out of shame he fled and hid. God said, 'O Adam, is it me you are fleeing from?' Adam said, 'O Lord, I am ashamed of my sin and am fleeing.' And, taking a fig-leaf, he covered himself.³⁶

The *Dürr-i Meknün*'s version is slightly more detailed:

Then envy increased in Iblīs' heart. He resolved to enter Heaven and deceive Adam with a trick, making him eat of the tree that God had forbidden [*men' itdügi*] and remove him from Heaven. So Iblis entered a form and came to the gate of Heaven, and saw that the peacock was flaunting himself [*cevelān*] and the snake walking on his feet happily wandering. He said to them, 'What shall we do about your lovely beauty, your lovely garments, despite that you will later die?...' and then cried. They said, 'What is the remedy for this?' The cursed one said, 'If I enter Heaven I will find your remedy. Let me enter the open mouth of the snake.' The peacock consented to this. The peacock and snake were the gatekeepers of Heaven. He made them believe with persuasion [*iğva*] and entered the snake's mouth and entered Heaven and leapt and came before Adam. Iblis, the cursed, put his poison in the snake's mouth. Before, the snake was a fair and beautiful individual and even had feet. When the cursed one saw Eve with her beauty and loveliness, with her crown and adornments, he persuaded her too and presented [*arız eyledi*] her with [the idea of] death. Eve said, 'What is death and what is its remedy?' The cursed one said, 'If you eat of that fruit [*buğday*] tree, you will remain eternally without dying. This is why it was forbidden [*men'*] you – so that death be necessary.' Eve presented this to Adam. Adam immediately forbade this [*men'*] and did not agree. Eve with her charms [*nāz*] said, 'I will take it and eat it.' 'Whatever happens, happens to me,' she said. Eve stood and took it and ate it and nothing happened. This is because Eve follows

36 EA pp. 26b-27a.

and Adam leads [*Havvā tābi‘ idi Adem metbū‘ idi*]. When the leader is not disgraced [*zevāl*] the follower must also not be disgraced. Adam saw that nothing had happened and then took it and ate it. Immediately the crown flew from his head and the adornments from his shoulders. Adam was left naked [*çıplaq*] and fled out of shame and desired a leaf from the trees to make a garment for his head. The trees did not provide a leaf. In the end the fig tree provided one. He took the leaf from it and held on to it.³⁷

The two versions have much in common. They use similar or identical sources, both being summaries of a version of the story from the *qişaq al-anbiyā* (in this case the *Dürr*'s version with the peacock is closer to al-Kisā'ī's). Both also place the burden of Adam's sin in his ignorance of the pairing of woman and man as "follower and followed", using an identical phrase to convey this. But the rest of the passages are strikingly divergent. For the forbidding of the tree the *Envār* uses *nehiy*, and the *Dürr* systematically uses *men'*. The *Envār* uses *yemiş* and the *Dürr* *buğday* to mean "fruit". The *Dürr-i Mekkūn* refers to Iblīs as "Iblīs the cursed" (*İblīs-i la'in*), or simply "the cursed one" while the *Envār* calls him "Satan" (*Şeytān*). The *Envār* uses the Arabic *salāḥ* and *'uryān*, and the *Dürr* uses the Persian and Turkish *zevāl* and *çıplaq* at corresponding moments. The *Dürr-i Mekkūn*, describing the beauty of Eve and the snake, uses the word *zībā*, a term definitely not favored by Aḥmed Bīcān.

Just as striking are departures within the narrative itself. In the *Dürr-i Mekkūn*, Heaven is guarded by the snake and peacock, whose persuasion is as much a focus of the story as the persuasion of Adam and Eve. In the *Envār*, Adam and Eve, who are the garden's own gatekeepers, allow Iblīs into Heaven. In the *Dürr* the focus falls on the beautiful peacock and the lovely ambulatory serpent who guard the gate and whose downfall parallels that of man. In the *Dürr-i Mekkūn*, Satan twice offers the fruit as protection against death; in the *Envār* he offers Adam and Eve the chance to remain in Paradise. It is typical of the *Envār*'s style to proceed from

³⁷ Demirtaş, *Dürr-i Mekkūn*. pp. 121-122.

Adam's flight to a divine address (*hitābet-i ilāhiyye*); no such transition occurs in the *Dürr-i Meknūn*. In the *Envārü'l-Āşiqān* Adam is ashamed, specifically, of his sin, while in the *Dürr-i Meknūn* Adam appears more concerned by his nakedness.

What is important is that these two narratives are different; they add up to stories that are not compatible with each other and do not say the same thing. They are consistent with the contrasting attitudes, broadly drawn, between Aḥmed Bīcān's concern with faith and piety and the *Dürr-i Meknūn*'s preoccupation with time and human legacy. The temptation of Eden, for Aḥmed Bīcān, is the prospect of eternal salvation and sinlessness; for the author of the *Dürr-i Meknūn* it is the abolition of death. What for Aḥmed Bīcān is the first human error away from the path to salvation, is, for the author of the *Dürr-i Meknūn*, a parable of anxiety about mortality and the finite. To dream of eternity, for this author, is not only futile but diabolical.

