

Literary Chains Frozen in Tile? Proposed Literary Connections between Salmān Sāvajī and Aḥmedi as Observed in the Persian Epigraphic Programme of the Green *Zāviye* in Bursa (821–827/1419–1424)

Abstract

The layers of Arabic and Persian epigraphy in the Green Complex (821–827/1419–1424) in the Western Anatolian town of Bursa, built for Meḥmed I (r. 816–824/1413–1421), are indicative of the literary horizon at this time. I argue that the extensive epigraphic programme is a contemporary source frozen in ‘tile’ and time, connecting the buildings to the concurrent developments in Anatolian literature. For the first time, I discuss the appearance of Persian poetry by the Jalāyirid court poet Salmān Sāvajī (d. 777/1376) on early Ottoman architecture, which ties in with the contemporary works of Tāceddin Aḥmedi (734–815/1334–1413), poet laureate of Meḥmed I (r. 816–824/1413–1421). The preserved texts in the Green Complex allow us to obtain a new perspective on the transregional connections between the post-Mongol Turkmen world and the Ottoman sphere of influence.

Keywords: Salmān Sāvajī, Aḥmedi, Bursa, Green Mosque, Meḥmed I, epigraphy, Jalāyirid dynasty

The layers of Arabic and Persian epigraphy in the Green Complex (821–827/1419–1424), located in the Western Anatolian town of Bursa and built for the fifth Ottoman sultan Meḥmed I (r. 816–824/1413–1421), are indicative of the literary horizon at this time. Why is this important? Because, given the scarce sources on the period, very little is known about the practice of multilingualism in the early Ottoman realm. In addition to the Arabic verses, the Green Complex is the first extant Ottoman structure that features Persian epigraphy, allowing us a glimpse into the developments at Meḥmed’s court. I argue that the extensive epigraphic programme is a contemporary source frozen in ‘tile’ and time, connecting the buildings to the concurrent developments in Anatolian literature.¹ While the existence of some of the Persian verses has

- 1 On the signatures in the Green Complex in Bursa, see Ayverdi 1972, 64–118; Blessing 2017, 225–50; Necipoğlu 1990, 136–70; Pancaroğlu 2019, 177–88; Taeschner 1932, 139–68. For an overview on the scholarship on the concurrence of Arabic, Persian and Ottoman Turkish in Anatolia during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see Kuru 2012, 548–92; Peacock and Yildiz 2016. On multilingualism and exchange between Anatolia, Iran and Central Asia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see Binbaş 2016; de Nicola 2018, 77–90.

been noted several times, a holistic discussion of the epigraphic programme has been omitted. I try to answer some of the questions pertaining to the makers and users of the multilingual inscription: What function does the calligraphy have in relation to the building? Where was Persian used as opposed to Arabic? Is there a system behind the combination of both languages? And how does it relate to the contemporary reception of Persian poetry in the Ottoman realm? What themes are particularly prominent? How might they relate to the socio-religious climate under Mehmed I? And, finally, who might have been involved in the programme?²

Texts on large architectural surfaces, particularly in public spaces like the charitable foundation of a sultan, have a significant function in the image-making of the royal dynasty. In recent years, scholars have increasingly paid attention to the strategic use of calligraphy on architectural surfaces.³ Even though they are used particularly in religious buildings, the Persian inscriptions in the Green *zāviye* are part of a regional Anatolian tradition. The Seljuks used Persian on the walls of Sinop and Konya, namely in verses either referring to the rulers or quotes from the *Shāhnāma* epos. Verses from the epos are also to be found on the tomb of Sāhib Ata in Konya (681–2/1283). As A.C.S. Peacock has shown, the Persian language dominated courtly literature until the late thirteenth/early fourteenth centuries, when Persian poetry was turkicised, by the likes of Tāceddīn Aḥmedī (ca. 743–815/1334–1413) and qādī Burhān al-Dīn (r. 783–800/1381–1398) or Qāḍī Burhāneddīn, who wrote a Turkish *divān*.⁴ I will discuss in this article, how the Persian epigraphy in the Green *zāviye* sits within these shifts by analysing it as a contemporary testimony to the literary horizon at the Ottoman court during Sultan Mehmed's reign.

1. What Function Does the Calligraphy Have in Relation to the Building?

The epigraphic programme of the Green Complex in Bursa presents the key themes of Mehmed I: legitimation and everlasting glory through the incorporation of local and foreign elements. There are three elements in the complex that are either a novelty in the Ottoman realm or the only remaining examples from this period: the mix of Persian and Arabic, the use of panegyric poetry about architecture on a building, and the reference to contemporary political events. This article is concerned with the Persian epigraphy, which appears in several locations: in the mihrab, on the door panels above the southern guestrooms, in the loggias of the anti-qibla wall, and upstairs on door panels of the antechamber to the sultan's loggia (Fig. 1).

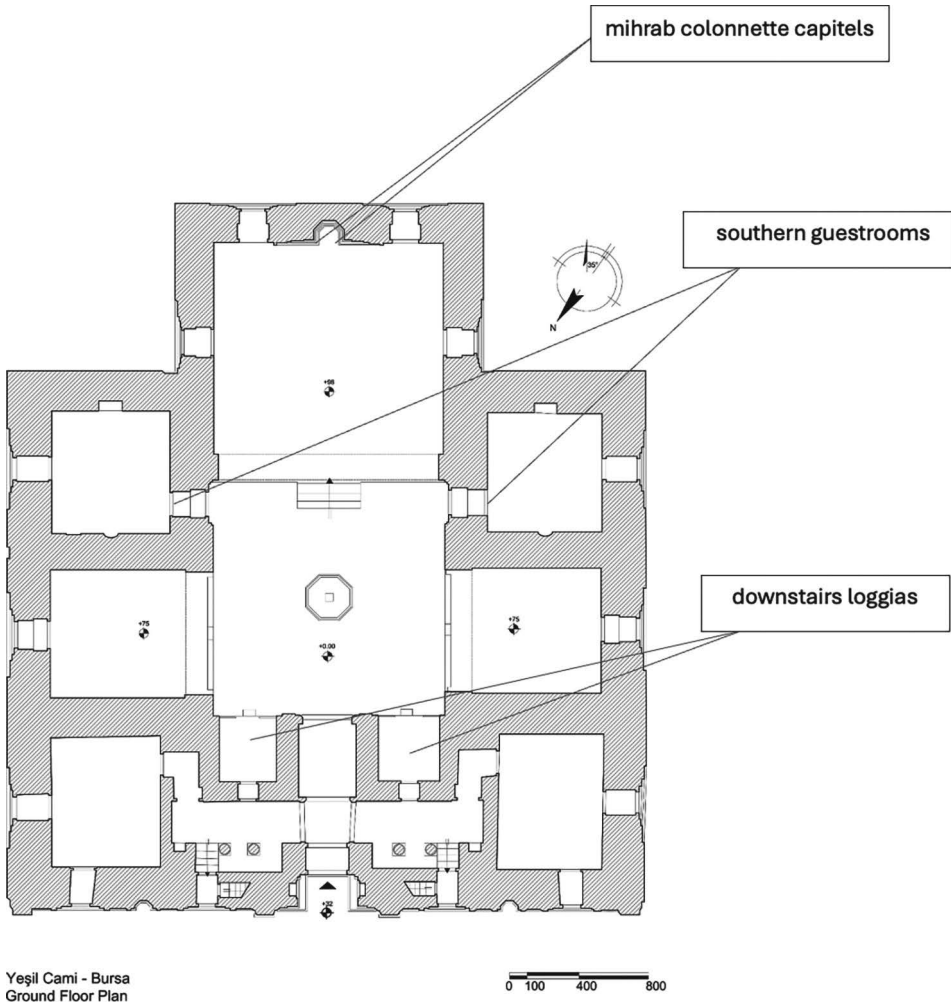
The inscriptions create an interaction between the building and its users: for instance, the inscriptions above the doors upstairs comment on the transition between

2 Unless otherwise stated all translations are my own.

3 See the edited volume by Gharipour and Schick 2013.

4 See Bombaci 1969, 69–70; O'Kane 2021, 174; Peacock 2019, 149; Redford 1993, 153–5.

Figure 1. Ground floor plan with Persian inscriptions, Green zāviye, complex Mehmed I, Bursa, 821–827/1419–1424. © Basel Haclavi after Ayverdi



spaces, while those in the mihrab focus on the topic of conversion.⁵ The alignment of the position of the texts with the architecture hints at a pre-conceived programme, which was communicated at an early stage in the planning process or even developed in tandem with the tilemakers. Several individual and collective names appear in the

5 For the full inscriptions in the Green zāviye, see Tüfekçioğlu 2001, 143–50, and for a discussion of the chronogram and the signatures, see Pancaroğlu 2019, 177–88; Taeschner 1932, 139–68.

epigraphy and are of importance in this context. The charismatic vizier and governor of Bursa, Hacı İvaş Paşa (d. 831/1428) was presumably the supervisor in charge of the construction and decoration of the *zāviye*. The epigraphy in the panels above the two niches flanking the entrance portal states that the building was ‘drawn by him, arranged by him’ and that ‘he fixed its principles.’ Inside, above the sultanic lodge, a second inscription indicates the name of the head designer, Naḳkāş ‘Alī.

Besides these two names, several artists left their signatures in the complex: we find the name of the tilemaker Mehmed el-Mecnūn (the inspired or possessed Mehmed) on a tile inside the sultanic lodge, as well as the collective signature of the group of craftsmen from Tabriz on the mihrab tile, complemented by the wooden door of the *türbe*, which was signed as the work of ‘Alī b. Hāji Aḥmad Tabrizī. The spectacular tiles themselves – in underglaze, overglaze, and black-line technique, the result of skills imported from the Turkmen-Timurid realms of Central Asia and Iran – have already received scholarly attention. The specifics of the epigraphy and the relation to both local T-shaped dervish lodges and transregional literary customs make it likely that the content of the programme was specifically devised in situ for the Green Complex and was not a wholesale Turkmen-Timurid import.⁶

2. Where Was Persian Used as Opposed to Arabic and Is there a System Behind the Combination of Both Languages?

Up to now, several scholars have mentioned the *rubāʿī* (quatrain) by Saʿdī (609–691/1213–1292) in white thuluth on the left column of the mihrab in the *zāviye*: ‘The thoughts of an oppressor who has been cruel to us remain around his neck forever, but they pass over us.’ The signature on the right column, ‘This is a work by the masters of Tabriz,’ launched the abovementioned discussion on the origin of the craftsmen. Yet, this is not the only occurrence of Persian in the Green *zāviye*.⁷ The corpus of texts only makes sense when read in conjunction with the Arabic epigraphy and, in hind-

- 6 On the intersection between architecture, panegyric poetry, and epigraphy, see Meisami 2001, and for a broader geographical context, see Bush 2018; Firouzeh 2015; Gharipour and Schick 2013. For an overview of contemporary Persian inscriptions on architecture, see O’Kane 2009, 114–57. On Hacı İvaş Paşa, see Özcan 1992, 485–6; Pay 1996, 177–85; on Hacı İvaş Paşa as a patron of the arts, see Yurekli-Gorkay 2017, 744–66; on his role as an architect, see Ayverdi 1972, 13–16. See also the article by Beyazıt 2007, 179–202; Ünver 1951, 8. On the story of the foreign craftsmen, invited by Hacı İvaş Paşa, including Naḳkāş ‘Alī, see Furat 1985, 437 and Necipoğlu 1990, 136. On the concept and spread of the ‘International Timurid style,’ see Lentz, and Lowry 1989, 317. On the tile-makers who used the sobriquet ‘masters from Tabriz,’ see Aube 2016, 33–62, at 33; Blair 2014, 321–56; Mahi 2017, 36–79. For a study of the specific tilemaking techniques used by the Tabrizi workshop at the Green Complex, see O’Kane 2011, 177–203, 189.
- 7 Shaykh Saʿdī of Shiraz, ‘On the conduct of Kings,’ *Gulistān* see Thackston 2008, 39. For the reference to the quatrain by Saʿdī, see Blessing 2017, 239; O’Kane 2021, 177. For the full inscriptions in the Green *zāviye*, see Tüfekçioğlu 2001, 143–50.

