THE APPROPRIATION OF ISLAMIC HISTORY AND AHL AL-BAYTISM IN OTTOMAN HISTORICAL WRITING, 1300-1650

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University

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Graduate Program in History

The Ohio State University

2013

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Abstract

This is a study of Ottoman historical productions of the pre-1700 period that deal directly with narratives of early Islamic history. It specifically deals with the representations of the formative events of early Islamic history. Through the lenses of universal histories, biographies of Muhammad, religious treatises and other narrative sources, this study examines Ottoman intellectuals’ perceptions of the events that occurred after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 C.E. It particularly provides a perspective on issues such as the problem of succession to Muhammad as leader of the Muslim community; the conflict between ‘Alī ibn Abī Talīb and Mu‘āwiyyah and the Umayyad dynasty’s assumption of the position of successor (caliph); and Ottoman views of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs and significant events and persons during the reigns of these two dynasties. Since the great schism between the Sunnis and Shiites began because of their different stances on the issue of succession to Muhammad, studying these perceptions can help to tell us whether the Ottomans were strict Sunnis who favored a rigidly Sunni interpretation of the formative events of Islam.

After the death of Muhammad, the Muslim community was divided over how his successor as leader of the community should be chosen. This division resulted in the emergence of the Sunni-Shiite schism. The Ottomans have traditionally been regarded as strict Sunnis. In this study, which utilizes Ottoman
Turkish and Arabic manuscript sources, many of which have never been studied before, it is argued that Ottoman Sunnism was not as monolithic as has been conventionally assumed and that there were many intellectual currents competing to shape the nature of Sunnism in the Empire. The study covers a wide range of historians, from the earliest representatives of Ottoman universal history-writers, such as Ahmedī (1334-1412), Enverī (d, 1460), and Şükrullah (1388-1461), to comparatively well-known later intellectual luminaries such as Mustafa ‘Ālī (1541-1600) and Katip Çelebi (1609-57), and lesser-known figures such as Mustafa Cenabī (d. 1590) and Muslihuddin Lārī (d. 1572).

A particularly noteworthy contribution of this study is the analysis of the course of ahl al-baytism in Ottoman historical writing. Ahl al-baytism is a term used to describe the love and reverence that Sunnis show not only to the immediate family of Muhammad but also to the twelve imams of the Shiites. (Ahl al-bayt, literally “people of the house,” refers to the family of Muhammad in broad terms.) It is argued in this study that ahl al-baytism was a widespread cultural phenomenon among Ottoman intellectuals. Based on this evidence, this study challenges the idea that Ottomans were zealous Sunnis. It contends that Ottoman Sunnism can be best understood with reference to divergent and even at times contradictory trends that coexisted. The pendulum, it demonstrates, consistently swung more towards ahl al-baytism and away from zealous Sunnism.
To my wife
for being there
Acknowledgments

I should say at the beginning what I should say at the end: This study is dedicated to my wife. Without her continuous support and encouragement none of this could have been written.

If I am a better academic today, it is most certainly due to my advisor Jane Hathaway. Throughout my graduate studies she has provided me with the best of advice, support and friendship. She made this dissertation much better with her suggestions and revisions. She left a mark on my academic training that proved to be indispensable. My gratitude is not easy to pin down here.

Dale K. Van Kley broadened my horizons with his courses on early modern Europe and has been one of the biggest supporters of my work. He also provided me with personal friendship and always treated me with kindness. Stephen Dale equally broadened my horizons by encouraging me to study Safavid history and provided much needed help at a critical time. Nicholas Breyfogle also encouraged me to continue my work with his supportiveness.

I have been fortunate to do a full year of research in Istanbul with the help of joint funds from Adıvar and Sydney Fisher fellowships. I am grateful to Carter V. Findley for providing me with these funds. I also received a dissertation fellowship from Turkish Cultural Foundation at a difficult time and it helped me
to continue my work. I also received various funds from the College of
Humanities and the Department of History at Ohio State. Alam Payind gave me a
hand at a time of financial uncertainty and helped me to get some first-hand
experience in the Middle East field. All these funds and interventions combined
helped me to finish this work and I am grateful to these people and institutions.

I had spent quite a bit of time in ISAM and Süleymaniye Libraries during
the 2008-2009 academic year. I am thankful to the courteous staff of both. I
would like to also thank Dr. Mehmet Canatar of İstanbul University for providing
me with a copy of his doctoral dissertation.

I have been also blessed with the amity and support of many people: A.
Kadir Yıldırım and Oğuz Kurt made Columbus home to me and we established a
life-long friendship. Yunus Zeytuncu and Ufuk Ulutaş were the ones with whom
we developed a real camaraderie all along. Yiğit Akın provided me with support
and encouragement during these years. All the other Tarih-i Osmani students at
Ohio State, notably James Helicke, Serdar Poyraz, and Catalina Hunt, made it
easier for me to adjust and thrive. We shared fun and enthusiasm with Okan
Çakır, Ahmet İzzet Bozbey and Mehmet Uğur Ekinci during their stay in
Columbus. Calvert Tooley and Matthew Yates had been my opening to Americana
and I am thankful for their friendship. Kerem Dirlikli and Nuh Aydın deserve
special thanks for providing me with much-needed support. I am much obliged
to all these friends.
My mother and my brothers Sefa and Sezai deserve thanks for waiting patiently all these years for me to get a doctorate. My final thanks go to my daughter, Esra Ela, for sharing her room with me and bringing so much joy to our lives.
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History
Major, Islamic History
Minor, Early Modern European History
Minor, Russian History
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OTTOMAN HISTORICAL WRITING, 1300-1650

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Intellectual history is the backwater of Ottoman studies. Despite the constant expansion of the field, works on ideas and intellectuals are still relatively rare; we are still far from having a comprehensive understanding of the history of intellectual production in the Ottoman Empire. For example, we still lack a comprehensive study of the oeuvre of Katip Çelebi (1609-57), the most significant intellectual of the seventeenth century.\(^1\) The same is true of Evliya Çelebi (1611?-82), whose travel writings, had they been composed by a European, would probably have inspired a plethora of works in the field of European history.\(^2\) There are many reasons why intellectual history remains a backwater. For one thing, it is seen as unrewarding relative to the intensive effort required to undertake it. Because of the unique nature of Ottoman intellectual identity, which included Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, and Persian elements, a successful study of any given intellectual endeavor requires one not only to master these languages but also to have a more than rudimentary understanding of the scholarship that

\(^1\) For an example of the still-scarce scholarship on Katib Çelebi, see Gottfried Hagen, *Ein osmanischer Geograph bei der Arbeit: Enstehung und Gedankenwelt von Kātib Čelebis Gihānnūmā* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2003).

was written in these languages. Yet there is another, more insidious reason for the lack of interest in intellectual history. Beginning with the Orientalist scholarship of the early nineteenth century, the attitude has taken root that Islamic scholarship declined after its brief florescence under the Abbasid and Spanish Umayyad caliphates in the ninth and tenth centuries C.E., and never recovered. By this logic, the cultural production of the Ottoman Empire, the foremost representative of Islamic civilization from at least the sixteenth century through the early twentieth century, is one point on a continuous trajectory of cultural decline. It has been argued that Ottoman intellectuals produced little original work; therefore, their output contains nothing worthy of scholarly investigation. This obsession with “originality” is the product of the modern age in which progress and novelty are seen as desirable and even inevitable. However, judging the intellectual production of earlier centuries according to current expectations is, at best, an injustice to reality and, at worst, the most backward form of anachronism. Generally speaking, Ottoman intellectuals believed that they were continuing a tradition, a tradition that they found significant enough to continue. For that purpose, they wrote works based on models that had been produced by scholars of earlier centuries and whose

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3 This author does not claim mastery in all of these three languages. This is simply a general observation. For a successful intellectual history which utilizes all of these three languages effectively, see Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali, 1541-1600* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

4 This is especially true in the case of the rational sciences and during the seventeenth century. Highly respected figures such as Halil İnalcık and Marshal Hodgson adhered to the idea that in the seventeenth century scholarship was in decline in the Ottoman Empire. See Khaled El-Rouayheb, “The Myth of The Triumph of Fanaticism’ in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire,” *Die Welt des Islams* 48 (2008), 197.
authoritativene had stood the test of time. At the same time, many of them produced works of striking originality, as the research of Khaled El-Rouayheb has shown. Generally speaking, intellectual production was evaluated differently in, say, the fifteenth or sixteenth century from the manner in which it is evaluated today. In addition to the fascination with novel ideas, importance was attached to expressing these ideas within the framework of classical genres and styles.

Historical writing is probably the most studied of the subfields of Ottoman intellectual history. One reason for this is that Ottoman intellectuals themselves were arguably more interested in history than in any other subfield and therefore contributed to it disproportionately. Even these efforts, however, tend to be undervalued in modern scholarship. In the historiographical studies undertaken in the last three decades, for example, historical writing is evaluated almost exclusively with reference to the transformation of the state and bureaucracy.

Historical writing in the Ottoman Empire took many forms. Two popular genres were the history of the Ottoman dynasty from its mythologized beginnings in the late thirteenth century to the reign of a sultan contemporary with or nearly contemporary with the author, as in the case of, the Tevārīh-i Āl-i Osmān of

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‘Āşıkpaşazāde (1400-after 1484),\(^7\) and the history of reign of a certain sultan, as in the case of Celâlzāde’s (1490-1567) Ṭabakāt‘ü-Memālik,\(^8\) which covers the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent (1520-66). Other genres included the ghazāvātnāme, an account of a specific military campaign, such as the Ghazāvātnāme-i Sultān Murād Hān\(^9\) on Murad II’s Varna campaign of 1444, and the historical calendar, such as Katip Çelebi’s Takwīmū’t-tevārīh.\(^10\) Transcending all these forms is the genre of universal history, in which the Ottoman dynasty is situated within a continuum of Islamic states and dynasties, and within a global historical framework. Universal history had been a very popular genre in both the Arabophone and Persophone intellectual worlds. Early Ottoman historians perused these works carefully and benefitted from them immensely. Not until the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, however, were Ottoman historians comfortable enough to write their own universal histories based on the Arabic and Persian models. It was not just a twist of fate that the rise of universal history-writing coincided with the increasing claims of the Ottomans to world domination.

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\(^8\) A facsimile of the work can be found in Mustafa Çelebi Celalzade, Geschichte Sultan Süleymān Kānūnīs von 1520 bis 1557, oder, Ṭabaḵāt ʿil-Memālīk ve Derecāt ʿil-Mesālīk (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1981). An annotated transliteration was recently published: Ayhan Yılmaz, ed., Kanuni’nin Tarihçisinden Muhteşem Çağ: Tabakâtü’l-Memâlik ve Derecâtü’l-Mesâlîk (İstanbul: Kariyer, 2011).


\(^10\) Katip Çelebi, Takwīmū’t-tevārīh (İstanbul: Dârû’l-Tibāʾat-İl-Āmire, 1146 (1733)).
When approaching these Ottoman-era universal histories, modern-day scholars have been interested almost exclusively in the Ottoman sections of these works, finding the pre-Ottoman parts redundant and unimportant. However, the composers of these histories found pre-Ottoman history significant and worthy of their attention. I find the pre-Ottoman parts of universal histories crucial not only because they provide important clues to the intellectual formation of Ottoman historians but also because they reveal the intellectual caliber of the individual historians. Writing on the history of the Ottomans, most historians felt obliged to praise the dynasty and to write an account that would please members of the royal family and, in some cases, their patrons in the government, such as viziers. In writing on pre-Ottoman history, however, they were able to distance themselves to some extent from dynastic concerns and the limits that these concerns imposed. Thus the pre-Ottoman sections of these histories give us a clearer picture than the Ottoman sections of how the mind of an Ottoman intellectual worked and how it appropriated earlier historical traditions.

Ottoman-era chronicles treating only Islamic history, exclusive of the world historical framework, are extremely rare before 1800. Although it would be interesting to learn how Ottoman intellectuals translated the works of classical

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12 This genre became popular only in the 19th century. For an example, see Ahmed Cevdet Pasha (1822-1895), Kısas-i enbiyâ ve tevârîh-i hulefâ (Istanbul: Matbaa-yi Amire, 1291 (1874-1875)).
Islamic historians, such as al-Tabari’s (838-923) *Tarīkh al-rusūl wa-al-mulūk*, and to see if they altered or expanded them, Islamic histories composed by Ottoman intellectuals are usually embedded within universal historical compilations. In this study, an attempt will be made to evaluate the appropriation of early Islamic history in Ottoman historical writing especially with reference to these universal histories. Studying the appropriation of Islamic history within the Ottoman intellectual context is important in three respects. First, it helps us to comprehend the development of a well-defined mentality among Ottoman intellectuals and the contribution of this mentality to broader Islamic scholarship. Secondly, it shows how stories of the remote Islamic past played an important role in the rhetoric that Ottoman historians adopted to explain their own times. Thirdly, and most importantly for the purposes of this study, understanding how Ottoman historians appropriated early Islamic history provides the essential context for the analysis of the evolution of Ottoman religious identity.

This last point will be pursued throughout this study and is therefore worth explaining at greater length. The Ottomans have conventionally been labeled staunch Sunnis, adherents of the majority sect of Islam. Indeed, considering the *fetvās*, or legal opinions, and treatises of Ottoman Şeyhülislams

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13 One can find various translations of bits and pieces of al-Tabari’s work in the Süleymaniye Library and other manuscript libraries in Istanbul.
(chief jurisconsults) Ebu’s-Su’ud (1490-1574)\textsuperscript{14} and Ibn Kemāl (Kemālaşazāde, 1468/9-1534)\textsuperscript{15} denouncing various sects and beliefs that they considered outside the realm of \textit{ahl al-sunnah wa-al-jamā’ah},\textsuperscript{16} and the religious persecution of the Qizilbash, Turkic tribesmen in Anatolia suspected of sympathizing with the shah of the rival Safavid empire in Iran,\textsuperscript{17} it seems impossible to think otherwise. No doubt in the creation of this Sunni image, the emergence and expansion of the Shiite Safavids as a political and social threat to the Ottoman Empire played an important role. Ottoman Sunnism was defined for the most part by jurists, such as Ebu’s-Su’ud and Ibn Kemāl, who were in the service of the Ottoman state, whose appointments and salaries were designated by the state, and who therefore naturally played a role in the justification of the Ottoman political position and in asserting Ottoman legitimacy vis-à-vis the Safavids. This juristic interpretation of Ottoman Sunnism has become the dominant explanation of Ottoman religious identity; however, it does not withstand serious scrutiny, first and foremost because of its limited application to the broader intellectual scene. Were, for example, Ottoman littérateurs and historians similarly staunch Sunnis? Cornell Fleischer has argued that even among the Ottoman elite of Süleyman I’s reign

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{14} For Ebu’s-Su’ud’s fetvas see M.E. Düzdağ, ed., \textit{Şeyhülislam Ebussuud Efendi Fetvaları} (Istanbul: Enderun, 1972).


\textsuperscript{17} See, for instance, the evidence presented in Colin H. Imber, “The Persecution of the Ottoman Shi’ites according to the Mühimme Defterleri, 1565-1585,” \textit{Der Islam} 56 (1979): 245-273.
\end{footnote}

7
(1520-1566), the Sunni character of the Ottoman Empire was not unanimously accepted until after the late 1550s.\(^{18}\)

In this study, I will attempt to define Ottoman Sunnism in a manner subtly different from that of the jurists by looking at the views of Ottoman historians on the issues that divided the original Muslim community, ultimately resulting in the schism between Sunnis and Shiites. These issues include the murder of the third caliph, or successor to the Prophet Muhammad as leader of the Muslim community, ʿUthmān ibn Affān, in 656 C.E.; the conflict over the caliphate in 656-657 between ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭalīb and Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān; and the massacre of ʿAlī’s son Husayn by the forces of Muʿāwiya’s son Yazīd at Karbala in Iraq in 680. I argue that the example of the Ottoman historians shows that Ottoman Sunnism was far from being monolithic. Ottoman intellectuals, among them historians, circulated a broad spectrum of attitudes on these subjects, ranging from intense identification with the family of the Prophet Muhammad, known in Arabic as \(\text{ahl al-bayt}\), including ʿAlī ibn Abī Tālib and the line of Shiite imams descended from him, to zealous Sunnism that was intolerant of any tinge of Shiism. Intriguingly, the pendulum swung towards \(\text{ahl al-baytism}\) more frequently than it did toward obsessive Sunnism. \(\text{Ahl al-baytism}\),\(^{19}\) a concept that was first labeled by R.D. McChesney in his study of an ‘Alid shrine in Central


\(^{19}\) I am grateful to Jane Hathaway for drawing my attention to this phenomenon.
Asia,\textsuperscript{20} refers to reverence among Sunnis for the family of the Prophet Muhammad. As it is used in this study, it refers to an affinity among Ottoman intellectuals not only for the Prophet Muhammad but also for his daughter Fatima, his son-in-law `Alî ibn Abî Ṭalîb, his grandsons Hasan and Husayn, and their descendants, including the twelve Imams recognized by Twelver Shiites. In their chronicles, these \textit{ahl al-baytist} historians support `Alî ibn Abî Ṭalîb’s claims to the caliphate in his conflict with Mu'awiyah’s camp, they curse Yazîd for his complicity in Husayn’s murder, contrary to the arguments of revered Sunni ulama such as al-Ghazâlî (1058-1111), and they support the descendants of Muhammad in the face of opposition from the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs. On the other hand, most among them do not subscribe to Shiite epistemological or eschatological beliefs, although a few actually do, notably the belief that the Shiite Imams possess special esoteric knowledge and the belief that the twelfth Imam will return at the end of time.

**Chronological scope**

This study will provide a survey of Islamic histories written by Ottoman intellectuals from the empire’s early years in the fourteenth century through the mid-seventeenth century. This survey is by no means exhaustive; however, it is fairly representative. I am particularly interested in the approach to early Islamic history up to the end of the Abbasid caliphate (1258) of a select group of Ottoman historians and littérateurs, and in determining the sources and methods that they used.

used. This three-and-a-half century period was crucial in the establishment of the
Ottoman Empire on the world scene. From the early fourteenth century, when
the Ottomans were a small principality on the borders of the Byzantine Empire,
to the mid-sixteenth century, when their empire spanned three continents,
Ottoman religious identity changed immensely, from a syncretic belief system
that incorporated learned Islam, Sufism and old Central Asian/Turkic traditions,
to a centralized and stringently orthodox Sunni Islam. This, at least, is what the
conventional wisdom would have us believe.

I argue that Ottoman historians’ treatments of early Islamic history
mirrored the evolution of Ottoman religious identity. By critically examining the
sections of their works dealing with early Islam, therefore, we can acquire a more
nuanced view of this process and its end result than the conventional wisdom
allows. Above all, this examination allows more space in Ottoman religious
identity to the sort of ahl al-baytism described above. At the same time, this
study will take into account the watershed in Ottoman political and social
history during this three-and-a-half century period that we would expect to affect
the historians’ outlook; chief among these are Selim I’s (r. 1512–1520) conquest of
the Mamluk Sultanate in 1516–17, which gave the Ottomans control of the Muslim
holy cities of Mecca and Medina; the emergence of the Safavids on the Ottomans’
eastern border in the early sixteenth century; changes in the representation of
imperial identity and authority during and after the sultanate of Süleyman the
Magnificent (1520-1566); and the rise of the puritanical Kadızadeli movement during the seventeenth century.

**Sources for and plan of the study**

The research that led to this study started with a simple question: How did Ottoman historians write about and contextualize early Islamic history and what can one learn from their output? I did not expect to find that these historians made original contributions to the writing of early Islamic history. By the time the Ottomans began to establish their empire in the fourteenth century, after all, some seven centuries had passed since the establishment of the original Muslim community in the Arabian Peninsula. Ottoman-era historians were thus obliged to recap what earlier historians had written about this period. I was more interested in how Ottoman historians rewrote this history over and over from a pool of available sources while, at the same time, manipulating it according to the needs and expectations of their own times. This manipulation of earlier materials constitutes their original contribution. I also wanted to see how the Ottoman historians’ craft evolved and grew more sophisticated over time – if, indeed, it did so.

Most of the sources that are used in this study are literary-historical accounts or, to put it in another way, narrative sources. Narrative sources present different challenges from archival sources. They are less formulaic and more interpretive than archival sources; at the same time, they are imbued with the worldviews of their authors. Regardless, they are crucial to the writing of
intellectual history since they, unlike archival sources, give us insight into the workings of the minds of the intellectuals who composed them.

During the first century of Ottoman rule, Ottoman historians relied disproportionately for their coverage of early Islamic history on sections of al-Tabārī’s voluminous history or its abridged Persian translation, compiled in 963 by Abū ‘Alī Muhammad Bal’amī. Neither Islamic history nor any other history was included in the curriculum of the Ottoman madrasas, indeed not in any of the madrasas in the Islamic world, although one would expect that the students were exposed to some Islamic history in their studies of hadīth, or traditions of the Prophet and his companions, and tafsīr, or Qur’ānic exegesis. The only notable work on early Islamic history produced by an Ottoman intellectual during this period was a sīra, or biography of the Prophet, by Erzurumlu Darīr, who lived in Anatolia during the second half of the fourteenth century. Darīr was not even an Ottoman in the strict sense of the word: he was neither educated in the Ottoman madrasas nor employed in Ottoman service. Composed in simple Turkish, his work became very popular, and during Murad III’s (r. 1574-1595) reign, a heavily illustrated version of it was produced. This illuminated version, featuring 814 miniatures, has attracted considerable attention from modern-day art historians; however, a content analysis of this work has never been undertaken. The second chapter of this study takes up this task. Although

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histories of the Ottoman dynasty were numerous by the late fifteenth century, accounts of Islamic history were still rare. One of the few surveys of Islamic history produced during this period appears in Şükrullah’s (1380-1460) universal history Behçetü’t-tevārīh, which will be scrutinized in the same chapter.

The sixteenth century was a period of efflorescence in Ottoman letters, including historical writing; a wide variety of works on the history of the Ottoman dynasty were produced. Correspondingly, many universal histories were written that dealt with early Islamic history, as well as translations of earlier Prophetic biographies, such as, Lāmi’i Çelebi’s (1472-1532) translation of the Persian poet Jāmī’s (1414-1492) Shawāhid al-nubuwwa (Signs of Prophecy). This work will be examined in the third chapter, along with Muslihuddin Lārī’s (1510-1572) universal history Mirkāt’ül-edvār, as redacted by Hocā Sadeddin Efendi (1536-1599). The fourth chapter will address the sections on early Islamic history of two universal histories written during the reign of Murad III (1574-1595), Mustafa Cenābī’s (1540s-1590/1) and Mustafa ‘Alī’s (1541-1600). Although Mustafa ‘Alī’s work, Ḧünhül-ahbār, is fairly well-known, its pre-Ottoman sections are severely understudied. Mustafa Cenābī’s work, composed in Arabic, remains obscure to many scholars of the Ottoman Empire. However, this work, Aylām al-Zahir, was one of the most influential universal histories ever written under the Ottomans.

The fifth chapter turns to the seventeenth century, a period of generalized political, economic, and social crisis. The intellectual aura of this period was characterized by contention over what constituted proper adherence to the
Prophet Muhammad’s example. I will examine Katip Çelebi’s unfinished and unpublished Arabic *Fadhlaka*, an expansion of his well-known Turkish *Fezleke*, in the context of this era of crisis. This work, and above all its sections on early Islamic history, has been largely neglected by modern scholars. Other works reflecting the overall sense of crisis are Mehmed b. Mehmed’s (d. 1640) *Nuhbetu’t-tevārīh* and Ahmed ibn Yūsuf al-Karamānī al-Dimaşḵī’s (1532-1611) *Akhbār al-duwal*.

Apart from these sources, which are the chief foci of this dissertation, I refer in passing to other literary/historical accounts, notably Yazıcıoğlu Mehmed’s (d. 1451) *Muhammediye*, Ahmedī’s (1334-1413) *İskendernāme*, and Enverī’s (d. 1465) *Düsturnāme*.

It is my hope that readers will come away from this study with a better understanding of how Ottoman historical writing grew increasingly sophisticated over time, evolving from literary-historical narratives based on a limited number of accounts to major universal historical compilations comparable to their Arabic and Persian counterparts in both style and content. This growing sophistication is clearly conveyed in Ottoman intellectuals’ views on early Islamic history, especially in regard to the issues that have divided Sunnis and Shiites historically. More broadly, this study hopes to contribute not only to an understanding of historical composition in the Ottoman Empire but also to discussions concerning Ottoman religious identity and its complex nature. It will do so, first, by questioning the assertion that the Ottomans were zealous Sunnis. Second, it will
demonstrate the great diversity of opinion among Ottoman intellectuals regarding the issues dividing Sunnis and Shiites. Third, it will demonstrate the limited applicability of this stringent brand of Sunnism to the greater intellectual scene of the Ottoman Empire. Finally, it will trace the course of a resilient *ahl al-bayt*ism among Ottoman historians regardless of period and context.
CHAPTER 2
FROM SIRĀṬ TO GHAZĀ: BEGINNINGS OF ISLAMIC HISTORICAL WRITING IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, 1300-1481

Introduction

The earliest surviving history of the house of Osman dates back only to the 15th century. Ahmed’s İskendernāme was the earliest work written which contains information about the Ottomans, albeit it is short and incomplete. The first comprehensive history of the Ottomans was written only later in the 15th century by Derviş Ahmed, known as ʿĀşıḳpaşazâde (henceforth APZ), a grandson of the famous 14th-century mystic and poet ʿĀşıḳ Paşa. A wave of histories of the Ottomans occurred especially after the conquest of Constantinople from the Byzantines in 1453 and the creation of an imperial structure. This relative delay in the inauguration of historical writing in the Ottoman Empire is a phenomenon which needs to be explained.

Coming from a nomadic background, Osman, the eponymous founder of the Ottoman Empire, was illiterate, if one trusts an episode recounted in APZ’s chronicle. When the dervish Shaykh Edebalı interpreted Osman’s famous dream, in which he saw a tree growing from his navel, as foretelling the greatness of the state he would found, one of Edebalı’s pupils, Derviş Tururoğlu, asked Osman to give him a gift. When Osman promised to give him a city if he would become a
governor, the dervish, even though he was contented with his village, asked him for a written proof. He instead gave him a sword and a cup, asking, “How did you get the idea that I can write?”

“That village and the aforementioned sword are still in the possession of the aforementioned dervish family,” APZ observes. Osman’s followers, the famous ghazis, who participated in his enterprise, were probably no different from Osman although one would assume that there were some among them who were somewhat educated in religious matters. The multiplication of literate figures seems to have started with Orhan (r. 1324-1362), Osman’s son and heir, who initiated the opening of the first Islamic theological seminary (madrasa) in Nicaea (İzник) in 1331 after this town’s conquest from the Byzantines. Recognizing that he did not have enough scholars to start a madrasa, he invited a number from other Turkish principalities, or beyliks, in Anatolia; Dāwūd-u Kayseri (d. 1351), who had himself been educated in Cairo, was appointed the first rector (and faculty member) of this madrasa.

The Seljuks established many madrasas, both in the Great Seljuk heartland in Iran and Iraq and in the offshoot kingdom in Anatolia (Rûm). Although madrasas, usually attached to mosques, apparently came into existence at least a century earlier, with the Nizamiyya madrasas established by the great Seljuk vizier Nizām al-Mulk (d. 1092), they entered a new phase of brilliance in


İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, Osmanlı Tarihi (Ankara: TTK, 1984), vol. 1, 520.
the 11th century. The Seljuks of Anatolia also constructed a great number of madrasas in their domains. How many of these madrasas survived the Mongol invasions of the 13th century is unclear, although the Mongol general Hülegü, who sacked Baghdad in 1258, was himself said to have opened several madrasas. When the Ottoman emirate first emerged, there were madrasas in different parts of Anatolia under the control of various principalities; however, their role in producing Anatolian literati has yet to be examined. We can assume that a critical mass of literati emerged only gradually. Correspondingly, history-writing must have developed gradually because of the gradual florescence of intellectual life.

One can also relate the late development of history-writing to the gradual evolution of the Ottoman state. In the stormy 14th century, the house of Osman was only one of numerous dynasties fighting for supremacy in Anatolia, even if the Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta, visiting in 1333, depicts it as the strongest in the region. Indeed, poets and historians of the first two centuries of Ottoman rule, notably Mustafa Ḍarīr, Ahmedī and Enverī, all of whom are discussed below, frequently switched their allegiances from the Ottomans to competing beys and back.

It is evident that a history of the Ottoman dynasty was not compiled during the first century of Ottoman rule. During this period, Ottoman

intellectuals relied on translations of various Persian and Arabic histories for their knowledge of earlier Muslim dynasties. When did they consider compiling a history of their own that situated the Ottomans in a long line of Muslim dynasties? It seems that such an idea did not occur to Ottoman intellectuals until the early 15th century, when the Ottomans had secured their position in both the Balkans and Anatolia. How did these intellectuals learn about early Islamic history? What were the sources available to them? The biographical literature of the Prophet Muhammad, known in the Arabic plural as sīrāt, was not included in the curriculum of early Ottoman madrasas,28 but one can assume that madrasa students studied the Prophet Muhammad’s life when they studied hadīth, or sayings attributed to the Prophet. The earliest evidence available for Ottoman intellectual life suggests that the historical sources available to most scholars in the first century of Ottoman rule were scanty.

In order to better understand Ottoman intellectuals’ appropriation of Islamic history we should also have a sense of their religious identity/ideology. The religious identity of the early Ottomans is still a matter of controversy. The representatives of the ghāzi, or frontier holy warrior, ethos in the second half of the 15th century, such as historian APZ, expressed their longing for the good old days when the ghāzīs’ ideology was identical to that of the nascent Ottoman state. After a century of continuous expansion in the Balkans and Anatolia, however, imperializing tendencies suppressed such ghazā narratives, if one is to believe

28 İsmail Hakkı Uzuncarşılı, Osmanlı Tarihi, vol.1, 524-525.
APZ, and the court was increasingly influenced by a growing number of ulema, or Muslim scholar-officials, who often did not come from the same social stratum as these ghāzīs. Historian Cemal Kafadar has proposed that the “ghazā ethos” that permeates ‘Āşıkpaşazāde’s history has already disappeared in histories written only a few decades later, such as Neşri’s universal history, Cihānnūmā.29

Apart from the ghazā ethos, a strong mystical, or Sufi, ethos influenced early Ottoman intellectuals. We know that in the 13th century, various Sufi brotherhoods, or ṭarīqas, were operating in Anatolia; some were Sunni and some were Twelver Shiite. The residents of Anatolia were far more heavily influenced by the religious perspectives of these ṭarīqas than they were by the “high” Islam of the ulema class, which had yet to emerge fully. Aydınoğlu Mehmed Bey (r. 1308-1334), the founder of the dynasty of the same name in the Aegean region, for instance, reportedly adopted Shiism under the influence of one of these ṭarīqas. The early Ottoman sultans are typically described as Sunnis, just like their Seljuk predecessors. However, their Sunnism was not the Sunnism of the ulema, since the ulema had not yet taken shape within Ottoman society as a group with class-consciousness. Rather, in 14th-century Anatolia, Islam had more of a syncretistic nature. This may help to explain why the early Ottoman sultans tolerated not only non-mainstream Muslim religious tendencies but also the practices of Christians and Jews.

This chapter examines the development of Islamic historical writing in the first two centuries of Ottoman rule. The central questions to be addressed concern both the historical writing and the religious identity of the Ottomans. How did early Ottoman historians write the history of Islam and the early Islamic states? How did they view the controversial events of early Islamic history? What can we deduce from these histories about the Ottomans’ religious identity and their attitude toward history? What follows is an analysis of a fairly representative sample of early Ottoman literary/historical works that were either Islamic histories themselves or parts of universal histories that included Islamic history.

The Age of Tales and Fables: Writing the History of Islam in the 14th Century

One of the most significant cultural productions of the fourteenth century, and probably the earliest account of the Prophet Muhammad’s life and the rise of Islam in Turkish, is Mustafa Ḍarīr’s (Mustafa b. Yusuf b. Ömer el-Mevlevi el-Erzen el-Rumi) Siretū’n-Nebī, which is also known as Tercümetü’ż-Żarir.\(^{30}\) Ḍarīr’s work has been studied either as an example of 14\(^{th}\)-century Turkish literature\(^{31}\) or with reference to its illuminated version, commissioned by Sultan...

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\(^{30}\) Manuscripts of this work are housed in various libraries throughout the world. Mustafa Erkan mentions fifty-two copies of the various volumes and miniatures of the work. For a comprehensive list of these manuscripts and their places see Mustafa Erkan, “Siretū’n-Nebī (Tercümetü’ż-Żarir),” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ankara University, 1986, XXII-LIV.

\(^{31}\) Mustafa Erkan’s doctoral thesis, and many other theses produced in Turkish universities, are good examples of literary studies of Ḍarīr’s work.
Murad III (r. 1574-95) and supplied with 814 miniatures.\textsuperscript{32} Studies dealing with its importance as an archetype of medieval Turkish literature emphasize Ḍarīr’s mastery of the Ottoman Turkish language and the work’s usefulness for the study of vocabulary. The majority of studies of Ḍarīr’s \textit{Siret}, however, concentrate on the sixteenth-century manuscript. The study of the sixteenth-century manuscript usually falls to the lot of art historians, who treat it as an artistic masterpiece demonstrating Ottoman refinement of the art of miniature.\textsuperscript{33} Neither type of study scrutinizes the content of Ḍarīr’s \textit{Siret}. However, content analysis of the \textit{Siret} provides us with an opportunity to study the cultural and intellectual atmosphere of the period of the Turkish beyliks in Anatolia.

Ḍarīr was not an Ottoman, nor he was a Mamluk, but his work played significant roles in the intellectual circles of both these empires. His date of birth and ethno-regional origin are not specified in his works, but one of the titles he uses suggests that he was somehow related to the city of Erzurum and was born in or near this town at the turn of the fourteenth century. A close study of his language and vocabulary also suggests that he indeed grew up in eastern Anatolia. At the beginning of his \textit{Siret} he provides some information on his life immediately before he started compiling his work. In 1377 (779 A.H.), he tells us, he came to Egypt and joined the conversation circle of the Mamluk sultan al-


\textsuperscript{33} See the footnote above.
Manṣūr ‘Alī (r. 1377-81). Mustafa was blind; hence his nickname ḏarīr (ضرير).

He asserts at the beginning of his work that he is blind yet his memory is sharp, his style is sweet and eloquent, his poetry is beautiful and his prose is candid. He also claims that although his education is limited, his mind is flawless (muhkem). In the presence of the sultan, he told every night the stories of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. These conversation nights continued for five years. Despite the fact that Arabic was the language of learning and instruction for the educated Mamluks, Turkish was used, though secondarily, for the edification and amusement of the Mamluk class. When these gatherings came to an end, al-Manṣūr ‘Alī urged him to write a biography of the Prophet Muhammad as his style had impressed the sultan.

While he was in the Mamluk palace, Darīr became acquainted with the Shaykh al-Islam, or chief mufti (jurisconsult), Akmal al-Dīn Muhammad b. Muhammad Mahmud al-Babirtī. His place of origin, Bayburt, a small town in the eastern Black Sea region, located a mere eighty miles northwest of Erzurum, suggests that the chief mufti was also a Rumi, or Anatolian. Darīr may even have been accepted to the sultan’s circle on the shaykh’s recommendation. Ethno-

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34 The page numbers refer to the first volume of the Topkapı Palace Library manuscript (MS Koğuşlar 1001), which is transcribed and presented with a glossary and index by Mustafa Erkan. Darīr, Siret, 5b.

35 Ibid., Siret, 6b.

36 Ibid.

regional alliance between the shaykh and Ḍarīr seems evident. Their bond also explains how Ḍarīr entered the inner circle of al-Manṣūr ‘Alī and became one of his boon companions. Unfortunately for Ḍarīr, his patron’s fate would go awry when he was dethroned by the Circassian mamluks, led by Barqūq (r. 1382-1389, 1390-1399), who became sultan in 1382 (784 AH). Ḍarīr’s fate, which was certainly bound to that of his ally the Shaykh al-Islam, also seems to have taken a turn for the worse after Barqūq was enthroned. The new sultan, at least at the beginning of his reign, did not favor the shaykh. In the same year, Ḍarīr moved to Anatolia and settled in the state of Karaman, one of the most powerful rivals of the Ottomans in the fourteenth century. He wrote most of his works during his stay in the domains of Karaman. He resided there until 1392, when he moved to Aleppo and became a client of Melik Çolpan, the Mamluk governor (nā‘ib) of Aleppo, about whom we do not possess any information.

Mustafa Ḍarīr, as well as the fifteenth-century chroniclers Ahmedī and Enverī, to be discussed later in this chapter, is a good example of the intellectuals of the beylik period. They were free-lancers seeking their fortunes in different beyliks and manipulating their patrons in order to attain economic advantage. When their patrons’ interests declined over time, they switched their alliances and became companions and clients of different rulers. Ḍarīr’s career also clearly shows that the Mamluk Sultanate was the major regional power at this time and set the standards for intellectual culture.
One of the titles Ḍarīr used, el-Mevlevī, suggests that he joined the Mevlevī Sufi order at some point in his life. He probably became a Mevlevī during his stay in Karamanid territory. This Sufi order, inspired by Mevlana Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (1207-1273), had become one of the strongest and most prominent Sufi orders in Anatolia in the century following the death of Rūmī, largely as a result of the efforts of Rūmī’s son Sultan Veled (d. 1312). Although Ḍarīr spent most of his time in Anatolia while he was writing his Siret, he ended up presenting his work to Sultan Barqūq. Indeed, the very first miniature in the sixteenth-century manuscript shows Ḍarīr presenting his work to him.  

When the idea of writing his Siret had crystallized in his mind, Ḍarīr consulted the Mamluk Shaykh al-Islām, Akmal al-Dīn, as to which of the earliest accounts of the Prophet’s life to choose as the backbone of his Siret. The shaykh recommended that he choose Abu Ḥasan al-Bakrī’s Sirāṭ instead of Ibn Ishāq’s (704-767) well-known account, as redacted by Ibn Hishām (d. 834). The shaykh argued that the Sirāṭ of Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām was really the work of a Qur’ān commentator and included jargon that was difficult for uneducated people to penetrate. Al- Bakrī’s account, in contrast, was based on a single transmission and easy for common people to comprehend.  

Al-Bakrī is one of the most intriguing personas of the medieval period, although his identity is shrouded in mystery and his very existence is debatable.

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38 For a complete list of the miniatures in various volumes of Ḍarīr’s Siret see the end of Tanındı, Siyer-i Nebi, no page number.

39 Ḍarīr, Siret, 7a.
His *Sirāṭ* was popular among the public but frequently condemned by the medieval giants of Islamic scholarship, including but not limited to Ibn Kathīr (1301-1373) and Ibn Hajar al-Asqalanī (1372-1448). ⁴⁰ Even the exact title of his *Sirāṭ* is not clear. In extant versions it is known as *al-Anwār wa-al-Misbah*, and most copies of it date only to the 17th or 18th century. ⁴¹ Franz Rosenthal argues that al-Bakrī never existed because medieval biographers consistently failed to mention him or his works. ⁴² Boaz Shoshan, in his study of popular culture in medieval Cairo, asserts that the elaborate titles of al-Bakrī’s works are products of later imaginations. He argues that al-Bakrī belonged to the pre-*Sirāṭ* writers of *qiṣas al-anbiyāḥ*, or stories of the prophets, who might have influenced later and more professional *sirāṭ* writers such as Ibn Ishāq, al-Wāqīdī (748-822), and Ibn Sa’d (784-845). These storytellers, he believes, played an important role in the dissemination of Islam and of the Prophet Muhammad’s religious persona among the rank-and-file. ⁴³ Regardless, it is clear that when Darīr wrote his Turkish *Siret*, he used a copy of al-Bakrī’s work; thus al-Bakrī, be he real or imaginary, was known to Muslim intellectuals of the fourteenth century. He cannot have been a figure of the post-medieval period. It is true that he is not mentioned by Muslim biographers until the thirteenth century, when (mostly negative) references to him begin to appear; it is thus possible that he lived at that time.

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⁴² Ibid, 36.

⁴³ Ibid, 37.
The sources for al-Bakrī’s Sīrāt further complicate his identity largely because he relied on two controversial figures of hadith literature: Ka‘b al-Akhbār and Wahb b. Munabbih. Ka‘b al-Akhbār was a former rabbi who converted to Islam during the caliphate of ‘Umar (634-644 C.E.). He is associated with attempting to incorporate Jewish elements into Islamic tradition. Wahb b. Munabbih was born during the reign of the caliph ‘Uthmān (644-56) and was also well-read in Jewish tradition, which he especially attempted to incorporate into Quranic exegesis. Although they reported hadīth from reliable sources, these two figures were considered suspect by both Sunni and Shiite authorities because of their Jewish associations.

A content analysis of Ḍarīr’s Sīret, which is probably not an exact translation of al-Bakrī’s Sīrāt but a synthesis of his work with that of Ibn Ishāq, suggests that al-Bakrī’s account is permeated with fabulous tales and fables, although there are parts which may be true that are shared by other sīrāt writers. In an account of one of the miracles that the Prophet Muhammad performed when he was a child, which appears in Ḍarīr’s Sīret but was not included in that of Ibn Ishāq, the Prophet saves his tribe from persecution by an enemy by splitting a river so that the enemy cannot not cross in pursuit. This story is clearly influenced by the story of Moses’ splitting the Red Sea. This and many other stories included in al-Bakrī’s, and thus in Ḍarīr’s, Sīret, may have been


45 Ḍarīr, Sīret, 193b.
fabricated at a later date to give cohesiveness to the Muslim community by showing Muhammad performing miracles even before the revelation of God’s message (nubuwah). In the work of both authors, Jews are depicted as perennially attempting, often with demonic assistance, to destroy Muhammad’s primordial light (nūr Muhammadī), which is supposed to have been transmitted from Adam to Muhammad through the generations.

This addition of a Jewish component to the Prophet’s life story, as well as the presentation of the uncle of Muhammad known as Abu Jahl (“the father of ignorance” as Muhammad’s enemy from birth, suggests the later and mostly fabricated nature of al-Bakrī’s account. Abu Jahl was one of the leaders of the Meccan opposition to Muhammad. He belonged to the same tribe as Muhammad and opposed his message from the outset. He was killed in the Battle of Badr (624 C.E.), in which the Muslims were victorious over the Meccans. Claiming that Abu Jahl opposed Muhammad from the time of the latter’s birth implies that Muhammad knew that he was going to become a prophet, a position that is not found in mainstream sīras.

For the purposes of this study, another aspect of al-Bakrī and his Sīrat is important. In a few biographical accounts and in Ḍarīr’s Sīret, al-Bakrī is called al-wāʾid al-Basrī, “the Basran preacher.” Basra was a town of mixed religio-political opinions; the Basrans sided with ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib in the Battle of Siffin in 657, in which ‘Alī fought against Muʿāwiya. In the 8th century C.E., the rationalist Mu’tazilite theological school, to which Shiʿites are thought to adhere, was developed in Basra by Wāṣil b. ‘Aṭā’, as was the mystical tradition of Hasan
al-Basrī. It therefore seems possible, even likely, that al-Bakrī was a Shiite, and this, along with his fabrications, could explain the enmity of Sunni scholars of the medieval period toward him. Shoshan observes that the famous seventeenth-century Twelver Shiite scholar Muhammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (1616-1698) used al-Bakrī’s account extensively, even suggesting that it be read during celebrations of the Prophet’s birthday (mawlid). Even though al-Majlisī confused al-Bakrī with a sixteenth-century scholar of the same name, the work that he recommended to the Shiite ulema is al-Bakrī’s Sīraṭ. An additional reason for the popularity of al-Bakrī’s Sīraṭ among Shiite intellectuals, according to Shoshan, may have been its connection to the concept of a primordial nūr Muhammadi, or “light of Muhammad,” mentioned above, a concept developed by the sixth Shiite Imam, Ja’far al-Ṣādiq (702-765). Another element with appeal to Shiites would have been the dominant role of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib in all six works attributed to al-Bakrī.

Even a cursory look at Ḍarīr’s Sīret demonstrates that both ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and his father play an important role in the narrative. In one instance, a soothsayer named Satih summons ʿAbdullah, the father of Muhammad, and Abū Ṭālib, father of ʿAlī, and predicts that each of them will have a son; one will be a prophet, the other will be a saint; one will bring a new law, the other will practice that law. In a similar episode, a Christian priest foretells not only the coming of


47 Shoshan, Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo, 38.

48 Ḍarīr, Sīret, 67a.
the Prophet Muhammad but also that of ʿAlī.⁴⁹ These stories and many similar ones were told and retold in al-Bakrī’s account and in Ḍarīr’s Siret.⁵⁰

The question that is pertinent to our study is why and how a sīra of Muhammad written by a Shiite, or by someone inspired by Shiism, was adopted by the Ottoman Sultan Murād III and made popular in the coming centuries. It is certainly true that Ḍarīr was not as concerned as the 16th-century Ottoman jurists with the Shiite tendencies of a particular author. In any case, al-Bakrī’s account is not simply Shiite propaganda since it speaks respectfully of caliphs recognized by Sunnis. Yet Abū Bakr, for example, is depicted merely as a companion and friend of Muhammad whereas ʿAlī is depicted as a virtual saint. Still, why did Murad, supposedly a strict Sunni, champion a work inspired by the account of al-Bakrī, who was known for his Shiite sympathies? There are a few possible answers. First of all, Ḍarīr’s account was written in simple Turkish and was entertaining, with its mixed poetry and prose. It seems clear that Murād III aimed to both entertain and educate his sons with this rather expensive project. Secondly, Murād III is known to have been a Sufi and therefore a devotee of the descendants of the Prophet, or ahl al-bayt.

⁴⁹ Ibid., Siret, 205a.
⁵⁰ Ibn Ishāq mentions only one such incident, and it is related not to ʿAlī but to Muhammad: “Yahya b. ‘Abbad b. ‘Abdullah b. al-Zubayr told me that his father told him that there was a man of Lihb who was a seer. Whenever he came to Mecca the Quraysh used to bring their boys to him so that he could look at them and tell their fortunes. So Abū Tālib brought him [Muhammad] along with the others when he was still a boy. The seer looked at him and then something claimed his attention: That disposed of he cried, ‘Bring me that boy.’ When Abū Tālib saw his eagerness he hid him and the seer began to say, ‘Woe to you, bring me that boy I saw just now, for by Allāh, he has a great future.’ But Abū Tālib went away.” Ibn Ishāq, Sīraṭ Rasūl Allāh, 79.
In this dissertation we shall follow prominent intellectuals of the Ottoman domains up to 1650 and assess the manner in which they depicted the major events and struggles of early Islamic history. We will pay due attention to changing attitudes and intellectual currents, as well as the shifting preferences of different Ottoman rulers. Our overarching argument, however, is that Ottoman historians were often at odds with the mainstream Sunni interpretation of early Islamic history. The Sunnism created by the Ottoman jurists beginning in the second half of the 15th century aimed to control and suppress anti-Sunni tendencies. Even the existence of this suppression and the continuous struggle to tame such tendencies prove the tenacity of certain not-strictly-Sunni inclinations among Ottoman literati, the sultans included.

**From Sirāṭ to Ghazā: Ahmedī’s History of Islam as Reflected in His İskendernāme**

No one illustrates pre-Ottoman Anatolia and its cultural landscape more effectively than Tācūddīn İbrāhīm b. Ḥiḍār, a contemporary and possibly a friend of Mustafa Ḍarīr better-known by his pen name Ahmedī. Born around 1334, Ahmedī in middle age enjoyed the patronage of Süleyman Beg of the central Anatolian Germiyanoğlu dynasty (r. 1367-1386). He probably started writing his İskendernāme when he was under Süleyman Beg’s patronage. Like Ḍarīr, Ahmedī switched allegiances according to the fortunes of the Anatolian beyliks during the tumultuous fourteenth century; after leaving the service of the

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Germiyanoğulları, he attached himself to the Aydınoğulları dynasty of southwestern Anatolia, and finally to the House of Osman, which was still a largely unknown quantity among intellectuals of the age. In an ironic twist of fate, he ended up presenting his İskendernâme to another Süleyman, Süleyman Çelebi, one of the sons of Bayezid I (r. 1389-1402) and an ultimately unsuccessful contender for the Ottoman throne during the interregnum (1402-1413) following Bayezid’s defeat by Tamerlane. Indeed, Ahmedî presented most of his life’s work to Süleyman Çelebi.\textsuperscript{52} Being part of the circle of a failed prince did not spell career suicide for a member of his entourage, at least not for an able poet like Ahmedî, who proved his talent at Sultan Mehmed I’s (r. 1413-1421) court as well. Ahmedî’s career trajectory overlapped with Đàrîr’s when Ahmedî became a student of Đàrîr’s mentor, the Mamluk Shaykh al-Islam Akmal al-Dîn. The exact nature of their relationship is a mystery, as is just how long Ahmedî stayed in Cairo, but it is no coincidence that two free-lance poets in Turkish during the fourteenth-century sought their fortunes in Cairo. Their story is instructive not only in shedding light on the educational paths of 14\textsuperscript{th}-century Anatolian scholars but also in demonstrating Mamluk patronage of literary scholarship in Turkish.

Ahmedî’s most significant work, the İskendernâme, is a poetic rendition of the Alexander romance, which was a popular genre in the medieval period, combined with a universal history that Ahmedî composed for practical reasons to be discussed later. A section of the latter covering the history of the House of

\textsuperscript{52} Ünver, “Ahmedi,” İskendernâme, 5-7.
Osman stands as the earliest written account of the Ottoman Empire, on which almost all later historians relied for their versions of early Ottoman history. Most of the universal history, however, is devoted to the rise of Islam and the history of the Umayyads and the ‘Abbāsids. Ahmedī was a poet, and he probably wanted to be remembered as such. Although the boundaries between history and literature were not always clear in the early centuries of Ottoman scholarship, the İskendernâme was not intended to be a history. As a matter of fact, writing a history was the last thing Ahmedī had in mind, and this helps to explain why his work contains so many errors in its coverage of Islamic history. He composed his İskendernâme as a morality tale, an advice manual for princes, to be precise. Thus, the work could be regarded as one of the earliest mirrors-for-princes in Turkish. An exhaustive 1997 study of the İskendernâme emphasizes this fact: Ahmedī wrote his work to depict “ideals of leadership and patronage that he found lacking amidst the political turbulence of his age.”

İsmail Ünver, the editor of a 1983 critical edition of the İskendernâme, points out that Ahmedī was influenced by earlier Persian poets who composed their own Alexander romances. Firdawsī’s (940-1020) Shāhnâme and Nizāmī’s (1141/1146-1180/1217) Sharafnâme and Ikbâlnâme, as well as Amir Khusraw Dihlawī’s (1253-1325) Ayine-i İskandarî are thought to have been the main


influences on Ahmedī’s work, although he did not simply copy or reproduce them. His work is a synthesis of the works of his predecessors, and he added his own perspective on Turkish and Islamic history.

Although it may not seem significant from a strictly historical standpoint, because it does not introduce any previously unknown information about the early centuries of Islam, Ahmedī’s section on the history of Islam is still instructive for the purposes of this study. How did the earliest known writer of the house of Osman treat the early history of Islam and the early Muslim dynasties? Does his treatment of these early dynasties relate in any way to his description of the history of the Ottoman Empire? The following sections address these questions.

Ahmedī begins his Islamic history with a summary of the primordial light of the Prophet Muhammad, his father’s marriage and the miracles that occurred at the time of his birth, such as the collapse of part of the Sasanian emperor Khusrau Anushirvan’s palace at Ctesiphon in Iraq and the extinguishing of the eternal flame in Zoroastrian temples. (Zoroastrianism was the Sasanian state religion.) He continues with the recognition of Muhammad as a prophet by the Christian monk Bahira, whom Muhammad encountered during a caravan journey to Syria, and the conversion to Islam of the Himyarite ruler of Yemen.

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56 The following folio numbers refer to the copy of the İskendernâme preserved in the Istanbul University Library, Türkçe Yazmalar MS 921. This text is reprinted in a facsimile in İsmail Ünver, İskendernâme.
three hundred years before Muhammad’s revelation. He then recapitulates the Prophet’s *hijra*, or migration, from Mecca to Medina and the miraculous events that occurred on the day of the Prophet’s relocation. A description of the Prophet’s wars with the Quraysh of Mecca follows. Here, Ahmedī mistakenly gives the number of non-believers at the battle of Badr as 32,000 against 313 Muslims. Although this is by no means the only factual error in his account, he certainly inflates the number to create a dramatic effect.57 Elsewhere, Ahmedī relates the Prophet’s *Mi’rāj*, his mystical transportation to Jerusalem and ascension to heaven ca. 619 C.E., at great length. His emphasis on the *Mi’rāj* is understandable given the fact that the *Mi’rājnāme* was also a favorite genre of medieval Persian poets.58

Ahmedī’s account of the Prophet’s life and mission does not seem to differ significantly from other Sunni accounts, even down to the historical inaccuracies. On the other hand, his account of Islamic history after the death of Muhammad diverges from earlier accounts. He describes the four rightly-guided (*Rashidūn*) caliphs who followed Muhammad in a few lines, highlighting significant aspects of each ruler’s reign. ‘Alī refused to submit to Abū Bakr (r. 632-634), the first caliph recognized by Sunnis, due to a lack of authorization (*huccat*) for Abu Bakr’s leadership, but when Abū Bakr displayed his proof to ‘Alī, he submitted. What this proof was and why ‘Alī accepted it are not specified. The extensive

57 *İskendernāme*, 52b-54b.

58 One such example is the famous *Mi’rājnāme* of Mir Haydar, dated 1436. A copy of this work is preserved in Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Manuscrit Supplement Turc 190).
conquests of the second caliph, ‘Umar (r. 634-644), are the highlights of his term.\textsuperscript{59} But in Ahmedī’s account of the reign of ‘Uthman (r. 644-656), the third caliph, Mu‘āwiyyah b. Abī Sufyān (r. 661-680), enemy of ‘Alī and founder of the Umayyad dynasty, becomes the main character in the narrative. Ahmedī’s depiction of Mu‘āwiyyah is certainly one of the most negative among all the histories to be discussed in the next sections of this study. According to Ahmedī’s account, Mu‘āwiyyah was appointed by the Prophet as a scribe to record his revelations from God, but he betrayed Muhammad’s trust and was exiled. When ‘Uthman became caliph, he appointed Mu‘āwiyyah to an important post, and that was why, according to Ahmedī, Uthman was killed. Mu‘āwiyyah was indeed a recorder of revelations (\textit{wahy}), at least according to most \textit{Sirāt}s. However, his betrayal is not mentioned in earlier accounts. Ahmedī, either to dramatize Mu‘āwiyyah’s actions or under the influence of a Shiite source, makes him a villain, even during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad.

‘Alī’s rule is similarly described with reference to Mu‘āwiyyah’s attempts to instigate rebellion against him. Mu‘āwiyyah is once more accused of being untrustworthy when he breaks faith with ‘Alī’s elder son Hasan, whom he allegedly has poisoned. Hasan made a truce with Mu‘āwiyyah; in return for a substantial annual income he forfeited his rights to caliphate. When he comes to Mu‘āwiyyah’s own caliphate (661-80) on the other hand, Ahmedī is terse. He does not refer to any of Mu‘āwiyyah’s achievements or conquests. Mu‘āwiya is depicted

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{İskendernâme}, 57b.
as a usurper with no legitimate claim to the leadership of the Islamic community. Mu'āwiyah took the caliphate from ‘Alī with “a thousand sorceries” and betrayed religion and trust. He is called a mütegallibe, someone who became a king by force and without legitimate right (istihkaksuz). In later accounts, such as Mustafa ‘Alī’s Künhül-ahbār, mütegallibet is, by contrast, portrayed as a legitimate means of acquiring leadership. Mustafa ‘Alī introduced this interpretation in the 16th century to historically legitimize the emergence of the Ottomans in Anatolia after the end of Mongol rule.

Ahmedī’s very negative treatment of the descendants of Abī Sufyān continues with Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah (r. 680-683), who, according to the poet, has no share in religion. He is depicted as a tyrant who harmed the public. “Although people say there should be no cursing of him,” Ahmedī avers, “yet may God’s curse be upon him from beginning to end.” However, he praises Yazīd’s son Mu'āwiyah II (r. 683-684) for abdicating the caliphate; this, Ahmedī feels, is the act of a wise ruler who admits that his family usurped the leadership from ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. At this point, Ahmedī sees fit to digress on the attributes of the ideal ruler: an ideal king should look after his people; he should be equipped with reason and knowledge; he should be just and forgiving; his decisions should be straightforward, and his reasoning should be trustworthy; he should be strong in war and mild in peace; he should be religious and God-fearing; he should look after scholars; he should act according to the shar‘iā; he should not prefer

60 Ibid., 57b-58a.
61 Ibid., 58a.
himself to anyone, and he should not succumb to the temptations of his carnal soul. The embodiment of these ideals, Ahmedī stresses throughout the İskendernâme, is Alexander the Great -- not the real Alexander, of course, but the one that he, like his inspirations, Firdawsī and Nizāmī, invented, drawing on popular culture.

Returning to the Umayyad caliphs, Ahmedī portrays Marwān al-Ḥakam (r. 684-685), the cousin of ‘Uthmān who seized the Umayyad throne after Yazīd’s death, as cruel and grotesque. His son, ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 685-705), is criticized for his appointment of al-Hajjāj b. Yūsuf as the military governor of Iraq and his destruction of that province in response to popular rebellion. Hajjāj is cursed for his cruelty towards the family of the Prophet Muhammad and his murder of, by Ahmedī’s account, over 600,000 people, doubtless a grossly exaggerated number. The caliph al-Walīd (I) b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 705-715) is, however, praised for his military defense against the Turks of Central Asia and his appointment of Qutaybah ibn Muslim as commander of the eastern armies, a decision that resulted in the addition of Bukhara, Samarkand, and the Ferghana valley to the caliphate’s dominions. His successor Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 715-718) (mistakenly rendered Sulaymān b. Walīd by the author) is praised, along with Yazīd (II) b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 720-724) (mistakenly written ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Abd al-Malik), for patronizing scholarship and scholars. But Ahmedī reserves his greatest praise for ‘Umar bin ‘Abd al-Azīz (r. 717-720), who treated the family of

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62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., 58b.
Muhammad with honor and respect. Later accounts of ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Azīz would be very positive for the same reason. Hishām bin ‘Abd al-Malīk (r. 724-743) (mistakenly rendered Hishām b. ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Azīz) is also treated favorably, but his successor Walīd (II) b. Yazīd (r. 743-744) is criticized because of unexplained mischief that occurred during his reign. His son Yazīd (III) b. al-Walīd (r. 744), on the other hand, is praised for his fairness, religiosity, and generosity towards scholars. Ibrahīm b. al-Walīd (r. 744) and his successor Marwān (II) b. Muhammad (r. 744-750) are mentioned simply as the last Umayyad caliphs. Ahmedī’s account of the Umayyads demonstrates that he was somewhat misinformed about their era, as well as about Umayyad genealogy. The sources from which he compiled this section of his history were scanty, and he probably relied on a single account, which obviously misled him. He did not cross-check his references, and he did not seek to be precise. In his defense, he was not, as we have seen, interested in writing a history, much less a reliable one. This attitude likewise informs his treatment of the Abbasids, who overthrew the Umayyads in 750 C.E.

Popular perceptions of the Abbasid revolution in medieval and early modern Muslim societies usually centered on the missionary Abū Muslim, who surreptitiously proselytized to the population of Khurasan in northeastern Iran for thirty years, thus laying the ground for the revolution. In medieval Anatolia, romances of Abū Muslim, known as Abumuslimnāmes, became wildly popular, as did ghazāwātnāmes, heroic accounts of Muslim military campaigns in non-
Muslim lands; *danişmandnāmes*, tales of the Seljuk governor Danişmand Ghāzī; and *Battalnāmes*, legends of the ‘Abbāsid hero Battāl Ghāzī. The *Abūmuslimnāme* of Abū Tāhir al-Tūsī above all shaped the view of Abū Muslim in the imaginations of medieval Turkic and Persian peoples. Al-Tūsī’s descriptions of Abū Muslim’s heroic acts in toppling the Umayyads served as a model for later Ottoman *ghazāvatnāmes*, or conquest narratives. Abū Muslim is described by Ahmedī as a *sāhib kıran* (lord of an auspicious conjunction), a label that has eschatological connotations. In Ahmedī’s account, Abū Muslim is as an intelligent and visionary man who is well-versed in the Qurʾān and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and who is a fighter comparable to the legendary *Shāhnāme* hero Rustam. The poet praises Abū Muslim’s holy war (*ghazā*) against the “infidels,” meaning the Umayyads and their supporters, among whom he killed 200,000. He clearly depicts Abū Muslim as finishing off the Marwānids and the Khārijites, members of a sect that rejected both the Sunni and ‘Alīd caliphates, and paving the way for the ‘Abbāsids.

The ‘Abbāsid caliphs themselves are treated with greater ambivalence. While al-Saffāh (r.750-754) is presented as responsible to some degree for Abū Muslim’s achievements, “Ja’far-i Dawānaqī” (al-Manṣūr, r. 754-775), al-Saffāh’s

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65 İskendernāme, 58b.
successor, is criticized for unjustly killing Abū Muslim. Al-Mansūr’s son, al-Mahdī b. Jaʿfar (r. 775-785), in contrast, is praised for his generosity and religiosity. Ahmedī lauds al-Mahdī for sending his son Hārūn al-Rashīd to fight the Byzantines, against whom he was victorious, and for destroying the “false prophet” (mulhid) Yūsuf. His brother al-Hādī (r. 785-786) is likewise esteemed for suppressing the growing number of “heretics” (melāhide) during his reign. In discussing heretical activities (ilhād) during al-Hādī’s reign, Ahmedī contrasts unlawful innovation (bidʿat) with adherence to Prophetic tradition (sunnat). He asserts that God is with those who are Sunni in the sense of following Muhammad’s example and rejecting bidʿat. He does not, however, use “Sunni” to mean someone who is not Shi’ite. In reviewing Hārūn al-Rashīd’s (r. 786-809) reign, he points out that the Barmakid family of viziers became worthy of respect during this period. He eulogizes the Barmakids (al-i Barmak) because they were just administrators, philanthropists, and friends of scholars and scholarship. On the other hand, he criticizes Hārūn openly because of his drinking, which hindered him from seeing the mischief happening in his realm: he asserts that “Iraq was destroyed, 140,000 people were killed, but Hārūn could not respond because he was never sober.” His reputation suffers further because he killed most of the Barmakids, an error that Ahmedī again ties to his drinking habit. Ahmedī is also critical of Hārūn’s oldest son, al-Amīn (r. 809-813), because he did not abide by the agreement he had made with his brother al-Maʿmūn to allow the latter to succeed him as caliph. In contrast to his criticism of al-Amīn, he

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66 Ibid., 59b.
commends al-Ma’mūn (r. 813-833), who was religious and astute in public affairs; indeed, the poet compares him to prophets such as Moses, Joseph, and Solomon. Ahmedī likewise favors al-Ma’mūn’s respect for scholarship and the fact that many works of classical Greek learning were translated into Arabic during his reign. Similarly, he praises al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-861) because many books were written in his time.

Al-Mutawakkil, like Hārūn, divided his realm among his three sons. The oldest, al-Muntaṣir (r. 861-862), (rendered al-Mustanṣir by the author), who succeeded his father as caliph, is condemned, just as al-Amīn was, for opposing his father’s will. Al-Muʿtaz (rendered al-Mukar, r. 866-869), al-Muhtadī (rendered al-Mahdi, r. 869-870), and al-Muʿtamd (r. 870-892) are similarly treated as caliphs during whose reigns social upheaval (fitna) replaced order. Al-Muktafī (902-912) is praised because he was potentially a good ruler. Among the succeeding ‘Abbasid caliphs, Ahmedī praises only al-Muṭī’ (r. 946-974) because of his devotion to God and because during his reign order was restored. The remaining caliphs do not receive special attention but do come in for a fair bit of criticism because they were either incompetent or drunks; among these are al-Muqṭadir (r. 912-932), al-Qahir (mistakenly rendered al-Zāhir, r. 932-934), and al-Raḍī (r. 934-940). Al-Muṭī’i’s successor al-Ṭaʾīr (r. 974-991) is condemned because of his heresy, although the poet does not specify what his heresy was, and because he spent time with ignorant people. This was why, according to Ahmedī, the commanders of the Oghuz Turkic confederation controlled most of Iran.
during his reign.\textsuperscript{67} Al-Qa‘im (r. 1031-1075), al-Muqtadi (r. 1075-1094), and al-Mustarshid (r. 1118-1135) are said to have had good relations with the Seljuks, who had emerged as the leading Oghuz clan, and this was why they survived the Turkish incursions. Caliphs who were not on good terms with the Seljuks, in contrast, lost their thrones. The Seljuk takeover of ‘Abbasid lands and the last ‘Abbāsid caliphs’ relations with them, either as competitors or as allies, form Ahmedī’s final theme before he tackles the emergence of the Mongols.

As in the case of the Umayyads, Ahmedī is misinformed about the ‘Abbāsids. His chronology is confused and, as noted above, he errs in transmitting the names of many of the caliphs. From Ahmedī’s treatments of the Umayyads and the ‘Abbāsids, we can conclude that his sources were quite limited. He did not have ready to hand, for instance, al-Tabarī’s well-known history, either in the original Arabic or in the well-known Persian translation, let alone in Turkish. He probably utilized an abridged Islamic history that was certainly far from reliable. Even though he did not intend to write a history, this inaccuracy poses problems for the study of his Ottoman history section, which has been taken seriously by both modern scholars and contemporaries of Ahmedī. If his information about earlier Islamic dynasties is erroneous, then there is cause for concern that his account of the Ottomans could be similarly misleading. One should be careful drawing historical conclusions from Ahmedī’s

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 60a-60b.
work although it offers a valuable window onto the context in which such a work was produced and the milieu in which it was redacted.

Sirāṭ in Popular Didactic Literature: A Glance at Yazıcıoğlu Mehmed’s Muhammediye

In 15th-century Anatolia, literature and history were often closely intertwined. Ahmedī’s work is a fine example of this interrelatedness. Another fine example is Yazıcıoğlu Mehmed’s Risaletü’l-Muhammediye. This work, known simply as the Muhammediye, has achieved immense popularity over the centuries. Manuscripts can be found in libraries all over the world, as well as in numerous Turkish family libraries. Like the Qur’ān, the Muhammediye was always held sacred. The work’s popularity outside the Ottoman domains attests to its wider impact: the Muhammediye was also known among Crimean and Central Asian Turkish populations later in the 15th century. The Muhammediye was reproduced many times over the centuries, and many commentaries on it were composed. It is written in the mathnawi style with approximately 10,000 couplets, and in its didactic nature, it resembles the most famous example of its genre, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī’s (1207-1273) Mathnawi-i Manavi.

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70 A mathnawi is a poem written in rhyming couplets.
Yazıcıoğlu Mehmed belonged to an erudite family. The family name Yazıcı, meaning tax registrar in this context, comes from his father, Salih, who was employed in a peripheral government position. Salih wrote a work entitled Şemsiyye that was a compilation of various Arabic works on astrology; he presented it to Hacı Ivaz Pasha, a vizier at the courts of Mehmed I (r. 1413-1421) and Murad II (r. 1421-1444 and 1446-1451). Salih’s sons, Mehmed and Ahmed (Bıcan), followed their father’s path, and their fame exceeded his. Where and when Mehmed was born are not made clear by the author himself, but his strong attachment to the people of Gallipoli (Gelibolu) suggests that he probably spent the better part of his life in the vicinity of this town. As to his education, at the end of his work, he notes that he was educated by a certain Zeynü’l-‘Arab, who, according to Katip Çelebi, was a scholar educated in either Cairo or Nakhchivan in Armenia. He was then educated by a certain Haydar-ı Hafi. It would be logical to assume that he was educated in one of the centers of Islamic learning like his fellow poet Ahmedī. Like Şükrullah and Enverī, discussed below, Yazıcıoğlu was patronized by the philanthropist Mahmud Pasha, to whom he would extend his gratitude at the end of the Muhammediye. Yazıcıoğlu was also a pupil of the age’s great Sufi master, Hacı Bayram-ı Veli of Ankara (1352-1430).

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72 In couplets 8946-8954, he prays for the forgiveness of the people of Gallipoli.

73 Muhammediye, couplet 8973.

74 Ibid., couplet 8974.

75 Ibid, couplet 8869.
Yazıcıoğlu became acquainted with Veli on the latter’s way to Edirne when Veli was summoned by Sultan Murad II (r. 1421–1451), based on allegations that he was causing trouble in Ankara and gathering rowdy pupils around him. Yazıcıoğlu was residing in Gallipoli at the time and was said to be a heavy drinker; when he saw Veli in Gallipoli on his way to Edirne, he became enlightened and submitted himself to him and became his pupil.

Yazıcıoğlu informs his readers why and how he wrote his work. By his account, he once compiled a work in Arabic, no longer extant, entitled *Meğaribü’z- zamān*, in which he synthesized works of Quranic exegesis and ḥadīth compilations, as well as al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā ’ulūm al-dīn* and “all the works he could find in Arabia, Persia, and Anatolia.” He asked his brother Ahmed, a writer known by his penname Bīcan, to translate it into Turkish. His brother translated the work under the title *Envārü’l-aşıkīn*. Yazıcıoğlu claims that his *Muhammediye* and his brother’s translation both derived from the *Meğarib*.

His Sufi friends or disciples (aşıklar) had urged him to write the *Muhammediyye*, but he had at first refused, claiming that there was no need for such a work since many accounts of the Prophet’s life and sayings were already available. However, the Sufis persuaded him to write such a work based on

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76 His brother Ahmed Bīcan confirms that both works were compiled from the *Meğarib*. The *Muhammediyye* is a poetic redaction of the material in the *Meğarib* while the *Envār* is a prose redaction. This information comes from the last pages of the manuscript of *Envārü’l-Aşıkīn*, dated 965 A.H./1557 C.E., in the private collection of Necdet Sakaoglu. Necdet Sakaoglu, “En Eski Osmanlı Coğrafyası ve Eseri: Dürr-i Meknun ve Yazari,” in Yazıcıoğlu Ahmed Bican, *Dürr-i Meknun: Saklı İnciler*, ed. Necdet Sakaoglu (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999), 13-14.
Quranic exegesis and Prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*). This source material is evident in the completed work, which incorporates passages from Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī’s (1150-1210) *Tafsīr-i Kabīr*, Zamaksharī’s (1075-1144) *Kashshāf*, al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā‘ulūm al-dīn*, Kaḍī Iyadh’s *Shifā’*, and many other works of exegesis, as well as ḥadīths reported by Ibn ʿAbbās and recorded in the collections of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Nawawī and others. The work was finished in 853 A.H./1449 C.E.

Despite the title *Muhammediye*, a comprehensive reading of the text reveals that Muhammad’s life is covered only briefly. As a Bayramī Sufi, and perhaps even a *khalīfa*—that is, an adept who can train his own disciples—Yazıcıoğlu compiled his work for a didactic purpose. His work is not a history; in keeping with his Sufi mission, he does not go into the details of any significant event unless there is a moral in it. He claims that the Prophet Muhammad appeared to him in his dreams and praised the work, and that it had been blessed by his master Hacı Bayram-ı Veli, who lauded it as the only Turkish work of its kind.  

Like the later Şükrullah and Enverî, Yazıcıoğlu begins his work by describing the primordial light of the Prophet. According to a report that was later reproduced by Şükrullah, the universe was created by a peacock who saw his reflection in a mirror and was amazed by it. After a long introduction to the creation of the various components of the universe, based on *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth*

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77 *Muhammediye*, couplets 38-41.

78 Ibid., couplets 8790-8794.
reports, he summarizes the transmission of the Prophet Muhammad’s light from one generation to another and goes over the extraordinary events surrounding Muhammad’s birth; the miracles that his wet nurse, Halīma bint Sa’d, observed when she was with him; and the story of the monk Bahīra.  

This part of the Muhammadiye suggests the influence of Ḍarīr’s Sīrāt although Ḍarīr’s work was a more comprehensive biography of the Prophet. Before going into the details of Muhammad’s physical appearance and attributes, he discusses Abū Bakr’s and ‘Umar’s conversions. While Ḍarīr’s Sīret foreshadows ʿAlī’s extraordinary role in early Islam by recounting how a priest summoned his father, Abū Tālib, from a trading mission, the Muhammediyye foreshadows Abū Bakr’s caliphate by recounting a dream that he had on his way to Mecca from Damascus. A priest interpreted it as foretelling the revelation to Muhammad and told Abu Bakr that he would be Muhammad’s successor.  

Commensurate with Yazıcıoğlu’s Sufi tendencies, Muhammad’s Mi‘rāj is described in great detail, as are the Prophet’s hijra, his miracles, and the wars in which he fought. Yazıcıoğlu also touches upon a few controversial issues, such as the controversial question of the status of the Prophet’s parents in the hereafter. He reports from al-Qurtubī’s Tezkire that God enlightened Muhammad’s parents after revelation, and they submitted

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79 Ibid., couplets 1520-1750.
80 Ibid., couplets 1823-1851.
81 Ibid., couplets 2048-2335.
82 This controversy was one of the points of conflict between the Kadızadelis and the followers of Sivasi Efendi in the 17th century.
posthumously to Islam and thus went to heaven. Following al-Rāzī’s *Tafsīr*, he explicates the key Qur’ānic verses known as Sūrat al-Fātiḥa and Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ, then transmits a number of important *ḥadīths*. He is careful to insert various moralizing lessons in-between explanations of the transitory nature of this world and its pleasures, as well as the closeness of death. He urges his Sufi audience to abstain from excessive eating and luxurious clothing.

The *Muhammediye* clearly shows reverence for the family of the Prophet. Yazıcıoğlu’s accounts of the Prophet’s grandsons, Hasan and Husayn, are moral rather than historical; thus, he limits himself to discussing the Prophet’s love for them and their martyrdoms: Hasan poisoned by Mu‘āwiya, Husayn killed by Yazīd’s general in the infamous massacre at Karbala in 680 C.E. In a special section, however, he also discusses the Prophet’s daughter Fāṭima, the wife of ‘Alī and mother of Hasan and Husayn. According to one tale that he transmits, when she was asked to marry ‘Alī, Fāṭima refused the proffered bride price (*mehir*). When her father asked her wishes, she told him that she wanted to have the right to intercede on behalf of the women of the Islamic community, just as he interceded for male sinners in the community as a result of a privilege granted to him during his *Mi‘rāj*. God accepted her wish, and when she asked for proof of his acceptance, the angel Gabriel brought a sealed letter. On her deathbed, she asked to be buried with this letter. Fāṭima seems to be the only woman emphasized in Yazıcıoğlu’s *Muhammediye* although ‘Ā’isha, Muhammad’s

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83 *Muhammediye*, couplet 3431.
84 Ibid., couplets 4505-4544.
favorite wife and the daughter of Abū Bakr, is praised to some degree because of her knowledge and devoutness.

Events following the death of Muhammad are covered rather succinctly. Yazıcıoğlu emphasizes Abū Bakr’s virtuousness: he is mentioned by God in the Qur’ān, and he donated all his wealth to the Muslim community. He stresses ‘Umar’s conquests and ‘Uthmān’s redaction of the Qur’ān without mentioning the controversies during the latter’s reign. As for ‘Alī, Yazıcıoğlu cites the hadith in which Muhammad likens his relationship with ‘Alī to Moses’ relationship with Aaron. However, Yazıcıoğlu observes, Mu‘āwiyah and his followers did not see that ‘Alī was a mirror to God, and so they opposed his caliphate and caused him to suffer. Like most authors discussed in this study, Yazıcıoğlu reports a hadith in which the Prophet predicts that the caliphate would last for thirty years after his death but would be followed by kingship (mülk).85 Ottoman historians used this hadith to make sense of the end of the line of Rashīdūn caliphs and what all of them regard as the Umayyad usurpation of the caliphate.

Yazıcıoğlu adopts widespread popular practice in cursing Yazīd because of his destruction of the Prophet’s grandsons Hasan and Husayn. He explains that cursing Yazīd had been prohibited among Sunnis in the past but that it has recently come back into vogue. In betraying the family of the Prophet, in any case, Yazīd had become an unbeliever (ilhad) and thus deserved to be cursed.86 Here, Yazıcıoğlu seizes the opportunity to criticize a practice common in his own

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85 Ibid., couplets 4635-4645.
86 Ibid., couplets 4667-4669.
time: during the commemorations of Husayn’s martyrdom in the Muslim month of ‘Ashūrā’, many people in Baghdad lined their eyes with kohl, a custom he considers worthy of Yazīd himself.\(^{87}\)

Despite his limited coverage of the Umayyad and ‘Abbāsid caliphates, Yazıcıoğlu does report a hadīth that serves to legitimize the ‘Abbāsids. Here, Muhammad tells his uncle ‘Abbās that his descendants will have the good fortune of serving as caliphs in the future.\(^{88}\) The implication, of course, is that the reign of the ‘Abbāsids will be a positive development for the Muslim community.

In one of the most intriguing sections of the Muhammadiye, the author describes the apocalypse and the signs foretelling it. He reports a hadīth in which the Prophet predicts that doomsday would occur only after the reigns of twelve caliphs from his own clan of Quraysh. Yazıcıoğlu identifies the first seven of these caliphs: the Rashīdūn (Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī), ‘Alī’s sons Hasan and Husayn, and the pious Umayyad caliph ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 717-20). Like other Sunni theologians, Yazıcıoğlu depicts ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz as an exception to the general pattern of Umayyad oppression; traditions of his piety were numerous and widespread. He does not name the remaining five caliphs, but the twelfth, he claims, will be the messianic figure known as the Mahdī, who will usher in the end of days. It is intriguing to see that Yazıcıoğlu concurs with

\(^{87}\) Ibid., couplets 4687-4688.

\(^{88}\) Ibid., couplets 4721-4727.
Twelver Shi‘ites in the number of caliphs, or imāms, in Shi‘ite parlance, who would come after Muhammad.89

Yazıcıoğlu’s work reflects in many ways his Sufi character. More than half of the work concerns the hereafter, different classifications of people according to their piety, heaven, and hell. His historical sections are short and didactic. His work had a very different fate from that of an almost contemporary mathnawi on the life of the Prophet, Vesiletü’n-necat, commonly known in Turkey as Mevlûd-ü Şerif, which was composed in 1409 by Dede Süleyman Çelebi (1351-1422). Born in Bursa, Süleyman Çelebi was known as a disciple of Emīr Sultān (1368-1429), the most famous saint of the age and the son-in-law of Bayezid I (r. 1389-1403). After Bayezid died, Süleyman Çelebi became the imām of the Great Mosque of Bursa. Although many imitations of his work were written over the centuries, his Mevlûd continued to be the most widely recited example of this genre, largely because Murad III (r. 1574-1595) introduced recitals of the Mevlûd to celebrate the Prophet’s birthday. The Mevlûd, which shows the influence of Āşık Paşa’s (1272-1333) Gharib-nāme and Darīr’s Siyer;90 it is less didactic and more down-to-earth than the Muhammadiye and thus easier to comprehend.91 Not surprisingly, the Mevlûd ultimately surpassed the Muhammadiye in popularity.

It is difficult to evaluate Yazıcıoğlu’s stance toward history on the basis of the Muhammadiye. His no-longer-extant Meğarib might have offered more for

89 İbid., couplets 4811-4819.
90 Kathleen Burrill, "Süleymān Čelebi, Dede," EI².
an intellectual historian. Although it lies beyond the scope of this study, a reading of Ahmed Bican’s *Envârü’l-Aşikîn* in conjunction with the *Muhammediye* might yield more grounded conclusions about Yazıcıoğlu Mehmed’s intellectual persona. However, one can argue that like Ahmedī, Yazıcıoğlu was strongly attached to the *ahl al-bayt*. One can see this in both authors’ treatment of Yazid ibn Mu‘awiyyah. Both poets openly curse him and his practices despite the discouragement that they faced from their peers. *Ahl al-bayt*ism was evident among the Ottoman intellectual circles from the very beginning.

**The Lives and Times of Kings in Persian: Şükrullah’s *Behçetü’l-Tevârîh***

Mahmud Pasha Angelovič, a half-Greek, half-Serb who had been enslaved as a boy and raised by the Ottomans, would play a significant role in the creation and definition of the office of the grand vizier in the Ottoman Empire. Proving himself very able in the Ottoman conquests in the Balkans, he would become the longest-serving vizier of Mehmed II (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481). With the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottomans completed their transition from a frontier principality to an empire. By establishing a new capital, building two new palaces, and compiling and editing the first Ottoman law code (*kânûnnâme*), Mehmed II became the symbol of this new stage in the Ottoman Empire’s history. While Mehmed was creating his imperium in political and military terms,

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Mahmud Pasha was fostering this image in the cultural and intellectual spheres. Under Mahmud Pasha’s patronage, universal histories were composed in order to position the Ottomans within a universal framework and to present them as the last in a chain of great Islamic empires.

Mahmud Pasha was also a philanthropist and a poet who wrote in Turkish as well as in Persian.93 The poets Yazıcıoğlu Mehmed, Şükrullah, and Enveri were active during his lifetime and enjoyed his patronage. Tursun Beg also belonged to his entourage, and the vizier inspired him to compile his history of Mehmed II and the conquest of Constantinople.94 Mahmud Pasha was not only loved by scholars; he was also respected by the public at large. After his death, a popular eulogy was written for him entitled Menâkıb-i Mahmûd Paşa-ı Velî.95 He was respected by the public to the extent that he was popularly regarded as a saint after his death, and his beheading on the order of Mehmed II, supposedly because of his enmity toward Prince Mustafa,96 was considered an unjust act.

Among the early Ottoman sultans, none was more controversial than Mehmed II. His image was paradoxical. His contemporaries in western Europe viewed him as a ruthless enemy of the Christian faith while his subjects, and the Muslim world in general, regarded him as a sledgehammer who struck down

93 For an analysis of Mahmud Pasha’s poetry, see Stavrides, The Sultan of Vezirs, 310-326.
95 On this menâkıb, see Stavrides, The Sultan of Vezirs, 369-392.
96 For an analysis of the causes of Mahmud Pasha’s execution see ibid., 341-355.
non-believers. At the same time, he is often portrayed as a Renaissance figure for his interest in novelties, different beliefs, geography, history, and art. In his controversial study of Mehmed II and his time, Franz Babinger calls defining Mehmed’s attitude toward the Islamic faith “a difficult undertaking.” He interprets Mehmed’s tolerance towards other religions as a reflection of “his own liberal ideas” of religion.\(^97\) Above all, he emphasizes Mehmed’s predilection for all things Persian and “hence heretical.” He also argues that Mehmed’s “obvious leaning toward heterodox Shi’ite doctrine and free thinkers, which he began to display even as a boy, and frequent association with heretics such as Mullah Lutfi, show that at least during certain periods in his life he inclined toward religious opinions that were directly at variance with strict Sunni theology.”\(^98\) Babinger emphasizes the overwhelming number of literati “ryhming in Persian” during Mehmed II’s reign, which was greater than at any other time in Ottoman history. Those who did not write in Persian, Babinger asserts, “imitated Persian models or tried to render them into Turkish.”\(^99\)

A fine example of this predilection for Persian during Mehmed II’s reign is Şükrullah’s *Behçetü’l-Tevārīh*. Şükrullah b. Şihabeddin Ahmed b. Zeyneddin Zeki

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\(^98\) Ibid., 410.

\(^99\) Ibid., 472-473.
provides clues to his life history in his work.\textsuperscript{100} He notes at the beginning of the \textit{Behçet} that he entered the service of the Ottomans when he was twenty-two years old and has been in service for fifty-one years.\textsuperscript{101} This would make him seventy-three years old when he finished his history. Elsewhere, he observes that he started writing his work in 861 A.H./1456 C.E. \textsuperscript{102} and finished it in two years; this would mean that he was born around 790 A.H./1388 C.E. He does not explain why he wrote his history in Persian, apart from the fact that it was the literary language of Anatolia at the time, but his mastery of this language, as well as the variety of sources in Arabic, Persian, and his native Turkish that he obviously used in compiling his book, demonstrate his sophisticated education. He may, like many contemporary Ottoman poets, have been educated in one of the Anatolian \textit{madrasas} or in the centers of learning in the south, namely Damascus and Cairo.

Şükrullah claims that during the reign of Mehmed II, scholars were more numerous and more highly valued than ever before. He was apparently in Bursa during most of this time, enjoying the sultan’s patronage. We can imagine a well-educated man of over seventy, praying for the health of the sultan, reading the Qur’ān and \textit{ḥadīth}. He explains that it had occurred to him that he had spent all his life without accumulating merit for the hereafter. He therefore decided to

\textsuperscript{100} Hasan Almaz, ed. and trans., \textit{“Behçetü’l Tevarih: İnceleme, Metin, Tercüme,”} unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ankara University, 2004. \ In the notes below, however, I refer to the folio numbers of the manuscript used by Hasan Almaz, Ayasofya Library, MS 2990.

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Behçetü’l-Tevārīh}, fol. 301b.

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., fol. 13b.
write a history of the Prophet Muhammad, covering his superior qualities, genealogy, birth, life, and family members, as well as his most pious companions. He also intended to cover the eponymous founders of the four legal rites (madhhab) recognized by Sunnis, and the compilers of the six hadith collections that Sunnis regard as canonical. He criticizes earlier works in this vein as being too long, if eloquent. This work, he asserts, is compiled from a wide range of sources, including Qur’anic exegesis (tefsīr), hadīth, and works of history. Indeed, he claims to have consulted at least sixty history books and distilled them in such a manner that nothing was lost in translation. If anyone wishes to learn about the Prophet Muhammad and the imams, he claims, he need only read this succinct work rather than poring over lengthy tomes. Şükrullah’s work was translated into Ottoman Turkish by a certain Mehmed Farsī during Süleyman I’s reign (1520-1566), and this translation became more popular than the original work. Farsī’s translation, however, is not a verbatim translation but a new edition with additions and omissions. Here, I discuss not the Turkish translation but the original text.

Şükrullah was not completely wrong in asserting that his book was comprehensive because it resembles an encyclopaedia more than a history. What differentiated him from his contemporaries, on the other hand, was that he used his sources critically; he was arguably the first Ottoman historian to do so. In addition, the portion of his work preceding the rise of the Ottomans is composed

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103 Ibid., fols. 10a-12b.
104 Şükrullah, Behçetü’l- Tevarih, Süleymaniye Library, MS Esad Efendi 2213.
as an annalistic chronicle. He remained faithful to the pillars of historical inquiry such as chronology and source-criticism. Şükrullah claims that there are four fundamental versions of history, by which he means Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim. Where variant Muslim chronologies are concerned, he considers reports contained in hadīths transmitted by of the Prophet’s cousin ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abbās, as redacted by the hadīth compiler Muslim, the most reliable. According to these reports, 6075 years had passed from the creation of Adam to the Prophet Muhammad’s birth. 105 Regardless of Ibn ‘Abbās’ accuracy, Şükrullah’s historical sensibility in deploying these materials is striking. He asserts that there are two uses of history: religious and secular. Works of theology and Qur’ānic exegesis cannot be properly understood without reference to history; the Qur’ān itself contains passages in which God explains what happened in history. Where secular history is concerned, Şükrullah’s attitude is not unlike that of George Santillana: by studying those who went before, we can learn how they solved problems and established effective governments while avoiding their mistakes. Muslim scholars and philosophers in the past, he asserts, considered studying history a duty second only to the obligatory daily prayers. 106

As noted above, the organization of the Behçetü’l-Tevārīh is reminiscent of an encyclopedia: Şükrullah begins with the origins of the universe, which he explains, like many other Muslim historians, with reference to the primordial light of Muhammad. Yet he also purports to include two separate traditions on

105 Ayasofya Library, MS 2990, fol. 8a.
106 Ibid., fol. 13a.
the origins of the universe: that of the theologians and that of the philosophers.\textsuperscript{107} The philosophers’ explanation involves the signs of the zodiac and how stars and planets are connected to certain types of people, behaviors and occupations.\textsuperscript{108} Following this lengthy introduction to the universe, he addresses another universe: the universe of the human body. He describes the human anatomy in great detail and explains the functions of bones, nerves, muscles, and major organs.\textsuperscript{109} The purpose of these explanations of astronomy, anatomy, and other sciences, he asserts, is to demonstrate the superiority of the human intellect to that of all other created beings.

Two sciences that were practiced more than any others by Ottoman intellectuals were geography and history. \textit{Behçetü'l-Tevārīh} clearly reflects this tendency. Şükrullah spends many pages explaining physical and social geography.\textsuperscript{110} For example, he attempts to cover all the peoples of the world, including the Chinese; the Turkish tribes; Rūmīs, referring to the population of Anatolia; Arabs; Indians; Ethiopians; and Persians. Where the Persians are concerned, Şükrullah, like other Ottoman historians, traces them from their legendary origins through the Sasanian empire (ca. 220-651 C.E.). The predominance of Persians in early Ottoman historical writing can perhaps be explained with reference to the sources available to Ottoman historians.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., fol. 2a.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., fols. 18a-34a.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., fols. 34a-42b.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., fols. 44b-50a.
Like other Ottoman historians, as well, Şükrullah accords paramount importance to prophets. According to the Islamic tradition, he asserts, seven great prophets have appeared on earth in the last 7,000 years of history. The last of these was the Prophet Muhammad, who would usher in the last millennium before the end of the world. During this last millennium, however, a caliph and a religious scholar would emerge every century by whom Islam would be empowered. This concept of a periodic renewer (mujaddid) stems from the hadith "Allāh shall raise for this umma [the Muslim community] at the head of every century a man who shall renew (or revive) for it its religion" (Abū Dā‘ūd, Sunan). Although this hadīth is regarded as trustworthy (sahīh), there has never been a consensus as to the identities of these mujaddids. The figures whom Şükrullah identified as mujaddids shed light on whom he identified as important in Islamic history. As opposed to the dominant tendency of identifying one mujaddid for every hijrī century, be he (and the mujaddid is always male) a politician, a jurist, a theologian, or a Sufi, Şükrullah claims that two mujaddids appeared simultaneously: one in the realm of politics, the other in the realm of religion. His scheme culminates in the ninth Islamic century, which coincides with the reign of his patron, Mehmed II, who is clearly the political mujaddid of this era. The author claims that the messianic figure known as the mahdī will appear during this century.

Overall, Şükrullah’s dual scheme of political and religious mujaddids runs as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Century</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Religious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st}</td>
<td>‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 717-720), Umayyad caliph</td>
<td>Muhammad al-Bāqir (676-733), fifth Shi‘ite imām</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd}</td>
<td>Al-Ma‘mūn (r. 813-833), ‘Abbāsid caliph</td>
<td>Muhammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfī‘ī (767-820), eponym of the Shāfī‘ī madhhab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3\textsuperscript{rd}</td>
<td>Al-Muqtadir Billāh (r. 908-932), ‘Abbāsid caliph</td>
<td>Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (838-923), historian and theologian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Al-Qādir Billah (r. 991-1031), ‘Abbāsid caliph</td>
<td>Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Sulāmī (937 or 942-1021), Sufi hagiographer and Qur‘ān commentator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Al-Mustahzir Billāh (r. 1094-1118), ‘Abbāsid caliph</td>
<td>Muhammad al-Ghazālī (1058-1111), Shāfī‘ī theologian and mystic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Al-Nasir li-Dīn Allāh (r. 1180-1225), ‘Abbāsid caliph</td>
<td>Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1150-1210), Iranian philosopher and scientist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Al-Nāṣir Muhammad ibn Qalāwūn (r. 1293-94, 1299-1309, 1309-1341), Mamluk sultan</td>
<td>Muhammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Daqīq al-‘Id (1228-1302), jurist and traditionist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Barqūq (r. 1382-1389, 1390-1399), Sirāj al-Dīn ‘Umar ibn Raslān ibn Sālih</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the table shows, Şükrullah concurs with the Sunni consensus, so far as religious or spiritual *mujaddids* are concerned, by including ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Azīz, Imām al-Shāfi‘ī, Imām al-Ghazālī, and al-Rāzī. However, he also includes the fifth Imām recognized by Twelver Shi‘ites, Muhammad al-Bāqir, whose status as a *mujaddid* has been widely acknowledged by Shi‘ites but not by Sunnis, even though his knowledge is respected by Sunnis and Shi‘ites alike. On the other hand, inclusion of figures such as al-Sulāmī and al-Bulkūnī seems more controversial, and al-Ṭabarī, the most prominent historian of early Islam, is a surprise. His inclusion shows Şükrullah’s respect for this historian and *hadīth* transmitter, who is, in fact, his most important source for both the early Islamic and the pre-Islamic periods. Other chroniclers cite al-Ash‘arī (873/874-935/936), founder of one of the major Muslim theological positions, rather than al-Ṭabarī, as the *mujaddid* of the third Islamic century, and al-Matūridī (873-944), founder of another major theological school, instead of al-Sulāmī, as the *mujaddid* of the fourth Islamic century. Şükrullāh’s substitution of al-Sulāmī for al-Matūridī may perhaps be explained by his Sufi leanings, since al-Sulamī is
best-known for his history of Sufism, *Ta’rikh al-Sufiyya,* which comprises the biographies of a thousand Sufis.

