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Evangelinos Misailidis' Earliest Petition for a Newspaper in Turkish with Greek Letters^{*}

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Context

The document presented here is Evangelinos Misailidis' first known petition to the Ottoman state dated Zī'l-ka'de 1260.¹ In this petition signed as "*Vangelinoz, veled-i Misail*,"² Misailidis, who would later become a prominent figure in the Ottoman intellectual world during the second half of the nineteenth century and would have a prolific publishing career spanning nearly half a century, sought permission to publish a newspaper in Turkish using Greek script (*hurūfâtı Rûmî ve 'ibâresi Türkî olmağ üzere*).

This document highlights Misailidis' early intellectual and commercial activities, enriching his biography and marking a key milestone in the press pillar of the literary tradition called "Karamanlidika."³ It underscores his pivotal role in its development. This introduction provides context on Misailidis' contributions before analyzing the document's content, examining its linguistic and cultural significance.

1. Evangelinos Misailidis

The tradition of Turcophone Greek publishing, which began in 1718 for religious purposes,⁴ expanded significantly in the late 19th century to cover non-religious subjects,

¹ The Ottoman Archives of the Presidency of the State Archives of the Republic of Turkey (hereafter BOA), A.}MKT.NZD. 21.82, 1. The catalog assigns the date "H-15-02-1267" (Hijri 15 Şafer 1267, corresponding to 20 December 1850) to the document. However, the basis for this date remains unclear. The only date mentioned in the documents within this file is on the order (*buyuruldu*), written in response to Misailidis' petition at the top left corner of the original petition. The *buyuruldu* is dated 18 Zī'l-ka'de 1260 [29 November 1844].

² *-idis* (-ιδης) is a suffix used in Greek to form patronymics from proper names of persons, meaning "son of." Therefore, Misailidis translates to "son of Misail," which is exactly as it appeared in the petition signed in Turkish. For patronymics and *-idis* see Herbert Weir Smyth, *A Greek Grammar for Schools and Colleges* (New York: American Book Company, 1916), 179.

³ I avoid the term Karamanlidika, a conventional but imprecise label for texts written in Turkish using Greek script. While it remains common in bibliographic and philological literature, the term tends to obscure the linguistic, regional, and confessional diversity of the communities that produced and circulated these texts. It also imposes a geographic shorthand that flattens a much more complex cultural field. Notably, the term *Karamanli*, from which Karamanlidika is derived, was at times perceived as pejorative or externally imposed by members of the very communities associated with this writing system, particularly in contexts where it implied provincialism or a lack of education. In light of these concerns, I prefer more descriptive and neutral formulations such as "Turkish in Greek letters" or "Turcophone Greek texts," which more accurately reflect the linguistic and scriptural character of the corpus without repeating derogatory or homogenizing labels.

⁴ The earliest known Turkish text printed in Greek letters is the bilingual book titled *Απάνθισμα της χριστιανικής πίστεως - Κιουλζάρι ιμάνι μεσιχί* (*Apanthisma tes christianikes pisteos - Gülzâr-ı Īmân-ı*

cumulatively resulting in over 750 publications and various periodicals. A number of intellectuals contributed to this corpus. Among these, one name shines particularly bright: Evangelinos Misailidis (1820-1890). Revered as “Münir-i Asyā-yı Şuğrā”⁵ (the illuminator of Asia Minor), Misailidis made significant contributions in three domains:

1. *Journalism*: Over a remarkable five-decade career, he established Turcophone periodicals, including *Ανατολή* (*Anatoli*, Tr. *Şark*, *Anadolu*),⁶ one of the Ottoman Empire’s longest-running newspapers published in Turkish. His periodicals served as a vital intellectual platform, fostering dialogue and shaping ideas among the empire’s diverse communities.
2. *Publishing and Translation*: Misailidis was a pioneer in establishing printing presses and spearheading ambitious translation and publication initiatives for the Turcophone literary tradition. His work culminated in the creation of what some referred to as the “Anatolian Library,”⁷ a testament to his efforts to disseminate knowledge and culture among the Greek communities scattered throughout Anatolia.
3. *Orthographic Standardization*: Misailidis played a pivotal role in refining the Turcophone Greek writing system. By adapting the Athenian transcription system for Turkish, Misailidis developed an orthographic standard that would become the predominant framework for this literary tradition.

Mesihī, Eng. Anthology of the Christian Faith) published in Constantinople in 1718. See Sévérien Salaville and Eugène Dalleggio, *Karamanlidika: Bibliographie analytique d’ouvrages en langue turque imprimés en caractères grecs (1584-1850)*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Athens: Center for Asia Minor Studies, 1958), 3-10.

⁵ Anastasios M. Levidis, “Οἱ περ φύλλων γενεή, τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν,” *Ανατολή*, February 18, 1890, 1-2. Levidis, who served for many years as the headmaster of the school at the Prodomos Monastery in Zincidere, was also a correspondent for *Anatoli*. In his obituary, he called Misailidis the “Illuminator of Asia Minor.”

⁶ The Greek word *Ανατολή* carries a dual meaning when translated into Turkish: it can refer both to *Şark* (the East) and to *Anadolu* (Anatolia). This semantic flexibility is reflected in the newspaper’s varying titles over time. In its early issues from the 1850s, the paper bore the bilingual title *Ḥavādisnāme-i Şarkıyye*, highlighting its reference to the East more generally. By the 1870s, however, it occasionally appeared under the title *Μικρά Ασία γιὰνι Ανατολή* (*Mikra Asia ya’nī Anatoli*) meaning “Asia Minor, that is, Anatoli.” Here, Mikra Asia is the Greek equivalent of Anatolia, underlining a shift toward a more geographically specific identification.

⁷ Iordanis I. Limnidis, ed., *Ιερουσαλήμ* (Dersaadet: Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete Matbaası, 1902), ε’.

Misailidis' multifaceted contributions underscore his profound impact on the intellectual and cultural landscape of the late Ottoman period. His works provide valuable insights into the cultural identity and experiences of the Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christian population of the Ottoman Empire.

His publishing and intellectual efforts preserved his community's cultural and linguistic heritage while reflecting the complexities of Ottoman transcultural cosmology. This makes him an essential figure in understanding the interplay of language, religion, and ethnic identity in the late Ottoman period; he also emerged as a cultural mediator and pioneer during profound social and political transformation.

While Misailidis' time in Constantinople after 1850 as the editor of *Anatoli* and a publisher has been the subject of considerable scholarly attention,⁸ his earlier life in Smyrna remains undocumented, known only through fragments in an interview shortly before his death⁹ and an obituary penned by a protégé¹⁰ as well as references by Christos Solomonidis, a historian and son of Sokratis Solomonidis, editor of *Αμάλθεια* (Amaltheia), the longest-running Grecophone newspaper in the Ottoman Empire.

In his *Η Δημοσιογραφία στη Σμύρνη (1821-1922)* [Journalism in Smyrna (1821-1922)], Solomonidis provides the following information about Misailidis' earliest newspaper *Ανατολικός Μηνύτωρ* (Anatolikos Minytor, lit. Eastern Herald):¹¹

Anatolikos Minytor: On 12 January 1845, the first issue of the Turcogreek (τουρκογραικική) newspaper (*Karamanlidika*), i.e. in Turkish with Greek characters, is published in Smyrna. Its title was *Pelsaret il Masrik* [sic] ("the Eastern Herald"), and Evangelinos Misailidis, who had settled in Smyrna and taught

⁸ For example, a recent study based on the author's 2014 dissertation is Şehnaz Şişmanoğlu Şimşek's *İki Kilise Arasında Binamaz: Karamanlıca Edebiyatı Dil, Kimlik ve Yeniden Yazım* (Istanbul: Metis, 2024).

⁹ Ioannis Polyvios, "Ευαγγελινός Μισαηλίδης," *Τερακκή* 1, no. 4 (June 30, 1888): 53–56.

¹⁰ Iordanis I. Limnidis, "Ευαγγελινός Μισαηλίδης," in *Μικρασιατικόν Ημερολόγιον ο "Αστήρ" 1914* (Constantinople: "Papa Georgios" Cemiyeti, 1913), 170–72.

¹¹ Christos Sokr. Solomonidis, *Η Δημοσιογραφία στη Σμύρνη (1821-1922)* (Athens: Mavridis, 1959), 142. In a series of articles on the history of *Anatoli*, published in 1982 in *Προσφυγικός Κόσμος* (Refugee World), Petros Pl. Misailidis—Evangelinos Misailidis' grandson—divides the history of *Anatoli* into five periods. For the first period, spanning 1843–1850, which corresponds to Misailidis's years in Izmir, Petros Pl. Misailidis mentions only the Turcophone newspaper *Σιάρκ* (Şark). See Petros Pl. Misailidis, "Ιστορικές Εφημερίδες του Περσμένου Αιώνα 'Ανατολή' - 2," *Προσφυγικός Κόσμος*, August 7, 1982, 1. Also see Manouil Io. Gedeon, *Αποσημειώματα Χρονογράφου: 1800–1913* (Athens: Τύποις Φοίνικος, 1932), 14.

Turkish, was its director and editor. The aim of the newspaper was to disseminate political news to the Turkish-speaking Greek populations of the provinces of Anatolia. “*The Anatolikos Minytor*,” writes *Amaltheia*, “The aim of the *Anatolikos Minytor* is the dissemination of news and knowledge among the numerous inhabitants of Anatolia and other regions, who are ignorant of Greek but usually write in the Turkish language with Greek letters; therefore, it seeks to fill a real gap.” *The Anatolikos Minytor* was published until the end of 1847.

The title of the newspaper, which Solomonidis records as *Pelsaret il Masrik* (Πελσαρέτ ιλ Μασρίκ), should more accurately be *Beşâret il-Maşrık* based on its intended meaning. This misspelling has been repeatedly cited in the literature without being questioned.¹²

Solomonidis’s chronology suggests that Misailidis applied for a license for *Beşâret il-Maşrık*. Though the petition’s single-page response indicates rejection,¹³ such denials were not uncommon, and publishers often appealed. While documentation is lacking, Misailidis likely challenged the decision, reapplied, and ultimately secured authorization. *Beşâret il-Maşrık* began publication on January 12, 1845. This petition is crucial for understanding his early career and the Ottoman media landscape. The text is briefly analyzed below.

2. The petition

Evangelinos Misailidis’ petition constitutes a significant and distinctive primary source, offering valuable insights into the intricate socio-cultural dynamics of the Ottoman Empire. Transcending its function as a mere bureaucratic request, it underscores

¹² While the most accurate rendering of the title would be *Beşâret el-Maşrık*, I have retained the form *il* as it appears in the Turcophone Greek transliteration cited by contemporary Greek and Turkish sources. I am grateful to Prof. Gisela Prochazka-Eisl, a member of the editorial team, and to Prof. Stephan Prochazka (Professor of Arabic Linguistics, University of Vienna) for their guidance. They noted that although *il* is incorrect in formal Arabic, it occurs frequently in colloquial usage, which likely accounts for its adoption in the Turcophone rendering. This philological detail can be understood as highlighting the oral-literate interplay and translational flexibility that characterized cross-script representations in the Ottoman context. Turgut Kut, a renowned researcher and bibliophile, wrote the first modern Turkish biography of Misailidis. He meticulously compiled scattered information, providing a detailed account while avoiding persistent errors and more correctly identifying the newspaper’s name, not as *Pelsaret il Masrik* but as *Beşâret il-Maşrık*. Turgut Kut, “Temaşa-î Dünya ve Cefakâr u Cefâkeş’in Yazarı Evangelinos Misailidis Efendi,” *Tarih ve Toplum* 48 (1987): 22–26, especially fn. 27.

¹³ BOA, A.}MKT.NZD. 21..82, 2.

the Empire's efforts to grapple with the challenges of multilingualism and accommodate the needs of its diverse constituent communities. As the earliest known instance of Misailidis advocating for a Turcophone Greek newspaper, this document provides crucial evidence for reconstructing the early trajectory of his life, a period largely shrouded in historical obscurity. It serves as a rare beacon, illuminating previously uncharted aspects of his biography and shedding light on the intellectual and commercial endeavors that characterized his early career.

One of the most compelling aspects of Misailidis' petition is its focus on language. The request centers on the creation of a newspaper written in Turkish using Greek letters. This combination is emblematic of the transcultural interactions within the diverse social formation of the Ottoman Empire that led to linguistic amalgamations and graphic syncretisms, as some Greek Orthodox Christians spoke Turkish as their primary language but retained Greek script for writing. By acknowledging the need for such a publication, Misailidis highlights the linguistic and practical challenges faced by these communities, particularly in Anatolia, who were unable to fully engage with either existing Greek-language newspapers or Turkish ones in Arabic script.

The petition shows careful consideration of political and administrative sensitivities. Misailidis assures that the publication would avoid offensive content and adhere to regulations, demonstrating a nuanced understanding of the Ottoman state's censorship and social order priorities.¹⁴ By proposing measures like admonishment mechanisms and reputable guarantors, the petition aligns with the state's broader objectives, thereby enhancing its likelihood of approval.

Moreover, the petition's pragmatic nature stands out as Misailidis emphasizes the newspaper's benefits—trade information, current affairs, and general knowledge. His awareness of merchants' needs highlights the press's role in economic integration and

¹⁴ In 1840, private individuals were granted the freedom to print books and other publications, provided they applied to the state printing house and covered the associated costs. By 1841, prior authorization from the Porte became mandatory, marking the beginning of stricter control and censorship over publishing activities in the Ottoman Empire. Hasan Refik Ertuğ, *Basın ve Yayın Hareketleri Tarihi*, vol. 1 (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1970), 192-93.

empowerment, reflecting its growing importance during the Ottoman Empire's modernization.

The petition's significance extends beyond its immediate context. It represents an early attempt at publishing a Turcophone Greek newspaper, forming a foundational link in a long-lasting tradition that became instrumental in preserving the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Turkish-speaking Orthodox community, not only within the Ottoman Empire but also in Greece following the 1923 Greco-Turkish population exchange.

In conclusion, Misailidis' petition is both a product of its time and a catalyst for cultural mediation. It mirrors the multi-faceted identity of Ottoman society, where communities sought innovative ways to navigate and manage the vast linguistic and cultural diversity of the empire while the state worked to structure and govern this diversity to maintain order and cohesion. This petition not only underscores Misailidis' deep commitment to the Turcophone Greek community but also reflects his ambition to establish a newspaper serving their linguistic and informational needs, embodying a vision for a dynamic literary tradition that traces its roots back to his formative years in Smyrna. As such, it remains a valuable historical document, providing insights into the interplay between language, commerce, and governance in a diverse imperial setting.

Transcription

- i *Taḳvīm-i vaḳāyi 'ḥāne-i 'āmire nāzırı sa 'ādetlü efendi*
- ii *nizāmına nazaran ī'cāb ve iḳtizāsını bi'l-muṭāla 'a i lām*
- iii *ve ifādeye himmet eyleyeler deyü*
- iv *buyruldu.*
- v *fī 18 za [zī'l-ka 'de] sene [12]60*

- 1a efendim sultânım
- 1b devletlü, 'ināyetlü, übbehetlü, merḥametlü ḥazretleri devlet ü iḳbāl-i ebedī ile saḡ olsun
- 2 'arz-ı ḥāl-i kullarıdır ki Der-Sa 'ādet ve İzmirde ṭab' ü neşr olunan gazetalar egerci ḥurūfāt ve 'ibāresi Rūmī ise de Rūm milletiniñ Anaṭolı re 'āyāsı kulları
- 3 kırā'atinde ifāde-i me'āl ve istifāde-i meḳāl olamadıklarından yine ḥurūfātı Rūmī ve 'ibāresi Türkī olmak üzere ticāret ve ifāde-i ḥāl ve keyfiyyet ve ma'lūm-ı eshel
- 4 olacak vechle bir gazetaniñ İzmirde ṭab' olunmasını ḥ'āhiş-ger olub bu kulları ise keyfiyyet-i mezbūruñ icrā'sını ve ez-her-cihet ḥavādisāt-ı sâ'ire-i bolitikaya
- 5 ferden ferdā ile yazılmamak ve İstanbul gazetaları ile sâ'ir İzmir gazetalarından emr-i ticārete dā'ir me'ḥūz olmak üzere bir maḥall-i maḥşūşa ittiḥāz ve 'ibāre-i
- 6 mezkūr ile ma'lūmu'l-efḥām evrāḳıñ İzmir cānibinde ṭab' olunması tüccārān ṭarafından daḡı iltimās bulmuş olub ve bu vādide sāye-i mekārīm-vāye-i ḥazret-i veliyyü'n-ni'amilerinde
- 7 geçinmek ve du'ā-yı deymūmiyet-i 'ömr ü iḳbāl ü 'āfiyetlerinde olmaḳlıḡımı niyāz veistirḥām itmekde oldıḡum muḥāt-ı 'ilm-i 'ālem-şümül-i veliyyü'n-ni'amileri buyuruldukda baḡr-i elṭāf
- 8 ve-ilā nihāyelerinden mutezarrı'dır ki keyfiyyet-i mezbūrun tecessüs ve taḡarrisi ve bir vaḳtde ṭoḳunaḳlu kelimāt yazılmamak ve töhmet-i mūcib olacak ḥālāt ve ḥavādisāt yazılmamak
- 9 ve yazıldıḡı taḳdīrce 'itāb buyurulmaḳ üzere mu'teberātdan kefil irā'e olunmaḳ üzere taḳdīm ve vakāyi'-ḥāne-i 'āmire nāzırı devletlü efendi ḥazretlerine ḥavāle birle
- 10 tensīb buyuruldıḡı ḥālde cānib-i seniyy'ül-cevānib-i 'ālilerinden ruḡşat ve müsā'ade-i 'ālileri bī-dirīḡ ü erzān buyurulmaḳ niyāzım bābında ve her ḥālde
- 11 emr ü fermān 'ināyet ü iḡsān lutf-i bī-pāyān merḥametlü efendim ḥazretleriniñdir.
- 12 bende
- 13 Vangelinoz
- 14 veled-i Misail
- 15 kullar
- 16 1

Translation

It was decreed that, in accordance with the regulations, the esteemed Superintendent of the Official Imperial Gazette is to review the matter and report on its suitability and requirements with due diligence.

On the 18th of Zī'l-ka'de, in the year 1260 [November 29, 1844]

My esteemed, gracious, majestic, and merciful Master, my Sultan, may you live forever in eternal prosperity and fortune.

This is the humble petition of your servant: Although the newspapers printed and published in the Gate to Prosperity (Istanbul) and Izmir use Greek letters and expressions, the Greek subjects in Anatolia are unable to comprehend their meaning or benefit from them. Therefore, they desire a newspaper to be printed in Izmir, written in Greek letters but employing Turkish expressions, in a manner that would make trade, current affairs, and general information easily comprehensible.

Your servant humbly requests the implementation of this matter. The proposed newspaper would refrain from reporting political news and other events in excessive detail or on an item-by-item basis, and would instead derive commercial content from the newspapers of Istanbul and other Izmir publications. This initiative has also been requested by merchants who support the publication of such accessible documents in Izmir.

In this regard, I beseech you to live under the gracious shadow of Your Excellency and pray for the continuity of your life, prosperity, and well-being. When this matter is brought to the all-encompassing wisdom of Your Excellency, it is humbly hoped that the aforementioned matter will be investigated and examined. It should be ensured that no offensive words or news that might lead to accusations are ever written. Should this occur, accepting admonishment and providing a reputable guarantor, the matter would be submitted to the esteemed Superintendent of the Imperial Gazette.

If deemed appropriate, I humbly request that permission and approval for this matter be generously granted by your noble side. In all matters, the command, favor, kindness, and boundless mercy belong solely to my merciful lord.

Your subject,

Vangelinoz, son of Misail,

Your humble servant

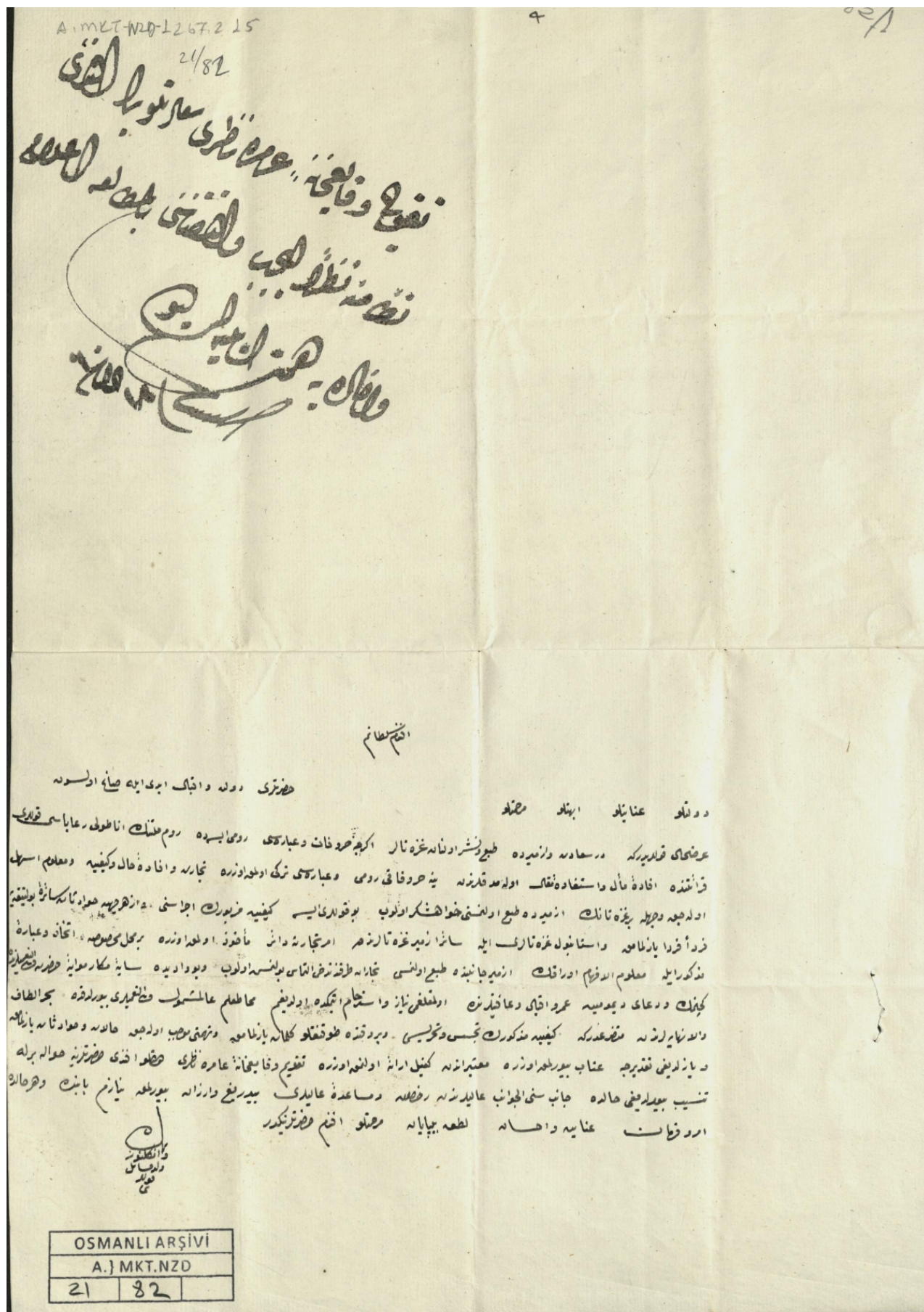
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Şimşek, Şehnaz Şişmanoğlu. *İki kilise arasında binamaz: Karamanlıca edebiyatta dil, kimlik ve yeniden yazım*. İstanbul: Metis, 2024.