Figure 2. Southwestern guestroom, panel above door, Green zāviye, Complex Mehmed I, Bursa, 821–827/1419–1424 © Veronika Poier



sight, to a carefully conceived programme motivated by recent political events. As I indicated above, several instances in the epigraphy hint at a creation *in situ*. As the main artistic intervention of Mehmed I, the Green Complex needs to be understood through the lens of the interregnum. The death of Bāyezid I (r. 791–804/1389–1402) in Timurid captivity in 804/1402 spurred a bloody fratricide that lasted until Mehmed became sultan in July 815/1413.⁸ Two mirrored inscriptions refer directly to the political resurrection of the Ottomans and the successful reinvigoration of the realm under Mehmed I. The verses in Persian in white thuluth are on tile panels above the southern guestrooms (Fig. 2). The two lines 2–3 referring to the political context read ‘May this *imaret* prosper in eternity. May its owner be victorious against the enemies’ and ‘He who is an enemy of this *devlet* / May they always be loathed in the world.’⁹

8 For an excellent overview of the political situation, see Kastritsis 2007 and 2017.

9 Line 1 تَوَكَّلِي عَلَى خَالِقِي (Arabic) *Tawakkuli ‘alā khāliqī*.

Line 2 این عمارت تا ابد معمور باد صاحبش بر دشمنان منصور باد (Persian) *Īn ‘imārat tā abad ma‘mūr bād ṣāhibash bar dushmanān manṣūr bād*.

Now, what is important in our discussion is the interpretation of the word ‘*devlet*,’ because it figures prominently in the legitimization propaganda of Mehmed I and his courtiers. As indicated by his sobriquet, Çelebi (Young Lord), the later Mehmed I was only 13 when his father Bāyezid I died in Timurid captivity. The attempts of Mehmed I and his courtiers underline the legitimate transition of dynastic power and show how endangered his fate was, throughout the interregnum as contender to the Ottoman throne and later as sultan. The anonymous chronicle *Aḥvāl-i Sultān Muḥammad* stressed that Çelebi Mehmed’s royal charisma, his military and political talent, for which the term *devlet* is used, compensated for his youth. However, *devlet* can also mean dynasty, reign or power. What is crucial here is that the cursing of the enemy is connected to the building, which stands for its patron Mehmed I representing the Ottoman dynasty.¹⁰

The Timurids did not intend for a unified Ottoman dynastic rule and allocated the decimated parts of the empire to rivalling princes.¹¹ During the early fifteenth century, Timur and his successor Shāh Rukh (r. 807–852/1405–1449) strategically created havoc among the brothers, intentionally weakening the unruly dynasty on the Western front of the Timurid Empire. The Timurid dynasts considered themselves as the overlords of the Anatolian principalities (beyliks), which becomes evident in a dispatch exchanged between Shāh Rukh and Mehmed in 818/1416. Shāh Rukh wanted to ensure that the Ottomans would not support the Karakoyunlu, whom the Timurid ruler planned to attack, with Mehmed responding that his main occupation were the neighbouring infidels, not the Muslim rulers. We should remember in this context that one of Timur’s reasons for attacking the Ottomans in 804/1402 was that Bāyezid gave refuge to Kara Yūsuf Kara Koyunlu (r. 789–821/1388–1419). I will show below that the lodging of Prince Aḥmad Jalāyir (r. 783–821/1382–1419) in 802/1400 is given as another reason for the Timurid invasion and that this is crucial in our context.¹² Indeed, to grasp the political and cultural atmosphere of this period, it is necessary to consider the status of the Ottomans as Timurid vassals.

The contemporary meaning of *devlet* comes to the fore in the verses paired with the reference to the durability of the building, ‘may it stand forever.’ By association, the building becomes a symbol for Mehmed I, ‘its victorious owner.’ We might take this relation between patron and building for granted, because it is a recurring trope in panegyric texts, but the aggressive tone of the lines remains crucial. As Julie Meisami has pointed out, the description of buildings in panegyric texts figured as a demonstration of power and rulership for the sovereign. While such references appear in the text by Salmān Sāvajī, these lines remain closer to Mehmed’s self-image than any of the quotations I will discuss in more detail below. One interpretation for the texts above the *tābhāne* doors, which remain in the realm of contemporary politics, could

Line 3 هر که این دولت نخواهد پایدار دایما اندر جهان مقهور باد (Persian) *Har kih in dawlat nakhvāhad pāy-dār dāyiman andar jahān maqbūr bād*.

10 See Kastritsis 2007, 206; Kastritsis 2013, 11.

11 Kastritsis 2007, 45.

12 See Kastritsis 2016, 285.

be that they were addressed to Persianate silk merchants travelling to Bursa via Tabriz and who would have stayed in the southern guestrooms. In this context, it is noteworthy that the northern guestrooms exclusively feature Arabic inscriptions, which might have been defined by a linguistic difference in the user communities of the spaces. Yet, given the lack of information in the endowment deed on the use of the space, we need to be careful with such interpretations: the legibility, script, and potential audience of the panels are factors that we need to consider, and which might have affected the meaning of the epigraphy in its architectural context.¹³

The association between building and ruler is continued in the verses of the Jalāyirid court poet Salmān Sāvajī (d. 777/1376) in the loggia area of the Green *zāviye* (Figs. 3–5), which have not yet been discussed or identified as his work. These lines present important proof for the presence of Persian poetry at Mehmed's court and the choice made by the inventors of the programme.¹⁴

The verses run from the eastern to the western loggia walls: the quatrains in white thuluth are divided into two cartouches per wall, defining the dados along the three walls, which enclose the loggia spaces. As the focus of this text lies on the context of the epigraphic programme, we should pay attention to the colour scheme of the inscriptions in the *zāviye*, as they behave according to a pattern in alignment with linguistic choices: in the loggias, white is used for Persian, gold for Arabic. Unlike the Persian, the Arabic texts in the loggias repeat: firstly, in the cartouches, above the white thuluth script, the golden kufi inscription in Arabic wishes the owner of the building happiness, alternating with permanent glory, and secondly, in the medallions dividing the cartouches a golden thuluth text specifically blesses the sultan. It becomes clear that the building and the owner are identified as one, further emphasising the connection between Mehmed I and the Green *zāviye*. The Persian verses in the Green *zāviye* read as follows, starting from the eastern loggia, with the eastern wall:

Oh, Qibla of salvation, Kaaba of purity
You are in a good place and there is no one like you anywhere

Every arch of your veranda is an earth-bound heaven
Every brick of your foundation is a world-displaying cup (*Jām-i Jahān Namā*)

This foundation cannot be broken
If the mountains were ground to dust (Q 56:5)

- 13 Meisami, 2001, 23. On the role of Bursa as a hub for the silk trade see İnalçık and Quatert 1994, 222. On the silk trade in the region see Stahl 2019, 351–64. On the destruction of the trade hub of Tana see Heyd 1885–1886, vol. 2, 374–5; Karpov 2020, 38–47. For the shift in trade routes, Barbaro 2010, 31. The endowment deed does not specify the uses of the rooms. See MC 5, Vakfiyya, (Endowment deed) for the Green Complex of Mehmed I in Bursa, İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Atatürk Kitaplığı İstanbul Kitaplığı Bölümü, Muallim Cevdet, Fermanlar, no 5. I will refer to Salmān Sāvajī as Sāvajī, even though contemporary sources reference him as Salmān.
- 14 On Salmān Sāvajī, see de Nicola 2018, 17; Wing 2016, 136–42. On the Jalāyirids, see also Roemer 1993, 1–40.

Figure 3. Anti-qibla wall with upstairs sultanic loggia and downstairs loggias, elevation with schematic distribution of text-fields, Green zāviye, Complex Mehmed I, Bursa, 821–827/1419–1424 © Basel Haclavi

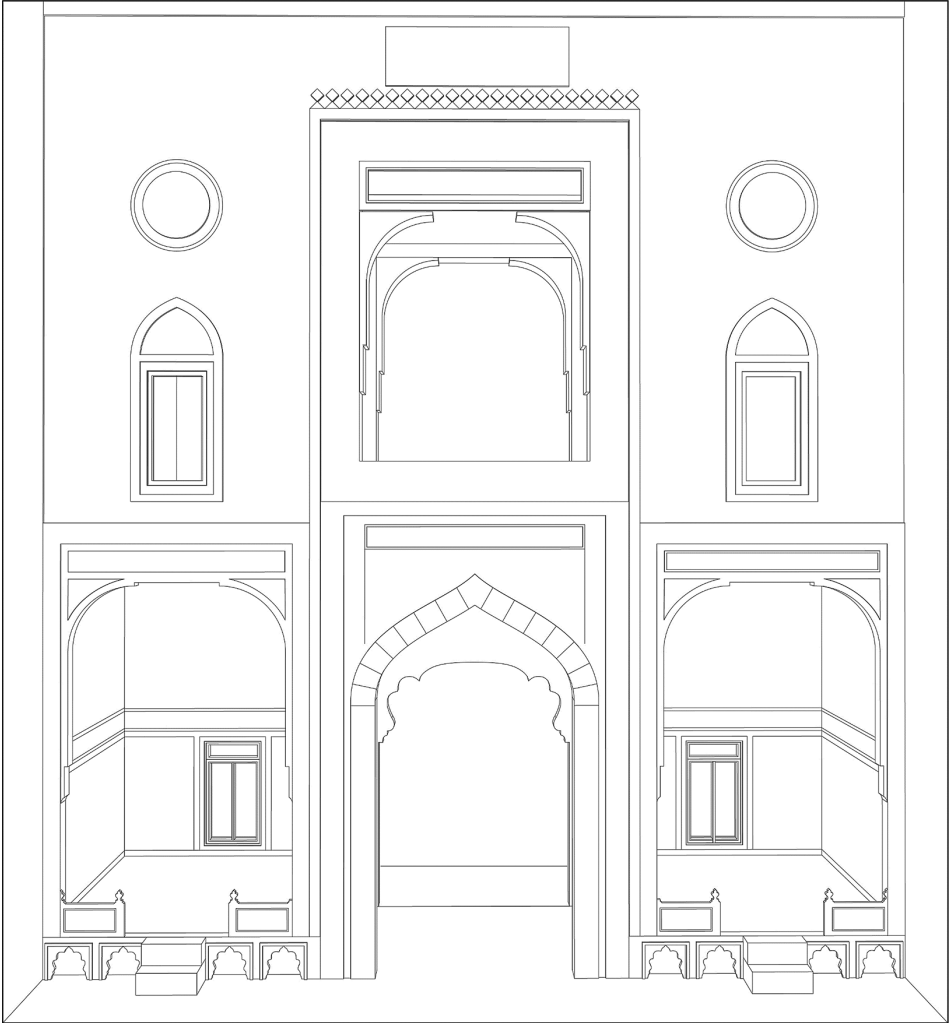


Figure 4. *Anti-qibla wall, eastern side, elevation, Green zāviye, Complex Mehmed I, Bursa, 821–827/1419–1424, © Basel Haclavi*