As for the political renewers, only one is an Umayyad caliph, while five are ‘Abbasid caliphs, and two are Mamluk sultans. The ‘Abbasid caliph al-Ma’mūn is perhaps included because he patronized the translation of works of classical Greek science and philosophy into Arabic, although his imposition of Mu’tazilite theology, including the doctrine of the createdness of Qur’ān, makes him a controversial choice. Al-Nāsir would have appealed to Şükrullah as a patron of the mystical *futuwwa* brotherhoods. Barquq, the first of the Circassian Mamluk sultans, may make the list because of his enmity towards Timur (Tamerlane), who inflicted a humiliating defeat on the Ottomans in 1402.

Over and above the individual choices for political *mujaddid*, Şükrullah’s creation of such a category is rather extraordinary, even if the main reason for it is to accord Mehmed II the status of *mujaddid*. Apocalyptic concerns also seem to play a role: Şükrullah notes that according to his calculations, the apocalypse was fifty-nine years away. The apocalyptic literature which became very popular as the first Muslim millennium (1000 A.H. ≈ 1592 C.E.) approached, and which is handsomely represented by the well-known Ottoman bureaucrat and intellectual Mustafa ‘Alī, seems actually to have appeared earlier with figures like Şükrullah. As noted above, Yazıcıoğlu was also very anxious about the approach of the apocalypse; his anxiety is reflected in his *Muhammediye*.

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Şükrullah’s history of the Prophetic period follows the conventional Muslim narrative whereby all the prophets bore the *Muhammedi nur*, that is, the primordial light of the Prophet Muhammad, which was transmitted down the generations. He describes the prophets preceding Muhammad succinctly, and then proceeds to what he regards as Jewish machinations to destroy the Prophet’s light before the coming of Islam, extraordinary events that occurred at the time of the Prophet’s birth and the prophecy of the monk Bahīra about the coming of divine revelation to Muhammad. In actual fact, Muhammad’s life story occupies only a relatively small proportion of Şükrullah’s work. On the other hand, Şükrullah describes at some length Muhammad’s physical attributes, manners, concubines, servants, freed slaves, and scribes; the miracles he performed and the tools and weapons he used as well as his marriages and the identities of his wives and children. Surprisingly, however, he does not devote special attention to the Prophet’s grandsons, Hasan and Husayn, or to the Rashīdūn caliphs, but covers them only briefly. Contrary to most of the other Ottoman authors discussed in this study, Şükrullah explicitly supports the choice of Abū Bakr as first caliph. His treatment of ‘Alī is straightforward, with little or no comment. He does not even describe the rift over the succession to the caliphate between ‘Alī, on the one hand, and the Prophet’s wife ‘Ā‘isha and her allies Talha and Zubayr, on the other, in 656 C.E. Şükrullah’s interpretation of the

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112 Şükrullah, *Behçetü'l-Tevârîh*, Ayasofya Library, MS 2990, fols. 93a-95b.
113 Ibid., fols. 99a-109b.
114 Ibid., fols. 109b-122b.
succession to Muhammad seems strictly Sunni, and as such is something of an anomaly among the works studied here since most of the other authors covered in this study do not insist that Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthman were superior to ‘Alī. In later chapters, however, Şükrullah praises those among the Umayyad and ‘Abbāsid caliphs who treated the family of the Prophet with respect. 115

Şükrullah devotes more attention to the biographies and works of the eponymous founders of the four Sunni legal rites (Arabic singular, madhhab), the compilers of the six canonical Sunni hadīth collections, and seven other influential scholars/theologians, such as al-Hakīm al-Nishabūrī (933-1012), the most famous traditionist of his age, who compiled the famous hadīth collection al-Mustadrak, and his student al-Bayhāqī (994-1066), also a traditionist and a prominent scholar of Shāfī‘ī jurisprudence, as well as a well-known chronicler of the Ghaznavids. The single longest section of his work, however, concerns Sufi adepts. He discusses 107 Sufi masters, beginning with the early shaykh Ibrahim b. Adham (d. 777-778), a native of the Persian town Balkh in today’s Afghanistan. He describes the lives of these famous Sufis and points out the exceptional predictions and enlightened explanations that some of them gave. 116 Şükrullah’s emphasis on Sufi masters can be attributed to his Sufi inclinations, not simply to the encyclopedic nature of his work.

115 Ibid., fols. 126b-127b.
116 Ibid., fols. 168b-189a.
After an encyclopaedic treatment of most of the subjects known to him in the first three-quarters of his work, Şükrullah at last turns to the history of secular rulers. As is typical of Ottoman historians, he begins with pre-Islamic Persia. He discusses the rulers of Persia from the earliest Persian empire to the advent of Islam, covering the Medes (ca. 700-550 B.C.E.), Achaemenids (ca. 550-331 B.C.E.), Parthians (ca. 240 B.C.E.-220 C.E.), and Sasanians (ca. 220-651 C.E.). For this information, he relies on al-Ṭabarî and a history entitled Qutu’l-arwāh. 117

After this lengthy description of the Persian dynasties, Şükrullah jumps to the Umayyads, since he had previously covered Muhammad and the Rashīdūn caliphs. Unlike most other Ottoman historians, he does not speak ill of the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, Mu‘āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān (r. 661-680), except to point out the fact that he conspicuously consumed. He does, however, condemn Mu‘āwiyah’s son Yazīd for the massacre of Husayn and his family at Karbala in 680 C.E. Apart from a few figures such as the aforementioned ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Azāz, who is widely praised for his devoutness and benevolent treatment of the family of the Prophet, and Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 723-743 C.E.), who respected the fifth Shi‘ite Imām, Muhammad al-Bāqir, the Umayyads are unflatteringly described as gluttonous, arrogant, lustful, dull, insensitive, violent, and irreligious.

117 Ibid., fols. 192b-239b.
The ‘Abbāsids, on the other hand, are described in greater detail and in a more positive light. Unlike other Ottoman historians, however, Şükrullah does not dwell on the extraordinary qualities of the ‘Abbāsid proselyte Abū Muslim. The ‘Abbāsid caliphs al-Saffāh (r. 750-754), al-Manṣūr (r. 754-775) and al-Hādī (r. 785-786) are praised for their religiosity and their generosity to their subjects. Hārūn al-Rashīd is openly criticized for destroying the Barmakid family of viziers, who, according to Şükrullah, echoing a common theme, were generous and far-sighted, and strove for the good of the common people. Hārūn al-Rashīd’s eldest son and successor, al-Amīn (r. 809-813), is described as moody, bloodthirsty and dishonest. His brother and rival al-Ma’mūn (r. 813-833), on the other hand, is described as well-mannered, well-educated, thoughtful, and cautious. He is praised for naming ‘Alī al-Ridā, the seventh Imām recognized by Twelver Shi‘ites, as his successor, and for giving him back Fadak, an oasis near Khaybar in the Hijaz that had traditionally belonged to the Prophet’s family. Al-Wāthiq (r. 842-847) is similarly praised for his generosity towards the Prophet’s family: he is said to have given so much to the ahl al-bayt that no “Alawī” died poor during his reign. Al-Mutawakkil’s (r. 847-861) dethronement by al-Muntaṣir (r. 861-862) is applauded by the author because the former bore a grudge against the family of the Prophet, going so far as to allow crops to be grown over Husayn’s tomb in Karbala. In discussing al-Muhtadī’s (r. 869-870) reign, Şükrullah describes the appearance of a man who falsely claimed to belong to the ahl al-bayt and sought political influence by attracting large crowds of followers.
Şükrullah stresses that real descendants of the Prophet (and of 'Ālī) never oppose the *shariʿa* the way this man did. 118

In contrast to his laudatory treatment of the early ‘Abbāsid caliphs, Şükrullah has marked reservations about the later ones. For example, al-Mu'tamid (r. 870-892), he asserts, neglected his duties and indulged his carnal appetites. He villifies al-Muqtadir (r. 908-932) for allowing women to assume *de facto* authority during his reign. Al-Qāhir (r. 932-934) is condemned for shedding blood, overtaxing the people, and ignoring basic rules of politics. During his reign, the Seljuks occupied Baghdad, and hereafter Şükrullah treats the ‘Abbāsid caliph and the Seljuk sultan as components of a single political unit. “The Seljuks’ greatness resembled the stars in the sky,” Şükrullah enthuses; “After the ‘Abbāsids’ fortune started to decline, the state/fortune of the Seljuks started to rise.” In connection with the reigns of the last ‘Abbāsid caliphs, none of which he covers in detail, he also notes the emergence of the Seljuks of Anatolia and the Mongols.

Şükrullah is often praised for making a contribution to the historiography of the Ottoman Empire. Yet the Ottoman part of his history is very succinct and does not include Mehmed II’s reign because Şükrullah intended to cover that period in a separate volume, which he apparently never wrote. At the end of *Behçetü'l-Tevārīkh*, Şükrullah explains that it would diminish Mehmed the Conqueror to include him at the end of a work covering so many other rulers, and

118 Ibid., fols. 268b-269a.
so he has decided to devote a separate volume to his reign. Mehmed II, he insists, is distinguished from pre-Islamic rulers by his Muslim faith and from other Muslim rulers by his unfailingly just conduct. He therefore deserves a volume devoted entirely to him. 119

In the Ottoman part of his history, Şükrullah changes from a source-critical professional historian to a panegyrist. Still, his narrative of Ottoman history is uniquely valuable because of one of his sources. During the reign of Murâd II, he explains, he was sent as an ambassador to Mirza Jîhân Shâh of the Karakoyunlu dynasty, which ruled eastern Anatolia, northwestern Iran, eastern Iraq, and parts of the Caucasus from the late fourteenth through the late fifteenth century. The shah declared to him that he and Murad II were not only brothers in religion but also relatives. To prove it, he summoned his court chronicler, one Mawlana Ismâ‘îl, who brought an Oğuznâme, the epic of the Oghuz Turk migrations (including that of the Seljuks), written in Mongol script. This book displayed the genealogies of the various Oghuz tribes, including the Ottomans, and showed that they were related to the Karakoyunlu.120

Şükrullah’s erudition in early Islamic history enabled him to make analogies between Ottoman realities of his own time and the distant Islamic past. In his discussion of the 1402 battle between Bayezid I and Timur, in which Timur inflicted a crushing defeat on Bayezid, he compares the Tatars who switched from

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119Ibid., fol. 301b.
120Ibid., fol. 286b.
Bayezid’s to Timur’s side in the middle of the battle to the people of Kufa in southern Iraq, who betrayed ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib in his struggle for the caliphate against Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān, and the Khārijītes, who turned on ‘Alī when he agreed to submit the outcome of his battle with Mu‘āwiya to arbitration. He further likens Timur’s followers to the followers of Yazīd who cut Husayn b. ‘Alī and his followers off from the Euphrates at Karbala, thus depriving them of water. And he compares his patron, Mahmūd Pasha Angelovic, to the Barmakid viziers, who, he claims, would be pleased to see that Mahmūd Pasha was grand vizier. Despite these intriguing analogies, the Ottoman section of Şükrullah’s history is of limited use to historians of the Ottoman Empire because it does not contain detailed information about the reigns of Murād II and Mehmed the Conqueror, even though the author spent most of his life under the rule of one or the other.

*Sirāṭ as Epic: Enverī’s Düsturnāme*

Although he was a contemporary of Şükrullah and another protégé of Mahmud Pasha Angelovic, the upbringing and style of the poet Enverī were quite different from Şükrullah’s. Instead, he more closely resembles Ahmedī. Half a century later than Ahmedī, he wrote his only surviving work, the *Düsturnāme*, as an epic tale of the reign of Mehmed II. The *Düsturnāme* is important not only because of the information it contains about the Ottomans but also because it is probably the most significant work on the early southwestern Anatolian emirate
of Aydın and its legendary ruler “Ghazi” Umur Bey (r. 1334-1348). 121 The work’s importance has been rightly emphasized by Mükrimin Halil during the early Turkish Republic 122 and later by Irène Mélïkoff. Recently, the Ottoman section of the Düsturnāme was transcribed and published by Necdet Öztürk. 123 This work is indeed a unique source for the history of the Ottomans and the Aydınoğulları, but it is often forgotten that over half of the Düsturnāme is a universal history emphasizing the pre-Islamic Persian empires. Little is known about Enveri’s life. None of the major Ottoman biographers mentions him. 124

From the Düsturnāme, we gather that he was somewhat educated in Arabic and Persian. It is also evident that he was close to Mahmūd Pasha, to whom he dedicated his work. He may also have participated in Mehmed II’s military campaigns.

In his introduction to the Düsturnāme, Enveri explains why he wrote this work. Earlier, he says, he had written a work called Teferrücnāme (now lost) for Mehmed II, but this work did not include the histories of the non-Ottoman Anatolian emirates. (It has been suggested that this work covered Mehmed II’s

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122 Mükrimin Halil Yinanç, Düsturnāme-i Enveri (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1928).


124 Ibid., XXXIII.
Enveri sought to fill the gap with the *Düsturnāme*, which he presented to his long-time patron Mahmud Pasha. He adds that his inspiration is Baydawi’s (d. 1292-1293) history, known as *Nizām al-tawārīkh*. He mentions two other sources: the work of a certain Samarqandī and the work of a certain Hāji (?) Selman. Enveri refers to Baydawi throughout the *Düsturnāme*. He is more of a genuine historian than Ahmedī, and he clearly states that he wants to write a history. However, like Ahmedī, he may also have wanted his work to serve as a book of counsel, in keeping with the title *Düsturnāme*. His history is divided into twenty-two chapters. A good deal of it concerns pre-Islamic Persian empires, as in the case of Ahmedī’s *İskendernāme*. Ottoman historians from Ahmedī through Mustafa ‘Alī, it appears, tended to regard ancient Persia, as opposed to the ancient Arabs, as the wellspring of Ottoman civilization. Furthermore, medieval Persian intellectual production had always had a profound impact on early Ottoman letters, as the discussions in this chapter have hoped to show.

Where early Islamic history is concerned, the *Düsturnāme* seems to serve as a précis of the lost *Teferrücnāme*, to which Enveri continually refers his readers for more details on the Prophet Muhammad, the Rashīdūn caliphs, the

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128 Neither the Mükrimin Halil nor the Irène Melikoff edition includes the pre-Ottoman sections of the *Düsturnāme*. Page numbers in the following notes refer to İzmir Milli Kütüphane, MS 16114-22/401.
Umayyads, and the ‘Abbāsids.\textsuperscript{129} He highlights only a few incidents, such as how Abū Bakr fought the Arab tribes who apostasized from Islam when the Prophet died, how ‘Umar conquered Damascus and parts of Persia, and how ‘Uthmān conquered Egypt, Khorasan, Iraq, and part of North Africa. He likewise briefly summarizes ‘Alī’s conflict with ‘Ā’isha and her allies Talha and Zubayr, and Mu‘āwiya’s call for arbitration of his struggle with ‘Alī, which Enverī regards as a trick.\textsuperscript{130} The Umayyads and ‘Abbāsids are covered only very briefly, as if they are distractions from the overall Persianate history. Enverī takes a positive view of the ‘Abbāsid revolution but, unlike Ahmedī, does not single out Abū Muslim.\textsuperscript{131}

Despite Mélikoff’s claims that Enverī sought to write a “book of direction,” a close reading of both Ahmedī’s and Enverī’s works suggests that Enverī had no intention of writing a “mirror for princes.” The only story in the work that contains any sort of moral is one in which Aristotle advises the young Alexander the Great not to take revenge on the Persians. Overall, Enverī does not relay history from any particular moral standpoint. He is, for the most part, succinct and straightforward in his presentation of the pre-Ottoman dynasties. He refers to different narrators (singular, \textit{rāvī}) on whom he relies, but, with the exceptions of Baydāwī and Nizāmī, the composer of a famous Alexander romance, he does not identify them. When it comes to the history of the emirates of Aydın and Osman, his genre shifts from history to epic story-telling that contrasts sharply

\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Düsturnāme}, fols. 35b, 37b.

\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Ibid.}, fol. 37b.

\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Ibid.}, fols. 38a-41a.
with the earlier sections of his work. Mélikoff has observed that the Aydınoğulları section of Enveri’s work resembles a dastan (poetic epic) more than it does a traditional history. Under the influence of Baydawī, perhaps, Enveri adopted a more or less historical tone whereas in covering Umur Bey of Aydın or the early Ottomans, he followed the genre of the ghazâwātnāme, or panegyric conquest narrative, with which he would have been well familiar from the courts of Murâd II and Mehmed the Conqueror.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to address the main questions of this study: How did Ottoman historians write the early history of Islam, and what can we deduce about their religious identities from their accounts? Ottoman history-writing apparently developed only gradually, in parallel with the gradual development of the Ottoman state. In the 14th century, the House of Osman was only one of many competing polities in the Middle East. Ottoman madrasas emerged gradually and flourished only in the 15th century. In terms of the development of Ottoman historiography, Mehmed II’s reign marks a watershed.

Ottoman intellectuals tended to treat Islamic history as part of a larger universal history and/or as part of a literary genre. In the early centuries of the Ottoman Empire, history and literature were often intertwined. Thus, the histories of Ahmedī and Enverī were written as mathnawis, as was Yazıcıoğlu’s Muhammediye. Some of these authors adhered strictly to literary conventions but were less concerned with factual accuracy. In his İskendername, for instance,
Ahmedī makes numerous factual errors in his coverage of early Islamic history. Mustafa Ḍarīr’s *Siret*, written in simple Turkish and based on al-Bakrī’s account, was popularized during Murad III’s reign thanks to the sultan’s patronage. Since al-Bakrī favored Shi‘ism Ḍarīr’s work likewise bears the signs of Shi‘ite interpretation of Muhammad’s life story, notably a deep reverence for ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib. Murad III’s patronage of this *Siret* reflects the relatively inclusive milieu of his court. Earlier Ottoman sultans had likewise tolerated “unorthodox” interpretations of early Islamic history, as noted in the earlier sections of this chapter.

In the 14th century, the sources on early Islamic history that were available to Ottoman intellectuals were apparently scarce. They continued to rely on abridged histories and translations of Persian prototypes. Baydawi’s *Nizām al-tawārikh*, for instance, was used as a model by almost all Ottoman intellectuals who wrote universal histories during this period. The influence of Persian was felt so heavily that the Ottoman historian Şükrullah composed his history in Persian rather than in his native Turkish.

Almost all the early Ottoman intellectuals discussed in this chapter shared a distaste for the Umayyad dynasty, which, they believed, had usurped the right of ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib and his descendants to the caliphate. Only Şükrullah, who, unlike Ahmedī and Enverī, belonged to the scholarly class, refrains from engaging with the controversial events of the early Islamic succession struggles. Even he, however, curses Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiyah because of his actions against the
descendants of ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib. In contrast, all these historians view the ‘Abbāsid caliphs in a positive light as long as they were not hostile to the family of Muhammad. Therefore, one can safely argue that the *ahl al-bayt*īsm that we will address in more detail in the upcoming chapters was actually well established among the intellectuals of the period under discussion. Mustafa Ḍarīr’s *Siret*’s role in the establishment of this cultural phenomenon is unmistakable. The entirety of his work was actually a summary of the account of al-Bakrī, who was suspected of being a crypto-Shi‘ite. Those who perused Ḍarīr’s work were left with a sense of ‘Alī ibn Abī Talīb’s superiority to all other companions, at least spiritually. Poets Ahmedī, Enverī and Yazıcıoğlu also adopted this *ahl al-bayt*īsm, especially in their criticisms of Yazid and the Umayyads. It seems that, in pre-Safavid Anatolia, Shi‘ite readings of history had equal credibility with Sunni ones. Most of the intellectuals discussed in this chapter reflect this reality. Moreover, *ahl al-bayt*īsm, which we will discuss in the next chapters in some detail, was also strong among the intellectuals of the period. We will see that this trend continued unabated despite the ups-and-downs of the sixteenth century.
CHAPTER 3
WRITING ISLAMIC HISTORY DURING THE AGE OF OTTOMAN EXPANSION, 1481-1574

Introduction

Beginning with Mehmed the Conqueror’s (r. 1451-1481) reign, the Ottoman Empire started to expand on a massive scale in Europe and Asia. Despite their different personalities and approaches to rule, Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512), Selim I (r. 1512-1520), and Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566) continued the territorial expansion policy of the Ottoman state. Civil war proved to be the biggest obstacle for Bayezid II, who was obliged to adopt a controlled expansion policy because of his brother Cem (1459-1495), then the governor of Karaman province in central Anatolia, who emerged as a pretender to the throne. Bayezid ascended the throne with the help of the imperial Janissaries, who preferred him to his brother. Cem took refuge with the Mamluk sultan in Cairo, then on Rhodes with the Knights of St. John, and finally at the Vatican with the Pope.\textsuperscript{132} Bayezid’s anxiety about a possible coalition of Christian forces to enthrone Cem in his place hindered his performance in the Ottoman-Mamluk war of 1485-1491, in which

\textsuperscript{132} For Cem’s episode, see Shai Har-El, \textit{Struggle for Domination in the Middle East: The Ottoman-Mamluk War, 1485-1491} (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 105-112; 115-121.
the two empires struggled for control of the central Anatolian region of Cilicia.\textsuperscript{133}

At the turn of the sixteenth century, Bayezid also had to suppress a Shi‘ite insurgency in eastern Anatolia, known as the Şahkulu rebellion, which clearly displayed the growing influence of the newly emerging Safavid Empire over the population of that region.\textsuperscript{134}

Selim I (r. 1512-1520), Bayezid’s son, then the governor of Trabzon, used his father’s weakness in suppressing the growing Safavid influence in Anatolia as one excuse among many to topple him. Selim’s reign also started with internal strife, as his brother Ahmed also had substantial backing from at least one faction at court. His other brother, Korkud, did not pose a significant threat to him and did not play a major role in the events that transpired. Selim was arguably more stringent than his father in his opposition to Shi‘ism. On the other hand, he shared his father’s respect for Sufism, including reverence for the controversial Andalusian mystic Ibn ‘Arabī (1165-1240) and his concept of “unity of being” (\textit{wahdat al-wujūd}), which emphasizes the transcendent unity of God in every

\textsuperscript{133} V.J, Parry, "Bāyazīd II," \textit{EI}. See also Har-El, \textit{Struggle for Domination in the Middle East}, 133-215.

aspect of being. Selim demonstrated his devotion to Ibn ʿArabī by restoring his tomb in Damascus after taking the city from the Mamluks in 1516. 135

In military matters, Selim relied more on offensive war than his father had done. During his reign, the Ottoman Empire extended its dominion to the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina as a result of Selim’s conquest of the Mamluk sultanate. In 1514, Selim inflicted a huge defeat on the Safavid Shah Ismail (r. 1502-1524) at Çaldıran in what is now northwestern Iran, thus restricting the influence of his missionaries (halīfas) in Anatolia, although Shi’ite-leaning populations continued to live within Ottoman borders for centuries.

Selim’s untimely death paved the way for the reign of his son Süleyman, who, unlike his father and grandfather, ascended the throne with no rival among his siblings. Süleyman’s reign (1520-1566) marked the zenith of Ottoman territorial expansion and the height of Ottoman cultural production, if one is to believe the accounts of his contemporaries. The Ottoman Empire became a power broker in Europe, coming into conflict with the Habsburg Empire and Venice while cultivating friendly relations with France and England. The century after Mehmed II’s death also witnessed the florescence of Ottoman historical knowledge in terms of both chronicles about the Ottoman Empire and universal histories.

This chapter addresses major representatives of this florescence and their views of early Islamic as well as Ottoman history. After briefly addressing the

troubling issue of the lost volumes of Mehmed Neşrī’s universal history (Cihanüma) and discussing İdrīs-i Bidlīsī’s Ottoman history, I shall turn to Lāmi‘ī Çelebi’s translation of Molla Jāmī’s Shawahid al-nubuwwa. Lāmi‘ī was one of the key figures of Ottoman Turkish literature in the first decades of the 16th century, and the study of his work provides a window onto views of the Prophet Muhammad’s persona, as well as those of other key figures of Islamic history. In the same section, I will discuss a similar work that was translated by the famous statesman and chancellor Celâlzâde Mustafa Çelebi at roughly the same time that Lāmi‘ī produced his work. Next, I will deal with the universal history of one of the main historians of Süleyman’s age, Ramazânzâde. The chapter ends with a thorough analysis of Muslihuddin Lārī’s universal history as redacted by Hoca Sadeddin Efendi. In this section, both Lārī’s and Sadeddin’s historical craft, as well as their views on early Islamic history, will be scrutinized.

**Ottoman History in Persian: Notes on İdrīs-i Bidlīsī**

İdrīs-i Bidlīsī, a statesman and scholar of Kurdish origin, moved to the Ottoman domains sometime during Bayezid II’s reign (1481-1512) after occupying the post of nişancı, or keeper of the royal seal, at the court of the Akkoyunlu, or White Sheep Turcomans, who ruled eastern Anatolia, northern Iraq, and western Iran. The rise of the Safavids in Iran forced the Akkoyunlu to withdraw from Iran; as a result, the Sunni retinue of the Akkoyunlu dynasty, including Bidlīsī, sought their fortunes in alternative locales such as the Ottoman

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Empire. Despite the earlier machinations of the Akkoyunlu rulers against the Ottomans, Bidlisî was welcomed at the Ottoman court, perhaps in part because of his influence over the Kurdish tribes in eastern Anatolia, whom he persuaded to accept Ottoman suzerainty. In 1502, Bayezid II, recognizing Bidlisî’s scholarly qualities and knowledge of affairs of state, asked him to write a history of the House of Osman in Persian; he finished this work in two and a half years. Known as Hesht Behisht, or Eight Paradises, it is highly regarded by later Ottoman historians such as Sadeddin, who will be discussed below, probably due to its eloquent style. “Eight paradises” refers to the reigns of the eight Ottoman sultans up to that time, culminating in the reign of Bayezid II, which Bidlisî recounts. Heşt Behişt is indeed one of the principal sources for the reign of Bayezid II. İdrîs-i Bidlisî knew Turkish and used it effectively because, even though the Akkoyunlu used Persian as their state language, their leaders were of Turkish origin and used Turkish for everyday communication. Like the

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137 The Akkoyunlus were one of the states that called on Tamerlane to intervene against the Ottomans. The Akkoyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan (r. 1453-1478) also allied with Venice in his struggle against Mehmed II. John E. Woods, The Aqqoyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), 90. For a somewhat detailed account of Akkoyunlu attempts to form alliances against the Ottomans, see Adel Allouche, The Origins and Development of the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict (1500-1555) (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag: 1983), 8-15.


139 Recently a transliteration of this work was published based on its Turkish translation: İdris-i Bidlisi, Heşt Bihišt, 2 volumes, eds. Mehmet Karataş, Selim Kaya, and Yaşar Baş (Ankara: Bitlis Eğitim ve Tanıtma Vakfı Yayınları, 2008). Sultan Mahmud I (r. 1730-1754) ordered one Abdulbaki Sadi, a palace scribe, to translate this work into Turkish. Sadi’s translation omits various poems, although the editors of the transliteration argue that he was loyal to the original text in terms of the historical content. Mehmet Karataş, et al., “Birinci Bölüm: İdrisi Bidlisi ve Eserleri,” Heşt Bihišt, vol.1, 54.
Ottomans, they traced their lineage to the Oğuz Turkic confederation, which had migrated from Central Asia during the eleventh century.\footnote{Woods, The Aqqoyunlu, 9.}

Nonetheless, Bayezid II asked Bidlîşî to compile his history in Persian. Despite the growing respect for Turkish in intellectual circles, Persian still served as the chief literary language in the late fifteenth century. The content of this chapter also proves the dominant role of Persian in the Ottoman universal historical tradition. In fact, all the works discussed in this chapter were either composed in Persian or are Turkish translations of Persian originals. Until the reign of Selim II (1566-1574), the Persian tradition continued to play an important role in Ottoman universal history-writing, with a few exceptions such as that of Neşrî, to whom we turn now.

**Neşrî’s Universal History in Turkish**

Little is known about the biography of the historian Neşrî, who lived during the reigns of Mehmed II and Bayezid II (1451-1512) Nonetheless, his work known as *Kitab-ı Cihānnümā* became very popular among later authors. When and where he was born are unclear, but early Ottoman biographers suggested that he was connected to either Karaman or Bursa. He was present at the last campaign of Mehmed II in 1481, in the course of which the sultan died, although it is unclear in what capacity. He probably belonged to the scholarly class (*ulema*)
because he knew Arabic and Persian very well. This can be inferred not from the Cihānnūmā itself but from his references to other works.141

The Cihānnūmā (Cosmorama) originally consisted of six volumes, but only the sixth has survived. We learn from Neşrī’s introduction that he composed the previous five volumes during the reign of Mehmed II whereas he wrote the sixth in the time of Bayezid II.142 The sixth volume includes histories of the Oğuz Turkic confederation and its (supposed) offshoots, the Seljuks and the Ottomans. Victor Ménage, in an extensive study of the Cihānnūmā’s sources, argues that “Neşrī’s history represents the nodal point of early Ottoman historical writings”143 because it was composed from all sources then available: ‘Āşıkpaşazāde’s (ca. 1400-1490) history, one anonymous Ottoman history and early historical calendars. ‘Āşıkpaşazāde was a Sufi; his overall style was quite different from that of Neşrī, who wrote within the conventions of scholarly writing for a more scholarly audience. Ménage demonstrates that Neşrī does not copy ‘Āşıkpaşazāde’s dramatic style but reproduces it selectively, according to his taste, while incorporating ‘Āşıkpaşazāde’s biographical references.144

A few observations are in order about Neşrī’s surviving sixth volume to determine his place among the intellectuals who composed universal histories. In

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141 Christine Woodhead, "Neshrī," EP.


144 Ibid. 18.
his introduction to the sixth volume, which might serve as an introduction to the entire work, Neşri argues that the most exalted knowledge is the one bound within the “holy books” (not just the Qur’ān). The holy books, he continues, address three realms of human knowledge: theology, jurisprudence, and history. The most virtuous people fall into three corresponding categories: prophets, kings, and scholars. If the sultans learn religious sciences and history, they may become mirrors of the prophets. “This is why,” Neşri adds, “the sultan is God’s shadow on earth.” He then expresses a wish to write a book in Turkish which will be comprehensive, including stories of past states. He decided to write this work, he claims, because of the paucity of works of history in his native Turkish. He succeeds in combining two different historical traditions: narrative annals and historical calendars (singular, takvim).

Neşri’s universal history is probably very similar to those of his predecessors, such as Şükrullah, but it must be more comprehensive because it is organized in six volumes instead of only one. His sources should be similar to those exploited by earlier authors because of the limited availability of certain materials. Why did Neşri’s universal history not become popular? Even Katip Çelebi, the paramount bibliographer of the Ottomans, was apparently unfamiliar with the earlier volumes of Neşri’s history. Although Neşri undoubtedly wrote these volumes, to which he refers in his extant work, it is very likely that he did not publish them, which in the age of manuscripts implied making them available to the public. It is curious that his sixth volume is extant and extensively used by
historians of the Ottoman Empire even while no one ever sees the earlier volumes of his history.\textsuperscript{145}

In his extant work, Neşri combines themes familiar from standard narratives of Islamic history with elements of the heroic secular narrative. For example, the theme of the primordial light of Muhammad is incorporated into the narrative of Oğuz Han, the ancestor of the Ottomans. Neşri asserts that everyone used to see this light in Oğuz’s face. In Neşri’s narrative, Oğuz Han emerges as a Muslim figure who is following Abraham’s religion; he is contrasted to his father, Karahan b. Zibbakoy, who is depicted as an unbeliever and a cruel ruler. Oğuz, on the other hand, “was guided by God to belief.” Among the honorable Turks, asserts the historian, he was the first to pronounce the Muslim profession of faith: “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his messenger.” He was very handsome, brave, and generous, of medium height, with a well-proportioned body. The Turks were amazed by the beauty of his face. He was the first Turk to call his people to Allah, triggering a seventy-five-year conflict with his pagan father. Oğuz ultimately killed his father and became the ruler of his lands. This happened during the time of the Prophet Abraham, whom Oğuz

\textsuperscript{145} Ménage mentions a Turkish manuscript, drawn to his attention by Paul Wittek and originally described by V.D. Simirnoff, that contains a Turkish history of the Abbasids that was probably produced at the end of the 15\textsuperscript{th} century. Ménage believes that this volume may constitute Neşri’s section on the Abbasids. V. L. Ménage, \textit{Neshri’s History of the Ottomans}, 7, footnote 1.
followed. The Turks believed that the “Dhū’l-Qarnayn” mentioned in the Qur’ān was Oğuz.\(^{146}\)

It is obvious that in this narrative, the primordial light of Muhammad metamorphoses into the light in the face of Oğuz. It is also interesting to see in this narrative that the Oğuz’s tribe’s migration is not triggered by a drought or any other climatic event but by a fight between Oğuz and his father over their beliefs. Oğuz appears here as an Abrahamic believer. Neşri clearly aims to demonstrate that the Ottomans’ ancestors were men of belief, just like them, who fought in the name of their religion to the point that they fought against their fathers, just as the early companions of Muhammad had done. According to this story, Oğuz’s descendants were also of the Abrahamic faith, and they immediately accepted Islam when they had direct contact with Muhammad’s message. This was the closest that the Ottomans ever came to claiming legitimacy based on their links with the early Islamic community.\(^{147}\) It was indeed a good opportunity for them to use this linkage to their advantage; however, in most later histories of the Ottoman Empire this story was dropped, probably because it was found not to be very credible. In the legitimation wars of the sixteenth century, using their ancestors’ links to early Islamic community could have been a major tour de force for the Ottomans to counter the Safavids, who claimed descent from Prophet

\(^{146}\) Dhū’l-Qarnayn, literally “he of the two horns / centuries,” is mentioned in the 18\(^{th}\) chapter of the Qur’ān. He builds a wall to enclose “Gog” and “Magog”. Medieval romance works claim that Dhū’l-Qarnayn was Alexander the Great.

Muhammad (and thus superiority over the Ottomans) and a legitimate right to the imamate, leaving the Ottomans with no choice but to find alternative means to legitimize their claims for world domination. However, the Ottomans did not not use this tale to a great extent; rather, most intellectuals legitimized Ottoman’s rule based on their roles in upholding the word of Islam through their military campaigns as *ghazis* of exemplary nature, comparable to the companions of Prophet Muhammad.

**Molla Jāmī and Molla Miskin in Translation: The Miraculous Sīrāts of Lāmi’ī Çelebi (1472-1532) and Celâlzâde Mustafa Çelebi (1490-1567)**

Any intellectual history of the early, and indeed later, Ottoman centuries should pay special attention to translations and their importance for the intellectual milieu. Early Ottoman intellectuals, in the absence of canonical works on most subjects, opted to translate earlier Persian or Arabic works, although they more often than not rendered these works as if they were their own compositions. This situation was part of the overall intellectual environment in which intellectual production and knowledge acquisition occurred; it was obviously quite a different environment from what we, as modern historians, witness today. The two translations that will be studied in this section are fine examples of this reality.

The life of Maḥmūd ibn Oṣmān, better known by his pen name, Lāmi’ī Çelebi, extended through the reigns of Mehmed II (1451-1481), Bayezid II (1481-1512), Selim I (1512-1520), and Süleyman I (1520-1566). Not only did he live
through the period of Ottoman expansion; he became the symbol of the ascendance of Ottoman literati as a result of this expansion. He earned the nickname “the Jāmī of Rūm” because of his translations of the works of the great Persian poet and mystic ‘Abd al Raḥmān Jāmī (1414-1492). He was born in 1472, in the last years of Mehmed II’s reign, and died in 1532, in the middle of unprecedented Ottoman expansion in Europe during Süleyman’s reign. He is said to have spent his entire life in the city of Bursa, to which he dedicated a şehrengiz, a formulaic work extolling a city’s virtues, and to have gained the favor of multiple sultans, without leaving his hometown, on the strength of his works alone. His greatest achievement, on the other hand, was his introduction of various hitherto unknown themes and forms into Turkish literature from Persian.\footnote{For a comprehensive study of Lāmi’ī Çelebi and his works, see Günay Kut Alpay, “Lāmiī Chelebi and His Works,” \textit{Journal of Near Eastern Studies} 35/2 (Apr., 1976): 73-93.}

Lāmi’ī’s connection to Jāmī went beyond his translations. Like Jāmī, he became an adherent of the Naqshbandī Sufi order, which had been founded in the 14\textsuperscript{th} century by Bahā’ ud-Dīn Naqshband (1318-1389) in what is now Iranian Azerbaijan. Although the impact of the Naqshibandīyya in Iran outside of Azerbaijan was limited, the order had a major appeal in Anatolia.\footnote{Hamid Algar, “The Naqshbandī Order: A Preliminary Survey of Its History and Significance,” \textit{Studia Islamica} 44 (1976), 140.} A majority of Lāmi’ī’s works reflect his concern with Sufism. He is said to have chosen as his spiritual guide Emīr Ahmed Bukhari, to whom he dedicated various poems and
eulogies. Emir Ahmed (d. 1516)\textsuperscript{150} was a disciple of Molla Îlâhî, a student of Hoca Ahrar, one of the famous Naqshibandî Hacegan, who brought the Naqshibandîyya order to Anatolia from Iran in the 15\textsuperscript{th} century. Lâmi‘î paid homage to the Naqshbandî order by translating Jâmî’s biographical compendium of the Naqshbandî shaykhs, known as Nefahât al-uns; to Jâmî’s collection of over five hundred biographies, Lâmi‘î also added a number of Anatolian shaykhs.\textsuperscript{151}

Although Lâmi‘î became famous for his mathnawis, poetic works employing rhyming couplets, his prose works are also highly regarded. Among these, his translation of Jâmî’s Shawâhid al-nubuwwah (Martyrs of Prophecy) is important for the purposes of this study. This work, as the author points out, is not a straightforward translation but an edition.\textsuperscript{152} It was customary for Ottoman intellectuals, in an age before copyright, to adapt translations to their own tastes with omissions as well as additions. A thorough-going comparison of Jâmî’s work with Lâmi‘î’s translation is beyond the confines of the current study. Yet the organization of Lâmi‘î’s edition suggests that his innovations to the work’s essence are minimal. Although he identifies his contributions on a few occasions,

\textsuperscript{150} He is not to be confused with Emir Sultan, a.k.a. Emir Seyyid Buhârî, of Bursa, who lived between 1368 and 1429 and who died long before Lâmi‘î was born. There is not much information on Emir Ahmed apart from the fact that he established three Naqshibandî lodges in Istanbul; his Sufi chain (sîsîla) died out in a few generations. Lâmi‘î justifies his own work by explaining that it was inspired by Emir Seyyid Buhârî, who married a daughter of Sultan Bayezid I (r. 1389-1402) and whose tomb eventually became a famous place of visitation in Bursa. While writing about him, Lâmi‘î fell ill; Emir Seyyid Buhârî, he claims, visited him in his sleep and healed him. Yet Lâmi‘î was ordered to compile the Shawâhid not by Emir Seyyid Buhârî but by Emir Ahmed Buhârî, Lâmi‘î’s spiritual mentor, who also apparently helped him with the translation. On Emir Ahmed, see Algar, “The Naqshbandî Order,” 140; K.A. Nizami, “Naqshbandîyya,” EI2.

\textsuperscript{151} Alpay, “Lâmi‘î Chelebi and His Works,” 78-79.

he seems for the most part to have done little more than add introductory sections to each volume and insert *mathnawis* at various points throughout the work.

The work is organized in eight short volumes of approximately forty to fifty pages each. Lāmi‘ī starts his work with prayers and several *mathnawis* emphasizing the unity of God (*tawhīd*). He then explains the necessity of belief in God and in Muhammad’s prophecy. During Muhammad’s lifetime, he points out, some people accepted his prophecy after observing the truthfulness of his face, without expecting further proof. Others accepted it only after they witnessed specific signs and miracles. Still others witnessed the Prophet’s miracles but dismissed them as sorcery. There were also hypocrites who gave the appearance of believing but, in their hearts, did not. Religious scholars have written many works on the distinctive signs of Muhammad’s prophecy, Lāmi‘ī explains, because these signs increase a person’s proximity to God and strengthen his beliefs. Among these works, Lāmi‘ī asserts that he has benefited greatly from Jāmī’s *Shawahid al-nubuwwah*.

In this work, the *kerāmets* and extraordinary things that happened to the followers of Muhammad are also considered to be reflections of his miracles. The work therefore includes these occurrences. Judging from the organization of the work, it is in conformity with the mainstream *sīra* literature, or biographies of
the Prophet, in terms of its chronological nature. However, the main framework followed in this work is religious rather than political. Lāmi‘ī probably chose Jāmī’s work to translate not only because he had benefited from it personally but also because it does not include lengthy chains of transmitters of narratives of the deeds of the Prophet and his companions. Jāmī deliberately excluded these from his text in order to make the work succinct and manageable. His decision means that it is often virtually impossible to determine his source for a given narrative. More generally, both authors, Jāmī and Lāmi‘ī, only rarely specify their sources. In the few instances in which sources are specified, there are references to authors such as Ibn al-Jawzī (1116-1200), the famous Damascene Ḥanbalī jurist and polemicist; al-Zamakhsharī (1075-1144), the pioneering linguist and theologian; al-Wāqidī (747/748-822), one of the earliest authorities on the Prophet Muhammad’s biography; Imam Mustaghfirī (961-1041), a somewhat controversial Qur’ānic exegete, on whom see below; and various hadith collections.

The early chapters of the work concur with other sīra works. The authors observe that Muhammad’s coming is predicted in the Hebrew Bible and the New

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153 The breakdown of the work is as follows: **Introduction**: The meanings of “prophet” (nabi) and “messenger” (rasūl) and an explanation of the qualities of each; **First chapter**: The distinctive signs of Muhammad’s prophecy observed before his birth; **Second chapter**: The distinctive signs from Muhammad’s birth to the beginning of revelation; **Third chapter**: The distinctive signs from the beginning of revelation to his emigration from Mecca to Medina; **Fourth chapter**: The distinctive signs from his emigration to his death; **Fifth chapter**: The distinctive signs the time of whose appearance is not known or that are not bound by time; **Sixth chapter**: The distinctive signs that occurred in the presence of the companions of the Prophet and other great figures; **Seventh chapter**: The signs that appeared in the presence of the followers of the Prophet’s companions, their followers, and the Sufis; **Conclusion**: On the punishments of the enemies of religion in this world. Lāmi‘ī, SN, vol. 1, 13-14.
Testament. The Jews in particular were aware that a Prophet would appear, although they expected him to emerge from among them. According to the narratives, the Jews denied Muhammad’s prophecy because of jealousy although many of them recognized Muhammad’s characteristics in their sacred texts. All these events are presented as reflections or “signs” of Muhammad’s prophecy. The primordial light of Muhammad; ‘Abd al-Muttālib’s dream about his grandson’s future; the beauty of Muhammad’s father, ‘Abdallāh; and other common themes of sīra literature are likewise covered by the narrative and treated as essential signs of Muhammad’s legitimacy.

The most intriguing part of the work relates to the period after Muhammad’s death. In this section, the first four caliphs recognized by Sunnis, known as the Rashīdūn, or rightly-guided, caliphs, are described with reference to Muhammad’s traditions about them and certain extraordinary events. A mainstream Sunni account is also included ranking the four in order of priority: Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Alī. After ‘Alī, however, an account of the Twelve Imams recognized by Imāmī, or “Twelver,” Shi’ītes is included. The authors assert that although the Rashīdūn are the best people after Muhammad, the children of ‘Alī by Muhammad’s daughter Fātima are superior to the children of the other companions. The authors therefore include the various miracles performed by the Twelve Imams. It is unclear if this section on the Twelve Imams is included in Jāmī’s original work. Certainly Lāmi’i Çelebi had immense respect for the Shi’ite Imams, which he also displays in his Murder of Husayn (Maktel-i
Huseyin), a *mathnawi* concerning the martyrdom in 680 C.E. of ‘Alī’s son Husayn and other members of the “house” of the Prophet Muhammad.

A critical influence in the section on the Rashīdūn caliphs is the work of Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad al-Mustaghfirī (961-1041), known as *The Proofs of Prophecy* (*Dala’īl al-nubūwah*). According to the reports taken from this work by Jāmī and Lāmi‘ī, the detractors of Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Alī were severely punished; some were turned into monkeys or pigs or killed in their sleep. It is curious that ‘Uthmān is missing in this narrative. It is not certain if he was deliberately neglected or not included in the translation. However, since Shi‘ites usually cursed Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, al-Mustaghfirī might have concentrated on them instead of on ‘Uthmān. Al-Mustaghfirī, who also produced a work on Qur‘ānic exegesis and one on the medical practices of the Prophet Muhammad, lived during the heyday of politicized Shi‘ism, when the Ismā‘īlī Fātimid caliphate ruled Egypt, Syria, and North Africa while the Twelver Buyid dynasty controlled Iraq and Iran. His work reflects a staunchly Sunni reverence for the Rāshidūn at a time when the Fātimids and their missionaries encouraged public cursing of the first three caliphs but especially Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. The accounts that he transmits make a moral point: not to speak ill of any of the Rashīdūn caliphs. Al-Mustaghfirī was criticized by *hadīth* scholars for transmitting false traditions and failing to mention chains of transmitters. Nonetheless, several of his reports

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154 SN, vol. 6, 3-11.

are included in Lāmi’ī’s edition. Al-Mustaghfirī was an obscure figure who apparently produced only a handful of works, few, if any, of which survived into the Ottoman period. There is therefore reason to believe that Lāmi’ī’s access to al-Mustaghfirī’s reports came only through Jāmī’s work.