There are also closely analogous passages in the *Dürr-i Meknūn* and Aḥmed's *'Acāibu'l-mahlūqāt*. Both works contain entries on herbs, foods, and talismanic stones, and how each can cure certain ailments. The much longer list of edible plants in the *Dürr-i Meknūn* includes most but not all of the items of the *'Acāib*, which is limited to the bitter orange, the apple, the fig, the pomegranate, the cypress, the plum, the black pepper, the hazelnut, sugar, the grape, date, and rose. Even a cursory comparison of these individual entries shows that this body of knowledge is distinct, proceeding from different sources. Compare, for instance, *Dürr-i Meknūn*'s notice on the apple,

The apple gives the heart strength. Peeled and eaten, it relaxes the heart, but creates indigestion if eaten cooked.

with the entry in Aḥmed's *'Acāib* on the apple's uses:

The juice of the apple's leaves is poisonous if drunk. If it [apple juice] is drunk when snake or centipede or scorpion bites, one will be cured...³⁸

Likewise, compare the *Dürr-i Meknûn*'s entry on the pomegranate,

The sweetness of the pomegranate is like the juice of a grape... The benefits of sour pomegranate are many. If one scatters its seeds over food, its acidity is good for the humors. If drunk with lemon juice, it is a useful [remedy] for expectorate. And if one eats three pomegranate flowers one will not see [ie. feel] pain in the eye.³⁹

with the '*Acāib*':

There are some pomegranates which, if one removes the upper part and sees that it is [made of] two parts, each of its seeds will also be of two parts. When a tree is planted somewhere it will repel animals and if left among barley or wheat no pests will appear [*qurt düşmeye*].⁴⁰

There is no overlap between these sets of botanical entries, distinct in form and content. The apple entries diverge in medical recommendations. In the pomegranate entry the '*Acāib* betrays its wonder-story heritage alongside a certain awareness of agricultural practice, while the *Dürr-i Meknûn* is rooted in humoral and folkloric medicine. This difference appears to be based on a difference in natural-philosophical theory. The '*Acāib* is naturalistic in its theory of the power of plants: God's power, dispersed in the element of water, acquires specific medical characteristics as it is taken up in the growth of a maturing plant. The *Dürr*'s theory is different. God simply created plants for his servants, "each one a remedy for a pain and the cure for an illness. He informed Luqmān the sage... and he informed the people."⁴¹ It is hard to imagine both theories and both sets of data as the same author's expressions.

It is worth a look at how Aḥmed Bīcān and the *Dürr-i Meknûn* differ when they more closely share nature theory and data. Aḥmed Bīcān writes about the ruby in his '*Acāib* and his

38 AM p. 39a.

39 Demirtaş, *Dürr-i Meknûn*, p. 188.

40 AM p. 39b.

41 Demirtaş, *Dürr-i Meknûn*. p. 182.

short poem, the *Cevhernāme*, and the author of the *Dürr* does the same in a chapter on stones.

The 'Acāib describes the ruby as follows:

The ruby: its essence is watery... If brought against the heat of metal it nullifies it, so that fire cannot burn and iron cannot be worked [*od yaqmaz ve demür kār eylemez*]. He who wears ruby will not be afflicted by the plague, and if a ruby is placed in a glass in the winter [its] water will not freeze.⁴²

This is rendered poetically in the *Cevhernāme* as:

It is proper to hold a ruby-stone –
one will not see the plague.
If shaken vigorously with water
That water will not freeze even if the world is in turmoil
Place a ruby in your mouth in a waterless place –
It will be as if you've drunk the purest water.⁴³

The *Dürr-i Meknūn* recounts the following:

The ruby is a jewel. If one puts a bit of ruby under the tongue thirst will abate. It has an imitator... known as the garnet. He who takes it in the hand is unaffected by fire [*od kār eylemez*].⁴⁴

In both the *Dürr-i Meknūn* and Aḥmed Bīcān's signed writings the ruby quenches thirst and defends against fire. But only in Aḥmed's two passages does the jewel prevent water from freezing and vaccinate against the plague. It seems likely, then, that Aḥmed and the *Dürr-i Meknūn*'s author possessed common basic knowledge on jewels. Aḥmed – who lived through Gelibolu's plague years – knew something additional about its talismanic uses, and the *Dürr-i Meknūn*'s author, always ready to unveil forgeries and hypocrisies, was suspicious of the false rubies of the marketplace.