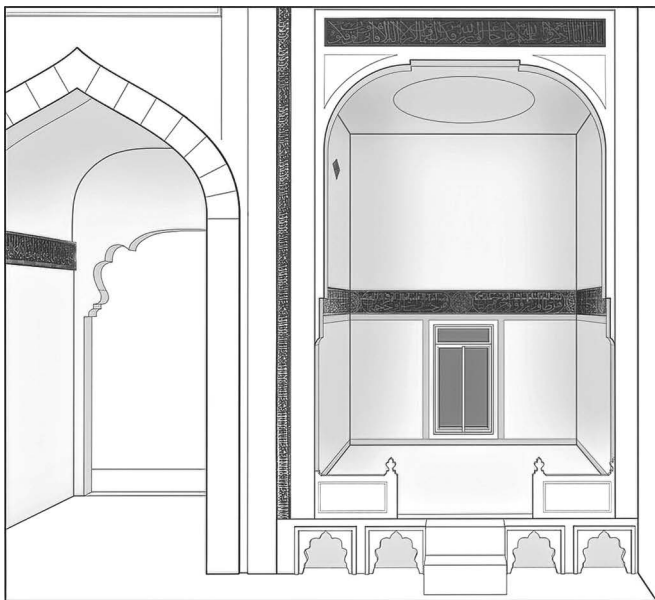
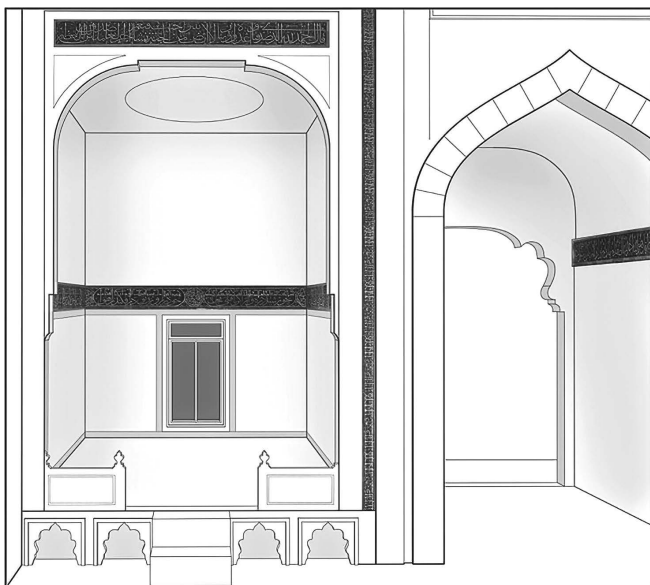


Figure 5. *Anti-qibla wall, western side, elevation, Green zāviye, Complex Mehmed I, Bursa, 821–827/1419–1424 © Basel Haclavi*



Western loggia, eastern wall

If a guard throws a stone from atop your rooftop
That stone will reach Saturn after one thousand years

The little speck of a sun, would figure out a way
to fit perfectly through your porthole from the sky

In lapis lazuli of eternity has heaven inscribed in its book
'may your greatness and life be eternal.'¹⁵

The verses in the *možāre*^c meter stem from a *qaṣida* composed by Salmān Sāvaji as an ode, presumably to the palace of the first Jalāyirid ruler Shaykh Ḥasan (r. 732–737/1332–1337) (see quatrain 34), in Baghdad (see quatrains 25 and 32), dating to 753/1353 (see quatrain 46).¹⁶ Despite his short reign of five years, this date is possible as Shaykh Ḥasan died only in 756/1356. The *qaṣida* by Sāvaji is loosely based on an earlier one by the Ghaznavid poet Ḥasan-i Ghaznavi (d. 554/1160?), for the vizier Ḥasan-i Aḥmad.¹⁷ It is noteworthy that the verses in the loggias of the Green *zāviye* represent not the whole poem but only excerpts from different parts of Sāvaji's lengthy poem for Shaykh Ḥasan, which comprises 46 quatrains. The quotes are verbatim, but as I will explain below, they do not follow the order of the poem. This indicates that the inventors of the inscription programme not only knew of the whole poem, but also adjusted and 'customised' the text for the use in the Green *zāviye*. In the loggias, I identified the first two quatrains on the eastern wall as the two opening quatrains of

- 15 Eastern Loggia, eastern wall: *Ay qibla-yi sa'adat vay Ka'ba-yi safa / jā-yi khushī va nist nazir-i tu hich jā*

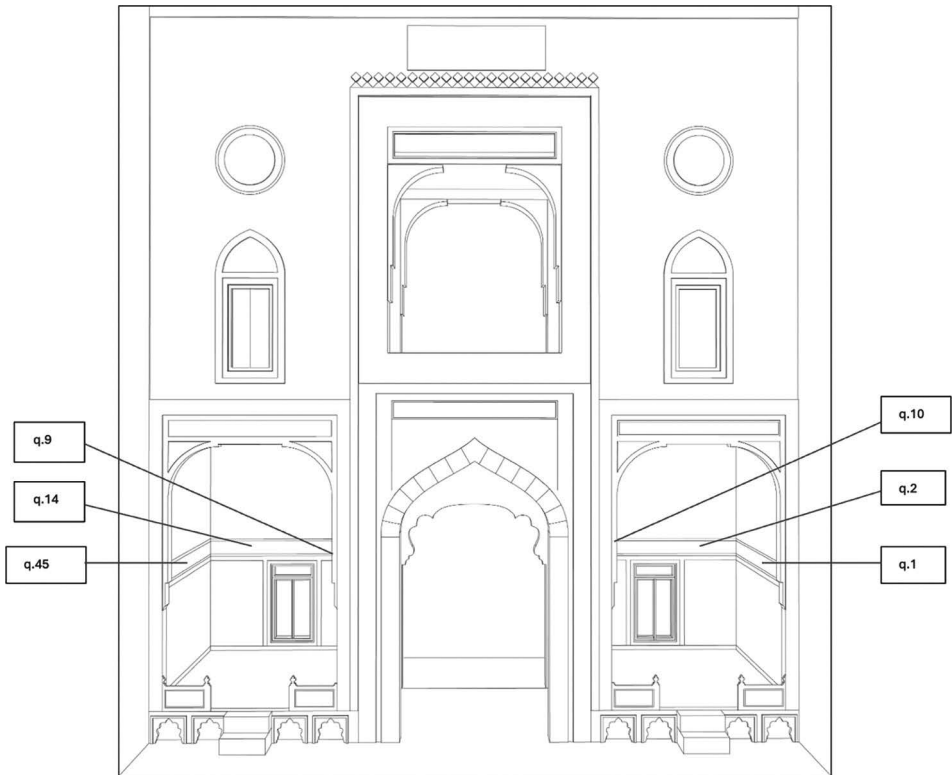
ای قبله سعادۃ وی کعبه صفا جای خوشی و نیست نظیر تو هیچ جا
Har tāq az ravāq-i tu charkh-i zamīn shubāt / har khisht az asās-i tu jā-m-i jahān namā
هر طاق از رواق تو چرخ زمین ثبات هر خشت از اساس تو جام جهان نما
Īn ān asās nist kib gardad khilal'pazir / larw bussati al-jibāl aw insbaqqati al-samā'
این آن اساس نیست که گردد خلل پذیر لو بست الجبال او انشقت السما