Lāmi’ī’s work concurs with sīra literature in its account of ‘Uthmān’s murder and its description of his soft-heartedness and piety. On the other hand, more space is devoted to ‘Alī than to any of the other three Rāshidūn caliphs and, indeed, anyone mentioned in the work other than Muhammad. The depiction of ‘Alī’s virtues opens with a report from the eponymous founder of the Hanbalī school of jurisprudence, Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780-855), who is quoted as saying, “No one other than ‘Alī has been praised more for his virtues among the companions of Muhammad.” The fact that this tradition comes from the staunchly anti-Shi’ite Ibn Hanbal could reflect Lāmi’ī’s and/or Jāmī’s attempt to underline his Sunni identity.

Yet the outstanding reverence for ‘Alī is unmistakable. Like the authors’ Sufi characters, ‘Alī is depicted as the head of the ‘arifīn, the people who have attained spiritual knowledge of God. He is said to have received nine-tenths of all knowledge and still to have a share in the remaining tenth. He performs miracles, such as reattaching a man’s arm, taming the waters of the Euphrates, and extracting water from the ground. He foresees future events. The sun rises for him just after setting, just as it does for the Prophet. In two instances even

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156 SN, vol. 6, 11-15.
Mu'āwiyah, ‘Alī’s archrival in the struggle over the caliphate, is caught praising ‘Alī for his knowledge.\textsuperscript{157}

Not just ‘Alī, but his sons, as well as other Shi’ite imams, are likewise treated with the utmost respect in this work. The authors report that ‘Alī’s elder son, Hasan, made an agreement with Mu'āwiyah and gave up his right to the caliphate in order to “inhibit mischief among the Muslims.” Mu'āwiyah reportedly said, “What Hasan did for me is what no one else did in my entire life”.\textsuperscript{158} A narrative of Husayn ibn ‘Alī follows that of his older brother. At several points, the authors emphasize how Husayn’s martyrdom was foreseen by the Prophet Muhammad, who told Husayn about it when the latter was a child sitting on his lap. No one among the killers of Husayn lived a good life. All of them, we are told, died terrible deaths. Even the people who hesitated to help Husayn in Karbala when he was murdered were punished for their negligence.\textsuperscript{159} Thus, despite the staunchly Sunni support for the Rashīdūn caliphs, this work displays a reverence for ‘Alī and his descendants that would not be uncharacteristic of a practicing Shi’ite. This phenomenon can be best understood by the phrase \textit{ahl-al bayt}ism. \textit{Ahl al-bayt}ism is the exceptional love and reverence shown by Sunnis for the Prophet Muhammad’s family. In the case of Ottoman intellectuals, \textit{ahl al-bayt}ism also included the remaining imams of the Twelver Shi’ites, as will be explained elsewhere in this study.

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 15-36.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 36-40.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 40-51.
In order not to interrupt what they call the “golden chain” of imams, Lāmiʿī and Jāmī elect to discuss the succeeding imams immediately after Husayn. Islamic history once again converges here with the biographies of these imams. These imams appear as potential rivals to the Umayyad and ‘Abbāsid caliphs, and their uneasy relationships with these authority figures are vividly described. A case in point is the stories connected to the fourth imam, Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (659-712), who is famous in Shiʿite lore for performing miracles such as talking with gazelles and camels and making them obey his orders. He is chained in a prison by the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (r. 685-705) but manages to escape. On the other hand, Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn later prophesies a long reign for ‘Abd al-Malik and his descendants after the latter orders his notorious governor al-Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf not to kill any descendants of Muhammad’s grandfather, ‘Abd al-Muttalib; ‘Abd al-Malik thereby overturns the tyrannical policy of the Sufyānid branch of the Umayyad dynasty, whose brief rule he has brought to an end.

The imams’ prophetic abilities extend to the ‘Abbāsid dynasty. Thus, the fifth imam, Muhammad al-Bāqir (676-733), foresees the rule of the second ‘Abbāsid caliph, al-Mansūr (r. 754-75), best-known for founding Baghdad, when the latter is still a child. Notwithstanding, al-Mansūr repeatedly attempts to kill al-Bāqir’s successor, Jaʿfar al-Sādiq, a pioneer in formulating Shiʿite doctrine who is likewise revered by Sunnis for his theological knowledge. Not surprisingly, given Jaʿfar’s exalted status, al-Mansūr is never able to kill him; whenever he tries, a dragon blocks his way. In one episode, the dragon threatens to swallow al-
Mansūr’s palace if he harms the imam. Ja‘far’s son Mūsa al-Kāzīm (745-99), whom Twelver Shi‘ites regard as his father’s designated successor, is imprisoned by the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 775-785) until ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib appears to the caliph and recites a Qur’ānic verse that prohibits killing members of the Prophet’s family. Al-Mahdī’s successor as caliph, Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786-809), however, returns Mūsa to prison, where he is poisoned by the vizier Yahya ibn Khālid al-Barmakī. This episode undoubtedly serves to justify Hārūn’s notorious destruction of the Barmakid family of viziers, an episode that profoundly troubled historians of the ‘Abbāsid era and later.160

The ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Ma‘mūn (r. 813-833), who promoted the translation of Greek classics into Arabic,161 is praised in the Shawāhid al-nubūwwah because of his attachment to ‘Alī al-Ridā (765-818), the eighth Shi‘ite imam, whom he names his heir, although al-Ridā ultimately predeceases him.162 Al-Ma‘mūn reinforces his ties to the imams by marrying his daughter to the ninth imam, Muhammad al-Tāqī (811-835). Given that al-Ma‘mūn is a problematic historical figure for a number of reasons – he won the caliphate by ordering the


161 El-Hibri argues that Abbasid-era chroniclers, and al-Tabarī above all, stressed not al-Ma‘mūn’s role in the translation movement but his controversial “inquisition” (mihna) over the question of whether God created the Qur’ān. El-Hibri, Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography, 96.

162 Al-Ma‘mūn’s attempt at moving the caliphal line from the ‘Abbāsids to the ‘Alīids was seen in Baghdad as crazy (majnūn); his vizier was accused of corrupting the caliph. Ibid., 101.
execution of his brother, al-Amīn; he forcibly imposed Muʿtazilite theology—the Shawāhid's attempt to legitimize him by linking him to the Shiʿite imams is noteworthy.

The symbiotic connection between the imams and the ‘Abbāsid caliphs continues through the tenth and eleventh imams. Imam al-Hādī (827-868) heals the caliph al-Mutawakkil (r.847-861) while the eleventh imam, Hasan al-‘Askarī (846-874), tames a wild horse belonging to the caliph al-Mustā‘īn (r. 862-866).

With the twelfth imam, Muhammad, who Twelver Shiʿites believe will return at the end of time as the eschatological figure known as the Mahdī, the authors’ approach shifts. On the basis of hadīths recorded in Majd al-Dīn Mubarak ibn al-Athīr’s Jāmi’ al-usūl, they argue that the Mahdī will not be the twelfth Shiʿite imam or any other descendant of Husayn ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib but a descendant of Husayn’s brother Hasan. Indeed, they assert that the twelfth imam was not occulted, as Twelver Shiʿites believe, but simply died.

It is obvious that Lāmiʿī had an affinity not simply for the ahl al-bayt but for the descendants of ‘Alī specifically. This is borne out by one of his original compositions, known as Maktel-i Imam Hüseyin, which is a standard account of Husayn b. ‘Alī’s martyrdom based on canonical sources. Lāmiʿī wrote this work

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163 He is not to be confused with his younger brother, the famous historian ‘Alī ibn al-Athīr, who wrote the famous historical compendium Al-Kāmil fi al-ta’rīkh.

164 Lāmiʿī Çelebi, Maktel-i Hüseyn, Süleymaniye Library, MS Serez, fols. 53-86. Several copies of this work are extant in national libraries in Turkey, France, Germany, and Bosnia. Maktel-i
in response to a *fatwa*, or legal opinion, given by the mufti of Bursa, Alauddin Ali, also known as Molla Arap, who would later become chief mufti under Bayazid II. The *fatwa* called for the banning of recitals of Maktel narratives in public, from which we can deduce that the practice was fairly widespread in late fifteenth-century Bursa. Lâmiî’s production of just such a work, which he circulated publicly and even showed to Molla Arap, demonstrates the popularity of Shi‘ite martyr narratives even in a city as close to the imperial capital as Bursa.

It is extremely curious to see Lâmiî Çelebi’s (and indeed Jâmî’s) attachment to ‘Alî b. Abî Tālib and his descendants. The Naqshibandîs trace their *silsila*, or spiritual genealogy, back to Abû Bakr, rather than to ‘Alî, in the manner of most Sufî orders, although the Naqshibandî *silsila* converges with the line of Shi‘ite imams in its inclusion of Ja‘far al-Sâdiq, the sixth imam. Dina Le Gall’s study shows that, despite the sectarian conflicts of the sixteenth century, the Naqshibandîs did not immediately adopt a Bakrî *silsila* in place of an ‘Alîd one. She argues that most things attributed to the Naqshibandîs, such as their role in taming “heretical” movements, were actually anachronistic imaginations that placed the outputs of later centuries in the context of earlier ones. One of these anachronisms was the role of the silent mystical ritual, or *dhikr*, of the Naqshibandîs, which also emerged later rather than earlier. Thus, Le Gall’s study

*Hüseyin* is a genre in Turkish literature which deals with the murder of Husayn b. ‘Alî b. Abî Tālib and the family of the Prophet Muhammad. It is sometimes called *Kerbele Mersiyesi*. The most famous example of this genre was composed in the 14th century by the Anatolian poet Kastamonulu Şazi. I have consulted a copy of this work in the Süleymaniye Library which was originally composed in 763 AH. The date of the manuscript is 927 AH. Like Lâmiî’s account, this work presents the standard narrative of Husayn’s martyrdom, based on canonical sources. Şazi, *Maktel-i Hüseyin*, Süleymaniye Library, MS Kemankeş 528.
enhances the idea that Naqshibandīs in their formative years acted with considerable fluidity. An important feature of this fluidity was their ahl-al-baytist attitude.\textsuperscript{165} The example of Lāmi‘ī indicates that, among Ottoman literati of the early 16\textsuperscript{th} century, respect for not only ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib and the family of the Prophet but also the remaining twelve imams occupied an important place – and this at a time when Selim I was pursuing his anti-Qizilbash campaigns. Clearly, these literati were representatives of a broader ahl al-baytism that one can observe in various levels and, according to the findings of this study, among most historians. This ahl-al-baytism most often also included a respect for the ‘Abbāsids, who were also considered ahl-al-bayt, especially in comparison to the Umayyads. Although Lāmi‘ī did not agree with Shi‘ite eschatology, which holds that the Mahdī, the eschatological figure to come at the end of time, is the 12\textsuperscript{th} Shi‘ite imam, he revered these imams and appropriated their heritage while also attempting to forge a rapprochement between the imams and the Sunni caliphs. Therefore, he implies that the division between the Shi‘ite line of imams, who for the authors represent solely spiritual authority, and the Sunni caliphs, who represent secular/political authority, was not as great as argued by most Shi‘ites. This line of thinking is in accordance with the Naqshibandī idea that the imams are innocent of the anti-Sunni provocations attributed to them by Shiites.\textsuperscript{166}


\textsuperscript{166} Hamid Algar, “The Naqshbandī Order: A Preliminary Survey of Its History and Significance,” 130.
Lāmi’ī was most certainly one of the pioneering ahl-al-baytists in the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, from his example and many others, it becomes clear that the Sunni identity of the Ottomans had not been firmly established in the early sixteenth century. Rather, it was constructed mostly by Ottoman jurists of later decades. It is thought-provoking here to ask how Ottoman Sunnism would have evolved had there been no imminent Safavid threat. I argue throughout this study that even when facing the Safavid threat, Ottoman intellectuals did not abandon ahl-al-baytism; if there had been no such threat, I would argue that the line between Ottoman Sunnis and Twelver Shi’ites would have been very blurry.

At about the same time, a similar work was translated from Persian into Ottoman Turkish by the famous statesman Celâlzade Mustafa (d. 1567), who became chief scribe (reis‘ül-kütāb) in 1525 and nişancı, or keeper of the imperial seal, in 1534, a post he held for twenty-three years. His official formulations became models for the imperial chancery in later centuries. He is also famous for his history of the house of Osman, Ṭabaḵātü’l-memālik ve derecātü’l-mesālik, parts of which became an important source for later Ottoman historians, especially with regard to Süleyman I’s reign.167

The work that Celâlzade translated was a piece of sīra literature by Mu‘in al-Dīn Muhammad Farahī, also known as Molla Miskin, entitled Delail-i

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nübüvvet-i Muhammedi ve şemail-i fütüvvet-i Ahmedi and popularly known as Maʿārij al-nubuwwa fī madārij al-futuwwa. His translation, which was slightly abridged, was ultimately eclipsed by the complete translation of Mehmed ibn Mehmed Üskibī, also known as Altıparmak. In his introduction to this translation, Celâlzâde laments that the people of Anatolia (Rūm) are not very knowledgeable about the Prophet Muhammad’s life; he has translated this work, he explains, to make this knowledge accessible to them. Like Lāmiʾī’s work, Celâlzâde’s translation combines features of a Sufi treatise with the conventions of the sīra literature although mystical concerns clearly take precedence over the biographical agenda.

It is probably no coincidence that Lāmiʾī and Celâlzâde translated two similar works from Persian at almost the same time, claiming to fill a gap in popular knowledge in Anatolia of the Prophet Muhammad’s life. Yet it seems doubtful that ordinary common folk, most of whom were illiterate, were the intended audience for either of these translations, except perhaps indirectly, as listeners to oral recitations. These works were probably intended for the higher echelons of society, who might read about early Islamic history but lacked access

168 Mehmed b. Mehmed was born in Üsküp (Skopje, Macedonia), where he studied and joined the Bayramiya Sufi order, then became a preacher (wāʿiẓ) and teacher in Istanbul and later in Cairo, where he died in 1033/1623-24. J. Schacht, "Altî Parmak ("the man with six toes"), Muhammad b. Muḥammad," EI². He was given the nickname “six fingers” (it is difficult to understand why Schacht opted for “six toes” because there is no specific reference to toes in this phrase) because of his gifts in diverse Islamic sciences. Altıparmak Muhammed bin Muhammed Efendi, Altıparmak İslam Tarihi (Delail-i Nübüvvet-i Muhammedi ve Şemail-i Fütüvvet-i Ahmedi) (Istanbul: Hisar Yayinevi, 1984), 19.

169 Celalzade, Delail-i nübüvvet-i Muhammedi ve şemail-i fütüvvet-i Ahmedi, Süleymaniye Library, MS Fatih 4289, 3b.
to the classic works of Arabic narrative history. Furthermore, given their strong Sufi affiliations – Lāmi’ī was a Naqshbandī, Celâlzâde a Halvetī – both authors may well have had Sufis in mind as their main audience.

**History for the Court and History for the World: Ramazânzade’s**

*Siyer-i enbiyā’-i ʿizām ve-ahvāl-i hulefā’-i kirām ve menākib-i selāfin-i Āl-i ʿOsmān*

Son of a certain Ramazān Çelebi, Ramazânzade was a member of the scribal class and one of the early pioneers of the Ottoman bureaucracy in the making. In order to differentiate him from Celâlzâde, his predecessor in the office, who was known as Great Nişāncı, he was called Küçük Nişāncı, or Little Nişāncı, by Ottoman biographers. His date of birth is not certain but his lifespan extended through the reign of Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566), to whom he dedicated his history. He died in 1571, five years after Süleyman’s death. It appears that he started his career in the *divān*, or imperial council, as a secretary and became a chief financial officer (*defterdār*) in 1553, chief scribe (*re‘īs ül-küttāb*) in 1554, and keeper of the imperial seal (*nişāncı*) in 1558. He later became *defterdār* of Aleppo and governor of Egypt, then was sent to the Morea to oversee a cadastral survey.¹⁷⁰

Although not as sophisticated as his predecessor, Celâlzâde, in his intellectual pursuits, Ramazânzade produced a popular universal history, although only the section covering the Ottomans was extensively used by later

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.
historians. Despite the work’s pompous title, \textit{Siyer-i enbiyāʾ-i ʿizām ve-aḥvāl-i hulefāʾ-i kırām ve menākib-i selāğin-i Āl-i ʿOsmān}, the history of the world apart from the Ottoman Empire is rendered in summary form. The author discusses in a few sentences each Qur’ānic prophet with reference to exegetical works such as al-Baydāwī’s (d. 1292-1293) commentary on the Qur’ān known as \textit{Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-tawīl}.\footnote{Ramazānzaade, \textit{Siyer-i enbiyāʾ-i ʿizām ve-aḥvāl-i hulefāʾ-i kırām ve menākib-i selāğin-i Āl-i ʿOsmān} (henceforth SE) (Istanbul: Tabhane-i Amire, 1862 [1279]) 1-35.} Muhammad’s biography is rendered only as part of a long prophetic tradition, without any specific details and mostly outside the conventions of \textit{sīra} literature although Ramazānzaade refers on one occasion to Ibn Ishaq’s \textit{Sīra}.\footnote{Ibid., 35-43.}

Ramazānzaade discusses the history of the \textit{Rashīdūn} caliphs in a few pages, referring only to their outstanding achievements.\footnote{Ibid., 43-45.} The Prophet’s grandsons Hasan and Husayn are also mentioned in passing without an extensive treatment of their biographies. One of the distinguishing features of Ramazānzaade’s history is his deliberate avoidance of controversial events and figures; for example, he does not discuss the conflict between Muʿāwiyah and ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib at all. An Umayyad or ‘Abbāsid ruler makes his list only if he was exceptionally pious or, on the other hand, cruel, or if he had an uneasy relationship with one of the great figures of Muslim learning such as Abū Ḥanīfa (699-767), the namesake of the Hanafī school of jurisprudence. Ramazānzaade is alert to such issues as a ruler’s
unorthodox beliefs. For example, he claims that the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Mu‘taṣīm (r. 833-842) openly followed the rationalist Mu‘tazilite theological doctrine and forced his subjects to accept that the Qur‘ān was created by God at a finite point in time rather than being the uncreated eternal word of God. This assertion shows an ignorance of ‘Abbāsid history on Ramazānade’s part since, as is well known, it was the caliph al-Ma‘mūn (r. 813-33) who imposed Mu‘tazilite doctrine on the ‘Abbāsid ulema, although his younger brother continued the policy during his reign.¹⁷⁴

After his short and mostly incomplete treatment of the Umayyads and ‘Abbāsids, Ramazānade discusses, in summary form, the Ismā‘īli Shi‘ite Fātimid caliphate, which emerged as a formidable rival to the ‘Abbāsids in the tenth century C.E., and the various Sunni states, notably the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk sultanates, that emerged following the collapse of the Fātimids and the weakening of ‘Abbāsid central authority. He also very briefly recounts pre-Islamic and non-Muslim empires, such as those of the Medes, Achaemenids, Parthians, Sasanians, Greeks, and Romans, in a separate section in which he draws on Firdawsī’s (940-1020) Shāhnāme; al-Tabarī’s (838-923) Ta‘rikh al-rusūl wa-al-mulūk; Ibn al-Shīhna’s (d. 1485) history of Aleppo, known as al-Durr al-muntakhab li-ta‘rikh Ḥalab and an Ottoman favorite on pre-Islamic states, al-Baydāwī’s (d. 1292-1293) Nīzām al-tawārīkh.¹⁷⁵ He does not provide much

¹⁷⁴ For al-Ma‘mūn’s mihna policy and historiographical reflections of it see Tayeb El-Hibri, Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography, 96-98.

¹⁷⁵ SE, 288-310.
information about these states; he mentions only how long their rulers lived and ruled.

Ramažânzade’s popularity is, of course, due to the Ottoman section of his universal history. Even so, he discusses the Ottoman sultans in summary form until he reaches Süleyman I. Even with Süleyman, during whose reign he lived, he follows his usual formula of listing the viziers, muftis, chief judges, scholars, and Sufis active during his epoch. As in the pre-Ottoman sections of his history, he avoids controversial events and figures. He does not, for instance, refer to Bayezid I’s drinking or to the part played by Süleyman’s wife Hurrem Sultan in the execution of young prince Mustafa. In this regard, his history contrasts with those of many of his predecessors, who do not hesitate to openly discuss the unsavory events and characters of Ottoman history. As a high-profile courtier, Ramažânzade probably wanted to avoid recording certain controversial events so as not to endanger his position at court. In this respect, his history represents a historiographical tradition that is close to the court.

Ramažânzade’s history is a primary source for Süleyman’s reign through 1561. It is also a eulogy for Süleyman and the “golden age” of the Ottoman Empire. The author repeatedly stresses that what Süleyman achieved had never been achieved by any other ruler in the history of mankind. He presents

176 For two discussions of Süleyman’s image among contemporary, as well as later, Ottoman historians, see Colin Imber, "Ideals and Legitimation in Early Ottoman History," and Christine Woodhead, “Perspectives on Süleyman,” both in Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead, eds., Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World (Harlow, Essex, U.K.: Longman, 1995), 138-191.
Süleyman as an ideal ruler. He starts with Süleyman’s poetry and emphasizes his distinguished place in the literature of his age. The sultan is then depicted as the continuator of the ghāzī tradition started by the founders of the empire. He is also depicted as the provider of ultimate justice to all his subjects and the guarantor of the true application of the religious law. Süleyman’s philanthropic activities are likewise lavishly described and praised. Ramazânzade spills much ink on the Süleymaniye compound, which was established by the sultan for extensive educational, medical, and charitable purposes.

Commensurate with his social class and background as a member of the Ottoman bureaucracy who was unshakably loyal not only to Islamic religious law but also to kânûn, or sultanic law, Ramazânzade praises the sultan’s commitment to law. He stresses Süleyman’s continuous efforts to eradicate rafz and ilhâd; both words refer to heretical activities of varying degrees. The historian differs from many other historians of the 16th century because of the strict Sunni discourse he adopts. Writing the biographies of the twelve Shi’ite imams was almost customary for most Ottoman historians, but Ramazânzade does not go any further than the biographies of the Prophet’s grandsons. On the other hand, he does point out that Süleyman visited Husayn b. ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib’s tomb and that of the seventh imam recognized by Twelver Shi’ites, Mūsa al-Kāzim, during his 1534 Baghdad campaign, along with Abu Hanifa’s tomb, where he prayed and asked for the great jurist’s intercession.\footnote{Ramažânde, SE, 230-231.} He displays his rather stringent Sunni
attitude not only towards the Safavids, whom he depicts as the main source of heresy and the reason for the corruption of the Sunni community, but also towards Shi‘ite-leaning Sufi groups in Anatolia, such as the Qalandarîs. He renders Süleyman’s struggle to eradicate anti-Sunni tendencies as part of his ideal image.

In the second half of the 16th century, Ottoman men of letters began to complain about a gradual decline of justice in the empire. They regarded Süleyman’s reign as a golden age, when everything was in proper order and everyone was given his due. The greatest representative of this line of thinking was Mustafa ‘Ālî (1541-1600), who was followed by critics of the 17th century such as Koçi Bey. Rather ironically, one of Süleyman’s own grand viziers, Lütfi Pasha, in his Asafname, composed in the early 1540s, was one of the first statesmen to complain of “decline.” Revisionist historiography over the past three decades has pointed out that the notion of decline was a creation of the literati of the 16th century, who were distressed by the bureaucratic transformation of the empire and who longed for the “good old days.” The fiercest critic of the age, Mustafa ‘Ālî, exemplifies this phenomenon very well; frustrated

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179 Lütfi Paşa, Asafname, ed. Ahmet Uğur (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1982). For a thorough review of the Ottoman authors who created the myth of Ottoman decline in the 16th and 17th centuries, see Douglas A. Howard, “Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of ‘Decline’ of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” Journal of Asian History 22/1 (1988), 52-77. In this article Howard aptly describes how “decline” was originally an “Ottoman creation” rather than being a modern invention.
by what he regarded as the displacement of a meritocratic system by one based solely on patronage – a shift that obstructed his own career ambitions – he became a bitter critic of the trends of his time, as is made clear by Cornell Fleischer in his exhaustive study of ‘Ālī’s career.\textsuperscript{180} Even from a cursory reading of Ramażânzade’s history, it becomes clear that the author was one of the pioneers who created an image of Süleyman’s image as the ideal ruler.\textsuperscript{181} Mustafa ‘Ālī himself made extensive use of Ramażânzade’s history, as well as that of Celâlzâde, in his writings. But whereas Mustafa ‘Ālī found analogies in pre-Ottoman Islamic history for the vanished “golden age” of Süleyman’s reign, Ramażânzade does not employ such analogies, even with the age of the Prophet Muhammad and the four “rightly guided” caliphs. He rather seems to be more fascinated with the golden age that he lived through.

Although they lived only a few decades apart, Lâmi‘î’s and Ramażânzade’s attitudes towards Shi‘ism differed radically. Coming from a Sufi environment in which ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib was constantly praised and \textit{ahl al-bayt}ism was particularly strong, Lâmi‘î opted for a conciliatory approach towards Shi‘ite beliefs. He was first and foremost a poet and a man of literature, and a representative of a more free-lance literature. He spent most of his time in Bursa, some distance from the capital, and was never controlled by the sultan or his immediate retinue.


\textsuperscript{181} It is unfortunate that Woodheard, in the above-mentioned study, does not utilize Ramadânzade’s history, which, along with Celalzade’s \textit{Tabakât}, is known as a leading source on the age of Süleyman.
Ramażanzāde, on the other hand, was raised in a bureaucratic milieu that required extreme loyalty to the sultan. Although not all bureaucrats were loyal, most were. Ramażanzāde was also a self-professed historian who had different priorities from those of a poet such as Lāmi‘ī. He therefore opted for an antagonistic approach towards Twelver Shi‘ism by ignoring or deliberately condemning those Shi‘ite beliefs and practices that diverged from the mainstream Sunni tradition that he had internalized so well.

Various cultural attitudes towards Sunnism and Shi‘ism coexisted in Ottoman intellectual circles between 1300 and 1650. On one end of this very complex and hybrid scale stood most jurists and ulema, who emerged gradually and came to monopolize the religious milieu of the sultan’s circle. This element stressed mainstream Sunni practice and theology; Ramażanzāde was close to this end of the scale. On the other end of the scale stood an alternative tradition, which was more lenient towards a Shi‘ite reading of history and at peace with the existence of such an alternative, which bore ahl-al-baytist tones and never upheld a strict interpretation of Sunnism; Lāmi‘ī was located at this end. It is my contention that the Ottoman Sunnism was actually an amalgam of all these different trends coexisting side by side, sometimes in competition and at other times in alliance with each other. Ottoman Sunnism was many things but never one and only one thing.
Universal History in Persian for the Ottoman Court: Hoca Sadeeddin’s Edition of Muslihuddin Lārī’s _Mirātū’l- edvār ve mirkātū’l- āḥbār_

Two important political events occurred in the greater Middle East in the early decades of the 16th century. One was the establishment of the Safavid Empire in Iran and the other was the conquest of the Mamluk sultanate by the Ottomans. Shah Ismail was the leader of a Sufi order, or _tariqa_, known as the Safawiyya, which was established by Shaykh Safi al-Dīn Ardabīlī (1252-1334). Although it began as a Sunni order, Shi‘ite elements gradually became dominant. Ismail belonged to a Turcoman tribe and spoke Persian and Azerbaijani Turkish fluently. He was also a talented poet who wrote poems in Turkish under the penname _Khatā‘ī_. Although politicization of the Safavid order started as early as the first half of the 15th century in the time of Ismail’s predecessors, Junayd (d. 1460) and Haydar (d. 1488), Ismail had the genius to transform his Sufi order into a formidable political organization at the turn of the 16th century, relying on his followers from various Turcoman tribal groups who played important roles in the establishment of the Safavid state. Ismail’s followers were sometimes called “red heads” (_Qizilbash_) because of the bolts of red cloth, folded twelve times in honor of the twelve Shi‘ite imams, that they wore in their turbans. The _Qizilbash_ followed extreme Shi‘ism, known as _ghuluw_ in Arabic, and believed in the divinity of their leader, who claimed descent from Mūsa al-Kāzim, the seventh

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imam recognized by Twelver Shi‘ites.\textsuperscript{183} The shahs brought Shiite ulema from Jabal ‘Āmil in Lebanon in order to inculcate Twelver (Imāmī) Shi‘ism in Iran, although it has been argued in recent scholarship that their numbers and impact were rather limited.\textsuperscript{184} The majority of Iran was Sunni at the time of the Safavid takeover, and many crypto-Sunnis continued to serve the Safavid state after the establishment of the Shi‘ite regime.\textsuperscript{185} By the time of Shah ‘Abbās the Great (r. 1588-1629), furthermore, the Safavids were at pains to eliminate the Qizilbash from their military and administration because of the extreme brand of Shi‘ism that they espoused and their entrenched tribal loyalties. Thus, Shah ‘Abbās recruited elite slaves (singular, ghulām) from Georgia to displace the Qizilbash. As a result of this policy, not only was Qizilbash influence suppressed; ghulāt Shi‘ism was displaced by a more mainstream Twelver Shiism by the end of ‘Abbās’ reign.

\textsuperscript{183} It has been argued convincingly by Adel Allouche that neither Ismail nor his successors were actually related to the Prophet Muhammad. The tradition of the Safavids’ Prophetic descent was invented at a later time, mainly to give cohesiveness to the growing order.

\textsuperscript{184} Andrew Newman, in a provocative article, argues against the “myth of clerical migration to Iran.” asserting instead that the bulk of the Shi‘ite scholars in Bahrain at that time rejected the Safavids’ association with Twelver Shi‘ism. He also maintains that Ottoman pressure on the Shi‘ite ulema in Jabal ‘Āmil was not as strong as has been argued by other scholars. Andrew Newman, "The Myth of Clerical Migration to Safavid Iran: Arab Shi‘ite Opposition to ‘Ali al-Karaki and Safawid Shi‘ism," \textit{Die Welt des Islams} 33 (1993): 66-112. For a comprehensive treatment of the migration of ‘Āmili scholars to Iran, see Dewin J. Stewart, "Notes on the Migration of ‘Āmili Scholars to Safavid Iran," \textit{Journal of Near Eastern Studies} 55/2 (Apr. 1996): 81-103.

\textsuperscript{185} A case in point is Qadi Jahan, who occupied the vizierial post twice during the reign of Tahmasb I (1524-26 and 1535-50). Arjomand also depicts Shah Ismail II’s failed attempt to bring Sunnism back as evidence of the influence of Sunnism. Said Amir Arjomand, \textit{The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 120.
At its inception, the Safavid Sufi order was perceived within a Sunni framework, at least if one trusts the accounts of contemporary observers such as Hamd Allāh Mustawfi Qazvīnī (d. 750/1349). In the ensuing two-and-a-half centuries the Safavid Sufi order transformed itself into a more Shi‘ite-leaning organization. The Ottomans’ concern with the emergence of the Safavid state on the eastern borders of their empire and the growing influence of Safavid khalīfas, or missionaries, who aimed to spread Shi‘ism while creating suitable conditions for a possible Safavid takeover, led the Ottomans and Safavids into military conflict. This culminated in the battle of Chaldiran in 1514, in which the Ottomans, with their superior cannon, inflicted a huge defeat on Shah Ismail’s army. This defeat came as a big surprise to Ismail’s followers, who wholeheartedly believed in the divine invincibility of their leader. The Ottoman-Safavid border continued to be a matter of controversy, and almost all of the Ottoman sultans in the 16th century undertook military campaigns to restrict Safavid influence.

The emergence of the Safavid state in the east with Twelver Shi‘ism as its official religion pushed the Ottoman jurists to create a mainstream Sunni understanding for the Ottoman state. Until the emergence of the Safavid state, the Ottomans’ religious identity was quite syncretistic, accommodating Sunni and Shi‘ite interpretations, stringently orthodox ulema positions as well as Sufi

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187 Ibid., *passim.*
tendencies. The emergence of the Safavids in certain ways pushed the Ottomans, at least in political terms, to reject *Qizilbash* or even militant non-Qizilbash Shi‘ism but not reverence for the family of the Prophet and even, in most cases, for the Shi‘ite imams.

The second watershed of these years was the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk sultanate in 1516-17. The Mamluks had been the rulers of Egypt, Syria, southeastern Anatolia, and the Hijaz since the 13th century. Selim attacked Mamluk territory after his successful campaign against the Safavids in the east. In two major battles, Marj Dabiq in northern Syria (1516) and Raydaniyya in the Nile Delta (1517), the Ottomans defeated the Mamluk armies and assumed control of the Mamluk domains. Ottoman control of the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina transformed the sultan into the “custodian of the Holy Cities,” implying his responsibility for the maintenance and security of the Muslim pilgrimage sites. This event had major significance for the construction of Ottoman religious ideology, a key component of which was the legitimacy afforded by stewardship of the holy cities. Although a consensus gradually emerged in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that the Ottoman sultan was also the Sunni caliph, his status as “servitor of the two holy sanctuaries” was arguably as important until the late 18th century.

With the Safavid takeover of Iran, many Sunnis living in that territory immigrated to Ottoman or Mughal territory. Artists and intellectuals sought their fortunes at the Ottoman and Mughal courts. One such intellectual, who spent
time at both courts, was Muslihuddin Lārī, who won fame in Ottoman literary circles for his universal history, known as Mirātü'l-Edvār.\textsuperscript{188}

Muslihuddin Lārī was born in Lar, a town to the south of Shiraz in southwestern Iran, in 1510. He is said to have followed the scholarly path of his father. He was educated by the leading scholars of his age, such as Mīr Kamāl al-Dīn, the pupil of Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī (1427-1502/3).\textsuperscript{189} His father, however, openly opposed the Shi‘ites, whom he regarded as heretics (rawāfid). Having fled Iran, Lārī was admitted to the court of the Mughal emperor Humayūn (r. 1530-1556), who apparently became his pupil. After his patron’s death and due to growing unrest at the Mughal court, he made the pilgrimage in 1557 and then moved to Ottoman Aleppo, where he tried to establish himself as a merchant. His final destination was Istanbul, where he was welcomed by the mufti Ebu’s-Su‘ud (1490-1574), who offered him a professorship with a fifty-akçe stipend in the capital. Lārī, however, declined and later moved to Amid (Diyarbakır), where he became a professor in the Hūsrev Pasha madrasa and teacher to the children of İskender Pasha, the Ottoman governor. After his days in Amid, he was once again seen at the Ottoman court. He composed his universal history for the Ottoman Sultan Selim II (r. 1566-1574) before he died in 1572.

\textsuperscript{188} Mustafa ‘Ālī, for instance, utilized Lārī’s universal history while compiling his Essence of History.

\textsuperscript{189} H. Sohrwiede, in his article on Lārī in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, suggests that Lārī was educated by one of the sons of Molla Sadra, the most significant Shi‘ite philosopher of the Safavid period. However, Molla Sadra was born in 1571-1572, around the time of Lārī’s death. It is possible that Sohrwiede confuses Molla Sadra with someone else. H. Sohrweide, ”al-Lārī, Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ b. Ḥalāl b. Kamāl al-Anṣārī (or al-Nāṣirī), known as Muṣliḥ al-Dīn al-Lārī.” EI².
Lārī composed works on Qurʿānic exegesis, Prophetic traditions, philosophy, and astronomy.\textsuperscript{190} He wrote his universal history, \textit{Mirātü'l-edvār}, on the occasion of Selim II’s accession to the throne. The work was translated into Turkish, with a few additions, by the great mufti, statesman and historian Hoca Sadeddin (1536-1599). Hoca Sadeddin’s life story to some extent resembles Lārī’s. His grandfather was an Iranian notable who joined the Ottoman court after the battle of Chaldiran, serving as Qurʿān instructor to the future Sultan Selim I. His father, Hasan Can, was a courtier of the same sultan. Sadeddin’s Persian background may explain his interest in Persian literature and history, which led him to translate Lārī’s work. At the Ottoman court, Sadeddin became a pupil of the legendary chief mufti Ebu’s-Su‘ud, who supposedly created a unique Ottoman law harmonizing \textit{sharī‘a} with sultanic law, or \textit{kānūn}.\textsuperscript{191} Afterward, he became a professor in one of Istanbul’s elite \textit{Sahn} madrasas in Istanbul. Because he had served as teacher to Murad III when the latter was still a prince in Manisa, he was immediately appointed sultan’s tutor once Murad ascended the throne; this was the source of his title Hoca Efendi. He wielded extraordinary influence at Murad’s court and at that of his successor, Mehmed III (r. 1595-1603). Mustafa ‘Ālī, in fact, harshly criticized Sadeddin for his nepotism. Sadeddin succeeded in pushing Mehmed III into the conflict with the Habsburgs that resulted in the

\footnotetext{190}{Ibid.} \footnotetext{191}{Colin Imber, in his study of Ebu’s-Su‘ud, finds this assertion problematic. He argues that Ebu’s-Su‘ud utilized tools and concepts available to him to find a solution to the problems of his age and nothing more than that. He also implies that the claim that he was a creative jurist is not very well-founded. Colim Imber, \textit{Ebu’s-su‘ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997; paperback 2009), 272.}
conquest of Keresztes (Hacova) in 1596. His steadfastness earned him the title of
grand mufti in 1598, although he died the following year.

Sadeddin is best-known for his history of the Ottomans, known as Tacü’t-
tevârîh, which he compiled from various sources that he obviously examined
critically. The work is laced with difficult Arabic and Persian jargon. Sadeddin’s
translation of Lârî’s Mirâtü’l-edvâr is an early work in which Sadeddin is striving
to prove himself an eloquent prose writer; its jargon provides a foretaste of the
Tacü’t-tevârîh. Sadeddin’s additions to and comments on the Mirâtü’l-edvâr
render his work an edition rather than a simple translation.

In both the Mirâtü’l-edvâr and Tacü’t-tevârîh, Sadeddin presents the
Ottomans as the strongest rulers in the Islamic world and as true caliphs. In his
introduction to Mirâtü’l-edvâr, he presents the “circle of justice,” a political motif
going back at least to the Sasanian Empire. By the terms of this schema, God
appoints kings so that they will regulate worldly affairs; he grants kingship to
leaders who follow God’s way and the Prophet’s tradition and act with justice and
wisdom towards their subjects. When the land of Rûm –that is, Anatolia–
succumbed to darkness after the collapse of the Seljuk state in the wake of the
Mongol invasions, the Ottomans arose and fought against the “infidels.” After the
massacres of the Mongol general Hulagu in the 13th century, the Ottomans
provided the land of Rûm with security and justice. They promoted the Hanafi
school of jurisprudence, destroyed heretical sects and beliefs, and captured the
lands controlled by the “infidels.” Especially during Süleyman I’s reign (r. 1520-
1566), the mufti asserts, the Ottoman state became so powerful that everything was in order, scholars were in demand, and subjects were well taken care of.\textsuperscript{192} Sadeddin describes a similar trajectory in his later work, \textit{Tacü’t-tevārīh}, using even more powerful language. According to the mufti, the Ottomans were the greatest Muslim rulers since the Rashīdūn caliphs. Most rulers, beginning with Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiya (r. 680-683), sinned and inflicted harm upon men of religion and common people alike. However, the Ottomans destroyed the darkness of polytheism and blasphemy, established the customs of religion and justice, and fulfilled the necessities of the \textit{ahl al-sunnah wa-al-jamā’ah}, that is, the Sunni community.\textsuperscript{193} This rhetoric reflects an idealized view of the Ottoman state by an Ottoman statesman in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century. The Ottomans are depicted as true heirs to the Rashīdūn whereas other rulers since the Rashīdūn are dismissed as aberrant and vile personalities. The Ottomans are also portrayed as an antidote to the chaos unleashed by the Mongols; their conquest of the lands of the “unbelievers” is emphasized. However, the reigning sultan, Süleyman’s son Selim II (r. 1566-1574), is warned that if he does not act according to the premises of the “circle of justice,” all the glories achieved by the Ottomans could be taken away. Süleyman’s reign is fixed as the Ottoman golden age, an exemplary rule to which succeeding sultans can only aspire. The \textit{Mıırätül-edvār} reflects the idealism of a young bureaucrat just launching his career. The realities of power

\textsuperscript{192} Muslihuddin Lārī, \textit{Mıırätül-edvār ve mıırktıül- abbār} (henceforth \textit{Mıırät}), Süleymaniye Library, MS Pertev Paşa 479, fols. 2a-4b.

would transform this idealist into a practitioner of realpolitik during his last years in Ottoman service.

Tacü’-tevārīh, Sadeddin’s Ottoman history, does not include the mufti’s opinions of history. Instead, his historical view is outlined to some extent in his introduction to Lārī’s work. Here, Sadeddin eulogizes Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, who between 1565 and 1579 served as grand vizier to three successive Ottoman sultans (Süleyman I, Selim II, Murad III), with a three-page-long poem in which he describes Sokollu’s shrewd concealment of Süleyman’s death on campaign in Hungary in order to prevent anarchy and guarantee the enthronement of Selim II. It was also this vizier who, with Selim II’s support, commissioned Sadeddin to translate Lārī’s universal history. Sadeddin asserts that Selim and Sokollu had frequent conversations with scholars and studied useful books, notably the life of the Prophet (Siyer) and works of history. Among the many benefits to rulers and viziers of reading history, Sadeddin believes, is that it teaches them how good and bad government worked in the past.¹⁹⁴

Sadeddin’s historical viewpoint is no different from that of most of his contemporaries: history is important to him for pragmatic reasons. His view of history does not include any references to the historian’s craft itself but only to its uses. He does not elaborate on this issue in the Tacü’-tevārīh. Although this later work was state-of-the-art and quickly became a model for Ottoman historians, still it does not provide a comprehensive understanding of his view of history.

¹⁹⁴ Mirātü’l-edvār, fols. 6a-6b.
However, a perusal of both works suggests that Sadeddin was aware of different types of reports and of the importance of source criticism.

Sadeddin explains clearly in his introduction why he translated Lārī’s work. Muslihuddin Lārī, he observes, composed this history in summary form and presented it to Selim II, who was well-read in Persian but wanted the public to benefit from Lārī’s work, as well; hence he commissioned Sadeddin to prepare a Turkish translation.195 In addition to translating Lārī’s work, Sadeddin extended it by adding different reports of and his own conclusions concerning certain events. One work frequently pops up here and there in the text and gives the reader the impression that passages taken from this book were not in the original text. This book is Ayyūbid historian Abū’l-Fidā’s universal history, known as *al-Mukhtasar fī akhbār al-bashar*.196

Saddedin’s account of the battle of Uhud in 625 C.E., one of the critical battles of the early Muslim community, illustrates his method. Sadeddin weighs in on the question of whether Muhammad himself performed the funeral prayer for the Muslims martyred in this battle, pointing out that he has clarified the...

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195 Ibid., fols. 6b-7a.

matter because Lārī relied on an unacceptable tradition.\footnote{Mīrāṭū'l-Edvār, fol. 100a.} Similarly, he adds a discussion of ‘Alī ibn Abī Talīb’s poetry to Lārī’s account of ‘Alī’s caliphate.\footnote{Ibid., fols. 146a-146b.}

Lārī recounts the Prophet Muhammad’s life story in some detail and in a manner commensurate with mainstream sīra narratives such as that of Ibn Ishāq. Strikingly, the legendary tales that are ubiquitous in 14\textsuperscript{th}- and 15\textsuperscript{th}-century Ottoman universal histories are omitted altogether. Lārī also draws heavily on Molla Miskin Farāhī’s \textit{Ma‘ārij al-nubuwwah}, mentioned earlier in this chapter. This work was popular in Ottoman and Iranian intellectual circles during the 15\textsuperscript{th} and 16\textsuperscript{th} centuries, to judge from the numerous copies and translations of it produced during that period; the translations of Celālzāde and Altiparmak are discussed above. Lārī, for his part, reproduces lengthy passages of the \textit{Ma‘ārij} verbatim as, for example, the description of events following the Muslim conquest of Mecca.\footnote{Ibid., fols. 120a-124b.}

In his treatment of the Rashīdūn caliphs, Lārī set a precedent that was followed by later universal histories. He describes each caliph’s pre-Islamic life, then his conversion and traditions of the Prophet praising him, followed by a description of each caliph’s wives and children and the important personalities of his reign. Certain landmark events are highlighted, notably ‘Uthmān’s murder in 656 C.E., which is recounted in great detail. As in most Ottoman universal histories and in most sīra literature, Ibn ‘Abbās, the Prophet’s cousin and
progenitor of the ‘Abbāsid line, appears as a wise counselor, advising ‘Uthmān to leave Medina on pilgrimage to avoid conflict.200 Significantly, Lārī has ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib warning ‘Uthmān that his appointment of his clansmen to important positions had provoked public outrage within the Muslim community. Lārī is also careful to specify that that ‘Alī had no part in ‘Uthmān’s murder; among other things, he sent water to ‘Uthmān when ‘Uthmān was under siege.

Lārī’s universal history gives a very favorable account of ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib. Lārī insists that ‘Alī’s virtues are beyond the comprehension of common human intellect and that the traditions of the Prophet concerning his virtues are “brighter than sunlight.”201 It has been suggested that Lārī’s father was openly hostile toward Shi‘ites after the establishment of the Safavid state.202 Although he also attacks Shi‘ite “heretics” (rawāfid) on a few occasions, Lārī seems to have an abiding love for ‘Alī and the Shi‘ite imams that he displays throughout his universal history. For example, in recounting ‘Alī’s conflict with Mu‘āwiyyah b. Abī Sufyān, he never refers to Mu‘āwiyyah with the honorific title Hazret or calls him caliph; in contrast, he continually identifies ‘Alī as “emirül-müminin (“commander of the faithful,” a caliphal title) even after Mu‘āwiyyah has secured his independence and became de facto caliph.

