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FOLLOWING THE STEPS OF THE *IKHWĀN AL-ṢAFĀ'* IN THE OTTOMAN WORLD. I: INSIGHTS FROM THREE UNIVERSAL HISTORIES

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ABSTRACT

This article is a first step in a project to study the influence of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* in the Ottoman world. We argue that, at least from the end of the fourteenth century until well into the second half of the sixteenth, the knowledge presented in the encyclopedic *Rasā'il* was a conspicuous scholarly source for the Ottoman cultural milieu, especially at the dynastic court, and played a significant role in forming their epistemological perspective. This argument is developed with reference to three universal histories: (1) in Turkish, the *Iskendernāme* (Book of Alexander) of Taceddin Ibrahim Ibn Hızır Ahmedi (d. 1413) written between the last quarter of the fourteenth century and the first quarter of the fifteenth; (2) in Arabic, the *Naẓm al-sulūk fī musāmarat al-mulūk*

*This study is the expanded version of a paper we presented together in Istanbul on the occasion of the 2nd International Professor Dr. Fuat Sezgin Symposium on the History of Science in Islam (7–9 October 2021). A first version was also presented by Fatma Sinem Eryılmaz at the MESA conference in 2017. Research for this paper benefited from the ERC project 'The origin and early development of philosophy in tenth-century al-Andalus: the impact of ill-defined materials and channels of transmission' (ERC-2016-ADG, 2017–2023, n. 740618) currently being conducted at UCLouvain. We thank the anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful comments and suggestions. All translations are ours unless indicated otherwise. (After the first citation, references to the *Rasā'il* are to the Arabic text in the series of critical editions with English translation published by Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies. References are given in the form *Rasā'il, Epistle N* (editor), n–n, where N refers to the number of the Epistle and n–n to the page range.)

(The ordering of ways for the conversation of kings) by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī (d. 1454), a prominent intellectual and expert in occult sciences, protégé of Sultan Murad II (r. 1421–44, 1446–51); (3) in Persian, the first volume of *Shāhnāmā-yi Āl-i ʿUs̲mān* (Book of kings of the house of ʿUs̲mān) by the Sufi intellectual and litterateur Fethullah Çelebi (d. 1561/62), better known by his pen-name ʿArif. The choice of these three histories enables us to mark the time period for the influence of the *Rasāʾil*, stretching it (in both directions) further than is accepted in present scholarship. These histories enable us also to draw attention to the proximity to the Ottoman dynasty of the cultural milieu attuned to the *Rasāʾil*, and highlight the relationship between history and knowledge that is central both for the texts under study here and the *Rasāʾil*.

The *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ wa-Khullān al-Wafāʾ* (Epistles of the Brethren of Purity and the Friends of Loyalty) form an encyclopedia of philosophy and science whose date, authorship and exact doctrinal positioning are issues that have remained controversial up to the present.[1] Alongside these issues, there has been in recent years a growing interest in the impact of this work across the centuries. Although still in an embryonic phase, current scholarship tends to demonstrate that the influence of the *Rasāʾil* was indeed more profound, more enduring, and more ramified than previously assumed, and that it extended over the Dār al-Islām in its entirety and even beyond.[2]

Recent research has also revealed that there are many more authors who used subtle forms of reference to the Brethren of Purity, or the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, and to their *Epistles*, than those who openly and explicitly acknowledged their debt. A classical example of these coded references in Arabic literature is the usage, often in some strategic place, of a typical formula from the Brethren such as: 'Maybe your soul will wake up from the slumber of negligence and the torpor of ignorance (*laʿalla*

[1] For an overview of this issue, see: Rémy Cordonnier, 'Influences directes et indirectes de l'encyclopédie des Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ dans l'Occident chrétien', *Le Muséon*, 125 (2012): 421–66; Godefroid de Callataÿ, art. 'Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ)', *EI*[3], 84–90; Carmela Baffioni, 'Ikhwân al-Safâ'' in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (first published in 2008; substantially revised 2021, available at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ikhwan-al-safa/). (Last accessed 23 September 2022.)

[2] Godefroid de Callataÿ, 'Who were the readers of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*?', *Micrologus. Nature, Sciences and Medieval Societies*, 24 (2016): 269–302.

nafsaka tantabihu min nawm al-ghafla wa-raqdat al-jahāla)' or 'Know, my brother—May God stand by you, as well as by ourselves, with a spirit coming from Him—that... (*iʿlam yā ākhī ayyadaka Allāh wa-iyyānā bi-rūḥin min-hu anna...*)'. Such shibboleth-like formulations and other disguised ways to refer to the Ikhwān were essentially needed because the *Epistles* contain material that could be regarded by many as incompatible with the Muslim faith.[3] It will suffice to remember here that the *Rasā'il* were severely condemned as heretic by Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), a self-proclaimed champion of Islamic orthodoxy,[4] and that the twelfth-century 'Abbasid caliph al-Mustanjid is reported to have had all the copies of the work burnt, together with Avicenna's *Shifā'*.[5]

As is well known, al-Mustanjid did not succeed in his attempt to erase the traces of the *Rasā'il* altogether. According to a recent account by Nader El-Bizri, the general editor of the ongoing international project at Oxford University Press and the Institute of Ismaili Studies to critically edit the whole corpus, over one hundred manuscripts of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* are currently preserved in about forty libraries and collections across the world. As El-Bizri writes, 'the large number of extant manuscripts and fragments of the *Rasā'il*, the broad range of the geographical sources, and the extended historical timeframe of their reproduction all reveal the extent of the circulation of this influential classical text'.[6] A very significant number of the extant copies of the *Rasā'il*, and among them, the majority of the oldest and most authoritative ones that are used for the above-mentioned editorial project, are preserved in the manuscript libraries in Istanbul and other former Ottoman cities.[7]

[3] For a study on shibboleth-like formulas that the Brethren used, see Godefroid de Callataÿ, 'From Ibn Masarra to Ibn ʿArabī: references, shibboleths and other subtle allusions to the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* in the literature of al-Andalus', in Antonella Straface, Carlo De Angelo, and Andrea Manzo (eds.), *Labor limae. Atti in onore di Carmela Baffioni* (= *Studi Magrebini*, 12–13 (2014–15), Universita degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale': Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo, il Torcoliere, Officine Grafico-Editoriali di Ateneo, xii. 217–67.

[4] Yahya Jean Michot, 'Misled and misleading... Yet central in their influence: Ibn Taymiyya's views on the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'' in Nader El-Bizri (ed.), *The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and their* Rasā'il*: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismāʿīlī Studies, 2008), 139–79.

[5] Ibn Athīr, *Ibn-el-Athiri chronicon quod perfectissimum inscribitor (Kāmil fī al-ta'rīkh)* (ed. Caroles Johannes Tornberg; Leiden: Brill, 14 vols., 1851–76), xi. 170.

[6] Nader El-Bizri, 'Prologue' in Nader El-Bizri (ed.), *The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and their Rasā'il*: 1–32, at 21.

[7] According to El-Bizri, the following libraries in Turkey contain at least one copy of the *Rasā'il*: Süleymaniye, Ayasofya, Emir Hüseyin, Atıf Efendi, Esad

Even though it is not a manuscript copy but an adaptation of the twenty-second *Risāla*, the *Şerefü'l-insān* (Human Honour) composed by Lami'i Çelebi (d. 1532) also deserves mention here.[8] This work, which combines the debate between the representatives of animals and humans in the Brethren's work with stories of mythic-historical Iranian kings from Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*, was presented to Sultan Süleyman in 1527. Over one hundred extant manuscript copies dispersed in former Ottoman lands and elsewhere attest to its popularity.[9]

Taking into account these indications of the high currency of the Brethren's ideas in the lands that came to be ruled by the Ottomans from the thirteenth century onwards, progressively and using several textual examples, in this article we argue that at least from the end of the fourteenth century until well into the second half of the sixteenth century, the knowledge formulated in the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* constituted a conspicuous and significant presence for the Ottoman cultural milieu, both in its content and its epistemological perspective. This is all the more evident for those intellectuals associated with the dynastic court. Even though we strongly believe that the influence of the Brethren's work formed one of the principal intellectual currents, and their ethical values and praxis of fraternity provided a major inspirational model for the social networks in the above-mentioned region and period, here, our scope is going to be more limited. The natural constraints of the article format is one of the decisive factors for this, but it is not the only one. This study is planned as the first step of an ongoing examination of the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* and its influence in the Ottoman

Efendi, Millet Library, Garullah, Köprülü, Kütüphane-i 'Umumi Defteri, Manisa, Raşid Efendi (Kayseri), Topkapı Sarayı (Palace Museum), Yeni Cami, Revan Köşkü. Noah Gardiner points to two other copies in the inventory of the library of Bayezid II: N. Gardiner, 'Books on occult sciences' in Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar and Cornell H. Fleischer (eds.), *An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503-4)* (Leiden: Brill, 2019): i. 735–65, at 738. Of the 20 or so manuscripts used for the critical edition of the *Rasā'il* at OUP-IIS, the following eight copies are kept in Istanbul collections: Atıf Efendi 1681 (1182 CE); Esad Efendi 3637 (*ca*. thirteenth century CE); Esad Efendi 3638 (*ca*. 1287 CE); Feyzullah 2130 (AH 704); Feyzullah 2131 (AH 704); Köprülü 870 (*ca*. fifteenth century CE); Köprülü 871 (1417 CE); Köprülü 981 (undated).

[8] Günay Kut, 'Lāmi'ī Chelebi and his works', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 35/2 (1976): 73–93, at 83.

[9] We believe that the life and work of Lami'i Çelebi is pivotal in understanding the nature of the Neo-Ikhwān networks in the eastern Mediterranean, particularly in the Ottoman lands. His personal relationship with these networks as well as the relationship of his *Şerefü'l-insān* with the twenty-second *Risāla* are going to be treated in the upcoming publications of the 'Following the Steps of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'' project.

world that surged as the natural consequence of the intersecting research interests of the articles' writers. