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Türkei- und Nahostforschung

Journal of Ottoman, Turkish
and Middle Eastern Studies

Herausgegeben von der Gesellschaft für Turkologie,
Osmanistik und Türkeiforschung e.V.

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Cultures of Expertise in the Eastern Mediterranean

Introduction

This special issue aims to explore cultures of expertise and the role of experts in the Ottoman Empire and the broader Eastern Mediterranean from the early-modern period to the late nineteenth century. An analytical focus on individuals positioning themselves as 'experts' as well as on the practices and bodies of knowledge they have at their disposal and provide upon request as a form of 'expertise' sheds light not only on expertise but also on moments of transformation in knowledge cultures more broadly in the Ottoman Empire and beyond. In juxtaposition, the following case studies suggest that 'experts' and 'expertise' are valid overarching analytical approaches to examine shifts in knowledge cultures across time. It is important to clarify that while paying close attention to the terminology at play in various case studies and source languages, we do not seek to provide a fixed, universally applicable definition of experts in an Ottoman or Eastern Mediterranean setting. Instead, we approach debates and disagreements that historical actors found relevant about various forms and claims of expertise as signposts indicating larger epistemological shifts and pressures on existing knowledge cultures.

The following introduction further explores the intricate relationship between expertise and knowledge cultures and proposes an overarching approach that emphasizes practices, interpersonal dynamics and moments of conflict and contestation as key elements in the study of expertise in transregional settings. It sets a frame for six case studies that subsequently explore cultures of expertise in the Eastern Mediterranean at different points in time and in different social, professional and regional environments. An epilogue revisits the question of terminology in the context of expertise, gathering the various expressions at play when expertise is being discussed by historical actors in the Eastern Mediterranean across time, and inquiring about patterns, shifts and continuities, thereby bringing together insights from all case studies under the lens of a conceptual history perspective.

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Why Study Expertise in a Transregional/Transimperial Setting?

In recent years, dynamics of knowledge transformation and processes of knowledge circulation have also been at the centre of an increasing number of studies in the Ottoman and Eastern Mediterranean context. Knowledge as an analytical category, however, has proven itself to be notoriously difficult to study or even to capture systematically in transregional environments. Ideas are often abstract or implicit, their movements only becoming legible sporadically in the effects they have had on historical actors and materialities. To hypothesize about transformations in knowledge cultures more comprehensively, it is therefore more productive to explore individuals, material culture and knowledge in close conjunction.

It is against this backdrop that we have deliberately chosen the concepts of experts and expertise as entry points into an exploration of transregional knowledge cultures. Our shared interest in expertise goes back to an earlier collaboration on questions of knowledge circulation in transimperial contexts in the framework of the SPP *Transottomanica*.[1] Looking at the history of ideas together with issues of translation, as well as at trajectories of knowledge production and transmission and borrowing our key frame of reference from social anthropology, we set out to 'follow the knowledge' and traced specific concepts, ideas and bodies of knowledge across time and space. Two aspects in particular remained sidelined by this earlier knowledge-centred approach: On the one hand, the interpersonal relationships and power dynamics that shaped knowledge cultures, channelling or limiting the movement of certain ideas while promoting others, still deserves closer attention. On the other hand, moments of activating and utilizing knowledge in everyday interactions to achieve certain goals or legitimize particular choices clearly stood out as important but had been difficult to capture through the lens of knowledge circulation alone.

Taking a closer look at experts and expertise in the transimperial context of the Eastern Mediterranean combines both lines of questioning: In the following, we explicitly understand experts as practitioners who preserve, activate and apply knowledge. Through their everyday performances, they contribute to both the legitimization and stabilization but equally to the diversification and transformation of knowledge cultures. The focus on experts as actors provides an opportunity to add to the growing field of research on knowledge circulation in transregional settings by merging the history of ideas and concepts with moments of practice and performance and attention to materialities.

1 Our research and the ensuing publication were made possible through funding from the German Research Foundation (DFG) within the framework of the Priority Program *Transottomanica* (SPP 1981). We would like to thank Necati Alkan, Eda Genç Atalay, Zaur Gasimov, Elke Shoghig Hartmann, Andreas Helmedach, Élise Massicard, Tomislav Matić, Alexandr Osipian, Melissa Favara, Florian Riedler, and Stefan Rohdewald for their valuable comments and kind support.

How to Study Expertise in a Transregional Setting?

Thinking about experts and expertise conceptually, a three-pronged approach is suggested here: First, we have borrowed from the sociologist E. Summerson Carr the notion that expertise is *something that people do, rather than just hold*. Second, we look at *expertise as relational*, created in moments of multilateral encounter, interaction and communication. Viewed from this perspective, expertise is something that needs to be recognized by others just as much as it is claimed by the individuals who see themselves as experts. This is highly relevant in a transregional setting characterized by mobile actors, brokerage and hybridity, where expertise has multiple audiences and various registers and enables individuals to switch between different frameworks, translating their claims, competences and skill sets in full or in part as they do so. Third, it has already been pointed out that expertise is a *diffuse and highly contested concept*. The following discussions not only acknowledge this challenge, but also tap into the heuristic potential that comes with the lack of clear-cut and uniform definitions and conceptualizations of expertise. The case studies assembled here prompt us to view discussions about expertise as signposts indicating broader disruptions and transformations of knowledge cultures. When expertise is claimed or denied, when the need for an expert in a certain field arises or when different groups of actors claim to know the same thing in different ways, underlying shifts in knowledge culture can be anticipated. Looking closely at encounters and performances marked by expertise, it becomes possible to map out these shifts and inquire about the role mobility and the movements of actors, ideas and material culture play in shaping and channelling knowledge cultures. In an analogy to Eric Dursteler's concept of *linguistic ecologies*, we pay particular attention to the interplay of actors, practices, ideas and materialities that enable and reproduce knowledge cultures – thus mapping out *ecologies of knowledge*. Actors and their practices are studied in close conjunction with terminologies used to describe experts and expertise in specific historical contexts and sources, in an attempt to connect approaches from conceptual history with concrete moments of practice. Collectively, we are thus asking about patterns and shifts in the conceptualization of expertise, inquiring in particular about changes brought about by processes of bureaucratization and professionalization in the fields of education and state administration, but also exploring situations of epistemological pluralism with a variety of cultures of expertise coexisting, overlapping and mutually impacting each other.

In a transimperial and transregional setting like the Eastern Mediterranean, questions of mobility and translation bear a particular relevance. Expertise is generally understood as a phenomenon shaped by historical and cultural contexts and as an ongoing, dynamic process that involves individual actors with their interests and resources, but also plays out on interpersonal levels. In the contact zone of the Eastern Mediterranean, we encounter specific forms of expertise: Experts often emerge as intermediary figures with the ability to negotiate between different, even competing knowledge cultures, bridging gaps across time and space and translating not only across various languages, but also across political, ethnical, religious, and social conflicts and power struggles in the region. Like the *dragomans* studied by Natalie Rothman, experts can be

regarded as being 'formed and transformed' in this contact zone. The Transottoman and Eastern Mediterranean contexts are best explored by looking at translation not as a binary process, but as a cluster of overlapping, interdependent and multidirectional activities shaped by specific parameters and conditions with regard to the multilingual, intercultural and interconfessional dynamics of the transimperial constellation. A broad conceptual outlook on translation as mediation not only between different languages, but across various linguistic, religious and cultural environments and between different genres, temporalities and social contexts underscores sociopolitical functions of translation in addition to linguistic aspects, emphasizing the vital role of translation in the creation, maintenance and delineation of transimperial spaces of interaction and exchange. Consequently, we encounter transimperial experts who skilfully broker between different linguistic, cultural and regional contexts – and thus also play a part in shaping the very boundaries of certain knowledge cultures. The contribution by Hasan Çolak, 'Multilingualism as a Form of Transcultural Expertise: A Study of Multilingual Ottoman Muslim Intellectuals in the Eighteenth Century' is instructive here, as it hones in on aspects of translation and the activities of translators in the multilingual and transcultural contexts of the early modern Ottoman Empire, pointing to gaps and misconceptions in our current understanding of the knowledge cultures and practices that shaped historical processes of translation. Interested only in the final product of a translation as a word-to-word conduit between different languages, later audiences and researchers have often failed to grasp that in multilingual scholarly environments of the early modern period, translations were the result of collaborations and co-productions that brought various translators of different ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic backgrounds together in complex processes of negotiation and exchange. Çolak demonstrates that early modern translators themselves contributed in no small part to this narrow and partial understanding of their work process by staging themselves as individual actors and their activities as individual achievements and products of their singular proficiency and expertise.

In addition to being closely entangled with moments of translation and brokerage, transimperial expertise is characterized by mobility and interconnectedness: On the one hand, both spatial and social mobility play key roles in shaping both the biographical trajectories of experts and their access to different knowledge cultures. Polina Ivanova's paper 'Non-Professional Expertise: On the Early Modern Transformations in Armenian Manuscript Production Viewed from Ottoman Tokat and Crimea' highlights this dimension as it reconstructs the biography of an early modern scribe and his role as an expert. Step'anos from Tokat's trajectory aptly illustrates the interplay between spatial mobility and cultures of expertise: His travel experiences, notably his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, held symbolic value and were seen as indicative of his elevated social and economic status by his peers. In addition, his eagerness and availability to move between various centres of trade and scholarship led to an increased attention, appreciation and demand for his work among potential audiences and sponsors of manuscripts. In her contribution, Ivanova emphasizes how public perceptions could outweigh professional training as a scribe at one of the early modern scriptoria when it came to being recognized as a scribe-expert.

Transimperial experts like Step'anos from Tokat had the potential to re-combine information, concepts and practices from different contexts into new patterns adjusted to the specific demands of their surroundings. Switching between different codes of conduct and knowledge cultures, they showcased their ability to translate or otherwise mobilize unfamiliar knowledge as part of their expertise. One could go so far as to argue that experts were formative figures in imperial contexts, as in adapting to newly-emerging challenges of governance and imperial cohesion, expanding empires depended upon transimperial experts to generate and implement new ideas and skill sets. Conceptualizing experts as transimperial brokers, we find them crossing not only spatial, but also social boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean. Expert identity could, at least temporarily, overwrite the general principles of social status or religious hierarchy, as the example of foreign advisors and military consultants at the Ottoman court illustrates. In his contribution titled 'Expertise and Sedition: Perspectives from the Ottoman Army of 1769,' Yusuf Karabıçak traces Ottoman perceptions of military expertise, investigating the role of foreign military advisors in the eighteenth century. At this juncture, as the Ottomans found themselves enmeshed in several costly and draining campaigns, military expertise was in particular demand, and Ottoman state officials were facing questions of how to best assess the value of different approaches to governance and warfare while at the same time examining the actual capabilities of the individuals that claimed mastery of these approaches. Access to foreign knowledge and the ability to transfer insights from external contexts into an Ottoman environment emerged as key indicators for valid expertise in these fields, at times overwriting the age, social origin, educational background or experience of the individuals involved. The author further argues that despite being rendered and valued as *foreign*, these conceptions of expertise did not in fact reproduce external influences, but remained very much rooted in an eighteenth-century Ottoman context. Being recognized as an expert was closely tied to questions of security and the ability to impose social order and prevent sedition, thus harking back to key concepts of Ottoman political thinking.

The crossing of social and geographical boundaries added ambiguity and peril to the trajectories of transimperial experts. One who was recognized as an indispensable specialist today could find himself denounced as a traitor or accused of all-too-radical disruption tomorrow. This danger underscores the second feature of transimperial expertise: It is relational, socially embedded and dependent upon the recognition of others, as Meriç Tanık underlines in her contribution titled 'Proving One's Worth: Agronomists', Forestry Engineers', and Veterinarians' Rhetoric on the Essential Utility of their Expert Knowledge.' She focuses on moments of contested expertise that emerged from the late nineteenth century onwards between different communities of Ottoman experts engaging with knowledge about agriculture, forestry and animal husbandry. These disputes pitted professionals trained in newly-established state institutions against local actors with long-standing expertise in their respective occupations, such as farming and horse care. The ensuing debates in which all actors involved attempted to convince their respective communities of their expert status and consequent value were highly publicized and often had a performative character, with outside professionals being ridiculed in front of local communities and striking back in

professional journals in their efforts to prove the worth of the expertise they provided, while dismissing their critics and promoting a sense of professional standards and community. Tanık's contribution also stands as a reminder that transimperial experts invariably performed to multiple audiences at once. Investigating the different forms of relations and interactions involved in making an expert and recognizing expertise, a number of constellations can be distinguished: Experts perform to communities of fellow specialists and others who also claim expertise in their field – who then either validate their performance or emerge as rivals, leading to counterclaims and mutual allegations of being 'wrong experts' or imposters. The contribution by Lale Diklitaş on 'Claiming Expertise against Orientalists and Reviving Islamic Knowledge in the Republic: İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi (1940–1948)' illustrates this aspect: The author zooms in on a key moment of transformation in knowledge cultures in the post-Ottoman context in Republican Turkey, capturing debates centred on the (de-)legitimization of religious knowledge and questions of authority to interpret and disseminate knowledge about Islam. These debates unfolded between translators of the western-Orientalist *Encyclopaedia of Islam* under the auspices of the Turkish Ministry of Education and religious scholars (*ulema*) steeped in the former Ottoman religious and intellectual tradition, who set out to publish an alternative encyclopaedia and journal. The contribution looks into the strategies used by the actors involved in these publications to claim continued relevance for themselves and their fields of expertise, underlining the importance of biographical references and credentials in this regard and honing in on discussions about specific entries in the respective encyclopaedia projects that sparked controversies. Considering different audiences of expertise, the contribution stresses that the debates were closely followed not only in Turkey, but by scholars across the Islamic world. In addition to competing with rivalling authorities in their respective fields, experts also engaged with potential patrons and sponsors, for example in the context of imperial power dynamics and court culture. Here, an emphasis lies on showcasing and also culturally – and not least, economically – validating expertise. Lastly, experts also both engaged with and set themselves apart from laypersons and those who were not (yet) initiated, thus activating mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, drawing boundaries between the categories of expert and layperson and, through their actions, marking or even newly creating certain fields of knowledge as expertise. As the following case studies illustrate, all three dimensions can be found overlapping and mutually impacting each other in the trajectories of transimperial experts. The contribution by Aude Aylin de Tapia on 'Cappadocia as a Field for Expertise: Paths of Three Rum 'Experts' of Cappadocia in Search of a Historical Identity' exemplifies this approach, tracing how different actors contributed to the establishment of the region of Cappadocia with its history, geography, and ethnography as a field of expertise in the context of an emerging transregional Hellenization movement during the second half of the nineteenth century. Introducing three key actors who contributed to the production of scholarship on Cappadocia, she underlines how Rum identity and thus being native to the region became closely entangled with authority to speak and write about historical Cappadocia. While also engaging with western travel writing and research, authors published in Greek and Karamanli-Turkish and were thus reach-

ing out to different audiences – in the region itself, but also in larger Ottoman cities, notably in Istanbul, where both Cappadocian immigrants and intellectual elites of the Hellenization movement crossed paths and engaged with knowledge about Cappadocia as relevant for thinking about their roots and emerging national identity. A strong concern of these scholars was the correction of what they perceived as false information and negative perceptions of Cappadocia.

In this special issue, we study understandings, legitimations, and trajectories of expertise by juxtaposing and discussing a wide variety of empirical contexts and case studies. Taking a selection of case studies with a broad geographical and chronological scope as a starting point, we discuss concrete empirical examples to shed light on the interplay between actors, practices, and ideas in shaping transimperial knowledge cultures. This deliberate focus on concrete moments of acquiring, transmitting, or utilizing expertise is also necessary to further question and overcome preconceived analytical categories when engaging with transimperial cultures of knowledge. Looking at expertise as a practice also provides an opportunity to move beyond text and text-based tradition and, operating with a broader concept of knowledge, also include tacit knowledge, embodied ways of knowing, and materialities in the study of knowledge cultures.

From Experts to Expertise: State of the Art

In order to define the phenomenon of 'expertise' we have been looking for inspiration in multiple directions, as it seems that the concept has been studied in various disciplines, starting with philosophy of science, sociology, and anthropology, but not least as a part of history of science, knowledge and ideas. From the philosophical perspective, expertise is a very fruitful, but also a very challenging concept. The interest consists in providing a definition for the nature of expertise, in trying to comprehend the type of knowledge that is essential for experts, in acknowledging and explaining the difference between novices/laypersons and experts by appealing to different kinds of intellectual resources. Expertise is also concerned with experience-oriented knowledge, practical knowledge, multiple forms of relevance characteristic of applied knowledge. Even though the knowledge component is essential for conceptualizing expertise, historians have thus far argued that defining experts and expertise should not primarily be based on the description of the knowledge base but rather needs to take into consideration the complex system of social interactions and communication processes. The social context and environment are responsible for *demand* with concrete expectations from the experts, like e.g. the involvement of the Ottoman Empire in multiple wars makes acute the need for those with foreign military expertise. But the social demand does not liberate experts from the need to prove the *credibility* of their expertise. Without credibility, without trust there is no expertise. Gaining trust lies at the core of expertise, with experts expected to prove their credibility, which was in the Ottoman Empire particularly connected with the approval of the authorities in charge. Dealing with cultures of expertise in the Eastern Mediterranean, it seems that defining the body of knowledge that is provided as expertise is crucial for understanding the particular

character of the regional and transregional context, in examining both premodern and modern phenomena of expertise.

Who is actually an expert? Our initial inspiration for this issue came from sociology of knowledge, in particular from reading Ronald Hitzler and his reflections of the nature of an expert in modern societies. According to sociologist Hitzler, there are five criteria that are essential in order to perceive the nature of an expert and the knowledge substance he disposes in order to be recognized as an expert. First of all, he underlines the *professional character* of modern expertise, which has to be proved through licenses and diplomas from public institutions. As Polina Ivanova argues in her contribution, however, the issue of being 'professional' was already significant in the early modern context. Focusing on the figure of the scribe, she argues that they can be seen as 'non-professional experts' of their time. Even though they could not provide any kind of formal certification or institutional affiliation, they were still recognized as experts by their communities because of their access to the valuable knowledge that they were ready to market as expertise. On the contrary, the contribution by Meriç Tanık points out how modern professionalization can hinder or impede social recognition in a conservative society. The second point made by Hitzler concerns '*Klasseninteressen*' of the professional experts, their demand to be acknowledged as such, but also their request for the *autonomy* and *authority* of their expert knowledge to be respected by power-holders and politicians. The contribution by Aude Aylin de Tapia, where Cappadocian belonging and identity seem to be necessary for the authority to be regarded as an expert in the region, and equally Lale Diklitaş's case study, where representatives of the former Ottoman *ulema* insist on their unique authority concerning access to religious knowledge and confront 'secular' translators who emphasize the autonomy of their linguistic expertise, further illustrate this aspect.

The third important aspect pointed out by Hitzler deals with the *antagonistic* character of expertise. The expert identity does not exist in a vacuum; the essence of being an expert should be considered a relational phenomenon. Similar as in applying apophatic or negative theology, expert identity can be defined by negation, by what cannot be said of being an expert, namely experts are *not* '*laymen*' or novices on the one hand. On the other hand, experts are *not decision-makers*, especially in the political sense. Thus, from the point of view of sociology of knowledge, neither laypersons nor politicians can be considered experts, which applies in both directions. Experts lose their status if they profess laicity or become politicians and thus decision-makers themselves. This antagonistic feature in elaborating the essence of expertise seems to be fruitful in defining one as an expert. What we see in many of our case studies is an idea of *wrong* or *fake experts* as antagonists of the real bearers of expertise. Thus disqualifying other scholars, translators, agronomists, or historians as ignorant, outdated, or unprofessional helped to frame one's knowledge and performance and indicate a belonging to a community of true, real experts. Across all contributions, we find attempts of historical actors performing as experts to lionize their own qualities by criticizing their opponents. The potential danger in the case that a military expert would be involved in decision-making and initiate sedition can be well recognised in the case study by Yusuf Karabıçak.

The fourth and final aspect emphasized by Hitzler refers to the *sociology of knowledge* of the expertise. What categorizes the knowledge applied by experts as 'expertise'? Here, according to Hitzler, experts should be distinguished not only from 'laymen,' but also from 'specialists,' when they provide problem-solving strategies. It is the *quality* of the expert's *knowledge* that makes the difference; experts are capable of visualizing the problem that needs a solution; they use metaphors, models and theories and offer an abstract solution to a problem unlike the laypersons who look for quick, concrete and practical answers, which are often regarded as insufficient. Therefore, an expert's systematic knowledge allows them to work out reasonable hypotheses for successful problem solving and use their experience from concrete cases in order to develop their knowledge and adapt their 'expertise' for the future. The last section of Hitzler's article summarizes *what makes an expert*. He comes to the conclusion that the most important knowledge component that an expert needs to possess is how to *present himself* as an expert. It is *staging oneself* as an expert that merits recognition and acknowledgement in the social environment or a sociopolitical context. The performative aspect in acting as an expert is of particular interest for our research inquiry into cultures of expertise. It implies that language conventions and ritualization provided stability of roles between experts and laypersons through communication, but these elements also indicated to whom and in which *communicative situations* ('*Kommunikationssituation*') the role of an expert is to be assigned. This aspect seems also particularly meaningful for the case studies in this special issue, where an expert's ability to communicate his competencies seems decisive for their success in being recognized as experts. In contrast to the well-established opinion in the research on the role of institutions as an essential element to back up expertise in the history of Western Europe, this aspect seems less relevant for the examples from the Ottoman Empire and Eastern Mediterranean – not least because of the lack of universities as centres of scholarly culture until the modern period.

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AUFSÄTZE / ARTICLES

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Non-Professional Expertise: On the Early Modern Transformations in Armenian Manuscript Production Viewed from Ottoman Tokat and Crimea

Abstract

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the widespread destruction and population displacements caused by the Ottoman-Safavid wars and the Celali revolts plunged Armenian communities of Anatolia and the Caucasus into a profound crisis. The crisis extended to manuscript production, as the devastation of monastic scriptoria resulted in a severe shortage of books. Yet the same period also witnessed the proliferation and growing affluence of Armenian merchant communities, along with merchants' increasing involvement in book production. This article examines the experience of Step'anos of Tokat, a refugee priest, poet, and manuscript-maker with strong links to Tokat's trade community, to explore the social history of Armenian manuscript production and the transformation of the 'scribe' from a copyist-artisan working as part of a monastic scriptorium to a mobile expert-entrepreneur serendipitously placed in a privileged position by the crisis in book production.

Keywords: Ottoman Armenian history, manuscript cultures, scribe, merchant patronage, Armenian Tokat, Armenian Crimea, Step'anos of Tokat

1. Introduction: scribes without scriptoria

The experts whom historians of manuscript cultures encounter most often are scribes. In recent decades, thanks to the growing scholarly interest in the social histories of manuscripts, scribes and scribal cultures have received significant attention.[1] Historians of the early modern period have observed a conspicuous trend in the 'professionalization' of scribes that accompanied the rapid growth of the early modern state bureaucracies. This professionalization trend, however, did not affect all manuscript cultures equally, privileging those languages and scripts that were expedient for state building and enforcement of confessional adherence.[2] For the millennium-old Arme-

1 Bahl and Hanß 2022; growing scholarly interest in scribes and social histories of manuscript production is well illustrated by the diversity of recent and ongoing relevant projects undertaken at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) at the University of Hamburg: URL: https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/research.html.

2 A relevant example of this in the Ottoman case is the replacement of the openness of the early Ottoman court under Mehmed II to the diversity of scribal cultures by the more exclusive triumvirate of *elsine-i selase* (Arabic-Persian-Turkish) at the time of the empire's

nian manuscript culture, the early modern transformation resulted in anything but the professionalization of scribes. Armenian statehood ended with the fall of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia in 1375, and the Armenian early modernity came to be defined not by the growth of centralized state institutions but rather by the violence inflicted upon Armenian communities of the Caucasus and Anatolia by the expanding early modern states – the Ottoman and the Safavid Empires – as well as the anti-state insurgency of the Celalis.[3] The violence of the Ottoman-Safavid wars and the Celali attacks resulted in innumerable deaths, the destruction of homes, churches, and scriptoria, turned hundreds of thousands of people into refugees and drove Armenian manuscript production to its *nadir*.[4] This time was hardly propitious for the professionalization of Armenian scribes. Indeed, the destruction of scriptoria and the dispersal of Armenian communities naturally led to de-professionalization in manuscript production and the rise of non-professional scribes.[5] Manuscripts were central to a wide variety of the social practices that held communities together, from liturgies and schooling to pious donations and communal poetry recitals, and as communities of Armenian refugees grew in new geographies, manuscripts must have been in high demand and short supply. A great number of manuscripts preserved from this period were copied by non-professionals for their own use, like priests copying liturgical books for their churches or students copying their own study materials.[6] The crisis in manuscript production seems, however, to have produced another type of non-professional scribes, those whom one could call 'non-professional experts.' These scribes were non-professionals in the sense that they were not established as such by any kind of formal validation or institutional affiliation and did not display perceptible professional pride or group identity. And yet, for their communities, they were experts: they possessed highly sought-after skills that they traded for financial, social, and spiritual gain. The vast majority were lower-rank clergy, urban, and working on a commission as solo entrepreneurs. And though the mentions of such scribes are ubiquitous in the colophons of early modern Armenian manuscripts, it is not easy to learn more about them. What kinds of social

expansion and confessional consolidation. On Mehmed's patronage of Greek scribes, see Raby 1983.

3 On the definition of 'Armenian early modernity' through the experience of violence and mass displacement, see Aslanian 2023, 42–75.

4 Aslanian 2023, 5–14. Dickran Kouymjian has pioneered the quantitative method for tracing diachronic fluctuations in Armenian manuscript production, drawing on evidence from surviving manuscript collections. Kouymjian 1984, 2007, 2012. His works remain a primary reference point for scholars studying Armenian manuscript production during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

5 In his introduction to the collection of seventeenth-century colophons, Hakobyan cites the example of a non-professional scribe who decided to undertake the copying of a manuscript himself because he could not afford to commission someone else to do it. Hakobyan and Hovhannisyan 1974, xviii.

6 Durand-Guédy and Paul 2023. Although it does not cover the Armenian manuscript tradition, the volume's treatment of manuscripts produced for personal use and the challenges they pose to scholars is highly relevant for the Armenian case.

backgrounds did these people have? How did they enter the trade of manuscript production? Who were their patrons and how much could they earn with their trade? Most colophons preserve very limited and fragmentary information about the scribes, and most scribes' work survives in single or at most several manuscripts. Only a handful of seventeenth-century scribes have more than ten manuscripts attributed to them.[7] This article focuses on one of them – Step'anos of Tokat (T'okhat'ets'i)[8] – a priest, poet, and expert manuscript copyist active in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, whose life trajectory, much like those of his countless contemporaries, was defined by dispossession, forced migration, and revival in a refugee community. By tracing the contours of Step'anos's life and his modest manuscript-making enterprise, this article explores how Armenian manuscript production survived at the time of crisis and dispersal and persisted through micro-enterprises of mobile copyists when traditional centralized manuscript production at monastic scriptoria waned and became increasingly insufficient for the evolving needs of new migrant communities.

2. Piecing Together a Scribe's Biography

How does one reconstruct the biography of a scribe? Almost everything we know about Step'anos's life and his book production comes from the colophons and marginal notes in the manuscripts he copied, as well as from the poems he composed. In the Armenian manuscript tradition, it was customary for scribes not only to provide basic information about the circumstances in which the book was written/copied, but also to make notes of significant (and not-so-significant) events of one's life.[9] Known as *ḫishatakarans* in Armenian or literally 'places of memory,' the colophons of Armenian manuscripts are indeed sites of private memory and microhistory, in which one can literally 'hear' the voices of scribes.[10] When taken together, the colophons of the sixteen surviving manuscripts copied or repaired by Step'anos amount to a short life account narrated by the scribe himself.[11]

7 Hakobyan and Hovhannisyan 1974, xvii.

8 The Armenian version of the toponymic surname 'of Tokat' is usually rendered as T'okhat'ets'i in secondary literature. Step'anos himself used a variety of other spellings in his colophons: most commonly T'okhat'ts'i, but also T'oghat'ts'i and Tōkhat'ts'i. For the transliteration of Armenian proper names and terms, this article follows the Library of Congress transliteration system (2023 version), which is based on the phonetic values of Classical and East Armenian. For the sake of consistency, more contextually appropriate Western Armenian phonetization is not utilized.

9 Sanjian 1969, 1–41, Zakarian 2022, 241–58; Sirinian et al. 2016.

10 In marginal notes and colophons written by Step'anos one comes across occasional vocal interjections like 'oh' and 'ah' that introduce Step'anos's complaints about the difficulty of his work.

11 The manuscripts are now preserved in four different manuscript collections: the Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (henceforth Matenadaran), the Library of Armenian Mekhitarist Congregation in San Lazzaro, Venice (henceforth Venice), the

Step‘anos was born in Tokat in 1558 and lived in the neighbourhood of Mihmad Hacib, near the Church of the Forty Martyrs – one of the largest churches of Tokat, which hosted most funeral services for Tokat’s Armenians.[12] Step‘anos got married in 1577 and become a priest in 1580, taking over the leadership of the Church of the Forty Martyrs. In 1589, he went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem.[13] The first evidence of Step‘anos’s activities as a book-repairer and copyist dates to the 1580s or early 1590s.[14] Step‘anos was in Tokat in the mid-1590s when Anatolia was afflicted by an animal plague, and in 1602 when Tokat was captured by the Celalis. The attackers ravaged and burned the city, having massacred a part of its population and put to flight those who survived.[15] Step‘anos himself was captured and beaten and survived only by having been mistaken for dead. With a few companions from Tokat, he fled first to Constantinople and then to Caffa in Crimea – home to a large and prosperous Armenian community.[16] From 1603 until 1621 he lived in Caffa, where from 1605 until his departure he served as the priest of the church of St. Gregory the Illuminator (Surb Lusaworich‘).[17] In 1621 he returned to Tokat, back to his native neighbourhood and the Church of the Forty Martyrs.[18] The last evidence of his activities as a scribe comes from 1622. As noted above, sixteen manuscripts known to have been copied/repaired by Step‘anos have survived: a Bible (repaired), a historical compendium (repaired and completed), a book of hymns by Nersēs Shnorhali (repaired), three collections of poetry, a Psalter, a Bible commentary, two collections of Armenian church hymns (*sharakan*), three collections of hymns recited on specific church holidays (*gandzaran*), a synaxarion, and two miscellanies.[19]

Library of Armenian Mekhitarist Congregation in Vienna (henceforth Vienna), and the Manuscript Library of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem (henceforth Jerusalem).

12 This information about the Church of the Forty Martyrs is found in Step‘anos’s lament on the destruction of Tokat, published in Khach‘atryan 1969, 146–60.

13 Jerusalem MS 3360 p. 389 reproduced in Pogharean 1990, 222. The biography and literary oeuvre of Step‘anos are also briefly surveyed in Akinean 1921, 117–37.

14 See the discussion below of Step‘anos repairing a medieval Bible, Matenadaran MS 181.

15 The destruction of Tokat is described in detail in two versified laments, by Step‘anos and his contemporary (but not his brother) Ḥakob of Tokat; both laments were published in Khach‘atryan 1969. Step‘anos’s first-person account of the events is also recorded in the colophon of a collection of church hymns (*sharakan*) he copied in 1603; the manuscript itself appears to not have survived (or its location is unknown) but the colophon was published in the journal *Ḥoys* in 1870 and reproduced in Hakobyan and Hovhannisyan in 1974. For an overview of the impact of the Celali uprisings on the Armenian communities of Anatolia and the plight of the refugees, see Shapiro 2022.

16 On the history of Armenian settlement in Caffa, see K‘ushnerean 1895, Mik‘ayelyan 1964 and Rapti 2002.

17 Venice MS 789, 202b, reproduced in Chemchemean 1995, 685.

18 Jerusalem MS 3360, p. 154, reproduced in Pogharean 1990, 221.

19 Step‘anos probably produced more books than those that have survived. For instance, in the colophon dated 1610 of the manuscript 7377 in the collection of Matenadaran, Step‘anos includes a list of books he produced after his arrival in Caffa. The list includes a lectionary (*chashots‘*) that does not appear to have survived. Matenadaran MS 7377 463a,

3. Armenian Tokat: A Commercial Hub on the Margins of the Manuscript World

Sixteenth-century Tokat, where Step'anos was born and where he learned his trade, was one of the most important Armenian settlements in Anatolia.The emergence of Armenian communities in and around Tokat dates to the medieval period, probably as early as the eleventh century, but possibly even earlier, and by the time the Ottoman administration conducted its first fiscal survey of Tokat in 1455, Armenians formed almost half of the city's population.[20] It seems, however, that only from the second half of the fifteenth century, and especially in the sixteenth century, did Tokat become a recognizable and even prestigious locus of Armenian culture, as is reflected in the perceptible rise in the number of people who wished to flaunt their links to Tokat by adding 'T'okhat'ts'i' or 'Evdokats'i' to their names. Among prominent figures of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries who chose to identify as T'okhat'ts'is/Evdokats'is were Karapet I Evdokats'i, the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia who served as the bishop of Tokat before assuming the position of the catholicos, Abgar Dpir T'okhat'ts'i, a pioneer of Armenian printing, as well as his son Sult'anshah T'okhat'ts'i, historian Andreas Evdokats'i, poets Khach'atur T'okhat'ts'i, Minas T'okhat'ts'i, T'adēos T'okhat'ts'i, Ḥakob T'okhat'ts'i, and Ghazar T'okhat'ts'i.[21]

What made Tokat emerge as a place of significance in the sixteenth century? The answer probably lies at the intersection of geography and economic history. In contrast to more traditional centres of Armenian learning situated further east in the Ottoman-Safavid frontier zone, thanks to its safer location in central Anatolia, Tokat was spared the ravages and displacements caused by inter-imperial warfare. Yet, unlike the new diaspora hubs in western Anatolia, Tokat was already a well-established centre of Armenian culture by the sixteenth century. As noted above, Armenians made up almost half of the city's population, spread across six neighborhoods (Pazarcuk, Taşmerdiven, Tahtakale, Kaya, Tarbiye, Mihmad Hacib); Tokat served as an episcopal see, and there were eight Armenian churches in the city itself alone, with serval monasteries and churches in the nearby villages.[22] Tokat was also a centre of textile manufacturing and a bustling commercial hub at the crossroads of trade routes going to Aleppo in the south and Tabriz in the east, the Black Sea ports in the north and Constantinople in the west, and this is probably what attracted earlier waves of Armenian settlers to Tokat in the

reproduced in Hakobyan and Hovhannisyan 1974, 415. In the list of "surviving" manuscripts I include also the manuscripts that appeared in publications in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but have perished since.

20 Ivanova 2021, 139–42.

21 Selected works and brief biographies of these Tokatī poets have been published in the anthology of Armenian poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Sahakyan 1986. A recent article by Cesare Santus sheds new light on the biography and printing activities of Sult'anshah of Tokat. Santus 2022.

22 For identification of Armenian settlements and shrines around Tokat, see Ivanova 2021, 115–36.

first place.[23] A vivid image of sixteenth-century Tokat as an affluent city full of busy markets and textile shops, spacious inns, public baths, and magnificent stone houses of merchants is preserved in the laments composed after the city's devastation at the hands of the Celalis by Step'anos himself and his contemporary and fellow townsman, Ḥakob T'okhat'ts'i, who fled to Poland after the attack.[24]

By the sixteenth century Tokat was certainly an important Armenian settlement and a vibrant commercial hub, but was it a centre of Armenian manuscript production? The wealth generated by Tokat's Armenian merchants and manufacturers must have nurtured a favourable environment for learning and cultural production – something to which Step'anos alludes in his poem, speaking of the city's many learned men, both among clergy and laity.[25] However, much of the evidence that could have helped reconstruct this cultural environment was likely lost during the Celali attack, when, as Step'anos laments in the same poem, Tokat's churches and homes were set on fire, and books were burned or stolen.[26] Only twelve manuscripts produced in Tokat before the Celali attack are known.[27] The earliest of these dates to 1463 and the latest to 1602–1603. The latter, a *sharaknots'* (hymnal), was begun by Step'anos's brother, who died just before the attack, and completed by Step'anos when he was already a refugee in Constantinople. The earliest known Armenian manuscript from post-Celali Tokat dates to 1616. Thus, it seems that it took almost fifteen years for the Armenian community of Tokat to recover and for manuscript production to resume. In the decades that followed, however, manuscript production in Tokat began to flourish, as evidenced by the 47 manuscripts known to have been copied there between 1616 and 1700.

The colophons of the manuscripts produced in Tokat until the end of the seventeenth century provide no evidence of monastic scriptoria operating in or around Tokat, either before or after the Celali attack. In light of this, it is unsurprising that throughout his life, Step'anos never worked as part of a scriptorium, instead always working alone or occasionally with the assistance of an apprentice. One might hypothesize – though cautiously, given that surviving manuscripts may present a distorted picture – that Step'anos was born into an environment where monastic scriptoria either did not exist or played a minor role in manuscript production. In such a context, most manuscripts would have been produced by individual, mobile copyists who not only carried out the artisanal work of manuscript-making but also sought out and negotiated commissions.

23 Şimşirgil 1995; for a history of commerce and industry in Tokat in the seventeenth century and later, see Genç 1987.

24 Khach'atryan 1969, 145–60.

25 *ibid*.

26 Khach'atryan 1969, 145–60.

27 These and the following numbers are based on the list of Tokat manuscripts included by Arshak Alpōyachean in his *Patmut'iwn Ewdokioy hayots'*, as well as an additional list compiled by the author of this article, based on manuscript catalogues published since Alpōyachean's study appeared. Alpōyachean 1952, 1568–1622.

The situation in Tokat seems to be emblematic of a larger shift in the history of Armenian manuscript production – away from institutionalized production dominated by monastic scriptoria to decentralized production by individual urban entrepreneurs.[28] The chronology and the geographic contours of this shift are yet to be investigated.[29] Studies of Armenian scriptoria have almost exclusively focused on their manuscript output, often equating the word 'scriptorium' with the manuscripts produced at a given location, and paying little attention to the social and economic history of the scriptorium as an institution.[30] Rare studies that have been more attentive to social and economic aspects of manuscript production suggest that medieval scriptoria were dynamic institutions employing a range of artisans (parchment makers, scribes, illuminators, binders, silversmiths), possibly financially independent from the monastic complexes in which they were located and often reliant on the services of intermediaries for connecting to urban/secular patronage and negotiating manuscript commissions.[31] How strong was the monopoly of monastic scriptoria over manuscript production, and when did its grip begin to loosen, opening up possibilities for independent manuscript makers? Or was the division between institutional scriptoria and individual enterprises perhaps always a part of the landscape of Armenian manuscript production that only became more pronounced in the early modern period? Answering these questions will not be possible without conducting large-scale statistical research beyond the scope of this study. On can suggest, however, that it was probably in places like Tokat, on the margins of the traditional geography of Armenian manuscript production, that the proliferation of individual non-professional manuscript makers would start earlier and gain momentum more quickly.

28 A similar shift in the history of manuscript production in Europe has been investigated in social histories such as Rouse and Rouse 2000.

29 In his study of the Armenian migration to Western Anatolia, Henry Shapiro touches briefly upon the impact of the refugee crisis on the geography of Armenian manuscript production. Shapiro (2022), 129–30.

30 This approach is exemplified, for instance, by 'Armenian Scriptoria,' (https://www.armenianscriptoria.com) a digital initiative of the Matenadaran, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, and the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, dedicated to showcasing the history and geographic spread of Armenian scriptoria. Tokat does not appear on their map, but Amasya – a nearby town with a smaller Armenian community in the early modern period – does. The website claims that 'the scriptorium of Amasia has over 700 years of history, during which a rich manuscript heritage was created testifying to the existence of once flourishing Armenian scriptorium in the city.' There is no surviving evidence, however, of the existence of a scriptorium as such in Amasya, let alone one that could claim 700 years of institutional history. This confusion seems to stem, at least in part, from an imprecise translation: the Armenian version of the website uses the terms *grch'ut'yan kentron* and *grch'ōjakh*, which translate as 'writing centre' and 'writing hearth,' respectively, and allow for broader interpretations than the word 'scriptorium' used in the English and French versions.

31 Mat'evosyan and Baloyan 2015, 332; Mat'evosyan 1990.

4. A Scriptorium unto Himself: The Education of an Independent Scribe

Working without scriptoria, independent manuscript makers like Step'anos had to have the competency to carry out a wide range of tasks otherwise tackled by a team of narrowly specialized professionals. Although Step'anos called himself a 'scribe' (*grich'*), we learn from his colophons that he indeed did much more than just writing: sizing paper with starch and burnishing it, preparing the inks and writing implements, folding quires, laying out the page, and binding. Such applied knowledge must have been passed mainly through master-apprentice chains. Step'anos frequently mentioned apprentices in the colophons of his manuscripts, and perhaps not coincidentally the last manuscript known to have been produced by Step'anos, dated 1622, was a gift to his last apprentice, Ḥovsēp'. The small pocketbook (10x15.5cm) is a miscellany containing lyrical and religious poetry, texts pertaining to a student's education, and, among other things, a collection of detailed scribal recipes – a perfect gift from an aging master to a novice scribe. This little textbook of scribal art includes instructions for mixing gold leaf with tree sap and fish glue to produce a gold ink for luxury manuscript illumination, instructions for starching and burnishing paper and improving softness with the use of sesame oil, instructions for fixing writing mistakes, as well as recipes for making black *murakkab* ink and a number of other inks and paints.[32] A scribe was also of course expected to master the art of calligraphy. The lament Step'anos wrote on the death of his younger brother Ḥakob, whom Step'anos trained to be a scribe, mentions that Ḥakob had mastered all of the major Armenian scripts: *bolorgir* – a miniscule font which dominated scribal hands from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, *notrgir* – or 'notary script,' miniscule cursive which would become widespread in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and *erkat'agir* – the earliest known Armenian script, which consisted of all capitals and was used primarily in books transmitting Scriptural writings, as well as the rules of *khaz*, the Armenian system of neume musical notation.[33] In addition to this, a scribe would have to learn to employ an extensive system of ligatures and abbreviations. In the miscellany gifted to his student, Step'anos provides a list of 300 common ligatures and abbreviations.[34]

Naturally, manuscripts produced by independent scribes like Step'anos could not compare in terms of artistic quality to the masterpieces of famous scriptoria. However, this seems to have been hardly a concern for anyone: the 'run-of-the-mill' manuscripts that Step'anos produced must have been good enough for his patrons. What seems to have mattered most for the success of one's manuscript-making enterprise was

32 MS 1455 in the collection of the Manuscript Library of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem, 2b, 195a–197b, reproduced in Pogharean 1971. On ink and paint recipes preserved in Armenian manuscripts, see Harutyunyan 1941. For studies of the tradition of medieval Armenian manuals for scribes dating back to the twelfth century, see Khach'eryan 1962 and Abrahamyan 1973.

33 Sahakyan and Mnats'akanyan 1986, 502. For an introduction to Armenian palaeography, see Stone et al. 2002.

34 Jerusalem MS 1455, 123b–126b, reproduced in Pogharean 1971, 140.

not artistic quality of the manuscripts one produced, but one's social connectedness, which translated into the ability to gain access to source manuscripts and to secure commissions.

5. Between the Church and the Marketplace: The Social Background of a Successful Scribe

From his birth, Step'anos was well positioned to succeed as a manuscript maker. He hailed, it seems, from a wealthy Tokat family. His father, Sargis, was not a priest since his name is mentioned in the colophons without the title *tēr* or *erēts'*; Sargis did, however, bear the title of *mghdesi*, meaning that he had completed a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and so did Step'anos's mother, Chanp'asha.[35] This alone, along with the fact that Step'anos could afford to go on pilgrimage as well himself as a young man, would have been a good indication of the family's affluence. It was probably his family's affluence that made it possible for him get the education necessary to start an ecclesiastical career and to become the priest of one of the city's largest and wealthiest churches at the age of only 22.

Thanks to a somewhat awkward rhetorical device employed by Step'anos in an elegy on the death of a young daughter of his acquaintance in Caffa, we learn more about the possible origins of the family's wealth.[36] Seeking to console the grieving parents and juxtaposing Tokat and Caffa as an allegory of the earthly life and life in heaven, Step'anos enumerated in the elegy his own 'earthly' losses. We learn that in Tokat Step'anos abandoned two well-built stone houses and two pavilions (*ch'artakh'*), mattresses, rugs, carpets, and fine metalware, but also a water spring, an orchard, a bakery, and a silk-weaving workshop. When he fled to Caffa, Step'anos adds, all he could bring with him was about three kilograms of woven silk (1000 dram), a modicum of portable wealth which he then 'multiplied and enjoyed.' This short but precious note reveals that Step'anos came from a family with significant possessions in Tokat and one which must have owed at least a part of its wealth to the silk trade and manufacturing.[37] The role of Armenians in trans-imperial trade of Iran's raw silk is well established, as is the role of silk trade money in sponsoring Armenians' cultural production, so it is not surprising to see evidence of the same pattern in a commercial hub like Tokat.[38] It is likely no coincidence that, in his lament on Tokat, Step'anos – speaking with the authority of someone intimately acquainted with the subject –enumerates a rich array of textiles

35 Hakobyan and Hovhannisyan 1974. The title *mghdesi* (also spelled *meghdesi*, *mehdesi*, *mahdesi* etc.) is an Armenian derivation from the Arabic *maqdisī,* designating a person who has traveled on pilgrimage to al-Quds, Jerusalem. A thorough historical contextualization of pilgrimage practices in the Ottoman Holy Land, both among Muslims and Christians, is provided in Shafir 2020. On Armenian pilgrimage to Jerusalem and more broadly on the history of Armenians' presence in and perceptions of Jerusalem, see Stone et al. 2002.

36 Jerusalem MS 3360, p. 489, reproduced in Pogharean 1990, 223.

37 On Iranian silk arriving in Tokat, see Faroqhi 1984, 143–4.

38 Matthee 1999; Baghdiantz McCabe 1994.

produced and traded in the city: *nakhshi apurshum*, *yekt'ay*, *valay*, *tipari*, *ch'if'ay*, *t'avt'ay*, *purunchuk*, *mughattam*.[39]

That Step'anos was connected both to the ecclesiastical establishment and the merchant networks of Tokat is also not surprising. The church and the marketplace, the clergy and the *khojas (khwājas)*, as merchants were known in Armenian, were closely related through kinship, friendship, and patronage. Both Step'anos and his brother Ḥakob became priests, and Step'anos married the daughter of a priest. From Step'anos's poems and colophons containing blessings of merchant friends and patrons we learn that having their sons ordained as priests must have been a common aspiration among the merchant class, as Step'anos repeatedly wishes for their sons to become priests.[40] It seems that at least on the level of stereotypes, merchants were expected to have the same kind of cultural cultivation as members of the clergy and that they wished to be remembered not only as rich and pious, but also as well-educated and erudite men.[41] In an elegy written for his brother Ḥakob who died prematurely in 1601, Step'anos paints an idealized portrait of a well-cultivated young priest, likening him to Aristotle and Plato, to Sahak the Parthian and Mesrop Mashtots', and Moses the Grammarian. In 1611, Step'anos 'recycled' this poem to compose another elegy, this time for his friend – whom he also calls 'brother' – merchant Akhijan who was likewise of Tokat origin and ended up in Caffa. Step'anos used the same text that he had once composed for his brother making a few adjustments: he changed the part on the circumstances of the death, omitted references to church service, teaching and scribal activities, and replaced the comparison to Sahak the Parthian, Mesrop Mashtots' and Moses the Grammarian by a comparison to great historians – Africanus, Eusebius, Michael the Syrian, Samuel of Ani, as well as the seventy translators of the Bible, perhaps alluding to Akhijan's knowledge of foreign languages.[42] In a similar manner, when Step'anos praised Khoja Zak'aria, the patron of a collection of hymns (*sharakan*) he produced in 1596 in Tokat, he exalted Zak'aria's skills in (ac)counting (*gitun hashwi ew hisapi*) – probably a nod to the latter's business acumen – and compared him to King Solomon, David the Invincible, Anania of Shirak and Andreas of Byzantium.[43]

Furthermore, it seems that not only members of the clergy and merchants were connected by strong ties of friendship and kinship, but that there were people who practiced both trades at once. The addressee of the elegy in which Step'anos listed his lost properties bore the title 'Khoja Tēr,' suggesting that he was possibly both an ordained priest and a merchant. And in yet another elegy, written for a Caffa priest's son who died young, Step'anos mentions that the young man trained as a deacon before he died of a disease contracted on a long-distance trading mission.[44] Although from the notes

39 Khach'atryan 1969, 158.
40 Venice MS 49, 393b, reproduced in Chemchemean 1993, 211–2.
41 The question of Armenian merchant literacy has been recently explored by Shapiro (2021) and Aslanian (2023).
42 Tatean 1922.
43 Venice MS 491, 393b, reproduced in Chemchemean 1993, 212.
44 Sahakyan and Mnats'akanyan 1986, 519–22.

left by Step‘anos it is not clear to what extent he personally was involved in the silk business after he became a priest and how he ‘multiplied’ the money he made from the silk he brought from Tokat, it seems very likely that it was his connections to the circles of merchant elites both in Tokat and in Crimea that made his migration experience so apparently seamless.

6. Manuscripts, Mobile Scribes, and Rebuilding Communities

Drawing on autobiographical notes of Step‘anos of Tokat, this article has painted a portrait of an early modern Armenian manuscript maker: an independent tradesman, urban, mobile and well-connected within ecclesiastical and merchant networks. What kinds of books did these artisans produce and for whom? What did it mean to be a ‘scribe’ at the time of mass displacement and rebuilding of Armenian communities? To answer these questions, in what follows the article will turn from the figure of Step‘anos himself to the books he produced and explore the roles of manuscripts as social artefacts. Scholars of manuscript cultures repeatedly stress that for communities that used and preserved them, manuscripts were very rarely simply containers of text and objects of individual quiet study – rather they were polysemous objects imbued with significant power to shape and maintain social relations through communal practices and affective force.[45] This was certainly true of Armenian manuscripts, which served as liturgical objects and cherished relics, as symbols of status and wealth and vessels for transmitting tradition. The surviving manuscripts created or repaired by Step‘anos are quite representative both of the kinds of manuscripts that circulated in Armenian communities of his time and the kinds of social relations and practices they reflect. To illustrate this vision of manuscripts as community-shaping artefacts, I focus on a selection of four manuscripts ascribed to Step‘anos: a Bible, a collection of glossaries, a synaxarion, and a poetic miscellany.

7. 1580s, Tokat, a Bible Repaired: Manuscripts as Relics

The earliest mention of Step‘anos in the colophons of surviving manuscripts records him not as a scribe, but rather as the repairer of a manuscript. A brief note was added by Step‘anos on a page of a thirteen-century Gospels manuscript, stating that he rebound the book and thanking his younger brother Ḥakob for help in sizing the paper with starch.[46] The colophon is not dated, but one can place it between 1580 and 1594.[47] The work was done by Step‘anos in Tokat, for the benefit of Step‘anos’s ‘own’ Church

45 Kohs and Kienitz 2022; Ronconi and Papaioannou 2021.

46 Matenadaran MS 181, 227a. The text of the colophon is reproduced in Eganyan, Zeyt‘unyan, and Ant‘abyan 1984, 742–6.

47 In the colophon, Step‘anos mentions himself as a priest but his brother still as a deacon. From other colophons we know that Step‘anos became a priest in 1580, and Ḥakob was already a priest and no longer a deacon by 1594.

of the Forty Martyrs. The manuscript was an illuminated Bible first copied in 1295, probably at the monastery of Mlēch in Cilicia.[48]

The manuscript must have had multiple meanings for the congregation of the church. Above all, it was a liturgical object. The Bible is known in Armenian as *ast-watsashunch'* or the 'breath of God,' and the physical body of the manuscript is central to the Armenian liturgy. To use the words of a historian of the Armenian Bible, 'the manuscript has traditionally been the Armenian religious object *par excellence*, comparable to the reliquary in the Western Catholicism and the icon in the Greek Orthodox Church.'[49] In Armenian churches the Gospels are placed on the altar next to the holy cross. A priest or a deacon announces the reading from the Gospels by saying, 'God is speaking.' Words from the Gospels chanted during the liturgy signify the presence of God among the faithful. As the book is carried in processions among the faithful, they kiss it and bow to it, remaining standing until the end of the chanting.[50] Just like the icons in the Orthodox tradition, the Gospels manuscripts would be ceremoniously carried to ward off foes, and manuscripts to which miracles were attributed would be given special names such as the 'Resurrector of the Dead' or 'Savior of All.'[51] To repair a Bible thus would mean to tend to the word of God, and the honour gained through the contact with the manuscript would imbue the artisanal work with profound symbolic meaning.

The repaired Bible must also have been venerated as a token of the past. Knowledge of history, as discussed above, was clearly considered a great virtue by people like Step'anos and his patrons. And while little is known about the antiquarian interests and habits of early modern Armenians, it is worth hypothesizing that the three-centuries-old manuscript was precious to the congregation not only because of its liturgical value, but also because of its age.[52] The attribution of the manuscript to Mlēch is not certain, but had it indeed been of Cilician provenance and recognized as such in Tokat, it would provide a physical embodiment of the cherished memory of the last Armenian kingdom. Possessing such a manuscript must have been a matter of great prestige for the church, which could proudly display it or use it in festive liturgies. It seems not coincidental that the rebound Cilician Bible was one of the few books that Step'anos brought with himself when he fled from Tokat to Crimea, where the manuscript would continue its liturgical career in service of Step'anos's newly established congregation.[53] Per-

48 The place of copying of the original manuscript is not mentioned in the colophon, but the cataloguers have attributed it – with a question mark – to Mlēch, a monastery in Cilicia in the vicinity of Tarsus. A short entry on Mlēch is included in Oskean's survey of the monasteries of Cilicia, Oskean 1957, 254–9.

49 Nersessian 2001, 49.

50 Hovhanessian 2022, 423.

51 Nersessian 2001, 49.

52 On antiquarianism among Muslims in the early modern Ottoman Empire, see Shafir 2022.

53 The Bible also includes a seventeenth-century repair colophon, written by Abraham, probably one of the apprentices of Step'anos. A poem written for him by Step'anos is preserved in the colophon of MS 7021 of the Matenadaran collection. Hakobyan and Hovhannisyan

haps also not coincidentally, another book that seems to have accompanied Stap‘anos on his flight to Crimea was also an old repaired manuscript: a fourteenth-century copy of the Chronicle by twelfth-century historian Michael the Syrian.[54]

One can furthermore hypothesize that books such as these would have been revered not only as antiquities, but also as survivor objects.[55] While the term itself is modern and is used here anachronistically, such a notion was probably not strange to early modern Armenians, who keenly used personifications when speaking about books' destinies. In colophons of Armenian manuscripts, one often comes across stories of survival: books having been abducted, enslaved, and then miraculously ransomed by munificent benefactors. At the time when Armenian communities were dispersed and thousands of people turned into destitute refugees, survivor manuscripts must have acquired new, more profound meanings for refugee communities made up of people who themselves were survivors of violence.

8. 1598, Almus, Glossary Miscellany: Manuscripts as Status Symbols

In 1598, Step‘anos copied an intriguing miscellany for a certain Pōghos, a priest of the Church of the Holy Mother of God (Surb Astwatsatsin) in the village of Mukhat‘ near Almus, about fifty kilometres east of Tokat.[56] This was a manuscript meant not for a congregation but for the private use by a student or perhaps a small group of students.

The miscellany consisted of several glossaries: 'Homeric Words,' 'Words of Hebrews,' 'Words of Galen the Physician,' 'Words of Philo [of Alexandria],' a list of grammar terms, 'Words of Persian Masters,' and a list of synonyms for novices writing poetry. Such glossaries date back to the eleventh century – though they probably came into use earlier – and have been documented widely in the Armenian manuscript tradition throughout the medieval and early modern periods.[57] The selection of glossaries included in Step‘anos's miscellany represents well the broad thematic reach of the glossary genre. The largest part of the miscellany (ca. sixty folios) is taken by what is called a 'Poetic Glossary,' also known as 'Homeric Words,' a composite list of words of different origins – rare words copied from older dictionaries, words from the Holy

1974, 174–5.

54 MS 1153 in the collection of the Library of Armenian Mekhitarist Congregation, San Lazzaro, Venice, Chemchemean 1996, 41–4. Chemchemean dated the original manuscript to the thirteenth century. A marginal note from 1595 records massive animal deaths in and around Tokat, suggesting that the manuscript was in Tokat at that time. In 1605, Step‘anos repaired and completed the text of the manuscript in Caffa.