‘Alī b. Abī Tālib’s reign, which was plagued with rebellions, is vividly described by Lārī. In one narrative, ‘Alī explains to his son Hasan that when the

200 Ibid., fols. 145a-145b.
201 Ibid., fol. 146a.
Prophet died, he ('Alî) could not discern anyone better suited to the caliphate than he was. However, he also asserts that he obeyed the first three caliphs out of concern for the common good. He complains to Hasan about the rebels and people who reject his authority. It is quite unusual for an ostensibly Sunni history to explain ‘Alî’s position as the rightful successor to Muhammad so clearly. Once more Ibn ‘Abbâs appears as a wise man, this time advising ‘Alî not to depose Mu‘âwiyyah from the governorship of Damascus. However, ‘Alî, like ‘Uthmân before him, fails to heed this advice, at which Ibn ‘Abbâs declares, “O commander of the faithful! You are very brave but you are not very well qualified in politics.” This proves prophetic since once he is deposed, Mu‘âwiyyah openly rebels against ‘Alî. Mu‘âwiyyah himself is clearly depicted as an unlawful claimant to the caliphate. His letters to important companions of Muhammad are answered with letters extolling ‘Alî’s virtues. On several occasions, a member of Mu‘âwiyyah’s camp defects to ‘Alî after reading distiches on ‘Alî’s virtues. As if to leave no doubt as to his preferences, Lârî reproduces a ranking of the early Muslims in which ‘Alî, as one of the earliest converts to Islam, occupies the top rank while Mu‘âwiyyah, who converted only after the conquest of Mecca, along with his father, Abû Sufyân, the leader of the Meccan opposition to Muhammad, is at the bottom of the list, above only the children.

Mirâtu’l-edvârûl-edvar also includes a vivid treatment of the group known as Kharijites, who turned against ‘Alî when he accepted arbitration at the

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203 Mirâtu’l-edvâr, fol. 147b.
204 Ibid., fols. 151a-151b.
battle of Siffin, and ultimately rejected both him and Mu‘āwiyah as candidates for the caliphate. Lārī also describes the various branches of Shi‘a Islam, including the Qaysānīs, Zaydīs, Imāmīs, and Ismā‘īlis. He also includes biographies of the eleven imams who, according to Imāmī belief, followed ‘Alī. His treatment of these imams resembles Jāmī’s depiction of them in the Shawahid al-nubuwah.

Like Jāmī, Lārī judges the Umayyad and ‘Abbāsid rulers by their relationship to the ahl al-bayt. Most of the Umayyads are dismissed as vicious usurpers, with the exception of Mu‘āwiyah(II) b. Yazīd (r. 683-684), who confesses that his family usurped the caliphate from its rightful claimants, the ahl al-bayt. Lārī cites the Qur’ānic verse “Who (Allāh) bringeth forth the living from the dead and bringeth forth the dead from the living” (Qur’ān, 10:31) with the implication that the Umayyads are the death from which God extracts “life” in the form of exemplary rulers such as Mu‘āwiyah II and ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Azīz (r. 717-720), widely praised for his piety and affinity for the ahl al-bayt. Likewise, the life story of the Shi‘ite hero al-Mukhtār ibn Abī ‘Ubayd Allāh al-Thaqafī (622-687), who in 686 rebelled against the Umayyads to avenge the murder of Husayn b. ‘Alī at Karbala, is recounted for the first time in an Ottoman chronicle, in great detail and with great vibrancy.205

Lārī’s account of the ‘Abbāsids is at once more informed than that of Ramaçânzade and more driven by favoritism toward the ahl al-bayt – to whom the ‘Abbāsids, of course, belonged. The controversial caliph al-Ma‘mūn (r. 813-

205 Ibid., fols. 169b-170a.
833) earns a privileged place in Lārī’s narrative, in contrast to his brother al-Amīn (r. 809-813), who is depicted as a pompous villain and drunkard who favored heretics (melāhide) over Muslims (this presumably justifies his deposition and execution at the hands of al-Ma’mūn). Al-Ma’mūn, on the other hand, is portrayed as an exemplary ruler, largely because of his generous treatment of the Shi’ite imams. As noted above, he named the eighth imam, ‘Alī al-Ridā (765-818), to succeed him as caliph, although al-Ridā declined, preferring to spend his life in prayer and supplication (in any case, he predeceased al-Ma’mūn).206 By Lārī’s account, al-Ma’mūn went so far as to employ criers to proclaim during the pilgrimage that “the best of the people after Muhammad is ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib.”207 In stark contrast, al-Mutawakkel (r. 847-861), who, not coincidentally, imposed the Hanbalī legal rite, is condemned as an enemy of the ahl al-bayt who sent Imam Tāqī to die alone in exile and who treated the mantle of the Prophet with disdain.208 Lārī similarly claims that ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mu’tazz’s caliphate lasted only one day because of his open animosity towards the ahl al-

206 Ibid., fols. 194b-197a.

207 This is one of the very curious episodes of ‘Abbāsid history. Commenting on this episode, Tayeb El-Hibri argues that al- Ma’mūn’s declaration that ‘Alī was the best of people was meant to show the significance of the caliph’s religious persona – a persona that al-Ma’mūn was determined to show that his brother al-Amīn lacked. He therefore praised ‘Alī on the basis of his religious charisma and banned praise of Mu’āwiyah not because he favored an ‘Alid line of succession but in order to assert that he was worthier of the caliphal office than his brother. El-Hibri, Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography, 106.

208 Mirātü’l-edvār, fols. 202b-204a.
bayt. He was punished – specifically strangled by a palace intriguer – because of his evil thoughts against the family of Muhammad.209

Elsewhere, Lārī’s account of ‘Abbāsid history shows the effects of the same kinds of misapprehensions and legends that hinder Ramazānзade’s narrative. He claims, implausibly, that al-Mu’tašim (r. 833-842) was an Ismā‘īlī Shi‘ite who favored heretics (melāhide). No other Ottoman universal history, even in translation, makes such a claim. He later condemns al-Wāthiq (r. 842-847) for his promotion of the Mu‘tazilite theological school. Although al-Wāthiq continued his predecessors’ adherence to this creed (which was disavowed by his successor, al-Mutawakkil), it was the “exemplary” al-Ma‘mūn who first adopted it, as noted above.

Lārī’s treatment of the Umayyad and ‘Abbāsid caliphs mixes chronologically-driven annalistic history with stories and anecdotes. This mixed style has its problems as it occasionally breaks the arc of the narrative and introduces repetitions. The author, probably under the influence of al-Tabarī, discusses the attributes and character of each ruler, and recounts events year by year during that ruler’s reign. In keeping with Ottoman historical tradition, he concludes each reign with a comprehensive account of the important personalities of that period. He thus synthesizes political narrative with biography. This style, which is characteristic of Mamluk chronicles and even much earlier chronicles, including that of al-Tabarī, would be adopted by

209 Ibid., fol. 215a.
Ottoman universal historians of the later 16th and the 17th centuries, such as Mustafa ‘Āli, Kâtip Çelebi, and Munecimbaşi Ahmed Dede. Lārī habitually depicts important religious figures of each reign as fierce critics of cruel and worldly rulers. A case in point is the famous Sufi Sufyān al-Thawri (716-778), who refused to bow in front of Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786-809) or congratulate him on his enthronement.210 Abū Hanīfa (699-767) likewise appears as a strong and independent figure during al-Mansur’s (r. 754-775) reign; he turns down the caliph’s offer of the chief judgeship of Baghdad and is later imprisoned.211

Sadeddin intervenes in the ‘Abbāsid section of Lārī’s text more frequently than elsewhere, openly criticizing Lārī for summarizing important events that Sadeddin thinks should be recounted in detail. He is also critical of Lārī’s reliance on unreliable reports for his accounts of certain events, such of those of al-Mu’tamid’s (r. 870-892) reign. Indeed, Sadeddin elected to write his own Ottoman history, Tacü’t-tevārīh, because Lārī’s version of Ottoman history contained insurmountable flaws. In his introduction to this later work, Sadeddin praises the Mirātū’l-edvār as a valuable work but criticizes Lārī for his brevity and inaccuracy.212

Conclusion

210 Ibid., fol. 193b. Lārī seems misinformed about this episode since al-Thawri was long dead when Hārūn al-Rashīd was enthroned. This episode should have taken place between Thawri and al-Mahdī (r. 775-785), not Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786-809).

211 Ibid., fol. 184a.

212 Hoca Sadeddin Efendi, Tacü’t-tevārīh, vol. 1, 18.
To conclude this chapter, I would like to go back to the original question of this study: How did Ottoman historians write the early history of Islam, and what can we deduce about their religious and political views from their treatment of pivotal events in early Islamic history? A content analysis of the works discussed in this chapter demonstrates that most Ottoman intellectuals treated the period after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in an *ahl al-bayt*ist fashion. Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān, the rival of ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib, for example, is depicted as a usurper of the caliphate, as are most of the Umayyad caliphs. His son Yazid is harshly criticized and cursed by most. Lami'ī went even further and composed a particular elegy for Husayn’s martyrdom at Karbala. Most ‘Abbāsid caliphs are treated positively, in keeping with the Ottomans’ reverence for them as Sunni *ahl al-bayt*. However, if they had a conflict with a member of the immediate family of Muhammad, or true *ahl al-bayt*, they were not spared but were also harshly criticized.

Historical writing from the second half of the 16th century shows a growing consciousness of and antagonism towards unorthodox beliefs and the people associated with those beliefs, who are typically labeled *melāhide* or *rawāfid*, both of which were used almost exclusively to describe Shi‘ite inclinations of various sorts. In the case of Lārī and Lāmi’ī Çelebi, condemnation of “heretics” poses no obstacle to reverence for the family of the Prophet Muhammad and the Shi‘ite imams. Ramazānzade, who seems more than any other historian examined here to be under the pressure of the court, might be
called the exception that proves the rule. He omits any discussion of the conflict between Mu'āwiya and ‘Alī, or of the Shi‘ite imams. Correspondingly, he draws an idealized portrait of his patron, Süleyman, as the crusher of heretical sects and views. However, it is important here to remember that Ramázánzâde is an exception that proves the rule. On the whole, however, Ottoman intellectuals continued to revere a more diverse range of pivotal religious figures and interpretations, with a strong respect for the family of the Prophet Muhammad and the twelve imams. I have tried to show in this chapter how much the views of Ottoman historians varied in regard to the contentious issues of early Islamic history and how this situation is at odds with the conventional wisdom, which depicts the Ottomans as a monolithic group of zealous Sunnis. Although a few of the intellectuals studied in this chapter adhered to a strict Sunni interpretation, such as Ramazânzade, most of them, as we will see in the next chapters, as well, actually adopted ahl-al-baytism as their main tool to evaluate this period of history.
CHAPTER 4

ISLAMIC HISTORY DURING THE ZENITH OF OTTOMAN HISTORIOGRAPHY, 1574-1600

Introduction

The reign of Murad III (1574-1595) created much controversy among those who experienced it, as it does today. That fierce critic of Murad and his viziers, Mustafa ‘Ālī of Gallipoli (1541-1600), showed great disdain for Murad’s preference for isolation, as opposed to mixing with people, and for leaving important affairs to the “corrupt” viziers in order to “remain an object of awe and veneration.”

Although Murad has also been criticized for tolerating the influence of imperial women, this trend had already started under Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566), the influence of whose wife Hürrem (d. 1558) is well-known, and continued during the reign of Murad’s father, Selim II (1566-1574), whose wife Nurbanu (1523-1583) “mainly affected official appointments by introducing the sale of offices.” Murad’s deep love for his favorite Safiye (1550-1605), who would become as influential as her predecessor as queen mother (Valide Sultan), is believed by many to be one of the reasons for Murad’s seclusion from public life.

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view and his tendency to confine himself to the harem. His preference for dwarfs and mutes in the harem, as well as his life-long commitment to Şeyh Şüica, a self-styled shaykh of the Halveti Sufi order who proved to be an excellent dream interpreter and practitioner of the most ecstatic Sufi practices, would also become points of controversy for Murad’s contemporaries. He was also much criticized by the “decline” writers, including Mustafa ‘Âli, for not leading the army on campaign, although his father, Selim II, had started the practice of allowing the grand vizier to lead military expeditions. Murad III’s two-decade reign is regarded by Mustafa ‘Âli as the epitome of Ottoman “decline.” Modern-day historians, on the other hand, find much deeper meanings in Murad’s isolation: Baki Tezcan, for example, portrays him as a ruler who attempted, unsuccessfully, to establish absolutist rule. Tezcan likewise sees the opening of an astronomical observatory in the palace during Murad’s reign as the sultan’s attempt to impose a more rationalist epistemology in the service of monarchy – a move that can be best understood if it is read in the context of opposing (and successful) “legalist” tendencies.

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215 For an authoritative analysis of the Ottoman imperial harem in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Peirce, The Imperial Harem. On the issue of sultanic seclusion, see especially 172-177.


It has also been argued by modern scholars that Murad’s preference for isolation and his absence on the battlefield led him to reinforce his legitimacy in cultural terms. For this purpose, he is said to have charged court chroniclers, or şehnāmeccis, to compose works that would place the Ottoman dynasty in the proper context of world history and that would depict the sultan as a legitimate and benevolent ruler. The picture of Murad in these şehnāme works is different from the depiction of the sultan in conventional şehnāmes, in which rulers are lauded for their military campaigns, courage, and valor. Murad is depicted in these works as a just and erudite leader; his image conforms to the ideals of palace-based sedentary living. These works, in addition to works such as Siyer-i Nebi, discussed in the first chapter, which were also heavily illustrated, were meant to display the cultural patronage of Murad III.

The post of şehnāmeci itself has created controversy in secondary scholarship: Baki Tezcan interprets it as Murad’s attempt at creating an official historiography, which ultimately failed, while Christine Woodhead emphasizes first and foremost the literary character of the şehnāme genre by demonstrating

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the limited use of and audience for these works.\textsuperscript{221} Although it is undeniable that the Ottoman sultans influenced cultural production and intellectual currents with their sponsorship of Persian and Turkish (seldom Arabic) works and with their preference for literary-cultural products, Tezcan’s arguments should be taken with a grain of salt where historical writing is concerned. No doubt the Ottoman sultans were actively involved in the creation of an imperial image with their commissioning of works such as İdrīs-i Bidlīsī’s (d. 1520) and Kemālpaşazāde’s (1468-1534) histories. However, critical and less laudatory accounts of the Ottoman dynasty always existed side-by-side with these official commissions. Therefore it was not easy for a sultan such as Murad III to influence the production of historical works, let alone impose a certain view of history on Ottoman men of letters, who, on the contrary, always saw history as a vehicle through which to impose their own views on the sultan and not vice versa.

Regardless of the criticisms of Mustafa ʿĀlî, Murad III is known as a zealous patron of art, literature, and architecture, as well as Sufism: he was affiliated with the Halvetī order. Contrary to what Mustafa ʿĀlî believed, he was also loyal to his close associates, friends, and conversation companions, as well as to men of learning such as the poets Bāḵī (1526-1600); Nevʿī (1533-90), his

\textsuperscript{221} Christine Woodhead, “Reading Ottoman ʿŞehnames’: Official Historiography in the Late Sixteenth Century,” 70.
younger son’s tutor; the historian Hoca Sadeddin and even MustafaʿĀlī himself.  

Like his ancestors Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512) and Süleyman I, Murad III used history as a vehicle for political propaganda, although the impact of this propaganda on the greater intellectual scene is yet to be determined. For better or for worse, Murad’s reign became a heyday of historical writing. Besides the works composed by the şehnâmeci Seyyid Lokman for the entertainment of the sultan and his retinue, at least two comprehensive universal histories were composed during Murad’s reign which would become influential historical works. One of these, Mustafa ʿĀlī’s Künhüʾl-ahbār, is fairly well-known because of its seminal contributions to Ottoman historical writing. However, KA’s pre-Ottoman sections are typically neglected by modern-day scholars because they are seen as tangential to Ottoman history. The author himself, on the other hand, considered his universal history significant not only because of the sections dealing with the Ottoman Empire, which he had treated in other works, as well, but also because of the pre-Ottoman portions. The second work, Aylam al-Ẓahir of Mustafa Cenābī, is less well-known despite the fact that its impact was no less substantial. Both works provide significant insight into the development of Ottoman historical writing in the second half of the sixteenth century and provide a useful

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framework for the study of the appropriation of Islamic history within the Ottoman intellectual context of the late sixteenth century.

**In the Footsteps of Arab Historical Writing: Mustafa Cenâbî and His Aylâm al-Ẓâhir**

Mustafa Cenâbî, or, to use his full name and honorific titles, al-‘Ālim al-Sharîf Abû Muhammad Muṣṭafa ibn al-Sayyid Ḥasan ibn al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Ḥusaynî al-Hashîmî al-Qurayshî, is one of the least known and least studied Ottoman historians despite the fact that his impact on Ottoman historical writing was as crucial as the impact of better-known historians such as Hoca Sadeddin and Mustafa ‘Ālî. Although his exact date of birth is not clear, he was born sometime during the 1540s, during the celebrated reign of Süleyman the Magnificent. The nature of his early education remains unclear; however, his father, Emir Hasan ibn Yûsuf el-Amâsî (d. 1568), was a well-respected scholar of his age and a professor in the madrasa of Emir Sultan in Bursa. It is

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224 Mustafa Cenâbî, al-Hâfil al-waṣīt wa-al-aylâm al-Zahir al-muhî, (henceforth Aylâm al-zâhir), Süleymanîye Library, MS Murad Molla 1429, fol. 2b.

225 The primary study on Mustafa Cenâbî is Mehmet Canatar, “Müverrih Cenâbî Mustafa Efendi ve Cenâbî Tarihi,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ankara University, 1993. Canatar provides a biography of Cenâbî as well as an introduction to his work. He is mainly interested in the section of Cenâbî’s history related to the Ottoman Empire although he refers to the earlier parts of the second volume of Cenâbî’s history. My study deals mainly with the first volume of Cenâbî’s history. Canatar also introduces Cenâbî and the Ottoman section of his history in his biography of the historian: Mehmet Canatar, “Mustafa Cenâbî,” in Cemal Kafadar, Hakan Karateke, and Cornell Fleischer, eds., www.ottomanhistorians.org (accessed July 3, 2012).

226 Mustafa ‘Alî provides some information on Cenâbî’s father in his Künhül-abhâr. Cenâbî’s career path is very similar to his father’s. His father was also a judge in Aleppo at one point. He also served as the chief judge in Mecca, Bursa, and Edirne. Mustafa ‘Alî gives his date of death as 1567. Faris Çerçi, Gelibolu Mustafa Ali ve Künhül-Ahbar’inda II. Selim, III. Murat ve III. Mehmet Devirleri (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2000), vol.2, 116.
reasonable to assume that Cenabi was educated first and foremost by his father, first at home and then in the madrasa in which his father was employed. He later became a pupil of the famous mufti Ebū’s-Su‘ūd Efendi (d. 1574) for an uncertain period. His connection to Ebū’s-Su‘ūd apparently paid off because he was appointed professor in various madrasas between 1573 and 1586, including such top-ranked madrasas as the Sahn-ı Seman and the Süleymaniye in Istanbul, and the Selimiye in Edirne. After his long career as a professor, he was appointed a judge in Aleppo in 1587. His career as a judge was short-lived as it was customary in the second half of the 16th century for judges to be rotated very often, sometimes twice within a single year. He died in 1590–1591.227

Mustafa Cenâbî’s universal history, which is known as al-Hāfil al-waṣīt wa-al-aylām al-Ẓahir al-muhū or Cenâbî Tarihi (henceforth Aylam al Zahir), is his most important work; the Ottoman section of this work in particular has made Cenâbî an influential historian.228 Aylam al-Ẓahir is a comprehensive universal history written in Arabic; it consists of two volumes with a total of around 900 folios. An abridged Arabic version exists, known as Nihāyat al-māram wa-bahr jawāhir al-kalām, as well as an abridged Turkish translation with the title Dür-r-i meknûn ve surr-i masûn or Gülşen-i tevârîh; both of these were composed by the author himself. Cenâbî is believed to have started his

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228 Among those who not only utilized but also directly copied from Cenâbî were Ahmed b. Yūsuf el-Qaramânî, Katip Çelebi, Mustafa ʿAlî, Hezarfen Hüseyin Efendi, and Müneccimbaşı Ahmed Dede. Mehmed Canatar, “Müverrih Cenâbî Mustafa Efendi ve Cenâbî Tarihi,” 99-139.
history around 1564 and finished it in 1577-1578. He thus took well over a decade to complete his history; the breadth of the work as well as its rigorous scholarship testify to the care with which he composed it.

Cenābī’s history is unique in two regards. First, it is probably the first comprehensive universal history written in Arabic by an Ottoman historian. Cenābī’s choice of Arabic as the medium for his history is rather peculiar. Ottoman historical writing was originally a Turkish-language enterprise; only in the late 15th century, after İdrīs-i Bidlīsî’s Persian history became popular in the Ottoman Empire, were Persianate works modeled on his history widely produced. By the late 16th century, Ottoman historians were composing highly ornamented histories based on Persian models, often in Persian. Thus, for example, the most acclaimed history of this era, the Tacü’t-tevârih of Hoca Sadeddin, features an ornate style of writing compared to earlier Ottoman histories such as those of Aşıkpaşazade and Neşri. Compiling a history in the Persian style, replete with poetry and flowery language, was regarded as a mark of literary success in Ottoman intellectual circles of the time. Arabic, in contrast, was the language of instruction in Ottoman madrasas and the vehicle for religious scholarship. It was not widely used in historical composition, even by native speakers within the Ottoman territories. Why, then, did Cenābī choose Arabic, instead of Persian or Persian-inflected Turkish, as his medium? Looking at the content of Aylam al Zahir, one can easily recognize that Cenābī had a deep veneration for the tradition of Arab/Islamic history-writing. He apparently chose
Arabic primarily to insert himself into that tradition. It is also possible that he wanted to reach out to the Arabic-speaking population of the Ottoman Empire to show them that Ottoman scholars in the central lands were not only capable of compiling histories in the footsteps of the Arab tradition but were also able to contribute to this tradition. One way or another Cenābī’s choice of Arabic was considered rather an arcane choice. This is why he was urged by Sultan Murad III to translate his work into Turkish in an abridged form. Ultimately, his original Arabic history remained obscure although his Turkish translation became moderately well-known among the Ottoman literati.

The second unique feature of Cenābī’s history is the method he adopts. Throughout his work, he uses different, even contradictory, narratives and lists all the different accounts related to a certain event or figure. In most cases he also synthesizes these reports and draws his own conclusions. This type of source-critical historical composition would be emulated by historians to come. Before Cenābī, Lārī used a similar technique; however, Cenābī’s sources are far more numerous and diverse than Lārī’s. Cenābī not only provides different chroniclers’ accounts of events; he also openly criticizes some of them. A negative example that illustrates this point is his reluctance to use the work of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (1445-1505), whom he cites only once, and then on a matter related to religion rather than history.  

He cites al-Suyūṭī’s assertion that the prayers of those who include the names of the martyrs of Badr, the first open battle between the Prophet Muhammad and the Meccans in 624 C.E., will be accepted. Aylam al-zāḥir, fol. 185a.
scholarship, with over 800 works to his credit. Some of his contemporaries accepted him as the mujaddid, or renewer, of his age. Cenābī, however, criticizes al-Suyūṭī for relying on a scholar identified only as al-Qurtubī, who, according to Cenābī, was famous for his lies. Here, Cenābī probably refers to Arīb ibn Saʿd al Qurtubī, (d. 979 or 80), the secretary of the Spanish Umayyad caliph al-Ḥakam II (r.961-76), who is known for his précis of al-Ṭabarī’s (838-923) history, which he extended to his own times.

Cenābī’s two-volume history includes sixty-six subsections, the sixty-sixth of which addresses the history of the Ottoman dynasty. Sections are arranged by states and rulers; within this framework, the events of each year are chronologically recounted, as well as the lives of the significant personalities of each age, be they Sufis, judges, jurists or authors. The sections dealing with the reigns of Selim II and Murad III are regarded as particularly important because Cenābī relies on his personal observations, as well as his connections. These sections also include discussions of the geographical attributes of key regions of the Ottoman Empire, as well as short biographies of Ottoman scholars.


If there is a typo in this name, he could be referring to Muhammad Ibn Shākir Qutubī (d. 1363) the author of ‘Uyūn al-Tawārīkh which seems equally reasonable in this case.

Charles Pellat, “ʿArīb b. Saʿd al-Kāṭib al-Ḳurṭubī,” EI². This is consistent with the space that Cenābī allots to the Umayyad caliphate in Spain, as well as to various North African dynasties influential in Spain. For Arīb also see Montgomery Watt and Pierre Cachia, A History of Islamic Spain (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1965; reprint New Brunswick: Aldine, 2007), 58.

upcoming section, in contrast, deals with the first volume of Cenābī’s universal history, particularly the sections related to early Islamic history.234

In the first section of his history, Cenābī recounts the different meanings attributed to the *risālah* (message/mission) and *nubuwwah* (prophecy) and recounts the history of the Abrahamic prophets until the time of the Prophet Muhammad.235 This section displays the extensive sources utilized by the author. His wide-ranging choice of sources shows his extensive education in the religious sciences and the possibility of attaining such an education in the sixteenth century. Cenābī’s rigorous scholarship is eminent in this section; he relies on trustworthy *hadīths* and exegetical works to write pre-Islamic history.236

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234 Mehmet Canatar studied the second volume of Cenābī’s history, especially his section on the Ottomans. He provided a modern Turkish transliteration of Cenābī’s Turkish translation, as well as a re-typed Arabic version of his section on the Ottomans.

235 *Aylām al-zāhir*, fols. 6a-33b.

Prophetic history of the world is based on Islamic creation narrative and is very consistent: since the world was destroyed after Noah’s flood, we are informed that the current nations in the world are all descended from Noah. He therefore traces back each of the nations to the sons of Noah one way or another.\(^{237}\)

It was customary for Ottoman historians to begin their political histories with the ancient Persians not only because they admired the literary versions of the Persian emperors with which they were familiar and advised the Ottoman sultans to follow their examples, but also because the universal histories they used, such as *Nizām al-tawārīkh* of al-Bayḍāwī (d. 1286 or 1293), began their histories with the Persians. Cenābī begins his history similarly; he goes over the Achaemenids, Parthians, and Sasanians, highlighting the ideal attributes of some of the great Persian emperors, notably the great Sasanian shah Khusrav I Anushirvan (r. 531-579 C.E.).\(^{238}\)

Beginning in the last decades of the sixteenth century and culminating in the middle of the seventeenth century, Ottoman intellectuals’ curiosity about the history of non-Muslim states grew immensely. Katip Çelebi, a follower of

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\(^{237}\) Tracing back one’s genealogy to Noah was quite common in Islamic historiography. Jane Hathaway, *A Tale of Two Factions: Myth, Memory, and Identity in Ottoman Egypt and Yemen* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), 35.

\(^{238}\) *Aylam al-zāhir*, fols. 36a-49a.
Cenābī’s model in historical composition, spilled much ink in the mid-seventeenth century not only on the Greeks and Romans but also on contemporary Christian states and peoples. Cenābī was arguably one of the intellectuals who instigated this interest in the history of non-Muslim states. The section of his history covering the Greeks and Romans comprises more than one-tenth of the first volume. The Ottomans, especially after the conquest of Constantinople, saw themselves as heirs to the Romans; it is thus logical that Cenābī devotes a great deal of space to them. When contrasted with his cursory treatment of the Umayyads and the ‘Abbāsids, his interest in western history is even more striking. In addition to ancient and medieval western history, he also had a considerable interest in Islamic Spain.

Cenābī’s account of the Greeks and Romans is followed by the history of the ancient Israelites and Egyptians, then that of Lakhm and Ghassān, two Arab Christian kingdoms that controlled the northern Arabian Peninsula at the time of Islam’s emergence, as well as that of the tribes in the interior of the Arabian Peninsula. He places the trajectory of the Abrahamic prophets, culminating in the life of the Prophet Muhammad and the early development of Islam, within the context of Arabian tribal history while paying tribute to the mystical concept of the *nūr Muhammadi*, a primordial light transmitted down the line of prophets. Thus, he recounts the story of Abraham, his wife Hagar, and their son Ishmael, the settlement of Hagar and Ishmael in the vicinity of Mecca, and the

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239 Ibid., fols. 49a-117b.
transmission of this primordial light from Abraham through the various biblical and Qur'ānic prophets to Muhammad. Cenābī’s account of this prophetic history is based on an exhaustive range of sources. He makes use of some of the exegetical works and hadīth collections mentioned above, as well as the well-known biographies of Muhammad by Ibn Isḥāq (704-767), as redacted by Ibn Hishām (d. 828 or 833), and al-Wāqidi (747/748-822). Although he borrows Ibn Isḥāq’s framework for his account of Muhammad’s life before his emigration to Medina and his battles with the Meccans, he incorporates the voices of a large number of alternative prophetic biographers. For example, he exploits the works of the less well-known prophetic biographer al-Zuhrī (d. 742) and al-Suyūṭī’s commentary on Ibn Hishām, known as Rawḍ al-unuf, “which contains old material which has not been preserved elsewhere, such as sīra texts by al-Zuhrī, Mūsā b. ‘Uḳba, Yūnus b. Bukayr and others.” Along the same lines, he uses the rather obscure prophetic biography of al-Yamurī al-Ishbīlī (1247-1334), known as ‘Uyūn al-āthār fī funūn al-maghāzī wa-al-shamā’il wa-al-siyar, which is mainly based on Ibn Isḥāq and al-Wāqidī but also includes “references to sources lost or not very well known such as Mūsā b. ‘Uḳba, Ibn ‘Ā’iẓ, Abū’Arūba, and Abū Bishr al-Dawlābī.” He also extensively exploits the biography of Moğoltay bin Kılıç (1290-1361), “which was considered controversial in its day because of the

240 See footnote 235.


author’s negative comments concerning the Prophet’s favorite wife, Aisha,” as well as al-Qastallānī’s *Mawāhib al-ladunniyya* and Jāmī’s *Shawāhid al-nubuwwah*, discussed in the previous chapter, along with *Usd al-ghābah fī ma’rifat al-Ṣahābah* of Ibn al-Athīr (1160-1233), *Kitāb šifat al-ṣafwah* of Ibn al-Jawzī (116-1201), *Dalā’il al-nubuwwah* of al-Bayhaqī (995-1077) and *Minhāj al Ṭalibīn* of al-Nawawī (1233-1277). He seems also to be aware of valuable local histories, such as al-Samhūdī’s (1440-1506) famous history of the city of Medina and its topography, known as *Khulāṣat al-Wafā*.

Clearly, Cenābī felt a personal attachment to the Prophet’s life story and to the history of Mecca and Medina. This is not surprising when we consider the fact that he was a *sayyid*, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, whose authenticity was unanimously accepted by Ottoman biographers. He came from the line of the descendants of the Prophet’s younger grandson Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalīb. Furthermore, his father served as a judge in Mecca. Cenābī recounts his father’s last pilgrimage, in 964 A.H (1557 C.E.), and how his father visited the place where the Prophet Muhammad gave his last sermon. He also notes that he himself prayed for forgiveness at the tomb of the Prophet’s wife Maymūna when he traveled to Medina in 963 A.H./1555-56 C.E., at the age of fifteen or

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sixteen. He is careful to mention every restoration commissioned by the Ottoman sultans to the Ka’ba and to the Prophet’s mosque in Medina. He describes at length and according to the different Sunni legal rites, or madhhabs, why one should visit the Prophet’s tomb in Medina and the proper behavior to observe in the vicinity of the Prophet’s tomb and those of his companions and the early caliphs of Islam. He includes a lengthy section on the hundreds of companions of the Prophet Muhammad, arranged according to their dates of death, with a short biography of each and an overview of his virtues. This section is apparently based primarily on al-Nawawi’s *Tahdhib al-asmā’ wa-al-lughāt*. Following this come similarly lengthy accounts of the successors of the companions, known as *Tābi‘ūn*, and their successors, *Tābi‘ al-Tābi‘īn*, all based on the *Tabaqat al-fugahā* of Abī Ishāq al-Shirāzī al-Shāfi‘ī (1003-1083). Cenābī was clearly fond of Arab scholars and emulated them in his history. He extensively used their technique of supplying short biographies of the luminaries of each age after the Prophet Muhammad’s time, including very valuable accounts of Ottoman luminaries, in the second volume of his work.

Compared to the vibrant style of other parts of his history, Cenābī’s account of the first four caliphs who followed Muhammad as leaders of the Muslim community, known as the Rashīdūn, is rather dry. Still, Katip Çelebi, who was fond of such succinct scholarship, found these sections admirable

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246 Ibid., fol. 210b.

247 Ibid., fols. 241b-244b.

248 Ibid., fols. 310a-336a.
enough to reproduce in full in his Arabic *Fadhlaka*. Cenābī’s chief sources for this section are Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīra* and Ibn Athīr’s *Usd al-ghāba*. Although he rarely cites this work, furthermore, Cenābī is clearly indebted in this section to the seminal history of al-Ṭabarī.

So far as the political events of the Rashīdūn era are concerned, the various military conquests led by Khālid ibn al-Walīd and Amr ibn al-‘As are the main topics that Cenābī covers for the reign of Abū Bakr.\(^{249}\) ‘Umar’s reign is treated in similarly cursory fashion, highlighting military campaigns.\(^{250}\) In his coverage of ‘Uthmān’s reign, Cenābī emphasizes the changes in this caliph’s appointments to provincial governorships and other high positions. Cenābī does not comment directly on the controversial issue of whether ‘Uthmān favored his relatives for these positions, but he reiterates a report from Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab, one of the most prominent scholar of the *Tābi‘ūn*, that ‘Uthmān was innocent of injustice and that his murderers were oppressors, while those who took no action in light of ‘Uthmān’s appointments should be excused because ‘Uthmān unquestionably favored his own clan.\(^{251}\) This report would be found unauthentic by Katip Çelebi and omitted in his account. As a critical historian, Cenābī deliberately refrains from taking a stand on this issue; however, by including this report, which had never been exploited by an Ottoman historian, he implicitly normalizes ‘Uthmān’s murder and supports in a way ‘Alī’s position in view of the

\(^{249}\) Ibid., fols. 253a-258b.

\(^{250}\) Ibid., fols. 258b-262a.

\(^{251}\) Ibid., fol. 266b.
fact that ‘Alī was typically accused of not doing enough to find and punish Uthman’s murderers, although he time and again rejected such claims. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalib’s reign is covered in similarly sparse detail. However, ‘Alī’s virtues and the Prophet’s sayings concerning him are painstakingly recounted. Cenābī depicts him as having knowledge of both seen and unseen. In his coverage of ‘Alī’s opponents, Talha, Zubayr, and ‘Ā’isha, Cenābī adopts a neutral tone, though he mentions the distinctive features and virtues of each. In recounting the battle of Siffin, however, he clearly identifies the side of Mu‘awiyah b. Abī Sufyān as the side of fitna (disorder) and baghy (rebellion). As an addendum to the reign of ‘Alī, Cenābī relates the life stories of ‘Alī’s sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn.

Cenābī’s account of the Shi‘ite imams, as well as his narrative of the different sects of Shi‘ism, is clearly inspired by al-Shahrastānī’s (1086-1153) famous compilation of various religious beliefs, philosophies, and doctrines known as Al-Milal wa-al-nihal. Although primarily accepted as a proponent of mainstream Sunni Ash’arī theology, Shahrastānī is thought by some to have been a crypto-Ismā‘ili Shi‘ite, “a hint to which can be found in al-Milal wa-al-nihal.” In addition to the Ismā‘ili-inflected work of al-Shahrastānī, Cenābī bases this section on Twelver, or Imāmī, Shi‘ite sources where these are available to him, sources such as Irshad al-irshād of the Twelver theologian, jurist and polemicist

252 Ibid., fols. 271a-271b.
al-Mufid (928-1032) and *I‘lām al-warā bi-a‘lām al-hudā* of the Twelver scholar and theologian Abū ‘Alī al-Faḍil b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsti (d.1223?). The latter work comprises biographies of the Prophet, his daughter Fāṭima, wife of ‘Alī and mother of Hasan and Husayn, and of the imams descended from them; it is based on a wealth of Sunni and Shi‘ite sources. Cenābī also makes extensive use of Sunni sources on the imams that are known for their sympathies for the *ahl al-bayt* so much so that their authors were occasionally called Twelver Sunnis, such as *Al- Fuṣul al-muḥimma fī ma‘rifat ahwal al-a‘imma* of the Mālikī scholar ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ṣabbāgh and the Shāfī‘ī author Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ṭālḥa al-‘Adawī al-Nisībīnī’s *work Matālib as-su‘ul fī manaqīb al-Rasul.* A former vizier of the Arūqīd ruler al-Malik al-Sa‘īd of Mārdīn, Ibn Talha wrote this work in Damascus in 1252; it became notorious among Sunni authors of the thirteenth century since it not only defended the Twelve Imams but also supported the idea that the twelfth imam was indeed the eschatological Mahdi. Cenābī’s careful use of both Shi‘ite and *ahl al-bayt*ist Sunni sources shows the extent of his knowledge of the Shi‘ite imams and their history, as well as his preference for sources that support an *ahl al-bayt*ist interpretation of early Islamic history.

In the second half of the 16th century, starting with Lārī’s history, we see Ottoman universal historians writing the biographies and describing the virtues

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254 For al-Mufid and his importance in the Shi‘ite revival of the Buyid age see Joel L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival During the Buyid Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 67-68.

of the Twelve Imams recognized by Imāmī Shi‘ites. Mustafa Cenābī, Mustafa ‘Ālī, Katip Çelebi, and Mūneccimbaşı Ahmed Dede all recount the life histories of the imams. There is little doubt that Cenābī was instrumental in establishing this trend in Ottoman historical writing; we know that both Mustafa ‘Ālī and Katip Çelebi used Cenābī as a model in their own histories. Cenābī is usually very careful not to exaggerate the virtues or vices of any historical character. However, his account of the Twelve Imams is unreservedly positive and seems little different from the reverential descriptions that a practicing Shi‘ite might give. He depicts Ḩusayn ibn ‘Alī as the most complete, most virtuous, and most knowledgeable person of his time. He cites a story in which the Umayyad caliph Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 723-743) noticed the reverence that the imam Zayn al-‘Abīdīn (659-712) attracted during the pilgrimage to Mecca and asked the poet Farazdaq (d. 730) to identify him. In response, Farazdaq composed a poem in praise of Zayn al-‘Abīdīn that induced Hishām to throw him in jail; Cenābī cites this poem at length in his history.256

The later Shi‘ite imams Muhammad al-Bāqir (676-733), Ja‘far al-Sādiq (702-765), and Mūsā al-Kāẓim (745-799) are similarly depicted as epitomes of righteousness, devoutness, and knowledge. Relying on Shawāhid al-nubuwwah, Cenābī recounts Muhammad al-Bāqir’s relations with the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-

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256 Aylām al-zāhir, fols. 287b-288a. Mustafa Cenābī was a poet himself, composing under the pen name Cinānī. In imitation of the great Arab historians, he quotes poetry extensively to enhance his narrative while embellishing his work with his own couplets and longer verses. Both Lārī, and his translator, Sadeddin, as well as Cenābī and his contemporary Mustafa ‘Ālī, enjoyed writing and reading poetry and accepted it as a strong medium of expression in historical composition.
Manṣūr (r.754-775) and Mūsa al-Kāzim’s relations with the Abbāsid caliph al-Mahdī (r. 775-785). As usual, the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Mā’mūn (r. 813-833) looms large in ‘Alī al-Ridā’s (765-818) somewhat comprehensive biography since he named al-Ridā his successor.257 Cenābī records an abridged version of al-Mā’mūn’s letter to ‘Alī al-Ridā in which he offers the imam coronation, and the imam’s response. Muhammad al-Taqī (811-835), ‘Alī al-Hādī (827/830-868), and Hasan al-‘Askarī (846-873) are also discussed in the context of their relations with the ‘Abbāsid rulers; this also reflects the influence of Shawāhid al-nubuwwah.258 After a summary of the life of the twelfth imam, Muhammad al-Mahdī (869-941?), he relates a story based on Ibn al-Sabbāgh’s (d. 1451) Fusūl al-muhimma, in which the author argues that al-Mahdī was not occulted, as Twelver Shi‘ites believe, but simply died.259 As if to underline this point, Cenābī offers a lengthy discussion of the identity of the eschatological figure known as the Mahdi, who many Sunnis believe will appear at the end of time, based on the verifiable hadith of the Prophet Muhammad and reports from the Shi‘ite imams themselves drawn from al-Tabarānī’s (873-971) Mu‘jam al-awsaṭ, Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣfahānī’s (948-1038) Hilyat al-awliyā‘ wa-Ṭabakāt al-aṣfīyā‘, Nu‘aym b. Ḥammād’s (d. 843) Kitāb al-fitān wa‘l-malāḥim and Alallāh Shihāb-al-Maghribī’s Kitāb al-Dalālāt. He concludes that the Twelfth Shi‘ite Imam is not the eschatological Mahdī.

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257 See Chapter 3 for this episode.

258 Aylām al-zāhir, fols. 298b-299b.

259 Ibid., fols. 304b-305a.
In many of the works covered in this study, notably Lā‘mī Çelebi’s translation of Jāmī’s *Shawāhid al-nubuwwah* and Lārī’s, Mustafa Cenābī’s and Mustafa ʿĀlī’s universal histories, stories of the Twelve Imams are recounted with reverence. In the sixteenth century, the Ottomans were faced with ever-growing Shi‘ite influence in Anatolia after the establishment of the Safavid state on the eastern borders of the Ottoman Empire. In light of this influence, Ottoman historians increasingly began to use terms such as *rafḍ* (rejection of the Sunnis) and *ilḥād* (atheism) to refer to various Shi‘ite doctrines. They likewise began to refer to the Turcoman groups who followed the Safavids as Qizilbash (literally, “redheads,” referring to the twelve-folded baton of red felt that they wore in their turbans) and to Shi‘ite zealots in Anatolia as *ghulāt* (extremist Shiites). Mustafa Cenābī, for example, reports that some *ghulāt* do not respect the sixth Shi‘ite imam, Ja‘far al-Sādiq, because he is descended from Abū Bakr on his mother’s side. He also reports differing views on the imam Zayn al-ʿAbidīn among the different Shi‘ite sects, as well as opposition among extreme Shi‘ites to the moderate views of the Zaydiyyah branch of Shi‘ism, which predominated in Yemen. It becomes clear that in the sixteenth century, Ottoman historians began to make a clear distinction between the virtues of the historical Shi‘ite imams and the miraculous and eschatological qualities attributed to them by many Shi‘ites. They were writing an alternative narrative of these imams while claiming their heritage in a way fundamentally different from that espoused by Shi‘ites. They were upholding the heritage of the Twelve Imams while rejecting some of the eschatological implications of Twelver Shi‘ite belief.
After recounting the history of the Twelve Imams, Cenābī returns to the Umayyads. He regards the founder of the dynasty, Mu‘āwiyah b. ’Abī Sufyān, as a *mutaghallib*, or usurper, from ‘Alī and lists a few of his achievements with little comment. He briefly describes his angry character and his weaknesses, such as wearing expensive clothing and riding expensive horses. His only redeeming feature was his skill at politics. He is harder on Mu‘āwiyah’s son Yazīd, who was responsible for the killing of Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalib, arguing that he was an infidel because of his poems praising drinking and because of the derisive words that he uttered when Ḥusayn was martyred.\(^{260}\) Overall, Cenābī’s account of the Umayyad dynasty is surprisingly succinct. He gives clues to the personal life and attributes of each caliph, but he skips altogether many significant events of the one-and-a-half centuries of Umayyad rule. Even the ten-year reign of Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik does not merit more than two pages in his account, while the whole dynastic history is covered in only fifteen folios.\(^{261}\) (In contrast, the companions of the Prophet Muhammad and their successors occupy over twenty folios while the history of the Romans consumes more than fifty.)

Cenābī’s Umayyad section seems to be a very concise précis of al-Ṭabarī’s (838-923) account. This is the only part of Cenābī’s narrative in which he does not refer to any source that he utilized; by the same token, he does not offer alternative accounts of any of the events recorded, not even of the ‘Abbāsid

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\(^{260}\) Ibid., 353b.

\(^{261}\) Ibid., 350b-365a.
missionary Abū Muslim and the ‘Abbāsids’ revolution. For the Umayyad caliphs’ terms he uses the term *wilāyat* (state), not *khilāfat* (caliphate), except in the case of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 717-720). Like many medieval and early modern historians, Cenābī regards ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz as uniquely pious among the Umayyad caliphs, not least because he condemned the Umayyad practice of cursing ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalīb and his descendants in Friday sermons. Cenābī considers ‘Abdullah ibn Zubayr, who had an independent caliphate in Medina (ruled 684-692), a caliph but not the Umayyads because they usurped the caliphate from the descendants of the Prophet. Cenābī’s account of the Umayyads clearly shows that he was relatively uninterested in their history, which receives the same amount of space in his narrative as the Almohads (al-Muwaḥḥidūn), who ruled in North Africa from 1121-1269.262

In stark contrast, Cenābī considers the ‘Abbāsids, who belong to the family of the Prophet Muhammad (*ahl al-bayt*), legitimate caliphs possessed of great virtue. His section on the ‘Abbāsids is heavily indebted to the history of al-Ṭabarī. Like al-Ṭabarī, he gives a glowing report of Hārūn al-Rashīd’s (r. 786-809) term and his exemplary character, and praises al-Ma’mūn (r. 813-833) for his devoutness and knowledge. This caliph merits special praise not only because he offered his throne to the Shi‘ite imam ‘Alī al-Ridā and married his daughter to him but also because he declared that ‘Alī b. Abī Talīb was the most exalted of the Prophet’s companions. Cenābī adopts a neutral stance on the *mihna*, the

262 Ibid., 471a-485a.
“inquisition” launched by al-Ma’mūn in 833 to impose the doctrine of the Qur’ān’s createdness. Although he regards most of the ‘Abbāsid caliphs in a positive light, he adopts a neutral tone toward some of them, such as al-Mu’taṣim (r. 833-842) and al-Wāthiq (r. 842-847). Al-Wāthiq, for instance, is praised because of his talent and because of his reverence for the family of the Prophet and the people of Medina but criticized for being a heavy drinker.