Facsimile



Inscribed Amniotic Membrane as a Talismanic-Medicinal Ingredient in the Fifteenth-Century Anatolian Turkish Medical Manual *Yādigār-ı İbn Şerīf*

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Context

The edited passage presented below on the talismanic-medicinal usage of human amniotic membrane is an extract from a therapeutic manual called *Yādigār* (lit., a work that evokes the memory of its author). This manual was composed by İbn Şerîf in the Turkish vernacular of Anatolia, most likely no later than the 1420s in Bursa. The manuscript copy that I consulted to prepare the transcription and translation below is dated 972/1565 (MS Gedik Ahmet Paşa). Amniotic membrane (aka amnion or caul) is the innermost layer of the membranes that form the amniotic sac, which contains the human embryo (and later fetus) cushioned by amniotic fluid during pregnancy (see figure 1).



Figure 1 — A wax model of a full-term fetus seen through the translucent amniotic membrane inside the opened uterus, ca. 1785, from the teaching collection of Florentine anatomical wax models that was on display at the medico-surgical academy Josephinum in late 18th-century Vienna. © Josephinum – Ethics, Collections and History of Medicine, MedUni Vienna, no. AT-MUW-FM-000343.

In rare events a baby is born “with the caul,” that is, with a piece of amniotic membrane stuck to his or her head. This membrane was perceived as a lucky or protective veil or helmet in premodern eastern and western societies, hence the historical names English *caul* (← Latin *galea*, helmet, or, *caput galeatum*, helmeted head), and German

Glückshaube (lucky helmet or cap) or *Glückshaut* (lucky skin or membrane). The 16th-century Ottoman manuscript copies MS Gedik Ahmet Paşa, which I used for the transcription and translation, and MS Török, which I consulted for additional context, contain the terms Arabic *niqāb al-janīn* (veil of the fetus); and Ottoman *niqāb* (← Arabic, veil), *oğlan niqābı* (child's veil), *duvak* (Turkish, veil), and *perde* (← Persian, veil, membrane). The strong symbolic association of the amniotic membrane with protection has led to various forms of talismanic usage of this human tissue in cultures around the world. Here, I will discuss two ways in which the Ottomans used the membrane and/or prescribed that it be used: a) as a medical drug (pieces of inscribed membrane would be ingested for healing purposes), and b) as fabric for a protective talismanic shirt (the membrane or possibly several entire membranes would probably have been rolled out flat and pressed to paper to dry them out so that they could be used for this purpose).¹ In both of these Ottoman applications of the membrane, the healing and/or protective power of the caul was combined with and secondary to the power of the Qur'anic verses, the prayers, the "beautiful names" of God, and the other amuletic designs that would be inscribed on it.² (See talismanic writing and design on the front and sleeve of a talismanic shirt made of linen in figures 2 and 3). Today, amniotic membrane has made a comeback in Western medicine and is considered beneficial primarily for the treatment of certain eye injuries; the tissue is procured from donors after prearranged caesarean sections, and its market value is growing.³

¹ See historical photographs of amniotic membrane dried out pressed to paper, as well as other historical illustrations of the caul in 16th-century medical and 19th-century talismanic European contexts in Surgeons' Hall Museums (Edinburgh), "The Veiled Child," The Anatomy Lab (blog), January 10, 2019, <https://surgeonshallmuseums.wordpress.com/2019/01/10/the-veiled-child/> (accessed May 6, 2025); and Imogen Crawford-Mowday, "Caul: A Sailor's Charm," (England: The Other Within: Analysing the English Collections at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford), <https://england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-sailors-charm.html> (accessed 6 May 2025).

² See Helga Anetshofer, "The Hero Dons a Talismanic Shirt for Battle: Magic Objects Aiding the Warrior in a Turkish Epic Romance," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 77, no. 2 (2018), 189: "... for the majority of the shirts, made from fabric [as opposed to amniotic membrane], the magical protection results from the inscribed verses, prayers, and formulas, which are based on a combination of religious, mathematical, and astral sciences. The shirt is only a means by which to cover the body with the inscriptions."

³ P. B. Veldman, et al., "Efficacy of Amniotic Membrane Grafting for the Treatment of Chemical and Thermal Ocular Surface Injuries: A Report by the American Academy of Ophthalmology,"



Figures 2 and 3 — Talismanic Shirt, Ottoman, 18th century, Linen, front and right sleeve, 145 × 85 cm. (See also Anetshofer, “The Hero Dons a Talismanic Shirt for Battle”). Neukloster, Wiener Neustadt, Austria (IMG_9207 and IMG_9197). © Neukloster. Courtesy of P. Prior Michael Weiss OCist.

The passage below from İbn Şerîf’s *Yâdigâr* is interesting specifically for two reasons. First, that the passage’s description of the preserving and marketing of amniotic membrane after childbirth is referring to an actual practice can be corroborated by the fact that a talismanic shirt that is explicitly made from amniotic membrane is listed in the inventory of Bâyezîd’s II palace library (see below for details). Second, as the amniotic membrane is a byproduct of childbirth, the passage points to a glimmer of female agency demonstrated by women who “save” their baby’s caul and are either willing or unwilling to sell it.

Ophthalmology (Rochester, Minn.), vol. 132(2) (2025), 154–163. “Amniotic Membrane Transplant,” American Academy of Ophthalmology, EyeWiki, https://eyewiki.org/Amniotic_Membrane_Transplant#cite_note-34 (accessed July 11, 2025). Globenewswire (2024), “Amniotic Membrane Market Expected to Reach \$12.68 Billion by 2032, with a CAGR of 14% | Introspective Market Research,” <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2024/11/12/2979375/0/en/Amniotic-Membrane-Market-Expected-to-Reach-12-68-Billion-by-2032-with-a-CAGR-of-14-Introspective-Market-Research.html> (accessed July 11, 2025).

İbn Şerîf's *Yâdigâr* is a well-known but understudied work. No source is available on the *Yâdigâr*'s author, İbn Şerîf, except for the *Yâdigâr* itself, which is undated. In the *Yâdigâr*, the author says that he is known by the name İbn Şerîf; that he has devoted his whole life to the study of medicine (*'ilm-i tıbbâ meşğûl oldum*); and that he has personally tried and confirmed the efficacy of many of the recorded remedies on patients (e.g., ... *mücerreb 'ilâc kim kerrâtile tecrîbe itdük şahîhdür büyük kişilere ve oğlancuqlara tecrîbe olunmuşdur* "... it is a tried and tested medicine; it is effective; we have tried and tested it many times; it has been tried and tested on adults and children").⁴ İbn Şerîf apparently lived and practiced medicine in Bursa for some time, as numerous references to Bursa are found in the *Yâdigâr* (e.g., comments regarding the bad air quality of Bursa or mentions of local names of remedies used in Bursa).⁵ The *Yâdigâr* is a popular early medical work in the Turkish vernacular and survives in around 60 manuscripts, dating from the 16th through to the 18th centuries. A good edition of the Old Anatolian Turkish text with a modern Turkish rendering is available (based on MS İstanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Revan Köşkü Kitaplığı no. 1684, which is complete but undated, prob. late 16th or 17th century),⁶ but no translation in a western language exists. The *Yâdigâr* is largely based on earlier sources. Its theoretical foundation is the Galenic-Islamic humoral tradition which İbn Şerîf studied by "reading some early and later books in Arabic and Persian from experienced masters (*mücerreb üstâdlar*)."⁷ Herbal medicines and food-

⁴ See Orhan Sakin, et al. (eds.), *Yâdigâr: 15. Yüzyıl Türkçe Tıp Kitabı*, (2. baskı), İstanbul: Merkezefendi Geleneksel Tıp Derneği: Zeytinburnu Belediyesi, 2017, 28–29, 399, 515).

⁵ Sakin, *Yâdigâr*, 26, 403 (*havânuñ yigregi oldur ki ... Bursa şehri soğakları gibi koğar olmaya* "the best air is that which ... does not stink like the streets of the city of Bursa"), 557 (*Hızır-İlyâs diyü ad virdük Bursa şehrinde Cân-ķurtaran dirler* "we called [the medicine] Hızır-İlyâs, in the city of Bursa they call it Cân-ķurtaran (Life saver)," 592–593 et al. Additionally, MS Atatürk Kitaplığı, the earliest dated manuscript copy (İstanbul: IBB Atatürk Kitaplığı, Muallim Cevdet Yazmaları, MC_Yz_K.000300, 911/1505–6) includes a rather randomly inserted dedication to Umur b. Timurtaş (d. 1461), a patron of architecture and literature in the service of Murâd II; Umur Beg was connected to Germiyan and had a residence in Bursa (for Umur Beg see Tim Stanley, "The Books of Umur Bey," *Muqarnas* 21 (2004), 323–331).

⁶ Sakin, *Yâdigâr*.

⁷ MS Gedik Ahmet Paşa, 1b (*Yâdigâr-ı İbn Şerîf*, Ankara: Milli Kütüphane, Afyon Gedik Ahmet Paşa İl Halk Kütüphanesi, 03 Gedik 5146, 972/1565, TÜYEK, <https://portal.yek.gov.tr/works/detail/620789>).

stuffs are the primary means of treatment. Other therapeutic procedures include blood-letting or phlebotomy (*faşd, kan aldırma*) and wet cupping (*ḥacāmat*); pastes or patches applied to the skin (*yağı*); and suffumigation (*buḥūr, tütüzdürmek*).

The popular appeal of the *Yâdigâr* probably lay in the work's explicit character as a concise practical guide for people to use when they had no access to a physician,⁸ as well as in the work's inclusion of numerous faith-based remedies that involved *ḥavāṣṣ* (hidden properties) of Qur'anic verses, prayers, or symbols, imbued with apotropaic and medicinal qualities. These special verses etc. were written on a piece of paper or other objects such as peeled eggs or the amniotic membrane. These inscribed paper talismans (*nusha*, prescription, recipe > today *muska*, amulet)⁹ would either be attached to ailing body parts with a string or ingested by eating or drinking (by dissolving the ink of the written verses in water and then drinking the water).¹⁰ In the preface (and other places), İbn Şerîf makes reference to the intersection or rivalry between religion (including practices often called "magic") and medicine. He cites two stories of Islamic medical lore in order to illustrate that—instead of resorting to passive trust in God (*tevekkül*)—one should benefit from the properties of medicinal herbs which were purposefully created by God. He states that all prophets practiced medicine and that medicine is a divinely

⁸ MS Gedik Ahmet Paşa, 1b–2a: "This book can conveniently be carried around and kept close, both when traveling or at home (*seferde ve hâzerde*). ... When this book is in the hand of a competent person there will be no need for a doctor (*ṭabīb*) to preserve one's health and drive away illness (*sağlığı sağlamakta ve şayruluğı def' itmeklikde*)."

⁹ Cf. Pe. *nuskhat, nuskha*, Exemplar, prototype, archetype, a copy or model whence anything is taken; a manuscript-copy; a physician's recipe; a prescription of ingredients for any composition; an inventory; an amulet (Francis Joseph Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, London: Allen, 1892, 1400).

¹⁰ See e.g. Sakin, *Yâdigâr*, 584: "They should cure those who are spellbound (*bağlu*) (by evil women) by writing and then making them eat and drink certain *ḥavāṣṣ*." For the tradition of ingesting the Qur'an as a normative and divinely sanctioned healing practice since the emergence of Islam see Travis Zadeh, "An Ingestible Scripture: Qur'anic Erasure and the Limits of 'Popular' Religion," in *Material Culture and Asian Religions: Text, Image, Object*, ed. by B. Fleming and R. Mann, New York and London: Routledge, 2014, 97–119.

sanctioned science (*‘ilm-i ṭibbīla ‘amel itmek hikmet-i Bārīye ve şerī‘at-ı Muḥammediyye-ye muvāfıkdur* “practicing the science of medicine is in accordance with God’s wisdom and the [sacred] law of Muhammad”).¹¹

My reading below is based on MS Gedik Ahmet Paşa of İbn Şerīf’s *Yâdigâr*, dated 972/1565. The passage is part of a list of treatments for leprosy (*cüzām*) at the very end of the section on dermatological conditions (*Dördünci bahş şişlerde ve yaralarda ve cirâhatlerde ve sivilcülerdedür*, Fourth Section on lumps or swellings, ulcers, skin inflammation, and pustules). The adjectives *ğarīb* and *‘acīb* “rare, wondrous,” used in the passage to describe birth with a caul (and/or its medicinal efficacy), generally relate to phenomena of God’s creation that defy rational explanations.¹² Nonetheless, the fact that the amniotic membrane in the recipe below can be substituted by olive leaves suggests that the actual cure was thought to come from the power of the Qur’anic verse inscribed on the membrane rather than from the membrane itself. The caul as the means to ingest the verses adds an additional potent layer to the healing process.

In an earlier project, I had come across another reference to amniotic membrane (Arabic *niqāb al-janīn*) in the section on prayers, hidden properties of the Qur’an, and magic squares (*tafşīl kutub al-ad’iya wa-kutub ḥawāşş al-qur’ān wa-kutub ‘ilm al-wafq*) in the inventory of Bāyezīd’s II palace library (*Kitāb al-Kutub* or *Daftar al-Kutub*, Register of Books), dated 909/1502–3. The section includes five talismanic shirts *qamīş* (aka *cāme-i fetḥ*, victory shirt, or *zırh qamīş*, armor shirt) whose primary function was to protect and aid the wearer in battle.¹³ One of the shirts is said to be made from amniotic membrane: *qamīşun min niqābi l-janīni fihi awfāqun wa-ad’iyatun*, “a shirt (made) from

¹¹ MS Gedik Ahmet Paşa, 1b; Sakin, *Yâdigâr*, 41, 399–400. The preface of the MS Atatürk Kitaplığı does not include this passage but instead has the dedication to Umur b. Timurtaş. MS İstanbul which is the basis of the Sakin, *Yâdigâr* edition has c. 50 fol. more text at the end than both MS Gedik Ahmet Paşa and MS Atatürk Kitaplığı; MS Atatürk Kitaplığı in particular has numerous misbound and/or missing folios.

¹² In Sakin’s *Yâdigâr* edition *ğarīb* “odd, rare” often appears together with *mücerreb* “experienced, proven, tried-and-true (remedy),” as in the passage of the caul edited here: *bir ğarībce mücerreb nesne* “a quite rare or odd (but) proven thing” (Sakin, *Yâdigâr*, 624).

¹³ Anetshofer, “The Hero Dons a Talismanic Shirt for Battle,” 175, 185–188.

the veil of a fetus (*niqāb al-janīn*), with magic squares (*wafq*) and prayers (*du‘ā‘*) on it.”¹⁴ Reading the therapeutic manual *Yâdigâr-ı İbn Şerîf* and the inventory of Bâyezîd’s II palace library together makes it possible to demonstrate that the collection and talismanic-medicinal application of amniotic membrane was an actual practice in 15th-16th-century Ottoman Anatolia.

Transcription¹⁵

Ve bir ğarîb ‘acîb nesne kim taḥkîk // gerçektür şol niqāb kim oĝlanıla bile doğar ba ‘z-ı ḥātūn kişi oĝlan doğırıcak niqāblu doğurur ol niqābdan alalar, yidi ‘aded veyā üc ‘aded [ıııa] ele girdüĝine göre ‘avratlar şaklarlar, degmede ele girmez meger cüzām olan kişi mün ‘im ola akçeye kıya ve yā-ḥud big kişi ola ol niqābı peydā ide ol niqābuñ üzerine // yazalar bu āyeti فَاحْزَرَقْتُ فِيهِ نَارٌ فَاحْزَرَقْتُ الْرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ فَأَصَابَهَا إِغْصَارٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ فَاحْزَرَقْتُ iki keret yaza yazdukdan şoñra bir dutulmaduḡ çölmege koyar, aĝzın // muḥkem bir nesne ile berkide furunda yaḡa andan çıkara kırk baḡş ide, kırk şabāḥ balıla karışdurub cüzām olan kişiyi yidüre Allāḥ faẓlıyla ol ‘illetden // ḥalāş ola, inşā ‘allāhu ve eger oĝlan niqābı ele girmese kırk ‘aded zeytūn yapraĝına bu āyeti¹⁶ her yapraĝa bir āyet yazalar çölmek içinde didigimiz // gibi yaḡalar andan ğubār saḡk idüp kırk baḡş ideler, kırk şabāḥ balıla karışdurub yiyeler. Şifā bula inşā ‘allāhu ta ‘ālā [MS تع] ve bu oĝlan yüzünde bile doğan // niqāba ‘avratlar duvaḡ dirler, perde daḡı dirler

¹⁴ MS Török, [page] 47 [lines] {18–19} (see *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library* (1502/3–1503/4), ed. Gülru Necipoĝlu, Cemal Kafadar, and Cornell H. Fleischer (Brill, 2019), *Muqarnas Supplements* 14, vol. 2, p. 37 (transliteration); manuscript page 47 (facsimile). Anetshofer, “The Hero Dons a Talismanic Shirt for Battle,” 189 (here erroneously labeled as no. 93 instead of correct no. 94). In the edition of the inventory, Guy Burak left *niqāb al-janīn* (lit. the veil of the fetus) untranslated with a question mark: “[no.] 94. “*Qamışun min niqābi al-janīni fihi awfāqun wa-ad ‘iyatun*” (A Shirt Made of ...? Inscribed with Magic Squares and Prayers), [manuscript page] 47 [lines] {18–19}” (Guy Burak, “The Section on Prayers, Invocations, Unique Qualities of the Qur’an, and Magic Squares in the Palace Library Inventory,” in *Treasures of Knowledge ...*, vol. 1, 359).

¹⁵ MS Gedik Ahmet Paşa, 110b^{22–23} – 111a^{1–6} (*Yâdigâr-ı İbn Şerîf*).

¹⁶ MS *bir āyet* – emended according to Sakin, *Yâdigâr*, 625.

Translation

A rare and wondrous thing that is certainly true is the veil (*niḳāb*) a child is born with. Some women give birth to children that are veiled. One should acquire from that veil seven pieces, or three pieces— [۱۱۱ا] —as much as one can get. (Yet) the women save it; it is not easily obtainable. But if a person who has leprosy (*cūzām*) is generous and does not mind spending a lot of money, or if it is a nobleman, he should acquire that veil.

On the veil one should write the verse “In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace: It was smitten by a fiery whirlwind and it burnt up.”¹⁷ One should write “*fa-ḥtaraqat* (and it burnt up)” twice. After writing (this),¹⁸ one should put it (the caul with the talismanic writing on it) in a not-yet-used earthenware pot, seal it firmly with something, and burn it in the oven. Then one should take it out, divide it into 40 portions, on 40 mornings mix (one portion each) with honey, and feed it to the leprosy patient. By the grace of God (the patient) will recover from the disease, inshallah.

And if one cannot obtain a child’s veil (*oĝlan niḳābı*), one may write this verse on 40 pieces of olive leaves, once on each leaf. One should burn them in an earthenware pot just as we described. Then one should pulverize it and divide it into 40 portions, on 40 mornings mix (one portion each) with honey, and eat it. (Then) he or she will be cured, inshallahu taala. The women call this veil that covers the child’s face when it is born *ḍuvaḳ* (veil) and also *perde* (veil).

¹⁷ *Bismillāhirraḥmānirraḥīm fa-aṣābahā i ‘ṣārūn fīhi nārūn fa-ḥtaraqat* (Qur’an 2:266).

¹⁸ The syntax of this phrase is not entirely clear. Cf. Sakin, *Yâdigâr*, 625: *Niḳābuñ üzerine bu âyeti yazalar ... فَأَحْتَرَقْتُ فَأَحْتَرَقْتُ iki kerre yazalar فَأَحْتَرَقْتُ kelimesin yazdıktan sonra* “On the veil one should write the verse: “... *fa-ḥtaraqat* (and it burnt up),” one should write *fa-ḥtaraqat* twice. After writing *fa-ḥtaraqat* ...”.

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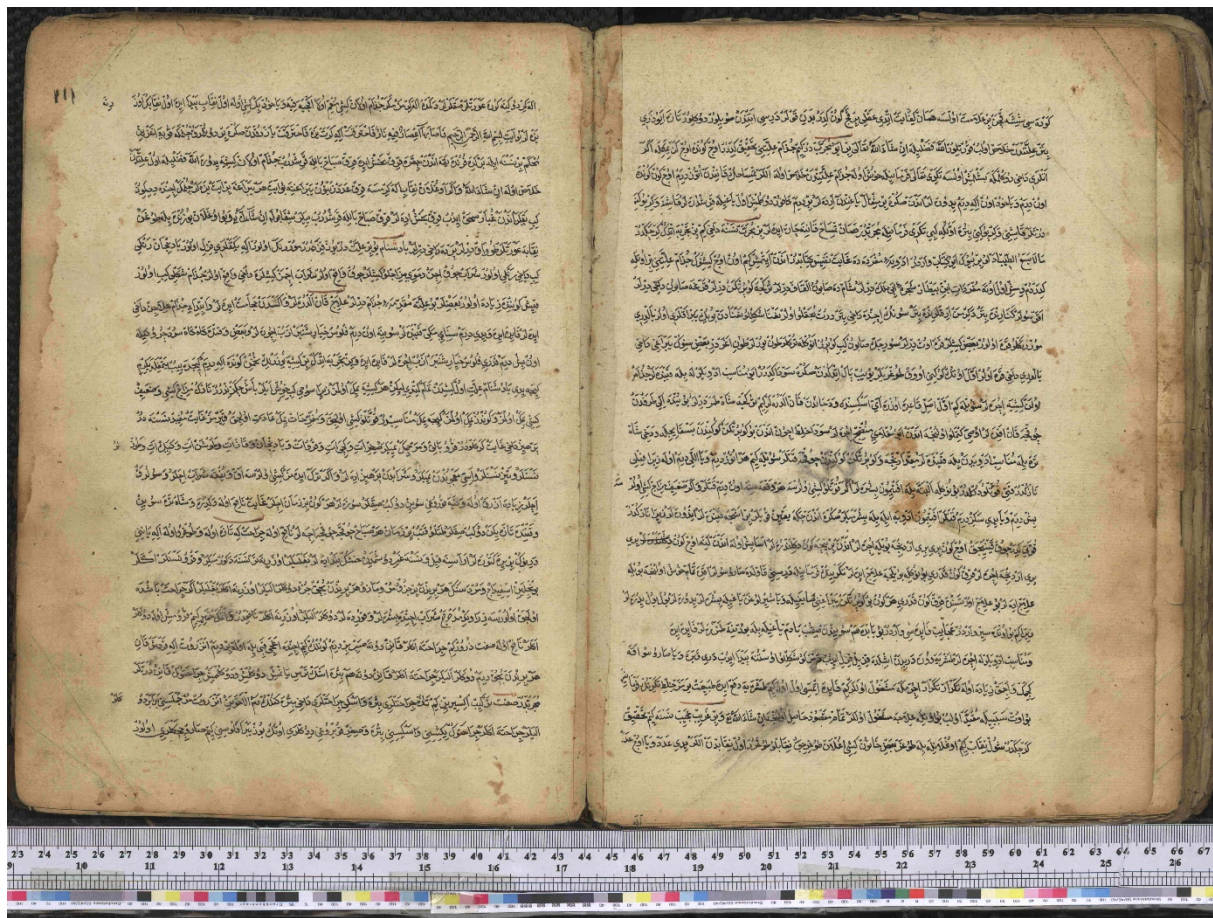
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Facsimile¹⁹

¹⁹ MS Gedik Ahmet Paşa: *Yâdigâr-ı İbn Şerîf*, Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, Milli Kütüphane, Afyon Gedik Ahmet Paşa İl Halk Kütüphanesi, 03 Gedik 5146, 110b-111a.