55 The use of the term 'survivor object' is inspired by Watenpaugh 2019, 19–47.

56 MS 532 in the Matenadaran collection, Eganyan et al. 2004, 1163–8. The name of the village was changed to Çevreli in the twentieth century as part of the policy of erasure of non-Turkish toponyms in Anatolia. The toponym Muhat is still recorded on the War Office Map published in 1942 and based on older Turkish maps, sheet C11 Reşadiye. On the politics of renaming in twentieth-century Anatolia, see Öktem 2008 and Nişanyan 2011.

57 Amalyan 1966, 5–15.

Scriptures, loanwords from Greek, Assyrian, Hebrew, Persian, and other languages, as well as words from dialects – meant to help in the composition of metered verse.[58] 'Words of Hebrews' is a list of Hebrew proper names from the Torah, Nevi'im, and the New Testament translated into Armenian through Greek.[59] 'Words of Philo' is a glossary of words and phrases used in Armenian translations of the philosopher Philo of Alexandria, along with some Biblical terms and other terms not found in Philo's works but related to them thematically.[60] 'Words of Galen the Physician' is a list of mainly Greek, but also some Arabic pharmaceutical terms transcribed in Armenian letters and glossed in Armenian.[61] Next comes a glossary of grammatical terms – another learning tool, thought to have been compiled by the Armenian translators and authors of commentaries on Dionysius Thrax.[62] The 'Words of Persian Masters' is at first glance the most intriguing of all of the word lists in the miscellany. Here one finds a list of mainly Middle Persian terms pertaining to Zoroastrian religion transcribed in Armenian and glossed: *vzurk* (Middle Persian *wuzurg*), *den* (Middle Persian *dēn*), *kharaman* (Middle Persian *Ahriman*) etc..[63] The list of over thirty such terms was meant to help the readers of *History of Vardan and the Armenian War*, an account of the fifth-century Armenian revolt against the Zoroastrian Sassanids' suppression of Christianity, written by Yeghishe, a scholar and soldier who participated in the events. Finally, the last glossary in the mis-

58 *ibid*., 82–8.

59 *ibid*., 106–16

60 *ibid*., 71–6. On Philo in Armenian scholarly tradition and education, see Mancini Lombardi and Pontani 2011 and Vardazaryan 2020. Most of Philo's terms in the glossary were taken from *Questions and Answers on Genesis* which was commonly used as a textbook in medieval Armenian schools. Amalyan 1966, 75. The earliest manuscript containing this glossary is dated to the thirteenth century; however the glossary itself was probably older, and possibly was a product of the early medieval 'Hellenizing school' responsible for the Armenian translations of and commentaries on Philo's works (Amalyan 1966, 75). On the history and translation activities of the 'Hellenizing school,' see Muradyan 2014.

61 Greppin 1985, 5–13. Most of the Greek terms, though not all, come from Galen's *On the Nature and Powers of Simple Medications*. Like the Philo glossary, the Galen glossary, though first mentioned in an early-fourteenth-century manuscript, is thought to have originated in the period of the 'Hellenizing school' when Armenian scholars could still have been reading Galen in the original Greek.

62 Amalyan 1966, 154–66.

63 *ibid*., 101–5. Gasparyan 1963 discusses the origin and context of all of the words contained in this glossary. The glossary is consistently present in the manuscript tradition starting from the late thirteenth and the history itself from the late twelfth century. The frequent appearance of both the glossary and the history in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century manuscripts suggests that the history remained popular among readers in the early modern period and, as suggested by Amalyan, was probably used in educational settings. In just one manuscript catalogue briefly consulted for this study, one comes across ten sixteenth- and seventeenth-century copies of Yeghishe's history. Eganyan, Zeyt'unyan, and Ant'abyan 1965, 1489.

cellany, a 'list of synonyms for novice poets' was a practical tool that belonged to a long tradition documented in Armenian manuscripts from the twelfth century. [64]

The miscellany copied by Step'anos in Mukhat' represents an impressive compendium of rather arcane knowledge. Is it conceivable that its commissioner, Pōghos, was well-versed in all of these fields of scholarship and ordered the manuscript for his studies? Could Mukhat' indeed once have been a centre of learning where industrious students pored over Philo, Galen and Yeghishe? In the late sixteenth century, Mukhat' was a sizable village with a mixed population of Muslims and non-Muslims. The Ottoman cadastral survey of 1574 recorded 51 Muslim and 91 non-Muslim households in Mukhat' in addition to 59 Muslim and 39 non-Muslim bachelors.[65] A mixed majority-Christian population was already documented there a century earlier, according to the first Ottoman survey conducted in 1455, and onomastic evidence suggests that its *zimmi* inhabitants were Armenians.[66] By the nineteenth century, however, Muhat was a Muslim settlement, and no local memory of its Christian past was preserved among Christian inhabitants of nearby villages and of Tokat.[67] Apart from the glossary miscellany, no manuscripts copied in Mukhat' seem to have survived. It is possible that Armenian presence in Mukhat' ended abruptly due to Celali violence, but more research in Ottoman cadastral documents would be needed to establish this with certainty. It is not to be ruled out that in the late sixteenth century, rather obscure places like Mukhat' had access to some teachers and manuscripts which enabled, however imperfectly, the transmission of intellectual tradition and the continuation of educational practices rooted in the early Middle Ages.[68] If that was indeed the case, mobile scribes like Step'anos would play a fundamental role in sustaining this fragile system through replication and circulation of rare and precious books.

What if, however, Mukhat' had little more than a church and a congregation? What if Pōghos knew little of Philo and Galen beyond their names? One can think of the glossary manuscript not as a practical learning aid, but rather as a symbolic object, an

64 Such lists normally consisted of 135–140 groups of synonyms, each of which contained from three to fifty words, including both close synonyms and broadly connected words. Amalyan 1966, 123–32.

65 BOA TD 2, 609–11. Summary descriptions of settlements in the vicinity of Tokat based on the cadastral survey BOA TD 2 have been published in Ahmet Şimşirgil's doctoral dissertation. For Muhat, see Şimşirgil 1990, 195.

66 The survey entry lists as heads of households people named Sargis, Yadgar, Kirakos, Simeon, Baronşah, Begbaron and others. BOA TT2, 610–1.

67 Neither the village nor its church/monastery are mentioned in Arshak Alpōyachean's survey of Armenian settlement and monuments in the region of Tokat; Mukhat' is also not mentioned as a Christian/Armenian settlement in oral history testimonies of the nineteenth-century Orthodox (Greek) inhabitants of the neighbouring villages. Alpōyachean 1952, 481–588. Files 1023 and 1024 of the Oral Tradition Archive, Centre for Asia Minor Studies in Athens cover the area around Reşadiye.

68 Pōghos, as we learn from the colophon of the miscellany, was close to Ḥakob Zēyt'unts'i, who served as the bishop of Tokat in the late sixteenth century. Ḥakob Zēyt'unts'i was a *vardapet* and a student of the Catholicos of Sis, Azaria Jughayets'i.

embodiment of an aspiration, a status symbol. Following John Greppin, who pondered why 'Galen dictionaries were copied and recopied right up until the 18th century, at a time when there were certainly few Armenian physicians who would appreciate the Greek original, therefore needing the *Galen Dictionary*,' one wonders: why would someone commission a miscellany consisting of arcane glossaries in the absence of an educational system that could warrant their use?[69] Greppin hypothesized that Galen glossaries might have been simply copied as 'part of a package, and perhaps a tradition' and that 'certainly they would have meant little to whomever read them.'[70] Indeed, to whoever *read* them, these and other glossaries probably meant little, and yet they probably meant a great deal to whoever had them in his (or her?) possession. Even if Step'anos understood little of what he copied and Pōghos never in fact used the glossaries, the commission of this manuscript would still make sense. It would provide Pōghos with a tangible token of belonging to an intellectual tradition, of which he knew but to which he perhaps could not fully belong because of the limitations of his own education. Having the manuscript in his possession, he could perform as an expert and display it ostentatiously to establish authority in the eyes of others. The paradoxical proliferation of glossary miscellanies like the one copied by Step'anos in unlikely locations and at the time when Armenian institutions of learning were seemingly in decline merits a systematic study. Could it be emblematic of displaced scholars clinging to an intellectual and social tradition, asserting status through possession of symbolic objects that were portable and relatively easy to replicate?

9. 1610, Caffa, *ḥaysmawurk'*: Manuscript Donations of Notables

In addition to serving as embodiments of symbolic knowledge that could mark their owners as members of the learned class, books could fulfill another important social function for their owners: they could be given to churches as pious donations. Such donations had twofold significance. The names of donors were recorded in the book, and prayers for them – along with their family members – were requested from all those who would read, copy, or use the book in the centuries to come. The donation would also be a political gesture, ingratiating the donor with the members of the clergy and strengthening their position vis-à-vis rivals within the community. Rich urban notables in whose names the donations were usually made surface in Step'anos's notes under the designation *tolvat'awork'* – an Armenian derivation from the Persian *dowlat,* a term which connoted both affluence and high social status.[71] Donations made to the church

69 Greppin 1985, 12.

70 *ibid*.

71 Ghazaryan and Avetisyan 2009, 769. The word is of Arabic origin, but it must have come into Armenia via Persian, as many other Arabic loan words present in medieval Armenian, in particular in poetry, starting in the thirteenth century. The scholarship on the entanglements of the medieval Armenian literary tradition with Persian poetry and Persianate aesthetics is extensive. For an overview discussion, see Cowe 2015.

would become part of the church's endowment or inalienable property, which could not be lawfully sold or taken away in any other manner. The endowments of churches functioned in much the same way as their Islamic counterparts, and indeed, from the late medieval period, Armenians employed the technical term *vaghm*, derived from the Arabic *waqf*, in their inscriptions and documents and turned to the courts of their Muslim rulers to register endowment transactions, especially significant donations of land and other revenue-producing properties.[72] In the context of places like early modern Tokat and Caffa, as well as in much of the Ottoman Empire and especially the west, where Armenian refugee communities were established, Armenian notables derived their wealth from trade and sometimes manufacturing, but almost certainly not from land ownership.[73] Sponsoring church repairs or paying for the construction of new churches or monastic buildings, when not proscribed by Muslim rulers, would count as the most praiseworthy act of public charity, while donating liturgical objects and books would remain a more affordable option for those unable or unwilling to spend as much. And although buying a manuscript would not entail the same expense as building or repairing a church, it must not be underestimated how expensive manuscripts were in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.[74]

In the colophon of one of the manuscripts he copied in Caffa, Step'anos provides enough information to reconstruct the social context of one such donation with some detail. The book in question is a *ḥaysmawurk'* copied and collated by Step'anos in 1610. *Ḥaysmawurk's* were liturgical compilations of lives of saints venerated by the Armenian Church arranged in chronological order to be read on the saints' feast days throughout the year.[75] Such books, initially based on similar Greek liturgical collections but gradually much expanded, have been documented in the Armenian manuscript tradition since the tenth century and remained popular throughout the early modern period and into the age of printing.[76] *Ḥaysmawurk's* must have played a significant role in forming the communal memory and mental geography in which early modern Armenians placed themselves. The stories of saints recorded in *ḥaysmawurk's*, written in accessible language and replete with vivid imagery, were read out loud and heard on a daily basis by all those who attended church services. Indeed, in one of his poems written on the occasion of a merchant's death, Step'anos compared the adversities afflicting traveling merchants to the torments of *ḥaysmawurk's'* saints, attesting to the popular appeal

72 Other spelling variants, especially from the later period, reflect Persian phonetics: *vokhf/ohf* etc. Khach'ikyan 1960, 23–30; P'ap'azyan 1971.

73 This statement is limited by the lack of relevant information. To my knowledge, there are no published studies on Armenian land ownership and land donations in the early modern Ottoman Empire.

74 Aslanian 2023, 8–9.

75 The designation *haysmawurk'* derives from the phrase '*ḥaysm awur*' meaning 'on this day' reflecting the calendar-like organization of these compilations. On the genre of *haysmawurk'* and the development of its canon, see 'Introduction' in Mathews 2014, xi–xx, and Piñon 2024.

76 Mathews 2014, xi–xx; on *ḥaysmawurk's* in print see Aslanian 2023, 262; Piñon 2024.

of *ḥaysmawurk'* narratives. During Step'anos's stay in Caffa, several new *ḥaysmawurk's* were copied for the city's churches, probably in response to the quick growth of Caffa's Armenian population produced by the arrival of Anatolian refugees.[77]

The *ḥaysmawurk'* produced by Step'anos in Caffa in 1610 was the largest book he produced during his lifetime, both in terms of its size – the book measured 43.5 cm by 28.8 cm, whereas most books copied by Step'anos were small pocketbooks measuring roughly 15 by 10 cm – and the number of folios: 650.[78] Step'anos experienced significant difficulties while copying the manuscript, having worked with three different source manuscripts, the first of which was taken away from him by the owner soon after Step'anos began his work and the second of which had incorrect order of saints' lives, causing confusion. The *ḥaysmawurk'* also contains a section completed by a different scribe – another Anatolian refugee who arrived in Crimea from a village around Sivas some ten years before Step'anos and worked in difficult conditions of an overcrowded and cold room.[79] Having bought this three-month section of an unfinished manuscript cheaply, Step'anos was able to speed up his own work. In the middle of the process, however, the commission fell through because the church that commissioned Step'anos received another complete *ḥaysmawurk'* manuscript as a donation from a certain notable.[80] At that point, Step'anos must have decided to give the manuscript as a donation in his own name to the church of St. Gregory the Illuminator, where he served as a priest. That too did not go as planned: when the manuscript was completed, Step'anos was approached by his wife, who suggested that he should find another patron for the manuscript to make a profit and allow her and their son to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. An argument ensued, but eventually Step'anos conceded. The manuscript was sold for fifty gold coins (*karmir*), thirty of which Step'anos gave his wife and son for their pilgrimage.[81] This provides a useful reference point for estimating a manuscript's relative worth: the price of it was almost twice the value of two persons' pilgrimage expenses, which in the seventeenth century must have been a complicated and expensive undertaking.[82]

The purchase was made by a merchant, Khoja Abraham of Gölcük (*Kawlchukets'i*), and his wife Sara Tolvat'khat'un, who were among the notables (*tolvat'awork'*) of Caffa. Judging from the name *Kawlchukets'i,* one can suppose that Abraham's family originated from Anatolia, probably from Gölcük, an important Armenian settlement in the region of Elazığ, but possibly even from around Tokat or Sivas, which also had

77 Jerusalem MS 3360, p. 555, reproduced in Pogharean 1990, 223.

78 Matenadaran MS 7377, Eganyan, Zeyt'unyan, and Ant'abyan 1970, 519. The claim of this being the 'largest manuscript' produced by Step'anos must be qualified by noting that not all manuscripts produced by Step'anos have survived.

79 Matenadaran MS 7377, 462a–b.

80 Matenadaran MS 7377, 463a; the text of the colophon containing this information is reproduced in Hakobyan and Hovhannisyan 1974, 415.

81 *ibid.*

82 Shafir 2020; Ervine 2002.

several settlements called Gölcük in their vicinities.[83] Khoja Abraham purchased the manuscript to give it as a pious donation to Step'anos's Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator, and the colophon includes an endowment stipulation: that the book is given to the church as an 'indelible memorial [gift]' and that nobody has the authority to remove it from there. The purchase 'bought' a request for God's mercy and prayers for Abraham and his large extended family: his grandfather and father, his brother (who died at sea, probably on a trading mission), his son and the latter's children, his mother, his wife, in-laws, and all of their kinsmen. The last-minute change of patronage is reflected in the appearance of the manuscript, as Step'anos had to go through all the folios and fit in dedications to the new patrons in every place where names of previous patrons were mentioned.

10. 1605, Caffa, *tagharan*: Poetry Miscellanies as Portables Salons

Among the books copied by Step'anos was yet a different category of books, which were likewise central to social life and politics of early modern Armenian communities, but for a different reason. These books were *tagharans*, or compilations of mainly lyrical but also historical, panegyrical, and satirical poetry. Containing exemplars of poetic eloquence and wit, *tagharans* were meant to be read out loud in private gatherings and formed the cornerstone of an informal institution whose role in cultural transmission and the politics of Armenian communities was perhaps second only to the church: the *majlis*. *Majlises* were gentlemanly salons or informal gatherings of men (though women were probably also sometimes included) who met to discuss communal matters, read poetry, share food and drink, and have fun. Armenians used the loan word *majlis* in a variety of spelling variations from the thirteenth century and possibly earlier; the word was used in the seventeenth century and, in fact, still remained in use with that meaning in the early twentieth century.[84] A vivid testimony to the tradition of salons in Ottoman Tokat is found in a late seventeenth-century source, the diary of Minas of Amid, who served as the bishop of Tokat in the 1680s.[85] Brief entries in the diary reveal that several times per week, and sometimes every day of the week, the bishop attended gatherings at the homes of various notable residents of Tokat, which involved dining, coffee, wine, and a lot of 'fun,' sometimes lasting deep into the night. Direct descriptions of salon sociability like those found in Minas of Amid's diary are rare, and so far, the best evidence of the popularity of salons among early modern Armenians

83 Hakobyan, Melik'-Bakhshyan, and Barseghyan 1986, 863.

84 Ghazaryan and Avetisyan 2009, 514; Sargsyan 2013, 498.

85 The diary of Minas of Amid has not been published. The manuscript is preserved in the manuscript collection of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, MS 1316. Folios 45a–184b cover the time of his stay in Tokat. Pogharean 1969, 564–5.

is provided by *tagharan* miscellanies themselves, which are ubiquitous in Armenian manuscript collections.[86]

In 1604–1605, during his early years in Caffa, Step'anos completed a *tagharan* that had been compiled in two stages: one forty years and the other fifteen years before he contributed to it.[87] Over four decades, the book was gradually expanded as it passed between different scribes and patrons. The first section of the manuscript (folios 1–192) was completed by a scribe named Nikoghos at the church of St. Sargis in Caffa in 1563. The scribe was probably still a novice since the first person mentioned in his colophon was his teacher, priest Mik'ayēl. The book did not at that point have a patron, and perhaps was later sold by Nikoghos. In 1589 the book was expanded with roughly another fifty folios added by a different scribe, one deacon Ḥovhannēs on the commission of a merchant, Khoja Abraham: potentially, but not certainly, the same Khoja Abraham who was already mentioned above. By 1605 the book passed to Step'anos, who added nearly a hundred folios sponsored by another Abraham bearing the title *khalifa*. Interpreting the title *khalifa* poses some difficulties, since it could denote a member of high clergy,[88] a teacher, or, as in Ottoman *kalfa*, a master artisan ranking below *usta*.[89]

The contents of the manuscript well represent the broad repertoire of themes and forms of poetic expression expected to be familiar to culturally cultivated Armenians of Step'anos's time. The manuscript contains 92 entries, including a large segment of poems on historical themes from the story of the Christianization of Armenia to the popular tale of Barlaam and Josaphat to the Crusades and the Fall of Constantinople, lyrical and religious poems, panegyrics and elegies, verses by prominent poets like Ḥovhannēs Erznkats'i (d. 1293), Khach'atur Kech'aṛets'i (d. 1331), Ḥovhannēs T'lkurants'i (dates of life unknown, fourteenth-fifteenth century), Aṛak'el Baghishets'i (d. 1454), Grigor Aght'amarts'i (d. ca. 1550) and by Step'anos himself, a number of anonymous (and probably contemporary?) poems in vernacular style, and some religious poetry in Armeno-Turkish.[90] The contents of the compilation completed by Step'anos were very similar to those of most other *tagharans* produced in his time, though no two *tagharans* were the same: each preserved a unique amalgam of literary canon and living

86 Over 200 *tagharans* are preserved in the collection of Matendaran alone and many more in other Armenian manuscript collections. Most of the surviving copies date to the early modern period. Hovsep'yan 2013, 115.

87 Venice MS 789, Chemchemean 1995, 667–86. Step'anos had to fill in pages in a book that was already bound, which was, according to his remarks, quite a strenuous task. Venice MS 789, 260b, reproduced in Chemchemean 1995, 685.

88 The title *khalifa* was etymologically related to the Arabic *khalīfah* used for political/religious successors of the Prophet Muhammad. This is how Armenian *catholicoi* or patriarchs were referred to in Safavid sources, and subsequently it became the title borne by high clergy. Kostikyan 2019.

89 Malkhaseants' 1944, 228–9. To my knowledge, there is not a systematic study of the titles used by Armenians in the early modern Ottoman world. It is very tempting to think of an artisan as the patron of the poetry collection, but the evidence is not sufficient.

90 An incomplete selection representing Step'anos's poetic oeuvre has been published in Sahakyan 1986.

tradition. Their voluminous contents should not belie the fact that most *tagharans* were small pocketbooks usually measuring no more than 10x15 cm.[91] The high price of paper was probably a factor in the prevalence of small-sized books, but perhaps a more important reason was that these books were made to be mobile, just like their owners.

Until very recently, *tagharans* have been studied mainly from the perspective of literary history and philology.[92] The perspective of social and cultural history, which would investigate these books' creators, patrons and consumers within a broader context of the early modern salons and consider poetry as a community-forming instrument, has only recently begun to be explored.[93] Helen Pfeifer, the author of a recent monograph on the early modern Ottoman salons, posited that 'the sociability that salons enabled was a key ingredient of the glue that held the Ottoman Empire together.'[94] Pfeifer underlined three key roles of the salons: defining the boundaries of the Ottoman elite, facilitating the circulation of culture across the empire, and providing space for political networking and informal governance.[95] It can be argued that for much the same reasons, the Armenian poetry reading gatherings and the sociability that they provided the 'glue' that held together the cultural and social domain that early modern Armenians like Step'anos inhabited. Thousands of Armenians put to flight by the violence of Ottoman-Safavid wars and Celali attacks could not bring their homes with them; the notables could not bring their salons, but they could transport their *tagharans*. The poetry contained in them would act as a community-forming instrument in two ways: first, through communality of familiar words, phrases, images, and intonations, and second, through social acts associated with poetry: not just communal readings, but also the collecting, exchanging, compiling and curating that must have been central to the creation of *tagharans*. Poet scribes like Step'anos must have been pivotal to the social life revolving around *tagharans,* since they acted both as mobile depositories of highly-prized poetic repertoires, both written and unwritten, canonical and newfangled, and as artisans who could transform fragile oral tradition into tangible and portable objects.[96] One also wonders whether the familiarity with poetic genres and images and

91 This observation is based on a brief non-systematic study of entries on *tagharan* miscellanies in the manuscript catalogues of the Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, the world's largest collection of *tagharans*.

92 Hovsep'yan 2013.

93 Michael Pifer's recent pioneering study of Hakob Meghapart's printed *tagharan* has laid a foundation for novel social history-oriented approaches to *tagharans* and to Armenian language and poetry more broadly. Pifer 2023. For an inspiring analysis of Ottoman *divan* poetry as a socially and politically embedded practice, see Aguirre-Mandujano 2020. Shapiro's discussion of the Turkophone poetry of an Armenian from the Ottoman Empire in the context of Safavid social gatherings in Tabriz, though in a somewhat later context, presents another inspiring example of poetry analysed through the prism of social and cultural history (Shapiro 2021).

94 Pfeifer 2022, 23.

95 *ibid*.

96 When speaking of a 'portable majlis' I use a term coined by Aslıhan Gürbüzel, though she employs it in a different context. Gürbüzel 2021.

the ability to converse in certain linguistic registers likewise enforced the boundaries of Armenian elites. Although in his colophons penned in Caffa Step'anos styled himself as a 'stranger (*gharip)*' and 'migrant (*pandukht*)' – itself a poetic trope well familiar to his circles – from the moment he arrived in Caffa, or elsewhere across the Armenian world, he would be quite at home in an imagined community, glued together and reified by poetry and poetry readings.[97] When Celalis ravaged Tokat, Step'anos lost his home and his pavilions where he probably used to host his *majlises,* but as long as he carried poetry with him – whether in his memory or in books – he was never truly homeless. In Armenian, just like in Arabic, the same word, *tun,* denotes both a house and a couplet of poetry. In the context of the history of displacement of Armenian communities of Anatolia, this double meaning of *tun* acquired a profound symbolic significance.

11. Conclusion

This brief examination of the life and work of an Ottoman Armenian scribe within the larger context of the transformation of Armenian manuscript production in the early modern period was inspired by the invitation of the editors of this special issue to think about expertise in terms of two contrasting and sometimes complementary modes: expertise as professionalisation and expertise as social recognition.[98] The juxtaposition of the two modes of expertise proved to be a useful model for understanding the transformations that shaped Armenian manuscript production in the early modern period. As traditional centres of manuscript production in the Ottoman-Safavid borderlands grew weaker and as Armenian communities became more dispersed geographically, an increasingly larger share of manuscript production passed into the hands of non-professionals – people who were not working at scriptoria, whose craftsmanship was mostly of lower quality and for whom the copying of manuscripts was probably one of several trades they practiced.

The portrait of one such non-professional scribe, Step'anos of Tokat, reveals an image quite different from stereotypical visions of a scribe – whether a devout, self-effacing copyist working tirelessly as part of a monastic scriptorium team,[99] or – and this is perhaps more common in the field of Ottoman history – an unassuming clerk serving state dignitaries.[100] Step'anos was a prolific scribe, and yet it seems that being

97 On the trope of *gharip* in medieval Armenian literature and its larger context of entangled Anatolian cultures, see Pifer 2014.

98 See the Introduction to this special issue, 8.

99 The image of a medieval scriptorium has been popularized by Umberto Eco in his novel *The Name of the Rose* and the subsequent TV series adaptation, an image which has been both acclaimed and challenged by historians of medieval European scriptoria. Murray 2022. In Armenia, there exists a tradition of literature romanticizing book-copyists and exalting them as proto-national heroes. See Erkanyan 2018 for a discussion of the novels of Derenik Demirchyan and Gevorg Devrikyan who have pioneered this tradition.

100 On the evolution of the social role and politics of Ottoman scribes in the early modern period, see Atiyas Tusalp 2013.

a scribe was not his primary and only engagement. Both in Tokat and in Caffa, he was above all a priest, attending to the needs of his congregation and the broader Armenian communities of his cities, and in Tokat he probably also had some involvement with his family's bakery and silk-weaving workshop. Given his privileged background, it seems that he took up manuscript copying as an additional trade partly because of the shortage of manuscripts and the practical needs of his church, and partly because it was so spiritually and socially rewarding. When Step'anos arrived as a dispossessed refugee in Crimea, the aspect of financial gain probably also acquired significant heft for him.

If expertise is to be defined through social recognition, Step'anos was certainly an expert. His expertise was vouched for by the demand for his labour, the remuneration he received, and the social dividends he won through establishing personal relations with some of the wealthiest and most powerful members of the community. It seems that despite the questionable quality of their work and their inefficiency, the non-professional scribes had a better chance at becoming 'experts' and gaining social recognition than their professional counterparts who worked in scriptoria and were not the sole and direct beneficiaries of the financial and social rewards earned by their labour.

The case of Step'anos also demonstrates that he clearly did not owe his authority to belonging to an institution, or to having trained with a famous master. On the contrary, his success lay in his ability to work independently. He lost everything, was nearly killed, had to move over a thousand kilometres away from his native town, and yet in less than a year, he was re-established and seemingly continued his business as usual. In times of dramatic upheavals and displacement, being mobile and not dependent on an institution must have been an important asset indeed. His mobility and independence would not be so much of a strength, however, had Step'anos not been simultaneously well integrated in trans-regional ecclesiastical and merchant networks and well versed in the rules of class sociability – a skill which must have become indispensable when he had to re-establish his social world in Crimea.

The fact that the social history of Armenian manuscript production has been little studied makes it difficult to put the case of non-professional scribes like Step'anos into a broader perspective. Having taken solely a qualitative approach, this article has touched upon many questions that it could not attempt to answer. When did the shift to more 'secular,' urban, and entrepreneurial book production begin? Was there a clear geographic dimension to this shift, with commercial centres like Tokat and Caffa leading the way? Or was the division between institutional scriptoria and individual enterprises always present to some degree? Did the ratios of scribes working at scriptoria vs. scribes working independently change dramatically in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Tackling these questions would require building an infrastructure for systematic quantitative research, which could help trace thousands of individuals involved in Armenian manuscript production and trade over centuries and across a vast geography.[101] If pursued, such research would make an important contribution to

101 A good example of relevant initiatives that could serve as models for such an undertaking is 'the Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams' project led by researchers at Ghent University since 2010: https://www.projectdbbe.ugent.be/.

Armenian cultural history, the cultural history of the Ottoman and Safavid Empires more broadly, and the global history of manuscript production, while advancing innovative approaches in the digital humanities.[102]

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Multilingualism as a Form of Transcultural Expertise: A Study of Multilingual Ottoman Muslim Intellectuals in the Eighteenth Century[2]

Abstract

The Ottoman Empire is often presented as a space in which a myriad of people using different languages coexisted. However, scholars have often taken multilingualism in the Ottoman world for granted and, despite some valuable exceptions, they have rarely ventured to study it. Likewise, they have often focused on the multiplicity of the languages spoken in the Ottoman Empire rather than the people who spoke, wrote, and interacted with each other in these languages. This paper proposes to analyse how multilingual Ottoman translators defined their expertise by virtue of their knowledge of languages that their audiences did not necessarily know. As a case study, it focuses on a joint translation of Aristotle through Ioannis Kottounios' commentary by a Greek-speaking Muslim and a Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christian in the eighteenth century. Drawing on the oft-cited metaphor of the tower of Babel, the essay engages with a discussion of transculturality in the Ottoman world of translation as expertise. Next, it explores how, if at all, these translators staged their expertise. It then analyses how their performing and staging of expertise was received by their primary audiences. Finally, it contextualises this collaboration among the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Muslim intellectuals who used sources written in Greek and Latin but produced works on ancient Greek history, philosophy and science in what the Ottomans called the *elsine-i selâse*, 'the three languages,' consisting of Turkish, Arabic and Persian.

Keywords: expertise, multilingualism, Ottoman culture, intellectual history, transculturality

> I live in a place, that very well represents the tower of Babel: in Pera they speak Turkish, Greek, Hebrew, Armenian, Arabic, Persian, Russian, Sclavonian, Wallachian, German, Dutch, French, English, Italian, Hungarian; and what is worse, there are ten of these languages spoken in my family. My grooms are Arabs; my footmen French, English, and Germans; my nurse an Armenian; my housemaids Russians; half a dozen other servants, Greeks; my steward an Italian, my janizaries Turks, so that I live in the perpetual hearing of this medley of sounds, which produces a very extraordinary effect upon the people that are born here; for they learn all these lan-

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> guages at the same time, and without knowing any of them well enough to write or read in it. There are very few men, women, or even children here, that have not the same compass of words in five or six of them. I know, myself, several infants of three or four years old, that speak Italian, French, Greek, Turkish, and Russian, which last they learn of their nurses, who are generally of that country.[3]

Quoted from the famous *Turkish Letters* by the sharp observer of the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire Lady Montagu, this passage offers several observations about multilingualism in the Ottoman Empire. First, perhaps in an exaggerated manner, it refers to the multiplicity of languages that she hears on a daily basis in her house in Pera across Istanbul *intra muros*. Second, she makes the effort to focus on the people who spoke these languages and she clusters them on the basis of their ethno-religious affiliation and occupation. Third, she draws attention to the multiplicity of languages spoken by 'the people that are born [t]here' with different levels of competence. These observations represent intercultural, multicultural and transcultural conceptions of Ottoman culture. As Welsch maintains, in the intercultural conception of culture, people in somewhat homogenous spaces establish contacts with each other, which might be seen from the presence of several Europeans and Ottomans in Lady Montagu's house. In the multicultural conception of culture, different cultures live alongside each other with little interaction in the same space, which might be seen in the way Lady Montagu feels the need to differentiate by associating certain ethno-linguistic skills with certain groups.

While it is not unusual to come across the representation of these conceptions in the scholarship, in Lady Montagu's account there is also a transcultural interaction between the speakers of these languages who come from similar and different spaces, cultures and professions, an image that is often lacking in the current scholarship.[4] I believe that transculturality, which Welsch characterises by external networks, internal differentiation and hybridity,[5] offers an analytical grid to comprehend the highly complicated picture of multilingualism and multilingual scholars in a way that is both similar to but also beyond Lady Montagu's portrayal. While the term 'transcultural' encompasses a wide range of meanings depending on the context in which it is used[6] and is well-known for referring to cultural phenomena common across different societies[7] – thus, far surpassing the framework put forth by Welsch – the internal differences in Welsch's concept of transculturality are relatively less explored. This paper puts forward the idea that it was, in fact, the internal differences within Ottoman Muslim and Orthodox cultures that united the two translators linguistically and led to their cooperation on

3 Lady Montagu 1799, 229–30.

4 For significant exceptions, see Dursteler 2012; Gürbüzel and Shafir 2022; Kim and Bashkin 2021; Shafir 2021.

5 Welsch 2017, 2001, and 1999.

6 For a few representative examples, see Abu-Er-Rub et al. 2019; Benessaieh 2010; Herren, Rüesch and Sibille 2012; Zhang 2017.

7 For a discussion on how the term transculturality is confused with that of transculturation, see Benessaieh 2010, 16–8.

the same project. Yet, this paper does not claim that these differences automatically eliminated all distinctions between communities. On the contrary, it demonstrates that the two individuals targeted different audiences in an almost exclusive manner, which ultimately allowed them to showcase their understanding of expertise in a distinct way. This essay offers an analysis of a case study of collaborative translation by two Ottoman intellectuals, one Muslim and the other Orthodox Christian. In doing this, the aim will be to seek the traces of perception and reception of expertise from a transcultural perspective. As such, it will also revisit the intercultural and multicultural aspects of multilingual Ottomans that characterise the current scholarship in an almost exclusive fashion. The case study is based on Esad Efendi from Ioannina, an eighteenth-century Ottoman Muslim multilingual intellectual who wrote several works in Turkish, Arabic, and Persian, and who also knew Greek.[8] Esad Efendi was a renowned polymath and polyglot scholar and one of the most prominent Muslim physicists and astronomers of his time, the librarian of the Ottoman court, and one of the four copy editors at the Müteferrika press. He is reputed to have produced translations in Arabic of the two seventeenth-century Latin commentaries on Aristotle's works on physics and logic by Ioannis Kottounios. What makes his case particularly appealing is that in preparing these works, Esad Efendi was assisted by a Turkophone Orthodox Christian, whom he acknowledged in a quite laudatory way, albeit keeping his name unpronounced. Therefore, it is possible to use their collaboration as a conduit in exploring the nature of expertise as a collective multilingual endeavour. While we can follow how Esad Efendi explained his expertise (without using the term itself) in his works, his Orthodox assistant not only revealed his identity, which I analyse in a prospective article, but also bombarded the Ottoman administration with several requests in return for 'his services for the translation of the books of Aristotle and Kottounios.'

The complex nature of the collaborative work of translation between these Muslim and Orthodox translators also calls for several questions about the nature of multilingualism and multilingual people themselves in the Ottoman Empire beyond Montagu's observations. For instance, can we define multilingual translation as a particular form of expertise in a society characterised by such a degree of multilingualism and analyse the multilingual translators as experts? To put it differently, what, if anything, differentiated someone in Montagu's house from one who staged or was acknowledged as an expert due to his/her knowledge of at least two languages? Were they, for instance, expected to be educated, or was their own claim or image enough? Were there early modern criteria that one expected of a multilingual expert when their expertise was sought? How can expertise be a collective enterprise given that multilingual Ottomans were depicted by Montagu as not 'knowing any of [a foreign language] well enough to write or read in it'? Were there social, religious or ethnic concerns in the perception of their expertise, or did their authority regarding the subject of the text translated take precedence over their expertise on linguistic intricacies? Attempting to answer these

8 Küçük 2013; Küçük 2020, 177–82; Morel 2021–2022; Özervarlı, Şenel and Kuşlu 2024; Sarıkavak 1997.

questions entails historicising the connotations of expertise, if not the term itself, as staged by the experts and as acknowledged by their audience(s), in some cases even to the present day. As such, it would also be possible to see the interconnection among the early modern and modern intellectuals who began to tell these stories as stories of individual, and, as this paper will also illustrate, improbable linguistic expertise.

This paper consists of the following sections: First, it offers a discussion of the current scholarship's contentions on the nature of multilingualism in the Ottoman Empire that dismiss the interactive aspects of multilingualism in Ottoman culture, and hence the Ottoman culture of expertise. Second, by using accounts of the Muslim and Orthodox translators, it explores what 'expertise' might have meant for them, with a discussion on what 'translation' and 'composition' represented in terms of expertise within the eighteenth-century Ottoman context. Third, it searches for the representation of their 'expertise' among the Muslim and Orthodox intellectuals of the time. Finally, it offers a contextualisation of Esad Efendi's works against the background of similar enterprises by questioning how different or similar Esad Efendi's conception of expertise in producing his translations was in comparison to similar works in the eighteenth century and beyond.

1. Tower of Babel

Lady Montagu is not the only person to refer to the transcultural aspects of multilingualism and liken the Ottoman Empire to the tower of Babel, just as this paper is not the first one to quote her in that regard.[9] However, before attempting to analyse the multilingual interactions between speakers of different languages that Lady Montagu noted, one has to delve into the complex nature of the relationships between speakers of the same language. Few sources express such complexity in one's relationship with the language that the modernity will seek to standardise as 'mother tongue' as Dimitrios Vyzantios' theatre play, entitled *Babel* and originally published in 1836.[10] This work depicts a group of 'Greeks' from Chios, Crete, Albania, Istanbul, Ionia, Cyprus, and Anatolia, hence, many of them coming from the nominal Ottoman space. Despite coming together to celebrate the news of Greece's independence, each one speaks with a different form of Greek and observes different cultural codes. For instance, while smoking a shisha, the character from Kayseri uses the word *tsibouki* (Turkish: *çubuk*), whereas the character 'wiseman' uses the compound word *kapnosiringa* (*kapno*= smoke/tobacco and *siringa* (=reed)) derived from Ancient Greek, and only joins the dance reluctantly and with embarrassment. At one point, the character from Kayseri asks the wiseman why he does not speak his father's language, to which the wiseman responds in Ancient Greek by saying that one must speak the language of their ancestors. While the Cretan uses the Italian-origin word *mandata* for news, the character from Kayseri prefers the word *havantisia* (derived from the Turkish word *havadis*). At a restaurant

9 See, for instance, Dursteler 2022, 30–1.
10 Vyzantios 1996.

they visit, the character from Kayseri, misinterpreting the first words on the menu written in archaic Greek as French, hands the menu to the wiseman, who skilfully reads out the first words, but when it comes to words like *keftedes* (Turkish: *köfte*, i.e. meatballs) and *dolmades* (Turkish: *dolma*, i.e. stuffed grape leaves), he hands the menu to someone else, crying in ancient Greek that it is written in Turkish. While celebrating together, when the Cretan asks the Albanian if the latter ate *kouradia* during his visit to Crete, the Albanian, who is already depicted as a rough man, pulls out his pistol and shoots the Cretan because in Cretan Greek, the word in question refers to lamb meat, but elsewhere, this word means excrement. The sergeant who emerges to address the incident speaks half Greek and half Italian and, since he only partially understands what the witnesses say, he puts all of them in jail and even insults the character from Kayseri by calling him *giaourtovaptismenos* (baptised in yogurt, in reference to the abundance of yogurt that the Greeks from Asia Minor use in their cuisine). Amusing as they sound, these characters in Vyzantios' *Babel* represent at least one aspect of transculturality: that is, networks with external cultures, internal differentiation and hybridity.

Yet, modern scholarship appears to have been more selective in understanding the nature of multilingualism in the Ottoman Empire. Bernard Lewis' paper entitled 'From Babel to Dragomans' presented for and published by the British Academy in 1998 epitomises this selective approach.[11] In a similar line of thought to Lady Montagu's, Lewis likens the Ottoman Empire to Babel, in which many languages were spoken. However, when it comes to the people who spoke these languages, he chooses to attribute the expertise associated with multilingualism only to non-Muslims.[12] In fact, in his essay, the term Muslim takes place in two main contexts; first, when Lewis discusses the Muslim resistance towards translation in general and the translation of the Quran in particular, which he contrasts with the Jews and Christians who were quite open to translating their holy scriptures and to translation on the whole, and second, when he talks about the dragomans who converted from Christianity to Islam and hence introduced their linguistic skills to the service of the Ottoman state.[13] In another essay, entitled 'The use by Muslim historians of non-Muslim sources,' Lewis equates the term non-Muslim with the Europeans only.[14]

A quick glance at the secondary literature shows the unquestioned ramifications of the kind of perspective that Lewis so bluntly proposed. The current literature, both Ottomanist and otherwise, is mostly based on an interest in multilingualism in the Ottoman Empire rather than in the multilingual individuals themselves,[15] and the more limited literature on multilingual individuals is overwhelmingly focused on the

11 This essay was republished alongside several essays of little relevance by Lewis in a book and constituted the bulk of the title of the book: *From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East*. Lewis 2005.

12 Lewis 1999.

13 *ibid*.

14 Lewis 1962.

15 Balım 2000; Eruz 2010; İpşirli 1987; Kaya 1991 (English translation: Kaya 1992); Kayaoğlu 1998; Koç 2004; Meral 2013; Ülken 1935.

European dragomans living in the Ottoman Empire.[16] What makes this a particularly curious case is that we see very little difference among the works of Ottomanist and non-Ottomanist scholars who are well versed in the themes in question. Christine Woodhead's essay on 'Ottoman languages,' for example, contains not a single word on multilingual Muslims who are not converts from other faiths, while the essay is full of references to 'bilingual intermediaries, drawn both from the subject populations and from among government officials.'[17] While the former in Woodhead's account is exemplified by 'Turkish-speaking local Greek Christians,' the latter turn out to be the members of the *devşirme* practice in which Christian children who were converted into Islam and taught Turkish formed the backbone of the Ottoman ruling elite for several centuries.[18] Similarly, the recent works of Peter Burke, possibly the most influential and comprehensive studies of multilingualism and translation across the world, are indicative of this state of the literature as we can perceive from his references to the Ottoman Empire: his Ottoman translators, too, are often 'converts from Christianity to Islam.'[19]

Even if the case study in this essay involves an Ottoman Muslim translator, the aim is not to counter the arguments and convictions of the current scholarship about the alleged absence of Muslims' roles as experts on translation. On the contrary, the aim is to draw attention to the complicated nature of the multilingual Ottomans' relationship with the languages that they knew, which was complicated even further when they combined their expertise for a collaborative enterprise.

2. Self-perception of Expertise

To return to the joint enterprise of translation, how can we determine the key expert in the translations of Aristotle into Arabic through the Latin commentaries of Kottounios? In his prologue to the Logic,[20] Esad Efendi claims that he was not happy with the earlier translations of Aristotle that were made during the Abbasid caliphate. To be precise, he accused them of not conforming to the original Greek: 'most translations dating back to the time of the Abbasid kings were confused and at odds with the original Greek books…'[21] Here, even though he did not use the term, he claimed a certain expertise on Aristotelian works, and he compared himself to the earlier translators of these works. Obviously, he made the subtle claim that this was not only a new translation, but also an independent work in which he showcased a technique of performing a certain form of expertise. This is something that the modern scholarship has taken up to claim that what Esad Efendi was doing was beyond mere translation. In his

16 In an exceptional way, in her study on the dragomans, Rothman underscores the 'role of individuals of Ottoman or North African descent in Orientalist scholarly production' in Europe in different capacities (Rothman 2021, 14).
17 Woodhead 2011, 149.
18 *ibid*.
19 Burke 2007, 14.
20 The said prologue is analysed, edited and translated into English in Morel 2021–2022.
21 Morel 2021–2022, 344; Şenel 2024, 382.

work on Physics, Esad Efendi claimed that he himself did the translation: 'I wanted to translate the *al-Kutub al-Samâniya li'l-Samâ' al-tabî'î* which is finer than his other books and is esteemed among to all of the Arab, Greek, Persian and Latin wisemen.'[22] While presenting his knowledge of the Greek language as an asset, his perceptions of his own expertise appear somewhat confusing. In the same work, he also emphasised that he made his translation and commentary 'within the commentary of the excellent Ioannis Kottounios the Greek from Karaferye,' modern-day Veroia in Greece), which was written in Latin.[23] So, the questions of whether he knew not only Greek but also Latin and what his level of expertise in these languages was remain at the heart of the discussion here, which has been noted only in passing in a few recent works.[24] Before we move on to these questions, we can consider Esad Efendi's partial answer in translation of Porphyry's *Isagoge*. Here, Esad Efendi claimed that he has done this translation directly from Latin: 'I translated it from the tongue of the Latins.'[25] However, he also noted that there was a Greek intellectual who helped him: 'I then spent some time studying their utterances and understanding their literal, commonly known, and technical meanings, thanks to one of the Greek servants of the Sublime Empire, who knew philosophy based on verification and certitude and not on mere opinion and surmise.'[26]

Who, then, was the expert here? Was it Esad Efendi, who composed the final work and who allegedly knew Greek and Latin, at least to a certain extent, but received some practical or technical help with the correct meaning of certain concepts? Or was it the Orthodox translator who helped Esad Efendi with his expert knowledge on the gist of the matter? To my understanding, their individual perceptions differ, if not explicitly clash. On the one hand, Esad Efendi appears to have taken credit for the entire work even though he acknowledged the highly-regarded contributions of an anonymous Orthodox translator. The scholarship had long proved unable to explain the difference between the commentary by Kottounios and the work of Esad Efendi. Some scholars maintained that Esad Efendi's main contribution lies in his knowledge of the Muslim commentators on Aristotle, which was lacking in the work of Kottounios,[27] and supposedly also in the work of his Orthodox translator. Hence, the final work was beyond mere translation. Rather, it was the composition of an independent work (*te'lîf*). There are certain grounds for this claim. As a recent contribution presenting the preliminary conclusions of a research project reminds us through the case of Esad Efendi's oeuvre, demarcation of the line between composition and translation was much wider than it has come to be understood in the modern period.[28] The plethora of words in the Ottoman literary culture to refer to ways of engaging with a text are testimony to

22 Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Istanbul, Ragıp Paşa Collection 824, fol. 1v.
23 *ibid*.
24 Artan 2016, 114; Baga 2023, 203.
25 Morel 2021–2022, 354; Şenel 2024, 382.
26 Morel 2021–2022, 345; Şenel 2024, 383.
27 Kaya 1991; Sarıkavak 1997.
28 Şenel 2024.

this phenomenon.[29] Yet, more recent analyses of Esad Efendi's texts on physics and logic underscore their translational qualities. Küçük claims that Esad Efendi's work on physics is 'a fairly literal translation of Cottunius [Kottounios], not an interpretive rendition of Aristotle,'[30] and Morel refers to Esad Efendi's work on physics and logic as 'paraphrastic translations.'[31] However, regardless of the debates on the 'original' contribution of the translator/commentator or on the genre in which they wrote, as this essay will demonstrate, there were several other Ottoman scholars who cited the people who helped them with their translations, which was not the case with Esad Efendi.

On the other hand, as Kaya demonstrates in the most detailed survey to date, the Orthodox translator asked for and received a number of privileges from the Ottoman court for his translation work on a continuous basis, although the translator is not identified.[32] As I analyse in a forthcoming piece, this translator was called Nikolaos Kritias. He was one of the most knowledgeable people on Aristotle at the time and later on, he held several prestigious posts in the lay and ecclesiastical offices of the Orthodox community in the Ottoman Empire. A native of Bursa, he came from a Turkish-speaking family, and he knew both Greek and Latin. He served in the Patriarchal Academy as one of three grammar teachers, as secretary of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, as grand logothete in the same Patriarchate, as grand ecclesiarch, as the chief warden (*kapu kahyâsı*) of the Phanariot prince of Moldavia, as scholarch of the Patriarchal Academy and as chief secretary of the patriarchal court.[33] In his petition to the Ottoman court, he presented himself as the person who 'served in the translation of the books of the first teacher and the chief of the philosophers, Aristotle, and of his commentator, Kottounios.'[34] Much like his counterpart, Kritias did not mention that he had helped Esad Efendi in this translation. The fact that neither Esad Efendi nor Kritias acknowledged each other's names brings me to the reception of their expertise in the Ottoman world of letters.

3. Reception of Expertise

Both Esad Efendi and Kritias were known as experts on matters Greek and Turkish, respectively, and this expertise appears to have relied on their knowledge of languages. Some eighteenth-century compilations on the Ottoman poets mention Esad Efendi's knowledge of languages beyond the *elsine-i selâse*. Esad Mehmed Efendi, for instance, refers to Esad Efendi of Ioannina as 'the translator of the Latin books of philosophy

29 Demircioğlu 2016; Paker 2014. For a thought-provoking discussion by three scholars, see Gürbüzel, Sooyang and Miller 2022.
30 Küçük 2013, 134.
31 Morel 2021–22, 331.
32 Kaya 2024.
33 Skouvaras 1961, 55, Gritsopoulos 1966, vol. I, 351–62, Angelomati-Tsougaraki 1984, 301–3.
34 T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri (Osmanlı Arşivi), Istanbul Mühimme Defterleri 132/91.

and the narrator of Greek works.'[35] Likewise, Râmiz states that he translated Şâhidî's famous Persian-Turkish rhymed dictionary into Greek and dispatched it to his native Ioannina, and as a result, people there began to show interest in the Persian language.[36] This translation, if it ever existed, has not survived. Kritias' association with the Turkish language is no different, but with more obvious reasons. He is known for his translation of the *berat*, the document of appointment issued in 1754 for patriarch Kyrillos Karakallos of Constantinople, from Turkish to Greek.[37] In addition, one of Kritias' contemporaries, Iosipos Moisiodax noted in his *Apologia* that Nikolaos Kritias was translating Theofylos Korydalleus' work on logic into 'the language of the rulers.'[38] Just as is the case with the reference to Esad Efendi's translation of Şâhidî's work from Persian to Greek, we do not know if this translation still exists.

Relying on these contemporary accounts written by people who did not have knowledge of the relevant languages, the modern scholarship took their claims for granted. One of the earliest scholarly analyses on Esad Efendi was tellingly entitled 'The richest inheritor of the Greek philosophers among us' (*Yunan Feylesoflarının Bizde En Zengin Varisi yahut Yanyalı Esad Efendi*).[39] Likewise, starting with the pioneering work of Adnan Adıvar on Ottoman science, Esad Efendi's knowledge of both Greek and Latin has been taken for granted.[40] Some people[41] even claimed that Esad Efendi also received an education in the flourishing Greek schools in Ioannina.[42] In a similar fashion, several modern analyses on Kritias claimed that he knew not only Turkish, but also Arabic.[43] In my opinion, we have few insights into Esad Efendi's knowledge of Latin and Kritias' knowledge of Arabic outside their own claims or claims of their contemporaries who did not necessarily know these languages. From the expertise perspective, both Esad Efendi and Kritias appear to have posed successfully as experts in these fields, an image that the modern scholarship often took for granted without much questioning.

Because we do not currently have any work that we can attribute to Esad Efendi and Kritias in Latin and Arabic, respectively, it is simply impossible to comment on their knowledge of these languages. While Esad Efendi and Kritias knew both Turkish and Greek and probably conversed in these languages, the way they wrote in these languages reminds us of the passage quoted at the beginning of this essay. Multilingualism did not necessarily mean that the multilingual scholars had expert knowledge of these languages as the scholarship tends to affirm. In corresponding with the patriarch of Jerusalem Chrysanthos Notaras, Esad Efendi often used the medium of Greek

35 Esad Mehmed Efendi 2018, 44.
36 Râmiz 1994, 9.
37 *Library of the Parliament of Greece, Athens*, MS 66, fol. 217–22; Gedeon 1910, 76–86.
38 Iosipos Moisiodax 1976, 37.
39 Şerefeddin [Yaltkaya] 1910.
40 Abdulhak Adnan [Adıvar] 1939, 126–7.
41 Sarıkavak 1997.
42 For the significance of Ioannina for the Greek-speaking Muslims, see Kotzageorgis 2009; Kotzageorgis 1997, 77–87.
43 Skouvaras 1961, 91.

language, but in doing this, he benefitted from the help of three members of the lay and ecclesiastical bureaucracy of the Orthodox community, namely Iakovos Manos, Drakos Soutsos and an unidentified person.[44] The only instance in which he himself wrote in Greek is contained in a few lines at the end of one of his letters, probably as a gesture.[45] As noted by Pinelopi Stathi, who edited this letter, there is no orthography and the spelling is problematic, to say the least.[46] From the way the ink dripped, it is also possible to note that he had difficulty with writing in Greek. So, we can disprove at least the claim that he received a form of education in Greek schools in Ioannina. On the back of another letter, he wrote in Turkish, clearly with no difficulty.[47] Even though more research is needed on the topic, a comparison of this unpublished letter with Esad Efendi's manuscripts[48] suggests that the two appear to be written by the same hand. The only extant petition written by Kritias gives an idea of the limits of his knowledge of formal Turkish, at least in the 1720s. If we assume that he wrote the petition on his own, we might say that he shows clear signs of poor selection of words when, attempting to refer to 'former times' (which would have been expressed with the phrase *evvelden* or *kadîmden olageldiği üzere*), he used the expression 'as it has happened in the predecessors' (*selefde olageldiği üzere*).[49]

Ironically, however, thanks to the success of these two scholars in connecting the Muslim and Orthodox worlds and staging themselves as experts on the affairs of the other community within their own communities, both the Ottomanist and Hellenist scholarship have ignored the transcultural collaboration between the two translators. The limits of their knowledge in the languages they are famous for using to make a difference in their religious communities call for the question of how representative their collaboration was in the broader Ottoman context.

4. Contextualisation

Was the 'expertise' of these translators exceptional in the ways in which they are presented in the secondary literature, often for reasons that are not entirely correct? The answer to this question is affirmative based on the recent scholarship on scholars of the Ottoman world of letters who were non-convert Ottoman Muslims as translators or commentators of texts in languages beyond Turkish, Arabic and Persian.

44 Stathi 1986.
45 *National Library of Greece, Athens*, Metochio tou Panagiou Tafou, Allilografia ton Diermineon 94, fol. 154.
46 Stathi 1986, 64.
47 *National Library of Greece, Athens*, Metochio tou Panagiou Tafou, Allilografia ton Diermineon 94, fol. 218.
48 Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Istanbul, Ragıp Paşa Collection 824.
49 T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri (Osmanlı Arşivi), Istanbul, Hatt-ı Hümâyûn 1165/38.

A significant example is the seventeenth-century intellectual Katib Çelebi's *Cihannümâ*. In a manner similar to Esad Efendi, Katib Çelebi dwelled on his own ability to perform expertise and explained his interest in writing this book as follows:

> … because it was clear that Islamic books were all inaccurate with respect to the countries of Europe and that Muslim writers fell short in describing most of the climes and countries, I have translated the abridgment of the book of *Atlas* (i.e., Atlas Minor of Hondius) which is the most recent of the geographical works written in Latin, and supplemented it with some useful information from the Islamic books.[50]

As he also notes in this work, Katib Çelebi benefited from the help of Mehmed İhlâsî, a Frenchman who converted to Islam and lived most of his life in the Ottoman Empire. İbrahim Müteferrika cites Mehmed İhlâsî among Katib Çelebi's chief sources of help and presents the former as 'a very capable man, familiar with the principles of geography and with an excellent knowledge of Latin' and as someone who 'mastered Turkish in a short time.'[51] Katib Çelebi also explains the way he translated the book as follows: 'I had him read the book and expound it to me, and we reflected on its meaning, considering how best to convey the author's intention.'[52] As Gottfried Hagen illustrates, there are several cases in which Mehmed İhlâsî's French pronunciation in reading the text in Latin influenced the way Katib Çelebi spelled certain words: *Ejipsiler* for Egyptians or *Gresiler* for Greeks.[53] Hagen also refers to several cases in which Katib Çelebi used different spellings for relevant vocabulary. As proof of Katib Çelebi's heavy reliance on Mehmed İhlâsî for the translation, Hagen also states that Katib Çelebi confused *aurea*, the Latin word for gold, with *Avrupa*, the Turkish word for Europe.[54] Hence, disagreeing with the earlier scholarship, he concluded that Katib Çelebi barely knew Latin and relied heavily on the assistance of Mehmed İhlâsî. We could also see a similar case with Katib Çelebi's work on the History of Constantinople and Caesars. Here, too, the way he spelled the names of Byzantine Emperors and his lack of consistency in spelling suggest that he relied on a Francophone translator. For instance, the Byzantine emperor *Nikiforos* appears as *Niseforos* or *Nisoforos*.[55] Several Ottoman intellectuals, including Katib Çelebi, also spelled the name of Alexander the Great's father as Filikos. However, a copy of Esad Efendi's work on physics, catalogued as the author's copy, conforms to the Greek original and spells it clearly as 'Filipos.'[56] This contrasts with several other copies of the same work by copyists who produced more beautiful and legible manuscripts: They simply spell the name as 'Filikos.'[57] A

50 Kātib Çelebi 2021, 35–6.
51 Hagen 2015, 298.
52 *ibid*., 299.
53 *ibid*.
54 *ibid*., 297.
55 Kâtib Çelebi 2009, 13, 18, 21, 31.
56 Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Istanbul, Ragıp Paşa Collection 824, fol. 1v.
57 Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Istanbul, Hacı Beşir Ağa Collection 414, fol. 1v.

recent study also shows that Esad paid minute attention to transliterating the names of ancient Greek philosophers, hence differing from the earlier scholarship on Aristotle in Arabic, in particular the ninth-century translator Hunayn ibn Ishak.[58]

The seventeenth-century Ottoman intellectual Hezarfen Hüseyin is also reputed to have had knowledge of Latin and Greek. Even though he does not mention his main sources, one of the sources in question was Georgios Kedrinos' *Synopsis Historion*.[59] Hezarfen Hüseyin notes that it was Panagiotis Nikousios, the chief interpreter of the Ottoman imperial chancery, who supplied him with the relevant books and that these books were translated for him by Ali Ufkî Bey, the famous Polish convert from Christianity to Islam.[60] Just like Katib Çelebi and unlike Esad Efendi, Hezarfen Hüseyin acknowledges the person who translated the work for him. However, he does not mention how the translation and composition of the work were realised; Hezarfen Hüseyin's work still awaits further investigation in that regard. So, despite the confident assertions of the scholarship, we are still unsure about his level of competence in these languages.