Although Cenābī’s account of the ‘Abbāsids is also comparatively short, he never fails to mention ‘Alid competitors to the ‘Abbāsid caliphate, such as the claimants who emerged during al-Hadī’s and al-Manṣūr’s reigns. He praises the knowledge, courage, and devoutness of these claimants without openly supporting their claims. Like Lārī, Cenābī applies labels such as zandaqa and malāhidā to extremist Shi‘ites, such as the Carmatians, a branch of the Ismā‘īlī sect, who allegedly rejected the shari‘a and the pillars of Islam, but never to the ‘Alīds or the Twelve Imams. Once again, one can observe the clear distinction drawn between “mainstream” Shi‘ism and extremist sects.

Although he is very rigorous in his scholarship and very careful in his assessments, Mustafa Cenābī’s treatment of early Islamic history in general and his evaluation of sectarian episodes in particular reveals that he occupied the extreme end of the ahl-al-baytist spectrum. While he implicitly supports ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālīb’s claim to the caliphate in the face of Umayyad opposition, he explicitly praises the descendants of Muhammad, including the Twelve Imams, and

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263 Ibid., 365a-419b.
upholds their heritage. Cenābī’s approach suggest that despite the ever-growing Safavid threat during the sixteenth century and despite the rigid Sunni impositions of sixteenth-century Ottoman jurists, *ahl al-bayt*ist ideology was still a potent force among Ottoman intellectuals of the period. Cenābī is probably the clearest defender of this *ahl al-bayt*ist ideology as his work is the most obvious representative of the multivalent character of Ottoman Sunnism.

**Mustafa ‘Ālī: History As Narrative**

Mustafa ‘Ālī was born in 1541, during the celebrated reign of Süleyman the Magnificent, just like Mustafa Cenābī. In many ways, his career resembles that of Mustafa Cenābī, but with one key difference. Mustafa Cenābī was content with his career in the *ilmiye*, or scholarly track, and he achieved considerable success in this career. Being impatient and sure of his capabilities, Mustafa ‘Ālī, after finishing his studies at the highest level of Ottoman *madrasas* around 1560, willingly or unwillingly,264 opted for a career in the *kalemiye*, or scribal division of the Ottoman bureaucracy, instead of advancing in a purely scholarly career, in which he could have had significant success had he been patient enough. Mustafa ‘Ālī first tried to become a protégé of crown prince Selim II (r. 1566-1574) at his provincial court in Konya, but with no success. However, he found a patron in the prince’s teacher/mentor Lala Mustafa Pasha, who later became a vizier at Selim’s

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264 Fleischer argues that Selim II ordered Mustafa ‘Ālī to be the chancery secretary (*dīvān kātibi*) at his court, whereas ‘Ālī was expecting to be appointed a *madrasa* teacher. Therefore, it seems that ‘Ālī’s career turned from *ilmiye* to *kalemiye* not because of his own choice but because of circumstances. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire*, 34-35.
court. He became personal secretary to Lala Mustafa and served him until 1568, first in Aleppo, then in Damascus, then in Egypt. Because of his patron’s connections with the able grand vizier Sokollu Mehmet Pasha (in office 1565-1579), he was sent to Bosnia, Sokollu’s native land, as a timarlı sipahi and then became secretary to Ferhad Pasha, governor of the Bosnian province, of whom he was very critical. After a decade, he was able to return to the capital to serve once again as secretary to Lala Mustafa Pasha, whom he accompanied on campaign against the Safavids. Mustafa ‘Ālī wrote his Nusretname, a treatise which deals with Lala Mustafa’s eastern campaigns, while serving in this position. After his patron’s death, Mustafa ‘Ālī held mid-level positions in the Ottoman provinces, first as a timar defterdarı, or financial administrator of the military grants known as timars, in Aleppo in 1582, then as defterdar (chief financial officer) in Erzurum in 1585/1586, and again as a defterdar in Sivas in 1588/1589. After years of service in the provinces, he finally returned to Istanbul, but without serious employment. After serving in less than lucrative small positions for a few years, he was finally appointed governor of Jidda, the port of Mecca, in 1599. In 1599, he left Istanbul for Egypt, hoping that he would be

265 Throughout Künhü’il-ahbar, ‘Ālī provides many personal anecdotes and clues to his biography. While he was in Damascus as a scribe to Lala Mustafa Pasha, then the governor of the province, ‘Ālī reports that he performed his daily prayers in the Umayyad Mosque, and he provides the history and current situation of the mosque from an insider’s perspective. Mustafa ‘Ālī, Künhü’il-ahbar (henceforth KA), 5 volumes (Istanbul: Takvimhane-i Amire, 1277 [1861]), vol. 3, 97.

266 ‘Ālī argues that Ferhad Pasha “enjoys the undeserved reputation of being a man of justice, of reliability, of valor, of friendliness, and of piety.” Counsel for Sultans, vol.1, 72-74.

267 For a study of this work see Mustafa Eravcı, Mustafa ‘Ālī’s Nusret-name and Ottoman-Safavi Conflict (Istanbul: MVT, 2011).
appointed governor-general of this important province, having rejected Mehmed III’s (r. 1595-1603) generous offer of retirement on 200,000 piasters. However, he died in 1600.\footnote{In this section, I follow Jan Schmidt’s précis of Cornell Fleischer’s biography of Mustafa ‘Ālī. Jan Schmidt, Mustafa ‘Ālī s Künhü’l-Ahbar and Its Preface According to the Leiden Manuscript (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archeologisch Instituut, 1987), 1-3.}

Mustafa ‘Ālī wrote more than fifty works, composing both in prose and in verse; many of his works are unique in their style and coverage. He considered himself a great poet and chose the less-than-modest pen name ‘Ālī, which means “exalted;” his poetry was accepted as some of the best of his age.\footnote{Fleischer, Bureaucrat and Intellectual, 24.} Ultimately, however, he was much better known for his prose and mixed prose and poetry works. Among his many works, Ḫünhü’l-ahbār (henceforth KA), his multi-volume, comprehensive universal history, stands as his masterpiece. Modern-day Ottomanists have primarily exploited the section of this work dealing with the Ottoman Empire. KA does not contain any new information about the early history of the Ottomans, although Mustafa ‘Ālī refers to an obscure work by one Mevlana Isa, Cāmī‘ül-meknūnāt, in his preface to the Ottoman section.\footnote{Schmidt, Mustafa ‘Ālī’s Künhü’l-Ahbar and Its Preface, 8. Although Fleischer asserts in Bureaucrat and Intellectual that this work is no longer extant, he provides a précis of it, focusing on Mevlana Isa’s depiction of Süleyman, in “Mahdi and Millenium: Messianic Dimensions in the Development of Ottoman Imperial Ideology,” in Kemal Çicek, et al. eds., The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization, vol 3: Philosophy, Science, and Institutions (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2000), 42-54.} His section on the reigns of Selim II, Murad III, and Mehmed III, on the other hand, is very useful because he incorporates his own observations and includes
biographies of the important men of each sultan’s age. Although the importance of Mustafa ‘Ālī’s section on the Ottomans cannot be denied, the author himself wanted his work to be remembered as a total history synthesizing all the historical sources known to him and covering the entire span of human history, from creation to his own time. So convinced was Mustafa ‘Ālī of the quality of his *magnum opus* that he claimed to have made an inimitable contribution on four topics treated insufficiently by his predecessors: a description of the earth’s creation and of history before Adam, the first human being; a section on geography; a description of the Prophet Muhammad’s mystical ascent to heaven (*mirāj*); and a description of Jesus’ return to earth at the end of time.271 By his own account, then, Mustafa ‘Ālī was first and foremost a universal historian and only secondarily an historian of the Ottoman Empire.272

Mustafa ‘Ālī’s introduction to his seminal *KA* is a manifesto of the historian, containing the sort of personal anecdotes not frequently shared by pre-modern Ottoman intellectuals.273 As such, it provides his view of the age in which he lived from an unprecedented critical perspective. ‘Ālī notes that he started writing his history in the year 1000 A.H. (1591), after having considered it for more than twenty years. He praises himself for keeping busy with scholarship

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272 Mustafa ‘Alī’s interest in the history of early civilizations and early Islamic history is not limited to *KA*; he also discusses them in his *Fusūl-i hall ü ‘akd fi usūl-i harc u nakd*, albeit in a concise manner. Gelibolulu Mustafa ‘Ālī *Fusūl-i hall ü ‘akd fi usūl-i harc u nakd* (İslam Devletleri Tarihi), ed. Mustafa Demir (İstanbul: Değişim, 2006).

273 By “Introduction,” I mean the general introduction to his history, not the introduction to the Ottoman section, which is transliterated and translated by Jan Schmidt based on the unique Leiden manuscript.
while his peers were preoccupied with accumulating wealth and grabbing lucrative posts. At the age of fifty-two, he says, he started to collect historical works that he thought would be useful to his project, aiming to produce a comprehensive work that would include elements of all these histories while surpassing them in authoritativeness. He chose to compose this work in Ottoman Turkish, instead of Arabic or Persian, he tells us, to make his work accessible to everyone. He further notes that he toyed with the idea of writing his history in another genre but abandoned this idea and adopted the way of Ibn Jarīr (al-Tabarī) and Ibn Kathīr. He claims that he based his history on 130 works that in turn constituted précises of other works, so that the total of works that he consulted, directly or indirectly, exceeds 600. He lists many of the works he consulted, dividing them according to the languages in which they were composed. This tactic serves to underline Mustafa ‘Ālī’s fluency in three languages. The pompous tone continues throughout the work, in which the author compares himself to other poets who made famous the exploits of kings, notably the great Persian poet Firdawṣī (940-1020), who compiled the Persian national epic known as the *Shāhnāme*.

The introduction also contains Mustafa ‘Ālī’s view of the development of Ottoman intellectual history. He claims that when the Turkic tribes first migrated to Anatolia in the eleventh century C.E., they were not highly literate; mixing with their slaves did nothing to improve their cultural sophistication. Only after Persian and Central Asian Turkic scholars came to the Ottoman lands did scholarship take a turn for the better. Mehmed II established the Sahn-1 Seman
madrasa in newly-conquered Constantinople, and protected the scholars who moved to the Ottoman Empire. His son Bayezid II and grandson Selim I continued his patronage. During the reign of Süleyman I, however, this enlightened order was turned upside-down when crown prince Mustafa was unjustly killed as a result of the machinations of Rüstem Pasha. After this incident, inflation and plague swept the empire.

Mustafa ‘Ālī’s introduction also offers the author’s explanation of the so-called “decline” of the Ottoman Empire. He likens the Ottomans to the Sasanians, whose fortunes declined when they appointed unqualified people to important posts. According to ‘Ālī, his own life story embodies the empire’s decline since he was continually passed over for key posts by unqualified rivals. He claims that all such offices are sold at auction to people who do not deserve them. He claims that he sold many of his books to provide for his family although he presented his situation to three consecutive sultans, who ignored him out of arrogance. He was told that caring for the welfare of the subjects hindered revenue-raising; he was advised that instead of submitting everything that he collected as the tax-registrar he should have kept some for himself. Mustafa Ali’s personal anguish no doubt contributed to his pessimistic view of the Ottoman Empire. His observations of bribery and the like were probably accurate, given his proximity to the court and high administrative offices. The problem, however, was that he

\[274\] KA, 103-105.
was infected by the intellectual malaise of the age, which was widespread among Ottoman literati of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.275

We are concerned here, however, with Mustafa ‘Ālī’s account of early Islamic history, which differs from those examined earlier, not least in the amount of space he devotes to the Umayyad dynasty. Indeed, his coverage of the Umayyads is far more detailed than his coverage of the ‘Abbāsid dynasty. He keeps his accounts of the reigns of most of the ‘Abbāsid caliphs brief, in part because he deals with some of these caliphs in different contexts in other sections of the work. The Umayyads, on the other hand, provide him with abundant morals and exemplary stories that are relevant to the author’s own age. Mustafa ‘Ālī clearly wanted these stories to be taken to heart by the upper echelons of Ottoman society, including the sultan himself. Thus, he is particularly interested in caliphs such as ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (r. 685-705), al-Walīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 705-715), and ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 717-720) because they gave scholars and mystics their due and were, in turn, befriended and protected by them. For example, he lauds ‘Abd al-Malik simply because he respected and rewarded the scholar Shu‘ubī. He claims that in ‘Abd al-Malik’s day, scholars were given their just rewards, whereas in his own time, only the lowliest are rewarded. He even inserts an original poem to underline his point:

I wish the practice were the same now,

275 Mustafa ‘Ālī elaborated on the “decline” of the Ottoman Empire in his Counsel For Sultans, written in 1581. In this work he provided a comprehensive analysis of the causes of this “decline” and proposed solutions for it. Cornell Fleischer aptly describes ‘Ālī’s perspective in this work as kānūn-consciousness, “an awareness of a specific regional and dynastic tradition enshrined in the kānūn laws issued by the Ottoman house.” Fleischer, Bureaucrat and Intellectual, 8.
So that one could differentiate the exalted and the perfect from the ignorant.

I wish the governors and viziers did not incline toward bribes,

So that the lowliest would not become superior to the virtuous.\textsuperscript{276}

Much of the point of this coverage of different dynasties is to present the qualities of the ideal ruler. Thus, despite the generally suspect character of the Umayyad caliphate, all the Umayyad rulers who were generous patrons of scholars are applauded by the author. On the contrary, those caliphs who did not heed the scholars’ advice are reviled, notably Yazīd (II) ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 720-723).\textsuperscript{277} Caliphs who were greedy and egotistical, such as Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 723-743) and Walīd ibn Yazīd (r. 743-744), whom ʿĀlī accuses of hypocrisy and unbelief, receive much the same treatment.

Mustafa ʿĀlī’s account of the reign of the first Umayyad caliph, Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (r. 661-680), is far superior to parallel accounts in the other histories under study here. Mustafa ʿĀlī’s account of the conflict between Muʿāwiyah and ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭalīb not only explains the historical episode but provides meaning to the conflict between Sunnis and Shiʿites. The author’s attitude toward Muʿāwiya appears empathetic at first, compared to the tone adopted by other Ottoman historians, but as the narrative continues a critical stance emerges. Mustafa ʿĀlī asserts that Muʿāwiyah converted to Islam many

\textsuperscript{276} KA, vol.3, 51.

\textsuperscript{277} Ibid., 128.
years before the Muslim conquest of Mecca in 630 C.E. but concealed his belief out of fear of his father’s reaction. He was one of the companions of the Prophet, for whom the Prophet Muhammad prayed for both this world and the hereafter and on whose authority hadith were transmitted. He was defended by ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-Aziz, who reportedly saw him and ‘Alî ibn Abî Ṭalîb in a dream in which Mu‘āwiyah told him that God has forgiven him for opposing ‘Alî. In other dreams reported by anonymous mystics, Mu‘āwiyah sits next to the Prophet Muhammad and is accepted as one of the true companions. Mu‘āwiyah is also defended by Sunni mystics and scholars, including the great legist Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (780-855), who in their dreams see the Prophet Muhammad condemning people who disparage Mu‘āwiyah. Mustafa ‘Ālī reports a tradition of Jarîr ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥamîd, one of the teachers of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, that Mu‘āwiyah was disconsolate when news of ‘Alî ibn Abî Ṭalîb’s martyrdom reached him. Mustafa ‘Ālī even refers to Mu‘āwiyah with honorific titles. Although he duly reports the caliph’s vices, such as his love for jewelry and food, for which the Prophet condemned him, as well as his actions against the Prophet’s descendants, he also praises him for his raids against the Byzantines, for serving as a scribe to the Prophet, for his generosity, especially towards ‘Alî’s sons Hasan and Husayn, the Prophet’s grandchildren, and the Prophet’s wife ‘Ā’ishah (612-678), and for his skill in politics and military strategy.

On the other hand, he also provides a critical perspective on Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abî Sufyân. In Mustafa ‘Ālî’s narrative, Mu‘āwiyah acknowledges more than once that ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭalîb is superior to him and that he himself did not want to
be caliph until after his cousin ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān (r. 644-656) was killed. Mustafa ‘Ālī also includes a critical report of the famous mystic Hasan al-Baṣrī (642-728) to the effect that there are four of Mu‘āwiya’s actions that are impossible to justify: his alleged role in ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalib’s murder, his alleged killing of one of the Prophet’s companions, his favoritism towards his own family, and his appointment of his son Yazīd (r. 680-683) as his successor. We also see ‘Ā’isha, the Prophet’s favorite wife, rationalizing Mu‘āwiya’s caliphate by pointing out that God sometimes bestows power on unbelievers or sinners; after all, He allowed the pharaohs to rule Egypt for centuries. Of course, an outspoken person such as Mustafa ‘Ālī would not hide his own opinions on these matters. On the conflict between Mu‘āwiya and ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalib, Mustafa ‘Ālī argues that it should be evaluated within the context of fate and God’s will. However, given the hadīth in which the Prophet advises everyone to follow ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalib, Mu‘āwiya should have acknowledged ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalib’s caliphate. Mustafa ‘Ālī asserts that he cannot understand those who do not comprehend the truths revealed by this hadīth, and adds that it is impossible to forget that many companions of the Prophet were killed at the battle of Ṣiffīn while fighting on the side of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalib.

Mustafa ‘Ālī’s rather ambivalent account of Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān makes far more sense when read alongside his similarly even-handed account of Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiya, who is usually regarded in a far more negative light than his father. Mustafa ‘Ālī provides a detailed account of Yazīd’s conflict with
‘Abdallāh ibn Zubayr (624-692), who promoted his own claim to the caliphate. Toward the end of his description of Yazīd, Mustafa ‘Ālī displays his historical craft by presenting contradictory narratives of Yazīd and his depiction in Islamic scholarship. He distances himself from both narratives praising Yazīd and narratives disparaging him, and makes it clear that he is aware of hadīths of dubious authenticity in support of both positions; the reader must determine the correct position on his own. He relates a somewhat positive tradition that in later life Yazīd distanced himself from his protégé, ‘Abdallāh ibn Ziyād, because of the latter’s role in the massacre of Husayn ibn ‘Alī and his band at Karbala in 680 C.E. Another hadīth that he cites, in contrast, insists that Yazīd was purely one of the denizens of hell. As in the case of Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān, however, Mustafa ‘Ālī indicates his own position by using derogatory terms for Yazīd such as “damned and dirty.” He also argues that Yazīd’s attacks against the people of Mecca and Medina, as well as his brutal treatment of the Prophet’s descendants, above all Husayn, are signs of a lack of belief and submission to Islam. But, commensurate with his even-handed approach, he also points out Yazīd’s good qualities, such as his generosity and intelligence. As in the case of Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān, certain mystics reported dreams in which Yazīd told them that God had forgiven him. Mustafa ‘Ālī does not find these reports credible because of
Yazīd’s actions, which, according to the author, surely proved otherwise. Mustafa ʿĀlī also argues that because of Yazīd’s atrocities against the descendants of the Prophet, none of his children lived long enough to enjoy this world, although there were among them some righteous people, such as his son Muʿāwiyyah II (r. 683-684).

Indeed, Muʿāwiyyah II is evaluated completely separately from the rest of the Umayyads. He is described as the one whom God brought to life from death. In a sermon, Muʿāwiyyah II acknowledged that both his grandfather and his father were wrong in opposing ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalīb and his son Ḥusayn, respectively. He lamented that his ancestors were fond of this world and power. He therefore withdrew from the caliphate after only forty days and died at the age of twenty-one. Upon his death, we are told, people lamented for days, expressing their love for his devout and ascetic character “which was rare among the Umayyads,” according to Mustafa ʿĀlī.

In recounting Yazīd’s caliphate, Mustafa ʿĀlī also extensively describes ʿAbdallāh ibn Zubayr’s term as counter-caliph of Medina, Basra, and Kufa and, in the context of this counter-caliphate, the 686-87 revolt in Kufa of al-Mukhtār, who ostensibly sought to avenge the killing of Husayn. Mustafa ʿAlī’s treatment of al-Mukhtār’s rebellion occupies more space than his description of any single Umayyad reign. Similarly, in the mid-sixteenth century, Muslihuddīn Lārī included an extensive treatment of this rebellion in his own history. Al-Mukhtār, it should be noted, looms large in Shiʿite hagiography as an epitome of heroism and loyalty to the ʿAlīd cause. Lārī’s attitude towards al-Mukhtār is openly
positive because of his role in the murder of Ibn Ziyād, the murderer of Ḫusayn. Mustafa ‘Ālī is far more negative, calling al-Mukhtār a rebel and a liar. It seems odd that an historian and intellectual who was fond of the imams and the family of the Prophet would treat al-Mukhtār with such disdain. The reason can be found in three key traditions that Mustafa ‘Ālī reports concerning al-Mukhtār’s career and rebellion. In the first, al-Mukhtār offers to deliver Husayn to Mu‘āwiyyah if his uncle, the governor of Kufa, will grant him political favors. In the second, he asserts that he is rebelling on behalf of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, a grandson of ‘Alī, who he claims is the Mahdī. (According to Mustafa ‘Ālī, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya knew nothing about this.) In the third, al-Mukhtār commits blasphemy by claiming to receive revelations from God. In short, Mustafa ‘Ālī criticizes al-Mukhtār not because he rebelled against the Umayyads or because he sought revenge for Ḫusayn’s martyrdom but because he was a blasphemous hypocrite who sought political gain. Mustafa ‘Ālī’s attitude becomes even clearer when, in contrast, he openly praises Ibn Ajdar, the actual killer of Ibn Ziyād, Ḫusayn’s murderer, and glowingly reports the episode of Sulaymān ibn Harīd, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad and an ‘Alīd who genuinely sought revenge for Ḫusayn. Although he committed a sin when he refused Ḫusayn’s request for assistance, Ibn Harīd later repented and sought, unsuccessfuuly, to avenge Husayn’s death.

Following the biographies of the Prophet Muhammad’s companions, Mustafa ‘Ālī tells the stories of the twelve Shi‘ite imams at great length, expanding on the precedent set by Lārī and Cenābī. Like Lārī and Cenābī,
Mustafa ‘Ālī relies on Ibn Sabbāgh’s compendium of imam biographies known as *Fusūl al-muhimma*, as well as *Shawāhid al-nubuwwah*, discussed in the preceding chapter. Mustafa ‘Ālī’s account of Husayn ibn ‘Alī’s life and martyrdom at Karbala is one of the most exhaustive and vibrant sections of *KA*.\(^{279}\) In his *divāns*, or poetry collections, Mustafa ‘Ālī composed elegies for Ḥusayn and for the other eleven imams. His *Sübhatü'l-ebda*, completed in 1593-94, collects elegies composed on ‘Ashūrā’, the day of Husayn’s martyrdom, between 1585 and 1591.\(^{280}\) As if to underline his devotion to Husayn, he endowed a fountain in Karbala while serving as interim governor of Baghdad in 1586.\(^{281}\)

Mustafa ‘Ālī recounts the Karbala massacre in a mixture of prose and original poetry. He takes an historian’s critical attitude to the episode, acknowledging that some of the reports of the extreme Shi‘ites concerning blood flowing from stones on the site and the sun bearing a bloodstain on the day of the massacre are not true. On the other hand, he argues that Ibn Athīr is wrong to discourage lamentations for Ḥusayn that go beyond those for other imams. Mustafa ‘Ālī justifies the lamentations on the grounds that on no other occasion when an imam was victimized was the Prophet’s lineage so gravely endangered.

Of the other Shi‘ite imams, Mustafa ‘Ālī treats ‘Alī al-Ridā’s (765-818) life and career extensively because the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Ma’mūn chose him as his heir. The twelfth imam, Muhammad al-Mahdī (869-941?), is also treated

\(^{279}\) *KA*, vol. 3, 353-385.


\(^{281}\) Ibid., 124.
extensively, as was common in Ottoman universal histories. Mustafa ‘Ālí asserts that the coming of the Mahdī is reported by all the trustworthy hadīth compilers. He narrates the attributes of al-Mahdī and the circumstances surrounding his reappearance based on reliable hadīth. Here, Mustafa ‘Ālí separates himself from the Ottoman historians who appropriate the Twelve Imams and their heritage but reject their eschatological implications. He argues that the Twelfth Imam, al-Mahdī, is indeed sāhibu'l-zamān (the master of the age), gālibu'l-burhān (the definitive proof), and huccetu'l-dīn (the proof of religion), the real Mahdī who is the subject of numerous Qur'ānic verses and many hadīths. Among these hadīths the best-known one, trusted by both Sunnis and Shi‘ites, is a narration by ‘Abdallāh ibn Mas‘ūd: “The Prophet (peace_be_upon_him) said: If only one day of this world remained, Allah would lengthen that day (according to the version of Za'idah), till He raised up in it a man who belongs to me or to my family, whose father's name is the same as my father's, who will fill the earth with equity and justice as it has been filled with oppression and tyranny (according to the version of Fitr). Sufyān's version says: The world will not pass away before the Arabs are ruled by a man of my family whose name will be the same as mine.”

Mustafa ‘Ālí points out that in many hadīths, the Mahdi is referred to by the Prophet’s kunya, Abū'l-Qāsim, while his father's name is said to be ‘Abdallāh, the name of the Prophet's father. As for the Twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdī, he was a descendant of Husayn, whose kunya was Abū ‘Abdallāh. For Mustafa ‘Ālí,

282 Abū Dawūd, Sunān, Book 36, Hadīth 4269.
this strengthens the argument identifying the Twelfth Imam with the eschatological Mahdi.  

Mustafa ‘Alī includes a long story of Muhammad al-Mahdī’s mother, Mālika,284 a Byzantine convert to Islam, who was said to be a descendant of both the Sasanian emperor and Shamūn,285 a.k.a. Simon Peter, Jesus’ apostle. The implication is that Mālika was chosen by God to unite not only the Christian and Muslim lineages but to bring the much-revered Persian heritage to the line of imams. This story is one of many conversion narratives in circulation in the pre-modern Ottoman Empire;286 typically in these narratives, conversion is inspired by a dream. In this case, Mālika converted to Islam after she had a series of dreams featuring Jesus, Mary, and the Prophet Muhammad, and Muhammad’s daughter Fāṭima. In the last dream she is told to go out to witness a battle between the Byzantines and the Muslims. When she does so, she is captured and sold as a slave to the eleventh Shi’ite imam, Hasan al-‘Askarī, with whom she conceives al-Mahdī. Mustafa ‘Alī tells Mālika’s story to prove the authenticity of al-Mahdī, who, in this narrative, combines Christian and Muslim eschatological traditions in his person. Al-Mahdī speaks in his crib, as does Jesus in the Qur’ān,

283 KA, vol.3, 418-419.
284 Ibid.,419-423.
285 If this character is Peter it is also important because Shi‘ites see Peter as someone similar to ‘Alī ibn Abī Talib. Every prophet is said to have an heir; Peter was Jesus’ as ‘Alī was Muhammad’s.
and performs miracles similar to those performed by Jesus. Mustafa ‘Ālī deploys the *hadiths* detailing the story of Malika, as he does the *hadiths* concerning the Mahdī’s names, to buttress his contention that the Twelfth Imam was the eschatological Mahdī expected by Sunnis and Shi’ites alike. Like Cenābī, ‘Ālī uses *ahl al-bayt*ist accounts that are reverential toward the Twelve Imams. In contrast to Cenābī, he accepts Twelver Shi’ite eschatological claims for the Twelfth Imam. In this, he adheres to a small but distinct tradition of Sunni intellectuals who agreed with Shi’ites on the identity of the Mahdī.

Ottoman historical writing began with powerful story-telling: the earliest accounts of the Ottoman dynasty, such as Ahmedī’s *İskendername* and Aşıkpaşazāde’s history, contain numerous stories that are meant both to teach a moral and to entertain readers. Mustafa ‘Ālī is likewise fascinated with this type of story-telling. He believes in the power of story-telling to such an extent that he frequently digresses from the main annalistic account to tell a lengthy story just for the sake of the narrative. A case in point is his account of a Kharijite known as Shabīb ibn Yazīd (ibn Nuʿaym al-Shaybānī). Shabīb (646-697) is said to have been a soldier in ‘Abd al-Malik’s army who rebelled because he did not receive his stipend.287 Although Mustafa ‘Ālī is particularly interested in the alternative nexuses of power offered by rebels such as Shabīb, this particular story is ostensibly told to amuse his readers, although it also makes a strong point about the brutality and ultimate weakness of the Umayyad establishment. Shabīb is

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depicted as a courageous hero who defeated the 50,000-man army of al-Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf, the brutal Umayyad governor of Iraq, with only a thousand men. Mustafa ‘Ālī tells the story of Shabīb’s heroism and that of his wife, Ghazāla, in such a way that the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik ultimately disappears from the narrative while Shabīb becomes the main figure. Künhü’l-Ahbār abounds with such stories, which ‘Ālī tells not only to be didactic but also to entertain his readers. Thus, even the most glorious of the Umayyad rulers is recounted in passing while the story of Shabīb and his wife Ghazāla occupies more than ten pages of Mustafa ‘Ālī’s narrative.

Mustafa ‘Ālī’s account of the collapse of the Umayyads clearly shows his opinion on the problem of succession to the Prophet Muhammad as leader of the Muslim community. He asserts that the Umayyads paid for what they did to Ḥusayn ibn ‘Ālī and other descendants of the Prophet. He explicitly states that someone from the line of the Prophet Muhammad should have been caliph from the outset. He is disappointed that the people of the time did not opt for the ‘Alīds, who would have made far superior rulers to the Umayyads. He is even more disappointed that when the Sufyānid line ended, the people did not opt for one of the Shi’ite imams but for the Marwānids instead. He does not even accept

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288 In many of the stories told in KA, women play significant roles as heroes and fighters. One Salat Hatun plays an important role in Ḥusayn’s conflict with Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān and his men. She and her son protect Ḥusayn from the aggression of Yazīd’s men and ultimately follow the imam all the way to Yemen. Later in the episode, after Salat Hatun is killed, we learn that her tomb became a site of visitation for centuries to come. Likewise, Muhammad al-Mahdī’s mother, the daughter of the Byzantine emperor, reportedly enslaved herself in order to be sold to al-Mahdī’s father.

the ‘Abbāsids as legitimate caliphs since they misinterpreted the *hadīth* “*Al-khilāfatu min al-Quraysh*” (“The caliphate is from the Quraysh”) and simply usurped power. \(^{290}\) At another point, he derides al-Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf as an infidel because of, among many other things, his preference for the Umayyads over the *ahl al-bayt*. \(^{291}\) Throughout his account of the Umayyads, ‘Ālī also shows much disdain for the Iraqis because of their lack of perseverance in the ‘Alīd cause: they abandoned Ḥusayn and acted treacherously toward the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. In this context, al-Hajjāj was, by Mustafa ‘Ālī’s account, sent to the Iraqis as a punishment from God.

According to the requirements for a good historian that Mustafa ‘Ālī sets out in *KA*, the historian should first and foremost be firm in his religious beliefs and should belong to one of the reputable Sunni *madhhabs*. He insists that the Kharijites, the Shi‘ites, and other heretics circulated many misleading stories about the four Rightly-Guided caliphs, the Twelve Imams, and the followers of the Prophet’s companions, and used these stories to attack the Sunnis. However, like Cenābī, Mustafa ‘Ālī also makes a clear distinction between these fanciful stories and the uncorrupted natures of these heroes of early Islam. Like Cenābī, ‘Ālī reclaims the heritage of the Shi‘ite imams in a Sunni context.

Mustafa ‘Ālī’s treatment of Abū Muslim (700-755) and the ‘Abbāsid revolution is well-composed and informed as he refers to both Arabic and Persian

\(^{290}\) Ibid., 162-163.

\(^{291}\) Ibid., 89.
sources. He particularly finds Abū Muslim’s killing by the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 754-775) unjust. He argues that criticism of the authorities by people who are not rebellious should be permitted.²⁹² He provides a vivid account of the early ‘Abbāsid caliphs although his coverage of the later caliphs is rather succinct. His search for the ideal ruler continues with the ‘Abbāsid caliphs; only a few of them make his list. He is critical of al-Manṣūr because of his blood-loving character and because, with the murder of Abū Muslim, he instigated hatred between the ‘Alīds and the ‘Abbāsids.²⁹³ He applauds al-Mahdī (r. 775-785) for his unprecedented generosity towards the needy and poor of Mecca and Medina,²⁹⁴ and al-Hādī (r. 785-786) for his insistence that the ‘Alīds had a legitimate claim to the caliphate.²⁹⁵ Mustafa ‘Ālī sees a parallel between al-Hādī’s time and his own. The brevity of al-Hādī’s reign resulted from his mother’s involvement in affairs of state; by the same token, in Mustafa ‘Ālī’s view, the interference of imperial women threatened the Ottoman state and was a key element in the empire’s incipient decline.

Mustafa ‘Ālī’s narrative of the demise of the ‘Abbāsids, like his account of the collapse of the Umayyads, demonstrates the failure of the state as manifested in a single ruler, here, the caliph al-Musta’sīm (r. 1242-1258). Depicting the end of the ‘Abbāsids allows Mustafa ‘Ālī to convey his overarching message to his

²⁹² Ibid., 173.
²⁹³ Ibid., 170.
²⁹⁴ Ibid., 185.
²⁹⁵ Ibid., 189.
audience, and first and foremost to the sultan himself. He conveys his message in three ways: first, he describes how al-Mustaṣim was not taking care of state affairs, or of his subjects and their welfare, and how this situation prepared his end. Secondly, with the famous story of the Shi’ite philosopher Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (1201-1274), he shows his audience what will happen if the sultans do not heed the counsel of scholars. According to the story, al-Mustaṣim rudely rejected as heretical a philosophical work that al-Ṭūsī had composed for him and threw it into the Tigris. Stung, al-Ṭūsī took refuge at the court of the Mongol emperor Hulagu Khan (r. 1256-1265) who later sacked Baghdad at al-Ṭūsī’s instigation.²⁹⁶ There is another moral to this story that Mustafa ‘Ālī wants to drive home: al-Mustaṣim’s fanaticism brought about the end of the ‘Abbāsid caliphate; the Ottoman sultans should avoid a similar fate by being open to criticism and new ideas. Mustafa ‘Ālī likewise warns the sultan about treacherous viziers with the example of Ibn al-Alqāmī (d. 1258), a crypto-Shi’ite who invited Hulagu to attack the ‘Abbāsid empire. In Künhü’l-ahbār and in Nūshatü’s-selatin, Mustafa ‘Ālī’s overarching message to the sultan is that he should not trust his viziers in state affairs but should attend to state business himself. The example of Ibn al-Alqamī is a well-chosen one; ‘Ālī illustrates with this example how a once-invincible caliphate collapsed because of the actions of unworthy viziers.

At the beginning of KA, as noted above, Mustafa ‘Ālī lists the qualities of a good historian: he should belong to the right Sunni legal rite; he should be

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 212-213.
truthful; he should not rely on only one account; he should narrate the most accepted and most famous versions of events; and he should be neither concise nor verbose in his writing.\textsuperscript{297} On the evidence of KA, ‘Ālī mostly lives up to these expectations, especially regarding his use of sources. In his section on early Islamic history, he relies on famous sīras and exegetical works. For the sections on the Umayyads and ‘Abbāsids, he makes extensive use of medieval accounts such as the histories of Ibn Athīr (1160-1233), al-Ṭabarī (838-923), and Mīrkhawānd (1433-1498). His sources show considerable overlap with those exploited by Mustafa Cenābī in his history.\textsuperscript{298} A comprehensive study of both authors’ sources would reveal the works available to the most highly-educated and fortunate of the Ottoman literati and would provide clues to the limits of their intellectual production and imagination, but this is a subject for another study.

**Conclusion**

Mustafa Cenābī and Mustafa ‘Ālī were near-contemporaries who were both educated within the Ottoman madrasa system. Mustafa ‘Ālī was surely aware of Cenābī’s history and probably used it, especially the Ottoman section, although in KA he does not refer to Cenābī’s work specifically. Both historians were fascinated with universal history although they had different purposes and different audiences in mind.

\textsuperscript{297} Ibid.,42-43.

\textsuperscript{298} For Mustafa ‘Ālī’s sources, see Schmidt, *Pure Water for Thirsty Muslims*, 22-58.
Mustafa Cenābī finished his *Aylām al-Zāhir* a few years before ‘Ālī began writing his *Kūnhūl-ahbār*. As a teenager, Cenābī witnessed the heyday of the Ottoman Empire during Süleyman’s celebrated reign. While he was still young he stayed for some time in Aleppo and Mecca, where his father served as a judge. It was probably in these cities that he developed a profound love of the Arabic language and of the Prophet Muhammad. He himself was descended from Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalīb, the Prophet’s younger grandson. In his late forties he composed his universal history in Arabic mainly because he had deep respect for Arab/Islamic historical writing and wanted to emulate this tradition. He may also have wished to demonstrate his ability to compile a history in the tradition of classical Arabic models. His peculiar choice had consequences, of course: his work remained largely unknown among the Ottoman literati. His abridged Turkish translation became much better known and more widely used.

Mustafa ‘Ālī’s *Kūnhūl-ahbār* is, of course, far more popular and better known than Cenābī’s *Aylām al-Zāhir*. Mustafa ‘Ālī seems to have been aware that he needed to write in Turkish in order for his works to be fully circulated in the inner circles of Ottoman literati. Although his sections on the Ottomans are widely celebrated today, the author clearly intended his work as a universal history. He is first and foremost a universal historian and secondarily an historian of the Ottoman Empire.

Cenābī’s and Mustafa ‘Ālī’s works exemplify the ahl al-baytīst trend in Ottoman historical writing very well. Both authors glowingly portray the Shi’ite imams and defend their rights. Mustafa ‘Ālī explicitly states that the descendants
of the Prophet Muhammad had a right to the caliphate. He regards the ‘Alīds as far superior to the Umayyads and evinces a deep devotion to the martyred Husayn. In his later work known as *Curious Bits of Wisdom*, he apparently goes so far as to offer a solution to the Sunni-Shi‘ite division.  

Both Cenābī and ‘Ālī use the terms *rafḍ* and *ilhād* on numerous occasions to refer to the various extremist Shi‘ite movements. However, they both make a clear distinction between the values of the twelve Shi‘ite imams and the qualities attributed to them by the extreme Shiites. Both historians present an alternative narrative of these imams that glorifies them as descendants of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*). Although Cenābī does not believe that the Twelfth Imam is the expected Mahdī, Mustafa ‘Ālī goes so far as to agree with the Shi‘ite identification of this imam with the Mahdī. Cenābī’s example shows that Ottoman intellectuals could appropriate these imams as heroes for their Prophetic descent and their earthly virtues. Mustafa ‘Ālī’s example shows that Ottoman intellectuals could go so far as to concede that the Twelfth Imam could well be the expected Mahdī.

Both Cenābī’s and ‘Ālī’s works show that despite the ever-growing Safavid influence in Anatolia and Iraq in the late sixteenth century, and despite a state of open warfare between the Ottoman and Safavid empires, Ottoman intellectuals did not necessarily adopt a rigid Sunnism as a defense against a perceived Shi‘ite threat. Rather, reverence for the *ahl al-bayt* remained quite strong among them.

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even if this meant open reverence for ʿĀlī and his descendants. Thus, despite the conventional view of the Ottomans as staunch Sunnis, this Sunnism by no means entailed disowning the Shiʿite imams or their legacy; in some cases, it did not even entail rejecting Shiʿite eschatological doctrine. The contributions of these two authors point to the complex, non-monolithic, and syncretistic nature of Ottoman Sunnism among intellectuals, even at the peak of the supposed “Sunnitization/Sunnification” campaigns of the sixteenth century.
CHAPTER 5
ISLAMIC HISTORY IN THE AGE OF TROUBLES, AND OTTOMAN ENCYCLOPEDISM, 1600-1650

Introduction

As the Hijrī millennium, which coincided with the last years of Murad III’s (r. 1574-1595) reign, approached, a large segment of the Ottoman population, including the historian Mustafa ‘Ālī, was expecting an apocalypse. To their surprise, life continued as usual and nothing cataclysmic happened. However, this sense of an apocalyptic breakdown was in a sense a harbinger of what would happen in the first half of the seventeenth century. The seventeenth-century crisis started with the accession to the throne of Mehmed III (r. 1595-1603). His reign was overshadowed by the Long War with the Holy Roman Empire, political instability, and rebellions. After Mehmed III’s reign, a series of very young sultans came to the throne, usually under the shadow of their mothers or consorts; Kösem Sultan, who was Ahmed I’s (r. 1603-1617) favorite, would become the mother of Murad IV (r. 1623-1640) and İbrahim (r. 1640-1648) and would emerge as one of the most powerful women in Ottoman history. In the absence of mature crown princes, both fratricide (at least in theory) and the practice of sending princes to govern the provinces in order to learn statecraft

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were abandoned. As a result, princes were raised entirely within the palace, and the power of the sultans declined immensely. Confined to their palace quarters and lacking the experience necessary to administer a vast empire, Mustafa I (r. 1617-1618 and 1622-1623) and İbrahim became mentally unstable. Meanwhile, the power vacuum was filled by the sultans’ mothers and their factions at the court. During these same years, a series of major uprisings erupted in Anatolia as a result of ruinous drought and inflation, along with a proliferation of armed peasant mercenaries who had fought in the Long War, many of whom joined the private armies of provincial governors in the region. These uprisings, commonly known as the Celâlî rebellions, were contained only at great material and human cost.

There were only a couple of rulers who continued the power-exerting traditions of the old sultans during this period. The first was Osman II (r. 1618-1622), who acceded to the throne at the age of fourteen. He was inexperienced

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303 There has been a growing interest in Osman II in the last decade, especially with respect to the representation of his reign in historical sources. See Baki Tezcan, “Searching for Osman: A Reassessment of the Deposition of the Ottoman Sultan Osman II (1618-1622),” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2001; idem, “The 1622 Military Rebellion in Istanbul: A
in mediating among the court factions and was unable to reach a consensual balance in politics. Osman was an early proponent of Ottoman reform, which was badly needed at the time. He attempted to supplement the powerful Janissaries with an army recruited from among the empire’s tax-paying Muslim population. In retaliation, a group of palace soldiers strangled him in 1622, when he was only eighteen. He became the first Ottoman sultan to be executed by his slaves. Seeing what had happened to his predecessor, Murad IV attempted to be a ruler similar to his sixteenth-century ancestors.\textsuperscript{304} Known for his physical vigor and vigilance, Murad IV proved himself a warrior ruler. In 1638, he reconquered Baghdad, which had been under Safavid control since 1623, and even briefly held the city of Shirvan in Azerbaijan.\textsuperscript{305} During his reign, the Kadızadelis, a puritanical party led by mosque preachers of provincial origin, emerged. Murad took advantage of their stance against any innovations to the practice of the Prophet to ban the use of tobacco, coffee, opium and similar intoxicating substances, although the sultan’s real purpose was to prevent unemployed Janissaries and similar socially disruptive elements from gathering in coffeehouses and similar

\textsuperscript{304} Referring to the age of Süleyman was quite a common practice for the seventeenth-century sultans.

establishments. İbrahim’s eight-year-reign typified the paranoia of the palace-imprisoned sultans of the period, who always feared being put to death as the result of a rebellion that would bring an alternative prince to the throne. The long reign of Mehmed IV (r. 1648-1687) signaled a new period of stability in Ottoman rule. Although Mehmed came to the throne as a child, his politically astute mother paved the way for the rise of the Köprülü family of grand viziers, who oversaw a series of efficacious reforms. And although the stereotype of Mehmed is that of a ruler more interested in hunting than in statecraft, recent scholarship has argued that he took an active role in the empire’s military ventures and sought to reinforce his legitimacy by persuading Christian subjects to convert to Islam.

While it is impossible to deny that the first half of the seventeenth century was a period of political instability, social strife, and economic mishap for the Ottoman Empire, there has been an uneasiness to accept the idea that Ottoman intellectual production reflected what was happening on these other fronts. Orientalist intellectuals such as H.A.R. Gibb and Harold Bowen argue that Islamic civilization began to decline after the golden age of the ninth and tenth centuries C.E. under the ‘Abbāsids, with a brief interruption around the time of


307 See Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam.*
the foundation of the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{308} However, after the sixteenth century the Ottoman Empire is said to have caught up with this overall “decline” of Islamic civilization. According to this narrative, the Ottomans produced little remarkable on the intellectual scene, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{309} In two recent studies, Khaled El-Rouayheb challenges the “lack of cultural production” thesis; on the contrary, he argues, interest in the rational as well as religious and philosophical sciences was on the rise in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{310}

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\textsuperscript{309} Madeline Zilfi’s studies on the Ottoman ulama analyze the evolution of ulama careers from 1600 to 1800. She asserts that the quality and independence of the Ottoman ulama deteriorated beginning in the early seventeenth century. Concerned more with their careers than with knowledge, the ulama of the seventeenth century lacked the intellectual substance of the revered ulama of the previous century. This obsession with careerism led them to seek favor with and a clientele among powerful court circles. Indeed, by the middle of the seventeenth century the principles of seniority and meritocratic promotion rarely worked at a time when “palace and military officials plundered the ilmiye, auctioning off or giving away positions to blatantly unsuitable favorites.” Instead, members of the ulama attained the highest positions in the Ottoman learned hierarchy at very early ages thanks to the influence of their fathers or patrons. Of course, not all the members of ulama class were prolific writers; most were not writers at all. However, according to the conventional wisdom, the works of the ulama of the seventeenth century were high in quantity but low in quality. Madeline Zilfi, "Ottoman Ulama," in Suraiya Faroqhi, ed., The Cambridge History of Turkey, vol. 3: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 219; eadem, The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age (1600-1800), 81-127. For a conventional overview of the intellectual activity of the period, see Ismail Hakki Uzunçarşılı, Osmanlı Tarihi, vol. 3, part 2: XVI. Yüzyıl Ortalarından XVII. Yüzyıl Sonuna Kadar (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1954), 490-531. Also see A. Adnan Adıvar, Osmanlı Türklerinde İlim (Istanbul: Remzi, 1970), 110-142.