Detail

بَوَاتُ سَبِيلِكُمْ مُقَيَّدًا أَوْلَبُ بَوَاتُكِ عَلَا جَدَّ سَخُولٍ أَوْلَكَ تَمَامَ مَصُودٍ حَاصِلٍ أَوْلَيْتَ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى وَبَرَّ غَرِيبٍ جَبِيبٍ نَسْنَهَ كَيْمٍ حَقِيقٍ
كَرَجَلَدٍ شَوْلٍ نِقَابٍ كَيْمٍ أَوْغَلَا نَبْلَهُ طَوْعًا بَعْضُ خَاوُونَ كَيْشٍ أَعْلَانٍ طَوْعًا جَبِيبٍ نِقَابًا لَوْ طَوْعًا أَوْلَ نِقَابًا بَدَنٍ اللّٰهُ يَدِي عَدَدًا وَيَا أَوْجَ عَدَدٍ

أَلَا كَرَدُوكَ كَوْنٍ عَوْدَتِكَ صَقْلًا كَرَدَكَ أَلَا كَرَمٌ مَكْرَجًا أَلَا كَيْشٍ نَعِيمٍ أَلَا الْجَبِيبَةُ فِيهِ وَيَا حَوْذِي كَيْشٍ أَوْلَهُ أَوْلَ نِقَابٍ بَيْدًا أَيْنَ أَوْلَ نِقَابًا كَرَدُوكَ
بَيْنَهُ لَوْ بَوَاتُ لَيْسَ اللَّهُ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ فَأَصَابَهَا أَصَابًا فِيهِ نَارٌ فَاحْتَرَقَتْ إِلَيْهِ كَرَّتْ يَدُهُ فَاحْتَرَقَتْ يَارَ دُودُنْ صَكْرٍ يَدُوكَ تَلَدُوكَ جَلَلَكُمُ قُوَّةً أَنْزَلَتْ
مُحَلِّمٌ يَدُوكَ إِلَيْهِ بَرَكَةُ فَرْدُهُ نَقَاهُ أَلَدُنْ جَعْرَةٍ فَرَقَ حَشْرٍ أَيْدِي فَرَقَ صَبَاحٍ بِاللَّهِ فَرَقَ شَرْبٍ جَدَامٍ أَلَا كَيْشٍ يَدُوكَ اللَّهُ فَفَنَدِيلَهُ أَوْلَ عِلْدَتِكَ
خَلَاصَ أَوْلَهُ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَالْكَرَاوَعْلَانِ نِقَابًا إِلَيْهِ كَرَمَسَهُ فَرَقَ عَدَدُ زَيْوُنَ يَبْرَأُ عَنْهُ بَوَاتُ هَرَبِيَّ عَنْهُ يَدَايَ يَزَمُ لَوْ جَلَلُ إِحْدَهُ دِيكُوكَ
كَيْ يَكْلَنَ أَلَدُنْ غُبَارَ سَخُولٍ أَيْدِي فَرَقَ بَشْشٍ أَيْدِي لَوْ فَرَقَ صَبَاحٍ بِاللَّهِ فَرَقَ شَرْبٍ يَبْرَأُ سِقَاوَلَهُ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ يَوْ بَوَاتُ أَوْغَلَا نَ بَوَاتُ بِلَهُ طَوْعًا
نِقَابَهُ عَوْدَتِكَ طَوْعًا وَيَدُوكَ بَرَّةً لَاحِي دَرَجَتٍ بَادِئًا سَنَامٍ بَوَاتُ عِلْدَتِكَ دَرَجَتُكَ دَرَجَتُكَ دَرَجَتُكَ أَوْلَا إِلَيْهِ يَكْلَنُ فَرَقَ أَوْلَا يَدِ بَحْجَانٍ رَنَكِي

Heavenly Signs of Authority: A Horoscope for the Bestowal of the Imperial Seal*

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Context

From mighty monarchs to humble peasants, many people throughout history have gazed at the stars in wonder, seeking to understand the workings of the heavens. Some sought celestial guidance prior to making significant decisions, whereas others looked to the sky to discern when fortune might turn in their favor. One of the ways to satisfy this curiosity in human beings has been horoscopes. Like many other societies, the Ottomans frequently relied on astrological readings in various domains of life.¹ Whether it was the commencement of a military campaign, the sailing out of the imperial navy, the execution of an imperial relocation (*nakl-i hümâyûn*), the appointment to a provincial governorship, or the laying of a building's foundation, they employed horoscopic calculations to determine the most auspicious moment to initiate such undertakings.²

The horoscope examined here pertains to the determination of an auspicious hour for the bestowal of the imperial seal to the newly appointed grand vizier.³ Following the death of grand vizier Karavezir Mehmed Pasha in February 1781, İzzet Mehmed Pasha was summoned to Istanbul to assume the grand vizierate. At the time of his appointment—dated 25 Safer 1195 (corresponding to February 19, 1781)—he had been serving as the governor of Erzurum for six months. This appointment marked the beginning of his second tenure as grand vizier, prompting a long journey from the mountainous province of Erzurum to the imperial capital. At this juncture, the chief court astrologer was tasked with a crucial responsibility: to cast a horoscope in order to determine the most auspicious hour for the bestowal of the imperial seal (*mühr-i hümâyûn*). As a result of his calculations, he determined the auspicious hour as the

¹ Salim Ayduz, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Müneccimbaşılık Müessesesi", *Belleten* 70, no. 257 (2006): 167-264.

² Ahmet Tunç Şen, "Astrology in the Service of the Empire: Knowledge, Prognostication, and Politics at the Ottoman Court, 1450s-1550s" (Ph.D diss., University of Chicago, 2016), 305.

³ BOA, TS.MA.e, 1293/18, 22 Rebiülâhir 1195 [April 16, 1781]. All calendar conversions were made using Yücel Dağlı – Cumhure Üçer, *Tarih Çevirme Kılavuzu IV* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1997).

moment when the hour hand reached 5 hours and 48 minutes⁴ on 22 Rebîûlâhir 1195 (corresponding to April 16, 1781).⁵

Certain specific considerations were taken into account in the preparation of this horoscope. The chief court astrologer sought to determine a celestial configuration in which the four angular houses were favorably positioned, while the influence of malefic planets was minimized. Indeed, the four angular houses (*evtâd-ı erbaʿa*) in this horoscope—namely the *ṭāliʿ* (1st house-the Ascendant), *sābiʿ* (7th house-the Descendant), *ʿāṣir* (10th house-the Medium Coeli), and *rābiʿ* (4th house-the Imum Coeli)⁶—are all positioned in fixed signs (Leo, Aquarius, Taurus, Scorpio) and are free from the harmful influences of the malefic planets. Traditionally, the two malefic planets, Saturn (*Zuḥal*) and Mars (*Merriḥ*), are positioned away from these houses, whereas the benefic planets, Jupiter (*Müşterî*) and Venus (*Zühre*), occupy favorable positions within the chart.⁷ Given that the horoscope was prepared for the Grand Vizier, particular attention is devoted to the 10th house—traditionally associated with worldly status, power, and career achievements.

It is known that in *iḥtiyārât* horoscopes,⁸ such as the example examined here, the specified date was generally adhered to. But did the new Grand Vizier, İzzet Mehmed Pasha, actually receive the imperial seal at the exact time specified on the 22 Rebîûlâhir 1195? Following the death of his predecessor, the pasha departed from Erzurum on the 25 Safer 1195, and an expense register was kept to document the expenditures incurred

⁴ The calculation of the *sāʿat-i muvāfaqa* in the timekeeping systems used by the Ottomans is a technical matter, and in this context, it likely corresponds to a moment occurring 5 hours and 48 minutes after sunrise. For technical details of the calculation, see Enes Güllü, “Mühendishanede Açık Ölçmek: Başhoca İshak Efendi’nin Aksü’l Merâyâ Fî Ahzî’z Zevâyâ Kitabı” (Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf Üniversitesi, 2021), 69-71.

⁵ The corresponding Gregorian date is Tuesday 17 April, but it is specifically stated in the document that the day in question was Monday (*yevm-i işneyn*). Therefore, this date actually corresponds to 16 April, possibly due to deviations in calendar calculations to determine the beginning of the month.

⁶ Şen, “Astrology in the Service of the Empire”, 126.

⁷ The two malefic planets, known as *naḥseyn*, are Saturn (*naḥs-i ekber*, the greater malefic) and Mars (*naḥs-i aṣḡar*, the lesser malefic); likewise, the benefic planets, called *şaʿdeyn*, are Jupiter (*şaʿd-i ekber*, the greater benefic) and Venus (*şaʿd-i aṣḡar*, the lesser benefic).

⁸ This refers to the astrological judgments derived from the stars as to whether a particular action should or should not be undertaken at a specific moment, a practice also known as electional astrology or hemerology.

during the journey.⁹ According to these records, expenses continued to be recorded until the 13 Rebîülâhir. Since the pasha traveled with his retinue during the winter months, he was only able to reach Istanbul toward the final week of the month.¹⁰ On the 20 Rebîülâhir, regalia such as sable fur, *aṭlas*, and *serāser* brocade were purchased for the robe of honour ceremony.¹¹ Moreover, an inscription on the reverse side of the document bears the exact date of the horoscope—22 Rebîülâhir 1195. Whether the “auspicious” imperial seal truly contributed to the grand vizier’s success remains a matter of debate; nonetheless, his tenure of a year and a half concluded amid a series of devastating fires that severely afflicted the imperial capital.

Transcription

*Ṭālî ‘-i vaḳt-i muḥtâr berây-ı iḥsân-ı mühr-i hümayûn be-şadr-ı a ‘zam fî 22 yevm-i işneyn
Rebî ‘ü’l-âḥir sene [1]195*

[Zāyiçe]

*İnşâ ‘allāhu’l-mu ‘în işbu mâh-ı mübârek-i Rebî ‘ü’l-âḥirüñ yigirmi ikinci işneyn günü
sâ ‘at-i muvâfaka ‘akrebi beş sâ ‘at kırk sekiz dakîka olduḳda
şadr-ı a ‘zam ḥazretleri bendelerine mühr-i hümayûn-ı meymenet-maḳrûn i ‘ṭâ’
ve iḥsân buyurılırsa vaḳt-i mezkûr ṭālî ‘inde evtâd-ı erba ‘a
burûc-ı şâbiteden ve kamer burc-ı şâbitde ve şâḥib-i ṭālî ‘şerefî burcında
ve evtâd nazar-ı ‘adâvet-i nuḥûsdan sâlim ve beyt-i ‘âşir sehmü’s-sa ‘âde
ve re’s ile mes ‘ûd bulunur inşâ ‘allâh müddet-i medîde ḥidmet-i
hümayûnlarında rızâ-yı yümn-iḳtizâ-yı ḥüsrevânelerine muṭâbîḳ ḥarekâta
sa ‘y ve iḳdâm buyururlar ḥaḳḳ subḥānehu ve te ‘âlâ cümle umûrlarında
muvaffaḳ bi’l- ḥayr eyleyüb her ḥâlde tevfiḳât-ı ‘alîyyesine maḫhar eyleye
âmin bi-câhi’n-nebiyyi’l- ‘arabiyyi’l-emîn*

⁹ BOA, TS.MA.d, 5344.

¹⁰ According to the *Sicill-i Osmanî*, the new Grand Vizier reached Istanbul in fifty-five days. Based on this calculation, the Pasha arrived in the capital just one day prior to the date specified in the horoscope, when the imperial seal was conferred. Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmânî III* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2006), 849.

¹¹ BOA, C.DH., 334/16664, 24 Rebîülâhir 1195 [April 18, 1781].

Translation

The ascendant of the designated time for the bestowal of the imperial seal to the Grand Vizier, on Monday, the 22nd of Rebiülâhir, [1]195

[Horoscope Chart]

With the will and help of God, on Monday, the twenty-second of this blessed month of Rebiülâhir, at the hour deemed auspicious—specifically when the hour hand reaches five hours and forty-eight minutes—if His Excellency the Grand Vizier is granted and honoured with the imperial seal of felicity and auspiciousness, then at that mentioned moment, the four angular houses shall be positioned in fixed signs, the Moon shall also be in a fixed sign, the ruler of the ascendant shall be in its sign of exaltation, and the angular houses shall be safe from the malevolent gaze of the malefic planets. The tenth house shall coincide with the Lot of Fortune and Midheaven, thereby making the time fortunate. God willing, in the long course of service to the exalted state, [the vizier] shall act in accordance with the propitious favor and royal will. May the Almighty grant him success in all affairs and make him ever worthy of divine favor and support. Amen, through the intercession of the trustworthy Arab prophet.

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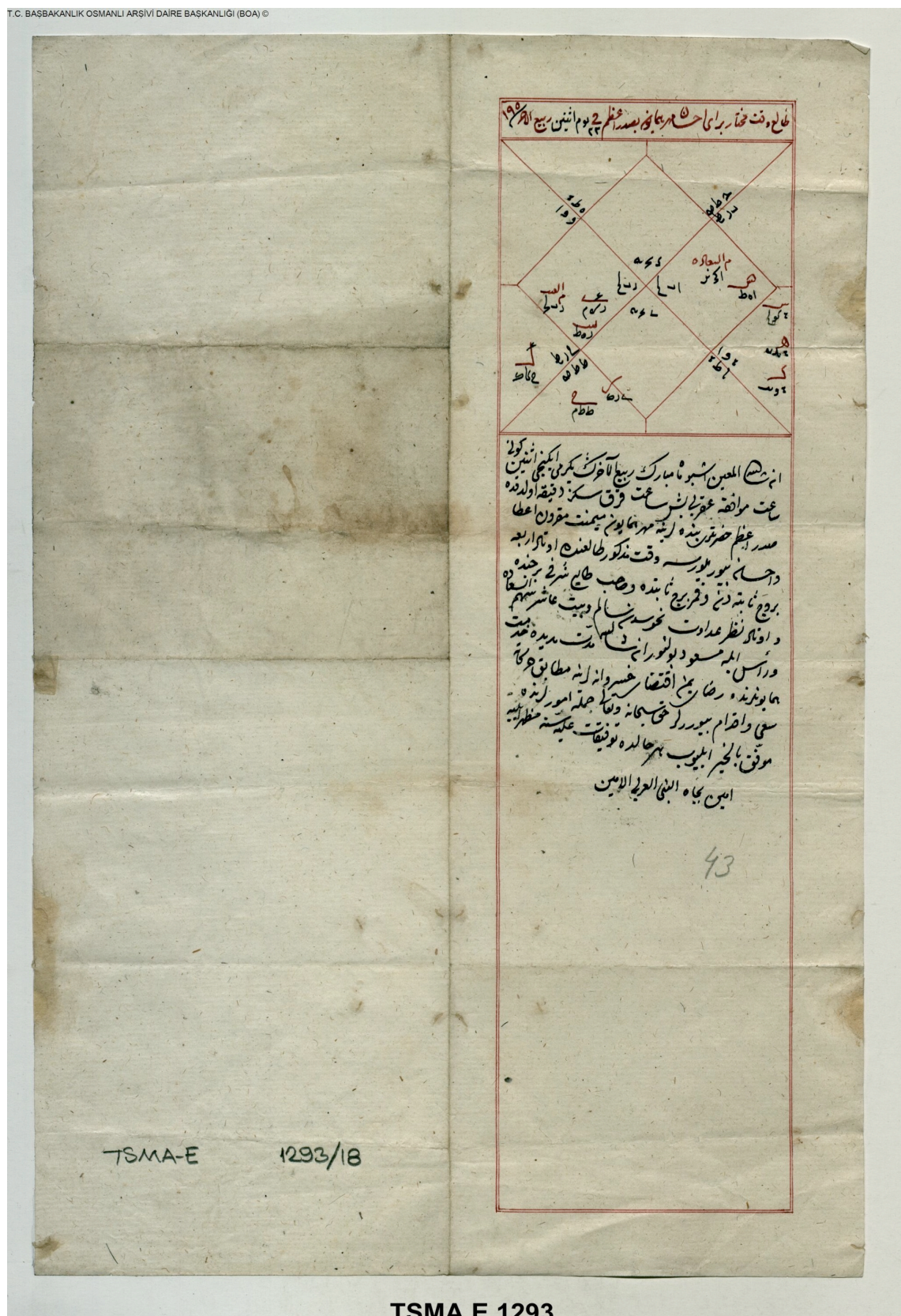
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A Melhame Compiled According to the Turco-Mongolian Twelve Year Animal Cycle in the Austrian National Library

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Context

The oriental manuscript H.O. 22, housed in the Austrian National Library, contains two texts. The first one is a copy of Şemsî Aḥmed Paşa's (died 1580) historical work, *Şāh-nāme-i Sulṭān Murād* (fol. 1v-87r), copied on 11. Zū l-hicce 1214 (04. April 1803). The second is a rather short text titled *melḥame-nāme* (fol. 87r-88r), the transcription and translation of which are presented in this article. It appears that both texts were copied by the same scribe, but apart from this, there seems to be no other connection between them.¹

Melḥames, also called *melḥemes*, are, among other things, a genre of calendar-based meteorological divination texts with deep roots in Turkish folk traditions. They were widely used during the Ottoman period, and many divinatory practices based on them have survived into recent times.² However, the H.O. 22. *melḥame* belongs to a unique group – namely, those based not on the hijra calendar, which was common in the Ottoman Empire, but on the 12-year Turco-Mongolian animal cycle. This type of *melḥame*, also referred to as *taḳvīm-i Tatar* 'Tatar calendar' or *aḥkām-i sāl-i türkân* 'predictions of the Turkic year', constitute only a small number of similar texts originating from the former territories of the Ottoman Empire. Of these, only a handful have been published to date.³

The *melḥame* in question dates to the 17th century, covering the years AH 1033 to 1044 (i.e. AD 1623/24–1635/36). For every year it provides broad projections on various matters of interest to an agricultural society: the amount of yield, the length and

¹ Flügel, Gustav. *Die arabischen, persischen und türkischen Handschriften der Kaiserlich-Königlichen Hofbibliothek zu Wien II*. Wien, 1865. 239–240.

² Köksal, Hasan. "Doğa Olaylarını Gözlemleyerek Yapılan Tahminler: Melhameler". *Acta Turcica* 1 Ocak (2013), 1–19.

³ Balci, Mustafa. "Bilinmeyen Bir 12 Hayvanlı Takvim Risalesi: Takvīm-i Tatar Ma'a-Acem". *Türkbilig* 20 (2010), 85–96. Boyraz, Şeref. "12 Hayvanlı Türk Takvimi ve Kehanet". *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 3/14 (2010), 148–167. Çelik, Aysun. "Aksaraylı Hasan Rızâyî'nin Nazm-i Ahkām-i Sāl-i Türkân Adlı Eseri". In: *I. Uluslararası Aksaray Sempozyumu: 27–29 Ekim 2016: kültür, tarih, din, medeniyet*. Haz. Sami, Yıldız Mehmet et al. Aksaray, 2017. 67–84. Hakkî, İbrâhîm. *Mar'ifet-nāme*. Ed. by: Qırımlı, Yuşuf Ziyâ. İstānbûl: Maṭba'a-i Aḥmed Kāmil, 1330. Kaya, İdris Güven. "İsmail bin Abdullah'ın Oniki Hayvanlı Türk Takvimi". *Turkish Studies* 7/2 Spring (2012), 15–34. Türkmen, Seyfullah. "Takvīm-i Tatar Ma'a-Acem' Üzerine Bir Dil İncelemesi". *Türkbilig* 22 (2012), 57–66.

harshness of winter, the amount of rain- and snowfall, the state of livestock, natural disasters, societal upheaval, and similar topics.⁴

Transcription

hāzā melhame-nāme

işbu melhame tatar-i şabā-reftār i ‘tibārıncadur on iki hayvān şüreti // on iki yıla dalālet ider ammā sene başı nevrūzdan ‘add olunur // her bār ki on iki āhır olsa yine ibtidādan ‘add olunur ğaflet // olınmaya ve hem on iki bāba takşim olunmuşdur

1033 bāb-ı evvel sıçan sālīdūr bu yıl ekin ve bicin çok // ola ve hem yıl yumşak eyü ola ve lākin hastalıklar çok ola // yılıñ āhiri eyü ola ve dağı kar ve yağmur çok ola ve sıçan // çok ola ve zahmetler çok ola emīnlik olmaya ve kış uzun // ola ve eger bu yıl oğul ve kız toğursa uşlu ve ‘ākıllu ola // 1034 bāb-ı sālī şıgır sālīdūr bu yıl hastalıklar çok ola // ve hem yemiş az ola ammā yağmur yazın çok ola ve ceng ü cidāl // çok ola ve hayvānāta ölüm erişe ve kış katı ola ve bu yıl // toğan oğul ve kız oynayıcı ola ve kinci ola ve hem güzel yüzlü // mühib ola 1035 bāb-ı sālīs pars sālīdūr bu yılıñ evveli // güzel ola ammā soñı katı kar ola ve dağı h^vācelere hastalıklar [86v] ola ve ucuzlık ola ve diyār-ı mağreb ve deryāda ceng ola ve bu // yılda oğul ve kız toğsa güzel ola ve mühib ola ve maḥabbetlü // ola ve sitārelü ola 1036 bāb-ı rābi ‘tavşan sālīdūr // bu yıl ni‘metler firāvān ola ve şular taşkun ola ve ekin ve bicin // çok ve ‘avāmm-ı nāsa hastalıklar irişe ve şadağa virenler hoş ola // ba‘z-ı yerlerde ceng u cidāl çok ola ve ba‘z-ı yerlerde biri // birine ziyānlar dege bu sene dünyāya gelen oğlan ve kız ‘ākıllu // ola ve eyü hūylu ve şirīn yüzlü ve çok sözlü ola 1037 bāb-ı hāmis neheng ya‘nī timsāhdur bu yıl leşkerde // harb ve fitne çok ola ve yağmur az ola ve kış katı ola // ve ekin ve bicin eyü ola ve hastalıklar ola ve bu yıl toğan oğlan // ve kız eyü olmaya ve ba‘zılar dimişler eyü ola 1038 bāb-ı sādīs // sāl-i mār ya‘nī yilandur bu yıl kış katı ola ve yemiş kem ola ammā // ekin ve bicin eyü ola ve dağı yılan ve çıyan çok ola ziyānları irmeye ve bu yılda vücūda gelen oğul ve kız haylī yavuz ola // ve

⁴ The text is transcribed according to the guidelines of *Keshif*. There are several cases where the text deviates from the orthography of Arabic and Persian, particularly *h*, *ḥ*, and *ḫ*. These I left according to the original spelling. The manuscript regularly spells *çok*, these are given here as? the expected Turkish *çok*.

maṣḥara ola 1039 bāb-ı sābi ‘sāl-i esb ya ‘nī at yılı // bu yıl taraf-ı Türkistānda ḥarb ve kan ve ceng çok ola // ve ḥayvānāta ölüm ola ve taḥıl eyü ola ve ḥastaluklar çok ola // ve kış miyāne ola ve bu yılda vücūda gelen evlād ‘āqıl ve zīrek // ola 1040 bāb-ı sāmīn koyun sālīdūr bu yıl kış uzun // ola ve ekinlere āfet iriṣe ve fitne ve ḥarb ola ammā tiz gece // ve ḥastaluklar ziyāde ola ve ḥayvānātuñ ḥālī eyü ola ve bu // yılda vücūda gelen evlād ‘ālim ve edeb ıssı ola ammā düşmenleri [87r] çok ola 1041 bāb-ı tāsī ‘ḥamdūna ya ‘nī meymūn yılıdur bu // yıl kış katı olur ve kuraḥ ola ve yemiş kem ola ve ḥastalıklar // çok ola ve taḥıl eyü ola ve ḥayvānāta āfet iriṣe ammā şoñı eyü // ola ve bu yıl vücūda gelen evlād edebsüz ve ḥürmetsüz ve bī- ‘aql // ola 1042 bāb-ı ‘āşir sāl-i murğ ya ‘nī tavuḥ bu yıl kış // uzun ola ve yıl evvelinde ḥastalıklar ola ammā girü iyilikler // ola ve daḥı ḥāmīle ḥatunlara ziyān ire ve ḥayvānātuñ ḥālī eyü // ola ammā ekin ve bicin miyāne ola bu yıl vücūda gelen evlād güzel yüzlü ola ammā düşmenleri çok ola 1043 bāb-ı iḥdā ‘aşar sāl-i seg ya ‘nī köpek bu yıl kış ziyāde ola yemiş eyü ola ve ḥayvānāta ḥastalıklar iriṣe ve ölüm çok ola ammā taḥıl miyāne ola ve bu yıl toḡan oḡlan maḥbūb olub // düşmenleri çok ola 1044 bāb-ı iṣnā ‘aşar toñuz sālī // bu yılda kış miyāne gece ammā ‘avāmm-i nāsda ḥastaluklar olub // taḥıl eyü olmaya ammā ni ‘met firāvān ola pādişāhlara ve beglere āfet // iriṣe ḥilāfetleri dürüst olmaya gāret ola ve re ‘āyāya // teşevvüş ola göz aḡrısı ve ḡulunc zaḥmeti çok ola ve bu yılda vücūda gelen eyü ola ve ba ‘zılar derler nāḥalef ola // v-allāhu a ‘lam ve-l-ḥakam [temā]m [temā]m [temā]m

Translation

This [is] a *melhame*-book

This *melhame* depicts the beliefs of the Tatars, who [ride] swiftly like the East Wind. They arrange twelve animal species into twelve years, [they] count [the year] from *Nevrūz*. Whenever the twelve [year cycle] ends, they count it from the beginning. Keep this in mind! They also divide [the cycle] into twelve chapters.