III. Who Wrote the *Dürr-i Meknūn*?

42 AM p. 37a.

43 Fatma Kutlar, "Aḥmed-I Bican'ın manzum Cevahir-Name'si," *İnsan Bilimleri Araştırmaları* 7 (2002): 59–68.

44 Demirtaş, *Dürr-i Meknūn*. p. 189.

Unfortunately, while there are many clues that Aḥmed Bīcān did not write the *Dürr-i Meknūn*, there are no clues as to who exactly did write it. Dating the document is relatively straightforward. Yerasimos and Kaptein find a *terminus post quem* of 1455 for the *Dürr-i Meknūn*, based on the work's reference to the master of the occult sciences, 'Abdurrahmān Bisṭāmī of Bursa, as "deceased". On this same basis it is unlikely that the work was written too long after Bisṭāmī's death. This places the likely date for composition of the *Dürr-i Meknūn* in the decades after 1455, coinciding with the lifetime of Aḥmed Bīcān. Those scholars with a more acute sense for linguistic coloration of fifteenth-century Turkish may hear the sound of these decades in the work's language; so far every expert, from Kātib Çelebi through to modern scholars, has seen its stylistic features as typical of mid-fifteenth century prose.

The question of who this anonymous author is, if he is not Aḥmed Bīcān, is more open to interpretation, and on this I can only offer speculative remarks. It is suggestive that this writer takes more than one opportunity to criticize the *zāviye* and the *medrese*. It is also meaningful that there appears to be no indication of Sufi affiliation – nor the name of even a single theorist of mysticism – anywhere in the *Dürr-i Meknūn*. On the other hand, the *Dürr*'s repertoire of geographical and occult lore is far more eclectic than Aḥmed Bīcān's, who relies upon a small number of canonical works. It is almost certain, then, that the author of the *Dürr-i Meknūn* was not a Sufi or this was not central to his identity; what *was* central is this writer's enthusiasm for occult wisdom as a non-mystical body of knowledge, as a kind of empirical art. Less urbane and less mystical than Aḥmed, the *Dürr*'s author looked outward and not inward for his worldview, ransacking his environment for useful information, without regard for authenticity or origin.

These idiosyncrasies serve an overarching theme: a kind of rage against those who build vain works and justify themselves to posterity thereby. This is entirely consistent with the Yerasimos' interpretation of anti-imperial message hiding in the work's stories on Constantinople's founding and the building of Aya Sofya, an anxiety about building and institutions. The author admonished those who presumed to transcend the limits of the lifespan by means of permanent economic, institutional, or physical structures – those who, in the fullness of time, would be obliterated by it, even as they live amid the domes of Istanbul that are like tombs for the living. In the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* what is glorified about King Solomon is not his *Beytü'l-maqdis* (told as an almost bureaucratic struggle to convince the demons to raise its pillars), but his nomadic throne carried by the winds. The throne, flying in the air and three miles long, housed Solomon in a bejeweled central tent along with his four thousand advisers sitting in chairs of ebony, juniper, and sandalwood, beside seventy *miḥrābs* in which stood the saints of Israel. Accompanied by flocks of birds and dragons, Solomon ruled from this airship, casting a shadow over his domains, scattering wealth among them and rendering his justice. If the “Living Star” (*kevkebi'l-ḥayy*) is the itinerant capital of a Turko-Persian ruler, then the Temple/Aya Sofya is the problematic symbol of a permanent seat of government in Istanbul – and the author's sympathy lies with the authority of former, not the latter. Yerasimos is perhaps correct to surmise that the author of the *Dürr-i Mekkūn*, with this clue and others, reveals his affiliation with a nomad-oriented segment of Ottoman society, a West Anatolian or Rumelian *gāzī* demographic that was reluctant to pay allegiance to a king in a palace.

This does not require as thorough a revision of our own critical understanding of the *Dürr-i Mekkūn* as one would expect. Aside from the name of its author, Yerasimos' thesis

remains valid in every aspect. Kaptein's critical edition and most of his commentary are untouched by the attribution of the work to an anonymous rather than a known writer. Şahin's readings of both the *Müntehā* and the *Dürr-i Meknūn* retain their insights even if the two works were separately authored. The scholar who wrote the *Dürr-i Meknūn* is, just as before, a real fifteenth-century Ottoman, but one without the name of Aḥmed Bīcān Yazıcıoğlu. It is only our biography of the real Aḥmed Bīcān that suffers for it, having been shorn of some of its most compelling content. Meanwhile, von Hammer-Purgstall's observation, that the *Dürr-i Meknūn* contained "more recondite learning, more entertaining history... than I ever saw collected in a simple volume," continues to ring true as an early response to the *Dürr-i Meknūn*'s cryptic magic. The *Dürr-i Meknūn*, a union of folkloric dark bodies of oral knowledge in Turkish or Greek with gestures towards an Islamicate canon at the beginning of the Ottoman imperial age, is still *sui generis*. As an expression of social distress and mortal anxieties, it is as pure a cry against the "terror of history" as any work of medieval literature. Situating the text's production not only in a non-elite context, but an anti-elite one, the *Dürr-i Meknūn*'s anonymous author courageously presents to his readers the hypocrisy of Nebuchadnezzar.

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