\textsuperscript{310} Khaled El-Rouayheb, “Opening the Gate of Verification: The Forgotten Arab-Islamic Florescence of the 17th Century,” International Journal of Middle East Studies 38 (2006): 263-281; idem, “The Myth of ‘The Triumph of Fanaticism’ in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire,” Die Welt des Islams 48 (2008): 196-221. Here, El-Rouayheb somewhat overinterprets Halil İnalcık’s chapter “The Triumph of Fanaticism” in The Ottoman Empire in the Classical Age, 1300-1600. He assumes that İnalcık connects the decline of scholarship (especially in the rational sciences) in the seventeenth century to the rise of Kadızadeli fervor. However, İnalcık makes no direct reference to this; if he makes such a connection at all, it is only by distant implication.
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If we consider the emergence of a new type of intellectual during the seventeenth century, the idea that scholarship declined during this period seems to be too quick a judgment. This new type of intellectual is best exemplified by Katip Çelebi; Hezârfen Huseyin and Ebûbekir Dimaşkı are other examples. Building on the achievements of the previous century, intellectuals such as Katip Çelebi explored new vistas of scholarship and also launched what might be called the age of Ottoman encyclopedism. These intellectuals were more open than their predecessors to Western sources and to Muslim works, notably those of Ibn Khaldûn, that had been introduced into Ottoman territory over the previous century. They accepted relatively new ideas such as the roundness of the world and the heliocentric view of the universe. The coming to the fore of figures such as Katip Çelebi would not have been possible in the absence of a vibrant intellectual milieu.

The steady production of innovative historical writing in the seventeenth century is one indicator of this milieu. During this period, universal histories were written in Turkish as well as in Arabic, although there was an increasing focus on specific periods or sultans. In contrast to the output of the previous century, fewer universal histories were composed. The specialization of Ottoman historical writing, if we may call it that, would increase in the eighteenth

Even if the Kadızadelis were influential, to think that this one group brought down the entire empire’s cultural production is at best naïve.
The production of universal histories in the sixteenth century has typically been linked to the Ottomans’ imperial expansion and claims to world domination. More specialized histories may thus reflect the empire’s newly emerging identity as a territorially stable polity with a focus on protecting the holy places of Islam and the world’s largest population of Sunni Muslims.

This chapter examines three universal histories produced in the seventeenth century, two in Arabic and one in Turkish. The first is Akhbār al-duwal by Ahmad ibn Yūsuf al-Karamānī al-Dimaṣḵī. The second is the Turkish universal history of Mehmed ibn Mehmed el-Edirnevī el-Rumī entitled Nuhbetu’t-tevārīh. The third work is the neglected Arabic history of Katip Çelebi, known by its shortened title Fadhlaka. While the major focus continues to be the appropriation and representation of early Islamic history in the works of Ottoman historians, I will place these texts in the context of the intellectual debates of the first half of the seventeenth century while linking them to the productions of earlier centuries discussed in the previous chapters.

**Cloning Cenābī: Akhbār al-duwal**

Abū al-ʿAbbās Ahmad ibn Yūsuf ibn Ahmad ibn Sinān al-Karamānī al-Dimaṣḵī’s birthdate is not certain. In the catalogs of manuscript libraries in Turkey, his birth date is recorded either as 939 A.H. (1532 C.E.) or 966 A.H.

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311 One of the few exceptions is Müneccimbaşı Aḥmad ibn Luṭf Allāh’s (1631-1702) universal history in Arabic Ṣabāʿ if al-akhbār fi waqāʾ iʾ al- aʾ thār (also known as Jāmīʾ al-duwal) (İstanbul: Matbaa-yı Âmire, 1285 [1868-1869]).
(1559 C.E.). There is not much information regarding his life and education, although it seems clear from his nisbas that he was connected to the region of Karaman and to the city of Damascus. Katip Çelebi writes that he died in 1019 A.H. (1610-1611 C.E.).312 His only known work is Akhbār al-duwal wa-athār al-uwal fī al-tārīkh.313 Karamānī writes at the end of his history that he finished this work on 7 Muharram 1008 A.H. (30 July 1599 C.E.).314 From the language and style of his work it seems that he was fluent in Arabic and Turkish, and that he had some interest and training in historical composition. His obscurity implies that he was one of those scholars who pursued a scholarly career without reaching a high enough position to have been memorialized by Ottoman biographers.

Akhbār al-duwal is a universal history which consists of an introduction and fifty-five sections. Each section also has many subsections. As usual with universal histories, it begins with the creation of the earth and ends with the author’s time. The bulk of the pre-Islamic section covers the history of the prophets who, according to Islamic tradition, preceded Muhammad; accounts of

312 Katip Çelebi, Kesfi’z-Zunun, 5 volumes, trans. Rüştü Bale (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yaymları, 2007), vol. 1, 73.

313 Hereafter Akhbār al-duwal. This work was printed many times from a lithograph originally published in Baghdad by Maṭba’a at ‘Abbās al-Tabrīzī in 1282/1865. The lithograph is based on an original manuscript which, unfortunately, I was unable to locate. There is an annotated edition of this work to which, unfortunately, I did not have access: Akhbār al-duwal wa-athār al-uwal fī al-tārīkh, ed. Fahrī Sa’d, 3 vols (Beirut: ‘Alam al-Kutub, 1992). The version of the work that I use is one of the reprints of the 1865 Baghdad edition: Al-‘Ālim al-Fādhis ‘Abī al-‘Abbās Ahmad ibn Yūsuf ibn Ahmad al-Dīnashqī al-shahīr bi’l-Qaramānī, Akhbār al-duwal wa-athār al-uwal fī al-tārīkh (Beirut: ‘Alam al-Kutub; Cairo: Maktabat al-Mutanabbi; Damascus: Maktabat Sa’d al-Dīn, n.d.).

314 Akhbār al-duwal, 497.
their lives are based on exegetical works, *hadīth* collections and commentaries, and general histories such as al-Tabārī’s work. Like most universal histories, the work is organized chronologically, but it does not list the events of each year, even in the sections covering the author’s own era. It resembles more a collection of the lives of great men; political history rarely receives priority. Katip Çelebi and many others after him describe *Akhbār al-duwal* as a summary of Cenābī’s history with few additions. While it is true that Karamānī reproduces a great deal of Cenābī’s material, his work is not a verbatim copy of Cenābī’s history. In fact, his omissions and additions shed a good deal of light on how he and Cenābī differed in their scholarship and in their attitudes towards early Islamic history.

Fortunately, Karamānī gives us a glimpse of his perception of history in his introduction: there are lessons, cautionary tales, and revelations in history for those who can recognize them. In recounting the past and the experiences of different nations, history offers a way to distinguish truth from lies and a way to understand the present and God’s message. Karamānī’s perception of history seems to conform to the popular medieval Islamic notion of history as a collection of parables and lessons that shed light on the present. His predecessors, such as Mustafa ʿĀlī, held a similar view. Karamānī also dwells on the linguistic origins of the root of the Arabic word *tārīkh* (“history”), أَرْخ. He looks into the meaning of the word and its origin in reference works such as al-

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315 Ibid., 16-80.

316 Katip Çelebi, *Kesfī‘z-zunūn*, vol.1, 73.
Khwārazmī’s (934/935-993/994 C.E.) revered scientific work *Mafātiḥ al-ʿulūm* and Jawalīqī’s (1073/4-1144 C.E.) work on Arabic language known as *al-Muʿarrab min al-kalām al-ʿajami ʿala ḥurūf al-muʿjam* and a work called *Nūr al-maqābīs*, which I was unable to identify. After citing sources that claim that the word is of Arabic origin and some that claim that it is of Persian origin, and after including a dictionary definition that could mean the offspring of a wild cow, he writes that the verb اَرَخ is most commonly used to indicate the time of a certain event. A closer look at this section reveals that Karamānī actually copied most of this information from al-Sakhāwī’s (1427-1497) work on Muslim historical writing, known in abbreviated form as *Al-Iʿlān*.  Parts of this section would be adapted by Katip Çelebi in his *Fadhlaka*. Based on Ibn ‘Abbās’ report and on a report of Dhahabī which was relayed by Ibn ‘Asākir, he states that there is history in the Qurʿān and that Adam’s children began to record history after the fall of their father. He also mentions that Noah’s flood and the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander the Great marked the beginnings of new calendars, just as the emigration of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina had.

After a long treatment of the pre-Islamic prophets recognized by Muslims, Karamānī ends this section with Muhammad. He treats Muhammad as the

fortieth prophet in this series, not as the founder of the first Islamic state. His account therefore includes little to no reference to the Islamic state or to Muhammad’s military campaigns. He is more interested in Muhammad’s miracles, his physical attributes, and his children and wives. This presents a contrast to Cenābī’s history because Cenābī dwells on Muhammad’s conquests, as well as other aspects of his life. Although there are sources common to both historians, Karamānī prefers to use medieval works, in contrast to Cenābī, who used early sīra works extensively. Karamānī’s main sources for this section are al-Mas‘ūdi’s (896-956) Muruj al-dhahab, Jāmī’s (1414-1492) Shawāhid al-nubuwwah, Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ’s (1083-1149) famous Quranic commentary known as al-Shifā, al-Ṭabarānī’s (873-971) famous hadith compilation al-Mu’jam al-kabīr, Ibn ‘Arabī’s (1165-1240) Muḥaḍarat al-abrār wa-musāmarat al-ahyaīr, Ibn Sa’d’s (784-845) Taβaqāt, Ibn ‘Asākir’s (1106-1175) history, Ibn Qutaybah al-Dinawarī’s (828-889)’Uyūn al-akhbār, Isma’il Abī al-Fida’s (1273-1331) Al-mukhtaṣar fī’akhbař al-bashar, Abū al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī’s (1116-1201) Qur’ānic dictionary Nuzhat al-‘uyūn al-nawāẓir, and Shahrada r ibn Shi‘rawayh’s (1090-1163) hadith collection Kītab firdaws al-akhbaar bi-māthūr al-khītab. Most of these sources are standard works that could be found in Ottoman libraries during Karamānī’s lifetime. We see, however, a marked preference for Ayyūbid- and Mamlūk-era chronicles produced in the centers of learning to the south.

320 Ibid., 81-91.
Karamānī’s formulaic sketch of Muhammad’s life can be taken at face value. Although it is not less formulaic, his treatment of the Rāshidūn caliphs allows more interpretation. Although his work features some of the ahl-al-baytist notions of his predecessors, Karamānī’s work strikes one as more Sunni-oriented than Cenābī’s work. For instance, he acknowledges at the very beginning of Abū Bakr’s reign that he was the best created being after Muhammad according to ahl al-sunnah wa-al-jamā’ah, followed by ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Alī. He also praises the greatness of Abū Bakr’s ‘ilm, or esoteric knowledge, in contrast to other works, which stress Abū Bakr’s closeness and loyalty to the Prophet and not his esoteric knowledge.321 It is to ‘Alī that ‘ilm is usually attributed. In keeping up with his overall approach, Karamānī refrains from including much detail on the political aspects of the terms of the Rāshidūn caliphs, preferring to emphasize their personalities and characters. He does not, for example, dwell on the Ridda wars, which preoccupied Abū Bakr. His aversion to political narrative continues in his treatment of ‘Umar’s reign; hadiths concerning the caliph’s virtues and quasi-miraculous deeds are of more concern to Karamānī.322 In summarizing ‘Uthmān’s reign, he asserts that he was killed by “oppressors” and acknowledges that he favored the old-guard Quraysh, who were recent converts to Islam, as opposed to ‘Umar, who was harsh toward them.

321 Ibid., 91-95.
322 Ibid., 95-98.
Karamānī’s Sunni orientation, however, does not make his account less *ahl al-bayt*ist than those of his predecessors. He acquits ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib of any complicity in ‘Uthmān’s murder based on a report recorded in Ibn ‘Asākir’s history. He provides additional circumstantial details that tend to exonerate ‘Alī: ‘Alī beat his children because ‘Uthmān was killed while they were guarding the door to his house; ‘Alī sent water to ‘Uthmān while he was under siege. He also includes a glowing report of ‘Alī’s virtues. He narrates ‘Alī’s murder on the basis of al-Suyūṭī’s and Ibn ‘Asākir’s histories and adds a report of ‘Alī asserting that he did not see anyone better fit than he was to assume the caliphate when the Prophet died.\(^{323}\)

Following his account of ‘Alī, he presents a narrative of the lives of the twelve imams; from this point on, his history closely parallels that of Cenābī.\(^{324}\) Like Cenābī, Karamānī presents the imams as epitomes of righteousness, justice, and true faith. He focuses on the characters of Hasan and Husayn while avoiding comment on the explosive political issues surrounding their careers. He does explicitly state that Yazīd was responsible for the murder of Husayn;\(^ {325}\) at first, however, he does not openly curse Yazīd but instead curses the military commander Shamir, who actually killed Husayn. Cursing Yazīd, in the manner of most of the Ottoman historians we have studied, would become a bone of contention between the puritanical Kadızadelis and their opponents in the first half of the seventeenth century. Although Karamānī lived before this

\(^{323}\) Ibid., 102-104.

\(^{324}\) Ibid., 105-118.

\(^{325}\) Ibid., 107.
debate emerged, he does comment on the appropriateness of cursing Yazīd in his section on Yazīd’s caliphate. He notes that three of the four purported founders of the Sunni legal rites, Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik ibn Anas, and Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, agreed on cursing him directly (taṣrīḥ) or indirectly (talwīḥ). For his own part, Karamānī prefers cursing Yazīd directly because his actions, such as hunting cheetahs, playing chess, and drinking and praising alcohol, made him an unbeliever. To underline his antipathy toward Yazīd, Karamānī cites a tradition that the later Umayyad caliph ’Umar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (r. 717-20) punished a man with twenty lashes because he called Yazīd amīr al-muʾminīn (commander of the faithful), a title that should be used only by legitimate caliphs; as well as a tradition of the Prophet claiming that the first man who will alter his sunna, or custom, will be an Umayyad named Yazīd. Yet to balance his account, he includes a counter-opinion of the great theologian al-Ghazālī (1058-1111), who did not permit the cursing of Yazīd because even though he was a sinner, he was still a Muslim, and it is incumbent upon all Muslims not to curse anyone who submits to God. Al-Ghazālī also maintained that Yazīd did not order the murder of Husayn.326 Although Karamānī relied on mainstream Sunni interpretations of history more than Cenābī did, he still carried over many ahl-al-baytist notions. His preference for cursing Yazīd instead of leaving the issue alone is a clear indication of this.

326 Ibid., 130-131.
Comparing Karamānī’s account of the Twelve Imams with that of Cenābī is instructive because Karamānī used Cenābī’s work extensively, although he does not acknowledge his debt. Overall, Karamānī’s treatment is shorter than Cenābī’s even though he copies entire passages and poems verbatim from Cenābī. In narrating Zayn al-‘Abīdīn’s (659-712 C.E.) life, for instance, he repeats the events narrated by Cenābī, such as the story of the poem that Farazdaq composed in praise of the imam, which resulted in the imprisonment of the poet by the future Umayyad caliph Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (b. 691; r. 723-743). But whereas Cenābī includes Farazdaq’s poem in its entirety, Karamānī provides only a few verses. Cenābī, unlike Karamānī, also covers exhaustively the sects established by descendants of various imams. Nor does Karamānī treat the imams’ relations with public figures in nearly as much detail as his predecessor. A case in point is Cenābī’s account of ‘Alī al-Ridā (765-818). Karamānī summarizes the imam’s life in a few sentences whereas Cenābī goes into great detail, going so far as to cite letters exchanged between the imam and the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Ma’mūn (r. 813-833). Thus, Karamānī’s account points up how thorough Cenābī was in his coverage of the imams and how much significance he attached to their legacy.

As for Karamānī’s treatment of Muhammad al-Mahdī, the Twelfth Imam, he asserts that Shi’ites believe that he is occulted and will come back at the end of

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327 See Chapter 3.
328 Cenābī, Aylām al-Ẓāhir, fols. 289b-293b.
329 Ibid., 290a-300a.
time. He describes how the Shi‘ites in Baghdad every Friday would take a horse and point it toward the gate of occultation, where al-Mahdī was last seen, while calling al-Mahdī’s name. This practice continued until the time of Sultan Süleyman (r. 1520-1566), who banned it. He also notes that scholars agree on the coming of the Mahdī but differ on the conditions of his advent. He himself provides a list of the conditions for the Mahdī’s coming identical to that provided by Cenābī.330 Although Karamānī’s presentation does not make it entirely clear that the Mahdī he discusses is not the Twelfth Imam awaited by Shi‘ites, we may deduce from the context that he, like Cenābī, does not believe that the two figures are identical. In this section, besides Cenābī’s history, Karamānī relies on the sources used by most Ottoman historians for the Shi‘ite imams: Ibn al-Sabbāgh’s Fusūl al-muhimmah, al-Bayhaqī’s (995-1077) Dalā’il al-nubuwwah, Jāmī’s Shawāhid al-nubuwwah, Ahmad ibn Yaḥya ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umari’s (1301-1349) Masalik al-absār fī mamalik al-amsār, al-Damīrī’s (1341-1405) Ḥayāt al-hayawān, al-Suyūṭī’s (1445-1505) Tarikh al-khulafā’, and Ibn al- Jawzī’s Nuzhat al-a’yūn al-nawāẓir.

In a separate section following his discussion of the Twelve Imams, Karamānī describes the virtues of the Quraysh, and of the prominent companions of Muhammad from the anṣār, the “helpers” who received him in Medina, and the muhājirūn, the Meccans who immigrated to Medina with him.331 He uses al-

330 Akhbār al-duwal, 117-118.
331 Ibid., 119-128.
Nawawī’s famous work on the companions, Tahdhīb al-asmā’ wa-al-lughāt. He includes a separate section on the four rightly-guided caliphs, as well as one on the virtues of members of the ahl al-bayt, especially ‘Alī and Fātimah, based on hadiths. True to his familiar pattern, Karamānī avoids controversial subjects; thus he does not comment on Talha and Zubayr, the two companions of the Prophet who joined ‘Ā’isha in opposing ‘Alī at the Battle of the Camel. His narrative in these sections is based almost entirely on Sunni sources.

Karamānī adopts a mainstream Sunni position regarding Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān, who, as Karamānī reminds us, was a companion for whose wellness the Prophet Muhammad personally prayed. He emphasizes Mu‘āwiyah’s generosity and gentleness. He refrains from taking a stand on his dispute with ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalib, insisting that what happened between them should be assessed according to independent reasoning (ijtihād). In stark contrast, Karamānī is almost savagely negative in his assessment of many caliphs of the Marwānid branch of the Umayyad family. ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (r. 685-705), he tells us, was not only stingy but foul-smelling; flies used to drop dead in front of his door because of the stench. He appointed not only one unbearably oppressive governor but two: al-Hajjāj ibnYūsuf, the infamous governor of Iraq, and al-Muhallab, the governor of Khurasan. Politics, we are told, corrupted him, for he was a devout and righteous person before he became caliph. He banned using honorific titles for the previous caliphs; he forbade good and enjoined evil, as is apparent from his appointment of the brutal al-Hajjāj, who massacred the
companions of the Prophet in Mecca and Medina.\textsuperscript{332} In contrast, ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, who rebelled against Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiya and established an independent state in the Hijaz and parts of Iraq, Syria and Egypt before being killed by al-Hajjāj during ‘Abd al-Malik’s reign, is depicted as an exemplary figure, a complete counterpoise to ‘Abd al-Malik and al-Hajjāj. Karamānī’s negative treatment of the Umayyad caliphs continues with ‘Abd al-Malik’s son al-Walīd (r. 705-715), whom he depicts as an arrogant and vainglorious snob, although he was beloved by the Damascenes. The other Walīd of the Umayyad dynasty, al-Walīd ibn Yazīd (r. 743-744), a.k.a. al-Walīd II, is condemned as an atheist. Karamānī quotes Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal’s opinion that al-Walīd’s oppression was greater than that of the pharaohs. His son Yazīd III (r. 744) is praised, however, because of his devoutness. There are only a few Umayyad rulers whom Karamānī lauds, for example Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 715-716) because he was righteous and made sure that ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 717-720) would succeed him. Like so many Sunni commentators, Karamānī considers ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz by far the best of the Umayyad caliphs, going so far as to call him the fifth rightly-guided caliph. The historian is particularly impressed by his remarkable character and his ban on the cursing of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalīb in Friday sermons. Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, meanwhile, is depicted as a smart and brave person who did little harm and who was extremely cautious with the public treasury.

\textsuperscript{332} Ibid., 133-136.
Like most of the other Ottoman historians surveyed here, Karamānī had a visceral distaste for the Umayyads. He praises only a few of the Umayyad caliphs, and then only the ones who, in his estimation, followed the “righteous” paths of the four rightly-guided caliphs. In this section Karamānī relies primarily on Ibn ‘Asākir’s seminal biographical dictionary Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq, al-Ṣuyūtī’s Tarikh al-khulafā’ and Ibn Kathīr’s (1301-1373) al-Bidāya wa-al-nihāya. He also makes some use of al-Dhahabī’s (1274-1348) Tārīkh al-Islām, Ibn Khallikān’s (1211-1282) biographical dictionary Wafayāt al-‘ayān, al-Hākim’s (933-1012) hadith work al-Mustadrak, al-Thā’labī’s (d. 1035/1036) Qurʾān commentary al-Kashf wa-al-bayān ‘an tafsīr al-Qurʾān and al-Māwardī’s (972-1058) Kitāb al-ādab. He appears to exploit these sources in part to fill in the gaps in Cenābī’s relatively short section on the Umayyads.

With the ‘Abbāsids, however, Karamānī goes back to reproducing sizable sections of Cenābī’s work verbatim. It should be borne in mind, however, that Karamānī’s work is not simply a précis of Cenābī’s; he does add information from other sources. In terms of overall approach, Cenābī is more critical towards his sources, and his work is far more comprehensive. Cenābī’s history also includes numerous references to the important scholars and personalities of each age whereas Karamānī rarely makes any reference to them. One of the few occasions on which Karamānī makes reference to a luminary is his section on Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, whose work is considered crucial for Sunni thought. As mentioned
earlier, Karamānī has a more visibly Sunnī outlook. His detailed treatment of Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal attests to the importance Karamānī attached to him.

In keeping with his overall approach, Karamānī’s section on the ‘Abbāsids does not include much in the way of political narrative. Thus, the ‘Abbāsid revolution, the fate of Abū Muslim, and al-Saffāh’s (r. 750-754) reign are cursorily summarized. Based on his sources, Karamānī asserts that with the coming of the ‘Abbāsids, the Islamic state changed; the Arabs were excluded from the governing councils (singular, dīwān) while the fortunes of the Turks and the Daylamites from northern Iran rose.

Karamānī’s work is more or less similar to the ahl al-baytist works discussed in previous chapters in terms of his treatment of the family of the Prophet. However, one can talk about degree. Cenābī may be called an extreme ahl al-baytist. A case in point is the ‘Alīd claimants to the caliphate. Although he follows Cenābī in his account of the early ‘Abbāsid caliphs, Karamānī ignores a number of ‘Alīd claimants whose efforts to attain the caliphate are described in some detail by Cenābī. The only exception to this pattern in Karamānī’s history is his attention to al-Ma’mūn’s naming ‘Alī al-Ridā as his heir. Although one can attribute this choice to Karamānī’s preference for succinctness, it stands in stark contrast to Cenābī’s extraordinary reverence for the ahl al-bayt. Karamānī, for example, notes that al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-861) reproached ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalīb, demolished Husayn’s tomb in Karbala, and prevented public access to the site.
However, unlike Cenābī, he does not criticize al-Mutawakkil for his actions or express negative feelings.

On the other hand, Karamānī takes a tough stand against the *mihna* of al-Ma‘mūn and his immediate successors, not only condemning the policy but sharply criticizing the caliphs who implemented it for inflicting harm upon Sunni scholars who did not accept the createdness of the Qur’an, scholars such as Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal. We can safely assume that this unusual critique of the ‘Abbāsid caliphs stems from the historian’s great reverence for Ibn Hanbal. This inference is borne out if we compare the treatment of al-Wāthiq’s reign (842-847) in Cenābī’s and Karamānī’s histories. Cenābī draws a positive portrait of al-Wāthiq because of his generosity towards the *ahl al-bayt*. Although Karamānī does not make any comment on the caliph’s treatment of the *ahl al-bayt*, he does not look as favorably upon him as Cenābī because of al-Wāthiq’s insistence on the *mihna*. Along similar lines, Karamānī lauds al-Mutawakkil because even though he was oppressive towards the *ahl al-bayt*, “when he assumed the caliphate he invigorated *sunnah* and the issue of the createdness of the Quran died.”

In his section on the ‘Abbāsids, apart from Cenābī’s history, Karamānī uses al-Tabarī’s history, Ibn Khallikān’s *Wafayāt al-a’yān*, al-Dhahabi’s *Tārikh al-Islām* and ‘Uyūn al-tawārīkh, al-Dināwarī’s ‘*Uyūn al-akhbār*, Sibt ibn al-Jawzī’s (d. 1185/86-1256) *Mir’āt al-zaman* and Abū’l-Farash ibn al-Jawzī’s *Shuzur fi al-tārīkh*, al-Masʿūdi’s *Akhbār al-zamān* (he seems to prefer this work

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333 Ibid., 159.
to *Murūj al-dhahab* because of its succinctness), al-Ṣuyūṭī’s *Tārīkh al-khulafā’,* and Ibn Athīr’s *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*. Apart from al-Tabari, these are canonical Ayyūbid- and Mamlūk-era works.

To conclude, Karamānī’s work was heavily influenced by Cenābī’s work although it was not as thorough as Cenābī’s account, and the sources that Karamānī exploited were not as diverse as Cenābī’s. Karamānī’s account also includes less political detail than Cenābī’s. Compared to Cenābī’s narrative, Karamānī’s treatment of early Islamic history is more in alignment with the mainstream Sunni narrative although he carried over some of the *ahl-al-bayt*ist aspects of his main source and expressed reverence for the family of the Prophet and the Twelve Imams.

**Cloning Lārī: Mehmed ibn Mehmed el-Rūmī el-Edirnevī’s Nuhbetu’t-tevārīh**

As in the case of Karamānī, there is little information on the biography of Mehmed ibn Mehmed. His birthdate is uncertain as well. At the beginning of his work, he mentions that he is employed as a scribe (*ahkām kātibi*) in the *dīvān* during the reign of Murad IV.334 He is known as a long-time (over twenty years) member of the retinue of Hāfiz Ahmed Pasha (d. 1632), twice grand vizier under

334 Mehmed b. Mehmed, *Nuhbet’ut-tevārīh*, Süleymaniye Library, MS Halet Efendi 589, fols. 2b-3a. The *ahkām katipleri* or *Divan-ı Hümayun Katipleri* numbered between fifty and 100. Their main task was recording the decisions that were taken in the imperial council and preparing imperial orders and letters. Mehmet Ali Ünal, “Divan-ı Hümayun Katipleri,” Osmani Tarih Deyimleri Sözlüğü (Istanbul: Paradigma, 2011), 202.
Murad IV (1625-1626 and 1631-1632) and the husband of the sultan’s sister.\textsuperscript{335} In his later career, he was a madrasa professor, a position that he probably held in Edirne, and at one point he identifies himself as a muhāsib (a scribe in financial service). Nonetheless, Katib Çelebi states that Mehmed ibn Mehmed wrote his work in the year 1030 A.H. (1620 C.E.) and presented his work to Osman II. Nuhbe seems to have been updated many times, beginning with the year 1026 A.H. (1617 C.E.).\textsuperscript{336} In the manuscript that I use, which is the author’s own transcript, however, he explicitly states that he wrote this work in the time of Murad IV.\textsuperscript{337} He is said to have written fine poetry under the name Kesbī, and he is said to have been a grandson of Şahidī, a famous poet from Edirne. Katip Çelebi gives his date of death as 1050 A.H. (1640 C.E.), and there seems to be consensus on this date in biographies of him.\textsuperscript{338}

Mehmed ibn Mehmed’s view of history is not as articulate as that of Cenābī or Karamānī. At the beginning of Nuhbetu’t-tevārīh\textsuperscript{339} he states that he read histories in Arabic and Persian that varied in style and coverage; he


\textsuperscript{337} Katip Çelebi, \textit{Fadhlaka} (Süleymaniye Library, MS Halet Efendi 589) and also \textit{Keşfû’z-zunûn}, vol. 4, 1550.

\textsuperscript{338} The most comprehensive information on Mehmed b. Mehmed’s life is in Abdurrahman Sağırlı, “Mehmed b. Mehmed er-Rumi (Edirneli)’nin Nuhbetu’t-Tevarih,” III-IX.

\textsuperscript{339} There is a printed edition of this work; in it, however, the pre-Ottoman sections are abridged to a short summary: Mehmed b. Mehmed Edirneli, \textit{Nuhbetü’t-tevārīh ve’l-ahbār} (Istanbul: Takvimhane-yi Âmire, 1276 [1860]). Throughout this study, I use Süleymaniye Library, MS Halet Efendi 589 (henceforth \textit{Nuhbe}).

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benefited from them, and he decided to write a work in Turkish based on the
information he gathered from these works. Fortunately, we are able to identify
the Arabic and Persian works to which he refers. Katip Çelebi asserts that Nuhbe
is mostly a copy of Cenâbî’s work with some additions. Although he used Cenâbî’s
history in other sections of his work, from a close reading of his sections on early
Islamic history it becomes very clear that he used Muslihuddin Lârî’s Mirâtu’l-
edvâr as his main source. From his references, it is apparent that he did not use
the original Persian work but Hoca Sadeddin’s Turkish translation. Besides
Mirâtu’l-edvâr, which he misattributes to Sadeddin and from which he copies
large portions, his sources for his section on early Islam are mainly Mamluk and
Ayyubid chronicles: Ibn Kathîr’s al-Kâmîl fî al-tarîkh, al- Sakhâwî’s (1427-1497)
Târîkh al-Malîk al-Muayyad, Isma’îl Abû al-Fida’ s (Şahîb •Hamaî) Al-
Mukhtaşar fî akhbaër al-bashar, al-Şuyûtî’s Târîkh al-khulafâ’, al-Dhahabî’s
Târîkh al-İslâm, Badr al-Dîn Mahmud ibn Ahmad al-‘Aynî’s (1361-1451) ’Iqd al-
jumân fî târîkh ahl al-zamân, Abû al-Maḥásîn Yuşuf Ibn TaghrîBirdî’s (1411-
1470) al-Nuju’ûn al-zahira fî mulûk Miṣr wa-al-Qâhirah, and Jamâl al-Dîn al-
‘Awfî’s (d. 1228) Persian Jawâmi’ al-ḥikâyât wa-lawâmi’ al-riwâyât, in
addition to al-Tabarî’s history. As a result of this source base, Mehmed ibn
Mehmed treats the medieval Muslim dynasties, and above all the Zangids and
Ayyûbids, at much greater length than do the other histories studied here.340 His
work consists of over eighty-sections; it begins with the Prophet Muhammad’s

340 Nuhbe, fols.111a-136a and 142a-174a, respectively.
life and continues with the histories of the major Islamic dynasties up to his own
time. In the margins of each page he gives information on the significant
personalities of each epoch, as well as geographical locations that are important
to his history.341

Since Edirnevi used Lārī’s work as his model, his opinions bear a close
resemblance to those of Lārī. Although his work is also very formulaic in its
treatment of early Islamic history and usually avoids discussion or commentary,
he seems to have adopted the ahl al-baytist notions of Lārī’s work. Of particular
note is his reverence for ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalīb. ‘Alī’s virtues are beyond human
comprehension, we are told, and he is the gate of learning whose every word
warrants a book. Edirnevi vehemently insists that ‘Alī refrained from shedding
the blood of his brothers in faith and showed respect to all the companions of the
Prophet Muhammad; he acquits ‘Alī of any charges that were brought against
him regarding ‘Uthmān’s murder. Hasan’s and Husayn’s lives are narrated in
summary form; the virtues of each are listed. Husayn’s murderers are called
oppressors. Edirnevi refrains from commenting on Mu‘āwiyyah; however, he
projects an extremely negative image of his son Yazīd and his reign. He
condemns Yazid and his men because of their oppression of the people of Mecca
and Medina and explicitly blames Yazīd for Husayn’s murder, calling him
damned (la‘īn) and filthy (palīd). He also prays that Yazīd will get what he
deserves.

341 Abdurrahman Sağırli’s dissertation studies only the Ottoman section of Nuhbe and Edirnevi’s
Tarih-i Al-i Osman.
Like Lārī, Edirnevī adopts a very critical stance towards the Umayyads, apart from Mu'āwiyah. For instance, he condemns Marwān ibn al-Hakam (r. 684-685) because he caused the murder of very important companions of the Prophet and more than 30,000 Muslims for the sake of his nine-month reign, which he started at the age of eighty.342 He also condemns ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān and Yazīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik because of their employment of al-Hajjāj. He cites a tradition that the famous mystic Hasan al-Basrī (642-728), when asked his opinion of ‘Abd al-Malik, replied, “What can one think of a ruler whose assistant is al-Hajjāj?”343 Yazīd ibn al-Walīd is likewise condemned because of his atheistic attitudes and his disrespect for religion. There are, of course, Umayyad caliphs who are applauded, such as Mu'āwiyah ibn Yazīd (r. 683-684), to whom alone among the spiritually dead Umayyads God granted life (referring to Qur'ān 10: 31, in which God declares that He creates life from death), and Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 715-716), who put an end to al-Hajjāj’s oppression and made sure ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz succeeded him. ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz is lauded, as usual, because of his many good works, but especially because “he banned the cursing of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalīb in Umayyad mosques, which had been in practice for more than sixty years.”344

342 Nuhbe, fols. 23b-24b.
343 Ibid., fols. 24b-26b.
344 Ibid., fols. 27a-28a.
Edirnevī looks upon the ‘Abbāsid caliphs more favorably. His accounts of the ‘Abbāsid caliphs are short; the longest of them spans only a page or two. Compared to Karamānī, he is more interested in political narrative; however, he does not always express strong opinions about the ‘Abbāsids. In this section, Lārī’s history looms very large. Like Lārī, Edirnevī is interested in the ‘Abbāsid caliphs’ struggle against what he calls the zanādiqa, but also like Lārī, he makes a clear distinction between the zanādiqa, who, in the Ottoman context would be those who did not believe in God or in any religion but concealed their unbelief, and the true followers of the ahl al-bayt. 345 Although Edirnevi is not clear on who he means by zanādiqa, the term could refer to anyone whose religious stand was not approved by the caliphs. Al-Mahdī (r. 775-785) and al-Hādī (r. 785-786) were among the ‘Abbāsid caliphs who were militantly opposed to the zanādiqa but who suppressed not only them but also members of the ahl al-bayt. Edirnevī asserts that al-Hādī, who killed more than 100 descendants of Husayn ibn ‘Alī, was not allowed to rule for very long because of his persecution of the ahl al-bayt.346 Along similar lines, al-Mutawakkil, who lifted the mihna policy, is overall considered a good caliph, but his hatred of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalīb is considered a shame, as is his destruction of Husayn’s tomb and his ban on public access to the

345 Zindiq is an ambiguous term used for a variety of purposes; even its origin is not clear. It is believed that it was originally used to refer to pre-Islamic Persian belief systems such as Manicheism and Mazdaism. However, over the centuries, zindiq and zandaqa came to be used as a blanket term for anything beyond the mainstream Sunni understanding. They therefore were used for various sorts of Shi’ite movements and sects as well as for a spectrum of beliefs ranging from irreligion to pantheism and gnosticism. See Ocak, Zindiklar ve Mülhidler, 6-15, 348-354 (citing Ibn Kemal).

346 Nuhbe, fols. 38b-39a.
site.\textsuperscript{347} Al-Muntaṣir (r. 861-862), who let the people visit Husayn’s tomb and who restored the \textit{ahl al-bayt}'s exalted status, is depicted as a just and reasonable ruler. Likewise, al-Mu'taṣid’s term is depicted as peaceful because he was generous towards the \textit{ahl al-bayt}.\textsuperscript{348}

\textit{Ahl al-bayt}ism, which we observe in most Ottoman historians, consists of reverence for not only ‘Alī ibn ‘Abī Ṭalīb, Hasan, Husayn, and Fāṭima but for all twelve of the imams recognized by Twelver Shi’ites. Despite their devotion to the imams, however, these authors acknowledge the validity of the caliphs recognized by Sunnis. Nonetheless, most of them support the \textit{ahl-al-bayt} against the Umayyads, and they take the side of the imams of the ‘Alīd line in the face of the oppression of certain ‘Abbāsid caliphs. Although most of them reject the eschatological qualities of the twelfth Shi’ite imam, al-Mahdī, they still revere him and the other imams as epitomes of proper belief and conduct.

Suprisingly, given Edirnevi’s reverence for the \textit{ahl al-bayt}, his account does not include separate treatment of the Twelve Imams, although in the margins of the manuscript, he writes succinctly about them. On the other hand, he, like Lārī, has strong opinions regarding conflicts between Sunnis and Shi’ites in the course of Islamic history, and historical episodes in which the imams’ names were abused by political usurpers to legitimize their claims to rule and to impose their views on the public. Like Lārī, Edirnevi recounts the conflicts

\textsuperscript{347} Ibid., fols. 42b-43a.

\textsuperscript{348} Ibid., fols. 45a-45b.
between the Sunnis and Shi‘ites in Baghdad after the Buyids, a Daylamite family who were openly Shi‘ite, began to dominate the caliph and to usurp power in Baghdad.\footnote{On the Buyids, see John J. Donuhue The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq, 334 H./945 to 403 H./1012 : Shaping Institutions for the Future (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Wilferd Madelung, “The Assumption of the Title Shāhānshāh by the Būyids and ‘The Reign of the Daylam (Dawlat al-Daylam),’” Journal of Near Eastern Studies 28/2 (Apr., 1969): 84-108; reprinted in idem, Religious and Ethnic Movements in Medieval Islam (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1992).} In these passages, Edirnevī and Lārī do not depict the Shi‘ite side in openly negative terms but imply their position. However, what they seemed to deplore was not the fact that the Buyids were Shi‘ites (there had always been a sizable Shi‘ite population in Baghdad) but the fact that they wanted to impose their views on the people by encouraging lamentations for Husayn in public, and that they tried to replace the caliphs as sources of authority. Such conflicts were observed during al-Qā‘im’s (r. 1031-1075) and al-Muṭ‘ī’s (r. 946-975) reigns.

As to the other ‘Abbāsid caliphs, Edirnevī favors those who were generous towards the people of Mecca and Medina, such as Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786-809), on whom he does not comment. Al-Amīn is condemned because he spent all his time on fun and games and violated his brother’s right to the caliphate, whereas al-Ma‘mūn, whose preference for the ‘Alīids is obvious, is lauded for his knowledge and virtue.\footnote{On al-Amīn and al-Ma‘mūn, see El-Hibri, Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography, 59-143.} Like Karamāni, however, Edirnevī condemns al-Ma‘mūn’s imposition of the mihna, the “inquisition” that insisted on the createdness of the Qur‘ān, and stresses the harm inflicted upon scholars by this institution during the reigns of al-Ma‘mūn, al-Mutaṣîm (r. 833-842), and al-Wāthiq (842-847).
In conclusion, Mehmed ibn Mehmed’s treatment of early Islamic history is very succinct compared to other histories discussed here. He is heavily influenced by Lārī’s work, and his work reflects the ahl-al-baytist notions of his source.

Writing During the Age of Ottoman Encyclopedism: Katip Çelebi’s Arabic Fadhlaka

Katip Çelebi was born in 1609. His life spanned the first half of the seventeenth century, and he became the foremost representative of a changing Ottoman intellectual scene. From his father, who was a member of the cavalry of the Porte (sīlahdār bōlgū) and a scribe in the fiscal administration of Anatolia (Anadolu muhāsebesi), he learned the scribal profession, and with him, he participated in various military campaigns from 1624 to 1628, when he was in his teens. He entered his father’s profession instead of obtaining an official diploma to teach in the Ottoman madrasas, which could be very tricky given the meritocratic frustrations of the seventeenth century. During his twenties, he acquired the basics of an Islamic education, reading works of Qur’ānic exegesis and Islamic law. An important milestone in his life was his acquaintance with Kadızade Mehmed Efendi (1582–1635), the fiery preacher of the early seventeenth century who had a mass following due to his polarizing views and puritanical opinions. Although Katip Çelebi seems to have been impressed by the preacher’s lively sermons, he did not adhere to his puritanical philosophy. He also studied with some of the well-known madrasa professors of his time, notably Arec
Mustafa Efendi, and learned astronomy, mathematics, and other sciences. He was married late and his only heir, a son, died at an early age.

Katip Çelebi proved to be a very different intellectual from most of his contemporaries. He had only a passing interest in politics; he was also less interested in promotion and attaining lucrative posts than in the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake. He therefore rightly became the most well-known Ottoman intellectual of the seventeenth century. Inheriting large sums of money from his relatives, he spent most of it on books. He trained his keen eye on Ottoman society and had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. Due to his many works, Katip Çelebi was considered to be an Ottoman Suyūṭī - although al-Suyūṭī is said to have composed more than 800 works, whereas Katip Çelebi composed less than a twentieth of that number. Regardless, he was still one of the most prolific authors of the Ottoman period, despite his death at the age of forty-eight. Most of Katip Çelebi’s oeuvre falls under the heading of encyclopedic work. He is perhaps best-known for his Kесfi‘iz-zunūn, a bibliographical

351 For Katip Celebi’s biography of Arec Mustafa Efendi in the Turkish Fezleke, see Orhan Şak Gökyay, ed., Katip Çelebi: Yaşamı, Kişiliği ve Yaptılarından Seçmeler (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1982), 117-118.


353 For Katip Çelebi’s works and a comprehensive list of secondary works on him, see Mehmet Yılmaz, Katip Çelebi Bibliyografiyası (İstanbul: Istanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 2011).
dictionary containing entries on more than 15,000 works and close to 10,000 authors. Also justifiably famous are his geographical compendium, known as Cihānnümā, and his Ottoman history, the Fezleke. Among many other works of interest, he composed a work related to the reform of the Ottoman Empire, Düstürül-‘amel li-ıslâhi‘l-halel, in which he offers solutions to the budget deficit during Sultan İbrahim’s reign. Although he relies on his observations, as did his contemporary Koçi Bey, his treatise is nowhere close to the comprehensive reform treatise of the latter. Although there has been a growing interest in Katip Çelebi’s works, a comprehensive study of his works has not been composed, nor have most of his encyclopedic works been put in their proper context. Since his geographical work, Cihānnümā, introduced and publicized ideas such as the roundness of the earth, it revolutionized geographical knowledge in the Ottoman Empire. His historical works also became quite influential: later Ottoman historians used Fezleke extensively.

Katip Çelebi’s very first work, which survives in an autograph version, is an Arabic universal history known as Fadhlakat awäl al-akhyar fi ‘ilm al-tārîkh wa-al-akhbâr (henceforth Fadhlaka). Since he wrote an addendum to this work

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355 See Koçi Bey Risaleleri, eds. Zuhuri Danışman and Seda Çakmacıoğlu (Istanbul: Kabalcı, 2008).

356 For a recent attempt see Bilal Yurtoğlu, Katip Çelebi (Ankara: AKM Yayınları, 2009).
in Turkish with the same name, covering Ottoman history, interest in this unfinished draft remained limited. This work was completed in 1642. Katip Çelebi states that he presented it to Şeyhülislam Yahya Efendi (d. 1644), who liked it and ordered him to make a clean copy of it. However, the author says that he did not manage to complete this task. Katip Çelebi is one of the few authors whose works can be found today in autograph manuscripts. The existence of so many unfinished works among Katip Çelebi’s corpus indicates that he was in some ways a perfectionist who constantly revised his works; it seems he had little interest in circulating them before they reached the state he desired.

Besides the unfinished nature of the *Fadhlaka*, the fact that it is in Arabic seems to hinder further exploitation of the work. Early in his career, Katip Çelebi seemed to prefer to write in Arabic. However, like many other Ottoman historians, he seemed to realize that compositions in Turkish circulated more widely among the Ottoman intelligentsia. Thus, he wrote his works of geography and history in Turkish. For *Fadhlaka*, however, his choice of Arabic was a natural one because he respected the works of Cenâbî and Karamânî, which were composed in Arabic and on which he relied extensively. Although most scholars who have written on *Fadhlaka* agree that it is essentially a reproduction of Cenâbî’s work in summary form, none seems to realize that Katip Çelebi benefited equally from Karamânî’s *Akhbâr al-duwal*. A case in point is his view of history, which is a summary of Karamânî’s view as outlined in *Akhbâr*. Like Karamânî, he includes different dictionary definitions of history and discussions.