[The year of] 1033, first chapter, year of the rat. This year, crops and yields will be abundant. The year will be mild and good, but there shall be much sickness. The end of the year will be favourable, there shall be abundant snow and rain. There will be

many rats and many hardships. [Life] will be insecure, and the winter will be long. If a boy or girl is born this year, they shall be well-mannered and intelligent. [The year of] 1034, second chapter, the year of the ox. This year, there will be much sickness. Fruits will be scarce, but in the summer, there will be abundant rain. There will be much fighting and bloodshed, livestock will perish, and the winter will be harsh. Boys and girls born in this year shall be playful (? *oynayıcı*) and vengeful, but they will have a pretty face and a stately stature. [The year of] 1035, third chapter, the year of the panther. The beginning of this year will be pleasant, but at the end, there will be heavy snow, and sickness will afflict the *hocas*. Prices will be low. In the West and at sea, there will be war. If a boy or a girl is born this year, they will be beautiful, sociable, lucky and fortunate. [The year of] 1036, fourth chapter, the year of the hare. This year, blessings will be plentiful, the waters will overflow, and the crops and yields will be abundant. Sickness will afflict humankind, [but] those who give alms will have a pleasant [year]. In some places, there will be much war and bloodshed, while in others, people will suffer losses. Boys and girls coming to this world this year will be intelligent, good-natured, sweet-faced, and loquacious. [The year of] 1037, fifth chapter, the year of the crocodile. This year, there will be [in]fighting and mutiny in the army. The rains will be scarce, and the winter will be harsh. The crops and yields will be good, [but] there will be much sickness. Some say boys and girls born this year will be good, while other say they will not be good. [The year of] 1038, sixth chapter, the year of the snake. This year, the winter will be harsh, fruits will be scarce but crops and yields will be good. There will be many snakes and centipedes – may they cause no harm! Boys and girls born this year will be extremely ferocious and buffoonish. [The year of] 1039, seventh chapter, the year of the horse. This year in Turkestan, there will be much fighting, blood, and war. Livestock will perish, [but] grain [yields] will be good. There will be much sickness, and the winter will be mild. Children born this year will be intelligent and clever. [The year of] 1040, eighth chapter, the year of the sheep. This year, the winter will be long, and misfortune will befall the crops. There will be unrest and war, but these shall swiftly pass. There will be much sickness, [but] the state of the livestock will be good. Children born in this year will be learned and

literate, but they will have many enemies. [The year of] 1041, ninth chapter, the year of the monkey. This year, the winter will be harsh and dry, fruits will be scarce. There will be much sickness, [but] grain [yields] will be good. Misfortune will befall the livestock, but [the year] will end well. Children born in this year will be shameless, disrespectful, and foolish. [The year of] 1042, tenth chapter, the year of the hen. This year, the winter will be long. At the beginning [of the year], there will be much sickness, but the rest will be good. Pregnant woman will suffer harm. The condition of the livestock will be good, but the crops and yields shall be average. Children who are born this year will be beautiful, but will have many enemies. [The year of] 1043, eleventh chapter, the year of the dog. This year, the winter will be harsher [than usual], fruits will be abundant, and the livestock will suffer sickness. There will be much death, grain [yields] will be moderate. Children born in this year will be beloved but will have many enemies. [The year of] 1044, twelfth chapter, the year of the pig. This year, the winter will pass mildly, but humankind will suffer from sickness. Grain [yields] will not be good, but blessings will be plentiful. Kings and *beys* will face misfortune, and their misdeeds will go uncorrected. There will be plundering, and turmoil will affect the subjects. There will be much eye pain and cramps. Some say those born in this year will be good, other say they will be wicked. God knows and judges! F[inished].

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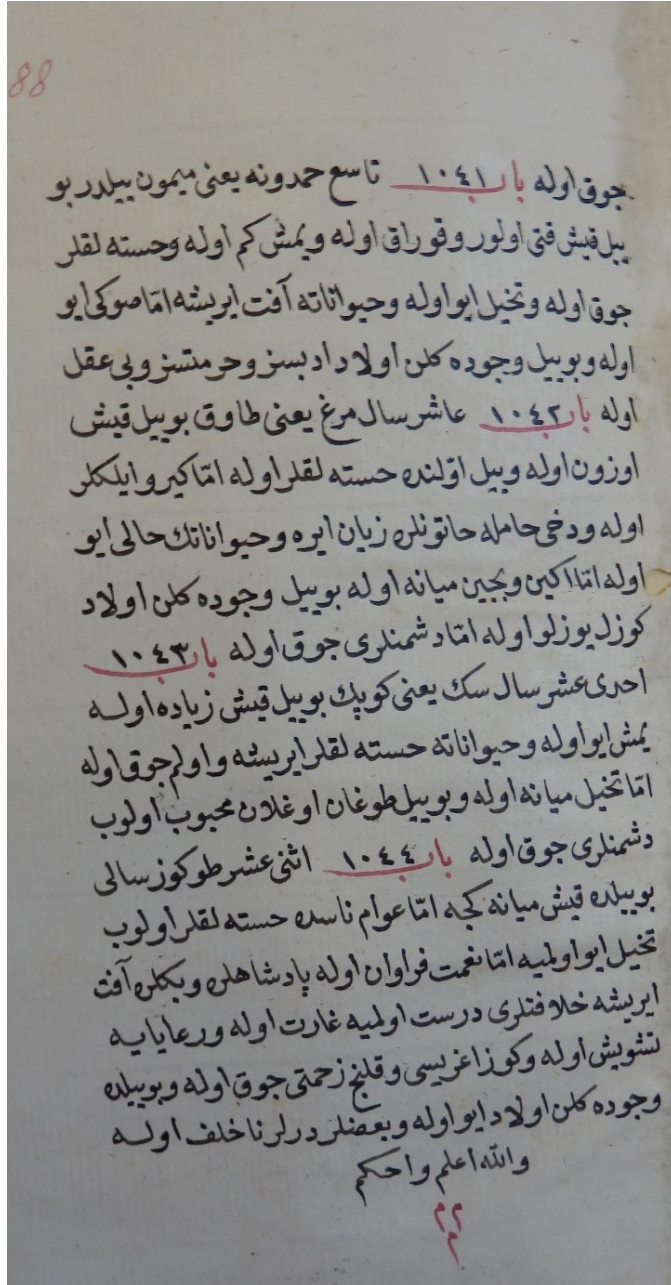
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Facsimile 2

اوله و او جوق اوله و ديار مغرب و در ياده جنك اوله و بو
 بيله اوغل و قيز طوغسه كوزل اوله و مهرب اوله و محبتلو
 اوله و ستاره لو اوله **بار ۱۰۳۶** رابع طاوشان سالدیر
 بو بیل نعمت لر فراوان اوله و صولر طاشقون اوله و اکین و بچین
 جوق و عوام ناسه حسنه لقلر ایرشه صدقه ویرلر خوش اوله
 بعض برلرده جنك و جدال جوق اوله و بعض برلرده بری
 برینه زیانلر دکه و بوسنه دنیا یه ککن اوغلان و قیز عاقللو
 اوله و ابو حیل و شیرین یوزلو و جوق سوزلو اوله
بار ۱۰۳۷ خامس نهک یعنی تمساح در بو بیل لشکرده
 خرب و فتنه جوق اوله و بغور از اوله و قیش قتی اوله
 و اکین و بچین ابو اوله و حسنه لقلر اوله و بو بیل طوغن اوغلان
 و قیز ابو اوله و بعضلر دیکش لر ابو اوله **بار ۱۰۳۸** سادس
 سال مار یعنی بیلاندر بو بیل قیش قتی اوله و میش کم اوله اما
 اکین و بچین ابو اوله و دخی بیلان و چیان جوق اوله زیانلری
 ایرمیه و بو بیلده وجوده ککن اوغل و قیز حیلی یاوز اوله
 و مسخر اوله **بار ۱۰۳۹** سابع سال اسب یعنی آت بیلی
 بو بیل طرف ترکستانده حرب و قان و جنك جوق اوله
 و حیواناته اولم اوله و تخیل ابو اوله و حسنه لقلر جوق اوله
 و قیش میانه اوله و بو بیلده وجوده ککن اولاد عاقل و زیرک
 اوله **بار ۱۰۴۰** ثامن قیون سالدیر بو بیل قیش اوزون
 اوله و اکندر آفت ایریشه و فتنه و حرب اوله اما تیز کجه
 و حسنه لقلر زیاده اوله و حیواناتک حالی ابو اوله و بو
 بیلده وجوده ککن اولاد عالم و ادب اسی اوله اما دشمنلری

۳۰

Facsimile 3



From an American Journalist to a Converted Ottoman Bureaucrat: Muhammed Alexander Russell Webb

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Russell Webb, Ottoman Empire, United States, 20th century, Diplomacy

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Context

The document concerns the appointment of Muhammad Webb Efendi, an American citizen, as the Ottoman Consul General in New York and his receipt of a merit medal. It provides insight into the Ottoman Empire's procedures for appointing officials to foreign diplomatic positions and its mechanisms for recognizing and rewarding diplomatic service. The date recorded on the document is 28 Jumada al-Awwal 1319 in the Hijri calendar, corresponding to September 7, 1901, in the Gregorian calendar. The document is cataloged under the archival code 373-29 and classified within the 'İ..HR..' series, which denote the *İrade-i Hariciye* (Imperial Edicts on Foreign Affairs) collection, preserved in the Ottoman Archive (Osmanlı Arşivi), formerly known as the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, BOA). This collection of documents includes appointments issued by the sultan pertaining to foreign affairs, indicating that the document forms part of a broader framework of diplomatic policy and governance. It is written in Ottoman Turkish using the Rika script style.

Alexander Russell Webb was born on November 9, 1846, in Hudson, New York. His father, Alexander Nelson Webb, served as the editor of the *Hudson Daily Star* newspaper. Webb received his primary education at the Home School in Glendale, Massachusetts, and subsequently attended Claverack College. After completing his formal education, he embarked on a career in journalism at an early age, contributing to various newspapers. Raised within the Presbyterian tradition, Webb actively participated in church services and Sunday school during his childhood and adolescence. However, he found this faith unsatisfactory and began seeking alternative spiritual perspectives. His involvement with the Theosophical Society exposed him to a variety of philosophical and religious ideas. While serving as editor of the *Missouri Republican* newspaper, Webb developed an interest in Islam and, starting in 1886, established contact with Islamic communities.¹ Seeking to gain a deeper understanding of Islam and the Muslim world,

¹ İlhan Ekinci, "Webb, Muhammed Alexander Russell," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, accessed January 18, 2025, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/webb-muhammed-alexander-russell>.

Alexander Russell Webb decided to travel to the East. As part of this decision, he accepted an offer to serve as the United States consul in Manila in 1887. According to his own account, Webb embraced Islam in early 1888, shortly after his appointment to the Philippines. Following his conversion, he adopted the name Muhammad and later returned to the United States, where he began formulating ideas for propagating Islam within American society. It has been suggested that Webb's efforts were rooted in a broader vision of reimagining the structure of American society. During his tenure as the U.S. consul in Manila, Webb established connections with Muslim intellectuals and merchants in India. Among them was Haji Abdullah Arab, who took an interest in Webb's ideas. The two corresponded, and Haji Abdullah Arab pledged financial support for Webb's missionary activities in America.²

Returning to New York in 1893 with financial promises from Indian Muslim merchants, Muhammad Webb began publishing newspapers. He first launched *The Moslem World* (1893), followed by *The Voice of Islam*, and later merged these into *The Moslem World and Voice of Islam* (1895–1896). That same year, Webb participated in the Chicago World's Parliament of Religions, where he delivered two lectures: "The Influence of Islam on Social Change" and "The Spirit of Islam." These lectures were later published in *The First World Parliament of Religions* (1894). Webb also established working groups across various regions of the United States. However, the movement he led—referred to as *The American Mission*, *American Islamic Propaganda Movement*, and *American Moslem Brotherhood*—faced significant financial challenges. These difficulties arose primarily because the financial support initially promised by Indian Muslims was not fully realized.³

Through his pro-Abdulhamid II and pro-Ottoman articles published in *The Moslem World* newspaper, Muhammad Webb garnered the attention of the Ottoman government in Istanbul. As a result, Mavroyeni Bey, the Ottoman envoy in Washington, invited Webb to the embassy to express gratitude for his writings. This meeting also

² Ekinci, "Webb, Muhammed Alexander Russell."

³ Ekinci, "Webb, Muhammed Alexander Russell."

brought Webb's financial difficulties to the attention of the Ottoman authorities.⁴ The Ottoman Empire, in response to Webb's financial struggles and request for support, decided to provide him with a regular monthly stipend to sustain both his publishing and missionary activities. Additionally, the Ottoman government aimed to utilize Webb as a soft power tool against anti-Islamic and anti-Ottoman propaganda. Webb played a significant role in countering the growing Armenian claims in the West by disseminating the Ottoman Empire's arguments in the United States. These allegations are extensively analyzed in the anonymously published pamphlets attributed to Alexander Russell Webb, specifically *A Few Facts about Turkey under the Reign of Abdul Hamid II* and *The Armenian Troubles and Where the Responsibility Lies*. *A Few Facts about Turkey* was initially published in early 1895, as corroborated by its first advertisement in the May issue of *The Moslem World and Voice of Islam*. The subsequent pamphlet, *The Armenian Troubles*, appeared in early 1896 and directly engaged with the intensifying Armenian crisis within the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, the issue was indirectly raised during the debates at the 1893 World's Fair and the Parliament of the World's Religions. Armenians and Western missionaries alleged that large-scale massacres targeting Armenians had taken place within the Ottoman Empire. In particular, the events of 1895–1896 had become a major point of contention, and these claims remained highly topical at the time the pamphlets were published.⁵ The Ottoman Empire and Webb both maintained that the Armenian question was purely a political issue. Webb regarded Western powers' demands for "Armenian self-government" as dangerous attempts aimed at destabilizing the Ottoman Empire.⁶

Alexander Russell Webb's writings, which emphasized the perceived superiority of Islam over other religions, were translated and disseminated through newspapers published in Istanbul. This activity is documented in the official archival records of the

⁴ Cezmi Eraslan, "Muhammed A. R. Webb'in Amerika'da İslâm Propagandası ve Osmanlı Devleti'yle İlişkileri (1893-1896)," *İlmî Araştırmalar* 2 (1996): 87.

⁵ Umar F. Abd-Allah, *A Muslim in Victorian America: The Life of Alexander Russell Webb* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 203.

⁶ Abd-Allah, *A Muslim in Victorian America*, 204.

Ottoman Empire, notably in a document preserved within the *Cumhurbaşkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi* under the *Yıldız Sadaret Hususi Evrakı* collection. This source provides valuable insight into the Ottoman state's involvement in the translation and circulation of Webb's works, illustrating an official effort to promote his ideas to a broader readership.⁷ Over time, this mutually beneficial relationship deepened, reaching its peak with the document we have transcribed. On September 29, 1901, the Ottoman Grand Vizier issued an order to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, confirming that Muhammad Alexander Russell Webb had been appointed Honorary Consul General in New York through an imperial edict dated September 12, 1901. Thus, a career that began as an American journalist concluded as that of a convert serving as an Ottoman bureaucrat. Webb passed away in 1916.

Transcription

Yıldız Sarāy-ı Hümayūnı

Baş Kitābet Dā'iresi

3874

Ma'rūz-ı çāker-i kemīneleridir ki

Amerikalı Muḥammed Vebb Efendi'niñ Niyu York faḥrī baş-şehbenderligine ta'yīni ve mūmā-ileyhe üçüncü rütbeden Mecīdī nişān-ı zī-şān ve gümüş liyākat madalyası iḥsān buyurulmasına mebnī mu'āmele-i lāzımenīñ ifāsı şeref-şādır olan irāde-i seniyye-i ḥazret-i ḥilāfet-penāhī iktizā-yı 'ālīsinden olmağla ol bābda emr ü fermān ḥazret-i veliyyü'l-emriñdir.

Ser-Kâtib-i ḥazret-i Şehyārī, Tahsin

fî 28 Cemāziye'l-ülā sene [1]319

fî 29 Ağustos sene [1]317

⁷ BOA., Y.A...HUS., 271-40 (officially known as Presidency of the Republic of Turkey Directorate of State Archives - Ottoman Archives - BOA)

Translation

Yıldız Imperial Palace

Office of the Chief Secretariat

3874

It is the humble petition of your most devoted servant that, in accordance with the exalted decree of His Imperial Majesty, the Refuge of the Caliphate, the necessary procedures are to be carried out concerning the appointment of Muhammad Webb Efendi, the American, as the Honorary Consul of New York, as well as the conferment upon him of the distinguished Order of the Medjidie, Third Class, and the Silver Medal of Merit.

Since this directive arises from the royal will of His Imperial Majesty, the Custodian of Authority, the execution of this matter is thus subject to his command and decree.

Chief Scribe of His Imperial Majesty, Tahsin

Issued on the 28th of Jumādā al-Ūlā 1319

29th of August 1317

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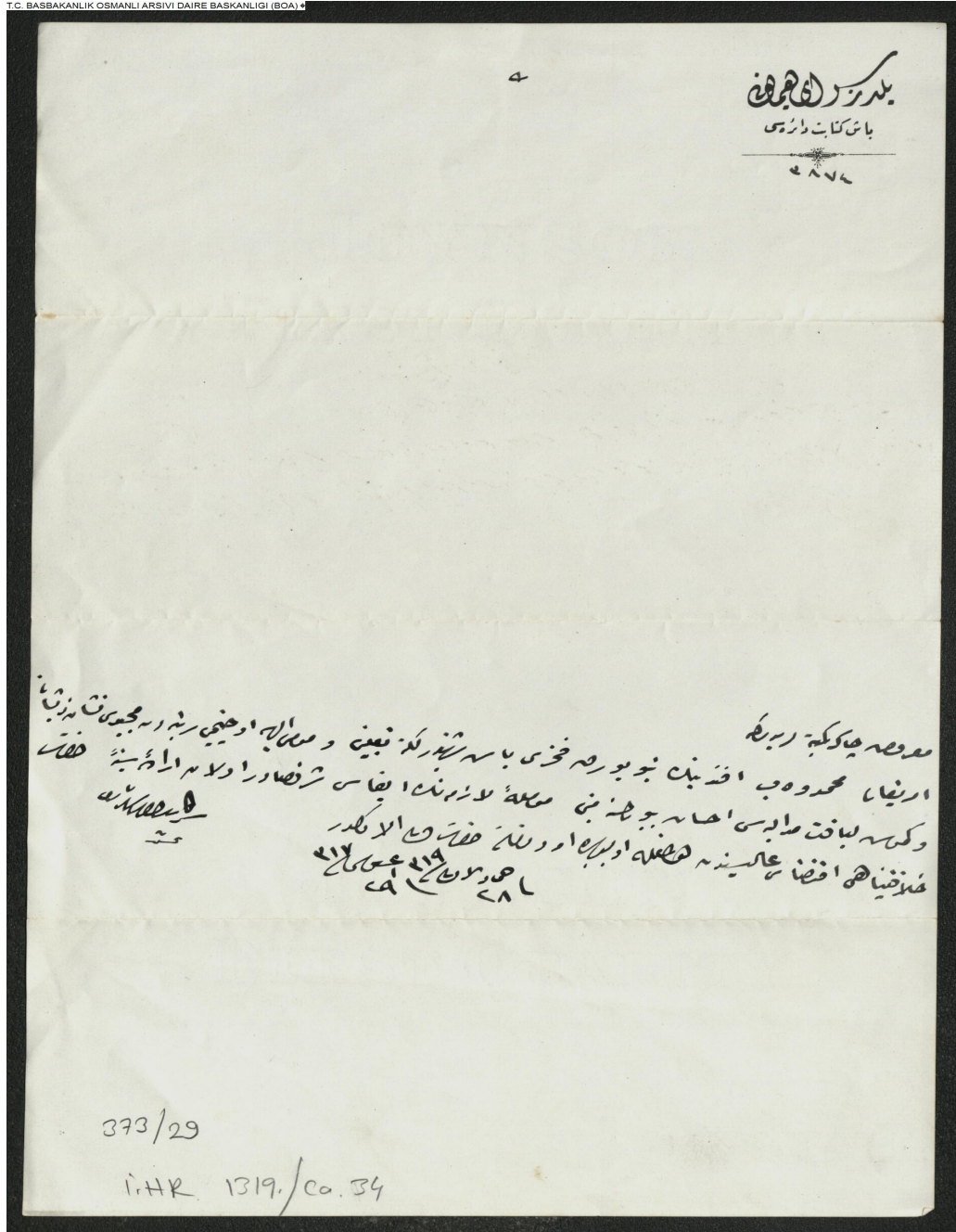
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Facsimile



The Ottoman Judge and the Undead: A Judicial Order to Stake Vampires*

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Keywords:

Ottoman supernatural, Ottoman judges, vampires, manuscripts, *mürāsele*, 18th century.