A similar translation was done in the eighteenth century by a less significant and little-known individual, namely Mahmud Efendi, the *mufti* of Athens. His History of the City of Philosophers, as published and extensively studied by Gülçin Tunalı,[61] offers several insights for a comparative study. Unlike Esad Efendi, Katib Çelebi and Hüseyin Hezarfen, he was quite open in explaining how his work came into existence. First of all, he acknowledged the people who translated the text for him: 'the clergymen called Papa Kolari and Papa Sotiri who are the chiefs of the priests and monks of the four hundred churches and ten monasteries still present in the lands of Athens.'[62] He also praised them as being 'much occupied with the history of Athens in histories in the Frankish, Greek, Latin and Roman languages' and having 'complete knowledge and skill.'[63] These words of praise remind us of the way Esad Efendi praised the person who helped him, but let us remember that Esad Efendi did not acknowledge that person's name. Just like some of the people mentioned throughout this essay, Mahmud Efendi did not know the source language, at least to the degree to understand the Greek translators who did not know Turkish. Therefore, he clearly expressed the difficulty he experienced and stated that he 'needed another translator to [understand] their Greek language.'[64]

Just as the other examples, he mentioned in several cases that he translated and composed this text. In doing this, he did not differ from the others in using the terms translation and composition (*tercüme* and *te'lîf*) interchangeably. However, he departed from them in one way, namely his conception of professional expertise. In the intro-

58 Şenel 2024, 394.
59 Bekar 2011, 46.
60 *ibid*., 45.
61 Tunalı 2020 and 2012.
62 Tunalı 2020, 86–7.
63 *ibid*., 87.
64 Tunalı 2020, 89.

duction, he claimed that his profession (*meslek*) concerned giving legal opinions and sermons, that his time was occupied with jurisprudence (*fikh*), *hadith*, and *tefsîr*, which constituted his knowledge. Finally, he claimed that he did not have enough time to attain mastery 'in the profession of book construction' (*kitâb inşâ mesleği*).[65] What is interesting here is that even though most of the people mentioned in this paper had somewhat limited knowledge of the source languages in their translation and composition work, the person who claimed the least expertise provides us with the most extensive information about the translators and the process of translation. Maybe the practice during the period under study of claiming expertise is one of the things that prevent the modern scholar from comprehending the true nature of multilingualism and multilingual scholars in the Ottoman Empire.

5. Conclusion

Even though the term 'expertise' did not feature in the works quoted in this essay, at least in the way we understand the concept today, claiming expertise on a certain topic or text was pretty much on the agendas of the people who composed works on the basis of the translation of works in Greek and Latin. Claiming expertise, sometimes at the expense of the other agents who helped with translating a certain text, appears to have created an image of the mastery of the composers of these works among the readers of these texts who did not have knowledge of the source languages. Modern scholarship is built on this image, drawn by those who claimed expertise and convinced their contemporary readers. When we have a closer reading of the texts and the individual writings of the translators in question, however, it appears that their knowledge in the multitude of languages on which their claim of expertise is based was somewhat limited. Let us remember the passage by Montagu on this occasion. Finally, my contextualisation of the case of Esad Efendi's claim of expertise with some other cases of translation in the Ottoman Empire might suggest that there was a negative correlation between claiming expertise and the details that the translators/composers offer about the essential support that they benefited from. Overall, shifting our focus from multilingualism to multilingual scholars with an eye to the nature of their expertise rather than their image seems to be the key for a better understanding of the transcultural world of Ottoman letters.

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65 Tunalı 2020, 88.

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Expertise and Sedition: Perspectives from the Ottoman Army of 1769

Abstract

This paper examines the letters of the Ottoman Grand Vizier and commander-in-chief of the 1769 campaign, Yağlıkçızâde Mehmed Emin Pasha, in order to advance the understanding of Ottoman notions of expertise. Military expertise has always been seen as a fundamental part of discussions of Ottoman modernization, and its perceived absence prior to the Ottoman-Russian War of 1768–1774 is cited as one of the many reasons why the Ottomans 'lagged' behind. This article attempts to understand what constituted expertise for the Ottoman elite before the major catastrophes of the war and puts forward an intertwining relationship between perceptions of expertise and sedition.

Keywords: Ottoman-Russian War of 1768–1774, military expertise, Yağlıkçızâde Mehmed Emin Pasha, order and sedition

1. Introduction

In March 1769, the Ottoman army assembled in Davutpaşa, located to the west of the gates of the Ottoman capital, in preparation for a long march to the northern front to confront the Russian Empire. The army was led by Grand Vizier Yağlıkçızâde Mehmed Emin Pasha, whose appointment to this high command is frequently interpreted as a result of palace intrigue and political manoeuvring, often cited as emblematic of the Empire's lack of military preparedness.[1] Mehmed Emin Pasha, after all, was a former scribe with no prior military experience or background in campaigning. His repeated requests for the acceptance of his resignation further reinforce this view of his inadequacy. However, this perspective raises important questions about the nature of expertise – particularly military expertise – and the criteria by which it is judged. What can his experience reveal about the intersection of political authority, military command, and the perceived role of expertise in the Ottoman military system?

Eric Ash argued that experts 'facilitated the expansion and consolidation of powerful European states.'[2] Bringing to mind Pierre Bourdieu's conception of 'field,' Ash argued that to be an early modern expert required the possession and control of a 'body of specialized knowledge,' experience with the knowledge in question, a distinction from

1 Aksan 1993, 225–6; Beydilli 2003.
2 Ash 2010, 22.

ordinary practitioners and a sociopolitical context of legitimation.[3] In his view, expertise was a vital resource that enabled powerful European states to outmanoeuvre their rivals. In contrast, Summerson Carr emphasized the social dimensions of expertise, positing that 'expertise is something people do rather than something people have or hold.'[4] While she acknowledged the importance of learning and acquiring knowledge, Carr focused on the performative aspects of expertise, highlighting that it is not simply a matter of individual capability but requires validation within broader social contexts. According to Carr, expertise is a social construct that gains its legitimacy through recognition by larger societal structures.

Military expertise is a critical area in which the complexities of expertise are most evident, particularly in the context of what Ash identifies as its role in facilitating the expansion of powerful European states. The early modern period witnessed significant transformations in military capacity across Europe, with some states – such as the Ottoman Empire – beginning to fall behind in comparison to their European counterparts. Recent scholarship, however, reveals that notions of military expertise were not solely grounded in training and experience; they also involved the performance and demonstration of skill and competence.

In the early modern era, the concept of the soldier underwent a significant transformation, blending elements of both performance and professionalism. Although military service – particularly in leadership roles – was still largely associated with aristocratic status and lineage, there was growing dissatisfaction among common soldiers regarding the lack of experience and expertise among military commanders.[5] For both the nobility and the gentry, military service was increasingly seen as a means of demonstrating courage and loyalty, qualities they believed would safeguard their honor and enhance their social standing.[6] Simultaneously, the early modern period also saw the rise of more specialized military roles that became professionalized, such as the military engineer.[7] These developments reflect the broader evolution of military expertise, which moved beyond hereditary privilege and aristocratic ideals to encompass a growing emphasis on specialized knowledge and technical proficiency.

Recent scholarship on Ottoman military expertise has shifted focus from viewing the empire as merely imitative in its adoption of military technology to recognizing its distinct traditions, sustained through systems such as apprenticeships.[8] Scholars have highlighted the early adoption of gunpowder technologies and the involvement of both foreign and local technicians in the empire's military advancements.[9] Mustafa Kaçar and Darina Martykánová contend that the Ottoman Empire only began to

3 *ibid*., 5–10; Bourdieu 2013.
4 Carr 2010, 18.
5 Woodcock 2019a, 12.
6 Trim 2019.
7 Lenman 2013.
8 Şakul 2013.
9 Agoston 2008.

systematically institutionalize foreign military expertise in the 1770s.[10] While notable exceptions, such as the role of the Marquis de Bonneval (Humbaracı Ahmed Pasha) and the employment of *efrencî* technicians, underscore the presence of foreign experts, the notion of expertise in this context is primarily associated with non-Ottoman figures.[11] However, the concept of what constituted a military expert within the eighteenth-century Ottoman army remains inadequately understood.

Virginia Aksan has compared 'late eighteenth-century Ottoman camps … to disturbed beehives'[12] and noted that 'the campaign headquarters probably resembled a bazaar as much as a disciplined military machine.'[13] Perhaps it is fair to call the Ottoman army led by Yağlıkçızâde in 1769 a moving capital. The Ottoman sultans had long since ceased to lead the army, but the Mongol tradition of considering the army itself as the capital continued, albeit with significant changes. The highest-ranking Ottoman officials were all in the army, and the bureaucracy continued to function in the 'usual' way, in motion. Every major foreign embassy had a dragoman present in the army as they still had to continue dealing with the Grand Vizier and the Ottoman chief scribe. Two copies of most documents sent to the government were made: one for the army, and one for the capital. In this sense, Yağlıkçızâde needed expertise in both governing the people and in disciplining the corps.

But who exactly was Yağlıkçızâde Mehmed Pasha? Aksan described him as 'little more than a glorified secretary.'[14] In fact, he came from a scribal background and managed to be appointed as the secretary to the Grand Vizier (*sadâret mektûbcusu*) in 1761. In this service, he became involved in Ottoman-Russian diplomacy in Poland-Lithuania shortly after the controversial election of Stanisław August Poniatowski in 1763. He interviewed the Russian ambassador in Istanbul, Count Alexei Obreskov, and the Prussian resident Karl Adolf von Rexin about developments in the Commonwealth and had them both sign the minutes of the meeting, a document that the Ottomans interpreted as a guarantee that the Russian military presence in Poland-Lithuania would not be counter to Ottoman interests.[15] This act of service probably led to his appointment as Chief Scribe of the Empire in a little more than a week. The Ottoman declaration of war in 1768, delivered to the ambassadors in Istanbul, copied paragraphs verbatim from the minutes of Yağlıkçızâde's interview with the Russian and Prussian representative.[16] While he was in the army, Yağlıkçızâde asked for the document to be delivered to him in order to strengthen Ottoman claims in his negotiations with foreign representatives.[17] This episode challenges the common portrayal of Yağlıkçızâde's appointment as mere palace politics, often presented as evidence of Ottoman unpre-

10 Kaçar 1996. Martykánová 2016–17, 159–82.
11 Aydüz 1998; Finkel 1992; Kaçar 1995; Murphey 1983; Şakul 2013.
12 Aksan 2013, 144.
13 Aksan 1998a, 117.
14 Aksan 2012, 334.
15 BOA, C.HR 63/3104, 13 Safer 1178 (12 August 1764).
16 Talbot 2017. See also: Karabıçak 2022.
17 BOA, TSMA.e 516/41, 11 Muharrem 1183 (17 May 1769).

paredness.[18] Instead, it highlights a deeper issue in the Ottoman military system – one that transcends common notions of military expertise. While Yağlıkçızâde's appointment was likely linked to his diplomatic work and pro-war stance rather than military competence, this does not mean that military expertise was irrelevant in Ottoman governance. In his letters the Grand Vizier claimed to have some kind of expertise. This means that the two most powerful men in the Ottoman Empire in 1769, Sultan Mustafa III and the Grand Vizier, were still talking about the best way to conduct a military campaign and the latter was still claiming that he knew what he was doing. Therefore, I will not assume a tension between court politics and expertise, because it seems to me to be informed by the knowledge that the Ottomans were ultimately defeated.

If we combine the army's composition to Yağlıkçızâde's career we may approach an answer. This paper aims to contribute to our understanding of how expertise was perceived in the Ottoman context by examining this intersection. It introduces a new aspect to the question of expertise: sedition. In the following pages I will argue that the claim to expertise initiated a negotiation between different parties. Even when it could be tested, expertise was accompanied by concerns about order and sedition. An expert was a potential troublemaker, and the prevention of trouble was expertise itself.

Thus, this study focuses on Ottoman perceptions of military expertise during a specific moment: the 1769 campaign against Russia. It draws on letters from Yağlıkçızâde Mehmed Emin Pasha, who commanded the imperial army and corresponded frequently with the Sultan from March to August 1769, found in the Topkapı Palace Archives. The Pasha wrote a letter to the Sultan almost every other day and kept him informed on the conditions of the army. His letters give us a glimpse into the mindset of an Ottoman bureaucrat-turned-general and highlights how he dealt with questions of expertise or lack thereof just before the disasters of the Ottoman-Russian War of 1768–1774, and therefore before the Ottomans began to accelerate their import of European military expertise. The paper will address three key issues from the 1769 campaign: first, Mehmed Emin Pasha's understanding of military command and expertise; second, the case of a Polish volunteer seeking to serve as an artillery expert in the Ottoman army, whose expertise was tested and ultimately rejected; and third, the execution of two Greek Venetian doctors who offered their services to the Grand Vizier. These episodes illustrate how questions of expertise were often intertwined with concerns about sedition, mutiny, and espionage. This paper, therefore, aims to explore the significance of military expertise in the Ottoman Empire and its role in the 1769 campaign.

2. Professionalization, Expertise, and the Importance of the 1769 Moment

Questions of professionalization and expertise have been central to the study of Ottoman military history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For our purposes here, I take professionalization to entail a more or less clearly defined career path that

18 Aksan 1993, 225–26; Beydilli 2003.

requires its holders to have expertise in the field to which they belong, while expertise itself is not limited to those on professional paths.

Christine Isom-Verhaaren's study of the Ottoman navy up to the mid-eighteenth century shows how professionalization and expertise intermingled but were not sufficient on their own to gain positions or status in the hierarchical organization of the navy. In the early centuries, Ottoman admirals who could be considered as naval experts came from corsair backgrounds in the North African provinces, without a professional career path established by the Ottoman centre, but clearly with a lot of expertise. Even then, Isom-Verhaaren demonstrates, palace favourites could replace these experts, leading to major defeats for the Ottoman navy.[19]

The underlying tension revealed in Isom-Verhaaren's study is that between court politics and expertise. This approach takes expertise as unambiguous and easily demonstrable, while the appointment of grand admirals with no prior experience seems to be related only to power politics. Moreover, there is an unspoken assumption in this kind of approach that, in the right environment, expertise trumps court politics and factionalism, which is far from true. Factionalism is still evident in environments where expertise is institutionalized, which is perhaps what the Ottoman army lacked, for despite the janissary regiments that formed a significant part of the Ottoman forces, expertise was not necessarily institutionalized.

Yannis Spyropoulos argued that 'towards the end of its lifespan, the Janissary corps became an increasingly decentralised institution.'[20] This meant that the janissary corps began to establish local ties, become involved in, and eventually dominate local politics. It also meant that lower-ranking officers had more political power. In many provincial towns, these officers allowed outsiders to join the corps and take advantage of its social benefits and networks without being paid by the government or appearing in roll calls.[21] On the other hand, as Aysel Yıldız shows, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the commanders of the janissary corps (janissary *aghas*) were overwhelmingly appointed from within the corps itself.[22] As she points out, 'this signifies a professionalization (…); but at the same time it strongly suggests that the corps was falling from favor.'[23] Direct appointment from outside of the corps of someone with ties to the palace symbolically emphasized the ties between the corps and the Sultan. The fact that the Aghas now came from within the corps severed ties to the palace, but also attested to the influence of various groups within the corps as it 'began to lose its strictly military nature and turn into a para-military group.'[24]

The rivalries among the janissary factions would be one of the issues that the commander-in-chief would have to deal with in the spring and summer of 1769, but his army was not only composed of janissaries. The Ottoman military system began to rely

19 Isom-Verhaaren 2022, 5–6, 157–87.
20 Spyropoulos 2019, 449.
21 Spyropoulos and Yıldız 2022.
22 Yıldız 2018, 453–4.
23 *ibid*., 454.
24 *ibid*., 459.

more and more on the use of armed irregulars, the *levend*s, who could occasionally be combined with the janissary regiments.[25] One of the main problems that Yağlıkçızâde had to deal with was the maintenance of order and the prevention of insurrection among the soldiers who did not live a life of constant military discipline.

The army also included specialized branches, such as the artillery corps, which raised its own questions of expertise. The Ottoman use of gunpowder and cannons has always been at the centre of Ottoman military history.[26] The 1768–1774 war marked a turning point, as the Ottoman army needed to update its artillery inventory after the Seven Years' War, recruiting more European experts, notably Baron de Tott who entered Ottoman service before the war. Available studies of Ottoman artillery focus on the period after the disastrous defeat at Kartal (Kagul) in 1770, emphasize the modernization brought about by Baron de Tott's efforts, and ultimately tell stories about how Western officers modernized the Ottoman army.[27] In fact, by not participating in the Seven Years' War, the Ottomans had missed the developments in light, mobile field artillery, and the effort to create a dedicated mobile field artillery corps was the result of firsthand experience at Kartal.[28] However, this question did not exist in the mind of Yağlıkçızâde Mehmed Emin Pasha in 1769. Moreover, the example of a foreign expert who offered his services that will be presented below, had no bearing of the field artillery division that was created with the help of Baron de Tott. These examples offer insight into local understandings of expertise, unmediated by foreign influences, which provides valuable perspective on Ottoman perceptions of expertise prior to the empire's major defeat in the 1770s.

This is not an argument for Ottoman isolation. Ottoman authors have long been writing about European military systems and recommending different perspectives in conversation with European developments.[29] 1769 is an important moment for understanding how these perceptions came together to shape the understanding of a commander-in-chief before the major defeat of the eighteenth century.

3. What Constituted the Commander-in-chief's Expertise?

A classic Ottoman manual for viziers written by Defterdâr Sarı Mehmed Pasha (d. 1717) argues that 'the man who is an eminent commander-in-chief or general has need first to be zealous and sagacious, one who has both campaigned and lived at home.'[30] According to Sarı Mehmed Pasha's advice, the commander-in-chief had to be experienced both in the battlefield and the capital, neither of which was more important

25 Aksan 1998b, 25–6.
26 Agoston 2008.
27 Gezer and Yeşil 2018; Yeşil 2017. Kahraman Şakul's MA thesis is an exception in this sense, as it covers a longer period of time and discusses the social context of the employment of foreign officers: Şakul 2001.
28 Aksan 2002b, 266.
29 Kaymakçı 2020; Theotokis and Yıldız 2018.
30 Wright 1935, 128.

than the other. Yağlıkçızâde may have excelled in diplomacy at home, but he had no experience of campaigning. I am inclined to argue that military expertise encompassed more than strictly military affairs. The Grand Viziers were responsible for running the Ottoman government as absolute deputies of the sultans, and leading the Ottoman army into war was only part of their responsibility as deputies of the sultan.

To understand what Yağlıkçızâde had to do as the commander-in-chief, we need a better understanding of the army and its constituents. Towards the conclusion of the eighteenth century, the Ottoman military had undergone significant decentralization, with its structure and funding primarily managed at the local level by governors, tax collectors, and the elites of town and village groups.[31] It was 'a federative military system that came to be dominated by semi-autonomous fighters, first as auxiliaries to the traditional janissary/*sipahi* organization and then as entrepreneurial ethnic bands.'[32] The commander's role (and necessary expertise) became that of a negotiator, rather than that of an active military problem solver. He had to reconcile different expectations and understandings of what it meant to be a soldier of the Sultan.

These expectations and understandings varied depending on the corps with which the soldier was associated and possibly his geographic background. As discussed above, by 1769 the janissary army had undergone major changes that allowed lower-ranking officers to control much of the corps and gave them enough power to negotiate with government-appointed officers. In this sense, Yağlıkçızâde could only negotiate with his janissaries and the larger army instead of expecting them to simply obey his orders. Studies of mutiny in the Ottoman army, especially in the late eighteenth century, illustrate the situation perfectly. Palmira Brummett argued that mutinies should be seen as movements 'that produced negotiation and compromise.'[33] 'Men mutinied to resist what they perceived as tyranny, to grab power, to enhance their reputations, and to better their economic positions.'[34] Moreover, the insistence of the Istanbulite Ottoman elites on preventing provincials and 'outsiders' from acquiring a status similar to their own added another dimension to the dispute.[35] In this environment, the late-eighteenth-century Ottoman commander-in-chief was less a military disciplinarian than a manager of political expectations.

A letter written by the Grand Vizier at the end of April from Provadia (*Pravadi*) in modern-day Bulgaria gives us a glimpse into his mind:

> What fun the higher or lower among the people of the campaign have in their tents is between them and God. Why should I talk about the affairs that they will have to deal with and for which they will be rebuked in the hereafter, and make them public? It is not fit for a commander (*ser'asker*) to talk about the vices of the soldiers, which are their own. According to your slave, the duty is to constantly investigate

31 Aksan 2012, 324.
32 Aksan 2014, 332.
33 Brummett 1998, 96.
34 *ibid*., 107.
35 Aksan 1998a.

> and act wisely in order to prevent, God forbid, sedition and the appearance of a problem that would harm the affair I have been appointed to carry out, and to make everyone obedient to my master like captives.[36]

Here, Yağlıkçızâde prioritizes the management of the army's morale and stability over harsh discipline. He explains to the Sultan that he did not say a word to those who behaved improperly and overlooked their offenses and disciplined (*terbiye*) those who knew proper behaviour by treating them kindly.[37] He emphasizes that controlling the atmosphere within the army, rather than focusing on strict enforcement of discipline, was central to preventing sedition. Even when he seemed to be fed up with the problems created by his soldiers, he did not think of disciplining them himself, but left it to the natural forces of warfare as we see in a letter written near Hantepesi in June:

> Would our soldiers really behave properly if their noses were not broken a little, if they did not see the sweet and the bitter, and if they did not see what a campaign and battle are? I pray to God that everything will find order according to your imperial wishes.[38]

None of this is to say that the Ottoman army did not discipline its soldiers or use force against transgressors. It certainly did, but the emphasis seems to have been on managing the different expectations of different groups in the army rather than turning them all into standardized soldiers who would do as they were ordered without question. To return to Defterdâr Sarı Mehmed Pasha's counsel, a good commander-in-chief was he 'who is acquainted with the condition of both great men and small, who knows how to treat [all ranks] with due consideration, in order that those under him may love him and gladly obey his orders.'[39] Obedience to orders was as much about the social relationship the commander had with his soldiers as it was about hierarchical relationships.

The same letter describes a dispute between the Grand Vizier and his soldiers. It seems that there were complaints in Istanbul against the Grand Vizier, especially regarding his prevention of soldiers from participating in raids:

> There is no limit to the number of those who petition every day, saying, 'I will go on a raid, grant me an allowance', or 'Grant me a horse' or 'My Agha does not allow me', and this slave of yours, I allow them as needed. Among these petitioners are men from all of the [janissary] companies, and from the servants of the officers, and scribes, and fief-holders (*zuemâ*) and vagabonds who came of their own free will, and *levend*s, and sheikhs, and madrasa students, and ruffians, and beggars, and Turks, Turcomans, Kurds, Chitaks, Albanians, and Bosnians, and other such peoples. How can they say that I did not give permission?[40]

36 BOA, TSMA.e 516/17, 23 Zilhicce 1182 (30 April 1769).
37 ibid.
38 BOA, TSMA.e 516/58, 20 Safer 1183 (25 June 1769).
39 Wright 1935, 128.
40 ibid.

Yağlıkçızâde's account shows that the possibility of mutiny was taken quite seriously both in Istanbul and by the commander-in-chief. Preventing raiding could and did lead to mutiny. The Grand Vizier's insistence on his having given permission demonstrates how 'negotiation and compromise' begins long before the mutiny itself.[41] But it also shows what the job of a commander-in-chief entails. Keeping the soldiers in line required negotiations as well as punishments.

An episode involving janissaries, recounted in one of the Grand Vizier's letters from Edirne, underscores the issues that even military customs could cause and the commander's responsibility to keep rivalries in check:

> In previous campaigns, the janissaries of different divisions would take turns taking aim, and those who hit the target would receive two gold pieces, while those who missed would receive only one. The men of the regiment wanted to do the same this time, but after consulting with the Agha of the Janissaries, we found several objections. First of all, if they all want to shoot and we allow some and not others, it will cause an uprising. If we allow them, it will take more than a month and we will have to pay more than two hundred thousand gold pieces. Even if that were possible, they would fight over who shoots first. At a time like this, when the army is so overcrowded, allowing a shooting contest will only cause sedition.[42]

Perhaps here lies the essence of the Grand Vizier's problem. The army under his command, even the janissaries, were not necessarily his to command as such. They were social groups with private bases, with whom he had to negotiate at every turn. Interestingly, this was where his claim to expertise lay. His credentials as commander-in-chief were that he was an expert politician. But how did he acquire that expertise? He explains:

> Your slave has known since my childhood, thanks to my studies, how commandership (*ser'askerlik*) worked in the sublime Ottoman state and in the times of the ancient and modern states, which of their measures were successful and which led to rebellion, and the reasons for this. God knows that in 47 and 48 (1734–6) I studied the history of Naima and Raşid, although I was very young and these things were not important for merchants. I tried to understand world affairs with *Cihânnümâ*. It turned out that the Almighty was training (*terbiye*) your slave to be of such great service to my master after all this time.[43]

For the Grand Vizier, military expertise can be gained through the study of previous discourses. This is not as surprising as it may seem at first glance, since manuals and his-

41 Aksan 2002a, 68. Aksan examines a mutiny at Ochakov in 1769.

42 BOA, TSMA.e 516/5, 7 Zilhicce 1182 (14 April 1769).

43 BOA, TSMA.e 516/17. *Cihânnümâ* is a work of geography that combined Islamic geographical tradition with European discoveries. Written first by the Ottoman polymath Kâtib Çelebi in mid-17th century, it was extended and printed in 1732 by İbrâhim Müteferrika. For a modern translation see: Çelebi 2021.

torical works were and still are part of military training.[44] Defterdâr Sarı Mehmed Pasha had a similar idea when he wrote his manual and explicitly mentioned previous books as sources of knowledge for a Grand Vizier.[45] In an article on the Grand Vizier Koca Ragıp Pasha (in office: 1757–1763), Henning Sievert argued that 'the extensiveness of a bureaucrat's *adab* (…) manifested itself in ornate correspondence that was indispensable for the functioning of the state and for maintaining its authority.'[46] Yağlıkçızâde Mehmed Pasha categorized the expertise required for leading a campaign in a similar way. His readings of history and discourse were meant to help him 'maintain his authority.'

Another important aspect of the march, again related to the issue of sedition, was controlling the flow of information. The Grand Vizier talks about the news of a massive fire in Istanbul that reached the army while it was in Provadia: 'This kind of rumour appears from time to time, and it is an old custom to verify and prevent it. It is well known to your slave from the Hajj campaigns.'[47] Actually, Yağlıkçızâde was never appointed as the *surre emîni*, the organizer of the march of the Hajj caravan from Istanbul to Mecca. He was only a young participant, but he makes full use of his epithet *el-Hâc*, a pilgrim to Mecca. In his letter, he links the two marches and makes it a matter of controlling rumours and thus sedition. There is a long tradition going back at least to Evliya Çelebi whereby the commander of the Hajj caravan was portrayed as a heroic figure, and at least some of his duties were shared with the commander of the imperial army.[48] The comparison between the two marches deserves further attention. In both cases, a large march was organized with the participation of various social elements. In both cases, the sultan appointed the leader of the march to represent him. Both of these types of marches with their huge populations created similar organizational problems and required the balancing of different interests by the vizier appointed to lead it. The Hajj campaign was definitely not a military one, but it included large military guards and the possibility of armed conflict with some Bedouin tribes if their conditions were not met while passing through their territories. Yağlıkçızâde's allusion to his participation in a Hajj campaign suggests a parallel in his mind between these two marches.

All in all, Yağlıkçızâde Mehmed Emin Pasha's letters allow us to understand one Ottoman conception of military expertise. It is, of course, dangerous to generalize, but at least in Yağlıkçızâde's mind, it seems that the Ottoman commander is basically a governor who is expected to control the flow of information and prevent sedition. He is not a disciplinarian who makes soldiers out of the men in his hands.

44 In fact, Caesar's *Commentaries* were widely read in the early modern period: Woodcock 2019b.
45 Wright 1935, 62.
46 Sievert 2013, 164. See also: Ferguson 2018.
47 BOA, TSMA.e 516/17.
48 Faroqhi 1994, 58–9.

4. A Polish Adventurer Who Claimed to be an Artilleryman

In early 1769, a (presumably) Polish adventurer from the Habsburg Empire arrived in Istanbul and applied for a position in the Ottoman army. He brought with him a tale of military experience: Four years earlier, he had been employed as a captain by Count Branicki of Poland-Lithuania. When the count's forces were crushed by the Russian armies, he left and travelled in Italy, France, England and Russia, returning to Poland to serve Count Lubomirski, one of the Polish magnates allied with the Porte. However, Lubomirski was also defeated by Russian forces, and our unnamed hero left for a second time, travelling through Silesia, Austria, Italy, Venice, and Marseilles to the Ottoman capital. Although the Austrian ambassador wanted to send him back to Austria, he refused, claiming that 'he had only come to the imperial army to be employed in the arts of warfare (*fünûn-ı 'askeriye*).'[49]

The Ottomans questioned him to assess his expertise. Upon the question of 'how he acquired the arts of warfare (*fünûn-ı 'askeriye*)' he replied that he had gone to school (*mu'allimhâne*) in Austria and trained for years under people of knowledge (*erbâb-ı vukûf*). He was then asked in which battles he had practiced the aforementioned science that he had learned. He replied that he had practiced this science nine years previously in the war that Austria waged against Prussia, that is, the Seven Years' War. His age – twenty-eight – seemed to align with his account. However, the Ottomans were not convinced and decided to test him further: 'He was told that he would be accommodated in İsakçı under the protection of the Sultan and cannons would be fired by cannoneers under his control, and if he managed to hit the required target or demonstrate other arts, he would receive favour and praise.'[50]

But here the story took a turn. The Sultan ordered the Austrian dragoman at the imperial camp to be questioned about him. The dragoman said that the adventurer had contacted the Austrian ambassador a few days before leaving the capital and asked for a document that would allow him to return to Poland. Confused, the Ottoman authorities handed him over to the Muhzır Agha (head of the Janissary Agha's guards and guardian of his prison) as a 'guest' until the matter was settled. We hear from the Grand Vizier a few days later:

> The artilleryman, who had come from Istanbul with a Polish claim, was given to the Muhzır Agha as a guest so that no one would harm him, as is the ancient custom. He was given food and some money and was completely forgotten. He will not be examined by the artillerymen and will not be mentioned from now on. He will be released after talking to the Poles, God willing. There is nothing to worry about, he even denied being an artilleryman. Apparently, he did not have the means to go to his country, the bastard goes this way. The world benefits from the Sultan's shadow. This one too will go to his country one way or another.[51]

49 KA 316, 55a, n. 119.
50 *ibid*., 120.
51 BOA, TSMA.e 145/18, 10 Muharrem 1183 (16 May 1769).

This episode adds a new layer to the question of military expertise. Experts in more specialized fields of the military, cannoneers being the most obvious, are recognized as such by the Ottomans. There is an education for this, which must be coupled with practice. This kind of expertise can be tested by other experts. But in the end our adventurer is never tested. He is made to deny his expertise. The Grand Vizier and possibly other Ottoman officials involved are apparently afraid of sedition. The cannoneer could be deceiving them; he could be a spy. Even after his repudiation of his expertise, he may be attacked by others, so it is necessary to keep him under guard. After all, expertise is negotiable and can itself be a bargaining chip. The Grand Vizier understands this.

This case also provides an interesting contrast to the more famous example of Baron de Tott, a European military expert who served the Ottomans during the same period. Unlike the Polish adventurer, Tott had strong credentials and was already attached to the French diplomatic mission in the Empire. There is no record of the Ottomans questioning or testing his expertise. However, his own narrative is full of his disregard for the Ottomans.[52] Notably, he criticized the Ottomans for casting brass cannons using an iron-making furnace, claiming that they needed his guidance to cast the cannons properly, based only on a manual.[53] A French consul, Louis Charles de Peysonnel, would later criticize Tott for being blind to the skill with which Ottoman brass cannons were being manufactured.[54] In his effort to constitute his own expertise in discourse for a different audience, Tott was dismissive of any local performance. This is one of the advantages of looking at lower-level foreign servants of the Sublime Porte. The balance of power is turned upside down, and without the full support of the representative of a foreign court, the Ottomans can take the initiative to judge and act on their own understanding of expertise without it becoming a diplomatic issue.

The difference between Tott and the Polish adventurer underscores a crucial point: expertise in the Ottoman Empire was not just about technical proficiency – it was deeply intertwined with political and power structures. As Virginia Aksan noted, European Enlightenment thinkers often misunderstood Ottoman resistance to change as mere hostility to modernization.[55] The case of Marquis de Bonneval (Humbaracı Ahmed Pasha) provides us with an interesting example of how this insight can be used to understand questions of expertise because expertise was always intertwined with power structures. Bonneval did not enter Ottoman service as a protégé of the embassy, but as a convert. He hoped to become a commander in the Ottoman army, he tells us, which did not happen precisely because of his inability to understand how the Ottoman power structure was intertwined with questions of expertise. Bonneval presents his credentials, beginning with his education: 'Since my childhood, I have spent my time in acquiring the arts of war.'[56] He then combines this with experience: 'I acquired the science of naval warfare by serving in the French Navy. Later I became a commander

52 Aksan 2002b, 260.
53 Baron de Tott 1786, 114–9.
54 Aksan 2001, 167.
55 *ibid*., 165.
56 Arif 1913a, 1153.

of land forces. Twenty-two fortified castles were conquered thanks to our efforts, and [I was] victorious in eleven battles.' He then lists his service to the Habsburg Emperor: 'I have repeatedly been commander-in-chief of the emperor's land forces, I was the commander of the right wing in Varadin and of the left wing in Belgrade, I was commander of the infantry in Timisoara.' His account goes on to list his many skills.[57] Did the Ottomans care?

On one level, they did, as they put him in charge of modernizing the mortar corps.[58] However, Bonneval was not given command in the Ottoman army. This fact points to a difference in understanding of the politics of the Ottoman army, and ultimately, of expertise. An order sent to the *kadı* of Gümülcine granting Bonneval a salary only finds his position and conversion worth mentioning: 'He abandoned the darkness of disbelief with divine guidance and sacrificed everything he had although he had everything.'[59] When Muhsinzâde Abdullah Pasha wanted to make use of his services, he was not interested in Bonneval's military expertise, but rather looked forward to benefiting from him in order to create 'a great revolution in the Habsburg lands' making use of Bonneval's connections and understanding, as he 'had knowledge of every development in the Habsburg lands.'[60] Not only was he an outsider and unconnected to Ottoman power circles, leading to his relative isolation, but his understanding of military expertise was fundamentally different from the Ottoman understanding. The Ottoman political elites were looking for commanders who could manage and negotiate with the various groups that made up the army. Yağlıkçızâde Mehmed Emin Pasha's appointment, too, might be seen in this light. For Istanbul, bureaucratic training or provincial experience could not have been an incidental consideration in appointments.

However, when it came to non-command positions, as the case of our Polish adventurer demonstrates, the Ottomans were quite willing to put experts to good use. Therefore, I think we should look for a distinction between two types of expertise: command and technical. The first one was deeply intertwined with power structures due to Ottoman recruiting patterns and ideas about what the army was. The second one was more practical. Distinguishing between the two will help us better understand the experiences and frustrations of figures like Bonneval and Baron de Tott and will help us to appreciate the experiences of many other experts who did not necessarily aspire to command positions.

5. Two Venetian Doctors

Not everyone who joined the Ottoman army on its march had a strictly military role to play. They still became part of the army and could attract the attention of the Grand Vizier. This was the case of two Venetian doctors who joined the army in Edirne and

57 Arif 1913a, 1153.
58 Kaçar 1995.
59 Arif 1913a, 1155.
60 Arif 1913b, 1224.

became a security problem. The chronicler of the army, Sadullah Enveri Efendi, tells how 'some Christians disguised as doctors' came to the Ottoman army in Edirne:

> They had criers announce to the people of the imperial army that they were doctors serving for free. In fact, everyone sent their sick to them and they did not fail to treat them. When they were investigated, some of them said that it was not true that they were doctors. They were sent to the commander with the suspicion that they were spies and helping the enemy of religion. The drugs they were carrying added to the suspicion surrounding them, and their claims were questionable. When they were investigated, it was found that they had been appointed by the Muscovites in the guise of doctors to give poisonous drugs and deadly ointments to the servants of God.[61]

Hygiene and disease were among the main concerns of the eighteenth-century armies, which made physicians all the more valuable in the eyes of the soldiers and their commanders. Yağlıkçızâde himself frequently mentions his health in his correspondence with the Sultan. In a letter written in Hantepesi in June 1769, the Grand Vizier informed the Sultan that

> I was quite ill when we left İsakçı. The chief physician of the army gave me the wrong prescription because he did not know your slave's constitution. I had to turn myself to the doctor from Chios who knows your slave's constitution. My illness was cured with a three-day prescription of bitter boiled rhubarb.[62]

Physicians had easy access to high-ranking Ottoman officials; Yağlıkçızâde's letter makes it clear that they were welcome and needed in the army. In fact, Harun Küçük's work showed not only how Ottoman perspectives of medicine as a field changed and influenced Ottoman attitudes toward natural philosophy, but also how physicians practicing new/chemical medicine were able to pose as experts and defend their positions by asserting their expertise. Süleyman I had already organized medicine as a field, creating a medical *medrese* system whose graduates were considered part of the *ulama* class.[63] In 1703, when Ahmed III and his chief physician Nuh, a convert of Cretan Greek origin, banned the practice of chemical medicine in the Ottoman capital, they demanded expertise and certification: 'Those whose skill [*hazakat*] and virtue are clear are to report to the most felicitous scholar among scholars, Nuh, who is serving as the chief physician at a level of authority equivalent to that of the chief judge of Rumelia [Ottoman Europe], for a sealed certificate.'[64] The rebuttal was also based on arguments about expertise: 'The chemical works that the authors had the audacity to present to the Sultan invoked expertise (*hazakat*) and natural-philosophical (*hikmet-i tabiyye*) and medical training as proper qualifications for a physician – which, the authors implied,

61 Enveri 2000, 21–2.
62 BOA, TSMA.e 516/52, 9 Safer 1183 (14 June 1769, catalogue date).
63 Küçük 2020, 66–9.
64 *ibid*., 274, footnote 1. In his thesis Küçük translated *hazakat* as expertise: Küçük, 2012, 120.

could be judged only by other physicians, not by the ruler or his Chief Physician.'[65] In the end, Ahmed III issued a decree that allowed physicians of different theoretical persuasions to practice in the capital. In Küçük's words, 'the edict refers to the marketplace physician, who may or may not have any formal training, as someone whose main occupation is prescribing drugs.'[66] A physician was supposed to prove himself by his experience and practice, not by formal education. Perhaps, the Grand Vizier's choice of doctor can also be read along these lines; the fact that the chief physician could not cure him did not make him less of an expert, but Yağlıkçızâde still chose to find another practitioner who proved his expertise to him by curing him.

In another letter, the Grand Vizier thanks the Sultan for the delivery of a medical paste.[67] However, his illness was not cured, as he explains in a letter in August:

> [the illness] has subsided in the last few days, thanks to the benefit of my master's blessing. The weak body of your slave has seen some comfort after the doctors were sent away. Your well-wisher, the army judge, is also quite ill, and haemorrhoids have made everyone weak, and many have gone to the plane of permanence because of this illness.[68]

Apart from the ambiguous attitudes towards the expertise of physicians in the letter of this sick and tired man, he gives us only one elite's perception of what a physician was. On the contrary, Enveri's account above reflects the perceptions of the common soldiers, and other accounts add more flair to the story of the Venetian physicians.

Athanasios Ypsilantis, another observer in the army, mentions the same physicians and notes that they were from Corfu. He notes that the Grand Vizier was suspicious of them, so they were tortured; to save themselves, they made up a story about their connections with Šćepan Mali, the de facto ruler of Montenegro whom the Ottomans considered a Russian agent. Ypsilantis also notes that the Grand Vizier saw this story as proof of the Orthodox Patriarch's connection to the rebellion in Montenegro and ordered a search of the Patriarchate.[69] Thus, what initially appeared to be a question of expertise and credentials quickly became a question of security, linking actors as diverse as the Russian empress, the rebel king of Montenegro, and the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople.

The Grand Vizier's letters to the Sultan show how much closer Ypsilantis' account was to reality than that of the army's official chronicler. Yağlıkçızâde mentions that the dragoman of the imperial council found a letter from Šćepan Mali among the doctors' belongings, and it was the dragoman who interrogated them and made them talk. Then they made up the story about the Patriarch's connection with the Montenegrins while they were held in the Edirne dungeons, possibly under torture. Four days later, the Grand Vizier wrote another letter to the Sultan, explaining how nicely he had treated

65 *ibid*., 122.
66 Küçük 2020, 162.
67 BOA, TSMA.e 516/58.
68 BOA, TSMA.e 145/19, 3 Rebiülahir 1183 (6 August 1769).
69 Ypsilantis 1870, 439.

one of the doctors named Corci, telling him that despite his claims, Šćepan Mali was not found in the Patriarchate. The doctor continued to insist on the truth of his assertions, and even claimed that he would find Šćepan himself if he were sent to the Ottoman capital. Four days later, the Grand Vizier reported that the doctors were still insisting on their claims. He told the Sultan that they would be sent from İsakçı to the capital and advised that they be brought face to face with the Patriarch, that he might distinguish friend from foe.[70]

Interestingly, the Grand Vizier never stops referring to the Venetians as doctors. He does not even question their credibility. These doctors were most likely Venetians of Greek origin, hence the interest shown in them by Ypsilantis and also their entanglement in a controversy involving the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople. It is quite likely that they were educated in Padua, a popular destination for Greeks in the Venetian and Ottoman domains. It is therefore not very surprising that the dragoman of the imperial council, Nikolaos Soutsos, goes through their papers, possibly looking for diplomas. However, the nature of the letter that Yağlıkçızâde claims that Soutsos found among them is unclear. It seems that the problem was not the credentials of these doctors at all.

The Grand Vizier and the grand dragoman were concerned about possible links to a rebel leader. Ypsilantis, himself a mid-ranking dragoman and a physician, had a take that was much closer to reality than that of the official chronicler of the army, Enveri Efendi. The latter immediately turned the question into one of medical credentials. His version must have been closer to the rumours circulating in the army itself. As far as the common people of the army were concerned, two foreigners who claimed to be doctors appeared and disappeared shortly thereafter. The explanation that the common members of the army for the disappearance was a challenge to the doctors' claim to be experts. Moreover, to the common soldier, the doctors turned out to be Russian spies. Even worse, they had come to poison and kill Ottoman soldiers. Experts in wartime had to walk a fine line between relying on their credentials and navigating elite and popular expectations of what their expertise entailed and where their loyalties lay.

Unfortunately, we have no information as to whether the Grand Vizier found a way to test these doctors. The fact that the grand dragoman found papers on them that started a whole new line of investigation may point to the existence of diplomas, letters of reference, and the like. However, there is not much evidence that would allow us to pursue this line of thought. What we do know is that two Venetian doctors of Greek origin appeared in the army camp in Edirne and that their appearance raised rumours and questions about their expertise and allegiances. They were treated as possible sources of sedition.

70 TSMA.e, 516/17.

6. Conclusions

In this paper, I have presented several images of the Ottoman army of 1769 in which questions of expertise came to the fore. Expertise is generally portrayed as an asset that can help states advance their interests. Moments like 1769 present an alternative picture in which expertise can be a problem in itself. It functions, or wants to function, as a passport that opens the doors to a military structure. The casesof the Marquis de Bonneval, the Polish adventurer who offered his services, or the Venetian Greek doctors who set up shop in Edirne, underline how a claim to expertise initiates a negotiation. In all of these cases, the claims are taken at different levels of seriousness. The Ottoman elite is anxious to protect the proper power structure; therefore, they do not allow Bonneval a command position; but they are fine with entertaining the employment of the Polish adventurer and the Venetian Greeks.

The reactions of the Grand Vizier show how the claim is almost always challenged based on a real concern about the emergence of sedition that might emanate from the person of the expert. This concern also seems to have been at the heart of how the Ottomans themselves, at least the Grand Vizier who commanded the army, perceived expertise. The commander of the Ottoman army was the one who had to prevent sedition, either from disgruntled groups of soldiers, or from unfounded news that arrived in the army, or from people who joined the army claiming to be some kind of expert. Military expertise was thus closely tied to ideas of power structures and order, and it had to be performed within a structure and culture that dictated political expectations.

Yağlıkçızâde Mehmed Emin Pasha's campaign in 1769 is an important moment to study to understand Ottoman perceptions of military expertise. His reports to the Sultan give us a rare insight into the mind of a Grand Vizier in action. Not only is he a firsthand witness at the top of the army's hierarchy, but he is also standing at a peculiar moment in Ottoman history. The Ottoman Empire had not waged war for almost three decades, and neither the Ottomans nor their rivals were expecting the complete collapse of the Ottoman military system in 1770 on land and at sea. His account, unlike many others that we have in our hands, is not written from the perspective of already having suffered defeat. His letters are written in the moment and perhaps in a hurry in the commander-in-chief's tent in the middle of the Ottoman army. He does not look back at the events trying to make sense of what went wrong, but reflects on the day's events, trying to make his sultan happy with his service. They reflect a conversation about proper conduct as commander-in-chief between the two most powerful men in the empire.

Their uniqueness is also their weakness. These reports reflect the opinions of only one man, regardless of his rank. They are written in a defensive manner; they can be read as the testimony of a person justifying himself. After all, Yağlıkçızâde was far away from the Sultan, and even if one accepts my account of the Ottoman army as a capital on the move, it is still clear that Mustafa III had the final say. Political factions in Istanbul were working against the Grand Vizier, and he had to defend himself. The sultan could and did dismiss the commander-in-chief; the sultan could and did execute Yağlıkçızâde. So, these letters are far from objective. But his perspective is still useful

because one of the underlying arguments of this paper is just that: expertise is highly contextual.

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Proving One's Expertise and Its Worth: Agronomists', Forestry Engineers', and Veterinarians' Rhetoric on the Essential Utility of Their Knowledge in the Ottoman Empire and Republic of Turkey

Abstract

How do members of a novel profession gain recognition for their expertise and negotiate its value? This article examines this historically rooted yet persistently relevant question by focusing on the experiences of agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians in the late Ottoman Empire and early Republican Turkey (1890s–1930s). These then-nascent professions faced shared challenges: agronomists worked to earn the trust of farmers, veterinarians contested with farriers over livestock care, and all three professions confronted public scepticism, ridicule, and inadequate compensation despite their extensive scientific training and vital contributions to the economy, public health, and environmental conservation. Drawing on their writings in mainstream press and professional journals, as well as historical interviews with them, this study explores the strategies agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians employed to carve out a new social and economic space for themselves. By analysing their efforts, the article uncovers how experts in emerging fields navigate resistance while striving to redefine societal rewards to secure a place in the new world they are helping to shape – one where economic recognition should be rooted in scientific contributions, which they present as the foundation of progress and advancement.

Keywords: agronomy, expertise, forestry, late Ottoman Empire, professionalisation, veterinary medicine

1. Introduction

In their introduction to *Rethinking Expertise*, Harry Collins and Robert Evans define expertise as 'know[ing] what you are talking about.'[1] Yet, a person who claims to know what they are talking about is not necessarily recognised by others as a person who knows what they are talking about, nor necessarily trusted. In other words, expert status is not absolute, but rather conditional on others' approval. The first half of my paper explores this intricate issue of recognition of expert status. Rather than focusing on the perspective of outsiders – how one recognises an expert – I approach this process from the experts' point of view, examining their self-perceptions and frustrations as well as the strategies they employ to convince doubters of their expertise. In the second half, I delve deeper into the mechanisms experts use to establish the *value* of their expertise,

1 Collins and Evans 2007, 114.

shifting from recognition to justification. It is not only about understanding what they claim to know but also about addressing the critical question: what is their expertise worth? I analyse this worth both in tangible and intangible terms, considering the monetary value attributed to their skills and knowledge as well as the social capital they command. By probing these dimensions, my paper sheds light on the intersection of professional authority, economic valuation, and social legitimacy.

To tackle these questions, I study the cases of agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians in the late Ottoman Empire and early Republican Turkey.[2] These professions were met with scepticism in the late 19th century and early 20th century, when they were newly emerging. The main source of the scepticism was the historical occupational groups that preceded them. For instance, some farmers rejected agronomists' scientific authority and ridiculed their expertise; after all, how can such an ordinary art as agriculture, practiced for millennia in Anatolia, be considered a science researched in university halls? The backlash also came from the broader public. For example, in the popular imagination, forests were believed to thrive naturally. As they supposedly grew anyway, forestry engineering was considered a vain area of non-expertise. In the face of such attitudes, experts actively tried to persuade the lay public of the scientificity of their competencies, arguing not only that their knowledge was more reliable, but also that it could more adequately meet modern demands. To convince others of their expert status, they united their forces within their own ranks and collectively developed self-narratives in the journals they published.

Members of these three budding professions did not merely strive for acceptance. Feeling underpaid, they also tried to convince the state, their main employer, that their expertise was more useful, vital even, to society than that of other professions that were well-paid and argued, on that basis, that they deserved better compensation. To achieve this, they presented themselves as the providers of resources essential to human existence such as food and heat, the protectors of public health, the guardians of nature, and, most importantly, the fosterers of economic prosperity.

The challenges faced by the expert groups I work on were not unique to their region; similar struggles occurred in other parts of the world. Nor were these issues exclusive to what we today call 'emerging nations.' Experts of these fields in Western countries encountered the same difficulties, albeit somewhat earlier, as specialised schools for training agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians had generally been established there sooner. In Germany during the 19th century, for example, agricultural representatives and estate owners often favoured lay animal healers over urban-trained veterinarians. For some, this preference stemmed from resistance to challenges to their rural authority and traditional way of life, while for others, practical considerations played a role – veterinarians tended to be stricter about animal health and incurred higher costs compared to lay healers.[3] Alexandre Liautard, the first editor of the *American Veterinary Review*, established in 1877, lamented that Americans 'are ignorant of the

2 This paper borrows from an article I published in French on Ottoman veterinarians. For a more detailed account on the history of their profession, see Tanık 2021.

3 Mitsuda 2017.

importance of veterinary medicine; our science is yet, and will be for years to come, in a low social standing.'[4] Similarly, in the United Kingdom during the same period, veterinarians frequently voiced concerns, including that their 'utility to agriculture and the nation was overlooked,' and that their 'social status was unjustifiably lower than that of the 'sister profession,' medicine.'[5] In 1872, George Fleming, a council member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, observed, 'Veterinary science… is not understood in Britain and is but little valued. Veterinary surgeons are only too often regarded as little, if at all, removed from the illiterate farrier or cow leech, [...] anything but educated scientific men who respect themselves and their profession.'[6]

In the Ottoman and Turkish context, what stands out is that the struggle of agronomists, veterinarians, and forestry engineers for recognition occurred in a paradoxical environment. Their expertise was deeply valued in the official discourse, making their worth seemingly unquestionable. Yet, in practice, their professional contributions were often overlooked, and their compensation failed to reflect the state's rhetorical support.

The roots of this contradiction can be traced back to the economic strain after the Crimean War (1853–1856), when the Ottoman Empire, facing dire financial circumstances, turned to foreign loans authorised by Sultan Abdülmecid, particularly from Britain and France. Amidst this economic pressure, certain Ottoman leaders began to place an emphasis on agronomy, forestry, and veterinary medicine as strategic professions. They recognised the potential of exploiting natural resources (*ṭabîʿî servetler*) to stimulate economic growth and repay the empire's mounting foreign debts. Consequently, the state took several initiatives to advance and instrumentalise knowledge, including sponsoring students to study abroad, inviting foreign experts to educate locals and advise government officials, establishing specialised schools funded in part by the first indigenous Ottoman bank, the *Zirâʿat bankası*, and reforming its bureaucracy, such as creating a Ministry of Forests, Mines, and Agriculture (*Orman ve maʿâdin ve zirâʿat neẓâreṭi*) in 1893. The late Ottoman period also saw a marked shift in political and public discourse, with the empire being celebrated as an 'agrarian country' (*zirâʿat memleketi*), a phrase that became ubiquitous in official statements and the press under the Hamidian regime and beyond, to the extent that this expression 'was on everyone's lips' (*hepimiziñ ağızından düşmeyen bir söz*).[7] This rhetoric was echoed in the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies after the Young Turk Revolution in 1908; for instance, Diyarbakır deputy Fevzi declared, 'Our country is above all an agrarian country,' while Aristidi Pasha emphasised that 'our trade is based almost entirely on agriculture.' Similar sentiments were expressed by other deputies, such as Drama's Rıza and Sivas's Nazaret Dagavaryan, who underscored agriculture's central role in the empire's prosperity. This narrative persisted into the Republican era under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who affirmed that 'agriculture is the basis of the national economy' and described peasants as 'the

4 Smithcors 1963, 344.
5 Woods and Matthews 2010, 30.
6 *ibid*., 46.
7 *Ṭanîn* 12 Mârt 1327 [25 March 1911], 1.

true owners and masters of Turkey.'[8] Although the terminology expanded to include phrases like 'country of farmers' (*çiftçi memleketi*), the core idea remained unchanged: agriculture was portrayed as the foundation of the nation's identity and economy.

Statistics validate these assertions. In the late Ottoman period, agriculture dominated the economy, with over four-fifths of the population engaged in farming during the 19th century, as Donald Quataert notes.[9] By 1914, agricultural activities accounted for 56% of national income, [10] and taxes tied to agriculture – such as the tithe (*ʿöşür* in the singular and *âʿşâr* in the plural) and livestock taxes (*ağnâm*) – constituted around 40% of total state revenue.[11] Agricultural exports were equally significant, comprising nearly 90% of the empire's outbound foreign trade between 1840 and 1913.[12] The proportion of agricultural exports in net production increased from 18.4% in 1889 and 17.8% in 1899 to 22.3% in 1910 and 26.5% in 1913. These figures reflect 'fairly high degrees of commercialisation of agriculture and external orientation of the Ottoman economy, particularly for later decades.'[13] These trends continued under the Republican regime: in 1932, over 9 million of Turkey's 13.6 million inhabitants were farmers, and agricultural products consistently accounted for over 65% of exports during the Republic's first six years.[14]

Given the state's investments in agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians to convert the country's natural capital into economic capital, the question remains: why were these experts not compensated in line with their contributions? Despite being integral to the state's vision of economic transformation, their pay and recognition lagged far behind the value attributed to their professions in the political discourse.