Western Loggia, eastern wall: *Ba'd az hizār sāl bih bām-i zuḥal rasad / gar pāsbān z-i qaṣr-i tu sangi kunad rahā*

بَعْد از هزار سال به بام زحل رسد گر پاسبان ز قصر تو سنگی کند رها
Khurshid zarrab-vār agar yāfti majāl / khud rā bi-ravzan-i tu dar afkandī az havā
خورشید ذرهوار اگر یافتی مجال خود را برون تو در افکندی از هوا
Gardūn bi-lajvard-i abad bar kitābi'ash / tahrir karda(h) 'dāma laka al-'izzu wa-l-buqā'
گردون بلاجورد ابد بر کتابش تحریر کرده 'دام لک العز و البقا'

- 16 See the edition Ḥasan-i Ghaznavi, Sayyid Ashraf, *Divān*, ed. M.T. Mudarris Razavi, Teheran: Dānishgāh-i Tihirān.
- 17 See Meisami 2001, 23; 34–5; Wing 2016, 137. Also see Ghaznavi 1949–1950. The initial lines of the *qaṣida* by Ghaznavi for Bahramshah (1117–1157) quoted by Meisami read 'O blessed building! What a pleasant place you are, whose head ever scrapes the heavens. To the eye you are a lofty building; to nature you are an extensive plain' after Meisami 2001, 34–5.

Figure 6. Distribution of quatrains, anti-qibla wall, western side, elevation, Green zāviye, Complex Mehmed I, Bursa, 821–827/1419–1424 ©Basel Haclavi



the *qaṣīda* for Shaykh Ḥasan (see in Fig. 6 q. 1 and q. 2). The third quatrain, which contains a quote in Arabic from the Qurʾān (Q 56:5), aligns with quatrain 10 in the poem by Sāvājī (q. 10). And the western loggia starts with quatrain 9 (q. 9), continues with quatrain 14 (q. 14), and ends with the penultimate quatrain, 45 (q. 45), of the poem by Salmān Sāvājī for Shaykh Ḥasan. The decision of selectively quoting less than a tenth, mostly in a non-consecutive order, of the verses from the poem by Sāvājī needs to be considered to understand the function of the epigraphy in the Green zāviye.

Why was the poem quoted at all? The major themes of the poem in the loggias align with the customs of Persian court poetry, from the association of the ruler with the architecture, to the reference of elements of poets such as Firdawsī (328–410/940–1020) via the image of Jamshid’s cup, the *Jām-i Jabān Namā*. This puts Mehmed’s foundation in a dialogue with the wider Persianate world. As shown by Meisami and Viola Allegranzi, the panegyric description of buildings is known from Ghaznavid buildings of the eleventh century in Iran and Afghanistan and from fourteenth-century Timurid buildings in Central Asia and Iran. In some cases, these poems served

as an introduction to the praise of the ruler.¹⁸ Besides the praise of the sultan, suitable for a religious foundation, Qur'anic themes were employed. The verse of the sura 56 *al-Wāqīʿ*, the Inevitable, in the eastern loggia on Judgement Day, can be related to the panel above the sultan's loggia, or *hünkār mahfili*, which is adorned on both sides, towards the main space, and the antechamber upstairs, with a hadith by Bukhārī on the resurrection.¹⁹ This quatrain presents a further exception within the loggia texts, as it mixes Arabic and Persian in the same line. It begins in Persian and ends in Arabic, starting with the Persian 'This foundation cannot be broken,' switching to the text of sura 56:5, 'if the mountains are ground to dust' – and 'if the heavens slit apart,' a part from sura *al-Raḥmān* 55:37, which also appears in sura *al-Hāqqa* 69:16.

At first glance, this element may point to a bilingual literary practice, both in the original Jalāyirid context and in the Ottoman context of 822/1420, where Persian and Arabic were mixed and must have been both understood, at least by the immediate audience of the text. This reading would align with the general assumption that Arabic in Rum was used for legal and bureaucratic purposes, the sciences and in the religious sphere, and Persian for literature. However, this interpretation cannot hold true, as not everyone was fluent in Arabic. For instance, the judge Devletoglu Yūsuf, born in the Western Anatolian town of Balıkesir, who translated a juridical text from Arabic into Turkish, laments that legal scholars at the time addressed, talked, taught, and read in Turkish in 827/1424, the year of the completion of the Green *zāviye*. The question of literacy in these two languages must remain open for now, as no further information was forthcoming, although I assume that a courtly circle of bilingual poets and courtiers picked the text for Bursa and promoted knowledge of Persian literature, regardless of the prevailing language barriers.²⁰

The poem by Sāvaji is not to be read as an ekphrasis, a verbal description, of the Green *zāviye* for Mehmed I, but of another building, a palace, for another ruler, Shaykh Ḥasan, in Baghdad, in a region far away from Western Anatolia. However, some architectural elements mentioned in the poetry relate to the building in Bursa and could have motivated the choice of these specific lines: while the Green *zāviye* features a loggia inside, and a veranda outside, it also includes arches outside. Lastly, the colour lāpislazuli of the penultimate quatrain dominates the tile decoration of the loggias. Yet, these tropes should be read as poetic metaphors: the realm is a paradisiacal one, but the poetic choices and the political climate motivating this selection are real. The fact that the inventors of the programme picked a poem by Sāvaji is of key importance here, and I shall return to the connection between the Ottoman court and the Jalāyirid poet below.

18 See Allegranzi 2019; Meisami 2001, 21–54. Arabic *qaṣīdas* by al-Buḥturi (d. 284/897) to palaces are already found for the palace of Samarra from the period of Caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–247/847–861). See Meisami 2001, 21.