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Context

Vampires have been part of Balkan, and by extension Ottoman, folklore long before they became heroes and villains of fantastic literature. Vampirism also existed in different parts of the empire under different names.¹ While we cannot get enough of vampire novels and TV series, Ottoman subjects were trying to get away from or get rid of them as quickly as possible. It is therefore not surprising that in one of his most well-known *fetvās*, Ebussuud Efendi addresses the legal permissibility of fleeing a village in the event of a vampiric incident.² In another, he outlines methods for dealing with such creatures.³ The fact that Ebussuud had to tackle the issue of vampirism clearly illustrates how legal discourse engages with the concerns of the populace even when those concerns may appear superstitious.⁴ The *mürāsele* (judicial order) copies transcribed and translated in this article further exemplify this point.

The *mürāsele* examples presented below appear in the marginalia of folio 156b of a manuscript titled *Sakk*, held in the Milli Kütüphane Manuscript Collection under catalogue number 606782. *Şakk* manuscripts are essentially compilations of anonymized judicial documents intended to serve as templates for subsequent legal issuances. They were widely circulated among legal practitioners and served as practical handbooks.⁵ The manuscript in question is named “*Sakk*” because the majority of the folios are de-

¹ The most general term used for vampires in the Ottoman Empire was probably *cādu*, while *karakoncoloz* was primarily employed in Greek-speaking regions, and *upir* in the Balkans. For a general overview of vampiric beings in the Ottoman Empire, see Marinos Sariyannis, “Of Ottoman Ghosts, Vampires and Sorcerers: An Old Discussion Disinterred”, *Archivum Ottomanicum* 30 (2013): 195-220. On the other hand, Kafadar argues that the vampire represents a distinct type of creature specific to the early modern period, see Cemal Kafadar, “Vampire Trouble Is More Serious Than the Mighty Plague.” in *The Land between Two Seas: Art on the Move in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea 1300-1700*, ed. Gülru Necipoğlu (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 126-151.

² Mehmet Ertuğrul Düzdağ, *Şeyhülislâm Ebussuud Efendi Fetvaları Işığında 16. Asır Türk Hayatı* (İstanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1972), 198.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ As Kırgı points out in his book on vampires, the study of Ottoman vampires is most effectively approached through the legal sphere, since the majority of records pertaining to such cases are found within judicial documents, see Salim Fikret Kırgı, *Osmanlı Vampirleri Söylenceler, Etkiler, Tepkiler*, 4th ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2022), 57.

⁵ Süleyman Kaya, “Mahkeme Kayıtlarının Kılavuzu: *Sakk* Mecmuaları” *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 5, (2005): 379-416.

voted to a copy of Mustafa b. Şeyh Mehmed's renowned *şakk* named *Ravzatü'l-kudat fi'l-mehadiri ve's-sicillat*.⁶ The work was copied by Ömer b. Hüseyin in 1117 (1705).

A *Mürāsele* is an order issued by an Ottoman judge (*kāzī*) or a deputy judge (*nāib*) in the form of a letter.⁷ Ottoman judges typically send these letters to recipients within their jurisdiction, thus reflecting the local administration of justice. However, since these letters were not sent to the Ottoman capital and only circulated locally, they are rarely found in archives.⁸ Fortunately, many copies of these *mürāseles* can be found in the marginal notes of *şakk* manuscripts.⁹

The two *mürāsele* copies, both titled *Ervāḥ-ı ḥabīse mürāselesidir* (Judicial Order for the Evil Spirits), address similar supernatural concerns but differ markedly in wording, addressees, and prescribed actions. The first is sent to a village imam, instructing him to investigate graves (*maḳber*) for signs of unnatural death and report back to the judge. The second is addressed to the entire population of a *çiftlik*, authorizing them to directly eliminate the vampire (*vanpir*) by staking it in its pit (*çuḳur*) with a stake made from a specific tree (*yemiş*).

These differences likely stem from the religious identities of the recipients: the first letter, probably addressed to a Muslim village, reflects greater judicial control and deference toward the dead, assigning only investigative duties to an imam. The second, likely directed at a non-Muslim community, delegates both judgment and execution to the local populace, perhaps allowing customary practices to guide the response. The shift in vocabulary from *maḳber* in the first letter to *çuḳur* in the second may also reflect broader patterns in pre-19th-century Ottoman legal writing, in which non-Muslims and their dead were referred to using less dignified terminology than Muslims. On the other hand, the first letter uses the general term *ervāḥ-ı ḥabīse*, the second employs the specific

⁶ *Ibid.*, 400-402.

⁷ Aleksandar Fotić. "The Belgrade Kadi's Müraseles of 1683: The Mirror of a Kadi's Administrative Duties," in *Belgrade 1521-1867*, ed. Dragana Amedoski (Belgrade: The Institute of History, Yunus Emre Enstitüsü, 2018), 65-77.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 66-67.

⁹ There are also personal *şakk* compilations that contain numerous *mürāsele* copies alongside other types of documents, see Fethi Gedikli, *Bosna Sakk Defteri: Hicri 1203-1288 (1788-1871) Tarihleri Arasında Bosna'da Hukuksal ve Toplumsal Hayat* (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2015).

word *vanpir*, which—if the letter is correctly dated to the late 17th or early 18th century—may represent the earliest known use of the term vampire in the Turkish language.¹⁰

The mention of a stake made from a *yemi  * tree is particularly notable, though the term *yemi  * broadly denotes various fruit-bearing trees, making its precise meaning ambiguous. *  m  -y   T  reh  t-   B  ld  n  n*, a travelogue with a particular tendency to record local customs and practices, sheds some light on this by noting that people in the Balkans use wood from what they call the *yemi  * tree, a species resembling ‘*anber-i b  ris* (common barberry) in both shape and fruit, to craft cross-shaped stakes.¹¹ Considering that hawthorn, known also as *yemi  en* in Turkish, is traditionally used against vampires in the Balkans, it is likely that *yemi  * here specifically refers to hawthorn. It is also possible that Evliya   elebi, when describing stakes used against vampiric beings in Circassia, employed a general term like *b  g  rdlen* (blackberry) to denote hawthorn or similar plants. Notably, barberry, hawthorn, and blackberry share botanical characteristics: all are thorny shrubs bearing small red to black fruits that stain the hands and resemble blood when picked, a fact familiar to many who have foraged blackberries.

¹⁰ The manuscript as a whole contains numerous dates, some as late as 1281 (1864). When examining the marginalia surrounding the *  akk* in an attempt to determine the original dates of the documents, one encounters a mixture of official and unofficial letters, orders, and judicial records, most of which include only partial dates. However, there is one document copy with a complete date on folio 77b, recorded as 29   a‘b  n 1087 (6 November 1676). Although the reader need not necessarily have compiled these documents exclusively from the same period, it is likely that the original *m  r  sele* examples belong to a timeframe between the second half of the 17th century and the first half of the 18th century. However the copies are at least a little older than the actual letters. On folio 1a, we find a copy of a letter from Kevakibizade Veliyy  ddin Efendi, the kadiasker of Rumelia, addressed to   ivizade Ataullah Efendi. In this letter, the kadiasker authorizes Ataullah Efendi to collect the *asker   k  smet* in Prevadi, beginning from the first day of Rebi  ’l-a  ir 1134 (19 January 1722). Prevadi, located in present-day Bulgaria, remained an *arpal  k* until 1135. One folio before that, there is a list of books that the author of the marginal notes took with him to Prevadi. Another, more extensive list appears on folio 171b; it includes the titles from the earlier list as well as many additional works. Taken together, these records strongly suggest that the same individual authored both lists. This, in turn, raises the possibility that the owner of these books traveled to Prevadi around 1722, likely serving either as a *n  ib* or as a scribe working under   ivizade Ataullah Efendi.

¹¹ Mehmed H   im, *  m  -y   T  reh  t-   B  ld  n  n*, ed. Feridun M. Emecen and   lhan   ahin (Ankara: T  rk Tarih Kurumu, 2022), 190. It is also noteworthy that one of the vampire incidents recounted in the text takes place in Prevadi—a location where the owner or reader of the manuscript may have personally served, as suggested by the marginal notes he recorded.

This suggests a symbolic association between these plants, blood, and vampiric folklore.¹²

As a final point, one might ask why these judicial orders were issued in the first place, and why the owner or reader of the *şakk* manuscript chose to anonymize and copy them into his manuscript. The rationale behind the original issuance appears relatively straightforward: any interference with graves required formal judicial authorization. Without such permission, tampering with the dead could constitute a serious offense, both legally and ritually. Indeed, *Törehāt-ı Büldānān* again provides a relevant example of how such a *mürāsele* might be obtained and employed. In one case, a rumor began to circulate that İnce Mehmed Ağa had become a vampire after death. As the rumor gained traction, a group of ten to fifteen individuals approached the court and requested a *mürāsele* to exhume and burn the body. Their request was granted, and the body was burned.¹³

This case exemplifies how any action against the suspected undead required judicial sanction. However, the fact that the *mürāseles* in question were anonymized, copied, and appended to the work of Mustafa b. Şeyh Mehmed suggests a further layer of meaning. It implies that the compiler believed these documents might serve a practical purpose in the future, that such cases were not as rare or anomalous as one might assume. This is significant not only because of the act of supplementation itself, but also because it points to a possible judicial practice: that Ottoman judges may have handled vampiric incidents primarily through the issuance of *mürāseles*, without formally recording such cases in court registers (*sicil*), since it may not have been necessary to do so. If most of these judicial orders have not survived or were never preserved in archival collections, this absence may lead to a historiographical bias—causing vampiric incidents to appear far less frequent in the historical record than they likely were.

¹² I thank Dr. Mahmud Esad Kalıpçı for raising this insightful point during our conversations on the matter.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 152.

Transcription

Ervāḥ-ı ḥabīse mürāselesidür

Fülān kı̇arye imāmı el-mükerrem ba'd'es-selām inhā olunur ki kı̇arye-i mezbûre mekâbirinden bir iki yirde ervāḥ-ı ḥabīse olmaḳ zann olınmaḡın açılıb naẓar olınmaḳ içün mürāsele iltimās eylemeleriyle taḥrir ve irsāl olındı lede'l-vuşûl ol maḳûle zann olınan maḳberleri açub fî'l-vâkı'a meyyit ḥāline teḥallûf bir ḥālet üzre bulınsa bu taraḫa i'lām eylesün ki mücibiyle 'amel olına ve's-selām.

Dı̇ger

Fülān nām çiftlik ahālisi mezbûrda vanpir nāmında bir ḥabīs zāhir olub müteezzī olduḡuñuz ecilden mürāsele irsāl olınmuşdur lede'l-vuşûl mazanne ittiḥāz itdüḡuñuz çukuru keşfidüb göresiz vâkı' ise yemiş ağacı ile çukuru içine mıḫlayasız ve's-selām.

Translation

Judicial Order for the Evil Spirits

Reverend imam of such and such village,

After salutations, what is requested of you is the following: since it is suspected that there are evil spirits in couple of graves in the aforementioned village and since the people have asked that those graves be opened up and examined, this order has been written and sent. Upon receipt of this letter, you are to open the suspicious graves. If you observe any deviation from the natural state of death, report back to us so that appropriate measures may be taken.

And peace [be upon you!]

Another [example]

People of the such and such named çiftlik,

As an evil being known as a “vampire” has emerged in the aforementioned location, and as it caused you distress, this order has been issued. Upon receipt, you are to inspect the suspected pit. Should your suspicions prove accurate, nail it down to its grave with a berry stake. And peace [be upon you!]

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Permission for Settlement: A tezkere for a woman from the occupied Kingdom of Hungary*

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Context

This *tezkere*¹ is found in Hungary, in the Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County Archives, among the “letters from *Mezőtúr*”² issued by the Ottomans in the 17th century (dated 1683, April). The collection comprises a total of 155 folios, including 13 documents written in Hungarian and issued by the Ottomans, while the remaining texts are in Ottoman Turkish.³ The miscellany addresses a wide range of topics, including land ownership, taxation, customs regulations, the renovation of the local Calvinist church, and legal matters such as inheritance and death cases. By analyzing this diverse corpus, it is possible to reconstruct aspects of everyday life on the periphery of the Ottoman Empire—distant from Istanbul, within the occupied territories of the Kingdom of Hungary, outside of Buda, in the vast expanse of the Hungarian Great Plain.

According to the *tezkere*, a woman named *Örzsike*⁴ intends to settle down in *Karcagújszállás*,⁵ a settlement within the Szolnok Sanjak. To obtain a residence permit, she accepts the obligation of paying the sultan's *jizya* tax. Through this *tezkere*, the Ottomans formally grant her the permit.

¹ Diplomatically, *tezkere* refers to documents facilitating communication between officials or individuals within the same administrative unit. These documents were composed in a straightforward manner, ensuring the purpose was conveyed clearly and completely, while avoiding unnecessary details. Various types of *tezkeres* existed, classified according to the specific purpose of their issuance. M.S. Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı Belgelerinin Dili (Diplomatik)* (İstanbul: Kubbealtı, 1994), 245.

² Today Mezőtúr is a town, which is located in the centre of the Great Hungarian Plain, Southeast of Budapest. The town was established in the Middle Ages. It lay along an important trade route, which was the shortest road between Buda and Transylvania, therefore the town prospered, and it became a market town (*oppidum*) in the 14th century. The settlement came under Ottoman rule in 1552 and remained so until its liberation in 1692. Z. Bodoki Fodor, *Mezőtúr város története honfoglalástól a felszabadulásig (896-1944)* (Mezőtúr, 1978), 13. In historical sources, it was referred to as Túr—in Latin as *Thwr oppidum* and later, in Ottoman records, predominantly as واروش طور (*vārōš-i Tūr*), meaning “the town of Túr.”

The present collection of historical documents, known as the “letters of Mezőtúr,” constitutes the surviving remnants following the destruction caused by the wars of reconquest and the devastation of the Second World War.

³ The archival reference of the letter bundle is HU-MNL-JNSZML-V.301.

⁴ This is a female Christian name, Erzsébet/Örzsébet, with a +*kA*^o diminutive suffix.

⁵ Karcagújszállás (first mentioned in the sources in 1506, known today as *Karcag*) also lay on the Great Hungarian Plain, at the westernmost end of the Eurasian steppe route, and this was one of the central places where the Cumans settled down in the 13th century. Gy. Györffy, *A magyarság keleti elemei* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1990), 311.

To fully understand the essence of this permission, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the administrative divisions during the period of Ottoman rule in the Kingdom of Hungary.

After the Ottoman crescent was raised over Buda Castle in 1541, the following quarter-century saw the Ottoman Empire occupy approximately 40% of the kingdom's territory, which was subsequently expanded through a series of smaller and larger conquests. Their control extended over the southern regions, a significant portion of the Great Hungarian Plain, and the southern and eastern parts of Transdanubia.⁶

At the heart of this newly occupied territory, Szolnok Castle fell into Ottoman hands following the 1552 campaign. That same year, the city of Szolnok was designated as the seat of the Szolnok Sanjak, as part of the Vilayet of Buda Vilayet (Province of Buda), and the surrounding countryside was swiftly brought under Ottoman administration. The Szolnok Sanjak remained under the jurisdiction of the Buda Vilayet until 1596, when it was subordinated to the newly established Vilayet of Eger.⁷

The *tezkere* states that Örsike was from the *kurūş tā'ifesi* (in Hungarian *'kuruc'*), which, in this context, indicates that she hailed from the northern part of the country. The etymology of the term *kurūş* remains uncertain to this day. Initially, it may have denoted a "wanderer, roamer, or fugitive" and its meaning later evolved, particularly in connection with Count Imre Thököly's anti-Habsburg struggles, to refer to soldiers fighting against the Habsburgs. Those who sympathized with this movement were also sometimes referred to by this term.⁸ Moreover, sources suggest that it was a common practice for the Ottomans to use this designation for people from the northern regions, as Thököly's activities were closely associated with Upper Hungary, where he recruited

⁶ After the establishment of the *vilayet* of Buda (1541) and Temesvár (1552), 6 new *vilayets* were established in the region up to 1663. G. Pálffy, *A tizenhatodik század története*, (Budapest: Pannonica, 2000), 13.

⁷ V. Tomkó "Török közigazgatás Magyarországon: a szolnoki szandzsákbégek története I." *Zounok* (Szolnok: A Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok Megyei Levéltár Évkönyve 19, 2004), 10.

⁸ Nagy László, "Kurucok és Labancok a Magyar Történelemben". *Hadtörténeti Közlemények* 26/2 (Budapest: 1979), 250-274.

his followers. Consequently, the Ottomans occasionally referred to the population of the northern regions as the “people of the *ḵurūṣ*.”

Thus, she intended to move from the northern regions to Karcagújszállás, which, according to the conditions of the time, was considered a populous settlement.⁹ Moreover, due to the Thököly Uprising, the Upper Hungarian territories often failed to provide security for their inhabitants. Her relocation from the less secure region to a more stable and populated southern settlement demonstrates the impact of political and military conflicts on individual lives.

This short permit also raises the issue of taxation eligibility, as in occupied Hungary of the mid-16th century, the *jizya* - mostly referred to as *haraç*- was originally intended to be paid by adult non-Muslim men. The following groups were exempt from paying the *jizya* tax: women, children, elderly and disabled people, monks (especially those living in monasteries) and the very poor who were unable to afford the tax. However, the obligation to pay *jizya* was sometimes linked to land ownership: individuals who held land, known as *baştina*, were required to pay the tax regardless of whether they were Muslim or non-Muslim. In order to safeguard *jizya* revenues, the state treasury regarded landowner status as the main criterion. Women were generally exempt from paying the *jizya* tax in the Ottoman Empire because *jizya* was primarily a tax in exchange for military protection, and women were not considered liable for military service.

However, there were exceptions when women were required to pay *jizya*. Firstly, widows who inherited land from their deceased husbands were liable to pay the tax as landowners. Secondly, women who lived independently and managed their own households might have been included in the *jizya* registers and taxed similarly to men. In some cases, local tax collectors might have mistakenly or deliberately taxed wealthy women. Additionally, women who voluntarily wished to become Ottoman subjects sometimes accepted the obligation to pay *jizya* as part of their new status. In summary, although women were mostly exempt from *jizya*, widows, landowning women,

⁹ Selmeczi László, *Őseink nyomában. A magyarországi kunok Olas nemzetsége és Kolbazzsége 1243/46–1685* (Kisújszállás: 2013), 48.

independent women, or those in special circumstances could be required to pay, usually at a lower rate than adult men. Örsike could be in this category, but there is no further record to prove that.

The Ottoman administration had already gained enough experience through the subjugation of various peoples to recognize the advantage of adapting taxation laws to the legal customs of the conquered countries. Thus, in Hungary, the most important state tax, the *jizya* tax, was also levied in this manner.¹⁰

By the 17th century, due to the state of war and financial issues, sources indicate that this type of tax could also be collected from women, and it gradually evolved into a more general form of taxation. This transformation within the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary remains a relatively understudied subject.

In conclusion, this *tezkere* serves as an interesting microhistorical source that sheds light on demographic shifts, legal adaptations, and everyday life under Ottoman rule in Hungary. The administrative flexibility exhibited by the Ottoman authorities reflects their ability to adapt fiscal policies to local conditions. Further research into similar documents could provide a deeper understanding of how the empire managed its frontier regions and adjusted its taxation and administrative systems to local realities.

¹⁰ Káldy-Nagy Gyula, *Harács-szedők és ráják. Török világ a XVI. Századi Magyarországon*. (Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1970), 72. "Cizye" Accessed June 20, 2025.
<https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/cizye>

Transcription

Hüve/Huva

Vech-i tahrîr-i hurûf oldur ki kuruş tâ'ifesinden Örijik nâm 'avret re'âyâ olub ve cizye-i pâdişâhî üzerine der-'uhde eyleyüb yine Karşāğuy Şālaş nâm karyede sâkin olmağ-ıçün icâzet tezkeresine tâlib olmağın tarafımızdan işbu memhûr tezkere virüldi. Kimesne rencide eylemeye. Tahrîren fî evâhir-i rebî' ül-âhır sene 1094.

El-hâkir

Mustafâ mîr-alay Şonloğ

Temmet

Translation

He! (God)

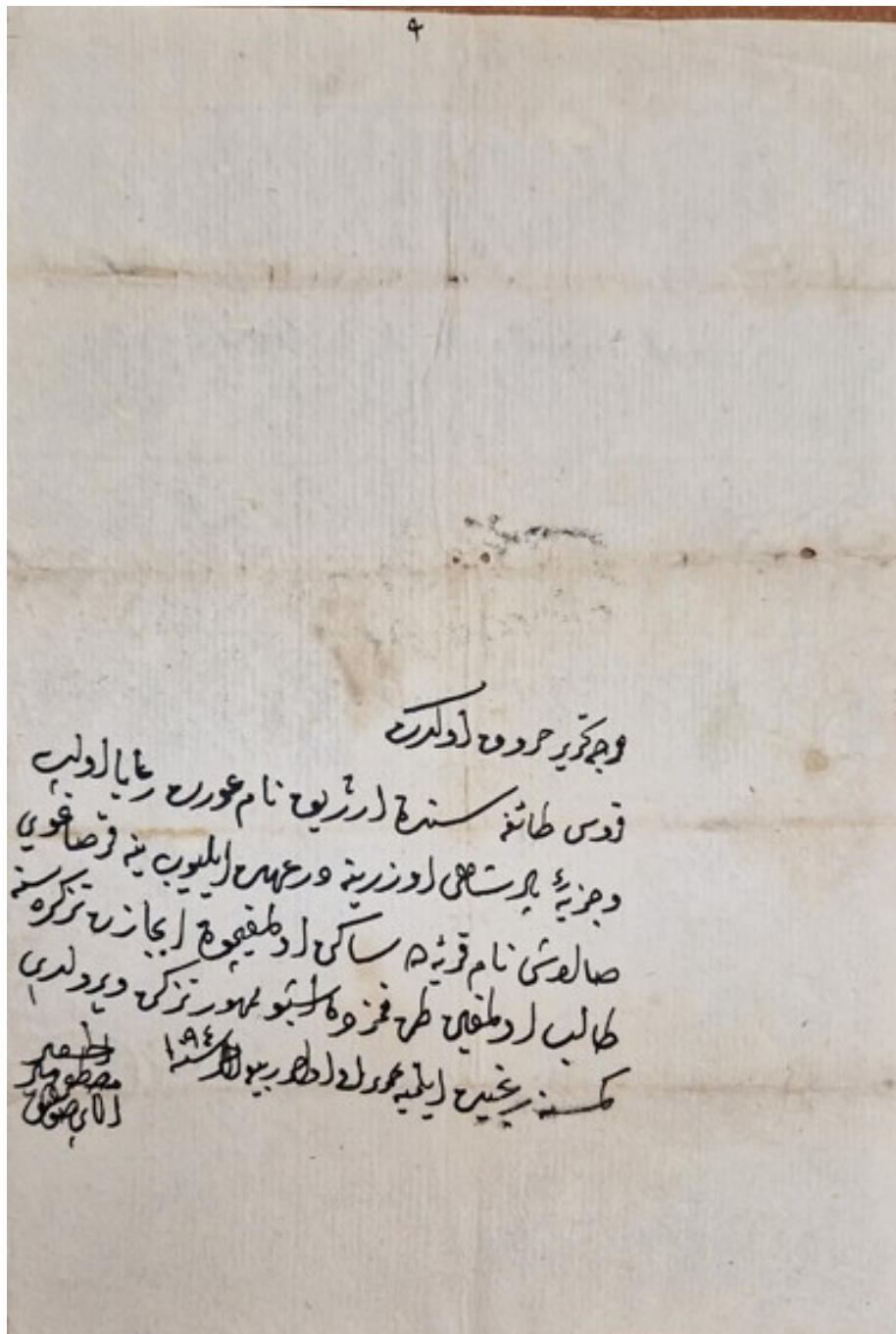
The reason for the issuance of this document is that a woman named Örsike, from the Kuruc people, became a reaya and accordingly, she took on the responsibility of paying the imperial *jizya* tax. Likewise, since she requested a permission certificate (*icazet tezkeresi*) to settle down in a village called Karcagújszállás (*Karşāğuy Şālaş*), this sealed permit has been issued on our part. Let no one cause her any harm.