The continuity of official discourse from the late Ottoman Empire to the early decades of the Republic of Turkey, coupled with the persistence of experts' complaints, led me to extend my study beyond 1923. However, the archival material available to me – primarily publications and interviews from Turkish-speaking experts – offers a partial view of the challenges these professionals faced. A broader examination of additional sources could uncover further issues, such as the impact of exclusionary policies tied to ethnic and religious identities. For instance, the case of veterinarian Nikolaki Mavridis Mavroğlu (1871–1955), a Greek Orthodox deputy director of the Pendik Bacteriology Institute, highlights such dynamics. Mavroğlu was threatened with dismissal due to his *gayrimüslim* status, but the intervention of his colleague Ahmet Şefik Kolaylı (1886–1976), who threatened to resign in protest, resolved the matter.[15] Unearthing more such documents could reveal similar instances of marginalisation that shaped the

8 Altuncuoğlu 2019, 285–6.
9 İnalcık and Quataert 1994, 843.
10 *ibid*., 845
11 Quataert 2010, 130.
12 Pamuk 2004, 179.
13 *ibid*., 180.
14 Şevket Raşit Haziran 1932 [June 1932], 8–9.
15 Unat 8 Şubat 1976 [8 February 1976].

lives of experts during both the late Ottoman and the early Republican periods extending beyond the economic and social challenges faced by all professionals.

2. Proving One's Expertise

> If someone loudly declares, "I'm an expert," then we can always reply, "Only if we say you are."[16]

2.1 A Line Must Be Drawn: Distinguishing Scientific and Ubiquitous Expertise

Agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians faced varying degrees of difficulty in getting their scientific expertise acknowledged. Agronomists and veterinarians suffered the most because neither the art of cultivating lands, nor that of caring for livestock were new to the Ottoman society. Those who made their livings by growing crops could not understand the utility of agronomists, whose profession only emerged in the 19th century. Farmers thought they were already ably handling the job themselves, which, in their view did not and could not hinge on scientific principles, and therefore called agronomists' *raison d'être* into question and mocked them. Şevket Arı (1888–1979), for instance, recalled painful memories in an interview he gave in the 1950s to Hadiye Tuncer (1913–1997), one of the first female Turkish agronomists, such as farmers testing his knowledge when he was a young agronomist by asking very basic or even absurd questions to insinuate that the years he spent training in specialised schools had gained him nothing:

> At the time, neither the peasant nor even the city dweller could grasp what agronomists were. I often heard mockery such as: "Are you learning husbandry at school now?" When I returned to my village, they would surround me and make me the object of their ridicule: "So tell us how many stalks does a wheat have? How many spikes does it have? Woe is you! You have been wasting your life in vain son, come here and we will teach you what real agriculture is."[17]

Elizabeth R. Williams' recent work on Arab provinces turned mandates (Lebanon and Syria) suggests that the same scepticism could be encountered throughout the post-Ottoman region, as she gives the example of farmers (*fallahin*) near Aleppo quizzing an agronomist's (*effendi*) knowledge about wheat and barley. There is a fundamental difference between the two groups regarding their respective assessments of the dynamo of agriculture; while for the expert, higher productivity can be achieved through science

16 Stichter 2015, 126.

17 'O zaman çiftçinin de, köylünün de hattâ şehirlinin de okuyan bir ziraatçiye aklı ermiyordu. Ziraat mektepte mi öğrenilirmiş? diye alay ettiklerini çok görmüşümdür. Hele köyüme gittikçe etrafımı alır, beni kepazeye çevirirlerdi: 'Söyle bakalım, buğdayın kaç kökü var? Yaprağında kaç çizgi bulunur? Vah oğul vah, sen boşuna ömür tükediyon, gel biz sana ziraatin daniskasını öğretek…' derlerdi' (Tunçer 1958, 113).

and technology (learning new methods and using sophisticated machinery), for the *fellahin*, productivity is above all tied to 'blessings [*baraka*] from God.'[18]

Yet, Ottoman farmers did not rely only on divine intervention. They acknowledged that husbandry required knowledge, too, but this was to be acquired through experience, or could be 'naturally' passed down in families to younger generations, many practicing agriculture the way their forefathers did (*babamdan böyle gördüm diyen rencber[ler]*).[19] In their view, the knowledge required to cultivate lands was 'tacit' to borrow Michael Polanyi's term;[20] agriculture could not be reduced to 'rules or formulae.'[21] One need not research it in a laboratory setting or learn it on the university benches: one simply did it. This is why the vivid depictions of mockery included in agronomists' memoirs were frequently directed at their education, and more specifically at their alma mater, the Halkalı Agricultural School (*Ḥalḳalı zirâʿat mekteb-i ʿâlîsi*), a university established on the outskirts of Istanbul in 1891 on the initiative of Agop Amasyan (1825–1895), a former student of the Grignon Agricultural School (*École d'agriculture de Grignon*) near Paris.[22] For instance, according to agronomist Ekrem Üzümeri, who specialised in viticulture as the surname he chose after the Surname Law was passed in Turkey in 1934 suggests (roughly translating as 'grapeman'), the very few farmers who had heard about the Halkalı Agricultural School would say that it had no reason to exist (Figure 1).[23] One of his contemporaries, Süleyman Fehmi Kalaycıoğlu (1892–1993), an agronomist trained in Münich who later got into politics by becoming a deputy for Trabzon in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, TBMM), also recalled bitter memories and even admitted to shedding tears when faced with constant ridicule about his scientific training:

> When I returned home during school holidays, I was afraid to wear my school uniform, which I wore with great pride in Istanbul. Anyone who looked at this uniform, which had "Halkalı Agricultural School" written on the collar, would sneer: "Look at him, it seems he couldn't find a school to go to, so he went to a manure school!" Some wouldn't even stop harping on at me: "Tell me! How many kinds of fertilisers do you learn about at the Fertiliser School?" They would tease me until I cried.[24]

18 Williams 2023, 183–5.
19 Ḥilâciyân 4 Teşrîn-i s̱ânî 1326 [17 November 1910], 2.
20 Polanyi 1958.
21 Lynch 2013, 56.
22 *Ḥalḳalı zirâʿat mekteb-i ʿâlîsi mecmûʿası* Nîsân 1333 [April 1917], 4. For more information on this school, see Soydan 2012.
23 Tunçer 1958, 123.
24 'Mektep tatilleri memlekete döndükçe çok iftiharla giydiğim mektep üniformasını kendi ocağımda giymeğe korkardım. Yakasında 'Halkalı Ziraat Mektebi' yazılı olan bu üniformaya kim baksa dudak büker: 'Şuna bak, sanki gidecek mektep bulamamış da gübre mektebine girmiş!' diye alay ederlerdi. Hele bâzıları büsbütün beni parmaklarına dolar: 'Söyle bakalım! Kaç çeşit göbre öğreniyorsun Gübre Mektebinde?' diye, beni ağlatıncaya kadar uğraşırlardı' (Tunçer 1958, 132).

*Figure 1. Freshly graduated agronomists from the Halkalı school as pictured by the New Agricultural Gazette's (*Yeñi zirâ'at ġazetesi*) August 1920 issue*


یکی زراعت غزتهسی

نسخهسی اون ایکی بچق غروشدر

آبونه: سنهلکی ۱۵۰ غروش، آلتی آیلغی ۷۵ »

زراعت جمعیتی طرفندن شمدیلك آیده بردفعه نشر اولنور زراعی رسملی مجموعهدر.

نومرو: ٤ — ۱ — آغستوس ۱۳۳٦ — برنجی سنه

حلقهلی زراعت مکتب عالیسندن بوسنه شهادتنامه آلان افندیلر

حلقهلی زراعت مکتب عالیسنده شهادتنامه توزیعی مراسمی تونك یکرمی ایکیسنه مصادف پنجشنبه کونی ایدی،

یکانه عالی مؤسسهٔ زراعیهمز اولان حلقهلی مکتبنك بوسنه مأذون اولان افندیلرینه درت سنهلك برآت هرفانلری اولان شهادتنامهلری توزیع ایدیلهجکدی، بو مناسبتله بتون هیئت تعلیمیه یه دعوتنامهلر تسطیر ایدلمشدی.

His colleague Nadir Uysal's recollection is very telling in this sense. He claimed: 'Back then, everyone thought that agronomists were Agricultural Bank employees. […] They used to say: 'There can be no educated farmers.' That's why my whole life has been a test and a struggle.'[25] Farmers imagined that educated men dealing with agriculture could only be civil servants working for the Ministry of Agriculture or employees of the Agricultural Bank (*Zirâ'at banḳası*) established on 27 August 1888. Put differently, in their view, well-read people could only have administrative or financial roles dealing with the agricultural sector, and not a scientific one.

The more aggressive territorial dispute was, however, between veterinarians and farriers, who, besides shoeing horses, also tended to the care of farm animals. Unlike agronomists, veterinarians had little tolerance for their rivals. The nature of their boundary work was markedly different. While farmers also felt threatened by agronomists encroaching on their domain, the role of agronomists vis a vis farmers was fundamentally distinct from that of a veterinarian vis a vis farriers. Agronomists' work involved conducting research to improve agricultural practices rather than directly working the land. They valued farmers' labour and sought to educate them by providing guidance on crop selection suited to specific climates and soils, developing strategies to enhance yield and quality, recommending soil management practices like fertilisation, irrigation, and erosion control, and advising on combating pests, diseases, and weeds, including the use of pesticides. In contrast, veterinarians and farriers competed for the same clientele, as both were involved in treating sick animals. This economic rivalry fuelled tension, with veterinarians openly criticising farriers for their reliance on naïve empiricism and lack of formal education. To disqualify farriers and assert their own authority, they branded farriers as 'foul copies' posing as veterinarians (*bayṭar ṭaslaḳları*) and warned the public about the dangers of their 'unscientific and ignorant practices that do not conform to reason' (*muġâyır-ı fenn ve muḫâlif-i ʿaḳl-ı icrâ'at- ı câhilâneleri*) and their 'charlatanry' (*şârlâtânlıḳları*).[26] Unlike the agronomists' ideal of a cooperative dynamic between farmers and themselves, the relationship between veterinarians and farriers was inherently adversarial due to their overlapping professional domains.

It is worth noting that this economic competition between veterinarians and farriers also existed in other countries, such as in France. After the opening of the first veterinary school in Lyon in 1761, the farriers' guild opposed the creation of another school 'capable of directly competing with them' within Paris. This strong rivalry led to the establishment of the second veterinary school in Alfort, just a few kilometres from the capital.[27] Although the conflict began earlier in France, Delphine Berdah shows that negotiations over professional boundaries continued throughout the 19th century. Like their Ottoman colleagues, French veterinarians persistently denounced – whether in pamphlets directed at rural populations or in scholarly journals – the inefficacy and,

25 'O zamanlar herkes ziraatjiliği Ziraat Bankası Memurluğu sanıyorlardı. […] Okumuş çiftçi olmaz, derlerdi. Bu yüzden bütün hayatım imtihanla, mücadeleyle geçmiştir' (Tunçer 1958, 78).

26 Anonymous 15 Kânûn-ı s̱ânî 1315 [27 January 1900], 100.

27 Thomas 2012, 110.

above all, the dangers of the 'treatments' administered by farriers. These practices were often likened to witchcraft, with some going so far as to label farriers as 'sorcerer-farriers.'[28]

2.2 Bad Rep: Facing a Crisis of Prestige

The problem, however, was not only demarcating themselves, as men of technical sciences (*mütefennin*), from those who held 'ubiquitous' knowledge.[29] It was also about convincing everyone else of this distinction. Indeed, it was not only farmers who took issue with the professed expertise of agronomists. They were held in low esteem in public opinion, too, especially because their profession was equated with husbandry. According to Zihni Derin (1880–1965), an agronomist known for his pioneering role in tea cultivation in Turkey, the public 'knew nothing about scientific agriculture,' 'acknowledging only the roles of peasants and farmers.' People would regard agronomists with astonishment and even ridicule, remarking for instance 'What could they possibly know? Pen and paper have no place in the fields.'[30] According to Nesip Karaçay (1870–1960), fathers would not even give their daughters their blessing to marry agronomists because they would associate them with farmers and thus considered them to be uneducated, low-earning, and overall unattractive suitors:

> They wouldn't even give the hand of their daughters to agronomists. [...] The oarsmen of that time (those who rowed in big boats) also had a lot of difficulty in getting girls. Families slighted them and did not want to give away their daughters in marriage. [...] Because, back then, the best profession was being a civil servant in a government office. [...] So, an agronomist was something like an oarsman.[31]

Karaçay deplored this treatment as it was out of touch with his academic background and professional achievements; he was educated at the prestigious Franco-Ottoman Galatasaray High School (*Mekteb-i sulṭânî*), created in 1868 as a Napoleonic style *lycée*, and then trained at the Grignon Agricultural School;[32] he worked as an agronomist in Brittany before returning to the Ottoman Empire, and subsequently directed the

28 Berdah 2012.

29 I borrow this term from Collins and Evans, who distrust the term 'lay expertise' used by Brian Wynne to describe sheep farmers' expertise. See Collins and Evans 2007, 16 and 49.

30 'Halk, Teknik Ziraat diye bir şey bilmiyor. Ve ancak köylü, çiftçiyi tanıyordu. Teknik ziraat bilgisini haiz olarak yeni yeni mekteplerden çıkan Ziraat Memuruna da, 'Bu ne bilir? Kağıt, kalemin tarlada işi olur mu?' diye hayretle bakıyor, hatta onunla alay ediyorlardı' (Tunçer 1958, 25).

31 'Ziraatçilere kız bile vermezlerdi. […] O zamanın hamlacıları da (Büyük kayıklarda kürek çekenler) kız almak bahsinde çok müşkülâta uğrarlar, kız âileleri bunları adam yerine koyup kızlarını vermek istemezlerdi. […] Çünkü ozamanın en iyi mesleği bir kalemde memuriyetti. […] İşte ziraatçı da, bir hamlacı gibi idi' (*ibid.*, 9–10).

32 For more information on the Galatasaray High School, see Şişman 1989 and Georgeon 1994.

Bursa Agricultural School, taught at the Halkalı Agricultural School, and served as the Director for Agriculture in Alpullu and even as the General Director for Forests. While he was celebrated as an 'agronomist of great value' (*agronome de réelle valeur*) in French sources,[33] he thought that he was not receiving the respect he was due in his own country. In addition to his agronomic skills, his command of French had caught the eye of French journalist Gaulis (1865–1912), who served as a correspondent for the *Political and Literary Debates Journal* (*Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*), the co-director of *Opinion* and the director of *Stamboul* during his stay in Istanbul from 1908 to 1911:[34]

> Nessib Remzi speaks French like a Frenchman and does so with such nuance and Gallic verve! A former graduate of Grignon, wheat crops and beets hold no secrets for him, nor all sorts of other things. He has travelled all over rural France, lived on farms, and even speaks Breton. The last language the Orient didn't know![35]

The discrepancy was palpable: a highly educated man destined to be among the nation's elite was talking about shot down marriage proposals in response to Tuncer's question regarding how agronomists were perceived in popular opinion at the turn of the century. An agronomist of similar calibre gave a comparably gloomy answer to Tuncer's question. Reşat Muhlis Erkmen (1891–1985), who completed his master's degree in Germany and even rose to being Minister of Agriculture, summed up agronomists' image in these words: 'Agronomy has always been held to be the most unsubstantial of jobs. It was the case then. I suppose it is still the case now...'[36]

Veterinarians suffered from a bad reputation, too, because they were considered as farriers' equals. It was this damaging public perception that pushed army veterinarian Subhi Edhem to write in 1918: 'There is almost no profession experiencing such a lack of recognition it deserves more than veterinary medicine. It can be said with regret that […] a veterinary scientist is not given the same prominence as a farrier.'[37] Their appellation did not help; veterinarians thought the confusion also stemmed from the polysemous word *bayṭar*, which designated both veterinarians and farriers. A lexicographic search proves them right. In some dictionaries published before the institutionalisation of the veterinary profession, *bayṭar* appears with one meaning only – that of farrier – such as in Artin Hindoğlu's dictionary.[38] Later on, it gains polysemy. Indeed, according

33 Angéli 30 September 1903, 416.

34 Gaulis 1913, v–ix.

35 'Nessib Remzi parle le français comme un Français et avec quelles nuances, avec quelle verve gauloise ! Ancien élève diplômé de Grignon, le blé et la betterave n'ont aucun secret pour lui, ni toutes sortes d'autres choses. Il a parcouru la France agricole, vécu dans les fermes et il parle breton. La dernière langue que l'Orient ignorait !' (Gaulis 13 June 1911, 1).

36 'Ziraatçilik her zaman en hafif meslek olarak kalmıştır. O zaman da öyle idi. Zannederim şimdi de öyle…' (Tunçer 1958, 68).

37 '[…] bayṭarlıḳ ḳadar […] lâyıḳ oldığı iʿtibârı göstermemiş hemân hîç bir meslek yoḳdur. Teʾessüf ile söylenebilirki […] mütefennin bir bayṭara bir naʿlband derecesinde ehemmiyet vérilmemişdir' (Subḥî Edhem 1334 [1918], 8).

38 Hindoglu 1838, 130.

to both Barbier de Meynard's and Thomas-Xavier Bianchi and Jean-Daniel Kieffer's dictionaries, the word *bayṭar* means veterinarian but 'also used to mean 'farrier,' but in the latter sense, نعلبند *naalband* is used in preference today.'[39] Sir James William Redhouse defined *bayṭarlıḳ* as both farriery and veterinary.[40] And, Diran Kelekian gave a triple definition for the word *bayṭar*: 'veterinarian, hippiatrist, and farrier.'[41]

Sharing a name for their profession with farriers not only exacerbated the amalgamation of the two socio-professional categories in the public imagination; *baytar* and other expressions used as its synonym such as *at doktoru*, literally 'horse doctor,' were also used as insults in popular parlance. The story of Mehmet Akif Ersoy (1873–1936), who served as a veterinarian for over twenty years before resigning on 11 May 1913 and later becoming Turkey's national poet, would confirm this unfavourable connotation. To humiliate him, an arrogant young man is said to have asked him in a mocking tone 'Aren't you a simple *baytar*?', to which he would have cleverly replied: 'Yes, do you need any treatment?'[42]

The caricatures of the period attest to the negative portrayal of veterinarians. For instance, in a caricature published in the satirical magazine *Cem* (or *Djém*), veterinarians' profession was rendered as a thankless job that could only be attractive in case of bankruptcy (Figure 2).

Here we see a man reclining in his bed, only just waking up from his sleep. Sulking, he tells the woman facing the readers' back: 'Good God! I saw the vet Rasim in my nightmare last night. He said to me: if your business goes downhill, don't wait, come, and work with me, here we sell a thousand oxen for a penny!'[43] He thinks of it as a bad dream because he was offered a job by a veterinarian, whom he considers to be a lower-class individual compared to himself, living in a richly furnished house with his fur coat-wearing wife. Rasim's job is erroneously described as selling domesticated animals, and for a penny at that. This caricature not only misrepresents the veterinary profession, but also shows that one spontaneously thinks of a veterinarian when one needs a counterexample to a fulfilled life.

This burden of mockery was not shared by agronomists and forestry engineers, whose professional title did not lead to confusion in the same way. Agronomists were called by domain-specific names such as *ehl-i zirâʿat* (expert in agriculture), *zirâʿat müteḫaṣṣıṣı* (agricultural specialist), *zirâʿat mütefennini* (man of agricultural technical science), *zirâʿat mühendisi* (agricultural engineer), or in very rare cases, *âğrônôm* – the French word trans-

39 Barbier de Meynard 1971, 360; Bianchi and Kieffer 1850, 431.
40 Redhouse 2015, 422.
41 Kelekyân 1329 [1911], 301.
42 Gür 1999, 209.
43 'Ḫayırdır inşâa'llàh! Bu géce rü'yâmda bayṭar Râsimi gördüm, siziñ orada işler kesâd ise durma ḳalḳ gel, burada öküzüñ biñi bir pârâya diyor!' (*Cem* 26 Kânûn-ı ṣânî 1928 [26 January 1928], 8).

Figure 2. Unflattering depiction of veterinarians in the satirical magazine Cem

posed into Ottoman alphabet,[44] whereas farmers were called *fellâḥ*, *çiftci*, *zârıᶜ* (*zürrâᶜ* in plural), and *rencber*.[45] The divide was semantically clear.

What discouraged the experts the most, however, was that it was not only the uneducated masses that held them in low esteem. Even the elites, whom they deemed as their peers and intellectually capable of recognising their scientific expertise, were often clueless. Army veterinarian Subhi Edhem thought this ignorance existed 'both among the elites and the masses' (*gerek ḫavâṣṣ ve gerek ᶜavâm arasında*).[46] In a similar vein, Ahmet Nevzat Tüzdil (1900–1965), who earned his doctorate in Hamburg after completing his studies at the Civilian Veterinary School (*Mülkiye bayṭar mekteb-i ᶜâlîsi*), noted regretfully that it was rather common to hear from respected writers of his time that veterinary medicine was only a more sophisticated form of farriery: 'And the saddest thing of all is that even most of the country's intellectuals still do not have the slightest idea what veterinary medicine is.'[47] Agronomists also faced unfavourable reactions from intellectuals, such as from famous journalist and writer Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu (1889–1974), particularly known for his novels *Nûr baba* (1922), *Kirâlık konak* (1933) and later, exploring pastoral themes, *Yaban* (1932). In an article he published in *İkdam* on 9 March 1923, Yakup Kadri shared farmers' critical views of agronomists, quoting them as saying, 'We don't need agronomists trained in Istanbul; we've always suffered from them instead of benefiting from them.'[48] Yakup Kadri then reinforced their sentiments, adding, 'Yes, what Anatolian peasants say about educated agricultural experts is true. I know first-hand some very bad ones…'[49] Agronomist Cevat Rüştü Öktem (1880–1936) responded to these inflammatory remarks with an article of his own. For him, Yakup Kadri's piece was unacceptable as it was riddled with 'logical fallacies' (*mantıken safsatakar*). Cevat Rüştü argued that someone who considers themselves an intellectual, like Yakup Kadri, cannot justifiably use their personal experiences with a few incompetent agronomists to make sweeping generalisations and present them as established facts to the public. What troubled Cevat Rüştü and his colleagues more than the rejection by peasants – whose ignorance agronomists excused with a paternalistic attitude – was the lack of recognition and active backlash from well-read men.

This frustration was also shared by forestry engineers even if they had a better lot in life compared to agronomists and veterinarians. They did not have the same critical mass of pre-existing tradesmen with whom to quarrel, whose field of work they would encroach upon. And yet, they shared agronomists' and veterinarians' burden of their

44 I have only encountered this word a few times, such as in *Aydınlıḳ* 1 Kânûn-ı evvel 1921 [1 December 1921], 172.

45 Ş. Sâmî 1318 [1901], 49.

46 Subḥî Edhem 1334 [1918], 8.

47 'Mes'eleniñ eñ şâyân-ı esef ciheti memleketiñ münevver zümresinden büyük bir ekṣeriyetiñ daḥi henüz bu meslekden tamâmen bîḫaber olışıdır' (Âḥmed Nevzâd 1927, 102).

48 'Bize İstanbul'da tahsil etmiş ziraat mütehassıslarının lüzumu yoktur; şimdiye kadar bunlardan fayda yerine hep zarar gördük' (Cevat Rüştü 2016, 213).

49 'Evet Anadolu zürrâlarının tahsil görmüş ziraat mütehassısları hakkında söyledikleri doğrudur. Ben öyle ziraat mütehassısları tanırım ki…' (*ibid.*).

profession being labelled as nonscientific and superfluous. They, too, thought that it was not only the populace (*ḫalḳ*) that misunderstood their expertise, but also the intellectual class (*münevver ṣınıf*). For instance, contributors to the first issue of the *Forestry and Hunting* magazine (*Orman ve Av*) collectively spoke out against 'many of the people who make up the nation's enlightened class' (*memleketiñ münevverânını teşkîl éden bir çoḳ kimseler*) who believed that 'forests grow randomly' (*onlarıñ gelişi güzel yetişdigini*) instead of the methodical intervention of forestry engineers.[50] Similarly, forestry engineer Mehmet Ali Salih wrote: 'We are always witnessing with regret that many people among the intellectual class, who are ignorant of the nature of forestry, even go so far as to deny the existence of such a science.'[51]

2.3 Showing a United Front: Corporatist Attitude and Associative Action

As a response to the scorn and mockery, agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians organised around various associations and journals. Their members adopted a corporatist attitude and conceived their respective professions as one body. Their terminology attested to this awakening of collegial spirit; they used words such as *meslekdaş* (colleague), *refîḳ* (fellow), *ḳardeş* (brother), *mesâʿî arḳadaşı* (work comrade), and *meslek müntesibi* (member of the profession) to qualify each other. As such, they created an 'us' and 'them' and opted for presenting a united front against the 'them' rather than retreating into individualism and letting each one fighting the battle alone. Journals explicitly invited all professionals for a gathering of forces. For instance, the *Journal of the Turkish Veterinarians' Association* (*Türk Baytarlar Cemiyeti Mecmuası*), the official organ of the Turkish Veterinarians' Association (*Türk Baytarlar Cemiyeti*) established on 6 February 1930, aimed to unite all Turkish veterinarians for stronger action:

> Colleagues, scattered across our beloved country, are each like a battery powering a light bulb. Whatever their skills may be, each colleague gives off a faint light that can only illuminate the path ahead of himself. To cast a stronger light, we must absolutely unite. That's why we're trying to weld the batteries together by stretching wires between them. That's how we'll get a light strong enough to illuminate the way for the whole professional body. And that's how we'll be able to pay tribute to the hitherto neglected members of this profession and make their voices heard.[52]

The creation of associations and journals was met not only with great enthusiasm, but also with great relief; they helped ameliorate experts' feeling of loneliness in the face of

50 Anonymous Mârt 1928 [March 1928], 1.

51 'Te'essüfle ve her zamân şâhid oluyoruz: münevver ṣınıf arasında ormancılıġıñ mâhiyet-i âṣliyesinden ġâfil pek çok ẕevât ʿâdetâ böyle bir ʿilmiñ vücûdını inkâra ḳadar bile ḥaddlerini aşarlar' (Meḥmed ʿAlî Ṣâliḥ Nîsân 1928 [April 1928], 22–3).

52 'Her meslekdaş, şu çok sevdiğimiz memleketin birer köşesinde kendi başına bir ampul yakan bir alektrik bataryası gibidir. Fert ne kadar kuvvetli olursa olsun nehayet kendi önünü görebilecek kadar bir ışık doğurur. Daha fazla için mutlaka birleşmeleri lazımdır. İşte biz; bu bataryaları, aralarına tel gererek birbirine rapt etmeye oğraşıyoruz. O zamandırki: hepi-

rejection. For instance, right after the creation of the first Ottoman veterinary association in 1908, a veterinarian from Trabzon named Yusuf Ziya sent a thank you letter, as he had truly begun to lose all hope: 'At a time when our profession was on the brink of extinction, the news of the creation in Istanbul of a veterinary association capable of revitalising and advancing it resonated throughout the provinces and brought us back to life.'[53] In a similar fashion, a forestry engineer from Bursa named Fikri celebrated the publication of *Forestry and Hunting*'s first issue in 1928, saying that this journal would henceforth unite colleagues dispersed throughout the country and foster solidarity: 'From now on, no forestry engineer will consider himself alone in his endeavours. He will have confidence in the existence of a body of colleagues who think like him and who work like him […].'[54]

Although agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians published numerous articles in the mainstream press to target wider audiences, the professional journals they launched, especially the public-facing ones, became the primary channel for educating the public about their expertise.[55] These journals were intended to foster scholarly debates within the expert community, but also to encourage scientific communication with the lay public. Indeed, many experts published articles in simple and plain language 'that anybody and even the peasants can understand,'[56] and answered all kinds of questions from the readers, 'be they canary or drayhorse owners' and 'from those keeping a small garden to those who manage large farms.'[57] Nonetheless, experts' prime objective remained using the journals to build up their legitimacy externally.

To bolster their authority, experts used a rhetoric of science. Their papers relentlessly stressed the range of knowledge they needed to accumulate and the diplomas they needed to collect to become the experts they claimed they were. Their fondness for credentialism, one of the three factors that characterise a profession according to Eliot Friedson,[58] was aimed at restricting access to their respective professions by raising the barriers that needed to be cleared for entry to the 'field' (*champ*), thereby disqualifying non-experts lacking this specific capital.[59] Articles also provided detailed descriptions

mizin önümüzü görmesine kâfi kuvvetli bir ışık yakmış olacağız. Ve o zemandırki: şimdiye kadar ihmal edilmiş olan meslek efkârı umumiyesini hörmet etmiş ve onu dinletmiş olacağız' (Anonymous 1 Teşrini evvel 1930 [1 October 1930], 2).

53 'İşte bu derece iẓmiḥlâle uġrayan meslek-i bayṭarîniñ teraḳḳî ve teᶜâlîsini mûcib olacaḳ mâddeleri müẕâkere étmek üzere bu kere Dersaᶜâdetde bir Cemᶜiyet-i ᶜilmiye-i bayṭariye te'sîs édildigi ḫaberi ṭaşralara müjde-i ḥayât gibi intişâr étdi' (*Mecmûᶜa-i fünûn-ı bayṭariye* 1 Eylül 1324 [14 September 1908], 26).

54 'Bundan ṣonra hîç bir ormancı, meslekî emellerinde kendisini yalñız ᶜadd étmeyecekdir. Kendisi gibi düşünen bir kitleniñ kendisi gibi çalışan meslekdaşlarıñ varlığına inanacaḳ […]' (Fikri Mârt 1928 [March 1928], 22).

55 On the relationship between journals and the public legitimacy of scientific enterprise, see Csiszar 2018.

56 Anonymous 30 Mârt 1325 [12 April 1909], np.

57 Meḥmed Kemâl 1 Teşrin-i s̱ânî 1315 [13 November 1899], 2.

58 Friedson 1986.

59 Bourdieu 1976.

of their day-to-day activities such as researching new vaccines, which veterinarians thought laymen could not even fathom doing. These written enactments of expertise were supposed to demonstrate not only the complexity of the tasks they needed to perform, but also their inaccessibility to laypeople. The tone of their articles tended to be highly pedagogic since they sincerely believed that the lack of recognition resulted from ignorance rather than from snobbishness or anti-intellectualism.

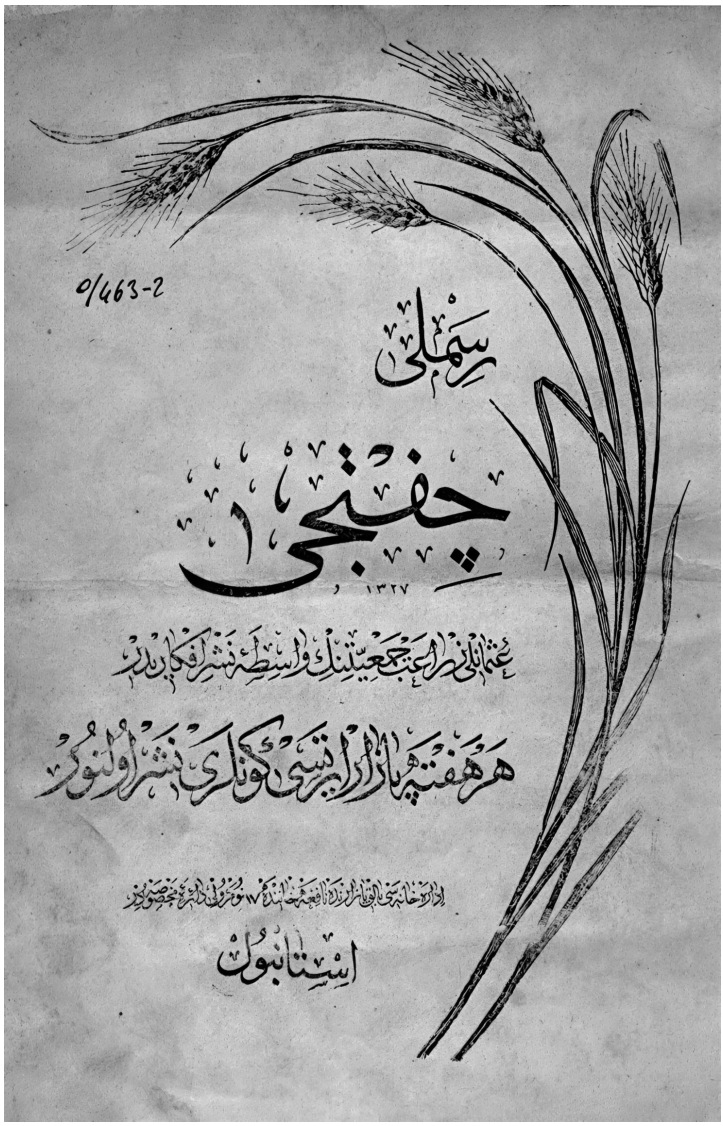
Some experts also drew strength from their past academic mobility. Indeed, many had studied in France and in Germany. They did not shy away from stressing that their competencies were acquired in prestigious European schools. They also often published articles right after attending international conferences abroad. Showing off their ties with foreign scientific institutions and learned societies, either explicitly or more discreetly (by putting the name of their alma mater after their signature, for instance) fulfilled one main objective: demonstrating that they were members of global networks of expertise. The reason is that, historically, expertise was associated with foreignness in the Ottoman Empire. The influx of foreign experts began in the 18th century, first in techno-military domains such as naval engineering, then expanded to other fields.[60] The importation of foreign expertise also marked the beginnings of the disciplines I work on; one of the first foreign experts called into the Ottoman Empire was the Prussian army veterinarian von Godlewsky in 1841.[61] The American agronomist James Bolton Davis, who taught at the first (and ephemeral) agricultural school (*Zirâʿat taʿlîmḫânesi*) established in Ayamama in 1847, followed him,[62] and then the French forestry engineer Louis Tassy, who directed the Forestry School (*Orman mektebi*) created in Istanbul in 1857.[63] As Ottoman agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians thought that their foreign diplomas would be less likely to be called into question than those acquired in their home country, they regularly advertised them in an attempt to command higher esteem. This is also an observation shared by Darina Martykánová regarding engineers:

> […] it was much easier for a foreign practitioner to achieve recognition as an engineer than for an Ottoman to do so. […] For the Ottomans, the credential system represented the easiest option: studying abroad was a way of acquiring a share in the prestige granted by the knowledge that was identified as both modern and foreign.[64]

This was not merely a strategy followed by a few experts to burnish their own personal images. Associations also resorted to the same strategy and advertised their members' foreign credentials as they considered the accomplishment of one to be an accomplishment for all. For example, *The Farmer Illustrated* (*Resimli çiftci*), the official organ of

60 On earlier accounts of foreign expert recruitments, see Bostan 1994; Martykánová 2016–2017; Yalçınkaya 2014; Zorlu 2008.
61 Bekman 1940.
62 Yıldırım 2008.
63 Kutluk 1943.
64 Martykánová 2010, 117.

Figure 3. The first issue of the Farmer Illustrated (Resimli çiftci) published by the Ottoman Agricultural Association (ʿOsmânlı zirâʿat cemʿiyeti)



the Ottoman Agricultural Association (*ʿOsmânlı zirâʿat cemʿiyeti*), sought to enhance all agronomists' prestige by appealing to their years of study abroad (Figure 3):

> Among these people, who belong to one of the purest and most honourable occupations in the world, there are many who have studied for years in the most prestigious

agricultural schools of Europe and have seen and learned firsthand the marvellous advances and developments in agriculture there.[65]

Forestry engineers were the least active in terms of associative and printing activities. They had only one main association, which was created on 26 December 1924 by Abdülkadir Sorkun, Tevfik Ali Çınar (1900–1963) and Asaf Irmak (1905–1996). Dubbed 'Forestry School Alumni Association' (*Orman mekteb-i ʿâlîsi me'ẕûnîn cemʿiyeti*) at first, it was renamed 'Turkish Foresters' Association' (*Türkiye Ormancılar Cemiyeti*) in 1930.[66] This change of name also corresponded to a shift in the nature of the organisation, which morphed from an alumni association into a professional one. Its official organ, *Forestry and Hunting*, published form 1928 onwards, is still active today.

The creation of this journal was seen as an important step forward. However, in later years, forestry engineers questioned the association's lack of energetic action. For instance, Yakup Apanay thought that the association was only interested in collecting money (*aidat toplamaktan başka bir şey yapmıyan cemiyet*) and compared the difficulty of getting the association to take actual action to the difficulty of safely reaching the stratosphere (*stratosfere çıkmak gibi zor iş)*.[67] His colleague Mehmet Ali Salih also pointed out that forestry engineers were left behind in the fight for their profession's rights, saying that other experts such as the alumni of the School of Medicine (*Tıbbiyeli*), the alumni of the School of Public Administration (*Mülkiyeli*), and even agronomists were better at promoting themselves, pointing out specifically the example of agronomist Cevat Rüştü Öktem, who relentlessly published easily accessible articles on the importance and merits of his field of expertise in mainstream newspapers such as *İkdam*. He believed that in the modern era, it was no longer 'rigour' (*ciddiyet*) that was valued, but 'smooth-talking, showmanship, and promises' (*lâfa, gösterişe ve söze kıymet veren bir asır*) and that this was precisely why his colleagues needed to pursue aggressive propaganda campaigns to promote themselves instead of 'pulling into [their] shell like a turtle' (*kaplumbağa gibi kabuğumuzun içerisine büzülerek*).[68] In short, according to Mehmet Ali Salih, recognition of expertise could only be won through performance.

For agronomists and veterinarians, the situation was very different. No fewer than eight veterinary associations were created between 1908 and 1928.[69] The first was the

65 'Dünyânıñ eñ temîz ve eñ nâmûskâr bir ṣanʿatına mensûb olan bu ẕevât arasında senelerce Âvrûpâda eñ ʿâlî zirâʿat mekteblerinde taḥṣîlde bulunmuş ve zirâʿatiñ şâyân-ı ḥayret teraḳḳiyât ve tekemmülâtını yaḳından görüb ögrenmiş bir çoḳ kimseler bulundıġı gibi […]' (Anonymous 30 Mârt 1325 [12 April 1930], 2).

66 It ultimately took the name 'Türkiye Ormancılar Derneği' in 1972, the word *cemiyet* being replaced by *dernek*, both meaning association.

67 Yakup Apanay 1933, 14.

68 Salih Şubat 1937 [February 1937], 47–50.

69 The establishment of a constitutional regime in 1908 precipitated the creation of two other associations. The first, called the 'Association for the Progress and Mutual Aid of Civilian Veterinarians' (*Mülkiye bayṭarları ittiḥâd ve teʿâvün cemʿiyeti*), presented itself not as a competitor to the Veterinary Science Association, but as its ally (*şurası iyice bilinsünki cemʿiyetimiz cemʿiyet-i ʿilmiyeniñ raḳibi degil*). See *Mecmûʿa-i fünûn-ı bayṭariye* 1 Şubâṭ 1324 [14 February

Veterinary Science Association (*Cemʿiyet-i ʿilmiye-i bayṭariye*), whose mission was to encourage advancements in veterinary medicine and defend Ottoman veterinarians' rights. Its official organ, the *Veterinary Science Review* (*Mecmûʿa-i fünûn-ı bayṭariye*) published 24 issues before disappearing in 1910. Similarly to the veterinary associations, we can track the establishment of the first agronomic association to the immediate aftermath of the Young-Turk Revolution of 1908, which ended sultan Abdülhamid II's authoritarian regime, injected an air of freedom into the empire, and allowed for the creation of associations, their existence being given legal status with a law passed in 1909.[70] Although agronomic societies were less numerous than their veterinarian counterparts,' agricultural journals were plentiful (over twenty before the empire's demise), the first one being *Means of Wealth* (*Vâsıṭa-i servet*) published from 1880 onwards.[71]

Veterinarians did not stop at publishing articles to promote their expertise. They went on to demand legal action for its official recognition. For instance, from the 1890s onwards, they demanded the institution of a monopoly resembling that of medical doctors to bar farriers from the exercise of the veterinary profession. Physicians had held a monopoly over the practice of medicine since 1861; only graduates of the Imperial School of Medicine (*Mekteb-i ṭıbbiye-i şâhâne*) or of foreign faculties of medicine were authorized to practice.[72] Veterinarians wanted the same privilege because they saw no difference between a doctor without a diploma and a veterinarian without a diploma; in their eyes, quacks in both domains presented the same danger to public health (Figure 4).[73]

The monopoly enjoyed by Ottoman doctors was undoubtedly a source of envy for veterinarians. However, the question posed by Méropi Anastassiadou-Dumont regarding physicians remains equally relevant for veterinarians: 'Is it sufficient for a state to outlaw empiricists and charlatans for the population to immediately abandon them and render them unemployed?'[74] This query highlights the complexities of establishing professional dominance, as evidenced in 19th-century Spain. There too, veterinari-

1909], 351–2. As for the army veterinarians, they founded the General Association for the Progress and Mutual Aid of Army Veterinarians (*ʿAskerî bayṭarları teraḳḳî ve teʿâvün cemʿiyet-i ʿumûmîsi*) in 1908 and published the *Journal of Military Veterinary Medicine* (*ʿAskerî cerîde-i bayṭariye)*. See Etker 2013. Finally, Berfin Melikoğlu Gölcü and Sezer Erer report the creation of four other veterinary associations before the fall of the empire: the Civil Veterinary School Alumni Association (*Mülkiye Baytar Mekteb-i Âlisi Mezunin Cemiyeti*) created in 1911, the Association of Provincial Veterinarians (*Taşra Baytarî Cemiyeti*) in 1911, the Students Association of the Civil Veterinary School (*Mülkiye Baytar Mekteb-i Âlisi Talebe Cemiyeti*) in 1919 and the Association of Turkish Veterinarians (*Türk Baytarlar Birliği*) in 1920. See Melikoğlu Gölcü and Erer 2013. Another association seems to have been created in Mersin for provincial veterinarians (*Taşra Baytarları İttihad ve Teavün Cemiyeti*). See Polat 2013, 64.

70 Toprak 1985.

71 For a more detailed account on these journals, see Demir 2014.

72 *Gazette médicale d'Orient* February 1863, 174.

73 *Servet-i fünûn* 14 Teşrîn-i sânî 1312 [26 November 1896], 190.

74 'Suffit-il qu'un État interdise empiriques et charlatans pour que la population les condamne aussitôt au chômage?' (Anastassiadou-Dumont 2003, 11).

Figure 4. Ahmet Nevzat Tüzdil's (1900–1965) diploma as exhibited at the Prof. Dr. Ferruh Dinçer Museum of the History of Veterinary Medicine in Ankara

ans (*veterinarios*), a new but growing social group since the founding of the Veterinary School of Madrid (*Escuela de Veterinaria de Madrid*) in 1793, sought to displace the historically entrenched farriers (*albéitares*) to monopolise the knowledge and practices of animal medicine. This jurisdictional battle extended into the realm of publications. *El Eco de la Veterinaria* (1853–1859) advocated for the scientific nature of veterinarians, contrasting it with the naïve empiricism of their rivals. It declared that veterinary medicine differed from *albeitería* 'as much as chemistry differs from alchemy' and that equating the two was akin to confusing 'the bright radiance of the sun with the pale glow of the moon.' In contrast, the journal *El Albéitar* (1853–1855), voiced the farriers' protests against being relegated to a subordinate status. Interestingly, an 1802 royal decree had already granted veterinarians comprehensive authority over all activities related to animal medicine. However, the limited number of formally trained veterinarians at the time allowed farriers to continue practicing veterinary medicine. These tensions prompted new legislative measures, including an 1847 decree which abolished the issuance of *albéitar* titles. Despite these legal efforts, both the public and state officials continued to consult and rely on farriers. Joaquín Riu highlighted this issue

in 1854, lamenting that the political chief of the province of Guadalajara had recently appointed an *albéitar* as subdelegate, despite a first-class veterinarian also seeking the position. While veterinarians criticised such appointments, farriers defended their role; Blas Cubells, for example, argued that their long-standing practices had the force of law, emphasizing that 52 years had passed since 1802, during which *albéitares* had carried out their duties without opposition. The case of Spanish veterinarians illustrates that achieving a monopoly does not automatically result in the swift eradication of rivals in practice or public perception.[75]

Later, taking advantage of the political context, veterinarians in Turkey attempted to legally change their professional title to leave the semantically ambiguous and occasionally embarrassing *baytar* in the past. Indeed, a new Turkish phonetic alphabet was introduced in 1928. The replacement of Arabic and Persian characters by Latin characters was intended to eradicate illiteracy, secularizes the country, and elevate it to the rank of 'modern' nations.[76] This alphabetical revolution was later accompanied by a lexical purge. The Society for the Study of the Turkish Language (*Türk Dili Tetkik Cemiyeti*, TDTC), founded on 12 July 1932, was entrusted with the mission of cleansing the language of words that the Ottomans had borrowed extensively from Arabic and Persian.[77] It was in this climate that the Turkish Veterinarians' Association tried to consign the word *baytar* into oblivion. Arguing that the term was of Arabic origin, the association members appealed to the TDTC for its official substitution by *veteriner*. Simultaneously, ex-veterinarians-turned-deputies pushed the same agenda at the TBMM. What may seem like a paradox in their reasoning from the point of view of the lexical purge (they did not propose a Turkish alternative to *baytar* but a word of Latin origin (which itself was revived in France to distinguish veterinarians from farriers)[78] is not paradoxical from the perspective of their struggle for recognition. Veterinarians were indeed less interested in the Kemalist government's linguistic policies and more interested in bolstering their public image. And, in their view, *veteriner* was capable of commanding greater respect both inside and outside of the country: 'We are convinced that replacing the word *baytar*, which has no place in our language, with *veteriner* will exert a positive influence on colleagues and on our representation abroad.'[79] With an

75 Gutiérrez García 2013.

76 Caymaz and Szurek 2007.

77 It was renamed the 'Turkish Language Association' (*Türk Dil Kurumu*, TDK) in 1936.

78 While veterinarians in Turkey were fighting to get the same title as veterinarians in France, their colleagues in France were battling to get rid of *vétérinaire* and replace it with *docteur* since *vétérinaire* was used as an insult in the French press and political discourse: politicians were frequently called 'braying vets' and 'spineless vets' or, worse still, the doubly stigmatising expression 'sub-veterinarians.' For further analysis of the differences of perception of the word *vétérinaire* in Turkish and French contexts, see Tanık 2024, 364–72.

79 'Lisanımızla hiçte alâkası olmıyan Baytar kelimesinin yerine Veterinerin konulmasının meslekdaşlar arasında ve hariçte çok iyi bir tesir hâsıl edeceğine kaniiz' (*Türk Baytarlar Cemiyeti Mecmuası* 25 Ağustos 1933 [25 August 1933], 62).

internationally recognized word – a title they would share with their European counterparts – their scientific expertise could become immediately visible.

3. Proving One's Worth

> After all, the homeland is land. And, agriculture is the development of lands, and therefore of the homeland. This means that service to agriculture is service to the homeland.[80]

3.1 Too Much Work, Too Little Money

Agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians did not just want their scientific expertise to be recognised; they also thought it should translate into more economic capital and higher social standing. They shared the opinion that they had highly demanding jobs, which were not only intellectually challenging, but also physically and emotionally draining. They needed to travel all around the country to deal with farmers, to examine and treat animals, and even to live in isolation near forests. Indeed, not all experts worked in the comfort and security of Istanbul's specialised schools and research laboratories surrounded by family. Many operated in remote areas. In 1928, Fikri shared with his readers the difficulties inherent to his profession. He believed forestry engineers like himself were more deserving than any other professional body because they lived under dreadful circumstances to provide their expertise – circumstances he judged to be more dangerous than those faced by law enforcement officers:

> Since a forester, regardless of his title and rank, is an individual who spends his time in the mountains and works in arduous and dangerous forests, his duties are not comparable to the duties of civilian public servants working in cities, and even that of policemen and gendarmes. Just as there is a difference between crowded cities and desolate forests, there is an equally great contrast between the duties and capabilities of forestry engineers and other officials. The forester, who is tasked to protect the nation's heritage up in the mountains and to manage this great wealth for the sake of the nation, must have a heart braver than anyone else, a mind sharper than anyone else, and a voice louder than any other voice.[81]

80 'Z̲âten vaṭan; ṭopraḳ démekdir. Zirâʿat ise ṭopraġı binâ'enʿaleyh vaṭanı iʿmâr étmek démekdir. Démek oluyorki zirâʿate ḥidmet vaṭana ḥidmetdir' (Anonymous 15 Mârt 1329 [28 March 1913], 1).

81 'Ormancı, her ne ṣıfat ve rütbede olursa olsun, daġlarda vaḳit geçiren, ṣarp ve tehlikeli ormanlarda çalışan bir insân oldığından icrâ'-yı vaẓîfeleri şehirlerde çalışan sîvîl me'mûrlarıñ ve ḥattà pôlîsleriñ ve jândârmalarıñ bile icrâ'-yı ve inẓibâṭî vaẓîfeleriyle ḳâbil-i tevfîḳ degildir. Ġalabalıḳ şehirlerle, ışṣız ormanlar arasında ne farḳ varsa, diger me'mûrlarıñ vaẓîfe ve ṣalâḥiyetleri arasındada o ḳadar büyük farḳ vardır. Bunuñ içündürki, milletiñ emânetini

Two years later, Enver, a veterinarian of eighteen years, published an article in the *Journal of the Turkish Veterinarians' Association* to testify about his situation, which he believed was also reflective of that of his colleagues. He began his testimony by stating that the first quarter of a veterinarian's life is idyllic as he spends it 'studying and dreaming of a bright future behind wooden school benches.' Yet, the disenchantment comes soon after graduation:

> The rest of our lives is spent far from the houses of science, on the summits of stormy mountains, under a hollow tent, on a wooden cot, or simply lying on the bare ground... Listening to the grievances of poor peasants in remote villages by the light of kindling or under the dim, trembling light of a kerosene lamp emitting black smoke... Sleeping under blackened quilts covered with lice... Forcing ourselves to hear lullabies in snowstorms and thunderstorms... To see lacquer gold in the mud covering animals' bodies... And to getting used to working under the biting cold weather, rain, and snow…[82]

Enver adds a final note to his dreary depiction of veterinarians' lives: they must endure all of this for only a few pennies (*bir kaç kuruş*).

On top of these harsh working conditions, the number of experts was low and consequently, the workload was heavy. For instance, in 1908, there were only 180 civilian veterinarians operating in the Ottoman Empire, whereas France had 4,000 and Bulgaria, which was comparable in size to a single Ottoman vilayet, counted 150 in the same year.[83] This problem persisted in the Republican regime; according to the figures reported by veterinarian Saip Ali, in 1932, there was only one veterinarian for every 4,000 square kilometres.[84] Agronomists also routinely bemoaned their own short supply. Even as late as the 1960s, speakers at an agronomic congress organised in Ankara were still pointing out the shortage of agronomists, such as the dean of the Faculty of Agronomy at Ankara University Sabahattin Özbek (1915–2001), who, while reminiscing about the past, deplored the treatment given to agronomists, whose number, he mentioned, did not exceed a hundred at the beginning of the century.[85]

Despite these conditions, scientific experts were paid low wages. In 1908, new veterinary graduates were supposed to earn 675 piastres as set by the government, but,

daġlarda muḥâfaẓaya ve bu büyük s̱erveti millet ḥesâbına idâre ve işletmege me'mûr olan ormancınıñ yüregi herkesden ṣaġlam, ḳafâsı herkesden ḳuvvetli, sesi bütün seslerden daha gür olmalıdır' (Fikrî Nîsân 1928 [April 1928], 20–1).

82 'Dörtde üçünü… Fen, ilim yuvalarından uzak fırtınalı dağ başlarında delik bir çadır altında, tahta bir karyola veya toprak üzerinde… Balçık köylerde bir çıra ışığında veya is püsküren bir idare lambasının sönük ve titrek ziyası altında perişan köylülerin dertlerini dinlemekle… Sim siyah bitli misâfir yorganlarının altında yatmakla geçirecek… Kar fırtınalarını, gök gürültülerini ninni… Hayvanın göysüne kadar çıkan çamurları yaldız gibi görecek… Yakıcı suuklar, yağmurlar ve kar altında çalışmağa alışacak…' (Enver 30 Birinci Kânun 1930 [30 December 1930], 19).

83 *Mecmûʿa-i fünûn-ı bayṭariye* 15 Teşrîn-i evvel 1324 [28 October 1908], 98.

84 *Türk Baytarlar Cemiyeti Mecmuası* 1 Temmuz 1932 [1 July 1932], 110.

85 Ankara Ziraat Odası 1964, 28–9.

in reality, entry level-jobs were paying only between 300 and 400 piastres a month,[86] which was quite similar to the salary of a worker with no diploma.[87] Their despair did not disappear during the early Republican period: in 1925, new graduates of veterinary schools received only 350 piasters a month instead of the promised 750.[88] They could not stand that medical doctors were paid twice their salary (a veterinarian working at Palu near Elazığ was paid 70 liras in 1930 for instance, while a doctor posted in the same region received 150 liras), as they believed that they were doing the same job, they on animals, and doctors on humans.[89] They found it even more intolerable when primary school graduates or civil servants with no scientific expertise, such as secretaries, earned as much as experienced veterinarians.[90] Some agronomists also highlighted the issue of low salaries, with Fazıl Keyder even mentioning colleagues assigned to remote provinces who were left to wander 'half-starved and penniless.'[91] Forestry engineers, who thought their actual number was only one fifth of that required to manage Turkish forests,[92] argued that their salaries were compatible neither with their qualifications nor with their workload: 'Forestry engineers are very few compared to the size of the forests and their salaries are very low when measured against the difficult tasks they perform.'[93] As Selçuk Dursun notes, at the start of the 20th century, only 10% of foresters earned a monthly salary of more than 500 piastres.[94] This trend persisted under the Republican regime. Forestry engineer Esad Muhlis Oksal (1888–1970), trained in Germany at the Eberswalde Forestry Academy (*Forstakademie Eberswalde*) between 1910 and 1916, earned 80 liras in 1937 while serving as a docent, a faculty rank just below full professor. While veterinarians expressed dissatisfaction with their monthly salary of 70 liras in 1930, particularly when compared to the 150 liras earned by doctors during the same period, it can be argued that foresters would have faced similar financial challenges as veterinarians.

86 *Mecmûʿa-i fünûn-ı bayṭariye* 15 Teşrîn-i evvel 1324 [28 October 1908], 99.

87 In 1908, the average worker in the Ottoman Empire received 11.29 piasters for a day's work (Makal 1997, 186–7). If we assume that he works 30 days a month, we can estimate his monthly salary at 338.70 piasters. In comparison, this means there is no noticeable gap between his salary and that of veterinary surgeons.

88 *Bayṭarî mecmûʿa* Ḥazîrân 1341 [June 1925], 438.

89 *Türk Baytarlar Cemiyeti Mecmuası* 30 Birinci Kânun 1930 [30 December 1930], 28.

90 *Türk Baytarlar Cemiyeti Mecmuası* 15 Nisan 1930 [15 April 1930], 90.

91 'Vilâyetlerde ziraatçi olarak gönderilen birçok arkadaş […] yarı aç, sefil dolaşırlardı' (Tunçer 1958, 56).

92 *Orman ve Av* Mayıs-Haziran 1937 [May–June 1937], 252.

93 'Orman memurları, ormanların genişliğine göre pek az olmakla beraber gördükleri müşkül vazifeye nazaran maaşları pek azdır' (Köstem 26 Mayıs 1936 [26 May 1936], 7).

94 Dursun 2007, 211.

3.2 Dynamos of the Economy

In an effort to address what they perceived as an ongoing 'crisis' of recognition and compensation, experts employed rhetorical strategies targeting both public opinion and the state, their primary employer. Their arguments focused on establishing their indispensability to society, asserting that by demonstrating the utility and essential nature of their scientific knowledge, they could validate their professional worth. The crux of their most frequent claims was related to their contribution to the economy. Agronomists appropriated the discourse of the time and defended the idea that the Ottoman Empire was a textbook agrarian country (*zirâʿat memleketi*) and that agriculture was the backbone of the country's economy. They argued that, thanks to its geographical location and climate, the country had extremely fertile lands. They also pointed out that the country's economy was highly dependent on agriculture because most of its inhabitants derived their income from agriculture, most taxes such as the tithe were levied on agriculture,[95] and agricultural products represented the majority of goods exported abroad. Since one of agronomists' main duties was to research new ways of scientifically increasing agricultural productivity, they argued that their expertise should therefore be considered vital for the country and accordingly highly valued.

Veterinarians argued that the Ottoman Empire was as much a country of livestock farming (*ḥayvâncılıḳ memleketi*) as an agrarian country. Mehmet Nuri Ural (1869–1942), who was trained near Paris at the Alfort School of Veterinary Medicine (*École nationale vétérinaire d'Alfort*), argued that, even though they dominated the market, agricultural products were cheap. Unlike animal-based products, they were not profitable enough and did not allow farmers to make a good living: 'The value of all our animals is worth millions of liras. […] Among our farmers – except for a few rare cases – there is no one who becomes rich by simply working the land. Yet, there are many who get rich off of livestock.'[96] In fact, according to the editors of the *Journal of the Turkish Veterinarians' Association*, livestock and animal-based products were worth 500 million liras in 1930, and their export abroad brought nearly 40 million liras to the Turkish economy.[97] Considering that in 1930 Turkey's entire exports were worth 152 million liras, this meant that animal-based products represented around one fourth of total exports.[98] Veterinarians argued that their scientific expertise should be compensated in keeping with the value they added to the Ottoman/Turkish economy as they were the ones reducing or preventing the loss of animals due to infectious and parasitic diseases and improving animal welfare and livestock productivity.