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of how it was understood in the past and of its origins. He evaluates history as a discipline that has lessons for the present while providing advice and precautions.\footnote{Katip Çelebi, 	extit{Fadhlakat aqwāl al-akhyār fi ‘ilm al-tārīkh wa’l-akhbār} (Beyazıt Library, MS 1038), fols. 2a-2b.}

An important part of the unique manuscript of 	extit{Fadhlaka} is unfortunately missing: folios 3 through 25, wherein Katip Çelebi is said to have listed 1300 historical works that he consulted. It is possible that he tore this part out when he was preparing his 	extit{Kesfī’z-zunūn}, since later he decided not to publish his Arabic 	extit{Fadhlaka}. The works that Katip Çelebi listed are, in any case, not an indicator of the sources that he actually used in composing this work. The sources he actually used are rather limited, probably not more than a hundred. The missing 1300 works are probably history books that he did not actually read from start to finish but that he saw in the collections of different booksellers and libraries during his journeys to different parts of the Ottoman Empire.\footnote{He began his encyclopedic project 	extit{Kesfī’z-zunūn} in Aleppo by writing down on the equivalent of index cards the titles of books he saw in the booksellers’ shops.}

In an early treatment of 	extit{Fadhlaka}, Mükrimim Halil Yınanç finds its sections on early Islamic history redundant and unimportant.\footnote{Mükrimin Halil Yınanç, “Fezleket Ekval el-Ahyar hakkında,” in 	extit{Katip Çelebi: Hayati ve Eserleri Hakkında İncelemeler}, 98.} However, these sections show the author’s unique position on the controversies of early Islamic history while demonstrating his extensive appropriation of the ideas of the great North African historian Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406). Until now, Katip Çelebi’s
Düstūr has been studied as the main expression of his Ibn Khaldūnian views. Yet Katip Çelebi reproduces Ibn Khaldūn’s ideas extensively in his Arabic Fadhlaka. Immediately following the missing folios, Katip Çelebi copies Ibn Khaldūn’s view of history verbatim, although he skips some of the details and examples. In the corresponding section of the famous Introduction (Muqaddimah) to his universal history, Ibn Khaldūn explains why the science of ‘umrān, or the study of civilizations, is better than jarh wa-ta’dil, the critical examination of historical personalities, usually applied to the chains of transmission of hadīths. Ibn Khaldūn argues that personality criticism works well for the hadīth sciences but that it is better to rely on the study of civilizations to understand what was and was not possible in the past and to distinguish truth from falsehood:

If this is so, the normative method for distinguishing right from wrong in historical information on the grounds of (inherent) possibility or absurdity, is to investigate human social organization, which is identical with civilization. We must distinguish the conditions that attach themselves to the essence of civilization as required by its very nature; the things that are accidental (to civilization) and cannot be counted on; and the things that cannot possibly attach themselves to it. If we do that, we shall have a normative method for distinguishing right from wrong and truth from falsehood in historical information by means of a logical demonstration that admits of no doubts. Then whenever we hear about certain conditions occurring in civilization, we shall know what to accept and what to declare spurious. We shall have a sound yardstick with the help of which

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361 Katip Çelebi, Fadhlaka, fols. 26b-28b.

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historians may find the path of truth and correctness where their reports are concerned.\textsuperscript{362}

Ibn Khaldūn applies his view of history by scrutinizing some of the mistakes of famous historians. Katip Çelebi adopts this discussion wholesale. He discusses, for instance, whether the ‘Alid origins of the Fātimid caliphs were authentic (he believes they were);\textsuperscript{363} whether there really was a copper city as reported in al-Masʿūdī’s \textit{Murūj al-dhahab}; and whether there really was a city called Iram in the desert near Aden famous for its pillars, as mentioned in the Qurʾān.\textsuperscript{364} Ibn Khaldūn also criticizes al-Masʿūdī on several occasions because he did not ask the historian’s fundamental question, namely whether things that were reported could really have happened. A case in point is al-Masʿūdī’s report on the numbers of soldiers in the ancient Israelite army that followed Moses out of Egypt. Moses is said to have counted the army in the desert, and the number came to more than 600,000. However, Ibn Khaldūn says, al-Masʿūdī forgets to take into consideration whether Egypt and Syria could possibly have sustained such an enormous number of soldiers.\textsuperscript{365}

In a study of Ibn Khaldūnism in the Ottoman Empire, Cornell Fleischer argues that Ibn Khaldūn’s views “hardly revolutionized” Ottoman historical writing. Instead, Ottoman historians gave a warm welcome to Ibn Khaldūn’s

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[363]{Ibid., 51-52. Iram is mentioned in Qurʾān 89:7.}
\footnotetext[364]{Ibn Khaldun, \textit{Muqaddimah}, 22-25.}
\footnotetext[365]{Ibid., 12-13.}
\end{footnotes}
ideas, with which they were familiar from other sources (such as ethical works and Persian works on political wisdom). He argues that Ottoman intellectuals used Ibn Khaldūn’s works for their own purposes: to legitimize a decline scheme that was already well-entrenched in Ottoman historical consciousness. It is indeed true that Katip Çelebi’s reform treatise Düstür is inspired by Ibn Khaldūnian “dynastic cyclism.” However, it seems unrealistic to assume that Katip Çelebi was interested in Ibn Khaldūn only because Ibn Khaldūn’s view of dynastic cyclism suited his purposes. It is important here to remember that despite authoring Düstür, Katip Çelebi had little interest in politics and political writing. On the evidence of Fadhılda and Kesfū‘īz-zunūn, Katip Çelebi venerated Ibn Khaldūn not just because of his dynastic scheme (which, of course, explained a great deal about the evolution of the Ottoman dynasty) but also because of his historical and scientific method. By the same token, Fahri Fındıkoğlu’s contention that the Ottomans utilized Ibn Khaldūn selectively by employing his decline scheme but not adopting his philosophy of history does not seem justified in the case of Katip Çelebi. On the contrary, Katip Çelebi seems very impressed by Ibn Khaldūn’s view of the sciences. A case in point is how Katip Çelebi treats philosophy (hikmet) in his Kesfū‘īz-zunūn. He quotes a long passage from the Muqaddimah regarding the philosophical sciences and their circulation among

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the different nations of the world, including the Islamic states. He recaps how the Muslims began to rediscover these sciences during the time of the ‘Abbāsid caliphate and how these sciences were actually crucial for humanity.\textsuperscript{368}

Although he benefited from Ibn Khaldūn’s philosophy of sciences, Ibn Khaldūn’s theory of dynasties still holds a significant place in Katip Çelebi’s oeuvre. For instance, at the point in \textit{Keşfî’z-zunûn} where Katip Çelebi discusses Ibn Khaldūn’s ideas on philosophy, he adds his own description of the circulation of philosophy in the Ottoman Empire and the drop-off in interest in it after the mid-sixteenth century. Like Ibn Khaldūn, he sees the lack of interest in philosophy and the hard sciences as an indication of the decline of a state. In \textit{Fadhlaka}, before surveying Islamic states chronologically, he quotes Ibn Khaldūn’s scheme of dynasties and states verbatim and at great length. According to Ibn Khaldūn’s scheme of dynastic cyclism, every dynasty goes through five stages, and in each stage there are certain characteristics peculiar to that stage. Here, I reproduce, in Franz Rosenthal’s translation, Katip Çelebi’s quotation of Ibn Khaldūn:

\begin{quote}
It should be known that a dynasty goes through different stages and encounters new conditions. Through the conditions that are peculiar to a particular stage, the supporters of the dynasty acquire in that stage traits of character such as do not exist in any other stage. Traits of character are the natural result of the peculiar situations in which they are found.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{368} Katip Çelebi, \textit{Keşfî’z-zunûn}, vol. 2, 566-568.
The conditions and stages of a dynasty are as a rule no more than five [in number].

The first stage is that of success, the overthrow of all opposition, and the appropriation of royal authority from the preceding dynasty. In this stage, the ruler serves as model to his people by the manner in which he acquires glory, collects taxes, defends property, and provides military protection. He does not claim anything exclusively for himself to the exclusion of [his people], because [such an attitude] is what is required by group feeling, [and it was group feeling] that gave superiority [to the dynasty], and [group feeling] still continues to exist as before.

The second stage is the one in which the ruler gains complete control over his people, claims royal authority all for himself, excluding them, and prevents them from trying to have a share in it. In this stage, the ruler of the dynasty is concerned with gaining adherents and acquiring clients and followers in great numbers, so as to be able to blunt the aspirations of the people who share in his group feeling and belong to his group, who are of the same descent as he himself and have the same claim to royal authority as he has. He keeps them from power and bars them from the sources of [power]. He stops them from getting to it, and, eventually, all the power is in the hands of his family. He reserves all the glory that he is building up to the members of his own house. He spends as much, or more, care to keep [his people] at a distance and to subdue them, as the first members of the dynasty expended in the search for power. The first [members of the dynasty] kept strangers away, and all the people who shared in their group feeling supported them in this. He, on the other hand, keeps [his] relatives away, and he is supported in this effort only by a very small number of people, who are not related to him. Thus, he undertakes a very difficult task.

The third stage is one of leisure and tranquility in which the fruits of royal authority are enjoyed. [These fruits are] the things that human nature desires, such as acquisition of property, creation of lasting
monuments, and fame. All the ability [of the ruler] is expended on collecting taxes; regulating income and expenses, bookkeeping and planning expenditures; erecting large buildings, big constructions, spacious cities, and lofty monuments; presenting gifts to embassies of nobles from [foreign] nations and tribal dignitaries; and dispensing bounty to his own people. In addition, he supports the demands of his followers and retinue with money and positions. He inspects his soldiers, pays them well, and distributes fairly their allowances every month. Eventually, the result of this [liberality] shows itself in their dress, their fine equipment, and their armor on parade days. The ruler thus can impress friendly dynasties and frighten hostile ones with [his soldiers]. This stage is the last during which the ruler is in complete authority. Throughout this and the previous stages, the rulers are independent in their opinions. They build up their strength and show the way for those after them.

The fourth stage is one of contentment and peacefulness. The ruler is content with what his predecessors have built. He lives in peace with all his royal peers. He adopts the tradition of his predecessors and follows closely in their footsteps. He imitates their ways most carefully. He thinks that to depart from tradition would mean the destruction of his power and that they knew better [what is good for the preservation of] the glory they themselves had built.

The fifth stage is one of waste and squandering. In this stage, the ruler wastes on pleasures and amusements [the treasures] accumulated by his ancestors, through [excessive] generosity to his inner circle and at their parties. Also, he acquires bad, low class followers to whom he entrusts the most important matters [of state], which they are not qualified to handle by themselves, not knowing which of them they should tackle and which they should leave alone. [In addition,] the ruler seeks to destroy the great clients of his people and followers of his predecessors. Thus, they come to hate him and conspire to refuse support to him. [Furthermore] he loses a number of soldiers by spending their
allowances on his pleasures [instead of paying them] and by refusing them access to his person and not supervising them [properly]. Thus, he ruins the foundations his ancestors had laid and tears down what they had built up. In this stage, the dynasty is seized by senility and the chronic disease from which it can hardly ever rid itself, for which it can find no cure, and, eventually, it is destroyed. 369

As one can easily grasp, this beautifully laid-out view of dynasties was welcome to Ottoman intellectuals of the post-Süleymanic age, who believed that the Ottoman state had reached its final stages and, in order to slow this irreversible cycle, must return to the practices of the “golden age.” Therefore it makes sense that interest in Ibn Khaldūn’s work surged during this period.

In the same section, Katip Çelebi discusses the issue of political leadership in the Islamic community (imāmah). Here he lists the requirements of the imam according to Ibn Khaldūn: the imam should have knowledge, probity, competence, and physical and mental soundness.370 He adds that there is controversy on the fifth attribute, which is descent from the Quraysh. The Quraysh, according to Ibn Khaldūn, weakened over time and other dynasties got the better of them.371 Ibn Khaldūn explains that although a majority of scholars still agree (in his time) that the imam should be from the Quraysh, they do not understand that Qurayshite descent was made a requirement only to sustain group feeling (‘asabiyah) among the Muslims and to prevent them from

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369 Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddimah, 342-344; Katip Çelebi, Fadhlaka, fols. 99a-100b.
370 Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddimah, 385-386.
371 Katip Çelebi, Fadhlaka, fol. 98b, marginalia.
splitting apart. Therefore, as long as group feeling is sustained, it does not matter if the imam is Qurayshī or not:

If it is established that Qurashite [descent] as a condition [of the imamate] was intended to remove dissension with the help of [Qurashite] group feeling and superiority, and if we know that the Lawgiver [Muhammad] does not make special laws for any one generation, period, or nation, we also know that [Qurashite descent] falls under [the heading of] competence. Thus, we have linked it up with [the condition of competence] and have established the overall purpose of [the condition of] Qurashite [descent], which is the existence of group feeling. Therefore, we consider it a [necessary] condition for the person in charge of the affairs of the Muslims that he belong to people who possess a strong group feeling, superior to that of their contemporaries, so that they can force the others to follow them and the whole thing can be united for effective protection. [Such group feeling as a rule] does not comprise all areas and regions. Qurashite [group feeling], however, was all-comprehensive, since the mission of Islam, which the Quraysh represented, was all comprehensive, and the group feeling of the Arabs was adequate to that mission. Therefore, [the Arabs] overpowered all the other nations. At the present time, however, each region has people of its own who represent the superior group feeling [there].

After relaying Ibn Khaldūn’s views, Katip Çelebi puts forth an argument according to which the imam should be from the Quraysh but not necessarily from the Hashimites or ‘Alīds. Moreover, it is not a requirement for him to be infallible, to be the best person of his age, or to be upright and devout. As long as he protects the borders and has the power to rule over his subjects, he can lead the community. He cannot be deposed because of his debauchery (fisq) or sins.

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This argument had been used by Sunni authors to legitimize the Umayyads’ claims to the caliphate. In a separate section of the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldūn discusses the Shi‘ite view of the imamate, but Katip Çelebi does not include this discussion in his own work. Ibn Khaldūn’s inclusion of the requirement of Qurayshite descent under the heading of competence is a very clever strategy. By re-employing this strategy, Katip Çelebi is legitimizing the Ottomans’ claims to the caliphate, thereby sending a clear message to the Safavids, who claimed authority based on their alleged descent from the family of the Prophet. Since it was no longer a requirement for the imam to be a descendant of the Prophet, or indeed a member of the Quraysh at all, the Ottomans, who had other qualities essential to the imam and who sustained a strong group feeling, could very well be legitimate leaders of the Muslim community.

In his treatment of the Rāshidūn, Katip Çelebi returns to his main source, Cenābī’s history, although he shortens some parts of Cenābī’s narrative and expands others. He also makes occasional references to Karamānī’s *Akhbār al-duwal*. Abū Bakr’s and ‘Umar’s reigns are briefly summarized. In his coverage of ‘Uthmān’s reign, Katip Çelebi rejects as unreliable a report by Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab to the effect that since ‘Uthmān favored his relatives, those who disdain him should be excused; Cenābī uses this report to neutralize ‘Uthmān’s

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373 Ibid., 393-404. Here, Ibn Khaldūn relies on al-Shahrastānī’s (1086-1153) *al-Milal wa-al-nihal*.

374 Katip Çelebi, *Fadhлaka*, fols. 65a-69a.
Although relatively detailed, Katip Çelebi’s account of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalib’s reign is likewise a précis of the relevant section in Cenābī’s chronicle. Like Cenābī, Katip Çelebi emphasizes ‘Alī’s virtues. At the end of this section, he raises the question of whether Sunnis consider ‘Alī or ‘Uthmān more virtuous. Drawing on the scholar and Sufi al-Yāfī’ī (1298-1367), he concludes that there are some Sunnis who regard ‘Alī as superior to ‘Uthmān; among them are the authoritative sīra author Muhammad Ibn Isḥāq (704-770) and the famous mystic Sufyān al-Thawrī (716-778). Katip Çelebi does not clarify in Fadhlaka the ranking among the first four caliphs; in Mizānūl-hakk, however, he advises his readers to follow the path of ahl al-sunnah wa-al-jamā‘ah. According to the mainstream Sunni position, which was defended by, for example, the sixteenth-century Ottoman jurist and mystic Birgevī Mehmed Efendi, the ranking among the early caliphs follows the historical sequence, that is, Abū Bakr comes first, followed by ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Alī. After them in virtuousness come the rest of the Prophet’s companions, then the companions’ followers, then the followers of the followers.376

Katip Çelebi renders Hasan’s and Husayn’s biographies briefly, without commenting on their distinctive virtues. Unlike earlier Ottoman historians, apart from Karamānī, he does not provide biographies of the remaining Shi‘ite imams.

375 Ibid., fol. 71a.

376 Imam Birgivi (Birgevi Mehmed Efendi), The Path of Muhammad: A Book on Islamic Morals and Ethics (Al-Tariqah al-Muhammadiyyah) and The Last Will and Testament (Vasiyyetname), ed. Tosun Bayrak (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2005), 87.
The *ahl-al-bayt*ist narrative, which was very much present in Cenābī’s history, turns into a dry summary of events in Katip Çelebi’s work. Like Karamānī but unlike Cenābī, Katip Çelebi often weeds out ‘Alīd rivals to the Umayyads’ and ‘Abbāsid’s rule. Although he might have opted for this method to keep his work short, Katip Çelebi seems to have been heavily influenced by the conflicts between the Kadızadelis and the Sufis. His choice of a more mainstream Sunni view of events was a consequence of how he approached this conflict.377

Since Katip Çelebi uses Ibn Khaldūn’s work extensively, it is appropriate here to discuss how Ibn Khaldūn interprets the succession problem in early Islamic history and whether his interpretation differs from Katip Çelebi’s. Ibn Khaldūn’s view of the issue of succession to Muhammad reflects what might be called a mainstream Sunni understanding. He supports the Umayyads because they represented group feeling (‘asabiyyah) at the time, the only thing that prevented the splitting of the Muslim community. He acknowledges the wickedness of Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiyyah, who is accused of the murder of Husayn ibn ‘Alī, the Prophet’s grandson. However, he finds Husayn faulty in his judgment (although he considers him a martyr because of his good intentions) because he erred when he opposed the group feeling that was strong among the Umayyads.378 Katip Çelebi adopts a similar outlook on this matter although he does not agree that Husayn erred in his judgment. He does not openly criticize and curse Yazīd, but he does not refrain from discussing his wickedness.


acknowledges that there is a controversy over cursing Yazīd. He adds that the Prophet banned Muslims from cursing fellow Muslims who pray five times a day; Yazīd was known to be a Muslim who prayed. He also mentions alternative views, such as that of Ibn ‘Arabī, which allow such cursing based on the fact that Yazīd’s acts cannot be considered the acts of a true Muslim.

In an interesting section at the end of his *Fadhlaka*, Katip Çelebi includes Yazīd in a list of history’s notorious debauchers and oppressors; however, he does not comment on this elsewhere in the work. In his famous treatise *Mızānu’l-hakκ*, however, he explains the issue in some detail. This book discusses twenty-one issues that were controversial in Katip Çelebi’s lifetime, such as the propriety of Sufi lodges, singing and whirling in mystical rituals, using tobacco and coffee, the faith of the Prophet’s parents, and Ibn ‘Arabī’s concept of “unity of being.” After discussing each of these issues Katip Çelebi reveals his own position. Katip Çelebi wrote his book in an attempt to curb the hostilities between the Kadızadelis and the followers of the Halveti Sufi leader Sivâsî Efendi. The Kadızadelis took their name from Kadızade Mehmed Efendi, a onetime teacher of Katip Çelebi, who, as noted above, as a young man admired his preaching. Kadızade is said to have been an eloquent preacher who attracted a huge following. He composed a widely-read commentary on the *Țarîkâtü’l-Muhammediye* of Birgevi Mehmed Efendi, described above. (The Kadızadelis adopted a shorter, more basic work by Birgevi, known simply as the *Risâle*, as a sort of proof-text.) Both authors were known as being rigid followers of the Sunni
path who did not criticize Sufi practices which were in conformity with the ones of the Prophet but opposed innovations to Islamic practice at the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Like the thirteenth-century Damascene jurist Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) and similar early salafi figures, they came into conflict with certain Sufi orders of whose religious practices they vehemently disapproved.

During Katip Çelebi’s lifetime and in the second half of the seventeenth century, the Kadızadelis’ struggle against particular Sufi orders frequently took the form of physical conflict, which created turmoil in the Ottoman capital. Ranged against the Kadızadelis were the followers of Abdülmecid Sivāsī Efendi, a Halveti shaykh who also enjoyed a large following, including many members of the imperial court. Like Kadızade Mehmed, he was a Friday preacher in one of the biggest mosques in Istanbul. As opposed to Kadızade Mehmed’s literal reading of the Qur’an and other religious texts, Sivāsī argued that there was an esoteric path to knowledge of God that could be attained only by a select few who chose to follow the Sufi path. Although both groups considered themselves followers of the Sunni path, Sivāsī’s view was much more liberal in matters concerning religion and society. In later life, Katip Çelebi distanced himself

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379 It has long been thought that Birgevi used Ibn Taymiyyah’s work extensively in his treatises; however, a recent study argues that he did not utilize Ibn Taymiyyah. Emrullah Yüksel, Mehemd Birgivi’nin (929-981 1523-1573) Dini ve Siyasi Görüşleri (Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 2011), 148.

from Kadızade Mehmed, especially because he did not approve of the Kadızadelis’ opposition to the rational sciences and philosophy, which Katip Çelebi believed were essential. According to Katip Çelebi, both the Kadızadelis and the followers of Sivāṣī benefited from the controversy and encouraged it in order to fuel their own notoriety. Although Murad IV is said to have been influenced by the Kadızadelis’ views when he closed coffee shops and banned the use of tobacco, he was probably more concerned with curbing potentially disruptive political gatherings and upholding his own authority, as noted above. According to Katip Çelebi, banning tobacco and coffee is futile because they are so entrenched in Ottoman society. Overall, Katip Çelebi advises rulers to leave their subjects alone in the matter of everyday practices.

One of the issues that split the Kadızadelis and the Sufis was cursing Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiya. The very fact that such a controversy existed suggests that many Ottoman subjects had adopted the practice of cursing.381 The Kadızadelis’ spiritual guide, Birgevi Mehmed, disapproves of such cursing in general because it is not permissible to curse someone who did not die as an infidel; he lists many hadīths forbidding this practice. He does not, however, specify whether Muslims can curse Yazīd.382 In Mizānūl-hakḵ, Katip Çelebi summarizes this controversy and cites different views. He categorically forbids Muslims from cursing

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381 Niyazi-i Mısırî, who was also a Halveti, was one of those Sufis who, in his treatises, allowed the cursing of Yazīd. Cavuşoğlu, “The Kadızadeli Movement,” 282-283.

382 Birgivî, The Path of Muhammad, 246-248.
Mu'āwiya because he was a companion of the Prophet, and all companions should be mentioned with blessings. Any disagreement among them is a matter for *ijtihād* (independent reasoning); the companion who is proven wrong gets a good credit in heaven for his intention, whereas the one who was actually right gets more credit. The dispute between 'Alī and Mu'āwiya must thus be decided by *ijtihād*; although 'Alī was right and Mu'āwiya wrong they both deserve credit because they were the companions of Muhammad. This is the same position that Katip Çelebi takes in *Fadhlaka*.\(^\text{383}\) As for Yazīd, Katip Çelebi notes that there are conflicting views. Shi‘ites and some Sunnis, such as the Shāfī‘ī jurist Muhammad al-Kiya al-Harrāsī (d. 1110-1111) and Sadeddīn Taftāzānī (d. 1389) allow cursing him. But the majority of Sunnis, including al-Ghazālī, do not approve of cursing Yazīd. (He also includes this report of al-Ghazālī in *Fadhlaka*.) According to Katip Çelebi, most people curse Yazīd not because they revere 'Alī or abhor Mu'āwiya but because they imitate other people who curse; he points out that using Yazīd’s name in vulgar curses has become popular practice. A matter such as this, which has been around for a millennium, should be put to rest; people who follow the middle path, which Katip Çelebi clearly believes is the correct path, should heed al-Ghazālī’s warnings and stay out of the affair. These ideas clearly reflect Katip Çelebi’s overall attitude towards the conflicts in the early Islamic community. In *Fadhlaka* and other works, he adopts a conciliatory attitude towards matters such as this and encourages his readers to stay away from controversy and public dispute, which are futile.

\(^\text{383}\) Katip Çelebi, *Fadhlaka*, fols. 76a-76b.
Katip Çelebi’s “middle path” policy can also be observed in his section on the Umayyad caliphs. Since Cenābī disapproved of the Umayyads and summarized their reigns only very briefly, Katip Çelebi relies on Karamānī’s *Akhbār al-duwal* in this section, although he does not quote it extensively. Unlike Ottoman historians of the previous century discussed in this study, he is not very critical of the Umayyads. Of course, rulers who were upright and devout, such as ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz or Yazīd ibn al-Walid, are given special treatment, as they are in earlier histories. The remaining Umayyads, however, are not disparaged.

In his section on the ‘Abbāsids, Katip Çelebi continues to rely heavily on Cenābī and Karamānī, mixing and matching information from both. His section on the ‘Abbāsids is quite brief; the reigns of all thirty-six caliphs are summarized in only eight folios.384 His overall attitude towards the ‘Abbāsid caliphs is not significantly different from his view of the Umayyads. At the beginning of the account, however, he reports a *hadīth* of Muhammad in which the Prophet gives his uncle ‘Abbās the good news of his family’s future political fortunes. He calls only a few of the ‘Abbāsid caliphs *amīr al-mu’minīn* (commander of the faithful), notably al-Saffāh (r. 750-754), who brought the dynasty to power, and Hārūn al-Rashīd, who is praised for his visible piety and generosity towards scholars (probably a reflection of al-Tabārī’s account as appropriated by Cenābī.) One noticeable difference from Cenābī’s account is that Katip Çelebi does not mention

384 Ibid., fols. 107b-114a.
the ‘Alīd claimants to the caliphate, nor does he emphasize the rivalry between the ‘Alīds and the ‘Abbāsid. Cenābī devotes numerous pages to the rapprochement between al-Ma’mūn and ‘Alī al-Riḍā. Katip Çelebi does no more than mention that al-Ma’mūn was married to ‘Alī al-Riḍā’s daughter and that he publicly proclaimed that ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalīb was the best human being after Muḥammad. He mentions the mihna imposed by al-Ma’mūn and his immediate successors, and the actions taken against the ‘Alīds by al-Mutawakkil and his successors, but he does not express an opinion on any of these. In marked contrast, Cenābī, in his account of al-Mutawakkil’s reign, tells the story of the scholar Ibn al-Sakayt, who told al-Mutawakkil that ‘Alī, Hasan and Husayn were superior to the Umayyads; in punishment, al-Mutawakkil ordered his tongue cut off at the root so that he died immediately. This story does not appear in either Karamānī’s or Katip Çelebi’s account of al-Mutawakkil, even though both used Cenābī’s history as their principal source.

Ottoman decline writers such as Mustafa ‘Alī recounted the end of the ‘Abbāsid with bitterness and used them as a cautionary tale to warn of what would happen if the Ottomans did not heed the lessons of history. Katip Çelebi, in contrast, does not frame the decline of the ‘Abbāsid in this fashion. He sees the main reason for their decline as their appointment of viziers to all important administrative positions, so that the mechanisms of government were in their hands. He mentions the role of the vizier Ibn al-Alqāmī in the ‘Abbāsid’s

385 Mustafa Cenabi, Aylām al-Ẓāhir, fol. 381b.
destruction, but he does not magnify the role of the Shi‘ite scholar Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī in joining the ranks of the Mongol general Hulagu, as Mustafa ‘Alī does. Katip Çelebi does not hold as strong opinions as Mustafa ‘Alī, most likely because he was not as personally invested in the Ottoman enterprise as Mustafa ‘Alī was.

Katip Çelebi’s *Fadhlaka* remains underexploited to this day. It is, however, significant as an example of the extensive appropriation of Ibn Khaldūn’s work in the mid-seventeenth century by an Ottoman encyclopedist who did not simply duplicate Ibn Khaldūn’s scheme of dynastic cyclism but adopted his philosophy of history and of the rational sciences. Katip Çelebi’s work also reveals how much he was influenced by the public controversies between the Kadızadelis and the Sufi orders. He played a mediating role in these debates, adopting what might be called a mainstream or “middle path” Sunni position. Unlike many other Ottoman historians discussed in this study, for example, he does not curse Yazīd but advises people to refrain from debating this issue. His positions on such questions allow us to make better sense of other Ottoman historians’ positions while showing how much these historians differed in their *ahl-al-bayt*ism.

**Conclusion**

Histories composed by Ottoman intellectuals in the first half of the seventeenth century built on the foundations of the great universal histories of the previous century. In the composition of Islamic histories (which were ordinarily part of universal histories), Mustafa Cenābī’s history established the norm. Two of the works discussed in this chapter, Karamānī’s *Akhbār al-duwal*
and Katip Çelebi’s *Fadhlaka*, relied far more heavily on Cenābī’s *Aylām al-Zāhir* than on any other work. Edirnevī’s *Nuhbetü’t-tevārīh*, in contrast, drew chiefly on Lārī’s *Mīrātül-edvâr*. None of these histories was as ambitious as the histories of the previous century in terms of coverage and originality. A comparison between Mustafa ʿĀlī’s universal history and the histories discussed in this chapter exemplifies the more modest scope of the later chronicles. Mustafa ʿĀlī, who believed that he was contributing significantly to the universal historical tradition, wrote a truly comprehensive history, whereas the historians discussed in this chapter were content to reproduce the histories of the previous century instead of composing wholly original narratives. The overall change in the Ottoman polity resulting from the multi-faceted societal crisis of the seventeenth century was largely responsible for this change in historical composition. This transformation prompted seventeenth-century historians to focus on “what went wrong” even in their treatment of early Muslim dynasties.

Although the historians discussed in this chapter relied on their predecessors for much of their coverage, they were selective in adopting their predecessors’ interpretations and analysis. For example, since Edirnevī relied on Lārī’s work, he adopted Lārī’s *ahl-al-bayt*ist attitude. Karamānī, on the other hand, adopted a more visibly Sunni outlook towards matters in early Islamic history while still honoring many of the *ahl-al-bayt*ist notions of his main source, Cenābī. Katip Çelebi, in contrast, stripped Cenābī’s account of its pronounced *ahl-al-bayt*ism and presented a more mainstream Sunni reading of early Islamic
history. In addition, Katip Çelebi’s coverage of early Islamic history was influenced by the conflicts in his own time between the Kadızadelis and the Sufis; on many controversial questions in early Islamic history, he opted for a middle path. Thus, unlike Cenäbî or Karamânî, or indeed Mustafa ‘Ālî, he did not condone openly cursing Yazîd ibn Mu‘awiya.

A close reading of these seventeenth-century historians’ takes on early Islamic history reveals that these Sunni intellectuals adopted *ahl al-bayt*ism to different degrees. Their attitudes ranged from rigid Sunnism, practically devoid of any sympathy for the ‘Alid members of the *ahl al-bayt*, to what we might call extreme *ahl-al-bayt*ism, with profound sympathy even for the Shi‘ite imams who followed Husayn ibn ‘Alî. This range of outlook is an indication of the complexity and multivalent character of Ottoman Sunnism.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

Islam in the Ottoman context, with all its dimensions, is one of the traditionally understudied subjects of Ottoman history. The pioneering works of Fuad Köprülü\textsuperscript{386} in the early twentieth century shed light on the role and formation of Islam in pre-Ottoman Anatolia. In the years following his publications, however, the issue was relatively neglected until after the 1980s,\textsuperscript{387} when the studies of Ahmet Yaşar Ocak,\textsuperscript{388} under the influence of French anthropologist-historian Irène Mélikoff,\textsuperscript{389} began to contribute to a better understanding of the subject.


\textsuperscript{387}An important cause of this lack of interest is no doubt the inferior place that religion was assigned in the ideology of the Turkish Republic. Although religion was not openly condemned, Islam was confined to the private sphere by the founders of Kemalist ideology. This disadvantageous position was reflected on the academic scene in the discouragement of religious studies.


\textsuperscript{389}Mélikoff’s studies mainly concern the Alevi/Bektâşi tradition in the Turkish/Ottoman context. See, for example, Irène Mélikoff, \textit{Uyar idik Uyardılar: Alevilik-Bektaşılık Araştırmaları}, tr. Turan Alptekin (Istanbul: Demos, 2006).
understanding of the role of religion and its complex nature in the Ottoman Empire. In the following decade, studies on Ottoman jurists filled an important void in the study of religious law.\(^{390}\) Recently, works on conversion to Islam in the Ottoman context have attracted interest,\(^{391}\) as have studies of Ottoman Sufism.\(^{392}\) Still, one can argue that the issue has not been addressed in proportion to its importance.

What do we really know about Ottoman Islam? In juridical terms, since their beginnings around 1300, the Ottomans had been known as sponsors of the Hanafi legal rite, probably because it was already established in pre-Ottoman Anatolia.\(^{393}\) In addition, we are told that they predominantly adhered to Sunni Islam. However, we are not truly informed about the kind of Sunni understanding that they had. We are also told that faced with the growing Safavid threat in the sixteenth century, the Ottomans became more and more militantly Sunni, taking their “Sunnification” efforts to extremes while paving the way for


\(^{393}\) Imber, *Ebu’s-su’ud*, 25.
the clear-cut “confessionalization” of the empire. However, what this confessionalization really entailed, apart from increasing conversions of non-Muslims to Islam, is insufficiently addressed in the existing scholarship. Even though the only comprehensive study of the Ottoman-Safavid conflict compellingly argues that this conflict was first and foremost a political and not a religious one, the notion of a sharp dichotomy between Ottoman Sunnism and Safavid Shi’ism still dominates interpretations of the intellectual climate of the period. I believe that scholars have too readily accepted this clear-cut dichotomy without paying enough attention to the complexities of the religious and intellectual milieu within which this conflict took place.

One way to attempt to understand the approach to Islam that the Ottomans adopted is to evaluate how they appropriated Islamic history. In this study, I have undertaken a selective but fairly representative survey of Islamic histories written between 1300 and 1650. Through this survey I have tried to demonstrate the changes and continuities in the formation of Ottoman religious identity while treating these histories as mirrors of the religious and intellectual climate that produced them.

394 Krstić, Contested Conversions, 12-16.


396 The creation of this sharp dichotomy was of course not the work of modern scholars but of contemporaries. Ottoman jurists of the sixteenth century were at pains to legitimize Ottoman claims to sovereignty in terms of their efforts at ghaza, or holy war, including holy war against the “infidel” Safavid shahs who, according to these jurists, considered themselves superior to the shari’a. Imber, “Ideals and Legitimation in Early Ottoman History,” in Kunt and Woodhead, eds. Suleyman the Magnificent and His Age, 147-153.
Islamic history was not a separate genre from other types of history in the Ottoman intellectual context; it was treated within universal historical compilations although there were a few literary works written on the biography of the Prophet Muhammad in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The Islamic sections of these universal histories lie at the core of this study. These sections have long been seen as unimportant and unworthy of attention. In this study, I have tried to prove otherwise.

To understand Ottoman historians’ approach to Islamic history, I have focused on the fundamental issues that defined Sunni, and in this case Ottoman, religious identity. The conflict between the Sunnis and Shi’ites, after all, started because of their different takes on the problem of succession to the Prophet Muhammad as leader of the Muslim community, and how they responded to this issue over time. I contend that the Ottomans’ approaches to the problem of succession provide us with ample opportunity to evaluate what kind of a Sunni mentality they really achieved. As a case study, I have focused on Ottoman history-writing. I chose the period before 1650 deliberately because this period witnessed not only the initial formation of Ottoman religious identity but also its transformation in response to major events such as the Ottoman conquest of Mamluk territories in 1516-17 and the establishment of the Safavid dynasty as a counter-caliphate on the eastern borders of the empire at the beginning of the sixteenth century. My examination of these historical works has revealed

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397 Veysî, Siyer-i Veysî (Mekke ve Medine) (Istanbul: Vezir Hanı Matbaası, 1286 [1869]); Nabî. Zeyl-i siyer-i Veysi (Bulaq: n.p., 1248 [1832]).
particular patterns in the manner in which Ottoman historians treated key events in early Islamic history related to the contentious issue of succession.

The Era of the Prophet and the Rāshidūn Caliphs

This period generated the least discussion in the histories covered in this study. The biography of the Prophet Muhammad was written based on the famous Sīra of Ibn Ishāq (704-767) and major exegetical works even though in the sixteenth century, Cenabī also made use of some of the lesser-known sīra works. Although works based on single (and often unreliable) sources were written in the fourteenth century, the sixteenth century saw major historical compilations based on a wealth of sources. Ottoman territorial expansion coincided with the emergence of what we might call an imperial mindset; the histories studied in this work attest to this new attitude. The caliphates of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar are narrated in a straightforward manner emphasizing their virtues and military achievements. The coverage of their terms is brief, ranging from a couple of paragraphs to a few pages. ‘Uthmān’s term is covered in similar fashion although some of his actions elicit discussion. Generally speaking, the chroniclers are sympathetic to him, highlighting his soft-heartedness, generosity, and piety. Where ‘Alī ibn Abī Talib is concerned, Ottoman historians take pains to address the question of whether he were responsible for ‘Uthmān’s murder in any way. All the historians surveyed here acquit ‘Alī of responsibility, emphasizing the fact that he sent his sons to ‘Uthmān’s house to protect him and that he offered water to him while he was under siege. Some of these historians
actually assert that ‘Uthmān was in some ways responsible for his own murder because he favored his relatives over the rest of the Muslims. In these attitudes, we see a mainstream Sunni defense of ‘Uthmān combined with a genuine reverence for ‘Alī and identification with the family of the Prophet, which he represents.

**The Conflict between Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān and ‘Alī ibn Abī Talīb**

Among the first four caliphs, ‘Alī holds a special place in the accounts of Ottoman historians. He is characterized as the true heir to the Prophet’s tradition and the peak of religious knowledge. Although most historians conform to the traditional ranking of the Rāshidūn caliphs, whereby Abū Bakr is the most pious, they declare ‘Alī superior to Mu‘āwiya (r. 661-680) in every respect. Mustafa ‘Ālī openly expresses his frustration with the Muslim community for not opting for ‘Alī instead of Mu‘āwiya and, more generally, for the ‘Alīds instead of the Umayyads. Most historians are more reluctant to criticize Mu‘āwiya since he was, after all, a companion of the Prophet; however, all of them contend that Mu‘āwiya was wrong in his independent reasoning (ijtihād) while ‘Alī’s reasoning was sound. To underline their position, they refrain from using honorific titles for Mu‘āwiya, such as hazret or amir al-mu’minīn (“commander of the faithful,” a standard honorific for the caliph), titles they routinely apply to ‘Alī. In treating the notorious arbitration that ended the climactic battle between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiya at Siffin in 657, they stress the treachery of Amr ibn al-‘As, the arbiter for Mu‘āwiya’s side, and Mughīra ibn Shu’bah’s weakness in the
negotiations, which resulted in the disfavoring of ‘Alī. These historians likewise applaud ‘Alī’s elder son Hasan for withdrawing himself from consideration for the caliphate in order to reconcile the opposing sides within the Muslim community. These attitudes conform in many respects to Shi‘ite views and clearly reflect the historians’ identification with the family of ‘Alī and, more broadly, with the family of the Prophet, or ahl al-bayt.

Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiyyah and the Massacre at Karbala

One issue that troubled many Ottoman historians was how to properly address Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiyyah (r. 680-683) and evaluate his term. Except for a few historians who abstained from commenting on this issue, almost all of the historians covered in this study clearly express their distaste for Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiyyah, cursing him and encouraging others to curse him. To be sure, scholars like Mustafa ‘Ālī, Karamānī, and Katip Çelebi give due space to more favorable views of Yazīd, including the mainstream view of al-Ghazālī (1058-1111), who discouraged Muslims from cursing him; this view was adopted by Katip Çelebi in his Mizānü’l-Hakk. Most Ottoman historians, however, including Mustafa ‘Ālī and Karamānī, sympathize with the predicament of Husayn ibn ‘Alī and the extended family (ahl-al-bayt) of the Prophet who were massacred by Yazīd’s men. Lām’ī and Mustafa ‘Ālī are particularly overt in their sympathy for Husayn, going so far as to compose martyrdom elegies for Husayn and his family. The implication here is that Ottoman sympathies lie with Husayn and the ahl al-bayt.
The Later Umayyads

All the historians surveyed here share a distaste for the Umayyad dynasty, with the exception of Mu‘āwiyah II (r. 683-684) and ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 717-720). Both of these caliphs are praised for their exceptional piety and reluctance to engage in the rough and tumble of politics. Mu‘āwiyah II is depicted as a diamond in the rough while ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz is portrayed as the true inheritor of the tradition of the Rāshidūn caliphs. He is especially well regarded because he prohibited the Umayyads from cursing ‘Alī ibn Abī Talīb in the Friday sermons and favored the ‘Alīds during his reign. This distaste of the Ottoman historians for the Umayyads manifests itself in two ways: some historians, such as Cenabī, abbreviate their coverage in order to show their lack of interest in the history and heritage of the Umayyads; other historians, such as Mustafa ‘Ālī, recount the deeds of the Umayyads in exhaustive detail precisely because the Umayyads provide the authors with abundant negative examples.

How did these historians’ attitude toward the Umayyads differ from those of historians under earlier Sunni regimes? It is well-known that the Umayyads were abhorred by the Shi‘ites, for obvious reasons, but they were not very well regarded by Sunnis, either. Nevertheless, some Sunni apologists strove to legitimize the rule of the Umayyads by asserting that their opponents were fomenting anarchy within the Muslim community. Although he could not be called a Sunni apologist in this sense, Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406) argued that the
Umayyads had the necessary group feeling (‘asabiyyah) to hold the Muslim community together, whereas the ‘Alīds lacked this quality. However, none of the Ottoman historians studied here opts for such apologetic remarks; all of them openly criticize the wrong-doings of the Umayyad caliphs. The stories of certain ‘Alīd opponents of Umayyad rule, such as al-Mukhtar, who rebelled against the Umayyads in an effort to avenge Husayn’s murder, are likewise recorded by these historians with great sympathy.

**The ‘Abbāsids**

In contrast to the Umayyads, the ‘Abbāsids are seen in an unreservedly positive light, first and foremost because they ended Umayyad oppression and second because they belonged to the *ahl-al-bayt* through their descent from Muhammad’s uncle ‘Abbās. The first ‘Abbāsid caliph, al-Saffāh (r. 750-754), and the ‘Abbāsid missionary Abū Muslim (700-755) are highly regarded because of their actions against the Umayyads, who are portrayed as usurpers of the caliphate. Among the ‘Abbāsid caliphs those, such as al-Ma’mūn (r. 813-833) and al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-861), who patronized the ‘Alīds are recalled with enthusiasm although al-Ma’mūn’s *mihna*, the “inquisition” that sought to impose belief in a Qurʾān created by God, was much criticized because of the harm inflicted on famous scholars of his age. Al-Ma’mūn’s brother al-Amīn (r. 809-813) is criticized for attempting to prevent his brother from assuming the caliphate following his own reign, in line with the promise of their father Hārūn al-Rashīd. As for the rest of the ‘Abbāsids, those known for their exceptional...
piety and generosity are applauded while those who indulged in debauchery and consumed alcohol are conscientiously criticized. The end of the ‘Abbāsids is presented as a parable, aimed at the Ottoman sultans, warning them of the results of intolerance and vizierial intrigue. Mustafa ‘Āli in particular seems to relish using the ‘Abbāsids’ loss of influence, beginning in the tenth century, as a warning to Ottoman sultans and viziers.

The Twelve Imams and the Mahdī

An unexpected finding of this study is the profound reverence that these Ottoman historians show not only for ‘Alī ibn Abī Talīb, his sons Hasan and Husayn, and his wife Fātima, but also for the remaining imams recognized by Twelver Shi‘ites. In almost all of the histories studied here, the biographies of the Twelve Imams are painstakingly recorded. Not only are their virtues extolled; they are presented as the epitomes of true belief and proper conduct. In recounting conflicts between the imams and the Umayyad or ‘Abbāsid caliphs, these Ottoman historians uniformly take the side of the imams and the ahl-al-bayt, showing, moreover, great interest in the imams’ historical and religious personas as well as their political careers. They make a clear distinction between the uncorrupted nature of these imams, which they accept, and the miraculous deeds attributed to them by extreme Shi‘ites, which they reject. One could argue that these authors are competing with the Shi‘ites to claim the legacy of these imams by interpreting their life stories within a framework consistent with Sunni belief. Most of the Ottoman historians discussed here believed that the Twelfth
Imam recognized by Shi‘ites, Muhammad al-Mahdī, died a natural death; they do not identify him with the messianic figure who many Muslims believe will appear at the end of time. Nonetheless, some among them, such as Mustafa ‘Ālī, actually believed that the Twelfth Imam was the Mahdī.

The reverence shown by Sunnis for ‘Alī ibn Abī Talib, his wife, and his sons, as well as the family of the Prophet Muhammad more generally, can be called ahl-al-baytism. In this study, I have tried to demonstrate that ahl-al-baytism in the Ottoman context was not confined to love for ‘Alī, Fātima, Hasan, and Husayn, or even to the Prophet Muhammad’s extended family, but also included the remaining imams recognized by Shi‘ites. I have tried to show that despite the vagaries of history and the ongoing conflict with the Shi‘ite Safavids, ahl-al-baytism remained a consistent feature of the mindset of Ottoman intellectuals. It is my contention, furthermore, that ahl-al-baytism is not confined to historical works; it can be found in Sufi writings, poems, folk songs, and even juridical writings; this, however, is a matter for a future study. Here, I have tried to demonstrate that this ahl-al-baytism, in its many forms and degrees, is an indicator of the hybrid and multilayered character of Ottoman Sunnism. Sunnism in the Ottoman Empire was not a monolithic phenomenon. Ottoman Sunnism, at least among intellectuals, was a dynamic and multivalent religious phenomenon, and by no means extremist or militant.
Towards a New Interpretation of Ottoman Sunnism

These considerations lead us back to the question of how the *ahl ahl-al-bayt*ism of Ottoman historians differed from the positions of earlier Sunni authors. It is known that some key classical Islamic historians, such as al-Mas‘ūdī (896-956), were of ‘Alīd stock. Ottoman historians relied heavily on medieval Sunni authors in their renderings of Islamic history; histories produced during the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk eras were of particular interest to them. However, this did not hinder some among them, such as Cenābī and Lārī, from exploiting the chronicles of these ‘Alīd historians. That is to say, they did not confine themselves to the narrow interpretations of a few rigidly Sunni authors but extended their reach to works known for their Shi‘ite and *ahl-al-bayt*ist sympathies. Not only in their sources but also in their interpretations they adopted a flexible approach. The case presented here pushes us, the historians of the Ottoman Empire, to reconsider our positions on the nature of the Ottomans’ Sunni identity. Since Ottoman Sunnism is often evaluated with reference to its animosity to the Shi‘ism of the Safavid state or to Qizilbash sympathizers in Anatolia, or with reference to the prescriptive writings of jurists, its multi-faceted and inclusive character is often left understudied and underappreciated. I have tried to demonstrate in this study that, if one turns to accounts of the roots of the Sunni/Shi‘ite divide and evaluates different interpretations of Ottoman historians, one can actually observe a great diversity of opinions. Ottoman Sunnism ranged along a spectrum from extreme *ahl-al-bayt*ism to militant Sunnism; no single interpretation
dominated exclusively. Nonetheless, it is my contention that the pendulum swung consistently towards *ahl-al-bayt*ism and away from zealous Sunnism.
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