Written in the latter half of the month of Rabi' al-Akhir, year 1094 [14–28 April 1683].

The humble servant Mustafa, *mîr-alay* of the sanjak of Szolnok

The end.

Facsimile



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Peerless

Bākī's Response to Sultan Süleymān

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Context

Derived from the Arabic root *nazara* (نظر), the term *naẓīre* denotes a concept of equivalence, referring to something that is a match, counterpart, or parallel in form, function, or status. In the literary traditions of Turkish poetry, the term *naẓīre* denotes a poetic counterpart or imitation – a composition crafted in deliberate poetic responses to a pre-existing poem, adhering to its meter, rhyme scheme, and frequently its thematic content.¹ This practice functioned as a means for poets to exhibit their technical mastery and creative ingenuity by producing verses that mirrored the formal structure of a renowned poem. Composed as an act of homage, a gesture of rivalry, or a form of poetic dialogue, the *naẓīre*² served as a dynamic intertextual engagement with established works. This tradition was particularly evident in poetic forms such as the *gazel* and the *kaşīde*, where the replication of quantitative meter (*‘arūḏ*) and rhyme (*kaḫfiye*) was both a challenge and a tribute.³ The abundance of *naẓīre* in response to a solitary poem was frequently regarded as an indication of the poem’s popularity and literary significance within the poetic canon.⁴

The present study examines a letter composed by Bāḫī (d. 1600), widely celebrated as *sulṭānū’ş-şu‘arā* (The Sultan of Poets) and a preeminent figure in Ottoman poetry. Notwithstanding the fact that the letter was ultimately intended for

¹ Kemal Yavuz, “Türk Şiirinde Nazire,” *Divan Edebiyatı Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1, no. 10 (January 1, 2013): 359–60, <https://doi.org/10.15247/dev.155>.

² For two key works on the *naẓīre* tradition see Edith Gülçin Ambros, “‘Naẓīre’, the Will-o’-the-Wisp of Ottoman ‘Dīvān’ Poetry,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 79 (1989): 57–83; Fatih Köksal, *Sana Benzer Güzel Olmaz* (Büyüyenay, 2018).

³ Mehmet Kalpaklı, “Osmanlı Şiir Akademisi: Nazire,” in *Türk edebiyatı tarihi*, ed. Talât Sait Halman (Ankara: Kültür ve turizm bakanlığı, 2006), 134.

⁴ One of the most imitated poems in the Arabic-Islamic tradition is the *Ḳaṣīdet al-Bürde* (Poem of the Mantle) by Imām al-Buṣīrī (d.1296?), composed in the 13th century in praise of the Prophet Muhammad. This celebrated *kaşīde* is notable for its spiritual depth, lyrical beauty, and perfectly structured meter and rhyme (ending each verse with the letter “mīm”). It became a cornerstone of devotional poetry. The poem’s profound influence is evident in the numerous *naẓīres* composed by poets across various Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu literary traditions, who sought to emulate its structure while infusing their own unique voice into the genre. Composing a *naẓīre* to the *Bürde* represented not only an artistic challenge but also a spiritual homage, and over time, entire anthologies of such responses were compiled, making it perhaps the single most widely imitated poem in Arabic verse. For more see, Al-Busiri, *Qasida Burdah: Healing Rhymes*, ed. Sayid Ashraf Shah, 3rd ed. (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015).

Sultan Süleymân the Magnificent (d. 1566), a marginal note indicates that, in accordance with established courtly protocol, it was first received by an intermediary before being conveyed to the sultan. Maḥmūd ‘Abdūlbākī or Bākī was active during the reign of Sultan Süleymân and was the recipient of significant patronage and favor from the Sultan.⁵ Like numerous Ottoman sultans, Sultan Süleymân the Magnificent was an accomplished poet in his own right, writing under the pen name *Muḥibbī* (The Lover). He composed a *Dīvān* (a collection of poetry) in Ottoman Turkish, as well as a shorter *Dīvān* in Persian.⁶ Sultan Süleymân’s literary inclinations and poetic sensibilities are widely considered to have been the catalyst for his considerable favors bestowed upon Bākī, the renowned poet. It is widely held that Sultan Süleymân regarded his patronage of Bākī as one of his most significant and valuable undertakings, regarding the presence of the poet at his court as a symbol of both personal and cultural prestige.⁷

The document⁸ under scrutiny reveals that Sultan Süleymân, composing poetry under the penname *Muḥibbī*, dispatched two of his poetic compositions to Bākī, entrusting him with the task of crafting *naẓīre*—poetic imitations or poetic responses—to these poems.⁹ It was a customary practice among poets to submit their literary works to others, inviting them to compose poetic responses, as this served as a means of evaluating both the quality of the original poem and the poetic skill of the responder. Bākī’s decision to compose two *naẓīres* in response to a single poem from

⁵ For more on Bākī and his biography see, Haluk İpekten, *Baki Hayatı Sanatı ve Eserleri* (Akçağ Yayınları, 2017); Mehmed Çavuşoğlu, “Bākī,” in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 1991); Mahmut Kaplan, *Baki: Şiir Ülkesinin Sultanı* (Lejand, 2021); Mutlu Muhammet Aktaş, “Bākī Hakkında Bir Bibliyografya Denemesi,” *Littera Turca Journal of Turkish Language and Literature* 4, no. 4 (October 31, 2018): 876–913, <https://doi.org/10.20322/littera.470632>; Walter G. Andrews, Najaat Black, and Mehmet Kalpaklı, *Ottoman Lyric Poetry: An Anthology*, 2nd ed, Publications on the near East (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014).

⁶ Amil Çelebioğlu, “Turkish Literature of the Period of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent,” in *The Ottoman Empire in the Reign of Süleyman the Magnificent*, ed. Tulay Duran, vol. II (Istanbul, 1988), 61–163.

⁷ Coşkun Ak, “Muḥibbi,” in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 2010; Hasan Kaplan, “Bir Yarışma Olarak Nazire: 16. Yüzyılda Ödüllü Bir Nazire Müsabakası,” *Kültürk*, no. 5 (2022): 42.

⁸ “TS.MA.e 759/116” (Istanbul), BOA.

⁹ Fatma Meliha Şen, “Kanuni Sultan Süleyman (Muḥibbi) ve Baki,” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları Dergisi* 28/18 (2006): 183–93.

the Sultan is noteworthy.¹⁰ Bākī, a renowned poet with a profound understanding of both Turkish and Persian poetry, asserts that he had never before encountered a poem of such sophistication. He goes on to describe the Sultan's use of expressions as matchless. Despite acknowledging the poem's unparalleled nature and the difficulty of composing a poetic response, Bākī chose to write two *naẓīres* because, as he states, “*a defeated player does not tire of the game*”. While Sultan Süleymān was undoubtedly a skilled poet, it is essential to recognize that Bākī's response is not directed at an ordinary poet, but at the *Padişāhı-ı Cihān* (Sultan of the World), the ruler of the Ottoman Empire, and his patron. In composing his reply, Bākī was clearly intent on pleasing his Sultan, a gesture that reflects the broader intellectual and cultural context of the early modern world, where poets, scholars, and intellectuals were often bound to imperial patronage. Bākī's response is a paradigm of this relationship, illustrating how poets navigated their roles within the structures of power and patronage, as evidenced in the letter under scrutiny.¹¹

Transcription

*Sultānum ḥazretlerinüñ ḥāk-ı cenāb-ı sa ‘ādet-nişāblarına çehre-i ḥuẓū ‘-ı mevzū ‘ kılınub
ed ‘īye-i izdiyād-i ‘ömr ü devlet-i rüz-efzūnları kemā-yenbağī
edā vü ifā olınduğdan şöñra ma ‘rüz-ı bende-i bī-miḳdār oldur ki devletlü ve sa ‘ādetlü
pādişāh ḥazretlerinüñ bu cāniblere iki dāne mümtāz ü müsteşnā ḡazel-i şerīfleri*

¹⁰ Kanuni Sultan Süleyman, *Muhibbî Dîvânı: Bütün Şiirleri (inceleme- Tenkitli Metin) = Dîwān-i Muhibbî = Dîvān-ı Muhibbî = The Collected Poems*, ed. Kemal Yavuz and Orhan Yavuz, 1. baskı, Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı yayınları- Edebiyat ve Sanat Serisi, 69. 18 (Fatih, İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2016).

<i>Hîç revā mîdur dilâ sen böyle cāy-ı ābda</i>	<i>‘Ömri zāyi ‘ eyleyüp bir dem kalasın ḥ ‘ābda</i>
<i>Āh kim deryā-yı eşkümdе bu çeşmüm merdümü</i>	<i>Sanasın bir keştîdür durmaz döner girdābda</i>
<i>Āfitāb-ı ḥüsnüñe baksam gözüm pür āb olur</i>	<i>Döstüm bir ḥāşşadur bu mihr-i ‘ālem-tābda</i>
<i>Deyr-i ḥüsnüñde gören yā kaşlarıñ kec-rā didi</i>	<i>Egrilik olsa ‘aceb mi kāfirī mihrābda</i>
<i>İy Muhibbî ‘ışık bir gevherdür eksük olmasun</i>	<i>Ḳıymetin bilür bunuñ yok kimse şeyḥ ü şābda,</i>

¹¹ Murat Umut Inan, “Imperial Patronage of Literature in the Ottoman World, 1400–1600,” in *The Empires of the Near East and India*, ed. Hani Khafipour (Columbia University Press, 2018), 493–504, <https://doi.org/10.7312/khafi7436-042>; Halil İnalçık, *Şair ve Patron* (Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2022).

vārid olub bu bende-i ḥaḳīr ‘acz u ḳuṣūr üzre bir dānesine iki nazīre dimek müyesser oldı
ḥaḳḳ budur ki ḡazel-i ṣerīfūñ eger maṭla ‘ı eger maḳṭa ‘ı
eger sâ ‘ir ebyāt-ı ṣerīfesi bî-miṣl ü bî-hemtā vāḳi ‘ olduğundan ḡayrı ḥuṣūṣen “egrilik olsa
‘aceb mi kāfirî miḥrābda”¹² beyt-i ṣerīfî vallāhü’l- ‘aẓīm
bir mertebe ser-āmed beytdür ki aṣla nazīre mümkün degildür bunca zamāndur ki eger
ṣu ‘ārā-yı ‘Acem eger ṣu ‘arā-yı Rūm miḥrāba müte ‘allıḳ niçe sözler söylemişlerdür
ḳaṭ‘an birisinüñ ḥāṭırına bunuñ gibi taṣarruf-ı ḥāṣṣ gelmemişdür bu ḳadar devāvīn
taṣannu ‘ idüb bunca iş ‘ār tetebbu ‘ itdüm ḥaḳḳ ‘alīm u dānādur ki
bu daḳīḳa-i enīḳāyı ṣimdi gördüm ḥaḳḳ subḥānehü ve te‘ālā sa‘ādetlü pādiṣāh
ḥazretlerinüñ ‘ömr ü devletlerin ziyāde ḳılıb müdāvāt-ı dünyevīye ve uhrevīyelerüñ ber-
āverde ber-ḥayr
eyleye bi-fazlihi ve iḥsānihi celle zikruhü bāḳī hemīṣe zāt-ı ṣerīf-i melek-ḥiṣāl-maḳrūn be-
ḥıfz ü ḥimāyet-i zi’l-celāl-bād inneḥü ra ‘ūf bi’l- ‘ayān

Min ‘abde’l-faḳīr

Bāḳī el-ḥaḳīr

Marginal note¹³

Eger niçün iki nazīre didüñ diyü su ‘āl buyrılursa
meṣḥūr meṣeldür “yeñilen oyuna toymaz” dirler
bu ma ‘ḳülece beyt düşe bolay ki diyü bulsam
bir ḳaç daḡı söyledüm ammā ḳanda müyesser olur ki
benüm gibi ḥaḳīr ol ṭabāḳa ṣi ‘r-i ṣerīfe nazīre dimege
ḳādir ola hemān bir taḳlīd-i maḥẓdur ki olnur

¹² This letter has been examined in the following studies, where this particular line has also been analyzed in detail; for further discussion, see, Sadettin Eğri, “Kanunî Sultan Süleyman (Muhibbî)’in Edebî Yönü,” in *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Sempozyum Kitabı*, ed. Cafer Çiftçi, Asım Yediyıldız, and Nadji Djekaba (Bursa, 2018), 49–63; Şen, “Kanuni Sultan Süleyman (Muhibbi) ve Baki.”

¹³ This marginal note was written by Bāḳī himself, added after completing the main body of his letter. As will be evident in the translated section, he uses this addition to explain why he composed two separate responses instead of one. The note appears on the right margin of the paper, written upside down, clearly in the same handwriting and with the same pen as the main text.

Post-Script¹⁴

*Bāḳī ḳuluñuzdan bu bendeñüze gelen mektûbdur
 ğazel-i dürer-bāruñuza ḥareminden iki nazîre dimiş
 ola ki birisi münāsib vāḳi ‘ola diyü benüm sulṭānum
 meşhûr meşeldür ki “yeñilen kişi oyuna doymaz” dirler ammā
 bir ğazeldür ki lā-nazîrdür hem ḳanda varsa müsellemdür*

Translation

After humbling myself before the exalted and blessed dominion of His Majesty, and offering supplications for the extension of His Majesty the Sultan’s life and the continued prosperity of his ever-thriving reign, I hereby respectfully present that His Majesty, the prosperous Sultan, has bestowed upon me two distinguished and exceptional noble poems. In light of my own humble position and limitations, this lowly servant has been granted the honor of composing two *nazîres* [poetic response] in reply to one of these works. It is evident that the verses of this noble poem, including its opening, its conclusion, and all other noble verses within it, are unparalleled and incomparable in their grandeur, particularly the verse “*egrilik olsa ‘aceb mi kāfirî miḥrābda.*” I swear by the Almighty that this verse occupies a place of the highest distinction, one that cannot be replicated. For a considerable period, numerous poets from both Persian and Rumi traditions have penned verses associated with the *miḥrāb*.¹⁵ However, none have conceived a line of such originality and singularity in their works. Over the years, I have composed many *divans* and written innumerable poems, but only now, by the grace of God, have I encountered such a

¹⁴ This section constitutes a postscript located at the top left corner of the document, aligned vertically along the left margin and written diagonally downward toward the center of the page. It appears to be written by another hand, most likely that of a court official or attendant responsible for receiving such letters and forwarding them to the sultan. As will be evident in the translated text below, this individual provided a brief summary of the letter’s contents

¹⁵ The *miḥrāb* is a niche set into the wall of a mosque that marks the qibla, the direction Muslims face in prayer, pointing toward the Ka’ba in Mecca. Beyond its architectural function, the mihrab carries profound symbolic meaning in poetry, where its arched form is often compared to the elegant curve of the beloved’s eyebrow.

remarkable expression. May God, the Glorious, prolong the life and increase the fortune of His Majesty, the prosperous Sultan. May He continue to grant divine support to him, both in this world and the hereafter, through His infinite grace and favor. Furthermore, may the noble and angelic qualities inherent in His blessed existence remain preserved and protected, for He is compassionate toward the visible world.

From the poor servant,
The humble, Bākī

Marginal Note

If it is asked, why did you compose two *naẓīres*?

There is a well-known proverb “*a defeated player does not tire of the game*”.

I thought perhaps I might come up with a couplet that fits in this manner,

And had I found more, I would have written them too — but how could it be possible?

For someone of such lowly rank as myself to compose a *naẓīre* to your noble poetry —

It is merely a pure imitation, nothing more.

Post-Script

This letter comes from your servant Bākī to this humble slave. He has composed two *naẓīres* to your pearl-laden *ġazel* from his own side, hoping that one of them might be found suitable.

O my Sultan!

It is a famous saying: “*a defeated player does not tire of the game.*” But this *ġazel* is truly without equal —Whoever possesses it is, in fact, the one defeated

Facsimile

T.C. BAŞBAKANLIK OSMANLI ARŞİVİ DAİRE BAŞKANLIĞI (BOA) ©

بانه قوه لافزه بوجهه کون کلن سلفو بربر
کونل ودر بار کون حوضه اف نهجه وسع
اولا که بر کسی منسوب واقع اولاهو کمال
مسئله سر مشهوره کیلی کنی هیزه دی راق
چی غنی لرکه لایطوره هم فتح داره مسکده

سلطان حضرت ملک خاک چاب سادات نصاب میری چهواضع موضع تلمذ اودید از دیار و دود و از انچه در کتب
ادوا و اعوانه و شکوه معروض بشد بقدر ارا و دلک دولت و سعادت و با دنا و فقر و غریب و یکی و دانه و خا و
وارد اولوب بوند و حقیر و حق و تصور و در دانه سنه انظر و یک میده اولدی حق بود که خذل و شکوه و سلاطین
اگر سادات میری و شل و و معا و افع اولد غدن غیري خصوصاً اگر یک کلاس عجبی و در خا و میری و عجب
بر مرتبه سر آمد بیت در که اصلا نظیر مکن و کلامی بونجی زمانه که اگر کس ای که روم و حربه شتایی و بونجی و کلامی
قطعا بدین سنگ خاطر نه بونک کبی عرف خاص کلامش بوند و او این تعفی ایوب بونک اشعار شتاع اقدم حق و علم و او را که
بود و قد انیده کلامی و در موم چانه و معالی سعادت و با دنا و فقر و غریب و یکی و دانه و خا و میری و عجب
ایله نبغله و اصله قبل کلامی باقی میده ذات کفری و کلامی تعریف و عجب و داندین زیاده و عیب و سادات و دود و از انچه در کتب

[illegible]

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All for a Silver Vase? Osman Hamdi Bey's Indignant Resignation Letter from the Ottoman Imperial Museum

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Context

In c. 2400 BCE, a ruler in southern Mesopotamia named En-metena ordered that a vase be fashioned and dedicated to Ningirsu, the god of war and agriculture. Mounted on a copper stand, the gleaming body of the vase was masterfully hammered from a single sheet of silver. It was decorated in two registers with fine, linear incisions of couchant calves arranged above a series of heraldic compositions featuring the lion-headed Imdugud bird, Ningirsu's symbol. As evidenced by the ekphrastic inscription in Sumerian wrapping around its mouth and referring to its "refined" silver, it was appreciated in its own time as an exquisite work.¹

About 4300 years later, an employee of the Ottoman Imperial Museum named Bedri Bey telegraphed his superiors from Nāşiriyya that a vase had been unearthed in archaeological excavations led by the French diplomat Ernest de Sarzec in Tello.² As the 1884 bylaw on antiquities established state ownership of all excavated material in principle,³ the vase arrived in Istanbul and was displayed in the Ottoman Imperial Museum. This marked the start of a new episode in this object's millennia-long adventures, which were soon to become entangled with inter- and intra-governmental controversies, the expansion of universal museums, and the use of antiquities as bargaining chips.

Right after the excavation of the vase, Sarzec called it his "best object," and when the time came for the customary division of finds, the French team leveraged the vase to secure the delivery of other important sculptures. Hence, the vase was not among the objects that were handed over to the French Embassy in April 1890. Still, Léon Heuzey, curator at the Louvre Museum, negotiated its temporary loan for restoration

¹ For the inscription, see Douglas Frayne, *Presargonic Period, 2700-2350 BC* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 208–9.

² BOA, MÜZ. ARK. 10/78 (17 Nisan 1304/29 April 1888).

³ For the full text of the 1884 bylaw, see "Âşâr-ı 'Atika Nizâmnâmesi," *Düstur*, 1. Tertib, 4. Zeyl (Dersaadet: Matba'a-yı 'Osmaniye, 1302/1886), 89–97 (in Ottoman Turkish); Hamit Zübeyr Koşay, M.E. Zarfî Orgun, Sadi Bayram, and Erdoğan Tan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Çağlarında Türk Kazı Tarihi*, vol. 1/2 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2013), 794–99 (in modern Turkish) and Nicole Chevalier, *La recherche archéologique française au moyen-orient: 1842-1947* (Paris: Editions recherche sur les civilisations, 2002), 497–500 (in French).

purposes and highlighted its art historical significance in publications. It became clear that the Vase of En-metena was a unique find—the earliest surviving silver cult vessel from ancient Mesopotamia.

Meanwhile in Istanbul, the director of the Ottoman Imperial Museum, Osman Hamdi Bey, was working toward the institutionalisation and expansion of the Museum and the School of Fine Arts. It was within this context that Vincent Scheil, an Assyriologist affiliated with the Imperial Museum informed Heuzey that the Ottoman side was open to trading antiquities from Tello—including “even the Vase of Entemena”—in exchange for books.⁴ Indeed, there was an ongoing conversation between Heuzey and Hamdi Bey about the vase, the fate of which, according to the former, was “in the hands of” the latter.⁵

About a year later, Scheil’s remark came close to fruition when Hamdi Bey informed the Ottoman Ministry of Education that he had received a proposal from the Louvre with regards to the vase. He added that he would support relinquishing this object because the Ottoman School of Fine Arts was in “extreme need” of copies of European paintings and architectural models to be used as a study collection, and “this vase, in terms of its quality, is not one of those antiquities considered to be of great rarity, nor, for that reason, extremely necessary to the Imperial Museum, one can see no inconvenience in accepting the proposal that was made.”⁶

⁴ Nicole Chevalier, “De Tello au Louvre: les aventures du vase d’Entéména,” in *Collectanea orientalia: histoire, arts de l’espace et industrie de la terre: études offertes en hommage à Agnès Spycket*, ed. Hermann Gasche and Bartel Hrouda (Neuchâtel and Paris: Recherches et publications, 1996), 78. The Louvre had already donated sixty-five volumes, alongside plaster casts of some statues in its collection, to the School of Fine Arts (see BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 10/83 (23 Eylül 1305/5 October 1889)). Hamdi Bey was circulating similar inquiries among other foreign teams as well. See, for example, Matthew Ismail, *Wallis Budge: Magic and Mummies in London and Cairo* (Kilkerran: Hardinge Simpole, 2011), 139.