95 Tithe revenues accounted for 27.1% of all tax revenues in 1887–1888 and 25.0% in 1910–1911. Animal tax (*ağnam*) revenues contributed respectively 11.5% and 7.6% in the same periods (Pamuk 2005, 100; Shaw 1975, 451–3).

96 'Ḥayvânlarımızıñ hey'et-i ʿumûmiyesiniñ ḳıymet-i mâddiyesi bir çoḳ mîlyôn lîrâları geçer. […] Memleketimiz zirâʿatcilerinde - pek azı müsteṯnâ olmaḳ üzere – rencberlikden zengîn olan yoḳdur. Faḳaṭ ḥayvâncılıḳdan zengîn olanları pek çoḳdur' (Nûrî 1928, 98).

97 *Türk Baytarlar Cemiyeti Mecmuası* 1 Teşrini evvel 1930 [1 October 1930], 11.

98 Özkardeş 2015, 32.

In their writings, forestry engineers focused on all the products and practices in the daily life of the era that had to do with wood and timber, be it constructing buildings, heating them, cooking food, or warming up water. That is why they depicted wood as one of the most essential human needs (*iḥtiyâcât-ı beşeriye*), like water or air, in an article published in 1894, a theme carried forward into the future.[99] Needless to say, wood was also important for industrial purposes, to fabricate anything from paper to tools used in factories and railroad ties. In 1936, the same narrative still stood firm: 'What institution, what artisan is there that is not dependent on forests? The great cities, factories, armies, scholars you see are all dependent on the forest. They should be grateful to the forestry engineers.'[100]

3.3 Custodians of Life, Nature and Memleket

Experts also had in their arsenal arguments that insisted on the essentiality of their competencies without being solely focused on their added value for the economy. Agronomists and veterinarians argued that they were the ones who guaranteed food availability and safety. While agronomists emphasised their responsibility in preventing and curing plant diseases that can devastate crops and even lead to famine, veterinarians stressed the importance of their role in inspecting meat hygiene at slaughterhouses, and in controlling, preventing, and curing animal diseases such as the rinderpest, a contagious viral disease with a very high mortality rate that mainly affects cattle and buffalo, which provoked numerous epizootic outbreaks throughout the empire (over 50,000 animals succumbed to the disease in the vilayet of Aydın in 1894 for instance, while over 30,000 animals died in Yozgat in 1898).[101]

Veterinarians also stressed that physicians alone could not protect humans' health because their health was inextricably linked to that of animals. They knew, as we have recently experienced, how dangerous zoonoses could be given their potential to turn into deadly pandemics. As veterinarians were the ones researching and producing vaccines and serums against animal diseases that could potentially pass on to humans, such as at the Imperial Bacteriology Institute (*Bakterîyôlôjîḫâne-i şâhâne*) first established in 1893,[102] they argued they had to be given more credit for their work. Nine years after the outbreak of the Spanish flu, one of the most severe pandemics in world history, veterinarian Ahmet Nevzat Tüzdil insisted on the vital role of veterinarians in society:

> Just as diseases can be transmitted between animals, they can also be transmitted to humans, and these are the deadliest for humans. Thus, by fighting animal diseases and minimising the risks of contamination, veterinary medicine protects human

99 R. Ferîd 15 Mârt 1310 [27 March 1894], 372–3.

100 'Hangi müessise, hangi sanatkâr var ki Ormana mühtaç olmasın? Gördüğünüz muazzam şehirler, fabrikalar, ordular, âlimler hep Ormana mühtaçtır; Ormancılara müteşekkir olmalıdırlar' (Anonymous 1931, 27).

101 Dr. Réfik-Bey and veterinarian Réfik-Bey July 1899, 599.

102 For more information on this institute, see Karacaoğlu 2020.

> health. For this reason, veterinary medicine has a central place and plays an important role in public health.[103]

Because of their role in public health, veterinarians contended that they were deserving of the same prestige as medical doctors. Some veterinarians even argued that their recognition should top that of physicians. For instance, Mehmet Nuri Ural argued that animal medicine was far more complex than human medicine, a kind of 'multiple medicine' even (*müteaddid bir ṭabâbet*); for physicians, the job consisted in treating a single kind of living being, whereas veterinarians had to master the anatomy and physiology of numerous animal species, each having their own specific diseases (*her cins ḥayvânıñ teşrîḥi, ef'âl-i ḥayâtiyesi, bilḫâṣṣa emrâż-ı birbirinden farḳlıdır*).[104] His colleague Ahmet Nevzat Tüzdil went even further, asserting that human medicine was merely a branch of animal medicine. He proceeded by syllogism: man is an animal, yet veterinary medicine aims to treat animals; therefore, veterinary medicine also encompasses medicine for humans. In his thinking, it was conversely human medicine that had to be in a subordinate position:

> According to the natural sciences, Man belongs to the animal kingdom. So, just as veterinary medicine is divided into branches, each dealing exclusively with bovine diseases, canine diseases and so on, human medicine, like these branches, deals with the characteristics, diseases and so on of a particular group of animals, and so we see that, from a scientific point of view, human medicine is only a branch of veterinary medicine.[105]

As for forestry engineers, they put forward ecological arguments to prove their indispensability. They stressed the harmful consequences of deforestation on humans and argued that forests averted floods by sucking up heavy rains, reduced soil erosion, and regulated the climate, making winters smoother and summers less torrid.[106] Since they were those who protected standing forests, developed scientific methods to foster regeneration and growth, and guided logging operations for them to be sustainable, their importance to conserving nature, and consequently to conserving human life, was immense in their view.

103 'Ḥayvânâtıñ bir çoḳ ḥastalıḳları birbirine intiḳâle müsteʿid oldığı gibi insânlarada geçebilir ve insânlarıñ eñ mühlik ḥastalıḳları şırasında olur. İşte ṭabâbet-i bayṭariye bu noḳṭada, o ḥayvânı ḥastalıḳla mücâdele éderek sirâyetiñ önüne geçmekle, bu serîrî sâḥada ṣıḥḥat-ı beşeri vikâye éder. Onuñ içündürki ṭabâbet-i bayṭariyeniñ ḥıfẓ üş-ṣıḥḥa-yı beşerdede ehemmiyetli bir mevḳiʿi, mühim bir rôlı vardır' (Âḥmed Nevzâd 1927, 104).

104 Nûrî 1928, 101.

105 'İnsânlarda ʿulûm-ı ṭabîʿiye noḳṭa-i naẓarından zümre-i ḥayvânîyeye dâḫildir. O ḥâlde bayṭarlıḳda naṣıl yalñız emrâż-ı baḳariye, emrâż-ı kelbiye ve sâ'ire… İle iştiġâl éden ṣuʿabât varsa beşerî ṭabâbet daḫi ʿaynen bir zümre-i ḥayvâniyeniñ ṭabâyiʿ, emrâż ve sâ'iresiyle meşġûl démekdir görülüyorki ʿilmen beşerî ṭabâbet, ṭabâbet-i bayṭariyenin bir ṣuʿbesidir' (Aḥmed Nevzâd 1927, 103).

106 Ömer N. Köstem 26 Mayıs 1936 [26 May 1936], 7.

As their last rhetorical strategy, agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians painted themselves as selfless servants motivated by nothing other than 'care for the homeland' (*vaṭan ḳayġusı*). They put forward values of service, courage, and sacrifice to command more esteem. Veterinarians painted their expert profession as a dangerous one. While making demands to improve their working conditions, pay cheques, and overall public perception, they regularly drew attention to the losses they had to endure and commemorated their colleagues who died fighting for the nation's prosperity. For instance, two army veterinarians named Ahmet and Hüdai contracted glanders, an infectious disease that affects equids but also transmissible to humans, while performing a serodiagnosis in 1928 and died shortly after.[107] They were called 'martyrs,' 'killed in the name of science and duty,' and their families received 2,500 liras each from the state, much like the family members of fallen soldiers killed in action.[108] These two deaths, followed by other losses such as that of veterinarian Kemal Cemil in 1934 in Paris while he was trying to find a cure for glanders at the Pasteur Institute, really epitomized veterinarians' sense of duty and became a forceful argument in their struggle to achieve a more highly regarded expert status.[109] Originally interred in Thiais, his remains were exhumed and repatriated to Turkey in 1939 aboard the French ship *Théophile-Gautier* in a metal coffin draped with the Turkish flag. Kemal Cemil was ultimately laid to rest in the Karacaahmet Cemetery beside his former teacher Ahmet, whose tragic fate he had also encountered. A ritual developed around these influential figures, leaving a lasting mark on the collective memory of veterinarians. Each year, on April 2nd, they would gather in a solemn procession to the Karacaahmet Cemetery, where they would honour their fallen colleagues who dedicated their lives to science by laying flowers on their graves. Similarly, but to a lesser degree, forestry engineers pointed out that their expertise could be dangerous at times by putting forth the colleagues who were harmed during forest fires, such as İzzettin Kıvanç, suggesting that 'a cash award and a certificate of appreciation would be fitting to honour this dedicated forester.'[110]

Experts regularly drew comparisons with the military, the one profession that the public could almost unanimously agree on regarding its indispensability and the level of sacrifice it demanded given the context of the time. Indeed, during the height of the professionalisation process of these three domains (1890s–1930s), the Ottoman Empire endured numerous wars that mainly ended in defeat such as the Italo-Turkish War, the First and Second Balkan Wars, and the First World War, which finally resulted in the occupation of the seat of the Ottoman government. Needless to say, the Turkish Republic was also born in a context of war. In a country with recent or fresh memories

107 Collective 1928, 1.

108 *Resmî ġazete* 4 Ḥazîrân 1928 [4 June 1928], 285.

109 *Son Posta* 27 Mayıs 1939 [27 May 1939], 4.

110 'Bir arkadaşımız vazife başında yaralandı: Ordu mıntakası mühendis muavinlerinden İzzettin Kıvanç Gölköy Kazasının Paşapınar Ormanında çıkan bir yangının söndürülmesi esnasında kollarından ve kulaklarının yanması suretiyle yaralanmıştır. […] Bu fedakâr ormancının nakdî mükâfat ve takdirname ile taltifi düşünülmelidir' (*Orman ve Av* İlkteşrin-Sonteşrin-İlkkânun 1937 [October-November-December 1937], 393).

of successive wars, what better profession than that of the armed forces could these scientific experts draw comparisons with to underline their essential role for the country's survival? Agronomists, for instance, argued that their work was as 'necessary' (*lâzım*) and 'sacred' (*muḳḳades*) as that of soldiers defending the country.[111] Some even argued that a country's strength lay not in the sword (*kılıç*) but in the agricultural plough (*saban*), reflecting and adopting the political rhetoric of the time.[112] This sentiment echoed Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's speeches, such as his address in Adana in 1923, where he stated that land conquest relies on two tools – the sword and the plough – with the latter always prevailing. The plough, he asserted, firmly roots people in their homeland and provides stability to the nation.[113] Forestry engineers also resorted to similar analogies, asserting that they deserved as much praise as soldiers protecting the country's borders, like Ömer N. Köstem:

> Forests are the lifeblood of nations. They are their greatest treasure. Forestery engineers are the proud guardians of this treasure, and, for this reason, are very sacred. Forestry engineers who guard and manage this treasure are as worthy of praise as the soldiers who stand guard at the frontiers in the snowy days of winter.[114]

This underscores that not all of their strategies were appeals to the technocratic logic of the late Ottoman state: experts also appealed to national emotions where they expected those strategies to pay dividends.

4. Conclusion

To enhance their reputation, agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians established an expertise hierarchy and explicitly placed themselves at the very top of the pyramid. They would argue that they occupied the summit for two main reasons: their expertise was science-based, and it responded to tangible needs. They shared that position only with groups whose vital role in society and whose scientific legitimacy were already established, such as physicians. While they rarely disputed the expert knowledge other groups may hold, they considered that their short-term absence or even permanent disappearance would harm nobody – an example offered was that of experts on literature. Emphasising functionality appears to be a sound strategy because, as Alvin I. Goldman observes, expert recognition is very much linked to what experts can do for laypersons; one's status as an expert is significantly bolstered when they can solve tangible problems and ameliorate their clients' situation with their distinctive

111 *Mecmûʿa-i edebiye* 17 Nîsân 1316 [30 April 1900], 1.
112 Cevat Rüştü 2016, 435–8.
113 Kaş 2012, 23.
114 'Orman milletlerin can damarıdır. Orman devletlerin en büyük hazinesidir. Ormancı, o hazinenin mağrur bekçisidir: bu bekçi çok mukaddestir. Kışın karlı günlerinde hudutlarda nöbet bekliyen Mehmetçik nasıl alkışa lâyıksa; milletin hazinelerini bekliyen ve idare eden Ormancılar da o kadar takdire lâyıktır' (Köstem 26 Mayıs 1936 [26 May 1936], 7).

knowledge.[115] Operating within a predominantly agrarian economy, members of these professions saw vast constituencies for themselves, and sought a status that reflected the far-ranging impact of their expertise.

Behind their determination to be appreciated as scientific experts also lay their desire of belonging to the elite. Obtaining diplomas in their fields required at least three to four years of higher education. Although these studies were mostly free of charge in the Ottoman Empire, this did not mean that they were easily accessible; a high school diploma as well as the successful completion of a competitive examination were required to attend specialised schools (for instance, in 1892, only 30 were to be selected among 700 applicants to the Halkalı Agricultral School's entry exam).[116] Moreover, if one wanted to further their studies abroad, one needed to master a foreign language (and belong to a wealthy family if they were not a scholarship recipient), and this again was not accessible to all classes. Therefore, to associate experts with husbandry or farriery was not only insulting to their hard-earned degrees, but also belittling of their social standing. For example, the Turkish Veterinary Association was founded by five veterinarians, all of whom had studied in France; Hüseyin Sabri Okutman, Samuel Abravenel Aysoy (1885–1959), Salih Zeki Berker (1886–1970), and Mehmet Hilmi Dilgimen (1882–1968) earned their master's degree at the Alfort School of Veterinary Medicine, while Ahmet Şefik Kolaylı (1886–1976) trained at the Pasteur Institute. The director of this association, Mehmet Nuri Ural (1869–1942), and the director of its official organ, the *Journal of the Turkish Veterinarians' Association*, İsmail Hakkı Çelebi (1873–1939), were also Alfort alumni. Their educational backgrounds suggest that a fear of social 'downgrading' may have been a driving force behind their collective action. An examination of the demographic profiles of the founders and editors of associations and magazines underscores the deep connection between professional struggles and class dynamics.

However, even if they occasionally hinted at it, experts did not openly talk about the risk of downward social mobility they faced as individuals. They rather branded their crisis as a collective one. Indeed, they drew a parallel between the nation's interests (*memleket menfaatleri*) and their own professional interests (*meslek menfaatleri*) and argued that better recognition would yield benefits for the nation as a whole. Since their expertise was necessary for common prosperity, everyone would reap great benefits from their work, which could only progress if they were respected and given proper working conditions and a 'fair' salary. Denying them these would have poor consequences the country's welfare, and they considered Europe a case in point. Surely, if Europeans were better at increasing their agricultural productivity or were generally more advanced than Ottomans, the reason was to be found in how they treated their experts. This idea was made clear in a very unambiguously titled article 'Let's encourage our men of science' published in the magazine *Agriculture* (*Felâḥat*) in 1913. Its author, Feridun, asks himself why there are not as many great experts such as the French entomol-

115 Goldman 2018, 3–4.
116 Soydan 2012, 225.

ogist Jean-Henri Fabre (1823–1915) in the Ottoman Empire, then proceeds to answer his own question: 'There are no true scholars, no true experts, nor any geniuses in this country. The reason? Here, technical sciences and those who master them are worthless, insignificant even.'[117] Better recognition was paramount because experts thought it would mean more high-achieving students would be attracted to these fields and scientists would be more motivated to produce knowledge beneficial to the nation. Or, as veterinary surgeon Süreyya Tahsin Aygün (1895–1981) remarked; 'The true victor will be the country whose laboratories are the strongest and the most powerful.'[118] The underlying message was clear: invest in your scientific experts to secure a better future.

While the knowledge they produced was of great benefit to the public, it still belonged to the experts, who wished to generate more social and economic return from it. It was in fact by positioning their expertise as the engine of the country's economy that they attempted to monetise it and to transform their competencies into a new form of capital. In this sense, they can be considered as early proponents of the knowledge economy. While the term 'knowledge economy,' originally conceptualised by Fritz Machlup in 1962 and popularised in the 1990s for post-industrial economies, might appear anachronistic in this context, it remains fitting. Agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians firmly believed that knowledge production, rather than physical resources, was central to a country's economic performance and competitive edge. Building on this conviction, they called for greater investment in scientific research, framing their expertise as indispensable to national progress.

Agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians treated their own expert knowledge as a market good and demanded better compensation for it. Nevertheless, they were locked in a difficult negotiating position. They were almost exclusively employed by the state, which was therefore able to dictate salaries and working conditions. Although experts could point to the economic benefits they provided, the state did not have to accede to their demands because they had limited alternative employment options, especially in the private sector. That is why some veterinarians praised foreign models of employment such as the American model in an issue of the *Veterinary Science Review* in 1909; unlike in the Ottoman Empire, where higher studies were free of charge but there was an obligation to work for the public sector after graduation, in the United States, only 10% veterinarians were employed by the Ministry of Agriculture and around 50% to 60% by private companies.[119]

Experts' rhetoric relied as much on emotions as on credibility and logic. They demanded more recognition by comparing their tireless devotion to the nation to that of military men. This play on patriotic sentiments could also be considered a wise strategy. In *The System of Professions*, Andrew Abbott argues professions are in a state of perpetual conflict and exist in an interdependent system in which they are constantly

117 'Bizde ḥaḳîḳî ʿâlim, ḥaḳîḳî müteḥaṣṣıṣ olmuyor olamıyor, bu memleketde dehâlar ḥâṣıl olamıyor. Sebebi? Bizde fenn, fenn me'mûrı ḳıymetsiz, ehemmiyetsizdir' (Ferîdûn 1 Teşrîn-i ṣânî 1329 [14 November 1913], 250).

118 Küçükaslan 2022, 408.

119 *Mecmûʿa-i fünûn-ı bayṭariye* 1 Şubâṭ 1324 [14 February 1909], 328.

negotiating the boundaries of their jurisdiction by emphasising their respective skills, yet that these professions also employ other forms of legitimisation that are not competency-based, but rather involve establishing that the values sought by experts are also shared by society.[120] Experts put forward their courage and selfless ideal of service, and these were undoubtedly culturally valued qualities in Turkish society, which cherishes its veterans (*gazi*) and sanctifies its martyrs (*şehit*).

The experiences of agronomists, forestry engineers, and veterinarians in the late Ottoman Empire and early Republican Turkey reveal that the recognition of expertise is neither automatic nor purely merit-based, but rather the result of a protracted and contested process. While the state may formally validate these professionals – through diplomas, titles, and public acclaim – their authority can fail to gain traction in society. The public can ignore, resist, or even mock them. Even when their scientific labor generates wealth for the state and private individuals or contributes to public health – outcomes that might intuitively warrant recognition – reward is far from guaranteed. These cases underscore the fragility and precariousness of expert status, while exposing the fraught dynamics that govern its legitimacy. They invite a critical rethinking of how societies allocate recognition and resources – and how such choices shape experts' ability to do their work: producing and mobilising knowledge.

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Cappadocia as a Field for Expertise: Paths of Three Rum 'Experts' of Cappadocia in Search of a Historical Identity

Abstract

In the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, literature in the Greek alphabet, namely in Greek and in Karamanli-Turkish, experienced an important increase in terms of the number of publications as well as the proliferation of published topics and the diffusion of these publications to wherever readers were present throughout the Empire, especially in Cappadocia, but also abroad. Cappadocia – as a region inhabited by Rums for centuries – became itself a subject for expertise for those who aimed to look into the past of local Rum communities, which, for the most part, were Turkish-speaking, while a minority of Greek-speakers were observed as the heirs of Ancient Greece. While Western travellers were interested in this topic and proposed (hypothetical) theories about the origins of these communities, a series of Rum authors became central experts about Cappadocia's history, geography and even ethnography and published several books and articles in Greek and in Karamanli-Turkish about Cappadocia. In this paper, we will follow the path of three of them: Nikolaos S. Rizos (1838–1895), Anastasios Levidis (1834–1918), and Ioannis Kalfoglou (1871–1931). Through the analysis of their biographies and writings, I will try to understand what the main motivations of these authors were to write about Cappadocia, why and how they became experts in this topic, what kinds of interactions they had with other authors writing about Cappadocia, and to what extent Cappadocia became a field of expertise and these authors experts in this field.

Keywords: Cappadocia, Greek-Orthodox Christians, intellectual history, Karamanlidika, literature in Greek; nineteenth century

1. Introduction

In the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, literature written in the Greek alphabet, namely in Greek and in Karamanli-Turkish (Turkish written in Greek script), experienced a significant increase in terms of number of publications as well as of topics, while the spreading of these publications throughout the Empire and abroad intensified too. In this context, Cappadocia – as a region inhabited by Rums, including Greek- and Turkish-speaking communities living in towns as well as in rural areas – became one of the places of diffusion but also a subject of expertise for this literature. In the same period, among Western intellectuals and travellers who visited Anatolia and Greek/Rum intellectual circles of urban centres of the Ottoman Empire and Greece, such as Istanbul, Izmir, and Athens, Cappadocian Rum communities began to be observed as the heirs of Ancient Greeks. While Western travellers were more interested in ancient times and theories about the origins of local Christian communities, a series of Rum

authors became central experts on Cappadocia's history, geography and even ethnography. They published numerous books and articles in Greek and in Karamanli-Turkish about Cappadocia and its Christian populations.

In this paper, we will follow the path of three of these authors: Nikolaos S. Rizos (1838–1895), Anastasios Levidis (1834–1918), and, to a lesser extent, Ioannis Kalfoglou (1871–1931). Through the analysis of their biographies and writings, we will investigate what the main motivations on these authors were to write about Cappadocia, why and how they became experts in this topic, and to what extent their expertise was recognized and considered in the Rum and *a fortiori* Ottoman, Greek and European intellectual circles. For that purpose, this article scrutinizes works of these three authors by integrating them in a larger network of writings published in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries about Cappadocia and including different kinds of works written in Western languages (mainly English, French, and German), in Greek and in Karamanli-Turkish: travelogues, missionary reports, articles of journals, newspapers and yearbooks (*salname* in Turkish ; *imerologion* in Greek).

Concerning the three authors, who are the focus of this article, and more generally when it comes to Greek Orthodox writers of the late Ottoman period, valuable biographic and bibliographic works, often based on the archives of the Center of Asia Minor Studies have been produced, especially in the first volume of the online *Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World* focusing on Asia Minor[1] A worthwhile secondary literature exists on intellectual circles including producers (authors and publishers) and audience of late Ottoman Greek literature and Karamanlidika, but it mostly concentrates on the largest urban communities, such as Istanbul or Izmir.[2] To propose a far-reaching intellectual history of the Christian communities of the Ottoman Empire, which transcends the borders of these main urban centers, it is now necessary to investigate the life and works of these personalities from the perspective of the provinces and through a comparative perspective, this article being a first attempt.[3]

For that purpose, I will consider main works of Rizos, Levidis and Kalfoglou and analyse them in terms of expertise on Cappadocia. Concerning Nikolaos S. Rizos, his book published in 1856, *Καππαδοκικα, ήτοι δοκίμιον ίστορικῆς περιγραφῆς τῆς Ἀρχαίας Καππαδοκίας, καὶ ἰδίως τῶν ἐπαρχιών Καισαρείας καὶ Ἰκονίου* [*Cappadocia, that is, an*

1 The project of the online *Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World* is described together with the main team and methodology used in its preparation on URL: http://asiaminor.ehw.gr/forms/fmain.aspx. The Encyclopaedia incues three volumes

2 See among others: Anastassiadou 2012; 2004; Anastassiadou-Dumont 1997; Anastassiadou-Dumont and Heyberger 1999; Balta 2011 and 2010; Balta and Kappler 2008; Benlisoy 2014; Benlisoy and Benlisoy 2010; Kechriotis 2016; Smyrnelis 2005 and 1997; Yılmaz 2012). A part of these references integrates the case of provincial migrants who integrated intellectual circles of Istanbul or Izmir. A few works have also been published on smaller provincial towns such as Kayseri or Mersin. See Balta 2002; Benlisoy 2021.

3 Comparative perspective has begun to be implemented in the study of newspapers published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the Rums of the empire, including Greek and Karamanli-Turkish newspapers. See for instance Balta 2010a and 2010b; Baydar 2014; Benlisoy 2014; Benlisoy and Benlisoy 2010.

essay of historical description of Ancient Cappadocia, and especially of the provinces of Caesarea and Ikonio] is the only source written by his hand, and information about his life and work are rather available in the work of his contemporary, Anastasios Levidis, as well as in a series of publications about the town of Sinasos, especially the monographs written by his own son, Serafeim N. Rizos, *Η Σινασός (Sinasos)* and by the historian Christos Hadziossif, *Σινασός, ιστορία ενός τόπου χωρίς ιστορία* (*Sinasos. History of a place without history*), respectively written in 1952 and published in 2005. The work of Anastasios Levidis is much more substantial, including books, articles and manuscripts detailed in the bibliography. Data he collected during his field research throughout Cappadocia have also been used by other scholars, especially the British archaeologist Richard Dawkins (1871–1955). As for Ioannis Kalfoglou, his two main works, the monograph of the Monastery of Ioannis Prodromos of Zincidere (*Ζιντζίντερε καργεσινδέ πουλουνάν Ιωάννης Πρόδρομος Μοναστηρή γιαχόδ Μονή Φλαβιανών*, 1898) written in Karamanli-Turkish and his *Historical Geography of the Asia Minor Continent* (*Μικρα Ασια Κητασηνην Ταριχιε Δζαγραφιαση*, 1899) also written and published in Karamanli-Turkish (and its translation into Greek by Stavros Anestidis with a preface of Ioanna Petropoulou published in 2002), are the main sources used in this article.

2. Cappadocia and the Cappadocians as a Subject of Expertise in the Nineteenth Century

Depending on the period, the toponym Cappadocia was given to a territory with changing boundaries that was sometimes a kingdom, a military, administrative, and/or a religious province or series of provinces, while in some periods, it disappeared entirely from official territorial nomenclatures.[4] In the nineteenth century, it reappeared as a cultural space after centuries of oblivion in the writings of Western travellers and in those of scholars who were seen as experts in various domains, especially geology, topography, history, art history, linguistics, and ethnography. It was also during the nineteenth century that Western authors began to make the connection between the history and geography of the region of Aksaray-Niğde-Nevşehir-Kayseri and that of the mythic, mystic Cappadocia mentioned by ancient authors such as Strabo. The reappearance of Cappadocia can be credited to multiple contextual factors. First, the interest of Westerners in Asia Minor increased because Cappadocia became an important step along the 'Voyage to the Orient,' in vogue at the time. Simultaneously, Protestant and Catholic missionary activities based in Cappadocia developed largely because of the significant presence of Christians (Orthodox Rums but Also Armenians) in this rural area, but also because of its very distinctive Christian landscape, which attracted

4 The first record of the term 'Cappadocia,' dating to the late sixth century BC, was found in a trilingual inscription in the Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian languages in the form 'Katpatuka,' which designated the name of one of the satrapies of the Persian Empire. Regarding the Ancient and Medieval history of Cappadicia, see Hild and Restle 1981; Lamesa 2015; Room 1997; Thierry 2002; Vryonis 1971.

the attention of missionaries. Secondly, an important migration flow of Cappadocian Rums, including educated people, to Istanbul and other intellectual centres of the Empire and abroad attracted the attention of intellectual circles to this region and its population, in the context of the rise of the Hellenization movement led, from different standpoints and with different objectives, from Athens and Istanbul, respectively.

As a trigger of the Western interest, in the 1810s, John MacDonald Kinneir, a British traveller passing through the region, was the first author to clearly identify the area between Aksaray and Kayseri as the ancient Kingdom of Cappadocia described by Strabo.[5] After he did so, many travellers visited Cappadocia, most of them being mainly interested in finding the ruins of ancient and Byzantine civilizations in the Cappadocian landscape. Local geology and troglodytism were also regional points of interest that fascinated Europeans.[6] Most Western travellers thought that Cappadocians' rupestrian living resulted from the preservation of a local, ancestral way of life, made possible by the remoteness of the area. Local Christians were thus observed as the heirs of an ancient tradition, testifying to their capacity to adapt to the local environment and guard against external influences. In the eyes of Western travellers, the endurance of Christian communities, which had practiced their faith openly in the midst of territories conquered by Muslims centuries earlier, demonstrated the fervent religiosity of these Christians.

Among local Christians, Rums drew the attention of archaeologists, epigraphers, and geographers in search of the vestiges of Hellenism. As a result, just as the term 'Cappadocia' became a generic word used to define the area, it also emerged in several narratives as an adjective used to describe Rums specifically (and not local Armenians or Muslims).[7] Ainsworth, in 1839, described Cappadocian Greeks as 'a tribe [. . .] excelling in having become less changed, and less humbled and prostrated than other Greek communities are by four centuries of Osmanli tyranny.'[8] Moreover, on the one hand, the Cappadocian Greek dialects also attracted the interest of Western travelling experts who considered that Cappadocians spoke an intact antique, or at least non-inflected language.[9] On the other hand, Turkish-speaking Rums surprised European travellers, not because they spoke Turkish, but because they did not know a word of Greek. A widespread story taken up in several travel accounts suggests that the latter had lost their original language because Turks used to cut out the tongues of Greek children 'to exterminate that speech.'[10] Finally, the archaeologist William Ramsay is the only author to have meticulously described the coexistence of both Turkish- and Greek-speaking groups, as well as the large proportion of bilingual individuals among them.[11]

5 Kinneir 1818, 96–100.
6 See for instance Hamilton 1842, II:254; Sterrett 1900, 677; Texier and Pullan 1864, 38.
7 This expression, referring to the contemporary population, was first used by Ainsworth before spreading to other travelogues (Ainsworth 1839, 1:312; Perrot 1864; Ramsay 1897; Wilson 1884).
8 Ainsworth 1839, 1:214.
9 Perrot 1864, 382–3.
10 Knüppel 1997.
11 Ramsay 1897, 240.

Descriptions of Cappadocia in European travelogues offer a wide range of details on a variety of topics at a time when Greek and some Rum elites were establishing the basis for the creation of an encompassing Greek nation. The creation of the Kingdom of Greece (1832) provided a spark for the development of Greek nationalism. However, when it came to Greeks (or Rums) living outside of the kingdom, it would be misleading to think that Athens had become the only heart of Greek nationalism. In Ottoman territories, the main concern was to unify all of the Rums under the same identity, based, first, on Orthodox faith and the Greek language. In this context, Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians, who were for the most part not able to understand Greek, appeared to present a thorny issue. As a rule, the Hellenization movement which took place from the late nineteenth century was double-headed from Athens and Istanbul. However, concerning Cappadocia and Cappadocian Rums, the movement was more specifically led from Istanbul under the leadership of Constantinopolitan Rum elites and under the auspices of the Patriarchate,[12] while representatives of Athens, namely Greek diplomats, penetrated inner Anatolia – especially Cappadocia – late, compared to the efforts done for the Aegean coasts of Asia Minor. The Greek Consul General of Smyrna, Stamatis Antonopoulos, visited the area of Konya for the first time in 1901, and it is only in 1908 that a Greek consulate was established in Konya, its first consul arriving a few years later, in 1912.[13]

The Hellenization efforts carried out by ruling elites of Istanbul about Anatolian Rums was also assisted by Turkish-speaking Cappadocian immigrants living in the capital, at least by those who were especially motivated to resolve their linguistic contradiction. But the movement's final purpose was far broader than a linguistic issue. Nevertheless, next to faith, the Greek language was the main symbolic incarnation of the unity of Greek culture and civilization. In this context, Karamanlı-Turkish became a tool leading toward Hellenization and Cappadocia one of the main targets since Turkish-speaking Rums were settled there in especially high numbers.[14] Against this backdrop, it was important to understand the population of Cappadocia, its history, language, and culture, and for that purpose Rum intellectuals and scholars began to write extensively on Cappadocia, the region becoming a new area for expertise.

3. Rum Experts of Cappadocia: Being a Cappadocian to be an Expert of Cappadocia?

Western narratives were important resources for Rum scholars. They led to the rise of a network of exchange for ideas among Western and Rum scholars. For instance, the French archaeologist Charles Texier used the work of Father Kyrillos (Metropolite of Ikonium who became Kyrillos VI, Patriarch of Constantinople between 1813 and

12 Anagnostopoulou 2010.
13 *ibid*., 63.
14 Tapia 2023, 19–23, 32–42.

1818) to write his major book on Minor Asia.[15] The Rum elites of the Ottoman capital became interested in foreign narratives about this part of Anatolia, their interest being triggered in part but not solely by the interest of Westerners. For instance, an article by Andreas Mordtmann on the troglodyte people of Cappadocia ('Die Troglodyten von Kappadokien'[16]) was debated during several sessions of the Greek Philological Syllogos of Istanbul in 1863, members of the Syllogos discussing Mordtmann's theory concerning the language of Cappadocian Rums. Paranikas, who had translated the article into Greek, opened a passionate debate on two principal issues: Mordtmann's use of the term 'troglodyte' and his point of view concerning local languages. Mordtmann claimed that Cappadocian Rums had directly switched from a Cappadocian language to Turkish, without ever using Greek as a mother tongue. He asserted that the Greek language was used only as the language of the Church and not as a native tongue.[17]

Avid supporters of the Hellenization movement rapidly understood that there was something to be done with these Cappadocians. The curiosity of urban Rum elites was also piqued by the massive migration of Cappadocian Rums towards the largest Ottoman cities, primarily Istanbul. Among these migrants, some well-educated individuals integrated themselves into the intellectual environment of the capital and attracted interest in their native land through their writings, becoming themselves experts about Cappadocia. Such was the case for the two following individuals: Nikolaos S. Rizos and Anastasios Levidis, who were born in Cappadocia, received part of their education in Istanbul before returning to their native land.

3.1 Nikolaos S. Rizos (1838–1895): the Precursor

Nikolaos S. Rizos was probably the most important author and source of inspiration for the other Rum experts on Cappadocia. Little is known about him; the only information about his biography comes from Anastasios Levidis.[18]

Nikolaos Rizos was born in 1838 in Sinasos (today Mustafapaşa), the main centre for Hellenism in Cappadocia.[19] He was the son of Serafeim Rizos, a trader who benefitted from and furthered the economic prosperity of Sinasos. Nikolaos went to the primary school in Sinasos[20] and then completed his studies in Istanbul, at the *Megali tou Genous Scholi* (Great School of the Nation). He graduated in 1856 and in the

15 Kyrillos 1815; Texier 1863, 559.
16 Mordtmann 1861.
17 'Συνεδριακες ΞΒ΄ τη 15 Ιουνιου 1863' 1863; 'Συνεδριακες ΞΒ΄ τη 27 Ιουλιου 1863' 1863; Mordtmann 1861, 11–28; Tapia 2023, 39–40. On the Syllogos of Constantinople, see Vassiadis 2007.
18 A. M. Levidis 1899b, 376–78; Sapkidi 2002c.
19 Hadziiossif 2010.
20 The school of Sinasos is the first primary school founded by a Rum community in Cappadocia in 1821, thanks to the financial support of several local traders, especially members of the Caviar Trade Union, including the father of Nikolaos Rizos (Balta 2009, 99; Benlisoy 2010; Rizos 2007, 11; Stamatopoulos 1986, 46; Tapia 2023, 141).

same year published his seminal and only book *Kappadokika*, presenting the history of Cappadocia and of its Rum population from the ancient to the Ottoman times.[21] Largely inspired by a previous work published in 1815 by Kyrillos, Metropolite of Ikonium,[22] he portrayed in a very detailed way the towns and villages of the region, giving demographic information, descriptions of main buildings, schools, and local administrative systems, among other things. An important aspect of his account concerned linguistics as he described the dialects spoken by Greek-speaking communities while abstaining from dealing with Turkish-speaking communities since the aim of his book was to correct 'the wrong ideas of the ignorant' who imagined that Cappadocian Rums were only Turkish-speaking Karamanlis.[23] This book was his response to the Rum elites who laughed at and disregarded the Cappadocians, describing them as uncouth people unable to speak the language of their Church and nation.[24] His impressive work, written in Greek, was published by Evangelinos Misailidis at the printing office of the Karamanli newspaper 'Anatoli' of Istanbul in 1856. In a short time, *Kappadokika* became one of the main references on Cappadocia for those who, in the next decades, would aim to collect material on Cappadocia and Cappadocians but also diffuse Hellenism and/or 're-hellenize' Karamanli people.

Rizos' work initiated of a new era of interest in the 'living monuments' and local culture of Cappadocia among Christian elites, not only those of Istanbul, but also those of other centres of Hellenism, such as Athens and Izmir.[25] Urban Rum elites discovered the Greek-speaking communities living in Cappadocia thanks to it. *Kappadokika* especially contributed to the Rum elites' awareness of these Cappadocian communities, which began to be observed as the proof of a direct link between ancient Hellenes and contemporary Greeks/Rums. In that context, research on local Greek dialects through the collection of living monuments (records of speakers, transcription of songs, etc.) began to be funded and supported by urban intellectual elites.[26] Rizos' book also became a tool to counter theories questioning the Hellenic origins of Cappadocian Orthodox Christians, such as, for instance, the theories elaborated by Mordtamnn and published a few years later (in 1861).

Kappadokika, probably because it was written by a local notable who knew his native land well, incited Rum intellectuals and scholars to consider it a relevant area of expertise, and Rizos appeared to be a trusted expert on Cappadocia and Cappadocians. Surprisingly, after that book, Rizos did not publish any other work and became quite an influential notable in the Sinasiote community until his death in 1895.[27] As a result, in terms of expertise, one can wonder if Rizos can really be considered an expert, since his production is limited to a single publication. He was perhaps not an expert in the

21 Sapkidi 2002c.
22 Kyrillos 1815.
23 N.S. Rizos 1856, θ'.
24 Anestidis 2014.
25 N.S. Rizos 1856. See also Anagnostakis and Balta 1990, 21–3.
26 Anastassiadou 2012.
27 Sapkidi 2002c.

scholarly sense of the word, but his only book became one of the main references for subsequent scholars and authors writing on Cappadocia – some of them even just copying or translating it in their own publications. As such, it was obviously regarded as the product of expertise by his contemporaries.

3.2 Anastasios Levidis (1834–1918): The Local Expert par excellence – A Life of Work on and for Cappadocians

Unlike Rizos, the second individual, Anastasios Levidis, published several books and articles on Cappadocia. He is the Cappadocian expert of Cappadocia *par excellence*, since he was born in 1834 in Everek, a small town close to Kayseri in a family of Karamanli local notables, the Kazantzoglous. Contrary to Rizos, Levidis belonged to a Turkish-speaking community and learnt Greek at school, first at the primary school of Everek for three years, and then at home thanks to one of his uncles who was head of the local parish and became his personal teacher. At the age of 20, he moved to Istanbul, where his father was already settled, and he enrolled, like Rizos, at the Great School of the Nation. There, the headmaster grecisized his family name and renamed him Levidis.[28]

Levidis dedicated his life to Cappadocia and became one of the most prolific authors and scholars writing about Cappadocia. In 1861, after his graduation from the Great School of the Nation, he returned to his birthplace and was appointed by Paisios II, the metropolite of Kayseri, as a teacher in the Religious School of the Monastery of Zincidere where he worked for three years. He became an administrator in the late 1860s and remained at the head of the Theological School until 1871, when the school began to decline due to a lack of funds and internal difficulties. After two years, in 1873, he returned at the direction of the school, which, in the meantime, had turned into a more secular high school. Internal difficulties, however, especially fights between religious and secular staff, incited him to quickly resign. In 1874, he was appointed director of the schools of Andronikí (Endürlük), where he taught for eight years. During the following years, he also ran various schools around Yozgat and in Talas (near Kayseri), and after his official retirement in 1889, he continued to be an advisor or board member for different schools throughout Cappadocia.[29]

During the three decades he spent in Cappadocia as a schoolteacher and director, Levidis travelled a lot throughout the region. He took notes on local history and geography, collected historical and linguistic material, especially song lyrics and local stories and traditions, and wrote books, while teaching and preaching the word of God. His fight against Protestantism was probably one of the main reasons for his wish to develop expertise about Cappadocia and Cappadocians. Levidis was indeed a fierce enemy of Protestantism and fought the missionaries who were penetrating Cappadocia

28 Levidis 1935; Sapkidi 2002b.
29 Levidis 1935.

in those years.[30] His goal was thus to develop his own expertise to be able to help his Cappadocian fellows and to use this expertise against Protestant proselytism. For these purposes, he wrote various works in Greek, but also in Karamanli-Turkish to more broadly diffuse his great knowledge among local communities, which were mainly Turkophone. For instance, he published two books in Karamanli-Turkish, one entitled *Mirati fezail ve meagip* (*Μιράτη φεζαΐλ βε μεαγίπ*, Mirror of virtues and vices, 1875), and the other *Giani Rouhani* (*Γιανί Ρουχανί*, Spiritual armor, 1880) to help local priests and populations who did not know Greek to adequately understand sermons and to give them ammunition against missionaries.[31] He also published a series of texts in the journal *Xenofanis*, especially on the history of proselytism in Asia Minor,[32] as well as two dictionaries: *Onomastikon*, a Turkish-Greek dictionary published in 1887 aiming to teach Greek to Turkish-speaking Rums in order to help them to recover their ancestral language, and its Greek-Turkish counterpart, *Lexikon Ellino-Tourkikon*, in 1888, to teach Turkish to Greek-speakers who needed to use the Turkish language as a tool for communication in their everyday and professional lives.[33]

After his retirement in 1889, Levidis dedicated the rest of his life until his death in 1918 to writing books, using the material that he had collected in the previous years. On the one hand, he continued the preparation of his monumental work *Istorikon Dokimion tis Kappadokia* (entire title: *Ιστορικόν δοκίμιον διηρημένον εις τόμους τέσσαρας και περιέχον την θρησκευτικήν και πολιτικήν ιστορίαν την χωρογραφίαν και αρχαιολογίαν της Καππαδοκίας*), an essay divided into four volumes and containing the religious and political history, geography, and archaeology of Cappadocia).[34] The first volume on Ecclesiastical history had already been published in 1885 in Athens. Levidis wrote the following three volumes later but never published them in his lifetime: the second volume focused on archaeology, the third one on political history and the fourth on languages previously spoken in Cappadocia. On the other hand, in 1899, he published two other books : one is an archaeological and historical work about the monasteries of Cappadocia (*Αἱ ἐν Μονολίθοις Μοναί τῆς Καππαδοκίας καί Λυκαονίας / The Monolithic Monasteries of Cappadocia and Lycaonia*) published in 1899;[35] the other is an unpublished (typewritten) treatise on major Cappadocian intellectuals from the Ancient Times to the present day (*Πραγματεία περί πολιτισμού και διανοητικής αναπτύξεως των Καππαδόκων και των εκ Καππαδοκίας διαλαμψάντων επισήμων ανδρών από των αρχαιοτάτων χρόνων μέχρι της σήμερον/Treatise on the culture and intellectual development of the Cappadocians and the brilliant official men from Cappadocia from ancient times to the present day*).[36] He also published an article on the town of Kayseri in the yearbook of

30 About the reaction of the Orthodox church and intellectuals against Protestant proselytism, see Anestidis 2011, 277.
31 Levidis 1875 and 1880.
32 Levidis 1905b.
33 Levidis 1875, 1880 and 1905b; Petropoulou 2001, 292; Renieri 1993, 55.
34 Levidis 1885.
35 Levidis 1899a.
36 Levidis 1899b.

the National charity shops in Constantinople (*Ημερολόγιον Εθνικών Φιλανθρωπικών Καταστημάτων εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει*).[37]

Levidis obviously used Western references, including Greek texts and the works of Europeans–such as the book of Charles Texier on Asia Minor–in his own writings, and his work dialogued with the research of European intellectuals of his time. The work of Levidis was for instance used by Frederick Hasluck in his seminal book *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*.[38] Levidis also met and exchanged with Richard Dawkins, another British scholar who, in the 1910s, prepared a dissertation on Cappadocian dialects and visited Zincidere in 1911.[39] Dawkins benefitted from the very rich collection of linguistic and ethnographical data collected by Levidis, who dealt with the Turkish- as much as Greek-speaking communities of Cappadocia at a time when the promotion of the Hellenic character of Cappadocian Rums and thus the silencing of any element that could be considered opposed to this view was the rule among most Rum and Greek scholars. On the other hand, he ignored Ottoman sources and focused neither on the Ottoman history of Cappadocia nor on the exchange of influences between the Ottomans and the Orthodox-Christians of the region, passing over the Ottoman centuries to go back to the glorious and prestigious Greek antiquity.[40]

3.3 Ioannis Kalfoglou (1871–1931): A Cappadocian Expert 'by Adoption'

The third individual, Ioannis Kalfoglou, is also central among Rum experts on Cappadocia, even though his expertise transcended the borders of Cappadocia and extended to Anatolia/Asia minor[41] as a whole. While the two previously named experts were Cappadocian natives who developed expertise on their homeland, Kalfoglou was rather a Cappadocian 'by adoption' since he himself was not a native of the region and his parents had no Cappadocian origin. He was born in 1871 in Üsküdar (on the Asian shore of Istanbul) to a family hailing from Bafra (in the Pontic area). Kalfoglou was consequently not a Cappadocian by birth. However, he spent several years in the region as a student of the Theological Seminary of Zincidere during the years when Levidis was the director.[42]

In the early 1900s, Kalfoglou became a fervent supporter of the Hellenization movement and of the emancipation of the Greeks of Asia Minor. From 1901 onward, he participated in the liberation movement of the Pontic region while living in Batumi. However, contrary to other supporters of the Hellenization movement, who wrote exclusively in Greek, Kalfoglou – whose native tongue was Turkish, like Levidis – wrote in Greek as well as in Karamanli-Turkish because he considered it important to reach

37 Levidis 1905a.
38 Hasluck 1929, II:759–60.
39 Dawkins 1916 and 1930, 135.
40 Petropoulou 2001, 292–3.
41 About the distinction between Anatolia and Asia Minor, see (Bruneau 2015, 40).
42 About the life of Kalfoglou, see the preface of Ioanna Petropoulou in Kalfoglou 2002.

Turkish-speaking compatriots and make them aware of their Greek identity by using Karamanli-Turkish. For instance, in 1898, he published a book in Karamanli-Turkish about the monastery of Ioannis Prodromos in Zincidere (*Ζιντζίντερε καργεσινδέ πουλουνάν Ιωάννης Πρόδρομος Μοναστηρή γιαχόδ Μονή Φλαβιανών*) and in 1899 another book on the history and geography of Asia Minor (*Μικρα Ασια Κητασηνην Ταριχιε Δζαγραφιαση /* Historical Geography of the Asia Minor Continent). [43] Cappadocia was not the central focus of Kalfoglou's work. He rather worked on Asia Minor as a whole, including the Black Sea area, the Aegean and Mediterranean shores. As a strong supporter of Hellenism who, however, felt himself to be Rum and Anatolian and distinguished this identity from being Greek (*Yunan*), he was driven by the desire to address misconceptions and ignorance about the geography of Asia Minor among his contemporaries.[44] However, with his book on the monastery of Zincidere, he also cultivated expertise on Cappadocia, since like Rizos and Levidis, he was one of the frequently quoted references in many articles and books of the twentieth century. In terms of historiographical expertise, Kalfoglou had a more encompassing way of writing history than Rizos and Levidis. Like that of Levidis, his work dialogued with Greek and Byzantine but also with Western sources and references. Yet, contrary to Levidis, he also used Ottoman primary sources such as firmans and wrote about the Ottoman period and administration in his *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*.[45]

In the early twentieth century, Kalfoglou settled in Batumi, where he published in 1908 a new essay on Caucasian Greeks, in which his ideology obviously changed since he aimed to prove the belonging of Caucasian Greeks to a purely Greek race encompassing all the Hellenes, including those living outside Greece, while, in 1899, he still distinguished between the Rums and the Greeks of Greece.[46]

4. Conclusion

The nineteenth century was a period of resurgence and revival for the Rum communities of the Ottoman Empire, a period during which political, socio-economic, cultural, educational, artistic, and philanthropic dynamics were revitalized thanks to a favourable context that included the independence of Greece (1830), reforms inside the Ottoman empire, and the rise of a class of new – often non-Muslim – entrepreneurs who benefitted from new technologies and opportunities brought by integration into the world economy. This renaissance was not only visible among Rums; similar dynamics were experienced by members of other *millet*s and a fortiori among Muslims.[47] In Cappadocia, this renaissance had various consequences. The massive rural exodus from the middle of the century within Christian communities caused a demographic

43 Kalfoglou 1898 and 1899.
44 Kalfoglou 2002, 11 (Petropoulou's preface).
45 Petropoulou 2001, 290.
46 Kalfoglou 2002, 32 (Petropoulou's preface).
47 Strauss 1995 and 1998.

decline, but it also provided rural communities with new opportunities for economic, social, and cultural development.[48]

In the urban environments that received these migrants, Cappadocians and Cappadocia became a subject of interest at the heart of a broader quest for identity. Both Rum and Western intellectuals observed and debated the case of these Orthodox Christians – many of them being Turkish speakers and some Greek speakers with 'archaic' dialects. These debates were also joined by intellectuals from Cappadocia, who sought to make known their region, its history, and its geography, but also local communities, language, and culture, often to correct a negative and often false image that had spread in the educated urban environments of the empire and in Greece.[49]

In this context, several personalities became – voluntarily or involuntarily – experts on Cappadocia, and their writings became references on the history of the region and its Christian communities. The three personalities studied in this article are obviously not the only ones. The historian Pavlos Karolidis, for example, can be mentioned here, since he was also born in Cappadocia (in the Turkish-speaking Rum community of the village of Endürlük near Kayseri). Educated in Istanbul and then trained at the universities of Athens, Munich, Strasbourg and Tübingen, Karolidis also began his career by developing expertise on Cappadocia as he defended a doctoral thesis in 1872 on Cappadocian archaeology (published in Greek in 1874[50]) and then published a work on the city of Comana in 1882 and a linguistic study on Cappadocian Greek in 1885.[51] However, subsequently, he moved away from this area of local expertise to focus on the history of the Greek nation and world history, incidentally becoming deputy of the Ottoman assembly between 1908 and 1912. One should also mention Ioakeim Valavanis, born in Aravani in 1858, doctor of philosophy from the University of Athens (1889), and his work on the traditions, language, and anthropology of the Orthodox Christians of his native land.[52] We can also mention lesser-known Cappadocian authors such as Simeon Farasopoulos (and his book on the village of Sylata) or Archelaos I. Sarantidis (and his book on the village of Sinasos), for whom biographical information is limited.[53]

Unlike Karolidis and Valavanis, the three personalities studied in this article did not have a university education. While Nikolaos Rizos and Anastasios Levidis were both born in Cappadocia, the former in a Greek-speaking community and the latter in a Turkish-speaking community, Ioannis Kalfoglou spent the key years of his education in the region. The three men have been able to claim – or have received – the

48 Tapia 2023, 128–44.
49 Anagnostakis and Balta 1990.
50 Karolidis 1874.
51 Kechriotis 2016; Petropoulou 2001, 284; Strauss 1995.
52 Valavanis published especially articles in magazines of the Athenian Literary Society *Parnassos*. His articles on everyday life, traditions, and beliefs in Cappadocian villages, as well as on the life of migrants, were later collected and published in a compilation in 1891. He also prepared a dictionary on the Greek dialect of his native village, Aravani, that he never published. About the life and work of Valavanis, see Fosteris 1955, 377; Sapkidi 2002a.
53 Sarantidis 1899; Farasopoulos 1895.

identity of expert in the fields of history, geography, linguistics and ethnography of Cappadocia thanks to their written production and despite a methodology that is often questionable from a scientific point of view, relying on few primary sources, sometimes based on approximate knowledge and having a biased approach shaped by the context of the rise of nationalist ideologies, especially the *Megali Idea* and the Hellenization movement in which they participated directly or indirectly. Their expertise was not founded on a disciplinary dichotomy but on a geography and on their belonging to it. It is indeed above all their indigenous identity – or at least, in the case of Kalfoglou, his presence on the field – that guaranteed their work the status of suitable expertise.

By scrutinizing the ways these authors are cited and mentioned in several Greek and Karamanlidika works (which often do not provide clear references to their sources), I observed that, in a few cases, in Karamanlidika, the word '*μεχαρετλού*' ('*meharetlü*,' variant of '*maharetli*' meaning 'skilful, proficient') was used, generally combined with the word '*efendi*' (which was more often used alone).[54] Most of the time, however, in Greek as much as in Karamanlidika publications, there was no specific term used to define them as 'expert.' Instead, their local origin was often emphasized with terms such as the Greek adjective '*ήμέτερος*' ('*imeteros*,' meaning 'our') or the Turkish equivalent suffix '*-miz*' in Karamanli-Turkish, or adjectives specifying their belonging to a local settlement (for instance '*Ανδρονικειὺς*'/'from Androniki' in Greek or '*Αραβὰνλη*'/'from Aravani' in Karamanli-Turkish).[55] This confirms that the status of expert was mainly validated by their presence on the ground and, above all, by their autochthony (for Kalfoglou, 'by adoption') that gave them legitimacy with external audiences (the urban Rum intellectual circles) but also internal readership (the Rums of Cappadocia themselves). In that sense, their expertise had a double audience, but also a dual purpose on multiple levels: as they themselves often emphasized, their main motivation was to correct the false image of their region and their compatriots, but also to prove to Cappadocian Orthodox Christians their rightful belonging to the Rum *millet*, to the community of the faithful of the Greek Orthodox Church, and even to the Hellenic identity, despite the Turcophony of many of them and despite their geographical location on the margins of the Hellenic world.

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54 For instance, Kalfoglou mentions Anastasios Levidis as 'meharetlü Anastasios Levidis Efendi' (Kalfoglou 1898, η).

55 See, for instance, Ioannidis 1896; Kalfoglou 1898, η; Levidis 1885, 8; Levidis 1899a.

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Claiming Expertise against Orientalists and Reviving Islamic Knowledge in the Republic: *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi* (1940–1948)[1]

Abstract

Debates in the 1940s surrounding the state-sponsored translation into Turkish of a central orientalist reference work, the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, gave marginalized *ulema* and their supporters the opportunity to (re)claim interpretive authority over Islam and to attain political influence. Through the publication of a rival encyclopaedia, the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi*, alongside a journal, the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi Mecmuası* (1940–1948), these *ulema* expressed their own claim to expertise and aimed to revive their scholarly and intellectual tradition in the face of representatives of the last generation of Ottoman *ulema* gradually passing away. For this purpose, they used several strategies on two levels, aimed firstly at *asserting* their own expertise and secondly at *denying* expertise to their rivals, the 'orientalists and missionaries,' such as invoking their own biographies and credentials, the complexity of their field, or their international impact on the one hand, and analysing methods, political aims, power dynamics and alleged neutrality and universalisms on the other hand. My case study demonstrates that the enactment of expertise always takes place within existing ideological debates and socio-political dynamics, as the *ulema* counteracted the ascription of expertise to orientalists to demand more resources, authority, and power for themselves in the long run.

Keywords: late Ottoman, Turkey, *ulema*, orientalist, religious scholarship, encyclopaedia

> 'This is their slogan: «Muslim-Turkish writers are bound to creed, but orientalists and missionaries to scholarship!» […] So, it has become a crucial task to demonstrate the true scholarly quality and colouring of the latter.'[2][3]

The early 1940s saw the outbreak of a fierce debate in the Republican Turkish press, including state representatives, scholars at Istanbul University, dissidents critical of the Kemalist state, former Ottoman *ulema*, and even voices from abroad. The underlying question was: Who can truly provide neutral, scientific and impartial knowledge about Islam, and what are the implications of interpretive authority being ascribed to certain agents and denied to others? The debate erupted after the Ministry of Education's deci-

1 This paper is based on my master's thesis titled *Gelehrter Widerstand. Kritik an kemalistischer Religionspolitik im Spiegel der* İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi Mecmuası *und* İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi *(1940–48)*, submitted at the University of Bamberg in 2021.
2 Eşref Edib 1942b, 3.
3 All translations are my own.

sion in 1939 to translate into Turkish the trilingual *Encyclopaedia of Islam*,[4] published from 1913–1936 due to growing colonial interest in Muslims and Muslim cultures in the 19th century. However controversial, this state project was a window of opportunity for the above-mentioned *ulema* to reclaim their position as *actual* experts of Islam – as opposed to ideologically motivated Western orientalists and their 'local aides' – by publishing an alternative encyclopaedia, the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi*,[5] alongside a journal, the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi Mecmuası* (1940–1948), as a response.

In this paper, I examine how marginalized *ulema* and their supporters expressed their own claim to expertise via these publications and legitimized the need for *their* encyclopaedia through citing their own biographical and intellectual background rooted in their Ottoman education and their criticism of orientalists' work and the facilitation of the translation project by Turkish institutions. Through their strategies of claiming expertise and calling for a 'truly' scholarly and scientific encyclopaedia about Islam, the *ulema* at once implicitly aimed to gain more resources, responsibilities, and authority for themselves and, closely related, to preserve – or rather revive – their own scholarly and intellectual tradition in the face of representatives of the last generation of Ottoman *ulema* gradually passing away.

E. Natalie Rothman's[6] account of *transimperial* expertise, with the two main features *mobility* and *relationality* characterizing the expertise of actors such as dragomans moving between different socio-cultural contexts, also informs my understanding of *post-imperial* or *post-Ottoman* expertise, embodied in the *ulema's* actions and discourses. Displaying mobility on different levels, (post-)Ottoman *ulema* and intellectuals, too, were navigating between different socio-political contexts – albeit with a restricted scope of action – shaped by a dismantling of their traditional standing and an extensive restructuring of political as well as educational institutions in the transition from Empire to Republic. Also, the relationality of expertise, thus its dependence on recognition by others in a process of continual negotiation and contestation through specific practices and performative strategies, is a key element of my analysis. As E. Summerson Carr puts it, 'expertise as enactment' means recourse to linguistic resources[7] and the mastering of an 'expert register […] that is recognized as a special kind of knowledge.'[8] The interactional nature of 'expertise as enactment' and as 'something people do rather than […] hold,'[9] inevitably has an ideological dimension to it, as claims to expertise are located within 'hierarchies of value that authorize particular ways of seeing and speaking as experts,'[10] especially relevant in a moment of socio-political transformation.

The actors I study claim to be the true experts and demand authority specifically with reference to and by a mobilization of their own history and intellectual tradition,

4 Houtsma, M. Th. et al. (eds.) 1913–1936.
5 Eşref Edib et al. (eds.) 1940–1948.
6 Rothman 2009.
7 Carr 2010, 19.
8 *ibid*., 20.
9 *ibid*., 18.
10 *ibid*.

invoking specific linguistic resources, as will be shown below. I argue that from my actors' perspective, expertise meant proficiency in the Islamic disciplines nurtured by a rich and long-standing tradition of (Ottoman) Islamic learning and scholarship, which was, at the same time, perfectly in line with the needs of modernity, comprehensive, multidimensional and international. With this claim to extensive expertise, they made a stand against Western orientalists whom they regarded as impostors led by political interests, wrongly recognized as the true authorities on Islam by representatives of the Turkish state, simply for the fact of being allegedly 'neutral' observers as non-Muslims. This depiction of their expertise was crucial in a moment when *ulema* saw their knowledge and position challenged on several levels.

With their intervention, the Ottoman *ulema*, besides asserting claims to expertise, also joined other Ottoman and Republican critiques of orientalism predating Edward W. Said's work, as elaborated by Zeynep Çelik. Drawing from late Ottoman and early Republican texts produced between 1872 and 1932 in diverse fields such as the press, (feminist) literature, poetry, or academic disciplines such as history or art history, her edited volume illustrates a thorough engagement with orientalist and Eurocentric arguments about Islam and the Middle East and the related methods.[11] It thus directs attention to the wide-spread local consciousness about the impact of orientalist views and to the agency and intellectual contributions of actors from the region itself, even before the rise of postcolonial studies in the West. Following up on Çelik's findings, but also qualifying her argument that the multi-voiced criticism of orientalism slowly faded away in the 1930s,[12] my paper clearly demonstrates that it was in fact still vivid and referenced on various levels in the 1940s.

To put forth my arguments, I will first briefly introduce some of the provisions in the early Republic pertaining to the social and political position of the *ulema*. Next, I will contextualize the Ministry of Education's decision to translate the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* as part of an attempt to build a new and secular knowledge base disjoined from the Ottoman tradition. This will entail an analysis of the preface to the Turkish translation and statements by actors involved in the official translation project. In the third and main part, I will follow the trajectory of the alternative *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi* to examine the strategies of the *ulema* and their supporters to claim expertise and interpretive authority regarding Islam. To identify their arguments, I will analyse their writings, especially covering topics such as the aim and scope of their encyclopaedia, their own position, and criticism of their adversaries, both in the journal, the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi Mecmuası*, and in their alternative encyclopaedia itself. I will also engage with the accompanying press debate. In the fourth part, I will touch upon the political demands deriving from these, followed by my conclusion.

11 Çelik 2020.
12 *ibid*., 54.

1. Introduction

Transformations regarding the position of the Ottoman *ulema* as a socio-religious class within the government apparatus, along with developments in its institutional structure and educational system, as well as attempts to strengthen state control over religion, can be traced back to the early 19th century. Traditionally, the *ulema* held a monopoly over questions regarding Islamic teachings and represented a cornerstone of the Ottoman political, judicial and educational systems, maintaining control over central functions. Earlier historiographic narratives about the role of the *ulema* in official modernization efforts from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic often suggested a conflict between progress and modernity on the one hand and hostile, traditionalistic and backward religious scholars on the other hand. In contrast, recent studies question this narrative and highlight the ways in which, despite increasing state control, the *ulema* continued to occupy crucial socio-political positions and managed to maintain their relevance and agency as a dynamic institution.[13] This study is also a contribution to this historiographic trend.

Nevertheless, the marginalization of the *ulema*, coupled with increased control of religion, reached new heights during the early Republican period, when the 'secularist drive […] was the most characteristic element of Kemalist reform'[14] in state and society. The newly delineated role for religion in the Turkish nation-building process had far-reaching consequences for the socio-religious class of the *ulema*. Several laws passed in 1924 such as that abolishing the caliphate, the Law of Unification of Instruction (*tevḥīd-i tedrīsāt*), and the law effecting the replacement of the Ministry of Sharia and Endowments (*Şerʿiye ve Evḳāf Vekāleti*) by the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyānet İşleri Reʾīsliği*),[15] subordinate to the prime ministry and with far fewer responsibilities and financial resources, had an immediate impact upon the *ulema*, their major areas of action, and their status.[16] Secularizing reforms, e.g. in the realm of jurisdiction and education,[17] resulted in the dissolution of the institution of the *ʿilmīye*.[18]

Institutional overhauls were paired with efforts to create a 'modern' and 'rational' interpretation of Islam from a 'Turkish nationalist perspective'[19] led by the 'anti-clerical

13 For more information on the changing socio-political roles of Ottoman *ulema* in the context of modernization efforts, religious reform and state formation from the late Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic, see e.g. Bein 2011; Bektaş 2023; Gunasti 2016 and 2019; Kara 2005, 2016 and 2017; Lord 2018; Toprak 2019.

14 Zürcher 2017, 188.

15 Henceforth referred to as 'Diyanet.'

16 Kara 2017, 55–7.

17 For a comprehensive account of secularizing reform policies and their connection to nationalism from 1925–1935, as well as an assessment of their impact, see Zürcher 2017, 188–96.

18 One of the major institutions within the Ottoman state organization and umbrella term for the Ottoman *ulema* class, which was trained in official *medreses*.

19 Hanioğlu 2011, 131–2.

and positivist faction'[20] of the ruling elite. Despite *ulema* opposition to the law, the Law of Unification of Instruction, originally stipulating the control of the *medreses* by the Ministry of Education, in practice resulted in their dissolution right after its adoption. Contrary to the initial specification to establish and maintain further venues of religious learning and research such as a Faculty of Theology and *İmam Hatip* Schools, in the course of the 1930s, these limited institutions were also dissolved,[21] and religious education in schools was removed from the curricula.[22] In line with the intended break with the Ottoman past and a reshaping of press and publishing,[23] the alphabet reform in 1928 severed ties to the Ottoman religious and intellectual tradition and rendered classical textbooks and other sources unusable.[24] In addition to the disappearance of institutions for scholarly engagement with the Islamic religion and culture and *ulema* being stripped of their occupational positions, more initiatives attested to the pervasive marginalization of the *ulema* and the delegitimization of the body of knowledge produced by them: The controversial Declaration about the Reform of Religion (*Dini Islah Beyannamesi*), prepared by a number of scholars at Istanbul University and leaked to the press in 1928, reflected upon engaging foreign philosophers of religion to 'scientifically'[25] identify the 'essence' of Islam, explicitly ruling out the ability of representatives of traditional Islamic disciplines to do so.[26]

In the press and even in parliament, the *ulema* and religious functionaries were, in continuation of a process starting in the 19th-century Ottoman Empire, and now with even greater vigor, publicly discredited,[27] and 'forced to endure in silence a barrage of condescending publications on the alleged obscurantism and backwardness of the Ottoman religious establishment, as well as frequent criticism of the Ottoman ulema's ostensible transformation into a priesthood-like organization.'[28] As late as 1948, in the debate over a reform of religious education, the member of parliament and later Minister of Education Tahsin Banguoğlu (1904–1989) advocated for a containment of the backwards '*medrese* mentality whose last aged representatives (*medrese zihniyetinin yaşlanmış son mümessillerini*) we see gathered around the Diyanet.'[29]

20 Lord 2018, 54.
21 Kara 2016, 211; Kara 2017, 57–60; Zürcher 2017, 188; see Toprak 2019, 109–10 for information regarding the number of closed *medreses*.
22 Brockett 2011, 119; Kara 2016, 209; Toprak 2019, 110–1.
23 Erken 2018, 35; Gürçağlar 2008, 102–3.
24 Toprak 2019, 113.
25 For an account of the emergence of the discourse surrounding science and its interrelations with ideas around civilization, modernity and nationalism in 19th-century Ottoman Empire, see Yalçınkaya 2015.
26 Bein 2011, 128; Flöhr 2020, 153–4; Kara 2016, 132–4, 151.
27 Bein 2011, 106–7, 133; Kara 2017, 193; Toprak 2019, 188.
28 Bein 2011, 106.
29 As cited in Yörükân 1948, 4–5.

2. Providing 'Secular' Knowledge about Islam: Translating the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*

However, there was still dire need for knowledge production on Islam, e.g. to control and shape religious beliefs of the population, to 'nationalize' religion, and for intellectual or academic purposes. This was the case at the onset of the Republic as well as in the years that followed. For instance, as the existing religious institutions were abolished or weakened without providing comparable and trustworthy alternatives, in 1925 the Turkish parliament still had to resort to Ottoman scholars such as Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi (1878–1942) to provide a Turkish Quran translation and commentary, aligning with its aims to provide direct access to the text and render the *ulema* redundant in the long run – which was, however, circumvented by the latter, who developed strategies on their part to advocate for their own positions.[30]

In the 1930s, some intellectuals argued that the complete rejection of the Ottoman-Islamic past and the void it caused had produced a cultural crisis.[31] The literary historian Mehmed Fuad Köprülü (1890–1966) bemoaned the lack of introductory works about Islamic civilization for his students at Istanbul University, which he deemed necessary for a comprehensive assessment of Turkish history; he therefore decided to translate a book by the orientalist and historian Vasily Bartold (1869–1930) for this purpose.[32] The absence of academic publications on Islam was also discussed at the first National Publication Congress in 1939, in the aftermath of which Hasan Âli Yücel (1897–1961), Minister of Education from 1938 to 1946, instructed a committee at Istanbul University to undertake the translation into Turkish of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam: A Dictionary of the Geography, Ethnography and Biography of the Muhammadan Peoples* – regarded as the 'crown jewel of Western Orientalism of the time,'[33] 'prepared by a number of leading orientalists' as proclaimed on its title page, and a 'quintessential expression of traditional European orientalism, with all that it implies for both good and bad,'[34] e.g. its 'Arabistic and philologistic prejudices'[35] and prevalent essentialism.[36]

A diverse team at the Faculty of Literature, including among others literary scholars, linguists, and historians, and presided over by the physician and historian of science Abdülhak Adnan Adıvar (1882–1955), would be carrying out the task of publishing the

30 For more information on the trajectory of the Quran commentary prepared by Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi, its political implications in the context of the early Republic, and Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi's strategies to circumvent state efforts to shape religion according to current ideological trends, see Gunasti 2019 and Flöhr 2020. These studies are also insightful accounts of the life and career as well as positioning and agency of an Ottoman scholar in a transitional period, as exemplified by Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi.
31 Koçak 2001, 383, 390–3.
32 Eyice 1992, 86; Kara 2016, 426–7.
33 Bein 2011, 115.
34 Daniel 1998, 433.
35 Hodgson 1974, 40.
36 *ibid*., 39–41.

İslâm Ansiklopedisi. İslâm Âlemi Tarih, Coğrafya, Etnoğrafya ve Biyografya Lûgati (Encyclopaedia of Islam. Lexikon of the History, Geography, Ethnography and Biographies of the Islamic World).[37] Mehmet Şerefettin Yaltkaya (1880–1947), head of the Diyanet from 1942 to 1947, was the only member explicitly known as a scholar of Islam, an *ʿālim*.[38] Initially, the committee intended to prepare a verbatim translation, and it was only the realization during the preparation of the first fascicle that entries concerning the Turkish and Turkic world were deficient that led to the decision to correct, complete and rewrite certain entries.[39]

The preface to the Turkish *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, while conceding that there were certainly some orientalists who were led by imperialist, colonial and missionary ambitions, generally expresses great admiration and appreciation of their work, mentioning several names specifically.[40] In contrast, it disparagingly asserts that the scholarly engagement with Islam in Turkey itself in the past centuries had mainly consisted of genres such as commentary or translation, being repetitious and generating scant original insight.[41] Adıvar justifies the translation of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* as a response to the pressing need for a reference work in Turkish for students and scholars not proficient in any foreign language.[42] As the committee's focus lay on *Turkish* culture and history, and entries on the Islamic religion were deemed important only inasmuch as they were somehow relevant for the understanding of the former, in the 1940s,[43] the translation committee mainly corrected, upgraded or completely rewrote articles specifically pertaining to *Turkish* historical figures and events. In contrast, it abstained from major changes in entries on essential religious topics such as 'Allah,' as well as other regions of the Islamic world – a tendency also noted by foreign scholars.[44]

İsmail Kara thus identifies two objectives of the state-sponsored translation project: first, the 'establishment of a secular and Western foundation for Islamic culture on an academic level' (*akademik düzeyde laik ve batılı bir İslâm kültürü zemini*),[45] and second, to reinforce Turks' role in historiographic narratives through expanding 'Turkish' entries.[46]

In general, a rather reserved language regarding Islam is identifiable in the preface, as though its connection to Turkish culture is accepted only begrudgingly and as a matter of necessity, which is also evident in the committee member Nihad Mazlum Çetin's (1924–1991) assessment that the *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* 'viewed' Islamic culture from an 'alien win-

37 İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi (ed.) 1940–1987.
38 Köprülü 2001, 43.
39 *ibid*., 43–4; Kara 2016, 447–8.
40 İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi (ed.) 1940, viii–xiii.
41 *ibid*., xiii.
42 *ibid*., xvii.
43 It should be noted that the translation of the *Encyclopeadia of Islam* was conducted over several decades and thus subject to varying socio-political contexts. In this paper, I am solely focusing on the years in which the alternative encyclopaedia project, the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi*, was published in parallel.
44 Kara 2016, 450; Spuler 1950, 323–5.
45 Kara 2016, 449.
46 *ibid*.

dow'[47] and that many Turkish intellectuals attributed to Western orientalists as 'outsiders' an objectivity in the evaluation of Islam that Muslims by default could not display.[48] Therefore, unsurprisingly, this endeavour was embarked upon independently from representatives of traditional Islamic scholarship, who were excluded from this knowledge production process and whose works, expertise and experiences were rendered invisible.

3. Resisting: Call for a 'Truly' Scholarly Encyclopaedia by Ottoman-Turkish *ulema*

Ulema as representatives of this tradition did not remain silent and seized the opportunity to emphasize the continuing relevance of their expertise and their indispensability. In fact, they had been aware of the fact that translations of orientalists' works were circulating in Turkish and had tried to tackle the 'danger' emanating from them through their own publications and counter-narratives since late Ottoman times.[49] This is also one of the reasons why the *ulema* themselves were a driving force behind the decision to translate the Quran into Turkish in 1925 and for their intervention for the production of a reliable Turkish commentary under their own control by Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi in the face of a public atmosphere in which defective publications were abundant and institutions of Islamic learning under threat.[50] The publication of books was one of the very few instruments with which the *ulema*, e.g. as representatives of the Diyanet, could still exert some limited influence,[51] yet still in the framework of highly restrictive laws regarding press and publishing and the expression of religious subjects.[52]

So, in the 1940s, the *ulema* could draw on their experience and a number of previous strategies to advocate for themselves in an increasingly oppressive context. They also did so in publishing the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi*. The encyclopaedia appeared from 1940 onwards in fascicles, and the publication stopped in 1948 with the second volume remaining unfinished with 384 pages, despite the initial aim to publish two volumes per year with 1,000 pages each.[53] The publishing endeavour was undertaken by *Asarı İlmiye Kütüphanesi*, which was owned by Eşref Edip Fergan (1882–1971) and one of the very few publishing houses in the early Republic that published a limited number of books on religious topics.[54] Unsurprisingly, these ambitious goals could not be achieved, as this private initiative with scant resources was, according to the editors, dependent on readers' subscriptions – one of the challenges frequently discussed in the corresponding *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi Mecmuası*, as will be shown below.

47 As cited in *ibid*., 450.
48 *ibid*.
49 Bilgin 2018, 172–4; Flöhr 2020, 181–2.
50 Flöhr 2020, 176–8.
51 *ibid*., 167, 178; Kara 2017, 199; Toprak 2019, 178.
52 For more information on the legal framework, see Brockett 2011, 66; Erken 2018, 38–9, 42, 46; Toprak 2019, 217–8. From 1924–1950, the Diyanet could publish merely 30 books, ten of them being from 1945–1950, see Kara 2016, 433.
53 Aykut 2001, 57; Kara 2016, 494.
54 For more information on the publishing house, see Erken 2018, 42–3; Kara 2016, 478.

3.1 Transparency through Biographies, Credentials, and Merits

One of the aspects the editors of the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi* frequently took up in their critique of the state-sponsored *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* was the fact that it was unclear and opaque as to which scholars the translation committee consisted of and what their credentials were. So, openly – and in fact, proudly – expressing who *they* were and what enabled *them* to publish a reference work of such importance was core to their own initiative.

They did so using several tools like biographical references, beginning with the title page of their encyclopaedia, which introduces the editors as follows: İsmail Hakkı İzmirli[55] (1869–1946), *ordinaryüs profesör*[56] and former dean of the Faculty of Theology; Kâmil Miras[57] (1875–1957), Diyanet representative and translator and commentator of the canonical hadith collection *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḫārī*; Ömer Rıza Doğrul[58] (1893–1952), author of the Quran commentary *Tanrı Buyruğu* and of *İslâm Tarihi – Asr-ı Saadet*, an extensive overview of Islamic history; and finally, Eşref Edip Fergan,[59] owner of the *Asarı İlmiye Kütüphanesi*. The editors all had been influential in Ottoman public life, either as journalists and activists during the Second Constitutional Period (1908–1918) and the War of Independence (1919–1923), or in education, both in teaching positions and in committees dealing with the reform of religious education. Also, most of them had been – at least temporarily – pushed out of public life in the early years of the Republic, with three of them being sued by an Independence Tribunal.[60] From the mentioning of their most significant positions and works on the title page, it can be inferred that these works probably enjoyed recognition as they were deemed suitable to lend the editors authority.

References to the credentials and accomplishments of the editors and other contributors are further explicated in the introduction to the encyclopaedia. Publishing an encyclopaedia is described as a serious endeavour to be faced on a national and international level. However, it is stated that luckily, there were indeed a considerable number of experts available for this:

> It is with deepest pride that we can announce the truth that we are able to find all these specialists (*ihtisas sahiplerini*), and knowledgeable and authoritative experts (*ilim ve sâlâhiyet erbabını*) who […] display merits which even set them apart from their colleagues in different parts of the world, here in our own country.[61]

55 For more information on İzmirli, see Birinci 2001, 530–3; Özervarlı 2001, 533–5; Özervarlı 2007; Sentürk 2007, 311–3.

56 The term refers to the highest academic rank achievable within Turkish academia during the specified period.

57 For more information on Miras, see Flöhr 2020, 196–7; Yazıcı 2005, 145–6; Yazıcı 2012.

58 For more information on Doğrul, see Debus 1991, 199–202; Kara 2016, 434–6; Öz 2018, 48; Uzun 1994, 489–92.

59 For more information on Fergan, see Albayrak 1995, 473–4; Debus 1991; Kara 1987, 13–4.

60 The Independence Tribunals were special courts established during the War of Independence to prosecute crimes such as treason and espionage.

61 Tahrir Heyeti 1940–1944, 9.

The team of contributors is characterized as follows: Firstly, it consists of Turkey's internationally renowned scholars of Islam (*İslâm uleması*) such as İsmail Hakkı İzmirli. Secondly, the diverse and comprehensive character of the team is emphasized, enabling the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi* to be a common work of the country's intellectuals (*münevverleri*), scholars (*ilim adamları*), and in sum 'all Turkish and Islamic thinkers' (*bütün Türk ve İslâm mütefekkir[leri]*) for the first time ever. Thirdly, the encyclopaedia also includes contributions and has secured wider support from the 'most famous and greatest ulema of the Islamic world' (*İslâm âleminin en tanınmış büyük ulemasının*).[62] Moreover, the editors stress their openness to contributions from scholars and experts (*ilim erbabı*) among Western orientalists who are solely guided by scholarly and scientific ambitions[63] – the reference to orientalists and scholars putting their work in the service of colonial aims being implicit.

Their self-conception and identity as explicitly Muslim scholars does not, in their view, impede their objectivity, the lack of which they ascribe to 'orientalists and missionaries' (*müsteşrik ve misyoner*), as they frequently designate the authors of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.[64] They explicitly describe their own publication as a 'scholarly and academic work' (*ilmî ve akademik bir eser*).[65] This scholarly and academic character, as well as a legitimation of their work on multiple levels, is guaranteed by, among other things, the diversity of the team, including theologians, historians, literary scholars, turcologists and other scholars from varying disciplines, many of whom had positions in institutions as the Diyanet, such as Ahmet Hamdi Akseki (1887–1951), or Istanbul University, such as the physician, writer and artist Süheyl Ünver (1898–1986).[66] Thus, there is an aspiration to present a comprehensive and multifaceted expertise in their work, warranted by the authors' multivalent backgrounds, both intellectually and geographically, and visible also in the choice of different self-designating terms, both traditional and more recently adopted ones, such as *ulema*, *ihtisas sahibi*, *münevver* or *ilim adamı*.

The journal that accompanies the rival encyclopaedia includes many clues and programmatic articles by the editors, mainly Fergan, about the objectives of their encyclopaedia, reflections upon its importance, and polemics against opponents. On a regular basis, it also provides short biographies of the contributors to the encyclopaedia and points out the relevance and specific features and qualities of their contributions to encourage the readers to engage with them. In these biographical overviews, aspects such as their educational backgrounds in Ottoman institutions, different positions and milestones in their careers, and their activities both in Ottoman and Republican institutions come to the fore. Oftentimes, the scholars' impact on an international level is invoked as a further credential. To offer an example, in the biography of Ahmet Hamdi Akseki, assistant to the Diyanet president from 1939 to 1947 and president from 1947 to 1951, we learn about his multidimensional Islamic expertise and perspective, having taken both the classical path of acquiring knowledge in *medreses* in the traditional

62 *ibid*.
63 *ibid*., 10.
64 See e.g. Eşref Edib 1940, 2–3.
65 [Eşref Edip] 1946c, 3.
66 Kara 2016, 453.

Islamic disciplines, and simultaneously a modern one by completing his studies with a focus on philosophy at the then-recently-established Faculty of Theology at Istanbul University. We further learn about his teaching activities in several Ottoman institutions as well as his many publications. Emphasis is placed on his efforts in committees discussing the reform of religious education and his 'great innovations and revolutions' (*büyük teceddüt ve inkilâplar*)[67] in the field of *medrese* education. Regarding Akseki's impact beyond Turkey, we learn that one of his books was translated by the government of Afghanistan to be taught in schools.[68] This biography of Akseki in fact does not remain the only one to be published: when this valued contributor is appointed Diyanet president in 1947, the editors highly acclaim this development and publish yet another and even more extensive and venerating account of his life and work as the most competent and deserving Diyanet president yet.[69]

The biographical accounts of one of the editors, İsmail Hakkı İzmirli, are another case in point. An extensive overview of his life and works is even distributed over two issues of the journal. In the description of his numerous works, his pioneering ideas especially in the establishment of an updated form of *kalām*,[70] dealing with the challenges of modern philosophy in the late Ottoman Empire, are emphasized.[71] He is singled out as editor-in-chief and the driving force behind the encyclopaedia, which represents the 'last and most prosperous stage of perfection of his scholarly life (*ilmî hayatının en son ve en feyizli tekâmül merhalesi*) exceeding half a century.'[72] An account of an event organized in honour of İzmirli's 75th birthday provides an emotional portrayal of the respect, acknowledgement and devotion shown by the guests towards the man himself as well as his 'works, his innovations in the instruction of *fiqh*,[73] *kalām* and philosophy, […] his philosophical profession, and his international scholarly standing (*felsefî mesleğini, beynelmilel ilmî mevkiini*).'[74] Translations and the impact of his publications beyond borders are invoked to underline qualifications and expertise.[75]

67 'Tahrir Heytimizden [sic]. Profesör Ahmet Hamdi Akseki' 1940, 3.
68 *ibid*., 3–4.
69 Miras 1947, 9.
70 Classical Islamic discipline dealing with doctrines of the Islamic faith through rational arguments to avert doubts, often translated as 'speculative theology.'
71 'Büyük Üstad İsmail Hakkı İzmirli'nin ilmî hayatî [sic] ve eserleri' 1940, 3–4; 'Büyük üstad İsmail Hakkı İzmirli'nin ilmî hayatı ve eserleri' 1940, 4–5.
72 Eşref Edip 1946, 3; Miras 1946, 2.
73 Classical Islamic discipline dealing with religious norms, often translated as 'Islamic jurisprudence.'
74 Eşref Edip 1945, 2. For an account of İzmirli's and other Ottoman scholars' contributions to debates surrounding a reform of Islamic disciplines in light of challenges such as modern science and positivism, see e.g. Bein 2011, 46–8; Özervarlı 2007, 87–90; Sentürk 2007.
75 E.g. Doğrul 1946, 3–4. For İzmirli's works translated into Arabic, see Birinci 2001, 531–2. In general, the journal *Sebîlürreşâd* (1908–1925 and 1948–1966), also published by Eşref Edip Fergan and supported by his circle, was influential and popular beyond Ottoman borders, especially in Russia; for more information on this, see Debus 1991, 48. From this, it can be inferred that contacts beyond Turkey most likely persisted into post-Ottoman times.

With İzmirli, but also other figures such as Akseki, the editorial board can in fact offer a work by 'major figures among late-Ottoman scholars' and representatives of 'chief intellectual bodies of the time.'[76]

In addition to biographical accounts of the contributors, interestingly, as more of these scholars passed away and their obituaries appeared with increasing frequency in the 1940s, these homages continued to honour them by way of pointing out their impact and importance; and indeed the obituaries seem to be mourning the loss of a scholarly tradition and decrying the existential threat to the entire cultural and intellectual legacy connected to it.[77] Not just the figurative loss, but the literal demise of the representatives of this tradition, the scholars 'who are thankfully not yet extinct but become fewer and fewer,'[78] is identified as a major problem, as their absence would aggravate the challenges associated with the scarcity of reliable books, resources and knowledge on Islam in the early Republic.[79] This is also a source of contempt for Yaltkaya, then Diyanet president and member of the translation committee of the *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, who had, according to the editors of the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi*, failed to engage and coordinate these *ulema* for scholarly activities, e.g. for the translation of truly relevant fundamental works into Turkish, instead misusing his position for the promotion of his own works.[80]

To further highlight the importance of this Ottoman scholarly tradition, convey authority and authenticity, and establish confidence among the readers, personal ties and lineages of scholarship are pointed out alongside connections to Ottoman institutions. This is the case when the appointment of Ahmet Hamdi Akseki as Diyanet president in 1947 is also celebrated because he had learnt from figures such as Mûsâ Kâzım (1858/9–1920), İzmirli and Mehmet Şemsettin Günaltay (1883–1961), 'masters who had fully captured both Eastern and Western philosophy' (*Şark ve Garp felsefesini hakkile kavramış üstatların*).[81] To recognize that two of the editors of the encyclopaedia, İzmirli and Miras, have a special and higher position in the team compared to the other two, Doğrul and Fergan, as actual Ottoman *ulema* having followed the classic path in acquiring their religious education, there are photos of them in the introduction, while photos of the other two are missing.[82]

Faced with disdain and disrespect on several levels, the *ulema* are keen to demonstrate the complexity of their own field and the skills needed to be able to pronounce even a minor judgement regarding any aspect of Islam. They contrast the lack of recognition accorded to them with the general readiness to grant this mastering of complexity to representatives of other fields:

76 Özervarlı 2007, 83.
77 E.g. 'Reis-ül-hattatin Kâmil Efendi' 1941, 4–5.
78 Çantay 1947, 15.
79 Eşref Edib 1941b, 3.
80 Çantay 1947, 15.
81 Miras 1947, 8.
82 Tahrir Heyeti 1940–1944, 10.

> Are the religious disciplines and religious judgements (*dinî ilimler, dinî hükümler*) inferior to those others? How can we accept that somebody who does not hold adequate knowledge and competence (*yeter derecede bilgisi, mümaresesi*) in the religious disciplines, which are categorized according to different classifications and entail very essential and subtle principles, norms and issues respectively (*[m]üteaddid tasniflere tâbi bulunan ve her biri çok mühim ve ince asılları, kaideleri, meseleleri ihtiva eden dinî ilimlerde*), claims to speak in the name of these disciplines (*bu ilimler namına*) and pretends to act as a *muğtahid*?[83] […] If there are no doctors without diplomas and no engineers, judges or attorneys etc., without certificates, how can we assume that one can be a *faqīh*, *mufassir*, *muḥaddiṯ* or an *ʿālim,* without having studied [these disciplines]? Is the science of religion (*din ilmi*) so irrelevant as to not be in need of any kind of specialization (*ihtısasa*)?[84]

The initiators of the rival encyclopaedia see their work as an opportunity to not only provide reliable knowledge for laypersons, but also to

> revive Islamic studies (*İslâmî tetkikatı canlandırmak*) which are weakened day by day, and to serve Turkish scholarship and intellectuals (*Türk irfanına ve Türk münevverlerine*) by publishing studies by *ulema* and trustworthy specialists in Islam (*İslâm âlimlerinin, İslâmiyat mütehassıslarının tetkikatını*).'[85]

In doing so, they frequently refer to late Ottoman reform efforts in different fields they were involved in, depicting a complex and vivid history.

In fact, they aim to revive these disciplines not only in Turkey, but in the Islamic world as a whole, by means of their encyclopaedia, in which they include modern perspectives.[86] The editors see their encyclopaedia and their scholarly outlook as a first step to an Islamic 'awakening'[87] through transregional exchange and a revival of the relations between Ottoman-Turkish *ulema* and scholars from other backgrounds. For this purpose, they attempt to collaborate with scholars from predominantly Muslim countries such as Egypt, Syria, Palestine, India and Iran.[88] As an example for this, they publish encyclopaedic entries and journal articles by the Iraqi historian ʿAbbās al-ʿAzzāwī (1890–1971) and several other international actors.[89] Underlining their immediate impact, they recount not only that they received orders from places as far as Alexandria in Egypt,[90][91] but also that their encyclopaedia project was getting atten-

83 Eşref Edip 1947, 11–2.
84 *ibid*., 14.
85 Eşref Edib 1941b, 3.
86 Tahrir Heyeti 1940–1944b, 15.
87 *ibid*., 14.
88 Tahrir Heyeti 1940–1944, 9–10.
89 See e.g. 'Sabık Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti Millî Şûra Reisi Resûlzade Mehmet Emin' 1943, 2; 'Bu sayıdaki yazılar' 1943, 1; 'Bu sayıdaki yazılar' 1945, 1.
90 [Eşref Edip] 1943, 4.
91 For the views of another Muslim intellectual based in Egypt, Rašīd Riḍā (1865–1935), on the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* and its connections to colonial ambitions, see Ryad 2009, 40–1.

tion and praise as an example in the Iraqi press.[92] The efforts to revive a collaboration beyond borders testify to an attempt to display an expertise with a transregional dimension to it – interesting also given the fact that Turkish-speaking Ottoman *ulema's* contributions to debates in Islamic modernism in the broader Islamic world are still often overlooked in academic scholarship,[93] as are the 'earlier interest of Istanbul ulama in modernization, their closer and more direct contact with Europeans.'[94] The dissident *ulema* tried to make this tradition visible.

3.2 Deconstructing Orientalists' and Missionaries' Unscholarly Bias

The editors of the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi* had adversaries against whom they tried to hold their ground on two levels: firstly, the authorship of the European *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, and secondly, the creators of its Turkish translation. In their journal, in which they frequently criticize specific entries, also presenting their own coverage of the same topics as a much more reliable substitute, they attentively observe and comment on the ongoing translation process. However, their encyclopaedia, the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi* itself, also offers space for engaging in this battle.

The entries about Adam are a case in point. This entry, penned in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* by Max Seligsohn (1865–1923), is translated into Turkish in the state-sponsored *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* with two footnotes indicating minor corrections.[95] Thus, unlike other articles, it is not a revised or rewritten version. Now, in the respective entry in the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi*, under the subheading 'Critique of the Encyclopaedia of Islam' (*İslâm Ansiklopedisi'ni tenkid*), Doğrul asserts that Seligsohn's entry was solely based on *isrā'īlīyāt*, i.e. narratives assumed to be of non-Islamic origin and, according to Doğrul, contradicting Quranic principles.[96] Thus, there is criticism on the methodological level, e.g. regarding the selective use of sources by orientalists tending to overemphasize the importance of *isrā'īlīyāt* in the Islamic intellectual tradition. Doğrul's critique, however, also pertains to another level when he moves on to analyse orientalists' and missionaries' intentions in their use of sources: According to him, they are misrepresenting the Islamic teaching about Adam as it constitutes a serious threat to their worldview, with the absence of the original sin in Islam shattering the foundations of Christianity.[97] Concrete and specific criticism in terms of insights and methods is often conflated with a more sweeping account of presumed intentions and objectives, and with allegations against an assumed collective of Western orientalists and missionaries.

The essence of this critique and the editors' conviction is that most orientalists were not driven by a scholarly mindset, but by imperialist, colonial and missionary

92 Azzavî 1941, 2.
93 Flöhr 2020, 45.
94 Özervarlı 2007, 77.
95 İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi (ed.) 1940, 134–5.
96 Doğrul 1940–1944, 94–5.
97 *ibid.*

aims, making their work – including the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* – political in nature.[98] To prove this point, Fergan and his circle scrutinize other publications by orientalists in which they openly voice their imperialist and missionary intentions, such as *Aspects of Islam* by Duncan B. MacDonald (1863–1943), 'the missionary who wrote the entry "Allah" in the Encyclopaedia of Islam.'[99] The introduction of this book in fact serves as a manual for missionaries, suggesting several strategies to enhance their efforts, which according to the editors are also implemented in the entry about 'Allah,'[100] e.g. when MacDonald translates 'al-Ǧabbār,' one of the 99 names attributed to Allah, as 'tyrant.'[101] Further orientalists making comments to the effect that Islam as a religion was incompatible with modern civilization are cited.[102] Unsurprisingly, the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* is regarded as a highly flawed work containing misleading representations of Islamic religion and history and serving ideological and political purposes.

The nature of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* and the question of who is qualified to produce reliable knowledge on Islam soon became the point of contention in a heated press debate with members of the translation committee at Istanbul University. Ahmet Ateş (1913–1966), member of the committee, praises the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* as a work by 'Eastern and Western scholars' (*Şarklı ve Garblı âlimler*) whose sole weakness lay in its relative outdatedness. In contrast, he criticizes the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi* as a 'ramshackle work' that could never compete with the former.[103] Ateş was, at the same time, from 1938 onwards assistant to the German orientalist Hellmut Ritter (1892–1971), who had founded and was heading the Oriental Institute at Istanbul University for the study of Arabic, Persian and Urdu literature and sources about Turkish history.[104] Fergan repudiates the assertion that the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* was an inclusive project also containing expertise by 'Eastern scholars,' explaining that in fact only a very limited number of authors from the region such as Mehmed Fuad Köprülü had contributed to the work – who even themselves, just as some members of the translation committee, were aware of the conditions underlying the emergence of the reference work and its ideological implications, as their writings indicated.[105]

Criticism is also directed against the prominent view expressed by the writer and literary historian İsmail Habib Sevük (1892–1954) that orientalists, as neutral and impartial outsiders, could produce more reliable knowledge about Islam than Muslims could about their own history and culture, and should thus be regarded as a touchstone for the studies and findings by Muslims. Fergan heavily attacks the depiction of Western

98 'Bağdatlı Üstad Abbas Azzavî' 1940, 4; Eşref Edib 1941, 4.
99 'İslâm Ansiklopedisinde "Allah" bahsini yazan misyoner kimdir?' 1941, 2–3; MacDonald 1911.
100 'İslâm Ansiklopedisinde "Allah" bahsini yazan misyoner kimdir?' 1941, 2–3.
101 'İslâm Ansiglopedisinde [sic] "Allah" bahsini yazan Mister Makdonald'ın hakikî hüviyeti ve Redaksiyon Heyetinden temennilerimiz' 1941, 4.
102 Eşref Edib 1941, 4.
103 As cited in Eşref Edib 1941, 3.
104 Yazıcı 2010, 362.
105 Eşref Edib 1941, 3.

scholarship as an 'impressive monument' (*heybetli bir âbide*) and gift to Muslims which they needed in order to understand Islamic civilization.[106] This problematic and paternalistic view is why the creators of the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi* were so keen to demonstrate that non-Muslim orientalists were *not* impartial outsiders, but rather following their own specific agenda. Further, orientalists' engagement with the Islamic religion and culture was nothing new, original or unique:

> These disciplines the missionaries, orientalists and others engage with (*[m]üsteşriklerin ve misyonerlerin ve sairenin meşgul oldukları bu ilimler*), are disciplines we have been taking great pains over for centuries and centuries. A considerable part of those who bequeathed works in these disciplines (*bu ilimlere dair eser*) have been our own ancestors. We are heirs to their works. Before anybody else, it is incumbent on us to deal with these works. We must absolutely investigate all primary sources, manuscripts as well as prints. […] Every study, every matter (*her etüdü, her meseleyi*) foreigners provide us about our own identity, we must unquestionably scrutinize and subject to a strict review. By adding our efforts to the efforts of others and nourishing the efforts of others with our own, we must demonstrate that we are a living and invigorating force in the world of scholarship (*ilim âleminde*). Peculiarly in those disciplines that concern our own identity (*özümüze müteallik ilimlerde*), we must avoid adorning ourselves with borrowed and foreign knowledge (*iğreti ve yabancı bilgi*). [...] Above all, especially in the disciplines that concern our own identity, it does not befit us to burden others. If we do so, they will not only mock us, but also throw us off their backs.[107]

There is an allusion to the connection of orientalists' expertise and power exercised over Muslim peoples when it is stated that reliance on their interpretive authority will lead to Muslims being 'mocked' and overthrown by them. At the same time, Fergan attempts to make visible Muslim scholars' expertise and scholarly tradition, implicitly belittled in the introduction to the Turkish *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, and to uphold that they are not extinct but still alive and an assertive and dynamic force to reckon with – even if the present power dynamics disadvantage them against orientalists and their knowledge production.

This is also a call to alienated Turkish intellectuals not to submit to them and adopt their views as this would constrict their perspective, e.g. through an uncritical transfer of categories of analysis and prevalent assumptions about Christianity to Islam with a 'mentality that was completely estranged from us (*büsbütün yabancı bir zihniyetle*).'[108] This comes to the fore in a polemical exchange with the sociologist Niyazi Berkes (1908–1988). Berkes criticizes the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi* on the grounds that it exhibited a rational, reformist and apologetic approach to Islam which according to him obscured the 'real' religion practiced among the masses for centuries. The editors reply that Berkes' views on Islam were solely based on his knowledge of Christian history and his ignorance of the Islamic one, which had undergone a completely different devel-

106 As cited in Eşref Edib 1942, 2.
107 *ibid*., 2–3.
108 [Eşref Edip] 1941c, 4.

opment – the latter not being in need of subsequent rationalization and reformation, unlike Christianity.[109] The *ulema* pursue their goal of increasing their own visibility, claiming interpretive authority, and advocating for their perspectives not only through their encyclopaedia, but also by promoting other publications to be consulted by Turkish intellectuals. For instance, Sevük is encouraged to engage with reliable Quran commentaries by İzmirli, Doğrul or Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi, the latter having been prepared under the auspices of the Diyanet, instead of using dubious translations from the French.[110] Also, Muslim *ulema's* long-standing tradition of engagement with orientalist scholarship is invoked, which authors such as Sevük oftentimes simply were not aware of, as they abstained from reading local authors.[111]

Thus, there is outright rejection of orientalists' supposed scholarly authority and superiority. The creators of the alternative encyclopaedia challenge them on several levels, singling out themselves as the actual experts capable of 'identifying the principles of the Islamic creed in all their origins and their evolution' (*İslâm akidelerini, bütün asliyetleriyle ve bütün inkişaflariyle tesbit etmeğe*)[112] and expressing that they can do without the ideologically biased insights of the former, invoking a rich tradition of their own.

They assert their own authority also in a polemical way e.g. as they belittle figures like Ateş, 'assistant to the orientalist Monsieur Ritter' (*müsteşrik mösyö Ritter'in muavini*),[113] and imply that he had no right to claim adherence to scholarly and scientific principles while he succumbed to orientalists' indoctrination and denied Muslim scholars' expertise:

> In his view, knowledge is exclusive to those people [Western orientalists and missionaries] (*ilim bunlara münhasırdır*) and can originate solely from their heads and investigations, whereas from true Turks and Muslims like us, not even knowledge on questions regarding their own identity (*kendi özlerine müteallik hususlarda […] ilim*) can originate! […] A suggestion to Ahmed Ateş […]: He should not mock high-ranking professors who could be the teachers of his own teacher (*hocasının hocası olacak Ordinaryüs Profesörlerle*).[114]

> This is probably exactly what bothers Ahmed Ateş, assistant and helper to orientalist Monsieur Riter (*müsteşrik Mösyö Riterin [sic] asistanı, yardımcısı*), the most, and what leads him to fanatic attacks: that the men whom he acknowledges as masters (*üstad*) are overthrown one by one in the face of real scholarship (*hakikî ilim*).[115]

Fergan even goes so far as to accuse Ateş of being hostile to true scholarly efforts and knowledge per se: 'How can such a miserable mentality (*zavallı zihniyet*) prevail in scholarly environs (*[i]lmî muhit içinde*)?'[116]

109 *ibid.*
110 '«Avrupa edebiyatı ve biz» muharririne göre İslâm dini ve medeniyeti' 1942, 3.
111 Eşref Edib 1942c, 4.
112 [Eşref Edip] 1941c, 4.
113 Eşref Edib 1941b, 4.
114 Eşref Edib 1941, 3.
115 Eşref Edib 1941, 3.
116 Eşref Edib 1941b, 4.

To sum up, the *ulema* and intellectuals critical of the translation project display several techniques to perform expertise, both to *assert* their own, and to *deny* their adversaries' expertise: On the first level, they resort to strategies to display the diversity, comprehensiveness and multifacetedness of their team and work, such as featuring biographical data and credentials with a focus on both a rich long-standing tradition and innovations undertaken in their field by themselves, demonstrating the complexity of their field as well as their international impact, connections and recognition. On the second level, they apply strategies such as a concrete critique of methods and insights produced by orientalists and a presentation of alternatives, as well as an analysis of orientalists' political and ideological aims and of power dynamics shaping the production of knowledge at the expense of Muslim *ulema* in order to question notions of neutrality. Another relevant strategy here is the challenging and questioning of alleged 'universalisms' imposed by orientalists which, in their view, distort Turkish intellectuals' perspective on Islamic religion and history. In Carr's terms, the actors thus enact expertise through linguistic tools such as the use of a variety of self-designating terms emphasizing their authority, names of institutions as credentials, technical terms and jargon of their complex field, or invoking their connections to other experts to reinforce their authority.

4. The Quest for Recognition – and Responsibilities

The previous discussion has made clear that the criticism of orientalist scholarship merged with a criticism of actors in Turkey ranging from academia to politics, who were regarded as their representatives and aides after orientalists had been successful in spreading their perspectives in Muslim countries e.g. by founding educational institutions attended by locals and publishing books which were widely broadcast and read.[117]

The criticism against local actors was gradually concretized and targeted several institutions. Initially, it was mainly directed against the academic translation committee: How could it consider entries such as the one about 'Allah,' given MacDonald's imperialistic and missionary aims and his promoted propaganda methods, to be scholarly products, and publish them without any significant comments?[118] The committee members' competence, as well as their methods and criteria in the selection of articles to be translated, revised, or rewritten, are questioned, demanding transparency regarding this policy.[119] Although the committee should, as was right and proper, scrutinize each and every entry, which would make their endeavour a respected one beyond Turkey and even in the West, according to their critics, it was arbitrarily rewriting some entries, while ignoring the core of the encyclopaedia:

117 Eşref Edib 1942b, 3.

118 'İslâm Ansiklopedisinde "Allah" bahsini yazan misyoner kimdir?' 1941, 2–3.

119 'İslâm Ansiglopedisinde [sic] "Allah" bahsini yazan Mister Makdonald'ın hakikî hüviyeti ve Redaksiyon Heyetinden temennilerimiz' 1941, 3–4.

> Even though the committee convened at Istanbul University has grasped the task it has been entrusted with, it pretends it has not, and refrains from performing it. It contents itself with rewriting a couple of arbitrarily selected entries, while refraining from instructing Turkish-Islamic authors (*Türk-İslâm muharrirlerine*) to rewrite the Islamic entries which are the main focus of the work (*eserin siklet merkezini teşkil eden*). This is why it does not want to introduce itself and prefers to remain anonymous.[120]

More specifically, Diyanet president Yaltkaya, who is identified as the committee's Islam expert (*İslâmiyat mütehassısı*), as he had rewritten some less relevant Islamic articles such as that on *Amin* (Amen), is asked about the reasons for his selection of these specific ones and his neglect of others. In addition, he is accused of not consulting and engaging other experts – alluding to the *ulema* critical of the regime.[121]

> They say: «We don't have ulema (*ülemamız*) who could write these articles. Therefore, we are compelled to include writings by missionaries.» What kind of excuse is this? Are Muslims dependent on the benevolence of missionaries now to learn about their creed? We are convinced that, thank God, you can find a lot of Muslim and Turkish scholars (*İslâm ve Türk âlimi*) in our country who could teach even those missionaries. We wonder: whom did the editorial board appeal to, who subsequently declined their request?[122]

The Ministry of Education, which initiated the official translation project, also became a target. A record of a meeting between the Minister of Education, Hasan Âli Yücel, and Fergan in 1946 indicates that government circles carefully observed the alternative encyclopaedia project and were suspicious of their editors, visible in attempts to ban other publications by Fergan.[123] Fergan even mentions that at an earlier stage, the Ministry actually purchased and distributed 150 copies of the fascicles of the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi*, responding to impassioned appeals about the national importance of the work – a practice it sadly discontinued later on.[124] The publishers of the rival encyclopaedia still claim that their 'criticism was very useful in moving the editorial committee to a more careful course of action.'[125] The above-mentioned press debates with well-known public figures in fact testify to the broader impact of their project.

However, when trying to increase their own visibility, the dissident *ulema* and intellectuals frequently point out the scarcity of their means to pursue their goals of reviving and spreading Islamic knowledge as a small team dependent on private means and readers:

> Unfortunately, this initiative was undertaken out of dire necessity. Until now, a giant work of this kind has not been initiated by the state or any company or asso-

120 'Ma'hud "İslâm Ansiklopedisi"nin başındaki hey'etin işi nedir?' 1941, 3.
121 'Müsteşriklerin islâm ansiklopedisinde islâmî meslelerin [sic] telif hissesi' 1941, 3–4.
122 'İslâm Ansiglopedisinde [sic] "Allah" bahsini yazan Mister Makdonald'ın hakikî hüviyeti ve Redaksiyon Heyetinden temennilerimiz' 1941, 4.
123 E. Edib 1946b, 7.
124 [Eşref Edip] 1946c, 3.
125 E. Edib 1946b, 7.

> ciation, and there is no hope or chance whatsoever of it being initiated, making it essential that it is accomplished [by us] for the honor of Muslims and Turks (*müslümanlık [sic] ve Türklüğün şerefi*) and in the name of *Islamic-Turkish* scholarship and knowledge (İslâm-Türk *ilim ve irfanı*). After the publication of a trilingual work in Europe under the protection of missionary societies with access to millions of liras, […] titled «Encyclopaedia of Islam» […], including several allegations, slander, distortions, and other assaults irreconcilable with scholarship (*ilimle hiç münasebeti olmıyan*), it became a fundamental responsibility of Turkish society to publish a great *Islamic-Turkish Encyclopaedia* written by Islamic-Turkish scholars (*İslâm-Türk uleması*) informing on the true principles of Islam, true Islamic-Turkish history, and the true Islamic-Turkish existence (*hakiki müslümanlık esasatını, hakiki İslâm-Türk tarihini, hakiki İslâm-Türk varlığını*). This imperative compelled us to embark upon this magnificent endeavour! [...] So far, we have carried out this task solely with the support of our esteemed readers. In the future, God willing, we will continue it with this support.[126]

The criticism against Yaltkaya, deemed unsuitable for the position of Diyanet president, the Ministry of Education, as well as against Ateş, 'assistant to the orientalist Monsieur Ritter' at Istanbul University, indicates that in the discussion surrounding the encyclopaedias and their specific entries, not only an intellectual dispute is at stake, but concrete (occupational) positions and access to institutions, financial means and opportunities to exert influence.

Even though in the early 1940s, due to the repressive environment, requests in this direction could not openly be stated, they were implicit in the *ulema*'s self-confident positioning as real experts against office holders in state institutions whom they considered incompetent. In the late 1940s, with the onset of the democratization process and more possibilities to discuss questions regarding religion and religious institutions, these *ulema* formulated their political demands more explicitly. In fact, the journal's final issues became an influential platform for their participation in the public debate. Thus, the earlier stage, with frequent invocations of their expertise, legitimized by references to their credentials, as well as warnings against the impact of orientalists' misleading works on uninformed Turkish writers,[127] was a fruitful ground for the later stage, when they demanded very concrete responsibilities e.g. in the field of religious education. In several journal articles, the *ulema* argued that, as the only scholarly authority commanding the necessary expertise, they were the ones to take on the leadership in the conceptualization of religious education and institutions of religious learning, 'even though on our end, when it's about religion, anybody who can hold a pen suddenly turns into a know-it-all (*bilgiç*).'[128]

This is also why, when finally in 1947, one of the contributors of the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi*, Akseki, is appointed Diyanet president after Yaltkaya's death, there is great excitement and joy among the editors, who dedicate poems to him and portray

126 [Eşref Edip] 1946c, 2.
127 Eşref Edib 1942b, 3; Eşref Edib 1942c, 4.
128 Yörükân 1948, 2.

him as the third Diyanet president, but 'undeniably the first in terms of his official career (*resmî hayatı*), the significance of his scholarship (*ilmî kıymeti*), and his sublime character (*yüksek karakteri*).'[129] This appointment is seen as a step in the right direction, reflected in an exemplary fashion by Akseki's official embrace of the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi* in 1948, when he sends a note to *muftis* all over the country to prompt them to obtain new subscribers and to persuade the community of the importance of this fundamental work, unique in the whole Islamic world. Although Akseki regrets that the Diyanet, due to a lack of means, could not fund the publication,[130] under his auspices, the demand to state organs to support the work[131] becomes reality.

5. Conclusion

As has been shown, the debates surrounding three competing encyclopaedias were a welcome opportunity for former Ottoman *ulema* and intellectuals to 'enact expertise' and claim interpretive authority over Islam and to mobilize it for political demands regarding their own position and responsibilities. In their claim to expertise, they resort to their own tradition and history, invoking different aspects of it: On the one hand, they draw on a century-old tradition of classical Islamic scholarship, and on the other, on their more recent attempts to bring classical Islamic disciplines such as *kalām* or educational institutions such as *medrese*s in line with modern intellectual developments and debates. Therefore, by recalling their experiences in this regard, and demonstrating their engagement with transregional scholarly debates both in the West and in other parts of the Islamic world, they establish not only an ancient-yet-modern tradition of in-depth expertise, but also its complexity, comprehensiveness and multifacetedness. It is a key concern of theirs to emphasize this and to contrast it with the flawed works of politically motivated orientalists, as much is at stake: Many Turkish intellectuals, just for the reason of their being non-Muslim and thus allegedly 'neutral' authorities on Islam, favoured Western orientalists over local scholars, who had been marginalized institutionally and socially both in the late Ottoman Empire and in the Republic.

There are several strategies available to the latter on two levels, aimed firstly at *asserting* their own expertise and secondly at *denying* expertise to their rivals, the orientalists. This includes invoking their own biographies and credentials, the complexity of their field, or their international connections on the one hand, and an analysis of methods, political agendas, power dynamics and alleged neutrality and universalisms on the other. Different self-designations of the *ulema* and intellectuals involved, such as *ulema*, *mütehassıs*, *ilim adamı*, *üstad*, *profesör* or *mütefekkir*, are also an indication of the multiple dimensions they ascribe to 'their kind of expertise.'

129 Miras 1947, 9.
130 Büyüker 2018, 239.
131 [Eşref Edip] 1946c, 3.

My case study clearly demonstrates that 'enactment of expertise' as a 'communicative practice […] is never insulated nor isolated from institution and ideology'[132] and takes place within existing power dynamics. Through their discourse, the *ulema* not only positioned themselves within a broader Ottoman and early Republican tradition of responding to distorted representations of Islam by orientalists. They also counteracted the ascription of expertise to orientalists in order to demand more resources, responsibilities, and power for themselves in the long run – which was closely related to the fear that the last generation of Ottoman *ulema* was slowly disappearing, and a break with the Ottoman intellectual tradition and institutions for Islamic learning and teaching underway.[133] Through a self-conscious invocation of their history, they rebuked figures such as the above-mentioned Banguoğlu, who warned against a '*medrese* mentality' and laid claim to a reform of religious education on his own: There was no need for his dubious initiatives and ideas; a look into the curricula of the modernized Ottoman *medreses* was enough, which just awaited reviving under the auspices of already available experts – former Ottoman *ulema*.[134]

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In the following, I will use these abbreviations:
İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi – İTA.
İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi Mecmuası – İTAM.
Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı – TDV.

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132 Carr 2010, 27.
133 Bein 2011, 149–51; Lord 2018, 100–1. See Kara 2017, 138–52 for a report from 1950 on the state of religious education in which Akseki expresses this fear. This report also demonstrates that many of the arguments initially proposed by the editors of the *İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi* remained relevant throughout the 1950s.
134 'Manasız ve fuzulî bir teşebbüs. Tahsin Banguoğlu'nun kendi kendine verdiği paye'. 1948, 10–1.

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Epilogue

The experts shaping the intellectual landscapes fostered a vibrant cultural exchange in the premodern and modern periods in the Ottoman Empire and the Eastern Mediterranean. The exploration of the matter of the terminology or the concepts used for the main historical actors in this book explores the nature and definition of experts and their expertise from a conceptual history perspective. A careful interpretation of concepts/terms of experts and expertise could lead to new ideas and aspirations constituting the meaning of these terms as they were used in the broader Eastern Mediterranean from the early modern period to the late nineteenth century.

Dealing with the historical semantics of terms/concepts, one should also see that overlapping terms/concepts bearing a historical character and application shifted over time. Today we define the term 'expertise' (derived from the Latin *expertus*) as 'possession of the specialized knowledge' but in early modern times, one could find it used to convey a variety of interesting meanings. As mentioned by Michael Wintroub, referring to dictionaries compiled in 1606 by Jean Nicot and in 1538 by Robert Estienne, 'expert' is one who is not only knowledgeable and/or practiced, but also ingenious. Along with this usual (customary for the time) definition the dictionaries provide synonyms such as 'artificious, argutus, solers' that are associated with the nature of experts and expertise. Interestingly, experience in the dictionaries was also labelled with the term 'expertise' and 'proof.' This definition was accompanied by critique on imposters, fakes and demonstration of fake qualities.

The terms used in the Ottoman practice and discussed in the contributions enable us to project and determine the indicators of great knowledge and erudition of the 'heroes' of the time. Rather than merely exploring the terms used by those actors, a further analysis and interpretation of these concepts offers valuable insights.

The concept of *erib* was used to describe one who is 'intelligent, shrewd, expert and one that is practised and desirous (in a thing)' and *erbāb* is explained as 'expert, people concerned with' (e.g.; *ʿilim erbābı* 'experts of knowledge, scholars'). The specific terms such as '*ehil* [*ehl*]' in the sense of 'men of letters, science' and *müteḫaṣṣıṣ* as 'specialist, and expert' as well as '*mütefennin*' in the sense of 'being learned in the art of science, being a scientist' were associated with experts (here agronomists) to argue the extraordinary quality and value of ones' expert knowledge.

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Religious and social class affiliations (with and without formal institutional validation) and their expertise outweigh their social ranking, recognition and reputation that could witness the community, group of people and local area. On the one hand, acquired knowledge (e.g. on arts of warfare, *fünūn-ı ʿaskeriye*) and being trained under the experts of knowledge (*erbāb-ı vukūf)* as well as gaining practical experience of battles made one an expert. At the same time, these experts could be called into question, and even if their expertise was not accepted or trusted, they became a matter of security concern. Multilingualism was also one of the attributes defining the experts and as a kind of a term denoted expertise based on the knowledge of languages even if the readers did not necessarily claim or know to a degree necessary to judge whether the expert in question was actually fluent in another language.

The affiliation of '*Khoja Tēr*' that Step'anos bore displays family affluence and his strong ties with clergy, which at the young age made his career path successful as a priest acting in one of the city's largest churches. Therefore, strong family ties, social recognition, knowledge and practical experience ('know how') were the main indicators that helped Step'anos to demonstrate his knowledge and expertise in Tokat and then transfer it to Crimea.

Additionally, a component of being an expert was to be an insider (or one of 'us') and to carry the local knowledge of an (imagined) homeland. The Greek adjective 'ἡμέτερος' (*imeteros*, 'our') or the Turkish equivalent suffix '*-mız*' in Karamanli-Turkish appears as a component of being or being admitted as a local/regional expert. So, in this case on the one hand, 'our' experts addressing internal and external audiences were accepted as 'fighters' to contradict already-circulated 'fake knowledge' and dissolve the 'wrong image,' and they were admitted as new and proficient, skilful and '*meharetlü*'/'*maharetli*' 'real experts.' In contrast to 'our' experts, foreign experts (*efrencī*) were not trusted and were suspect. Furthermore, within the state-sponsored translation project of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, expertise rooted in the intellectual tradition of Ottoman-Islamic education empowered marginalized former Ottoman *ulema* to assert their 'true' knowledge and paved the way to discredit and reject expertise from rivals such as orientalists and missionaries, whom they labelled as 'outsiders.' Nevertheless, there is a striving within this project to encapsulate a comprehensive and diverse spectrum of expertise, underscored by the contributors' use of various self-designating terms. These terms encompass both traditional labels and more contemporary descriptors, such as *ulema, ihtisas sahibi, münevver,* or *ilim adamı*.

Another question is the scepticism experienced through the different terms denoting the same spectrum of expertise used in different regions that displays a lack of or poor recognition of experts and (non) acceptance of one's expertise. One term is a mirror reflecting traditional experience, passing down from father to son, and another term is expert knowledge acquired from institutions – diplomas, as in the cases of farmers and agronomists, or veterinarians and farriers. A vivid example was discussed showing the different imagery of social recognition of the terms *fallahin (*farmers) and *effendi* (agronomist).

Additional misunderstanding based on shared terms emerged in the case of overlapping terminology for experts who gained their expertise through disparate means.

The term *bayṭar*, which designated both veterinarians and farriers, led to confusion and veterinarians suffered a bad reputation because of equal recognition with farriers. Representing their expertise as the 'real one,' they sought to disqualify others by branding them as ignorant, outdated, unprofessional or *wrong experts*. Disqualifying their adversaries-farriers and seeing them as competitors, veterinarians branded farriers as 'foul copies' (*bayṭar ṭaslaḳları*), criticized them and exposed to the public their non-professional and ignorant practices as 'charlatanry' (*şārlātānlıḳları*). This competitive dynamic between different groups of experts such as veterinarians and farriers illustrates the complexities of expertise recognition. Afterwards the exchange of the used title term *baytar* with *veteriner* paved the way to recognition of a higher level of understanding and a marker of scientific expertise.

Summarizing, we want to point out that terminology is an important tool for studying cultures of expertise in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially because so little is known about the terms and their development in the conceptual history of the Ottoman Empire and the Eastern Mediterranean. Nevertheless, terminology has only an auxiliary function in studying the phenomenon of expertise because cultures of expertise can be perceived only in the totality of their social, intellectual, communicative, and performative environments, which the contributors to our special issue try to reconstruct meticulously in their case studies, even when a concept, such as an explicit term name is not present.

EINZELBEITRAG / INDIVIDUAL PAPER

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Strategies to Gain Rabbinic Authority: Situating a Responsum of Elijah Mizraḥi (c. 1450–1526) in Ottoman Constantinople

Abstract

In this essay, I seek to illustrate the workings of rabbinic authority by means of a concrete historical example, a decision taken by Rabbi Elijah Mizraḥi (c. 1450–1526) in a particular constellation in Ottoman Constantinople around 1500. The insights of a historian of Jewish history may also be of interest to scholars of Ottoman Studies, at best stimulating interdisciplinary collaborations as well as comparative studies. After a brief introduction to the genre of responsa literature and its value as a source for political history, a specific conflict is presented, which was sparked by the question of whether Rabbanite Jews were allowed to teach Karaite Jews in religious and secular subjects. An appraisal of Mizraḥi's reasoning reveals that the scholar who permitted the teaching espoused a rather liberal position. It was supported by halakhic tradition, but did not automatically follow from it. If Mizraḥi's arguments are then placed in their historical context, the decision's likely effects become visible, allowing a reconstruction of the rabbi's strategies: an overall conciliatory approach appears to have enabled him to gain recognition of his authority among various groups of the city's generally heterogeneous Jewish population. The example at hand thus offers an illuminating vantage for examining Jewish politics under the impress of continued migrations in the Ottoman lands and the Mediterranean region of the following 16th century.

Keywords: Jews, Karaites, Ottoman Empire, rabbinic authority, responsa literature, science

What is rabbinic authority? How does it work? Like any form of authority, rabbinic authority is always a relational phenomenon:[1] On the one hand, it is claimed by the scholar of Halakha (Jewish law), but on the other hand, it depends on being recognized as legitimate – as justified so that the scholar's co-religionists potentially follow suit. Unlike the ecclesiastical hierarchy, as is generally known, there is no institutionalized leadership in Judaism who could demand allegiance qua office.[2] Working as a rabbi, that is, as someone who interprets and applies Halakha, may or may not even neces-

1 Following Georg Simmel's observation that there is always an interrelationship between the person exercising authority and the person subject to authority. Cf. Simmel 2009, 130–1.

2 Even in times when central offices exist, like in the case of today's Israeli chief rabbis, the actual authority of the incumbents and the recognition of their halakhic decisions remains a matter of negotiation. For a recent example, consider the late Sephardi Chief Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef (1920–2013). Despite prominence and long tenure, many of his decisions did not find recognition among Sephardi rabbis. To what extent his authority holds up over the longue durée remains an open question. Cf. Taub 2015, in summary 277–80; Zohar 2007,

sarily involve holding an office in a Jewish community.[3] At the same time, it would be contrary to the self-image of a scholar with expertise in Halakha and the wider rabbinic literature to just drift with the tide. His role is not simply to carry out what his co-religionists want him to do – whether voluntarily or under duress. In the Jewish tradition, a third way exists for the halakhic scholar, the rabbi. His influence does not stem from any form of institutionalized power. One might have in mind the instrument of the *ḥerem*, the Jewish ban, but its implementation remains dependent on the acceptance of exclusion in the community.[4] Rabbis have repeatedly entered into cooperation with non-Jewish authorities to enforce their decisions. Yet in this case, power is surrendered to the outside world.[5] The inherent authority of the scholar lies instead in the halakhic expertise, embedded in a centuries-old tradition itself, which must be asserted and accepted as justified. Halakhic decisions only endure if they meet with majority approval, recognizing the claimed authority as legitimate. The process is circular, if one will: only through the repeated recognition of halakhic decisions does rabbinic authority constitute and perpetuate itself. Therefore, the rabbinic arbiter or decisor is well-advised to be politically pragmatic, forming coalitions and being aware of power relations in the community.[6]

In this essay, I seek to illustrate the workings of rabbinic authority sketched above in an abstract way with the help of a concrete historical example. I hope that my work as a historian with a focus on Jewish history will also be of interest to scholars of Ottoman Studies, at best stimulating interdisciplinary collaborations as well as comparative studies. In many ways, the scholar of Sharia (Islamic Law) is faced with similar challenges to the one in Halakha. A mufti issues legal opinions not unlike those of a rabbi. In the Ottoman Empire of the 16th and 17th centuries, the institution of the mufti undoubtedly underwent major changes. With the development of a distinctive

127–30. In the Ottoman Empire, the office of chief rabbi, whose incumbent was officially appointed by the Ottoman government, had only existed since 1835. Cf. Levy 2010. Also see the information in fn. 35 below.

3 Cf. Čejka and Kořan 2016, 6–7.

4 On the Jewish ban in general, cf. Cohn and Greenberg 2007.

5 Concerning the legitimacy of non-Jewish authority, see Walzer, Lorberbaum and Zohar 2000, 430–62.

6 The concept of authority has often been a focus of discussion in the social sciences. Its development is frequently associated with the writings of Max Weber, who distinguished between three forms of legitimate rule or, synonymously, authority: traditional, charismatic and legal/rational rule. Cf. Weber 2019, 338–447. Broken down to the micro-level, all three aspects characterize the legitimization of rabbinic authority: it is legitimized by tradition, that is, previous legal decisions and local customs. It is based on charisma, as the personality of the scholar plays an important role. Does he act in a consensual manner? Or does he favour a rather confrontational course? Finally, rabbinic authority is legitimized by knowledge of the recognized rules, laws and procedures. For a slightly different parallelization of Weber's typology and the conception of rabbinic authority, cf. Zohar 2012. A multifaceted discussion of the concept of authority within the Jewish political tradition is provided by Walzer, Lorberbaum and Zohar 2000.

branch within the Sunni Hanafi school of law and the rise of an imperial learned hierarchy, including the emergence of the chief mufti and the binding nature of his opinions, legal scholars became increasingly dependent on the state. At the same time, the individual mufti continued to issue his decisions with reference to tradition and in an effort to gain approval – not least to maintain his position.[7] As noted above, an ecclesiastical hierarchy is initially characterized by a far more solid institutional structure. However, the Greek Orthodox and Armenian communities, similar to the Jewish ones in this respect, had to find and assert their positions anew as non-Muslims under Ottoman rule. The state collaborated with quite different elites of the respective communities, contributing to their fragmentation to a certain degree. As a result, authority negotiations became more complex.[8] The comparative view and the awareness of the differences and similarities between the empire's religious communities, which could only be hinted at here, can help to better understand Ottoman society as a whole.

The focus of this essay will be on one particular figure, the Constantinopolitan (Istanbuli) Rabbi Elijah Mizraḥi (also known by the acronym Re'em; c. 1450–1526),[9] and on his halakhic decision in a specific case involving different Jewish groups in his native city.[10] In addition to individual immigrant Ashkenazi (Central European) and Italian Jews, the majority of Constantinople's Jewish population, including Mizraḥi himself, consisted of Romaniots at the end of the 15th century. These followed their own customs and liturgical rite. They spoke Greek, even though, as in the case of the other Jewish groups, most learned writings were written in Hebrew.[11] The majority of Romaniot Jews followed the rabbinic tradition which characterizes Judaism up until today. However, a considerable number of them were also Karaites, rejecting the rabbinic tradition and abiding by their own interpretations of Scripture.[12] Finally, the Jewish population of Constantinople included Sephardi Jews, i.e. Jews who, after the expulsions from the Iberian Peninsula in the years 1492–1498, increasingly found refuge in the Ottoman Empire. Due to their economic success, but also their sheer numbers, they eventually came to dominate the local

7 For the development of law and legal institutions in the Ottoman Empire, cf. Burak 2015. For a discussion of changes in Jewish law in the later 16th century in the context of the Ottoman Empire, and to some extent in comparison with those of Islamic law, see Weinstein 2020; Weinstein 2022.

8 For an insight into the changes in the Greek Orthodox Church in the early Ottoman centuries, see Papademetriou 2015. Comparative perspectives between the empire's various non-Muslim communities are opened up by Ayalon 2017 and Barkey 2008 in particular.

9 For a first view of his life and oeuvre, cf. Hacker 2007; still valuable is Friedmann 1974.

10 In modern research, the name Istanbul is often used to refer to the Ottoman period of rule over the city. However, I prefer to use the name Constantinople here; as with Mizraḥi, as will be presented, the focus is on the Romaniot (Greek Jewish) perspective.

11 Generally, the study of Romaniot Jewry has long been a stepchild of scholarship. Only very few monographs exist. See, for example, Bowman 1985; Gardette 2013. A broad insight into the history and culture of Byzantine Judaism is provided by the different contributions to the collective volume edited by Bonfil et al. 2012.

12 For an overview of Karaite history, see Lasker 2022; Polliack 2003. For insight into the history of research on Karaites, see Rustow 2010.

Jewish communities – a development that, however, was not yet foreseen at the turn of the 16th century.[13] It is in Mizraḥi's world of experience, and in the case presented below, that important processes at the turn of the modern era converge, shaping Jewish life not only in the Ottoman Empire but in the broader Mediterranean as well: there emerged a multitude of voluntary, but above all forced migrations, even before the expulsions of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula; this was accompanied by challenges to community life in general and to rabbinic authority in particular. Concomitant was a veritable explosion of knowledge, intensified by scholarly encounters, but also by the technology of printing. And not least, new alliances and coalitions arose with the rising empire of the Sultans on the political map.[14]

In this way, the experiences of many contemporaries were not only structurally similar. People as well as writings also moved within the Mediterranean world and interacted with each other. Even a brief look at the Romaniot Mizraḥi makes this clear: although speculation that the scholar himself had studied in Padua with Rabbi Judah ben Eliezer ha-Levi Minz (c. 1408–1506) can hardly be substantiated,[15] we know from other Romaniot scholars that they attended yeshivot in Italy and Germany. The Ashkenazi influence on the legal traditions of Romaniot Jews in particular is clearly recognizable.[16] At the same time, someone like Mizraḥi was also familiar with the writings of prominent Sephardi authorities, which in the 15th century had long been widespread in the eastern Mediterranean. Moreover, one of Mizraḥi's own teachers had studied under a Sephardi scholar.[17] Rabbinic controversies developed across state borders, but even members of the same family sometimes lived under different rulers. Rabbi Moses ben Elijah Capsali (c. 1420–c. 1500), for example, who, as will be discussed below, was considered the leading authority among the Romaniot Jews in Constantinople before Mizraḥi, hailed originally from Venetian Crete, where the presumably larger part of his family continued to live.[18] Corresponding contacts may in turn have promoted the exchange of writings, to which Mizraḥi's correspondence bears witness as well, referencing contemporary Italian

13 For an account of the various immigrations to the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the modern era, see Hacker 2018. Concerning the history of Sephardi Jews in the Eastern Mediterranean, still valuable is Benbassa and Rodrigue 2000.

14 For a general portrait of the time and early modern Jewish experiences, cf. Ruderman 2010, esp. 14–6.

15 In older research, reference has been made to a letter of Elijah Capsali (c. 1483–1555), in which he mentioned an alleged ordination of Mizraḥi by Judah Minz. See Friedmann 1974, 20–1.

16 Cf. Ta-Shma 2002. See also references in the literature noted in fn. 18 below.

17 Mizraḥi was a student of Mordecai ben Eliezer Comtino (1420–d. before 1487), inter alia. Comtino in turn had studied religious and philosophical subjects under Ḥanokh Saporta (15th century), a distinguished Catalonian scholar. On the intellectual profile of Romaniot Judaism in the 15th century, especially in its reception of Iberian and Provençal scientific writings, see Gardette 2013, 35–43; on the narrower context of Comtino, cf. 43–54.

18 Cf. Benayahu 1983, esp. 11–9; Paudice 2010, 39–52. As an example of a contemporary rabbinic controversy across state borders, see the controversy between Moses Capsali in Constantinople und Joseph ben Solomon Colon (c. 1420–1480) in Pavia; cf. Rabinowicz 1957.

scholars.[19] Conversely, Venice as the place of publication of at least some of Mizraḥi's writings points to the reception of his works in Italy – both in the short and long term.[20]

The course of events thus suggests integrative perspectives. The histories of the Mediterranean Jewish communities, especially those in the Italian and Ottoman lands, are not only intertwined.[21] Their exploration faces similar methodological challenges. With an interest in the workings of rabbinic authority, I will therefore proceed in the following in two steps: in a first section, I briefly introduce the specific genre of responsa literature, outlining the limitations, but above all the possibilities of its informative value as a source for Jewish political history. In doing so, I also will already discuss Mizraḥi and his case by way of example in order to clarify my access to the sources. In a second and longer part, I then analyse how Mizraḥi proceeded in a specific constellation in Constantinople around the year 1500. I examine the scholar's argumentation and then explore the potential effect of his decision in the contemporary political context – not least with regard to Mizraḥi's own rabbinic authority. What can only be provisionally sketched and presented here will be analysed in much greater detail in my ongoing book project on Elijah Mizraḥi and the functioning of his rabbinic authority.[22]

1. Responsa as 'a Window onto Rabbinic Leadership in Action'

Responsa (legal opinions) provide important insights into the scholar's activity as halakhic decisor and potential community leader: In response to a current query or a contemporary conflict, the scholar made a legal decision, often preceded by detailed deliberations.[23] As the questions that stimulated the texts usually arose from actual occurrences and the answers provided were intended to change behaviours or serve as legal precedents in the future, responsa reflect individual and societal realities more directly than many other literary genres. In the words of Marc Saperstein, they 'provide a window onto rabbinic leadership in action.'[24]

Colon was responding to various allegations that had been made against Capsali. In terms of content, a number of family law issues were discussed.

19 See, for example, the reference to legal opinions by Judah Minz and David ben Judah Messer Leon (c. 1470–c. 1526), which were circulating in Salonica at the time. Cf. Härtel 2023, annotation 11, 73.

20 See two examples from the field of Halakha: Mizraḥi's super-commentary to Rashi's commentary on the Torah, upon which the bulk of his scholarly fame rests to this day, was published in Venice in 1527, a year after the scholar's death. Also in Venice, a second collection of Mizraḥi's responsa appeared in the 17th century. Cf. the information in fn. 25 below.

21 Cf. the pioneering work of Benayahu 1980.

22 In order to shed light on the diversity and scope of rabbinic leadership, a variety of problems Mizraḥi faced will be analysed in individual case studies. The one discussed here offers a first insight into one such problem. Cf. also Härtel 2022; Härtel 2023; Härtel 2024.

23 A concise introduction to the genre of responsa literature is provided by Slepoy 2018; see also Elon 1994(b), 1453–1528.

24 Saperstein 2014, 6.

Like any type of source, of course, responsa have their limitations. The texts clearly reflect the perspective of the rabbi or the rabbinic milieu, presenting reflections in halakhic discourse and following specific rules of argumentation. The scholarly nature of the responsa is reinforced by the fact that the legal opinions were often revised before their publication, omitting the details of the case under negotiation. Thus, a first collection of Mizraḥi's responsa appeared in print in Constantinople in the years 1559–1561, some thirty years after the scholar's death.[25] The rabbinic perspective likewise implies that political actors other than the rabbis, the halakhic scholars themselves, appear less often in the texts, and, if so, are mediated by the rabbinic view. In the case discussed below, we will see how Mizraḥi also sought to assert his authority over lay representatives of Constantinople's various Jewish congregations, depicting them in rather derogatory ways.[26] The non-Jewish Ottoman rule, on the other hand, which determined the scope of all Jewish life and thus also the functioning of rabbinic authority, is not mentioned at all in the responsum at hand. This does not mean, however, that it was not present or perhaps even decisive in shaping Mizraḥi's decision.

A halakhic scholar writes his responsum in a particular historical constellation and with the interest that his decision is followed and his authority is recognized. There is no guarantee that this will happen. Unlike judicial court decisions, legal opinions are not binding for the disputing parties. However, if we take the socio-cultural context of the responsum's composition into account, here the specific situation of Constantinople's Jewish population around 1500, we can examine how the scholar's arguments, including his depiction of events, functioned, and why the scholar might have reached one conclusion and not the other. It will be possible to reconstruct the scholar's strategies for gaining recognition, taking him seriously as a political actor in this context.[27]

25 To date only traditional editions are available; see Mizraḥi 1938. After the Constantinople edition of the 16th century, a second collection appeared in Venice, nearly a century later in 1647; see Mizraḥi and Ibn Ḥayyim 1778. Cf. Heller 2004, 499; Heller 2011, 639.

26 For more general information on negotiation processes between rabbis and lay leaders, cf. Ayalon 2017. Concerning Mizraḥi's depiction of the lay leadership in the case at hand, see the references in fn. 65–7 below.

27 See Roni Weinstein's recent remarks on a sociological turn in the history of halakha, pointing to a new research perspective 'that emphasizes the significant weight and contribution of the nonhalakhic context for our understanding of the concrete functioning of Halakhah in historical conditions;' Weinstein 2022, 4–5; also cf. Saperstein 2014, 29–30.

2. Elijah Mizraḥi's Strategies to Gain Rabbinic Authority

2.1 The Case in Question: Should Rabbanite Jews be allowed to Teach Karaite Jews?

The case that lends itself to illustrating the workings of rabbinic authority is a relatively early one within the responsa by Mizraḥi handed down.[28] The conflict under discussion dates back to the above-mentioned Moses Capsali, who was considered the halakhic authority of Constantinople's Romaniot Jews until his death around the year 1500 – a status subsequently attained by Mizraḥi. The responsum is a long one, covering in quarto nearly 17 pages. It almost seems as if Mizraḥi wanted to take the chance in formulating his political agenda also to stand in distinction to his colleague's earlier and rather unfortunate mode of action. The Sephardic immigration, which was to significantly change the balance of power between the various Jewish groups in the city, was not yet far advanced at the time of the events described. Thus, the responsum primarily provides insight into the life of Romaniot Jewry in the 1490s.[29] It is not possible to determine exactly when Mizraḥi wrote the text, probably some time after Capsali's passing.[30] In any case, as we will see, both halakhic scholars were differentially successful in asserting their rabbinic authority.[31]

28 See Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, 176–92. Partial translations are available; see Walzer, Lorberbaum and Zohar 2000, no. 13, 409–14; Rozen 2010, no. 12, 339–55. If possible, I follow the already existing translations in my quotations from the text. Mizraḥi's responsum was available in the 16th century to the Karaite Joseph ben Moses Beghi. In his tract, which was mainly devoted to refuting the (polemical) identification of the Karaites with the ancient Sadducees, Beghi also integrated an account of the events in Constantinople at the end of the 15th century, evidently drawing on Mizraḥi's text. See 'Extracts from Joseph b. Moses Beghi's *iggeret qiryah ne'emanah*' 1972. I will provide elsewhere an analysis of this account, which offers interesting insights into the Karaite perspective. On the Karaite perception of the events, see likewise Elior 2018.

29 At the end of his responsum, Mizraḥi mentions that after the imposition of the ban, several scholars of the people expelled from Spain arrived, who taught the Karaites and for whom the ban could not claim any validity anyway, since they were not present at the time of the legislative effort. See Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, 192. This remark has led researchers to date the events described roughly to the year 1490/91, which seems plausible in principle. Cf. Benayahu 1983, 42.

30 Only in the halakhic discussion does Mizraḥi mention Capsali and other scholars of his generation by name, whom he commemorates here in the past tense. See Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, 179. Capsali had apparently already died by the time the responsum was written. Soon after his death around the year 1500, Mizraḥi may have composed the text.

31 The case is known in the scholarly literature. It has been referred to frequently, especially in relation to Karaite life in Constantinople, but without analysing Mizraḥi's argumentation in more detail and, at the same time, in its historical context. See, inter alia, Attias 1989, 188–9; Attias 1991, 68–72; Benayahu 1983, 42–5; Danon 1927, 318–22; Friedmann 1974, 149–63; Morgenstern 2007, 111–4; Rozen 2010, esp. 71–3. Moreover, Mizraḥi's responsum is occasionally referred to in legal history studies devoted to the issue of communal decision-making. Cf. fn. 68 below.

Romaniot Jewry may not be thought of as a homogeneous entity at this time. It was divided into various congregations. The Karaites generally organized themselves separately from the rest of the Jewish population. However, Constantinople's rabbinic Jews, the Rabbanites, were also grouped into different congregations, usually organized according to their original places of origin. For within the framework of Sultan Mehmed II's population policy, large groups of people, including Jews from Anatolia and the Balkans, had been forcibly relocated on the Bosporus in order to rebuild the desolated city after the Ottoman conquest.[32] The result was a polycentric Jewish community structure, with a certain continuing tension between the individual local congregations and an overarching communal organization in the city.[33] It is against this background that Mizraḥi's responsum should best be read and his effort to gain authority understood.

What was at stake in the case under discussion? The conflict that initially Capsali and then Mizraḥi grappled with was one that at first glance might seem very specific, but to which a number of religious, economic, and above all political issues were attached. The question was whether Rabbanite Jews should be allowed to teach Karaite Jews. The responsum at hand begins with a description of the legislative effort, some time ago, by some of the men of the congregations and some of the apparently lay representatives of the congregations – all Rabbanites – to prohibit anyone from teaching Karaites.[34] The prohibition was to be comprehensive. Not only the teaching of religious studies such as Torah, Talmud and Halakha, but also of secular subjects, the so-called teachings of the 'sages of the Greeks,' were to be prevented. Among other things, logic, physics, metaphysics, algebra, geometry, astronomy and music were no longer to be taught to the Karaites. To this end, the men had gathered in one of the city's synagogues, where they planned to enforce the teaching prohibition under threat of *ḥerem*, the Jewish ban. Anyone who would not follow the prohibition was to be excluded from the community. Since the imposition of a ban was apparently understood as the prerogative of the halakhic scholar, the rabbi, the men sent for the local rabbinic authority, the 'leading rabbi.' No name is given, but the rabbi was probably none other than Moses Capsali.[35] The latter, however, did not at first comply with the request to impose the ban. The matter, which was controversial among the Jewish population, was postponed until the next day, when the opponents of the teaching prohibition also raised their

32 The resettlement policy was known as *sürgün*. In the aftermath of the conquests, the Ottoman authorities used *sürgün* as a means of forced colonization to repopulate devastated areas. Cf. Hacker 1992; Yerasimos 2009.

33 Cf. Ben-Naeh 2008, 210–3; Ruderman 2010, 83–4.

34 See here and in the following: Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, 176.

35 See *ibid.*, 176, 191. In his responsum, Mizraḥi speaks of the 'leading rabbi' (רב המנהיג), as which he apparently identifies Capsali. It is difficult to decide to what extent this was an honorific or an actual official title, including formal recognition from the Sultan. Certainly, however, Capsali's authority was not based primarily on an Ottoman appointment. Moreover, it was solely focused on Constantinople. His position should not be confused with the imperial chief rabbis of the 19th century. Cf. Hacker 1984, esp. 243–50, 254–5.

voices. In particular, the affected group of teachers, among whom also scholars can be assumed, spoke out against the ban. Finally, the initiators of the legislative effort to prohibit teaching Karaites took action: they threatened Capsali that if he did not join them, they would support another rabbi. Under duress, Capsali therefore attended the proclamation of the teaching prohibition under threat of banishment.

Such a disregard for rabbinic authority, as had happened to Capsali, set an extremely dangerous precedent from the point of view of halakhic scholars. A group of ordinary community members, including some of the congregations' lay representatives, had arrogated to themselves an authority previously reserved for the rabbi. Although the halakhic scholar was not completely ignored, Capsali's forced consent in the case at hand left him at best a symbolic authority, not an actual factual one. The question of the responsum itself has not been handed down. It is possible that Mizraḥi responded to an inquiry about how to deal with the teaching prohibition that had come about in this way. It is equally conceivable that Mizraḥi took action on his own initiative to use the opportunity to present his position in great detail. Be that as it may, the formal decision here was clear to Mizraḥi. It can be stated briefly as follows: The teaching prohibition under threat of banishment had substance solely for those who agreed to it. For all others, the legislative decision could have no binding force.[36] Mizraḥi went so far as to claim that not even automatically was everyone who had attended and participated in the relevant meeting subject to the threat of banishment, but really only every person who had accepted the ban.[37] Basically, Mizraḥi disputed the legitimacy of any decision made by the self-empowered minority of community members and lay representatives.

The conflict that had ignited over the question of teaching Karaites went to the heart of rabbinic authority. It is therefore not surprising that Mizraḥi rejected at length the competing claims to authority put forward and defended rabbinic authority – always, it seems, with an eye to what was feasible and taking into account the current balance of power in Constantinople. In the following, I would like to take a first extractive look at one central aspect of the responsum's overall complex argumentation: the question of teaching Karaites, over which the conflict had arisen. How did Mizraḥi argue and reach a decision? And what was the potential effect of his decision in the context of the circumstances of the time – not least with regard to his own authority?

2.2 Finding Arguments with Recourse to Common Practice and Tradition: a Conciliatory Approach

By denying that the teaching prohibition was binding on anyone outside the small self-empowered group that had enacted it, Mizraḥi de facto allowed Rabbanites to teach Karaites – in secular as well as religious studies. That rabbinic scholars also counted Karaites among their students was nothing unusual at that time. In the responsum at hand, Mizraḥi even referred to his own teachers, who had advocated the teaching of

36 See Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, esp. 176–7, 191.
37 See, again, *ibid.*, 177.

Oral Law, that is, of rabbinic literature as well.[38] Generally, the teaching prohibition seems to have been only poorly enforced.[39] Of course, opposing voices also existed.[40] In any case, however, what Mizraḥi allowed corresponded to a rather common practice. It is all the more interesting that the scholar justified his position extensively and in detail, which can only be illuminated here briefly in selective points.

It seems that little controversy surrounded the transmission of secular knowledge, the various disciplines of 'Greek wisdom.' Mizraḥi categorized the teaching of these subjects as a matter of discretion, being neither prohibited nor commanded.[41] The subjects originated with the Greeks, the scholar elaborated. Similar to crafts and the like, they were to be taught to anyone who wished to profit. Especially since scholars apparently also instructed Muslims and Christians, there was no reason not to teach Karaites as well.[42] But according to Mizraḥi, there was also nothing to be said against the instruction in religious subjects when he referred to the Karaite study of rabbinic *midrashim*, that is, specifically rabbinic interpretations of Scripture. According to him, competition in study had a positive effect on one's own group: Rabbanite students saw themselves driven by the Karaite example. Conversely, the scholar saw in the abandonment of the teaching of the Karaites a reason for the dwindling of knowledge in the ranks of Rabbanite Jews.[43]

Mizraḥi was consistently careful not only to relate his arguments to current practice. He also, and above all, sought to support them by reference to earlier authorities, thus placing them in the halakhic tradition – a tradition that in fact included different, sometimes even contradictory and very radical positions on how to deal with Karaites in general. It was Mizraḥi's attempt to resolve apparent contradictions through various differentiations and sometimes also deliberate omissions, arguing for a liberal position toward the Karaites in his own days – also beyond the question of teaching. This can be clearly seen in his dealing with statements of Maimonides (Rambam; 1135–1204), one of the long recognized authorities of the time. Mizraḥi was aware that contradictory positions appeared in Maimonides' various writings regarding the appropriate

38 See Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, 179–80. Mizraḥi names his teachers Rabbi Elijah ha-Levi and Rabbi Eliezer Capsali. He also refers to Rabbi Mordecai ben Eliezer Comtino and his teacher Rabbi Ḥanokh Saporta, teaching Karaites every type of wisdom they requested. Cf. fn. 17 above. As a student of Comtino, Mizrahi had experienced this teaching practice himself. One of his fellow students had been Elijah ben Moses Bashyatchi. See fn. 60 below.

39 See Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, 192.

40 Mizraḥi mentions that Moses Capsali himself, for example, was against teaching the Oral Law to Karaites who did not believe in it. See *ibid.*, 179.

41 See *ibid.*, 177, referencing the Talmudic concept of *davar ha-reshut* that encompasses permissible but not obligatory actions. In the account of events at the beginning of the responsum, the relevant argument is also attributed to Moses Capsali, as well as correspondingly to the teachers protesting against the teaching ban. See *ibid.*, 176.

42 See *ibid.*, 177, 178. Also cf. again *ibid.*, 176. For a more detailed analysis of Mizraḥi's position vis-à-vis secular studies, see Sagi 2005, 247–52.

43 See Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, 178.

treatment of Karaites.[44] Wisely, therefore, he referred to a passage from the scholar's code of law, the *Mishneh Torah*, which postulated a rather pragmatic approach. In the code's third chapter of the 'Laws of the Rebellious,' it is first stated that a person who does not acknowledge the validity of the Oral Law is one of the heretics and should be put to death by any person. In this way, a Karaite would have been subject to the death penalty. However, the chapter continues to indicate that the implementation of this policy is not always appropriate, especially not to those

> who were led astray by their fathers, who were born to heresy and brought up in it – they are like an infant taken captive among non-Jews, and brought up in their religion. Such a person is acting under force, even if he later learns that he is Jewish and observes Jews and their religion, he is like having acted under force, for they have brought him up in their error. […] It is therefore proper to bring them to repent, and appeal to them in ways of peace until they return to the essence of the Torah. And one should not be hasty to kill them.[45]

The Karaites of his own time and place, Mizraḥi could infer, did not fall under the category of heretics to be punished by death. The scholar went even further by interpreting the last sentence of the quoted passage to mean that one should not kill Karaites even if one had previously sought their repentance in vain:

> One should not infer from the phrase, 'And one should not be hasty to kill them,' that it is proper to kill them after we have made an effort to bring them to repent if they did not want to listen, for [Maimonides] previously declared them comparable to an infant taken captive among the non-Jews, who is in no way punishable to death. Even though [an infant taken captive among the non-Jews] does not want to repent, since he is deemed to have acted under force he is exempt from punishment by death, as we understand the exclusion 'except for one having acted under force.'[46]

44 Maimonides' seemingly contradictory positions toward the Karaites have preoccupied not only traditional authors but also modern scholars. Cf. Blidstein 2004; Lasker 2007; Sinai 2008, including references to further research literature.

45 Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, 179: שהדיחו אותם אבותיהם ונולדו במינות וגדלו אותם עליו הרי הן כתינוק שנשבה לבין הגוים וגדלוהו על דתם שהוא אנוס ואף על פי ששמע אח"כ שהוא יהודי וראה היהודים ודתם הרי הוא כאנוס שהרי גדלוהו על טעותם [...] לפיכך ראוי להחזירם בתשובה ולמשכן בדרכי שלום עד שיחזרו לאיתן התורה ולא ימהר אדם להורגם. The translation is by Rozen 2010, 346 (slightly revised). Mizraḥi quotes from Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah. Hilkhot Mamrim*, chap. 3, § 3. Cf. *The Code of Maimonides* 1949, 144. In classic printed editions, including the translation noted here, the last sentence of the quotation is missing. It is this sentence from which Mizraḥi draws further conclusions in the following. However, the words have survived in virtually all manuscripts – and were apparently also available to Mizraḥi in the corresponding version. Cf. Blidstein 2004, 185 with annotation 52, 187 with annotation 59. Interestingly, Mizraḥi's reading has also inspired modern interpretations of the passage in Maimonides. In addition to Blidstein cf. also Sinai 2008, 288 with annotation 30.

46 Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, 179: ואין לדקדק ממאמר אל ימהר אדם להורגם מכלל שראוי להורגם אחרי שהשתדל להחזירם בתשובה ולא רצו לשמוע שהרי כבר דמה אותם לתנוק שנשבה לבין הגוים שאינו בן מות כלל ואף על פי שלא רצה לשוב בתשובה מדקאמר הרי הוא כאנוס ואנוס פטור ממיתה כדנפקא לן מההוא פרט לאנוס. The trans-

Ultimately, the Karaite congregations were thus recognized in their existence. Mizraḥi substantiated his position by referring to further Maimonidean writings that advocated mutual respectful relations between Rabbanites and Karaites.[47] On the other hand, references to passages in which Maimonides was offensive and unforgiving toward the Karaites were instead kept short and referred to further necessary examination.[48] The deliberately selected halakhic discussion supported an overall conciliatory attitude toward the Karaites that was careful to avoid all too deep rifts between the congregations.

2.3 Placing Arguments in Context: Why Karaites Matter

How then are we to understand Mizraḥi's position in its contemporary context? What was the potential effect of his halakhic arguments and decision – not least with regard to his own authority? It is important to keep in mind that the conflict under negotiation occurred in the 1490s. Very likely Mizraḥi wrote his legal opinion before the immigration of the Sephardi Jews gained momentum, significantly changing the composition of Constantinople's Jewish population. In the 1490s, the Romaniots still dominated Jewish life in the city. Among them, the Karaites certainly represented a small minority, but – as far as the scant data and occasional statements we have allow for conclusions – not one that could simply be ignored.

Most of the Karaite Jews had only arrived in Constantinople as a result of the forced relocations that followed the Ottoman conquest, where – as was common practice – they grouped together according to their places of origin. The most important of their congregations was that of Adrianopolis (Edirne), which also counted numerous scholars among its ranks.[49] It was to exist well into modern times, while as early as the end of the 16th century, smaller Karaite congregations with members from Anatolia

lation is by Rozen 2010, 346 (slightly revised).

47 See Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, 179. Reference is made to a responsum of Maimonides, in which the scholar permitted the circumcision of the sons of Karaites as well as basic acts of reverence toward them. All this was to be done as long as the Karaites, conversely, respected the generation's rabbinic authorities and did not publicly violate the holidays of Rabbanite Jews. Cf. Moses ben Maimon 1960, vol. 2, no. 449, 729–32. The responsum was also edited by Isaac Shailat; see Moses ben Maimon 1987, vol. 2, Appendix A, no. 3, 668–72. Shailat doubts the responsum's authenticity. However, Mizraḥi obviously attributed the text to Maimonides around 1500.

48 See Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, 179. The scholar refers to Maimonides' commentary on the Mishnah tractate *Ḥulin*, which is known for its condemnation of Karaites as heretics. Cf. Sinai 2008, 278, 280. For Mizrahi, the passage 'appears as a contradictory figure in need of further examination' (שנראה כדמות סותר וצריך עיון). He does not deal with the text any further.

49 The entire Karaite leadership known from before 1453 in Adrianopolis, the former Ottoman capital, was moved to Constantinople. See Hacker 1992, 12; Lasker 2022, 58. On early Ottoman Adrianopolis, cf. Singer 2018; Singer 2019.

and the Balkans no longer appeared in the Ottoman tax lists.[50] Since no fundamental distinction was made on the Ottoman side between Karaite and Rabbanite Jews, no information regarding the quantitative balance of power between the two groups can be gleaned from the general poll tax registers of the 15th century. Much later numerical data from the mid-16th century indicate that Karaites at that time accounted for less than ten percent of the Romaniot tax-paying population.[51] This figure will generally guard against judging the Karaite group to be too quantitatively weighty in Constantinople, but it hardly permits accurate conclusions about inter-communal relations in the 1490s. For there are at least some indications that individual Karaites certainly belonged to more affluent segments of the Jewish population, benefitting from the economic opportunities in the Ottoman capital.[52] Even in the responsum at hand, this is hinted at: on one hand, Mizraḥi reports that Capsali would have firmly rejected the teaching ban against the Karaites, but supported a corresponding resolution prohibiting the work of Rabbanites as servants in Karaite households. As a result of the different ritual practices of the two groups, one feared a violation of the dietary regulations as well as one's own holidays.[53] Apparently, at least some Karaite families could afford servants, while there were Rabbanite Jews who, as domestic servants, probably belonged to a lower social class. On the other hand, according to Mizraḥi, economic envy had also played a role among those who had supported the teaching prohibition under threat of banishment. That was because Karaite Jews lent money to Rabbanite Jews at interest.[54] At least individual Karaites, it can be concluded, prospered economically. In his halakhic argumentation, Mizraḥi, as we have seen, took a conciliatory stance toward the Karaites. In principle, this position may have enabled the scholar to negotiate with the representatives of this economically powerful group and potentially to gain recognition as a rabbinic authority among them as well. After all, was it not more attractive for Karaite Jews to accept someone like Mizraḥi in a leadership position than someone who ultimately sought to avoid any contact with them, even in the form of student-teacher-relations?

50 Cf. Akhiezer 2012, 737–8; Ben-Naeh 2008, 82, 84.

51 See above all Yerasimos 1995, esp. 101–7, 109–11: Only for the middle of the 16th century do registers exist for the first time that list tax-paying persons separately according to the individual congregations. For the year 1540, the Karaite congregations of Adrianopolis (Edirne), Kastamonou and Prevadi are recorded with 116, 2 and 11 taxpayers. A total of 129 Karaite taxpayers were thus roughly – Yerasimos notes inaccuracies in the documentation – opposed by 1386 Rabbanite taxpayers. All of them were Romaniot Jews. Sephardi Jews were not included in this register. Also cf. Epstein 1980, 178–80.

52 Cf. the general remarks of Assaf 1935, 223; Ben-Naeh 2008, 378–9. For various evidence pointing to the welfare of a certain stratum of Romaniot Jews, among them Karaites, see Rozen 2015, esp. 25–7.

53 See Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, 191. Concerning the Karaite festival calendar and dietary laws, based on a different interpretation of Scripture compared to Rabbanite Jews, cf. Lasker 2022, 103–11. By the 15th century, various reforms among the Karaites had led to a rapprochement with Rabbanite practices.

54 See Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, 192. Cf. Rozen 2015, 27.

One may even wonder how much negotiating leeway Mizraḥi and others actually possessed – be they religious or lay representatives of the community. As mentioned, no fundamental distinction was made between Rabbanites and Karaites on the part of the Ottoman rulers. It is well known that the various Jewish congregations had to meet and agree on tax matters time and again.[55] So was it perhaps even quite necessary, from a Rabbanite perspective, to maintain good relations with the Karaites? Perhaps especially with those who, because of their elevated social position, maintained individual relations with the Ottoman palace?[56] There were repeatedly issues concerning the Jewish population as a whole.[57] Deep rifts between congregations, which Mizraḥi's decision avoided, would have unnecessarily complicated the situation. However, a person who enjoyed the recognition of as many as possible among the Jewish population could negotiate internally between congregations and externally vis-à-vis Ottoman rule.

Let us return once again to the specific question of instruction, or rather the prohibition of teaching, which was negotiated in the responsum. The text leaves little doubt that the Karaites were interested in Rabbanite teachers and the knowledge they conveyed to them. A number of Karaite scholars are also known from the 15th and 16th centuries. But it is assumed that the resettlement to Constantinople had destroyed familiar educational structures, at least in part.[58] Even before that, Karaites had been in exchange with Rabbanites, so that a habitual practice probably only intensified. In order to keep up with the latest research, Karaites had obviously been dependent on Rabbanite teachers for some time. That rabbinic teachings were also imparted here is not surprising. Since the 13th century, there is evidence of a corresponding influence in

55 Muslims and non-Muslims alike were obligated to pay various levies in cash, in kind, or in service. According to Islamic law, non-Muslims also had to pay the poll tax (*cizye*). In the Ottoman Empire, the treasury levied this tax on households, and communities often paid it, as they did other taxes, as a lump sum. Cf. Imber 2019, 239–59; Rozen 2010, 26–34; Shmuelevitz 1984, 81–127. Epstein points to Ottoman documents attesting to an effort by the Karaites to achieve fiscal independence after the resettlement to Constantinople, following up on older extant privileges from Adrianopolis; see Epstein 1980, 16, 57. In the long run, these efforts were not successful, but remained occasional points of dispute.

56 Wealthy families, including those of the Karaites, with access to the Ottoman palace, sometimes obtained special privileges for themselves and their descendants. See the example of the Karaite woman Strongilah noted in Rozen 2010, 204–5. Her descendants later strove for reconfirmations of the privilege; see Danon 1927, no. 27a, 246, no. 39, 264–5.

57 Cf. Ben-Naeh 2008, 211–2; Rozen 2010, 80. It was by no means only tax issues that required joint action by the various congregations. Another example was the organization of the burial system. In 1582, Romaniot Jews, among them Rabbanites and Karaites, as well as Sephardi Jews, jointly acquired land for a cemetery in the city. Cf. Rozen 1992, 87.

58 Cf. Akhiezer 2018, 42; Bowman 1985, 139–46; Hacker 1992, 11. Hacker assumes a mutual attraction between Karaites and Rabbanites under the shared experience of forced resettlement. A concise overview of Karaite scholarship in Byzantine and Ottoman times is provided by Lasker 2022, 46–65. Even though the resettlement broke off familiar structures on one side, scholarly dynasties such as that of the Bashyatchi family continued on the other. Cf. also fn. 49 above.

Karaite texts.[59] Thus, Rabbanite scholars were recognized as an authority – an authority, however, that did not automatically perpetuate itself. On one hand, because it remained a question of time until Karaite scholars emancipated themselves from their Rabbanite teachers and used the knowledge they had acquired for their own purposes.[60] At the same time, there was no interest in dissolving group boundaries among either Rabbanite or Karaite Jews.[61] On the other hand, from a Rabbanite perspective, the dependency between teachers and students could be used to exert influence on the other group. Rabbanite teachers were able to impose conditions on their students, as had generally already been formulated by Maimonides, to whom Mizraḥi referred in detail in his halakhic decision. Among other things, rabbinic scholars were to be respected and rabbinic religious practice was not to be denigrated.[62] Perhaps in individual cases, one could even hope to convince students to become a member of one of the Rabbanite congregations?[63] With his decision to lift the teaching ban or to declare the corresponding resolution invalid, Mizraḥi kept all these options open and de facto courted recognition among the Karaites, as long as possible.

Finally, the question of the teaching ban also crystallized social differences within the Rabbanite congregations themselves on different levels. In his account of the events, Mizraḥi had described the protest of the teachers, who feared for their income earned by teaching Karaite students. Here, important earnings of the scholarly group were threatened. Evidence suggests that Mizraḥi's position was not entirely uncontroversial even among scholars. The existence of anti-Karaite polemics from that period

59 In addition to the literature noted in the preceding footnote, see, inter alia, Akhiezer 2012, 727–37; Dönitz and Hollender 2016, with a case study on the Karaite scholar Aaron ben Yoseph ha-Rofe (c. 1250–1320); Lasker 2008, 6–7, 12–3.

60 Simultaneously with the rapprochement between Rabbanites and Karaites, the body of law of Karaite Judaism, authoritative down to the present day, was created during those years. Known as *Adderet Eliyahu*, it goes back to Elijah ben Moses Bashyatchi (c. 1420–1490). Jean-Christophe Attias has repeatedly demonstrated how the Karaite students adopted the knowledge imparted by their Rabbanite teachers. Even the teaching of a secular, supposedly neutral subject such as astronomy could serve to legitimize their own calendar calculations and the cohesion of their own group. Cf. inter alia Attias 1989, 191–4; Attias 1991, 80–9. Concerning the Karaites' familiarization with Rabbanite historiographical literature and their adaptation of Rabbanite historiographical concepts to their own needs at this time, see in detail Akhiezer 2018, 25–49.

61 For example, the question of whether Rabbanites and Karaites were allowed to marry remained controversial. On this topic, see also Mizraḥi 1938, no. 58, 192–3. Cf. Corinaldi 1984, 32, 108.

62 See Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, 179 as well as fn. 46 above. Mizraḥi's teacher Comtino had already formulated similar conditions for his Karaite students. Cf. Attias 1989, 190–1; Attias 1991, 70–1.

63 The rhetorical question that Mizraḥi asks, again with reference to Maimonides, points to this hope: 'How will they return to the essence of the Torah if we do not inform them about the Torah's reasons?' (ואיך יחזרו לאיתן התורה אם לא יודיעו להם טעמי התורה); Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, 179.

proves that not everyone approved of the transmission of knowledge to Karaites.[64] But is it not likely that by lifting the ban on teaching, Mizraḥi may have rallied a larger number of scholars and persuaded them to recognize his authority? In the end, did not material interests, i.e., concerns about one's own income, weigh more heavily than ideological reasons, as manifested in the polemics? In addition to the conflicts within the scholarly class, as it were, the controversies in the case at hand naturally reflect the contrast between the congregations' religious and lay representatives. It was lay leaders and ordinary community members who sought to enforce the teaching prohibition and compel the leading religious authority at the time, Capsali, to cooperate. The light in which Mizraḥi portrayed those responsible was not a positive one. They had acted violently.[65] They were driven by envy and hatred of the teachers.[66] In all this, they had acted as a minority.[67] To discourage them and undermine their confidence, the reference to the importance of knowledge and teaching traditions was probably not enough. Of interest in this context are Mizraḥi's remarks on congregational decisions in general and on the significance of the formation of majorities within the congregation in particular, which I will elaborate on elsewhere.[68] Suffice it to note here that in this case likewise, the scholar's conclusions had the potential to promote recognition of his authority – even among broader, non-scholarly segments of the population. His sophisticated reasoning corresponded to the complex situation of Constantinople's overall Jewish population at the turn of the modern era.

3. Conclusion

The inherent authority of a rabbi lies in his halakhic expertise, embedded in a centuries-old scholarly tradition. However, this expertise requires recognition, which is what provides rabbinic decisions with legitimacy. The case presented in this essay illustrates how rabbis like Elijah Mizraḥi strove for this recognition among the Jewish population of their time, turning them into genuinely political actors on the local stage.

64 Cf. Benayahu 1983, 82–3; Bowman 1985, 149–50; Lasker 2022, 59. Also see the introductory remarks at 'Extracts from Joseph b. Moses Beghi's *iggeret qiryah ne'emanah*' 1972, 299–300.

65 See Mizraḥi 1938, no. 57, 176.

66 See *ibid*., 192.

67 See *ibid*., in his concluding remarks 191. See also the following fn.

68 A long segment of the responsum is devoted to the question of the legitimacy of communal decisions. Where does a community and its government derive their power from? What is the role of the scholar when majority decisions are fundamental? See *ibid*., starting on 180 until approximately the end of the text. The authorities of the rabbinic tradition are discussed, permitting different conclusions. In modern legal history studies of these issues, reference is sometimes made to Mizraḥi – without, however, taking into account the specific historical context in which his decisions could have had an effect. See, inter alia, Cohen 1993, esp. 105–6; Elon 1994(a), 700–2. Also cf. Walzer, Lorberbaum and Zohar 2000, 416–8.

It is the halakhic decisions of the scholars that have been handed down. Of course, these responsa are highly subjective, reflecting the perspective of the rabbi and his milieu, but it is precisely this subjectivity that makes the texts very instructive for historians. Documented are the halakhic arguments, which were obviously based on interpretations and selections from tradition. In the case at hand, Mizraḥi discussed the question of whether it was permissible for Rabbanite Jews to teach Karaite Jews. However, tradition and even individual authorities such as Maimonides offered very different answers regarding the general treatment of Karaites. If Mizraḥi took a very liberal position here, allowing, among other things, thus also the teaching of religious and secular disciplines, this decision could certainly be justified by tradition, but it did not automatically follow from tradition. In a second step, therefore, it is interesting to situate arguments and decisions in their historical context and to reflect on their likely effects. Retrospectively, strategies can be reconstructed. In the case at hand, again, Mizraḥi's overall conciliatory attitude toward the Karaites could have helped him to gain recognition among another important Jewish group in the city. The Karaites were a minority, but counted affluent and potentially influential individuals in their ranks. At the same time, it can be surmised that Mizraḥi's decision, which secured the income of a large number of rabbinic scholars as teachers of the Karaites, earned him majority support within his own scholarly milieu. Overall, the length of the responsum indicates the importance and urgency Mizraḥi attached to not only resolving the specific conflict, but to principally asserting his rabbinic authority in the city. It is likely that he still had the unfortunate fate of his earlier colleague Moses Capsali in mind, who had had to bow to the coercion of ordinary community members and whose authority in the end had hardly been recognized.

The case of conflict presented here dates from the 1490s in Constantinople. It provides insight into the already polycentric community structures within which Mizraḥi sought to assert his authority. With the arrival of Sephardi refugees and their scholars in the following years, the balance of power between the various congregations was once again to shift sharply and rabbinic authorities were to be challenged more than ever – not only in the cities of the Ottoman Empire, but in many regions of North Africa and in Italy as well. In this respect, the example at hand also offers a perspective from which to view aspects of Jewish politics in the following 16th century.

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Bei der vorliegenden Monographie handelt es sich um die Dissertationsschrift der Religionsethnologin Esther Voswinckel Filiz. Sie befasst sich mit Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi (1541–1628), einem der bekanntesten Istanbuler Sufi-Persönlichkeiten aus osmanischer Zeit und dem Gründer des Celvetiyye-Ordens. Die Autorin untersucht in ihrer *Biographie eines Ortes* – so der Untertitel des Werks – aus religionsethnologischer Perspektive das Heiligtum des Sufis und die heute gelebte Religiosität an seinem Mausoleum im Istanbuler Stadtteil Üsküdar. Verfolgt wird die Methode der teilnehmenden Beobachtung (S. 35) in Form des *ethnographic writing* (S. 11). Als Ausgangspunkt und Primärquelle der Untersuchung dient die Grabstätte des Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi, die früher wie heute als populärer Pilgerort viele Bevölkerungsschichten anzieht. Die Autorin besuchte diesen Ort, der wegen Bauarbeiten von 2013 bis 2015 geschlossen war, während ihrer stationären Feldforschung von April 2014 bis Oktober 2015 sowie mehrere Monate im Folgejahr. Voswinckel Filiz dokumentiert die Etappen der Restaurierung des Mausoleums bis zu seiner Wiedereröffnung und zeichnet in ihrer Studie die Gespräche mit verschiedenen Akteur/-innen sowie ihre Recherchen und Eindrücke auf, die im Zusammenhang mit diesem Mausoleum stehen.

Das Buch besteht aus sieben Kapiteln (einschließlich der Einleitung), der Danksagung, dem Literaturverzeichnis, einem kurzen Anhang, dem Index sowie mehreren Abbildungen, die größtenteils aus der Zeit der Feldforschung der Autorin stammen.

Das Vorwort, verfasst von Volkhard Krech, dem Erstbetreuer der Arbeit und gleichzeitig Direktor des Centrums für Religionswissenschaftliche Studien (CERES) der Ruhr-Universität Bochum, unterstreicht das methodische Vorgehen, so auch die Bedeutung der Untersuchung. In Kap. 1 (Einleitung, S. 17–37) beschreibt die Autorin den Prozess ihrer Themenfindung, die Problemstellung, die Leitgedanken und Fragestellungen der Arbeit sowie ihre theoretischen und methodischen Grundlagen. Die Leitfragen lauten: 1. Wer oder was [ist] Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi? Ort oder Person? (S. 18); 2. Wo befindet sich Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi? (S. 21); 3. Wie teilt sich der Ort mit? (S. 29); 4. Wie treten Menschen mit ihm in Beziehung? (ebd.).

Ziel der Untersuchung ist es, einen Beitrag zur „religionswissenschaftlichen Erforschung der religiösen Semiotisierung von Orten und von Sakralarchitektur" zu leisten und das Desiderat in der „religionsethnologischen Erforschung von Orten und Stätten des (Sufi-)Heiligenkults in Istanbul" zu schließen (S. 29). Ob zu religiösen Praktiken der Sufis und über die Orte und Riten der Sufi-Heiligenverehrung in der Türkei wie im „Forschungsstand und Erkenntnisinteresse" (S. 29–32) suggeriert wird „überraschend wenige ethnologische Arbeiten" (S. 30) vorhanden sind, hätte an dieser Stelle genauer erörtert werden sollen. Zwar liegt die Autorin mit der Beobachtung richtig, dass in der westlichen Forschung religionsethnologische und -soziologische Studien über die

islamische Mystik insgesamt wenig vertreten sind und darunter kaum Untersuchungen existieren, die sich auf die religiösen Praktiken der Sufis sowie die Orte und Riten der (Sufi-)Heiligenverehrung in der Türkei beziehen. Entgegen ihrer Ansicht dürfte dies jedoch weniger in Zusammenhang mit dem 1925 in der Republik Türkei verabschiedeten Gesetz Nr. 677 über das Verbot von Sufi-Konventen und Heiligengräbern stehen. Religionsethnologische und -soziologische Arbeiten im Themenbereich Volkreligiosität, Gräberkult, Heiligenorte und -verehrung sind in der Türkei zahlreich vorhanden. Volkskunde und Volksreligiosität bilden eine lebendige Forschungsdisziplin innerhalb der türkischen Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften und werden von benachbarten Fächern ebenfalls bedient. Es bleibt daher kaum nachvollziehbar, aus welchem Grund die Autorin in ihrem Forschungsstand die religionssoziologisch und ethnologisch relevanten Studien aus der Türkei, gar über Istanbul (Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi, Karaca Ahmed, Eyüp Sultan u.a.),[1] gänzlich unkommentiert auslässt, stattdessen drei westliche Forschungsbeiträge als Fußnote aufführt, die zudem nicht über Istanbul handeln. Die Autorin hätte bereits durch eine Bewertung der von ihr verwendeten Studien aus der Türkei einen wesentlichen Beitrag zum Stand der Forschung geleistet.[2]

In Kap. 2 (S. 39–51) teilt Voswinckel Filiz ihre Eindrücke sowie Hintergrundinformationen über den Ort ihrer Untersuchung mit. Sie nähert sich durch mehrere Zugänge kreisend der Stadt Istanbul, dem Bosporus, dem Stadtteil Üsküdar, dem Üsküdarer Viertel Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi und dem Mausoleum. In die Darstellungen sind Legenden, Erzählungen, historische und aktuelle Ereignisse wie auch Angaben zur geographischen Lage eingearbeitet.

Kap. 3 (S. 61–121) befasst sich mit dem Besuch der Heiligenstätte. Nach Erklärungen einzelner (einfacher) türkischer Begriffe wie *ziyaret*, im Unterschied zu *misafirlik*, ohne Einbindung der *ziyaret*-Literatur, folgt das „Ortbegehungsprotokoll" im Viertel (S. 64–87). Dabei werden Fragen über „Außen und Innen" und „Übergänge zwischen beiden Bereichen," „Riten und Gesten des Gastrituals" diskutiert. Die Autorin führt die Leser über verschiedene Wege und Straßen zum Heiligengrab (*türbe*). Geleitet von der Frage „wie werden Anwesen und Anwesenheit kenntlich gemacht?" (S. 81) analysiert sie alle ihr sichtbaren „Dinge" (besser: Objekte) architektonischer und kultureller Art. In die Feldnotizen ist die gelebte Praxis der Gabenzirkultion vor der *türbe* aufgenommen. Diese Darstellungen enthalten wertvolle zeitgeschichtliche Aspekte und Überlegungen, auch über den Säkularisierungsprozess in der Türkei.

Kap. 4 (S. 123–169) führt in den Innenbereich des Mausoleums während der Zeit der Bauarbeiten, in der der Komplex nicht betreten werden durfte. Die Autorin erhält durch ihre „Schlüsselinformanten" Zugänge in das Ökosystem Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi. Das sind der Pförtner, die Grabwächterin, die Restauratorin, der Gärtner u.a., durch deren Mitteilungen Voswinckel Filiz sich ihrem Untersuchungsobjekt aus verschiedenen Blickwinkeln weiter hineinarbeitet. Die unterschiedlichen Funktionen und Auf-

1 Beispielsweise Akalın (1997); Bayrı (1947); Günay (2001 und 2002); Köksel (2009); Uyanıker (2010); Türk (2012).

2 Ak (2012), Köse und Ali (2010), Erdoğan (2013) und Tanman (1990, 1992, 1993, 2005) sind im Literaturverzeichnis aufgeführt, sie werden aber nicht besprochen oder bewertet.

fassungen der Akteur/-innen helfen, den religiösen Ort als Organismus zu erfassen. Restaurationsarbeiten im Mausoleum werden ebenso wie einzelne Reliquien durch Fotografien dokumentiert. Hinsichtlich der Informant/-innen lässt sich zusammenfassend feststellen, dass die einen Befragten eine visionär fromme Glaubenswelt ausleben, während die anderen aus rationalen Gründen mit dem Komplex verbunden sind. Der weitere Kapitelverlauf widmet sich der Wiedereröffnung des Mausoleums. Voswinckel Filiz beschreibt die offizielle Eröffnungszeremonie am 20.06.2015, so auch die rituellen Handlungen und den Umgang mit dem Ort, der wie aus diesem Kapitel hervorgeht einen gewissen Holismus erkennen lässt und Vorstellungen der „lokalen Regeneration" aufweist.

Kap. 5 (S. 171–217) handelt vom „dynamischen Dritten". Das sind die „Dinge des Heiligen," womit in erster Linie die tragbaren Artefakte gemeint sind, die zur *türbe* des Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi gehören. Laut Voswinckel Filiz stellen die „*tragbaren* und *textilen* Elemente einen Zwischenbereich zwischen den für [ihre] Arbeit wichtigen Kategorien ‚Ort' und ‚Person'" dar (S. 174). Sie begibt sich auf Spurensuche nach den beweglichen Dingen und versucht anhand der Historie des Mausoleums die aktuellen Standorte der Objekte zu lokalisieren, was ihr teilweise gelingt. Ihre Recherchen führen sie zunächst zurück in die republikanische Ära vor 1980. Besondere Aufmerksamkeit genießt der einstige Grabwächter (*türbedar*), der dieses Amt von 1954 bis 1979 innehatte (S. 200f.) und als Zeitzeuge wertvolle Informationen über den Zustand des Mausoleums sowie das ehemalige reiche Inventar hinterlassen hat (S. 195–208). Allerdings versäumt es die Autorin in diesem Abschnitt, die Paradoxien in ihren Darstellungen über die türkische Kulturpolitik aufzuzeigen. Beispielsweise führt sie nicht aus, wie das Amt des *türbedar* mit dem Gesetz Nr. 677 im genannten Zeitraum zu vereinbaren war.[3] Entsprechend unberücksichtigt bleibt die Literatur, die zur Aufklärung dieses Sachverhalts beigetragen hätte.[4]

Da ein wesentlicher Teil des Inventars aus dem Mausoleum heute im Archiv des *Türbeler ve Müzeler Müdürlüğü* in Istanbul gelagert wird, handelt der weitere Kapitelabschnitt vom Archivbesuch der Autorin, der es möglich war, die aus drei Truhen bestehende Sammlung Aziz Mahmud Hüdayis zu sehen und zu beschreiben. Die Überführung der Kultgegenstände in staatliche Archive bewertet sie als „ikonoklastische Deprivation" von Sakralstätten der Sufis im 20. Jahrhundert, die im Falle Istanbuls zu einer „Sakralisierung des städtischen Raums" führte (S. 216–217).

Kap. 6 (S. 219–243) konzentriert sich auf den Turban (*tâc*) des Heiligen und schildert den Besuch der Autorin beim Turban-Hersteller im Selamsız genannten nahegelegenen Viertel Selami Ali Efendi. Abweichend von ihrer bisherigen Methode berücksichtigt

3 Das Gesetz Nr. 677 spricht sich bereits in der Überschrift für das Verbot des Grabwächtertums aus: *Tekke ve Zaviyelerle Türbelerin Seddine ve Türbedarlıklar İle Bir Takım Unvanların Men ve İlgasına Dair Kanun* (URL: https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.3.677.pdf, letzter Zugriff am 13 Januar 2025).

4 Beyinli Dinç, Gökçen. 2017. '677 Sayılı Kanun, Türbeleri ‚Millileştirme' ve Yıkıcı Sonuçları: Geç Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Türbedarlık'. *Cihannüma. Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi* 3.2. 113–137.

sie hier die osmanischsprachige *tācnāme*-Literatur, ein eigenes Genre in der islamischen Ordensmystik. Das Kapitel erhält durch mündliche Informationen weitere Vertiefung. Voswinckel Filiz stellt fest, dass dem Turban als „Nussschale" des religiösen Ortes höchste kultische und symbolische Bedeutung zukommt. Sie identifiziert dessen Knopf, der aus einem zusammengefalteten Tuch besteht, als „das Innerste der Stätte," der dazu einlädt, „die ‚Einfalt' der religiösen Performanz als kulturelle Praxis des *Einfaltens* zu betrachten" (S. 246).

Die Zusammenfassung (S. 245–255) präsentiert die wichtigsten Ergebnisse der Arbeit und beantwortet die eingangs gestellten Fragen. Es folgt die Danksagung (S. 257–260) und das Literaturverzeichnis mit englisch-, deutsch-, französisch- und türkischsprachigen Titeln (S. 261–276).[5] Manche im Fließtext aufgereihte Literatur findet sich im Literaturverzeichnis nicht wieder (z.B. S. 29: Geertz, Gellner, Crapanzano, Cornell). Der Anhang (S. 278–280) enthält zwei Abbildungen über den Gebäudekomplex und die transkribierte Inschrift an dessen Hauptpforte ohne Übersetzung. Mit einem kurzen Index (S. 281–284) schließt das Werk.

Voswinckel Filiz gelingt es in ihrer Studie, gemeinsam mit dem Leser/der Leserin in die Welt und Umwelt des Sufis Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi einzutauchen und sich schrittweise an sein Mausoleum zu nähern, um am Ende zum Herzstück, dem gefalteten Turbanknopf zu gelangen. Vom Großen zum Kleinen voranschreitend dokumentiert sie die lebendige Geschichte eines „heiligen" Ortes in Istanbul und das damit verbundene Ökosystem. Anekdoten, Erfahrungen, Erzählungen und Ereignisse aus der Gegenwart und Vergangenheit fließen in die Untersuchung ein. Diese werden mit Legenden über den Sufi-Heiligen gekonnt verknüpft und verwoben.

Die Arbeit ist analytisch. Sie enthält interessante wie auch wertvolle Beobachtungen und Erkenntnisse mit persönlichen Eindrücken und Anmerkungen, die stellenweise ausschweifend sind (z.B. Kafka und die Türschwelle, Zeus und der Bosporus, Orhan Pamuk und das rote Museumsband). Die Studie besitzt vor allem bis Kap. 5 eine exotisierende Note. Der Stil erinnert durch den ethnologischen Tagebuchcharakter an abendländische Reisebeschreibungen des Orients aus dem 19. Jahrhundert über das fremde Unbekannte, das es zu ergründen gilt.

Bezüglich der in der Einleitung dargestellten methodischen Herangehensweise ist zu bemerken, dass Voswinckel Filiz ausschließlich westliche, ethnologisch-religionswissenschaftliche Termini und Kategorisierungen verwendet. Zwar wird dadurch der Abstand zum Untersuchungsobjekt deutlich bewahrt, eine Berücksichtigung einschlägiger Begrifflichkeiten und Zuordnungen aus dem untersuchten Kulturkreis hätte aber zu einem tieferen Verständnis des „sufischen Heiligenkults" verholfen. Beispielsweise arbeitet sie mit dem Begriff *agency* („Wirkmacht") (S. 28), aber bespricht nicht den im sufischen Kontext existierenden und hier besonders relevanten Begriff *baraka* („Segenskraft"). Auch folgt sie westlichen Definitionen und Theorien von religiösen Orten (S. 26–29), ohne die im Sufismus so wichtige Unterscheidung zwischen *mekan*

5 Arbeiten von C. Zülfikar (1999), J. Gonella (1995), J. P. Brown (1868), Ü. Günay (2003), N. Aytürk / B. Altan (1992) u.a. wurden laut Literaturverzeichnis nicht konsultiert.

(Ort) und *makam* („Ort") zu treffen oder gar anzusprechen. Dies ist angesichts der klar benannten methodischen Ausrichtung der Studie zwar kein Mangel *per se*, Voswinckel Filiz betont jedoch, ihren Fokus auf „das Moment der Grenzen und Übergänge zu verschiedenen Bereichen," d.h. auf Paradoxien, zu richten (S. 27).

Dem Ansatz der „teilnehmenden Beobachtung" bleibt die Autorin treu. In Kap. 5 und 6 ändert sie ihr Vorgehen von einer eher passiven physischen Präsenz zur engagierten Interaktion mit gar eigener (Führungs-)Rolle in der Gruppe, indem sie als Initiatorin aktiv wissenschaftliche Fakten herbeiführt. Fragen zur teilnehmenden Beobachtung, die unbeantwortet bleiben und im Vorfeld exakter hätten geklärt werden können, sind: Wurden alle Befragten, deren Gespräche dokumentiert wurden, über die Forschungsmethode und -ziele aufgeklärt? Ist es in der ethnologischen Forschung gängig, wissenschaftliche Schlussfolgerungen anhand einzelner „mündlicher Quellen" zu ziehen, die ohne weitere Kommentierung als „persönliche" bzw. „mündliche Information" oder als „Gesprächsnotiz" aufgeführt werden, ohne genaue Angabe des Datums, des Ortes, einer ggf. anonymisierten Person (z.B. S. 146, 153, 187, 231, 233)?

Die Stärke der Arbeit ist die akribische Hinführung vom Großen zum Kleinen, mit dem besonderen Blick der Autorin für Details, die vielfältigen Annäherungen an den Ort und seine Geschichte und Gegenwart. Der wissenschaftliche Schreibstil aus der vermeintlich europäischen Außenperspektive bleibt gewöhnungsbedürftig. Statt längerer, inhaltlich teilweise bedingt relevanter Ausführungen hätte die zusätzliche und kritische Lektüre zum Themengebiet der Arbeit an mehreren Stellen zu mehr Substanz verholfen. Die in der Vorbemerkung explizit angegebenen Transkriptionsregeln werden nur in bestimmten Textauszügen eingehalten.

Zusammenfassend ist festzuhalten, dass die Untersuchung von Voswinckel Filiz auch die Sufi-Studien auf besondere Weise bereichert. Gleichzeitig bietet sie spannende (Detail-) Einblicke in die jüngsten Entwicklungen von Sakralarchitektur im städtischen Raum Istanbuls wie auch in die türkische Politik und Gesellschaft, die es wert sind, nach wie vor intensiv erforscht zu werden.

Alkan, Necati. 2023. *Non-Sunni Muslims in the Late Ottoman Empire: State and Missionary Perceptions of the Alawis*. London et al.: I.B. Tauris. 231 pages. ISBN: 9780755644742.

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Non-Sunni Muslims in the Late Ottoman Empire: State and Missionary Perceptions of the Alawis presents a unique and in-depth analysis of the position of the Alawi community within the socio-political and religious landscape of the late Ottoman Empire. The originality of the research lies in its use of both Ottoman and missionary sources, which are scarce and often under-utilised in Alawi studies. By providing a comprehensive overview of Alawi history and beliefs from these two perspectives, the author successfully fills a significant gap in the existing literature.

Often shrouded in mystery and misunderstanding, the Alawis have long been the subject of intrigue and scholarly neglect. This book seeks to rectify this by exploring the complex dynamics between the Alawis, the Ottoman state and Protestant missionaries. The author's approach highlights the complex interplay of religious, political and social factors that have shaped Alawi identity and its interactions with wider imperial and colonial forces.

The book begins by reviewing the state of research on the Alawis, establishing their historical context and distinguishing them from other non-Sunni groups such as the Alevis/Bektashis and the Nusayris.

The first chapter shifts the focus to the socio-economic structures of the Alawi community, exploring how their geographical isolation in mountainous regions shaped their interactions with the Ottoman state. The author examines in detail the various socio-political mechanisms employed by the Ottoman authorities, including taxation, military conscription and efforts at religious integration. These discussions illustrate the oscillation between coercion and accommodation in the empire's treatment of religious minorities.

Moreover, it outlines the origins of Nusayrism, founded by Muhammad ibn Nusayr in the 9th century. Initially rejected by Hasan al-'Askari, the eleventh Imam, Nusayrism developed as a '*ghulat*' (extreme) Shia sect in Iraq and Syria. Al-Khasibi played a crucial role in the spread of the sect in the 10th century, establishing its doctrines.

Despite internal conflicts and external pressures, such as the condemnation of Ibn Taymiyya in the 14th century, the Nusayris maintained their practices, especially in the mountainous regions. The Tanzimat reforms of the 19th century aimed to integrate various groups into the Ottoman legal system, but the Nusayris continued to resist taxation and military conscription, often finding ways around Ottoman authority. The reforms eventually gave them a more secure legal status, thanks to European influence and missionary activity.

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After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the French granted the Nusayris, now called Alawites, a dominant religious status in Syria, marking a significant shift from their marginalised position to political recognition. This chapter traces the socio-political journey of Nusayrism through centuries of resistance and adaptation.

The second chapter examines 19th Protestant missionary efforts to convert Alawis and other non-Sunni Muslims, presenting them as targets of Christian benevolence. It examines the missionaries' successes and failures, their cultural encounters with the Alawi community, and the resistance they encountered. Initially driven by millenarian beliefs, American missionaries shifted from proselytising to civilising, promoting American ideals around the world. In the Ottoman Empire, Protestant missionaries turned their attention to non-Sunni Muslim groups such as Alevis, Druze, and Nusayris seeing them as more amenable to conversion than Sunni Muslims. They took advantage of the Tanzimat reforms of 1839, which granted legal recognition and certain rights to various religious communities, including Protestants. The chapter also looks at David Metheny's missions among the Nusayris, who were seen as isolated and degraded, which met with Ottoman opposition, notably in the case of Telgie Ibrahim, leading to diplomatic tensions over religious freedom and missionary activity.

The third chapter focuses on the Ottoman policy of 'correction of beliefs,' first implemented by Mahmud II and later intensified under Abdülhamid II. Mahmud II targeted groups such as the Bektashis by associating them with the Janissaries, leading to their persecution and forced conversion. The 'correction of beliefs' developed as a state policy aimed at integrating heterodox Muslim communities, such as the Alevis and Druze, into Sunni orthodoxy. Under Abdülhamid II, this policy became part of a broader civilising mission, with efforts to educate and convert these groups through state-sponsored programmes. The chapter examines how these measures were enforced, the role of religious officials, and the varying degrees of success and resistance encountered. It highlights the imperial aim of using Islam as a tool for social and political cohesion, while addressing the complex interactions between the state and different religious communities.

The fourth and final chapter examines the complex socio-political dynamics and changing fortunes of the Nusayri community during the transformative Young Turk era. It examines the initial euphoria of various ethnic and religious groups, including the Nusayris, following the 1908 revolution. However, it highlights the subsequent disillusionment as the promised freedoms failed to materialise, culminating in local and central tensions. The chapter also explores the enthusiastic but ultimately challenging efforts of Protestant missionaries who, despite widespread resistance and socio-political obstacles, found limited but significant acceptance among the Nusayris. It illustrates the nuanced interaction between revolutionary aspirations, religious outreach and the complex realities faced by the Nusayris in an era of disturbance and reform.

A notable strength of the book lies in its balanced approach, which employs a range of primary sources to offer a nuanced perspective on the Alawite experience. The incorporation of rare archival material, such as missionary reports and Ottoman documents, contributes to the book's credibility and depth. By situating the Alawis within the broader context of Ottoman policy towards heterodox groups, the author illuminates the complexities of religious identity and state control during this period.

The book's critical analysis of the motivations behind Ottoman and missionary actions is noteworthy. The author contextualises Ottoman policy within the empire's broader attempts at centralisation and modernisation, particularly during the Tanzimat reforms. The period of reform and its impact on religious minorities, including the Alawites, is skilfully handled, providing the reader with a clear understanding of the delicate balance the Ottoman state sought to maintain between religious orthodoxy and administrative pragmatism.

The author's treatment of missionary encounters is particularly illuminating, presenting them not just as religious endeavours but as cultural and political enterprises that often clashed with local traditions and state interests. The nuanced portrayal of these encounters underlines the complexity of religious conversion and the resistance it often engendered. The narrative effectively conveys the challenges faced by the missionaries and the agency of the Alawis in coping with these pressures.

Overall, Non-Sunni Muslims in the Late Ottoman Empire makes a significant contribution to the study of the status of these groups in the Ottoman Empire and the state's treatment of religious minorities. Its meticulous research and comprehensive approach provide valuable insights into the interplay between state power, religious identity and missionary influence. The book is an essential resource for scholars interested in the dynamics of the Ottoman Empire and the socio-religious history of the Alawites.

It is a commendable piece of scholarship that invites further research and discussion: The depth of the book and the author's analytical rigour make it a valuable addition to the existing literature on the subject. By uncovering the layers of historical interaction and examining the Alawis' responses to external pressures, the author not only enriches our understanding of this community, but also provides a template for the study of other marginalised groups in complex imperial contexts.

Lellouch, Benjamin. 2024. *Ahmed Pacha et les juifs du Caire (1523–1524), Histoire et historiographie*. Leiden: Brill. 283 pages. ISBN: 9789004688391 (e-Book).

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With this book, Benjamin Lellouch plunges the reader back into Egypt, focusing on the Jews of Cairo, victims of violence during the revolt of the Ottoman governor Ahmed Pasha (1523–1524), and on the commemoration of a local festival, Purim. The historian had already produced a remarkable study of the changes in Egypt after the Ottoman conquest, based on the Turkish chronicle of 'Abdüssamed Diyârbakri[1]. This expert on Egypt in the first half of the 16th century studied the social, political and cultural conditions of a local Jewish festival and the works associated with it. B. Lellouch examines this additional Purim (*sheni*), which followed the model of a canonical festival celebrated by all Jews. In Cairo, the Jews joyfully recalled the hardships they had suffered under the rule of Ahmed Pasha (1523–1524) and the happy ending that brought them relief. In this book, the historian adopts a philological approach that allows him to study two objects in 'a movement of renewed comings and goings' (p. 14): the history of the events that preceded the establishment of Purim in Cairo and the historiography of these events. The study is divided into three chapters. For this approach to work, the author had to mobilise a wealth of Turkish, Italian and Arabic documentation on the violence and the context, in order to appreciate the information provided by a Hebrew chronicle, Eliyahu Capsali's *Ḥasdei ha-Shem*, devoted entirely to Ahmed Pasha's revolt.

In his first chapter, B. Lellouch introduces the two central figures of the Cairo affair of 1523–1524: Ahmed Pasha, the Beylerbey of Egypt, and his enemy, Avraham Castro. This chapter combines the history of events with a description of social structures. After a preliminary critique of Ottoman, Arab and Italian sources, the author presents an account of Ahmed Pasha's revolt and its background, and then paints a picture of the Jewish community led by Avraham Castro. This revolt of Ahmed Pasha gives rise to brief developments in the chronicles of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire from the beginning of the 17th century. As we can see, Ahmed Pasha was the target of historiographical disqualification and falsification. In the second half of the 16th century, the Ottoman chronicles even referred to the Egyptian Beylerbey as a 'traitor' (*hain*), a term that is still attached to his name today.[2] As B. Lellouch shows, Ahmed Pacha disap-

1 Lellouch, Benjamin. 2006. *Les Ottomans en Égypte. Historiens et conquérants au XVIe siecle*. Louvain: Peeters.

2 On Ahmed Pasha and his rebellion see: Seyyid Muhammed Es-Seyyid Mahmud. 1990. *XVI. asırda Mısır eyâleti*. Istanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, 77–81; Yelçe, Nevin Zeynep. 2009. 'The Making of Sultan Süleyman: A Study of Process/es of Image-Making and Reputation Management'. PhD thesis, Sabancı University, Istanbul, 282–310; Emre, Side. 2015. 'Anat-

peared from memory and his revolt was erased over time. But the Jews of Cairo still remember him and the hardships he caused them.

Chapter 2 is devoted to an analysis of the various techniques used by the Jewish authors in the composition of their writings. The historian shows the uneven density of information about Ahmed Pasha's revolt. The author first refers to the important contribution of *Hasdei ha-Shem* by Eliyahu Capsali (d. 1550), a Cretan rabbi. This chronicle deals with the causes of Ahmed Pasha's appointment as governor of Egypt and his desire for revenge against the Sultan; the governor's violence against the Jewish financier Avraham Castro and his clients, and Castro's flight to Constantinople; the purge of the Janissaries or Ahmed's proclamation as Sultan, which led Soliman to order the elimination of his brother in the Morea. Above all, this 'book of wars' is surprisingly accurate and, unlike the Cairo Megillah, does not follow the archetypal model of the Book of Esther. B. Lellouch invites us to read first the summary of the Megillah written by Yosef Ibn Verga, then the full text of the Megillah with its various versions. This liturgical chronicle omits certain information and compensates for others with individual and collective rewrites. When the historian compares the different versions of this liturgical chronicle, he gets the impression that the Jewish memory of Ahmed Pasha's revolt is ramified and that the rest of Jewish historiography is made up of successive germinations, cross-fertilisations with Muslim historiography and budding in sometimes opposite directions. The author deals with the historiographical divide surrounding Castro, Ahmed Pasha, a secondary figure in Jewish writings, and the Cairo Affair of 1523–1524, which became a scholarly subject at the end of the nineteenth century and continues to be so today.

After a philological and narratological study of Jewish sources in order to highlight the long-term formation of memory traditions, the third chapter, entitled 'The attack on the Jews: feared, proclaimed, carried out,' returns to history. B. Lellouch examines the question of violence against the Jews. He takes a longer view than that of Ahmed Pacha's revolt. He examines the relationship between the Jews and the authorities in the light of the available sources, which were criticised in the first two chapters. By establishing the facts, he reveals what is of the order of invention in the constructions of memory, in particular the idea that Castro fled Cairo because he did not mint money in the name of Ahmed Pasha.

A few years after Benjamin Hary's work,[3] B. Lellouch offers the scientific community a solid book and three important contributions. Firstly, the use of Ottoman, Arab,

omy of a Rebellion in Sixteenth-Century Egypt: A Case Study of Ahmed Pasha's Governorship, Revolt, Sultanate, and Critique of the Ottoman Imperial Enterprise'. *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 46. 77–129; Lellouch, Benjamin 2006. *Les Ottomans en Égypte*, 56–60, 69 and Lellouch, Benjamin 2021. 'Hain Ahmed Paşa (m. 1524) et sa famille'. *Turcica* 52. 63–102.

3 Hary, Benjamin. 1992. *Multiglossia in Judeo-Arabic. With an Edition, Translation, and Grammatical Study of the Cairene Purim Scroll.* Leiden et al.: Brill; Hary, Benjamin. 2010. 'Cairene Purim, the'. In Stillman, Norman (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World.* Vol. I. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 527.

Italian and Jewish sources clarified the chronology of events and the identity of the actors. Secondly, it places the events in Cairo in 1523–1524 in the Syrian-Egyptian context of the late Mamluk period and the early years of Ottoman rule. Finally, it allows the historian to highlight the fractured memory surrounding Avraham Castro. The book concludes with a series of valuable appendices that allow historians to move back and forth between B. Lellouch's work and the sources used and translated. This study goes far beyond its primary objective and can be seen as a model for analysing the social, political and cultural conditions in which a historiographical work is produced. The study is carried out with great mastery and is impressive for its originality and the horizons it opens up for Ottoman and Jewish historians.

Karaosmanoğlu, Yakup Kadri, and **Wilson, Brett M.** (Translator and Editor). 2023. *Nur Baba: A Sufi Novel of Late Ottoman Istanbul*. London: Routledge. 136 pages. 7 B/W illustrations. ISBN: 9781032463926.

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This book presents the first-ever English translation of *Nur Baba*, one of Turkish most renowned novels, written by Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu (1889–1974) in the early 20th century. The novel follows Nigâr, a young and beautiful yet dissatisfied aristocratic woman from Istanbul, who becomes involved with a Bektashi Sufi community in Istanbul. Frustrated by her absent diplomat husband and the monotony of family life, Nigâr falls under the influence of Nur Baba, a charismatic but manipulative Bektashi sheikh ('Sufi Master'). She is drawn into a world of drinking, drugs, and sexual excess, mirroring the novel's broader critique of moral decay in Ottoman society. The story is narrated by Macid, Nigâr's cousin, who acts as both an observer and moral compass, attempting to allegedly save her from Nur Baba's corrupting influence.

Karaosmanoğlu's depiction of Nur Baba's Bektashi *tekke* ('Sufi lodge') – portrayed as a place of indulgence and debauchery – parked controversy upon the novel's initial publication in 1921, igniting debates about Sufism's role in Turkish society. Through this lens, *Nur Baba* offers a rich exploration of class, gender, and morality during the late Ottoman and early modern Republican periods. It reflects the tensions of the Second Constitutional Period (1908–1918), during which nationalist and modernist ideologies clashed with traditional religious and social structures. While critiquing the moral decline of Sufism, the novel also expresses a nostalgic fascination with its spiritual heritage. As such, *Nur Baba* remains a valuable resource for understanding the socio-cultural transformations of the late Ottoman Empire, particularly regarding gender roles and societal norms.

Brett M. Wilson, a scholar specializing in Sufism and Islam in the late Ottoman period, has undertaken the translation and editorial work for this edition. Motivated by the growing academic interest in Ottoman Sufism, Wilson has translated Nur Baba into English for the first time. The novel has previously been translated into several languages, including German,[1] Italian,[2] Spanish,[3] Serbo-Croatian,[4]

1 Karaosmanoğlu, Yakup Kadri. 1947. *Flamme Und Falter. Ein Derwisch-Roman.* Edited and translated by Annemarie Schimmel. Gummersbach: Florestan.

2 Karaosmanoğlu, Yakup Kadri. 1945. *Nur Baba*. Edited and translated by Rossi Ettore. 1945. *Nur Baba*. Roma; Karaosmanoğlu, Yakup Kadri. 1995. *Nur Baba*. Edited and translated by Bellingeri Giampiero. Milano: Adelphi.

3 Karaosmanoğlu, Yakup Kadri. 2000. *Nur Babá*. Edited and translated by Salom Alín. Barcelona: Destino.

4 Karaosmanoğlu, Yakup Kadri. 1957. *Nur Baba*. Edited and translated by Fetah Sulejmanpašić. Sarajevo.

Diyâr, 6. Jg., 1/2025, S. 194–198, DOI: 10.5771/2625-9842-2025-1-194

Greek[5] and Slovak.[6] Originally serialized in the newspaper *Akşam* in 1921, *Nur Baba* was first published in Ottoman Turkish and later in modern Turkish, following the language reform. Wilson's approach to translation is meticulous, preserving the novel's historical and linguistic nuances. He worked directly from the original Ottoman Turkish text, based on the 1923 edition published by Orhaniye Press in Istanbul.[7] While most text was translated, Wilson retained key technical terms – such as *Muhabbet* (divine love, ethos, banquet, passion) – to maintain their original contextual meanings. His detailed footnotes and explanatory commentary provide valuable cultural and social framework for specialists and even readers unfamiliar with Ottoman-era concepts. Additionally, an extensive introduction situates the novel within its historical and cultural framework, drawing from Wilson's prior research[8] on the subject.

Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, *Nur Baba*'s author, was a pioneering Turkish novelist who experienced firsthand the transition from the late Ottoman Empire to the early Turkish Republic. His works often explore the contradictions of this period, making him a key figure in modern Turkish literature. In *Nur Baba*, he offers a fictionalized account of Sufism's decline, blending real-life elements with literary imagination. Although Karaosmanoğlu was himself a Bektashi, his portrayal of the order is highly critical. The novel describes their rituals and practices in detail, including *Nevruz*[9] celebrations. It suggests that the Bektashis had strayed from their spiritual origins, a critique that Karaosmanoğlu later acknowledged was partly inspired by his own disillusionment with the Bektashi path. This extract embodies Karaosmanoğlu's subtle critic:

> This Bektashi ablution is something completely unusual. Though the water makes less contact on the designated parts of the body than the ablutions taken five times a day, they believe that it lasts for the rest of your life. I don't know to what degree this is true, because our guide gave us this information in a half-joking, half-serious manner (p. 60).

The novel reflects prevailing public perceptions of Bektashiyya – and Sufism more broadly – at the time. The Bektashis were often viewed as ritually impure, apostates, or even atheists, with their esoteric rituals and cryptic symbolism adding to an air of mystery and suspicion. Historically, they maintained strong ties with the Ottoman state through their affiliation with the Janissary corps. However, following the corps'

5 Karaosmanoğlu, Yakup Kadri. 2009. *Ο τεκές του Νουρ Μπαμπά ή Κατήχηση στον έρωτα: μυθιστόρημα*. Edited and translated by Giorgos Salakidis. Thessalonikē: Stamoulēs Ant.

6 Karaosmanoğlu, Yakup Kadri. 1989. *Derviš a dáma*. Edited and translated by Xénie Celnarová. Bratislava: Tatran.

7 Karaosmanoğlu Yakup Kadri. 1928. *Nur Baba*. Istanbul: Orhaniye Matbaası.

8 Wilson, M. Brett. 2017. 'The Twilight of Ottoman Sufism: Antiquity, Immorality, and Nation in Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's Nur Baba'. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49.2. 233–253; Wilson, M. Brett. 2024. 'Putting out the candle: Sufism and the orgy libel in late Ottoman and modern Turkey'. *Culture and Religion* 24.2. 135–155.

9 *Nevruz* is the Persian New Year festival, which is celebrated at the spring equinox, around the 21st of March. Bektashis believe that it also marks the birthday of Ali.

dissolution in 1826, the order was banned, further deepening public distrust. Although the Bektashis experienced a quite revival in the late 19th century – often operating under the guise of other Sufi orders, such as the Naqshbandiyya[10] – their secretive nature and association with past controversies only fueled suspicions about their moral and spiritual integrity.

Moreover, *Nur Baba* engaged with a broader transregional intellectual debate about Sufism's legacy in modern societies. Prominent Muslim reformists like Rashid Rida, Muhammad Abduh, and Musa Biyiyev viewed Sufism as an obstacle to Islamic modernization.[11] Meanwhile, the Wahhabi movement saw it as a corruption of true Islam.[12] Conversely, some intellectuals – such as Albanian writer Naim Frashëri[13] – believed that Bektashis could serve as a progressive force for national identity and modernization. These competing perspectives shaped Karaosmanoğlu's portrayal of the Bektashi order. Rather than rejecting Sufism entirely, the novelist critiques its contemporary manifestations, particularly the alleged moral corruption of certain lodges. The novel includes references to controversial practices like *Mum Söndürmek* (the 'Putting Out the Candle' ritual), rumored to involve orgiastic gatherings, which epitomize the moral decadence and licentiousness into which Sufis had fallen. At the same time, *Nur Baba* expresses a lingering admiration for Sufism, particularly in the poetic traditions of figures like Celaleddin Rumi[14]. Anyway, this admiration is largely unfulfilled, as the narrator, Macid, who initially seeks philosophical enlightenment in the Bektashi lodge, instead encounters superficiality, cynicism, and decadence.

> He (Nur Baba) appeared to give some importance to all these trifles, and I imagine that he was then striving to guide me via these lines and colors to the symbols and secrets of the Sufi path, which I would soon enter. This man was not nearly as mature and profound as he seemed at first. His words were quite simplistic and childish (p. 56).

In this way, *Nur Baba* encapsulates the prevailing intellectual discourse on Sufism's place in interwar Turkey, about its compatibility with modernity, and its role in state

10 Clayer, Nathalie. 2015. 'Sufi Printed Matter and Knowledge about the Bektashi Order in the Late Ottoman Period'. In Chih, Rachida, Mayeur-Jaouen, Catherine and Seesemann, Rüdiger (eds.). *Sufism, Literary Production, and Printing in the Nineteenth Century*. Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag. 351–367.

11 Sirriyeh, Elizabeth. 2014. *Sufis and anti-Sufis: The defence, rethinking and rejection of Sufism in the modern world*. London: Routledge.

12 Nahouza, Namira. 2018. *Wahhabism and the rise of the new Salafists: Theology, power and Sunni Islam*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

13 Naim Frashëri (m. 1900) was an Albanian poet and patriot, considered one of the most influential Albanian characters of the 19th century. He belonged to the Bektashiyya.

14 Celaleddin Rumi or Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī (1207–1273) was a *ʿālim*, Sunni Muslim theologian, and Central Asian Persian mystical poet, known as one of the greatest authors of Persian mystical literature.

and nation-building.[15] This perspective fueled a revival of Sufi literary heritage, particularly figures like Yunus Emre[16] and Hacı Bektaş Veli,[17] who were reimagined as symbols of Turkey's authentic cultural identity – a process of 'Turkifying' Sufism. Alongside this cultural reclamation, Sufi practices and rituals certain Sufi practices and rituals have faced increasing criticism for being corrupted by Arab, Persian, and Greco-Roman influences, which were seen as causing the decline of the original Turkish-Ottoman heritage. Sufi poetry and music were reframed as enduring pillars of Turkish tradition, preserving the nation's cultural soul. Karaosmanoğlu's *Nur Baba* aligns with this effort to nationalize the past while condemning the perceived moral and ritual excesses of late Ottoman Sufi orders.

Ironically, as the novel was reaching its peak popularity, Sufism was celebrated as a cultural and symbolic heritage, while its living institutions – the orders – were abolished under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1925. The novel reflects this paradox, advocating for a distinction between Sufism's historical legacy and its contemporary practices, which were deemed incompatible with the modern Republic's vision. This duality – honoring Sufism's past while suppressing its present – defined the Republican approach, transforming Sufism from a spiritual tradition into a carefully domesticated historical relic.

In *Nur Baba*, women serve both as active agents in the lodge's corruption and as symbols of societal decay. The central female character, Nigâr, embodies the shift from innocence to moral downfall. Initially depicted as an aristocratic woman bound by traditional values, her fascination with Nur Baba and the lodge leads her into a spiral of addiction, alcoholism, and infidelity. Her descent reflects the anxieties about women stepping beyond the emerging nuclear family structure of the late Ottoman Empire. The novel also critiques the influence of elite women in shaping the lodge's shameless. This dynamic mirrors broader societal anxieties about women's emancipation since the late Ottoman period. *Nur Baba* appears to critique the perceived superficiality of women's progress, suggesting that their newfound freedoms lead not to genuine empowerment but to moral and personal decay. Wealthy patrons like Nigâr and her aunt, Madame Ziba, are portrayed as key enablers of its moral decay. On the other side, while the *tekke* initially appears to promote gender inclusivity – where men and women worship together, and the shaykh's wife holds a significant role – this equality proves illusory. Ultimately, women remain subordinate to Nur Baba, whose manipulative power renders them powerless despite their apparent influence.

15 About this topic see Bein, Amit. 2020. *Ottoman ulema, Turkish Republic: Agents of change and guardians of tradition*. Stanford: Stanford University Press; Silverstein, Brian. 2011. *Islam and Modernity in Turkey*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

16 Yunus Emre (1238–1320) was a Turkish folk poet and Sufi who greatly influenced Turkish culture.

17 Hacı Bektaş Veli (1209–1271) was an Islamic scholar, mystic, saint, sayyid, and philosopher from Khorasan who lived and taught in Anatolia. Alevi and Bektashi Muslims believe the path of Bektaş is the path of Haqq-Muhammad-Ali since they were the source of Bektaşi teachings.

> She (Nigâr) was essentially a serious but weak-willed woman, whose life was as drowsy as the silence of a newborn baby in a bright white cradle. It took more for her to submerge herself in this swirling, murky entourage that burned, in her own words, like a thousand desires, a thousand types of candles. No, Nigâr was not felled on Nur Baba's intricately woven red carpet with the submissiveness of a pigeon with its wings clipped (p. 51).

Finally, Nur Baba's Bektashi *tekke* symbolically portrays a microcosm of late Ottoman society, bringing together individuals from diverse social backgrounds. The interactions between Istanbul's elite and lower-class sufis highlight the novel's exploration of class stratification and societal fragmentation. For the Ottoman elite, including Nigâr and her family, the lodge represents both an object of curiosity and a dangerous blurring of class boundaries. Nigâr's involvement is considered particularly scandalous from her cousin Macid, as it entails crossing a rigid social divide. While lower-class sufis are portrayed as coarse and unrefined, the elite disciples, particularly women, are depicted as pleasure-seeking and capricious, using the lodge as a space for indulgence rather than spiritual enlightenment.

> Wasn't it for this that she (Nigâr) left everything? Her husband and children? Where was her mother? How many days did she mourn when her mother died because of her? How many hours did she cry after her children went to live with her husband in order not to see her again? (p. 99).

This critique extends to other elite figures, such as Nasib Hanım, who uses the lodge for extramarital affairs, and Necati Bey, a government official whose escapism and indulgence in drinking mirror the broader decadence of the Ottoman ruling class. Despite its spiritual pretensions, the lodge ultimately mirrors the class hierarchies of the wider society. Wealthy patrons like Nigâr and Ziba receive preferential treatment, while lower-class disciples are relegated to servile roles.

In conclusion, Brett Wilson's translation of *Nur Baba* is an invaluable resource for understanding the transformation of Sufism from the late Ottoman Empire to the early Republican era. These changes are rooted in the Ottoman Empire's long process of internal restructuring (*Tanzimat*), shaped by its interactions with European modernity. The book also sheds light on the development of Islamic reformist and modernist movements, which profoundly influenced Sufism's ritual, cultural, and doctrinal landscape. More broadly, *Nur Baba* serves as a lens through which to examine late Ottoman/Turkish society's evolving attitudes toward gender, sexuality, and social stratification. By capturing the emotions and tensions of a society in transition, the novel offers a microhistorical perspective on the nationalization and modernization processes. It contributes to ongoing scholarly efforts to explore the transformation of Islamic tradition and late Ottoman/Turkish society in relation to Ottoman nationalism and secularism – not only in the context of the *Tanzimat* and Mustafa Kemal's reforms but in their wider cultural and social dimensions.

Akgöz, Görkem. 2024. *In the Shadow of War and Empire: Industrialisation, Nation-Building, and Working-Class Politics in Turkey*. Leiden: Brill. 374 pages. 4 maps. 32 figures. 1 table. ISBN: 9789004416741.

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Görkem Akgöz's *In the Shadow of War and Empire: Industrialisation, Nation-Building, and Working-Class Politics in Turkey* demonstrates the importance of critically re-examining a period of Turkish history often characterized by nostalgia and myth. The book meticulously explores how industrialisation and nation-building processes intertwined and intersected, spanning from the late Ottoman Empire's industrialisation efforts to the end of the Democratic Party era. Furthermore, it aims to fill a significant gap in historiography by offering a fresh perspective on the history of the working class, a central figure in these processes.

The book is divided into two main parts, each consisting of three chapters. The first part adopts a macro perspective, discussing the close relationship between industrialisation, political economy, and evolving economic ideas in the Early Republic with the process of modernization and nation-building. The second part narrows the focus to the lived experiences of industrial workers who carried the burden of this transformation, particularly their working conditions and relations on the factory floor. This dual-level analysis allows readers to better understand the discrepancies between planned economies and factory realities, successfully combining macro and micro analytical perspectives.

The first chapter provides a solid foundation for understanding the Ottoman Empire's industrialisation process. By drawing on a broad range of secondary sources, the chapter examines how the Ottoman Empire's first industrialisation drive began in the mid-19th century and why it did not achieve the desired level of success. This analysis clarifies the continuities and disruptions in Turkey's industrialisation history, highlighting how the trauma of this early failure deeply influenced the Republican elite's mindset.

The second chapter shifts focus to Turkey's political economy after the Republic's establishment. The author argues that statism was shaped by both internal and external dynamics, which expanded the state's manoeuvring capacity. Key factors included the declining influence of the 1929 economic crisis on peripheral countries and the Soviet Union's success with its planned economy model, which left a lasting impression on Turkish bureaucrats and intellectuals. Consequently, the state abandoned ineffective liberal policies in favour of statist economic strategies. The author convincingly argues that statist policies not only promoted economic growth but also strengthened the ruling CHP, enabling it to implement reforms more effectively and consolidate its power.

In the third chapter, the focus turns to the political dimension of state policies and the strategic establishment of state factories. While Ottoman factories were primarily

located in Istanbul, the Republic deliberately placed factories in remote parts of Anatolia. Despite foreign experts criticizing these locations as inefficient, the Republican government prioritized political objectives over economic ones. These factories and railways were seen as tools for penetrating Anatolia and spreading modernity. However, the author also highlights significant challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure and labour shortages, which hindered the success of these ambitious modernization efforts.

In the second part, the author examines the production process and the lives of workers, with a particular focus on the Bakırköy factory. The main question in this section revolves around how production relations operated within the factory. By utilizing primary sources, the author amplifies the voices of workers, a group often marginalized in traditional historiography.

The fourth chapter takes readers inside the factory, revealing the discrepancies between economic plans and reality. Contrary to the state's paternalistic rhetoric and technical planning, factory operations were often unstructured and chaotic. Workers faced numerous challenges, including uncertain wage policies, insufficient salaries amid rising living costs, housing shortages, and the authoritarian behaviour of foremen. Crucially, the author emphasizes that workers were far from passive; they resisted by quitting jobs or moving to other factories offering better conditions, prioritizing their own well-being over nationalist discourses.

The fifth chapter examines how World War II transformed workers' experiences. Although Turkey remained neutral during the war, its economy suffered severe disruptions. As living costs skyrocketed, workers' living conditions deteriorated. The author demonstrates how this period saw a rise in workers' self-awareness and organizational capacity, supported by petitions with increasingly assertive tones. Sections such as 'Questions of Distribution: Mümin versus Management' and 'Questions of Dignity: Mustafa versus Management' offer exemplary microhistorical analyses of workers' struggles.

In the final chapter, the author explores shifts in labour policies during the post-war period. External liberal influences and a more conscious working class at home forced a relaxation of authoritarian labour policies. Additionally, the emergence of a political party opposing the CHP significantly enhanced workers' bargaining power. The author highlights how workers became politicized in this environment, with unions emerging as key actors in their lives. Through the life stories of two workers, the chapter illustrates the diverse trajectories of this politicization process.

The book makes important contributions to the literature. The first is that labour fills a major gap in global historiography. The history of the working class in the Global South has been much less studied than in the Global North. Women's labour has been even more neglected. However, the book shows that women's labour was indispensable in the early Republican period and that women were more exploited because they were paid less. In this respect, although the work takes a broad view of labour and touches on important points both geographically and thematically, it does not exclude the factories, which were the main areas of production, from its analysis.

The book also filled a major gap in Turkish labour historiography, which is the history of workers in state factories. State factories have continued to be involved in daily

politics despite the passage of nearly 100 years. The privatization of these factories in the neoliberal period after 1980 created great discomfort in society, and these factories became a nostalgic, myth-filled taboo. However, it is shown in the book that the workers working in these factories do not have a life as described and that they suffer from various economic and social difficulties. Moreover, it demonstrates that the rhetoric of a patriotic and nationalist worker class, along with the image of a paternalistic and supra-class state, does not reflect the realities of their experiences.

Another significant strength of the book lies in its extensive use of resources. It draws on a diverse array of materials, including bureaucratic discourses, newspaper articles, reports by foreign experts, and government statistics, providing a robust foundation for its analysis. Most notably, the book highlights workers' petitions as a primary source, allowing their voices to emerge directly. These petitions provide a unique and invaluable insight into the experiences, struggles, and strategies of workers, offering a perspective rarely found in traditional historiography. Thanks to these sources, the book clearly shows that workers are not passive and are using the opportunities they have to develop different strategies to avoid the transformative effects of industry, oppression and misery. It has also shown once again how misleading the myths are that are created when we cannot reach out to workers' voices.

The only criticism of the book is that its emphasis on the failure of industrialisation efforts in the Ottoman and Republican periods feels somewhat exaggerated. While these initiatives did not achieve their full potential, Turkey has, since the 1930s, reached a position in terms of industrial output that is close to that of developed countries. Although political expectations may not have been entirely met, the statist policies succeeded in guiding the private sector and serving as a role model for economic development. These policies supported protectionist measures and human capital development, enabling the Turkish bourgeoisie to become self-sufficient by the 1950s. However, with this newfound strength, the bourgeoisie sought to dismantle the expanding statist policies at the first opportunity.

In conclusion, *In the Shadow of War and Empire* is a remarkable work that fills significant gaps in both global and Turkish labour history. By utilizing extensive resources and combining macro and micro analyses, it offers a fresh perspective on Turkey's industrialisation history. The book sheds light on the real living conditions of the working class, who bore the burden of this transformation, effectively uncovering the truths hidden behind nostalgic and mythologized narratives.

Yılmaz, Mehmet Şakir. 2022. *"Koca Nişancı" of Kanuni: Celālzāde Mustafa Çelebi, Bureaucracy, and "Kanun" In the Reign of Suleyman the Magnificent (1520–1566)*. Istanbul: Akademik Kitaplar. 295 pages. ISBN: 9786057147172.

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"Koca Nişancı" of Kanuni: Celālzāde Mustafa Çelebi, Bureaucracy, and "Kanun" in the Reign of Suleyman (1520–1566) represents a significant scholarly contribution to the study of Ottoman history. Based on Yılmaz's dissertation (Bilkent University, 2006), the book offers an in-depth examination of bureaucratic culture and administrative developments during the reign of Sultan Süleymān the Magnificent (d. 974/1566), focusing particularly on the career of Celālzāde Mustafa Çelebi (d. 975/1567), a central figure in the legal and bureaucratic apparatus of the empire.

Yılmaz sets himself apart from other works by shifting the scholarly focus away from the traditional emphasis on military and political narratives and instead foregrounding the administrative backbone that maintained the empire's longevity and centralization. The book shows how Celālzāde, as Koca *Nişancı* (Chancellor), played a central role in the development of Ottoman bureaucracy, law and governance. His career was central to the codification of the *Kanun* (law) under the rule of Sultan Süleymān (r.1520–1566), which according to Yılmaz was crucial to the success of the empire. Yılmaz draws attention to Celālzāde's contributions, which have been overshadowed by more famous figures or simplified by previous scholarship. This makes the book a fresh and nuanced addition to the field of Ottoman studies.

The book comprises 295 pages, including the bibliography and the table of contents, and is divided into an introductory section, three main chapters and a concluding section. This is followed by two appendices. The appendices contain a comprehensive list of Celālzāde's works and their respective copies, as well as a *berāt* (imperial edict) written by Celālzāde for Grand Vizier Pargalı Damat İbrahim Pasha (d. 942/1536). This introductory chapter provides an overview of the central administration and bureaucracy of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, with a particular focus on the reign of Sultan Süleyman. During this period, the empire's bureaucratic apparatus was consolidated and expanded. The introduction explains the role of influential bureaucrats such as Celālzāde in shaping the legal and political system of the Ottoman Empire. Celālzāde made a remarkable contribution to the development of the chancellery and the legal framework, thereby strengthening the established classical structure of Ottoman administration.

Chapter I provides an analysis of Celālzāde's family background, his academic qualifications and his rise within the imperial bureaucracy. His career began with his

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appointment as *Reisu'l-Küttāb* (head of the secretaries) under Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha, a post he held from 1525 to 1534. He held the role of *Nişancı* from 1534 to 1556 and again briefly from 1566 to 1567. The second chapter examines the development of *insha,* the official administrative language of the Ottoman state. This chapter traces the development of *insha* from its beginnings before 1500 to its refinement in the 16th century, highlighting Celālzāde's expertise in the genre. His contributions significantly influenced Ottoman prose and formal communication practices within the empire's bureaucracy. Chapter III analyzes the concept of '*kanun*' (law) during the reign of Sultan Süleymān, with a particular focus on the central role Celālzāde played in its codification and organization. The term '*kanun*' originally referred to tax registers, but later became a broader legal framework. Celālzāde's work in compiling the imperial edicts and legal texts was central to the structuring of the Ottoman government.

In the conclusion, the lasting influence of Celālzāde on the political and legal landscape of the Ottoman state in the 16th century is emphasized. Yılmaz identifies the synthesis of Islamic legal principles and the pragmatism required for imperial expansion as the most important features of his legacy. Celālzāde is credited with codifying legal and administrative structures that contributed to the legitimacy and stability of the Ottoman state. His career is set as an example of the significant influence of bureaucrats on the administration and political thinking on the legitimacy of the Ottoman Empire under the rule of Sultan Süleyman.

The book effectively functions as a biography, detailing Celālzāde's life, career and contributions in the context of Ottoman bureaucratic and political history. It outlines his family background, his education and his rise through various bureaucratic functions. By placing Celālzāde's work within the broader development of Ottoman administrative systems and legal codes, the biography shows how his contributions helped to shape key aspects of Ottoman government. Through a detailed examination of Celālzāde's career, Yılmaz offers insights into his role in the codification of laws and the development of bureaucratic structures at the height of the Ottoman Empire.

Yılmaz sheds new light on Celālzāde's legacy by offering a corrective to previous scholarship that has either oversimplified or neglected his contributions. Unlike other studies that either exaggerate or demonize historical figures, Yılmaz presents a balanced account. Celālzāde is neither glorified as a hero nor vilified as a villain. Instead, he is portrayed as a pragmatic and influential bureaucrat whose work was essential to the administration and political thinking about the legitimacy of Ottoman rule. The book emphasizes how Celālzāde's contributions to the codification of laws and the development of the bureaucracy helped to legitimize and stabilize the empire by bringing together Islamic legal principles with the practical realities of imperial rule.[2]

One of the book's greatest strengths is its detailed analysis of the bureaucratic processes that supported Ottoman rule. Through the career of Celālzāde, Yılmaz provides

2 For a more detailed analysis of this book, see the interview with Mehmet Şakir Yılmaz, Ottoman Bureaucratic Culture and Political Thought. URL: https://www.jhiblog.org/2024/07/17/ottoman-bureaucratic-culture-and-political-thought-an-interview-with-mehmet-sakir-yilmaz/ (accessed 5 March 2025).

a nuanced understanding of how the Ottoman state functioned across vast geographic regions and maintained its centralized authority over diverse populations. This focus on bureaucratic culture offers valuable insights into the administrative foundations that underpinned the empire's success during the reign of Sultan Süleymān.

Despite its strengths, the book is not without its weaknesses. One notable problem is the organization of the narrative. At times, Yılmaz digresses into tangential discussions that, while interesting, distract from the main theme. A tighter structure would have improved the coherence and readability of the text. In addition, the extensive use of Ottoman Turkish archival sources without accompanying translations may be challenging for readers unfamiliar with the language, limiting the book's accessibility to a wider audience. The inconsistent spelling of key terms – such as Nişancı (variously written as Nishanci, Nishancı), Rüstem (also as Rustem), Vizier (also as vizir) and Süleymān (also Suleiman, Suleyman) – further complicates reading.

In terms of theoretical engagement, Yılmaz's book presents a comprehensive and detailed account of Celālzāde's contributions to the field of bureaucracy and the law. While this concentrated approach offers valuable insight into Celālzāde's role within the Ottoman imperial framework, integrating additional theoretical perspectives on bureaucracy and legal history could potentially enhance its appeal for a wider academic audience. In this regard, the book is comparable to Kaya Şahin's *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleymān* (Cambridge University Press, 2013). In contrast to Yılmaz's detailed account of Celālzāde's legal and bureaucratic contributions, Şahin's work employs a broader interdisciplinary lens, situating Celālzāde within the political, cultural, and diplomatic dimensions of the period. Both approaches contribute significantly to our understanding of Celālzāde's influence in Ottoman history, with each approach offering unique insights.

This book is intended for scholars of Ottoman history, with a particular focus on those engaged in the study of bureaucratic and legal developments within the Ottoman Empire, as well as political historians interested in the dynamics of power within the early modern Islamic world. By engaging with primary sources and providing a focused study of Celālzāde's career and writings, Yılmaz offers valuable insights to academics. His comprehensive historical analysis and utilization of novel archival sources indicate that he has effectively engaged with the scholarly community.

Ultimately, Yılmaz's work is a valuable contribution to Ottoman studies, especially for those interested in the administrative and legal reforms of the 16th century. Although the book's dense narrative and specialized focus may limit its accessibility, it offers essential insights into the workings of the Ottoman bureaucracy and the role of key figures such as Celālzāde in maintaining the administrative and legal structures of the empire. Yılmaz's examination of the development of the Ottoman bureaucracy during the reign of Sultan Süleymān offers a critical perspective on the mechanisms of imperial governance during a crucial era in the empire's history. By placing Celālzāde's career in the context of broader Ottoman reforms, the book offers a balanced view that emphasizes his pragmatic and influential role in shaping Ottoman governance.