19 Bukhārī, vol. 2, Book 24, No. 492 in Qaṣṭallānī 1886, 11.

20 See Kuru 2012, 558; Peacock, Yıldız 2016.

3. The Contemporary Reception of Persian Poetry in the Ottoman Realm and the Epigraphic Programme

The Green *zāviye* remains the only building in the Ottoman territories from the early fifteenth century with panegyric poetry, and the closest example would be the Persian foundation inscription of the Çinili Köşk in the imperial Topkapı palace grounds from 876/1472, built under Mehmed II (r. 848–850/1444–1446, 854–886/1451–1481). The epigraphy employs similar tropes as the verses quoted above from the loggias, likening the Çinili Köşk to the firmament. As Gülru Necipoğlu writes, the pavilion in Istanbul inspired poets such as Veliüddin Ahmed Paşa (829–901/1426–1496) and Cafer Çelebi (863–921/1459–1515).²¹ As this praxis was quite the norm, one could assume that the Green *zāviye* also inspired further poetry. Yet, the function is different from a royal garden pavilion. It was described as a ‘*zāviye*’ in the endowment deed with no hints of palatial functions, yet the sultanic loggia, which sits above the two loggias with the poem by Salmān Sāvaji, needs to be considered in the light of multiple functions.²²

The lavishly decorated anti-qibla wall with the loggias and its Persian poetry is without precedent in the Ottoman realm. Unlike the two loggias below, the sultanic loggia does not feature any epigraphic decoration, only the abovementioned signature of the artist Mehmed el-Mecnūn on a small tile inside the loggia. The focus of the decoration lies on the lavish tile cladding in black-line technique. The floor and the walls of the royal lodge feature tiles with interlocking star and polygon patterns, that are continued on the ceiling. The two zones are separated by a tilework muqarnas band with overglaze gilded patterns. As this was the space with the most exquisite decoration, the artists in charge of the designs and tilework chose to leave their signatures in or near it. A tile panel placed between the muqarnas zone and the inner Bursa arch bears the signature of Mehmed el-Mecnūn.

According to the abovementioned painted inscription on the anti-qibla wall above the sultan’s lodge on a cartouche in the central room, the decoration or painting (*naqsh*) of this ‘*imāret*’ was completed in Ramadan 827 (mid-August 1424), under the head painter-designer Nakkaş ‘Ali. With regard to its function, the royal *mahfil* of the anti-qibla wall in the Green *zāviye* shares aspects with some earlier Anatolian royal loggias, such as the segregation of the community and the visual control over their activities. In the discussion of Mehmed’s complex, the earlier T-shaped *zāviye* of his

21 See Necipoğlu 1991, 216–7. For the full text, see Ayverdi 1972, 754; Kolsuk 1970, 58–61; O’Kane 2021, 177–8.

22 See MC no. 5, lines 37 and 39. The deed first introduces the ‘*imāret*’, then the *zāviye* and finally the madrasa but fails to mention a *türbe* for Mehmed. The endowment deed (MC no 5) refers to the building as a ‘*zāviye*’ (convent) in line 37 and mentions the payment of its shaykh in line 208 (15 *dirhem* a day, plus rations of wheat and rice). The word ‘*imāret*’ is mentioned twice in the building, in both *tābhāne* rooms in the poetry on the tiled fields above the window lintels, ‘May this imaret prosper in eternity, may its owner be victorious against the enemy.’

vizier Bāyezid Paşa (d. 823/1421) in Amasya (816/1414) deserves our attention. These buildings both include a similar anti-qibla wall façade with loggias below, as well as a royal *mahfil* with subsidiary *mahfils* above. The lodge in Bāyezid I's *zāviye* (802/1400), on the other hand, is a small, unassuming space with a window overlooking the main hall, probably functioning as a royal *mahfil*. Yet, none of these examples foreshadow the development of the complex multi-chambered and balconied upper story of the Green *zāviye*, both looking outwards to the landscape as a belvedere and inwards to the central hall. Nor is the unprecedented design of its anti-qibla wall predicted by previous models. What truly sets the upper floor of the Green *zāviye* apart from these other buildings are its design innovations with specific functional implications. These include the fountains in the rooms upstairs, the muqarnas hood in the antechamber of the *mahfil*, as well as the magnificent tile decoration of the *mahfil*. These elements evoke the early Islamic palatial context of the *maqṣūra* in Damascus, where the Umayyad court convened. Building on this legacy, the *mahfil* itself references the potential omnipresence of the distant sultan. In tandem with the poetry, the decoration and architectural shape are reminiscent of a palace.

But why was Salmān Sāvaji quoted in the Green *zāviye* at all? At this time in Anatolia, Persian classics like the *Gulistān* by Sa'di, the *Pendnāme* by 'Aṭṭār (539–617/1145–1221), and Rūmi's *Masnavi* (603–671/1207–1273) were used for learning Persian, which together with Nizāmi (d. 605/1209) and Firdawsi served as references in poetry. Persian poets fascinated – but of course, the fourteenth-century Anatolian poet Şeyh Gölşehri (647–750/1250–1350) does not include him in his *Manṭiqu't-ṭayr*, or *Conference of the Birds* from 716/1317, where he lists six famous mystics: Sanā'i (472–544/1080–1150), Rūmi, Nizāmi, 'Aṭṭār, Veled (622–711/1226–1312) and Sa'di.²³ And Sāvaji was too young around 716/1317, as he died 777/1376. Yet, Sāvaji must have come to some fame in the lands of Rum. Eighty years later, Sāvaji held a certain importance for one of Meḥmed's most significant court poets, Tāceddin Aḥmedi. Aḥmedi served as the poet laureate of Meḥmed I after the death of his younger brother Sülyeman Çelebi (d. 813/1411), for whom he (Aḥmedi) completed the verse epos *İskendernāme*. Aḥmedi substantially borrowed from Persian authors such as Nizāmi and Firdawsi and holds an important place in our discussion of Persianate elites. In this context, it may come as no surprise that Aḥmedi also based his poem *Cemşid u Hürşid* on *Jamshid u Khurshid* by Salmān Sāvaji. Yet, given the distinction in genre between the *masnavi* of *Jamshid u Khurshid* and the *qaṣida* for the Jalāyirid palace, more research needs to be done on the surviving manuscripts of *qaṣidas* by Salmān Sāvaji in Anatolia to draw further conclusions on his reception.

The prevailing themes of this poem connect to the loggias in the Green *zāviye*, particularly in their emphasis of the legendary king Jamshid, royal immortality, and the gift of scrying, of divination.²⁴ It is probable that a poet like Aḥmedi was influential

23 See Kuru 2013, 284.

24 On the use of elements from Firdawsi and Nizāmi by the poet Tāceddin Aḥmedi, see Kasritsis 2016, 255. On the reception of Sāvaji's writings by Aḥmedi, see Dankoff 1984, 9–10 and the PhD Dissertation by Beaudoen 2017, 120, note 22.

in redefining the literary canon in promoting Sāvajī, who was then included in the inscription programme of the Green Complex. The sources used from Saʿdī to Sāvajī, to contemporary political connotations, make it obvious that a sound regional and transregional knowledge of politics and literary sources motivated the choice of the texts. As Aḥmedi is mentioned nowhere in the complex, it remains open as to whether he was involved, but several factors hint at it.

The connection between the Ottomans and the Jalāyirid dynasty, who ruled over Azerbaijan and Iraq as the successors of the Mongols, was a contemporary concern. The link was established in Ottoman historiography, as observed by Tezcan and Kastritsis. Indeed, in the historical section of the *İskendernâme*, Aḥmedi focuses on the ancient kings of Islam, classical Islamic history, and the Mongol rulers and their successors, which include the Ilkhanids, the Çobanids, and the Jalāyirids.²⁵ Of course, as mentioned above, the epigraphy of the Green *zāviye* needs to be considered in the light of the Timurid attack on the Ottoman realm in 804/1402. The accommodation of the Jalāyirid prince Aḥmad (r. 783–812/1382–1410) at the Ottoman court in 802/1400 is regarded as one of the reasons for this attack.²⁶ Prince Aḥmad ruled over Baghdad but left in 802/1400 when Timur approached to take in the city. Given the Ottoman sympathy for the Jalāyirids and the anti-Timurid stance of both dynasties, it seems plausible that a poem by a Jalāyirid poet was chosen. Perhaps the fact that it was dedicated to the palace of Sultan Ḥasan in Baghdad is even more fitting, as this was the town that prince Aḥmad had left behind.

Furthermore, such potential anti-Timurid sentiments are to be found in the abovementioned verse by Saʿdī on the left column of the mihrab. Given the tensions with the Timurid vassals, the quatrain referencing a cruel oppressor and his eternal condemnation makes double sense. One might wonder why such an aggressive verse is in the mihrab, the holiest place in the building. Several motives may have motivated this choice: firstly, the idea of divine justice, of a system, that chastises the tyrant and liberates the suppressed; secondly, the small format of the inscription, which is barely visible; and thirdly, the fact that it was in a crucial place of the building, opposite the sultan's loggia in view of the sultan. The epigraphy of the Green *zāviye* represents a blatant demonstration of power. As for the Jalāyirid dynasty, their light was fading. In 835/1432, the last Jalāyirid ruler was defeated by the Karakoyunlus. But unlike his dynasty, his poetry lived on: over the fifteenth century, Sāvajī must have become popular with the Ottomans, and the Green *zāviye* seems to have been part of a new poetic discourse. Following the example of Aḥmedi, the Ottoman Prince Cem (d. 900/1495) and Sultan Süleymān I (r. 926–973/1520–1566) referenced Sāvajī.²⁷

25 See Kastritsis 2016, 257 and for the perception of the Mongols, see Tezcan 2013, 30.

26 See Kastritsis 2016, 258.

27 For the use of Sāvajī by Prince Cem, see Dankoff 1984, 9–10. On the use of Sāvajī by Süleymān I, see the forthcoming article by Eryılmaz. The wandering scholar Ibn al-Jazarī (751–833/1350–1429), who frequented the courts of Shiraz, Herat, Tabriz, Edirne and Bursa also could have played a role in this transmission process, as he was in charge of educating the sons of Bāyezīd, see Tanındı 1999, 647.

In the broader context of Persian in the early Ottoman realm, the inscriptions of the Green *zāviye* are not just a testimony to literary exchange, to emulation, and reappropriation, they also reveal the political motivation for choosing a specific text. In the Green *zāviye*, it is paramount to consider architecture and epigraphy together, because besides their function as a transregional message of newly gained self-confidence, the texts have a function within the building, therefore the choice of texts distinguishes its functional spheres. I have shown how the position of the epigraphy of the loggias below the royal *mahfil* was strategic, as it was concerned with themes such as immortality and rulership. This careful matching of content and architectural form on the anti-qibla wall indicates the completion of the epigraphic programme before the execution of the tilework. Who was addressed? As mentioned before, even among the juridical cast, Arabic speakers around 822/1420 were scarce. Yet, in accordance with the practices of courtly poetry, the two languages were regarded suitable for a royal foundation open to the public. In the endowment deed, Persian was not mentioned in the curriculum of the madrasa. Thus, the few contemporaries who would have been able to fully understand the epigraphy were presumably courtiers of Mehmed I and Persianate travellers from Iran, Iraq, and Central Asia.

I suggest that the inscriptions were intended as much for the inner circle of Mehmed, to affirm his rulership towards the Timurid enemy, as for travellers from the Timurid realm. That the court poet of Mehmed I, Aḥmedi, promoted Sāvaji during his lifetime might have facilitated the choice of a poem by Sāvaji for the loggias downstairs. Of course, as Aḥmedi died in 1413, this selection testifies to the general prominence of Sāvaji at the Ottoman court at this time, rather than his own involvement. Furthermore, the affirmation of sympathy with the Jalāyirids is logical, as they, like the Ottomans, suffered from their Timurid overlords. In the Green *zāviye* at least, more space seems to have been devoted to the yoke of an enemy and the ties to the Jalāyirids than to the distinction or their heritage from the Mongols. This interest in Jalāyirid culture will prevail at least in Ottoman poetry and book culture.²⁸

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28 Çağman and Tanındı 2011.

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