⁵ Letter from Heuzey to Hamdi Bey, 25 January 1894, quoted in Henri Metzger, *La correspondance passive d’Osman Hamdi Bey* (Paris: Diffusion de Boccard, 1990), 94. Cf. Edhem Eldem, “An Ottoman Archaeologist Caught Between Two Worlds: Osman Hamdi Bey (1842–1910),” in *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia: The Life and Times of F.W. Hasluck, 1878–1920*, ed. David Shankland (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 145–46 and his important correction to Metzger’s transcription on p. 146, n. 1. See also Edhem Eldem, *Osman Hamdi Bey Sözlüğü* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2010), 272.

⁶ Chevalier, “De Tello au Louvre,” 78 (my translation).

This led to nothing short of an intra-governmental scandal. Hearing about the Louvre's proposal and Hamdi Bey's position on this matter, a royal decree was issued, ordering the formation of a special committee to decide on such proposals—a measure that would essentially undermine Hamdi Bey's authority.⁷ The decree also ordered the delivery of the vase to the Imperial Palace for examination by the sultan himself.

The letter published here is Hamdi Bey's response to this request, which concludes with his resignation attempt.⁸ His resignation apparently came as a surprise. The Minister of Education, Zühdü Pasha, tried hard and long “to appease his [Hamdi Bey's] broken heart,”⁹ and after much convincing, Hamdi Bey agreed to continue in his post. Stressing that the value of his contributions could easily be established by comparing the state of the Imperial Museum before and after he took office, Hamdi Bey concluded that the individuals who circulated those serious accusations were “immoral” and acted with “malice.”¹⁰ While this episode makes it clear that the fate of the vase was, in fact, not “in the hands of” Hamdi Bey, he did take steps to re-enforce his authority. Several months after this incident, he urged the Ministry of Education to inquire with the Palace to see when the vase was going to be sent back to its “dedicated space” in the museum galleries. The response to this inquiry was terse: the vase was to stay with the sultan.¹¹

This impasse was resolved rather abruptly on 8 February 1896. The French ambassador Paul Cambon was invited by Abdülhamid II to a long reception—an “infernal din,” as Cambon later described it—which did have one silver lining: “I asked the Sultan on behalf of the Louvre for the famous silver vase from Tello, of which Mr. Heuzey dreams night and day, and His Majesty gave it to me.”¹² It was as simple as that. A few weeks later, the vase was received in Paris by Heuzey himself, who

⁷ BOA, İ.HUS. 33/66 (3 Kânûn-i Şânî 1310/15 January 1895).

⁸ BOA, MF.MKT. 247/1.3 ([n.d.] Kânûn-i Şânî 1310/[n.d.] January 1895. This letter must have been written between 16–21 Kânûn-i Şânî 1310 / 28 January–2 February 1895.

⁹ BOA, A.MKT.MHM. 534/13.2 (23 Kânûn-i Şânî 1310/4 February 1895).

¹⁰ BOA, MF. MKT. 247/1.8 (8 Şubat 1310/20 February 1895).

¹¹ BOA, MF.MKT. 247/1.9 (27 Mart 1311/8 April 1895); BOA, BEO. 601/45029.2 (30 Mart 1311/11 April 1895); BOA, MF.MKT. 247/1.11 (3 Nisan 1311/15 April 1895).

¹² Paul Cambon, *Correspondance. 1870-1924* (Paris: Grasset, 1940), 1:401. See also Cambon's thank-you note dated 13 February 1896 (BOA, Y.PRK.TŞF. 4/55).

worriedly wondered if it “has had to suffer too much for eighteen months at the hands of the Messieurs du S  rail.”¹³ It was then placed prominently in “Le Salle de Sarzec” at the Louvre in a dedicated glass case, and remains one of the most celebrated pieces in the Mesopotamian galleries.

By violating the regulations that he himself sanctioned, Abd  lhamid II not only did *not* return the vase to the Ottoman Imperial Museum, but he went so far as to “re-turn” it to a *different* museum, and not even in exchange for books or architectural models. Such special arrangements, initiated by the sultan or at times by Osman Hamdi Bey himself, were part and parcel of the politics of archaeology and museology in the late Ottoman Empire.¹⁴ In this case, the sultan’s gesture, showcasing his incontestable authority to his own subjects—Hamdi Bey included—as well as foreign dignitaries, rendered the protracted intra-governmental controversy and Hamdi Bey’s resignation nothing but a footnote.

Transcription

M  ze-i H  m  y  n

numro

Ma ‘  rif ne   ret-i cel  lesine

Devletl   efendim   azretleri

M  ze-i h  m  y  na gelen   s  r-ı ‘at  kan  n birer bah  ne ile Avrupa m  zelerine g  nderilmekde oldu   ve ez-c  mle bir bu  uk sene mu  addem // bulunmu   olan bir s  m destini  n ba ‘  zı antika modelleriyle m  b  delesini mute  savver bulundu   istihb  r kılınm  ş oldu  ndan // z  kr olunan destini  n man  z  r-ı ‘  l   buyurulmak   zre takd  mi ve bir   omisyon te  kiliyle ba ‘d-ez-  n o   omisyonu  n ma  za  ası // olmadık  a bu mi  ill   mu ‘  mel  t  n icr  ’ olunmaması   eref-  ud  r buyurulan ir  de-i seniyye-i   azret-i   il  fet-

¹³ Letter from Heuzey to the French Ministry of Education, 23 February 1896. This letter is quoted in full in Chevalier, “De Tello au Louvre,” 80 and partially in Maurice Pillet, “Hamdi-Bey et la Mission de Sarzec    Tello,” *Revue Arch  ologique* 46 (July–December 1955), 7.

¹⁴ Zeynep   elik, *About Antiquities: Politics of Archaeology in the Ottoman Empire* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016). Other famous examples of Abd  lhamid II’s gifts include the sculptures of Ephesus presented to Franz Joseph I of Austria and a section of the Mschatta gate given to Kaiser Wilhelm I of Prussia.

penāhī muḳteẓā-yı celīlesinden // bulundığı mābeyn-i hümāyūn-ı mülūkāne baş kitābet-i celīlesinden bā-teẓkire-i ḥuṣūṣīye vāḳi‘ olan tebliğ üzerine bā-teẓkire-i sāmīye // iş‘ār buyurılıb meẓkūr komisyon derdest teşkīl bulunduğundan mebhūsün-‘anh destiniñ sür‘at-ı tesyārı // şeref-vārid olan seksen toḳuz numarolu ve 16 kânūn-i ṣānī sene [1]310 tārīḥli teẓkire-i ‘alīye-i cenāb-ı neẓāret-penāhīlerine emr ü beyān // buyurulmuş ve zikr olunan desti müze-i hümāyūn mu‘āvinī sa‘ādetlü Ḥalīl Bege tevdī‘en irsāl ü tāḳdīm kılınmış // olduğunu ve müze-i hümāyūna gelen āṣār-ı ‘atīḳanıñ birer bahāne ile Avrupa müzelerine gönderilmekte olduğına // dā‘ir ‘ācizlerine vāḳi‘ olan isnādı hīç bir vāḳt ḳabūl idemeyeceğimden bu günden i‘tibāren müze-i hümāyūna // devām itmekte ma‘zūr bulunduğımı ‘arz iderim ol-bābda emr ü fermān ḥazret-i men-lehü’l-emriñdir

fi Şa‘bān sene [1]312 ve fi Kānūn-i Ṣānī sene [1]310

bende

Ḥamdī

Translation

Imperial Museum

number

To the Exalted Ministry of Education

Dear illustrious sir,

It was communicated by the exalted Chief Secretary of the Imperial Private Apartments of His Majesty to the Grand Vizieriate that because it has been said that antiquities arriving at the Imperial Museum are being sent to European museums under various pretenses, and that a silver vessel which was found one and a half years ago may be exchanged for some models and copies,¹⁵ an imperial decree of His Majesty the Caliph ordered the presentation of the aforementioned vessel for the observation of His Majesty, as well as the formation of a commission, without the mandate of which these sorts of dealings are no longer to be carried out.

¹⁵ lit. “antique models,” most likely referring to copies of paintings, architectural models, and casts.

As this commission has been formed, the speedy delivery of the aforementioned vessel was ordered in the ministerial note dated 16 Kānūn-i Sānī [1]310 [28 February 1895] and numbered 89. Accordingly, the said vessel was dispatched and presented by the Assistant Director of the Imperial Museum, Halil Bey.¹⁶

Since I could never accept the accusation of sending antiquities that arrived at the Imperial Museum to European museums under any pretense, I respectfully submit that I must excuse myself from continuing at the Imperial Museum from this day forth. In that regard, the command belongs to him who commands all.

January/February 1895

Your servant,

Hamdi

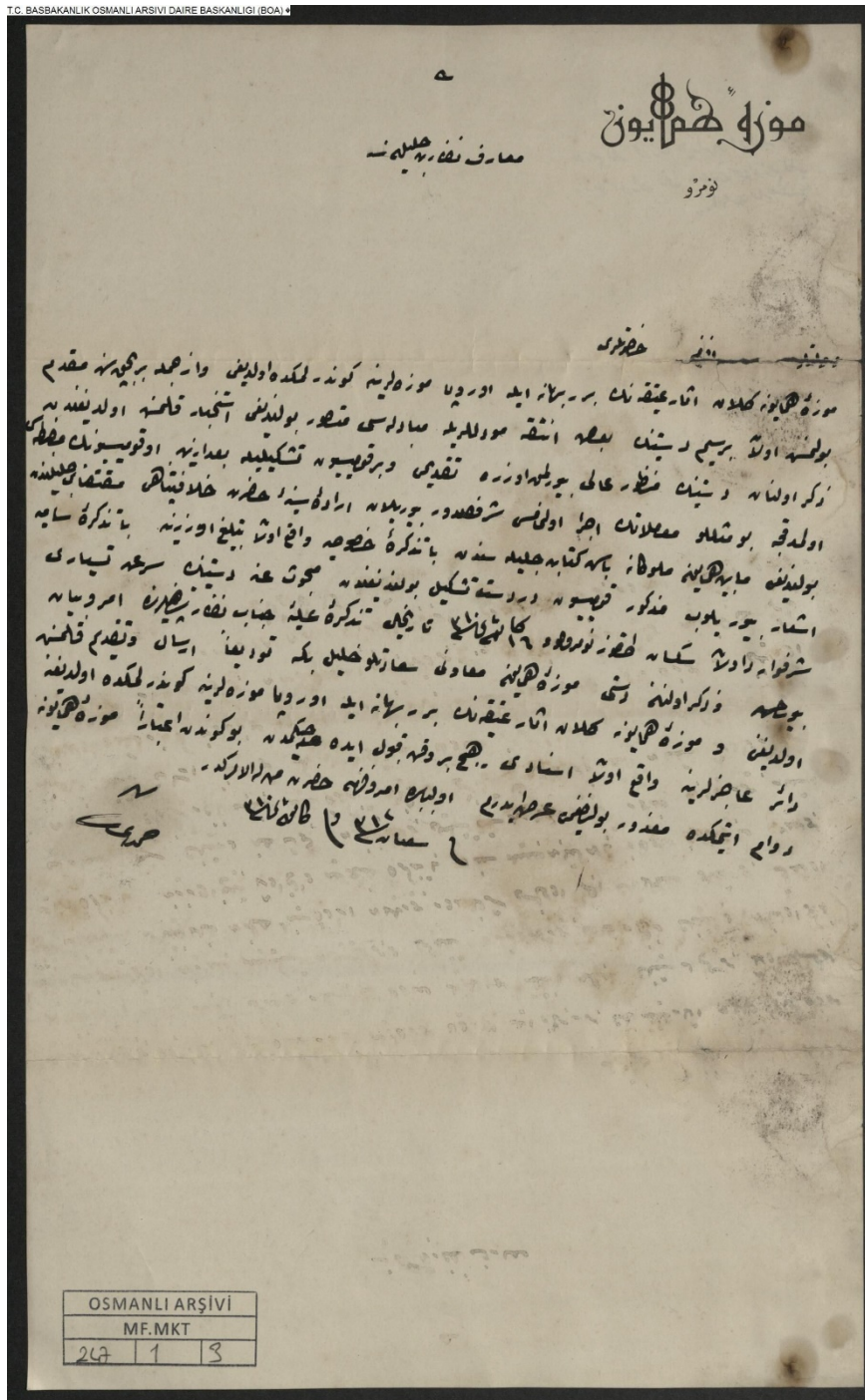
¹⁶ Halil (Edhem) Bey was the younger brother of Osman Hamdi Bey and succeeded him as the director of the Ottoman Imperial Museum in 1910.

Illustration



Vase of En-metena, c. 2400 BCE; silver (vase) and copper alloy (stand); H. 30.4 cm; diam. 10 cm (neck); 18 cm (body); excavated at Tello, Iraq. Musée du Louvre, AO 2674.
[Photo](#): Musée du Louvre, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Facsimile



MF.MKT.00247.00001.003

Osman Hamdi Bey's resignation letter, addressed to the Ministry of Education. BOA, MF.MKT. 247/1.3 ([n.d.] Kānūn-i Sānī 1310/[n.d.] January 1895).

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‘El-Müfti bi-Mahruseti İstanbul’: Şeyhülislam Alaeddin Çelebi Ali el-Arabi’s Exceptional Title in Full

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Context

An Exceptional Chief Mufti

Unlike provincial muftis, Ottoman *şeyhülislams* did not add their rank or place of office to their signature. The only known exception is Alaeddin Çelebi Ali el-Arabi (1495 – 1496), whose signature, according to Uriel Heyd, reads ‘*Alī al-‘Arabī al-muftī*’, clearly indicating his rank (*‘el-müfti’*).¹ El-Arabi’s *fetva* presented here from the archives of the Franciscan monastery of Fojnica in Central Bosnia appears to be the only one known which also includes the *şeyhülislam*’s place of office.

Ali el-Arabi’s *fetva* is the earliest document of its kind to be found in the Fojnica AT collection, bearing the most complete signature of this Chief Mufti so far identified. According to the 1916 *İlmiye Salnamesi*, Ali el-Arabi was from Aleppo and came to Istanbul having completed his studies in his place of origin, only to continue learning under Molla Gürânî (Chief Mufti between 1480 and 1488)² and Molla Hızır Beg. His first appointment at the *Darülhadis* in Edirne as an assistant to Molla Fahreddin-i Acemi (‘the Persian’ or ‘Stranger’)³ was followed by a position at the *medrese* in Kaplıca. Around this time he became a follower of Şeyh Alaeddin of the Halvetiye order of dervishes (hence Alaeddin Çelebi). When this *şeyh* was banned to Manisa in western Anatolia, he too was exiled for a while, after which time he received a position at one of the prestigious Eight Colleges (*Semaniye*) in Istanbul,⁴ where his salary was to be reduced from 80 to 50 *akçe* daily wages later in the reign of Sultan Mehmed Fatih, but his remuneration was restored on becoming Chief Mufti of Istanbul in March/April 1495, only to die a year later. – It is quite remarkable that an original *fetva* should have survived intact in the Fojnica ar-

¹ Uriel Heyd, “Some Aspects of the Ottoman Fetvā”, in: *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* XXXII (London, 1968), p. 35 – 56; here: p. 43, n. 74 (referring to *İlmiye Salnamesi*, p. 340).

² About his education and career (with facsimiles of two of his *fetvas*) see *İlmiye Salnamesi*. Meşihat-i Celile-i İslamiyenin Ceride-i Resmiyesine Mülhakdır. Birinci defa. Meşihat-i ulya mektubcılığı marifetiyle tertib olunmuştur. Darü’l-hilafeti’l-aliye – matbaa-i amire [İstanbul], 1334/ 1916, p. 334f.

³ For Molla Fahreddin (yet without facsimiles of his *fetvas*) see *İlmiye Salnamesi*, p. 327f.

⁴ On these and other colleges see Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300 – 1650. The Structure of Power* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 227 – 237; Nathalie Clayer, “Madrasa”, in: François Georgeon, Nicolas Vatin, Gilles Veinstein (eds.), *Dictionnaire de l’Empire Ottoman. Avec la collaboration d’Elisabetta Borromeo* (Paris: Fayard, 2015.), p. 736 – 738.

chives in Central Bosnia when the Chief Mufti in question held this office for only such a short term.⁵ Apart from the two specimens illustrated in *İlmiye Salnamesi*, no other (complete) originals of his *fetvas* appear to have been accounted for in any of the collections of original *fetvas* kept in Istanbul – at least none seem to be mentioned as such by Özen.⁶ The specimen of one of his *fetvas* in a similar collection of *fetvas* in Belediye Library, all glued onto the pages of a bound volume, has like most of the others missing its *davet*,⁷ but has the Chief Mufti's rank ('*el-müfti*') indicated in his signature. Fojnica AT 9a – 1683, however, has more to show.

Commentary

As mentioned before, two more of Ali el-Arabi's *fetvas* are given in facsimile in *İlmiye Salnamesi*,⁸ both of them with a 'request' or *davet* which closely resembles the 'request' on top of the Fojnica specimen. Across these three examples, no significant variation can be observed, which is at variant with the practice of most other Chief Muftis who tend to use the same formula, but within differently shaped *davets*. Furthermore, unlike all the *fetvas* illustrated here issued by the earlier Chief Muftis, the first example given in the Almanach contains a four-line reply which takes as much space on the sheet as does the question, just like in the Fojnica example. Another feature that Fojnica AT 9a – 1683 has in common with the published specimens, especially the second example, is the way how the signature is introduced by the phrase 'Wrote it ...' (*harrerehü*) which seemingly lacks its final 'r', yet the preceding 'r' is closely attached to the 'h' as to be almost invisible. The rendering of his name as given in the signature on our Fojnica *fetva* is virtually identical with that on the illustrated pieces, with the final 'i' extending upwards, with a

⁵ The facsimiles of only two of his *fetvas* are illustrated in the Almanach, together with a brief summary of his biography: *İlmiye Salnamesi*, p. 339 - 340. The possibility of his having issued *fetvas* before his official term as Chief Mufti is not followed up here. Yet it is known that some muftis of Istanbul (such as the saintly mystic Abdülkerim el-Kadiri [died 1544/45]) who never achieved the position of Chief Muftis were granted by Sultan Süleyman the authority to provide questioners with *fetvas*: Uriel Heyd, "Some Aspects", p. 45f.

⁶ See his chapter 'a. Orijinal Fetvalar (Fetâvâ-yı Yapışdırma' in Şükrü Özen, "Osmanlı Döneminde Fetva Literatürü", in: *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, Cilt 3, Sayı 5 (Istanbul, 2005), p. 249 – 378 (with comprehensive further reading); here: p. 258 – 262.

⁷ İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Atatürk Kitaplığı, Muallim Cevdet K 576, p. 6. I am grateful to my colleague Benjamin Weineck for having provided with a digital copy of this volume.

⁸ See p. 340.

small pendant or flag ‘blown’ left from its top. There can be no doubt that our Fojnica piece is an original *fetva* by Chief Mufti Ali el-Arabi, and an especially important one as it does contain details which all the published examples do not.

Following the Chief Mufti’s name, the title (*‘el-müfti*) had already been recognized as his by Heyd.⁹ Yet Ali el-Arabi’s full title, as given in Fojnica AT 9a – 1683, clearly reads: *el-müfti bi-mahruseti İstanbul* (‘mufti in the well-protected [city of] Istanbul’), followed by the (slightly modified) short prayer. This would be the only case known where a Chief Mufti of Istanbul, just like a provincial mufti,¹⁰ would give his full title by indicating his rank but also his place of office, both following after his personal name (see below for more detail).

Such evidence from one of the Franciscan archives of Central Bosnia would once again highlight the significance of these unusually large deposits of original Ottoman documents for the field of Ottoman Studies in general, and Ottoman palaeography and diplomatics in particular.

Transcription

Fojnica AT 9a – 1683

Recto:

[Davet:] *Allāhümme ihdinā’s-şirāte’s-şevāb*

- (1) *Bu mes’ele beyânında e’imme-i Hanefiyyeden cevāb ne vecihledür ki*
- (2) *Zeyd zimmī mürd olub zimmiler cem’ olub akrabasıyla bir zimmîyi*
- (3) *ihtiyār idüb esbābını çıkardub yazdursalar yazılınca ‘Amr papas*
- (4) *âyin-i bâtılası üzre Zeyd zimmînün üzerinde İncil okusa esbāba*
- (5) *papas yapışmasa kâdî şoñra papasa ben yazacağım esbābını iznsiz*
- (6) *sen yazmışsın diyü hakāret idüb siyāset veyā cerīmelemek istese*
- (7) *şer’an kâdir midür beyân buyurub müşāb olasız*

⁹ See above.

¹⁰ “While the Shaykh al-Islāms did not add their rank or office, the provincial muftis used to indicate theirs”. Heyd, “Some Aspects”, p. 43.

- (8) *El-cevāb Allāhu a'lem*
 (9) *Ḳādir degildür elbette bu maḳūle kimse mürd olduḡında eger*
 (10) *ḳoñşularından eger yanında ḥāzır olanlardan bir ḳaç kimsenüñ*
 (11) *ma 'rifetiyle meyyitüñ mālin ve menālin görüb ve esbābın zabṭ*
 (12) *idüb görmek şer 'idür iden mezkūr papas itmedügiyle¹¹*
 (13) *mu 'āḥez olmaz ihtiyāt eylemişdür*
 (14) *ḥarrerehü el- 'abdü'l-faḳīr 'Alī el- 'Arabī*
 (15) *el-müftī bi-maḥrūseti İstanbul*
 (16) *'afā'llāhu ta 'ālā anh*

Verso:

In Bosančica letters:

Fetiv da može fratar Boga moliti i misu govoriti gdi ga zovu (Fetva [permitting] the friar to pray to God and perform mass wherever they may call him)

In Latin script:

Fetva da kadia more oglobiti fratra ako bi izpiso stvari koga god umiruchega od raje (Fetva [confirming] that the cadi must subject a friar to a fine if he makes a list of the belongings of any deceased *reaya*)

Translation

[‘Request’:] O God, guide us along the straight path!

[Question:] What is the reply of the Hanafi teachers concerning this [i.e. the following] problem?

While [as is common practice] after the death of zimmi Zeyd the zimmi come together, choosing one of their ranks to take out his belongings and have them recorded together with his relatives – if [however] during the recording Amr the monk (*papas*) recites the Gospels over zimmi Zeyd according to his void rites, [but] without taking hold of his

¹¹ Remark of the editors: Despite the suggestion of both reviewers to read *itdügiyle*, the author insists on adhering to his reading.

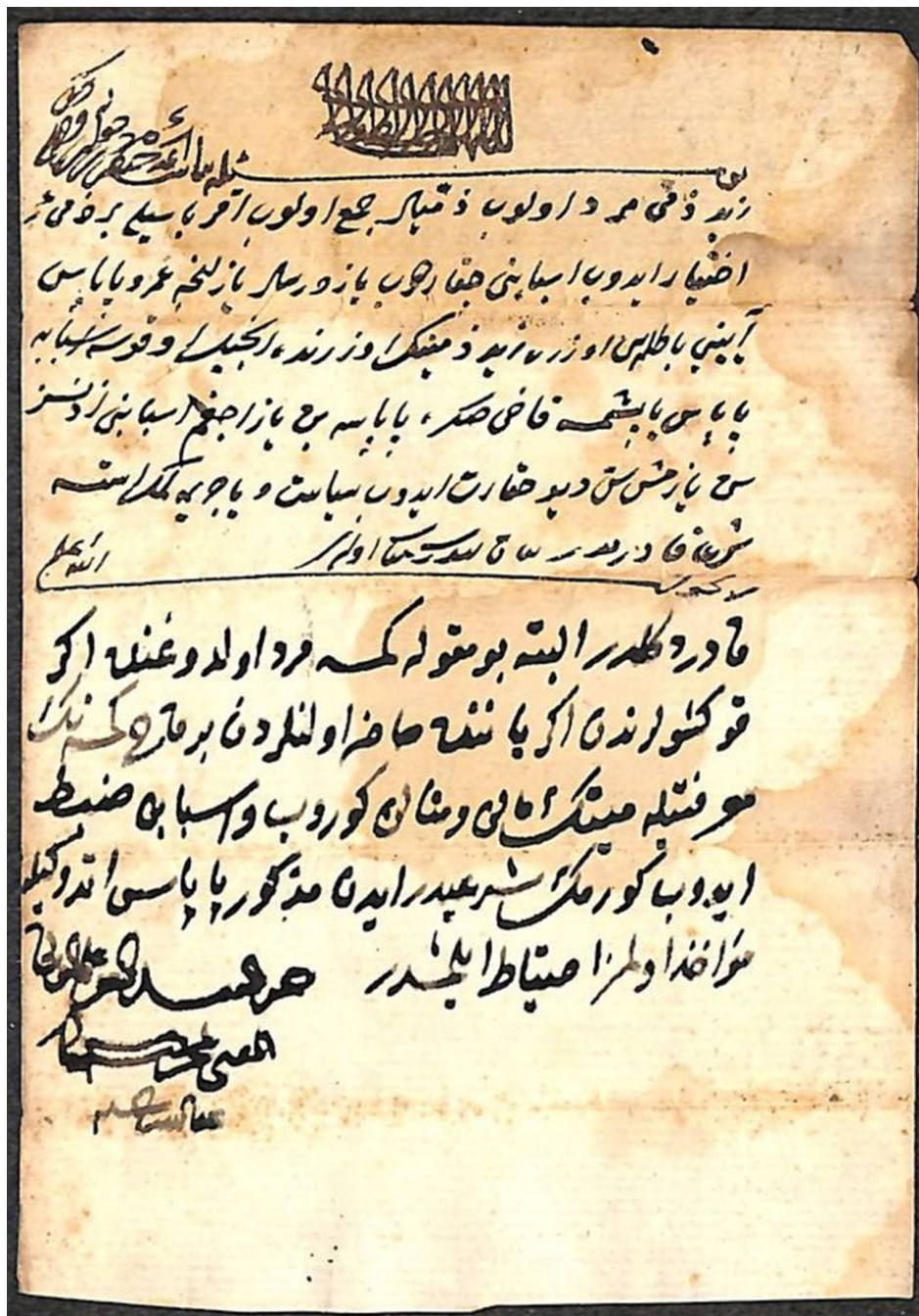
belongings, [so that] later on the *cadi* is contemptuous towards the monk saying: 'It's me who shall do the recording! You registered his belongings without permission!' [all this] with the intention of making him liable to punishment and fines – is he [the *cadi*] capable of this according to Sharia law? May this be explained and may you find reward [with God]!

Reply: He is not capable [of it]. Certainly, when such an individual dies, the lawful [procedure] is to inspect the belongings of the deceased in the presence of either a number of people from among his neighbours or those present by his side, and to take hold of his belongings. [But] the said monk must not be reprimanded for not having done what is [commonly] done. He was being cautious.

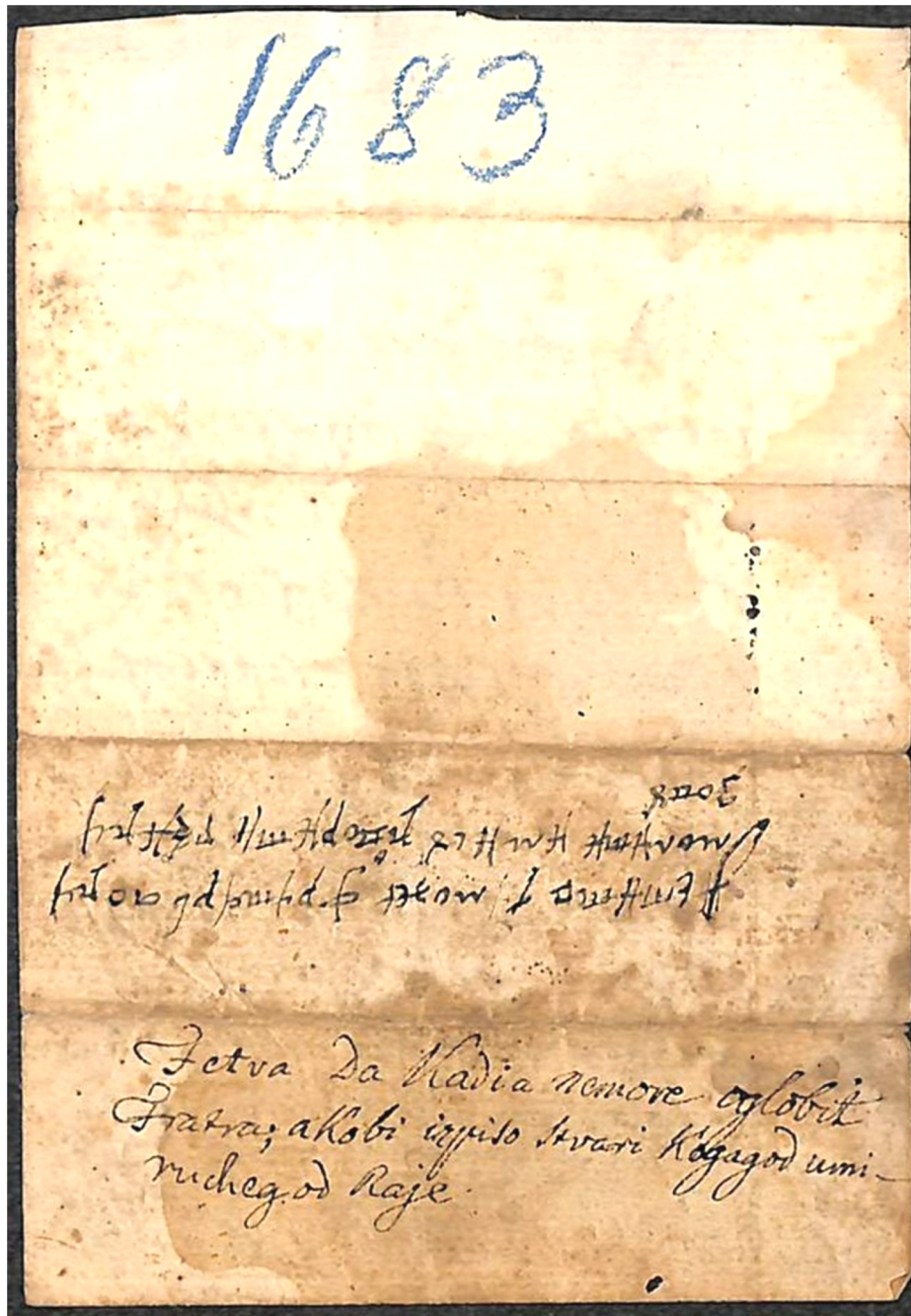
[God's] wretched servant composed this, [Alaeddin Çelebi] Ali el-Arabî, *müfti* in the well-protected [residence of] Istanbul

Facsimilia

a) The Fetva



b) Text in Bosančica and Latin letters



Fojnica Monastery, Bosnia and Herzegovina, AT 9a - 1683 verso

c) Close-Up of Signature & How to Read it



Fojnica Monastery AT 1683 (detail): Full signature with name, rank and place of office of Şeyhülislam Ali el-Arabi: *ḥarrerehü el-‘abdü’l-faḳīr ‘Alī el-‘Arabī / el-müftī bi-maḥrūseti İstanbul / afā’llāhu ta‘ālā ‘anh*

Dispelling Sorcery and Glad Tidings: Two Recipes and a Note from Şeyh Ğālib Dede

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Context

The practice of performing or commissioning sorcery is considered one of the gravest sins in Islām and is strictly prohibited and condemned. The Holy Qur'ān states that those who engage in sorcery shall have no share in the hereafter and emphasizes the necessity of seeking refuge in Allāh from their harm.¹ Prophet Muḥammed underscored that sorcery is among the seven gravest sins.² Likewise, just as he sought divine protection from every form of evil, he also sought refuge in Allāh to safeguard himself from the effects of sorcery. In this context, he would frequently recite *Sūrah al-Felāk*, *Sūrah an-Nās*, and *Āyah al-Kürsī* for protection.³

Evliyā Çelebi narrates that the Prophet Muḥammed, upon realizing that he had been afflicted by sorcery, followed the advice of the Rāhib Baḥīrā and purified himself in a river in Acre ('Akkā), invoking the name of Allāh. Through this act, he was ultimately freed from the spell. This account highlights the convergence of three significant elements in breaking sorcery: the recitation of Qur'ānic verses, prayer, and water. In this regard, the role of water as an instrument of physical and spiritual purification is undoubtedly a crucial aspect. These properties have rendered water a frequently employed medium in countering magic. Accordingly, various methods – such as reciting verses over water, immersing objects inscribed with Qur'ānic verses or prayers into water, and transferring spiritual energy into it – have been utilized with the aim of ensuring afflicted individuals' safe deliverance from the effects of sorcery.⁴

The religious and mystical background of sorcery has also engaged Sufi poets. Some Sufi leaders, who led various tariqas, devised different recipes that combined the elements of Qur'ānic verses or prayers and water, aiming to heal their disciples afflicted by sorcery or incurable diseases. One such Sufi poet was Mevlānā Celālüddīn-i Rūmī (1207-1273), the spiritual architect of the Mevleviyye, whose life, memories, and

¹ *Sūrah al-Baqara*, 2/102; *Sūrah al-Felāk*, 113/4.

² Buḥārī, *Veşâyā*, 23; *Hudūd*, 44.

³ Buḥārī, *Vekālet*, 10; *Fezā'ilü'l-Ḳur'ān*, 10.

⁴ Gülay Karaman, *Klasik Türk Edebiyatında Sihir*, PhD Thesis, Kocaeli University, Institute of Social Sciences, 2015, 342-343.

works have left a profound legacy. According to Aḥmed Eflākī's (d. 1360) *Menākıbu'l-‘Arıfîn*, Mevlânâ Celālüddîn-i Rûmî cured a disciple suffering from malaria by casting a prayer into water.⁵

Şeyḫ Ğâlib Dede (1757-1799), recognized as the last great poet of Ottoman literature, is also among the Mevlevî poets who provided remedies for repelling sorcery through two recipes that I have been able to identify. In the second *zahriyye*⁶ folio of the manuscript of *Hüsn ü ‘Aşk*, which Şeyḫ Ğâlib prepared as a draft in his own handwriting and is currently cataloged in the Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Hâlet Efendi Eki, no. 171,⁷ one can find a recipe for “warding off sorcery” written by the poet himself (Transcription I). This recipe essentially serves as a *fevâ'id* record (useful notes) authored by Şeyḫ Ğâlib. The first recipe, written with the intention of protecting people from sorcery, consists of reciting *Āyah al-Kürsî* and *Sūrah al-‘Aşr* into a cup of water in a specific order and with a number of repetitions. Upon fulfilling the necessary conditions, the individual applying the recipe is instructed to touch a wall or the ground without wiping their hands on their garments. Şeyḫ Ğâlib's recipe integrates three key elements: “the protective power”⁸ of *Āyah al-Kürsî*, the emphasis

⁵ Aḥmed Eflākī: *Ariflerin Menkıbeleri*. Translated by Tahsin Yazıcı. İstanbul: Kabalcı Yayınları, 2006, 249.

⁶ *zahriyye* is the name given to the front side of the leaf where the main text begins, which usually contains the records of the owner of the book in manuscript books. Adam Gacek, *Arapça Elyazmaları İçin Rehber*, translated by Ali Benli and M. Cüneyt Kaya, İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2017, 174.

⁷ For the content of this copy of *Hüsn ü ‘Aşk*, prepared by Şeyḫ Ğâlib, the following sources can be consulted: Şeyḫ Ğâlib: *Hüsn ü Aşk*, edited by Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2019; Mehmet Akif Gözütok, “Yazımdan Yayıma *Hüsn ü Aşk*’ın Serencâmı - I.” *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi (TUDED)* 60, no. 1 (2020): 263-288; Mehmet Akif Gözütok, *Yazımdan Yayıma *Hüsn ü Aşk*’ın Serencâmı - II.* *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 30, no. 2 (2020): 531-562.

⁸ 2/255: “Allāh! There is no god worthy of worship except Him, the Ever-Living, All-Sustaining. Neither drowsiness nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who could possibly intercede with Him without His permission? He fully knows what is ahead of them and what is behind them, but no one can grasp any of His knowledge-except what He wills to reveal. His Seat encompasses the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of both does not tire Him. For He is the Most High, the Greatest.” (*Sūrah al-Bakara/Āyah al-Kürsî*) Mustafa Khattab, *The Clear Quran*, <https://quran.com/2> (Access Date: March 31, 2025).

on “grave loss”⁹ (*hüsr/hüsrân*) in the second verse of *al-‘Aşr*, and the physical and spiritual purifying/permeating properties of water, all converging on a shared foundation.

Şeyh Ğālib’s second recipe for protection against sorcery is found in the first *zahriyye* folio of a manuscript copy of *Tercüme-i Şevāķib*, cataloged in the Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Hâlet Efendi Eki, no. 47 (Transcription II). This recipe, like the first, is a *fevā’id* record penned in Ğālib Dede’s own handwriting. In this second recipe, the poet exclusively employs *Āyah al-Kürsī*, this time accompanied by seventy radish seeds. While the first recipe requires the water recited over to be consumed, in the second recipe, one is supposed to do *ğusl*¹⁰ washing with water over which *Āyah al-Kürsī* has been recited and purified. Furthermore, it is stated that this method has been confirmed through experience.

Above Şeyh Ğālib’s second recipe, yet another *fevā’id* record is encountered (Transcription III). In this note, Ğālib Dede announces the date on which he became the sheikh of Galata Mevlevihanesi. The exact date when Ğālib became the sheikh of Galata Mevlevihanesi is explicitly documented in *Tezkire-i Şu‘arā-yı Mevleviyye*, authored by his disciple and close companion, Esrār Dede.¹¹ However, the fact that this information was personally conveyed by the poet elevates Şeyh Ğālib Dede’s *fevā’id* to the status of a valuable historical document.

Finally, when considering the significance of Şeyh Ğālib’s *fevā’id* records, the recipes he composed for repelling sorcery, in particular, are seen as reflecting a different aspect of his persona, distinct from his identity as a poet. The third record, in which he

⁹ 103/1-3: “By the passage of time! Surely humanity is in *grave loss*, except those who have faith, do good, and urge each other to the truth, and urge each other to perseverance.” (*Sūrah al-‘Aşr*) Mustafa Khattab, *ibid*, <https://quran.com/103> (Access Date: March 31, 2025).

¹⁰ The term *ğusl*, which literally means “to wash” in dictionary definitions, is used in Islamic terminology to refer to a religious obligation that entails washing the entire body thoroughly, ensuring no dry area remains, as a required act of purification. Mehmet Şener, “Gusl”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, İstanbul, 1996, 14/213-214.

¹¹ “... Çelebi Elhâc Muḥammed Emîn Efendi’müzün bi’l-fi’l irâde-i ‘inâyetleriyle Ğalaṭa’ya şeyḫ olmaları emîr-nâmeleri şudûr ve külâh-ı sa‘âdet-i destgâhları destâr-ı gîsû-dâr-ı meşîḫatle tevsîm olup biñ iki yüz beş Şevvâl-i Şerîf’inün toḫuzıncı cum‘a irtesi günü (9 Şevvâl 1205) mesned-i irşâda iclâs olındılar.” Esrâr Dede: *Tezkire-i Şu‘arā-yı Mevleviyye*, edited by İlhan Genç, Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2000, 383.

notes his appointment as the sheikh of the Galata Mevlevihanesi, vividly illustrates the joy he experienced at that moment.

Transcription I (Recipe I)

Li-def‘i’s-sihr

āyetü’l-kürsī ‘aded 1

sūretü’l- ‘Aşr ‘aded 3

yine āyetü’l-kürsī ‘aded 1

sūretü’l- ‘Aşr ‘aded 4

yine āyetü’l-kürsī ‘aded 1

bir fincān şuya okuyub içilür

içüren ve içen ellerini esbābına sürmeye dīvāra yāḥud toprağa [süre]¹²

m¹³

Translation I

For dispelling sorcery,

one should recite *Āyah al-Kürsī* over a cup of water once,

followed by *sūrah al- ‘Aşr* three times,

then *Āyah al-Kürsī* once more,

sūrah al- ‘Aşr four times,

and finally *Āyah al-Kürsī* one last time.

[All these] are prayed over a cup of water and drunk.

Those who offer and drink the water should not rub their hands on their garments but a wall or the ground.

Completed.

¹² Şeyḫ Gālib, *Ḥüsn ü ‘Aşk*, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Hālet Efendi Eki, no. 171, (Şeyḫ Gālib Dede’s handwriting), II^p.

¹³ In manuscripts, the letter *mīm* (m/م) at the end of texts signifies the end of the text in question. This letter is an abbreviation of the expression *temme/temmet* (completed/finished). Adam Gacek, *ibid*, 71.

Transcription II (Recipe II)

Āyetü'l-kürsī 'aded 70

turb tohmı 'aded 70

her birine bir āyetü'l-kürsī okuyub

bir miqdār şuyla bir toprak tencerede kaynadub

ba 'de't-taşfiyye tohmı atub

şuyı bir gügüm şuya katub

anuñla ğusl olına def'-i sihr içün mücerrebdür¹⁴

Translation II

Āyah al-Kürsī should be recited 70 times over 70 radish seeds,
these seeds are then boiled in a clay pot with a certain amount of water,
after the radish seeds are removed
the water is added to a jug,
the *ğusl* bath is then performed using this water.
It is confirmed by experience to dispel sorcery.

Transcription III (Glad Tidings)

*Biñ iki yüz beş senesi şevvāl-i şerīfün toközuncı sebt günü Ğalaṭa meşīḥatiyle müşerref
olduḳ*

erenler sırrıyla şafāsıyla be-kām eyleye

āmīn

fī 9 şevvāl 1205¹⁵ (June 11, 1791)

¹⁴ Derviş Maḥmūd-ı Meṣnevī-h^vān, *Tercüme-i Şevākīb*, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Hālet Efendi Eki, no. 47, I^a. This recipe was written in Şeyḫ Ğalīb Dede's handwriting. However the person who wrote the copy of *Tercüme-i Şevākīb* is İbn Hızır Elḥāc Muḥammed al-Ḳonevī.

Translation III

On Saturday, 11 June 1791,
we were honored with the title of sheikh of Galata (Mevlevihanesi),
may the saints be blessed with divine secret and delight.
Amen.

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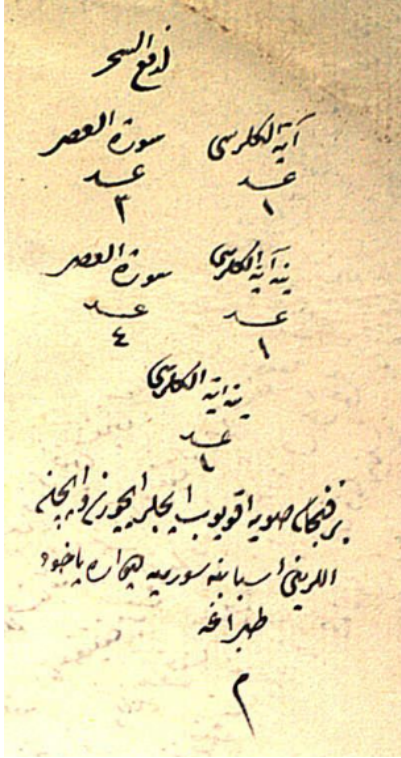
¹⁵ *Ibid.*, I^a.

Şeyh Gâlib: *Hüsn ü 'Aşk*. Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Hâlet Efendi Eki, no. 171.

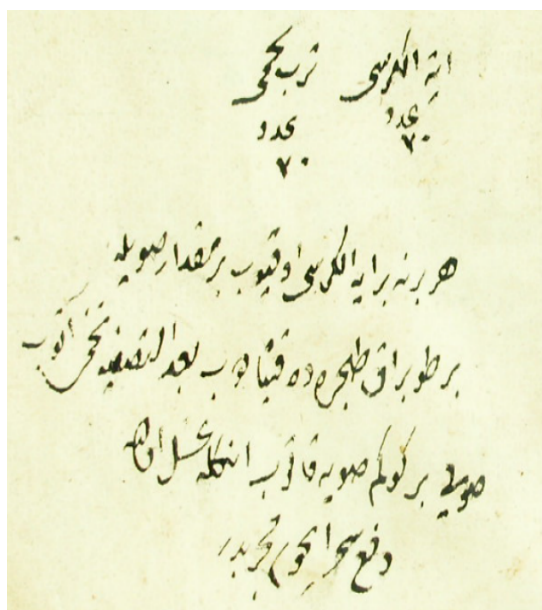
Şeyh Gâlib: *Hüsn ü Aşk*. Edited by Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı. İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2019.

Facsimilia

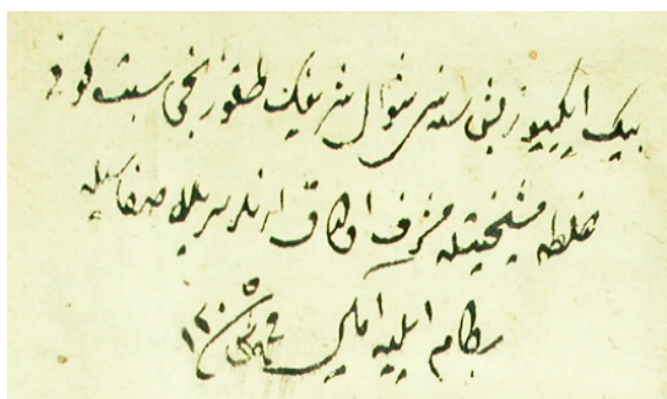
Recipe I



Recipe II



Glad Tidings



Correction

Rik J. Janssen, S. Berk Metin

In the article

“19th Century Ottoman Archery Records Among
Leiden Miscellanea”, published in *Keshif* 3/1, Winter 2025,

there are three minor corrections:

- The first words on page 50: “(see footnotes 23,25),” should actually be footnotes 19 and 21.
- Addition to footnote 24:
“Of the consulted sources in footnote 24, the anonymous manuscript (TY2694) is most likely the original source, as this is the only manuscript that omits two records which are also absent in the Leiden notebook, while the two records appear in the other consulted sources.”
- Page 44: “*havāsıyla*” should be “*hevāsıyla*”.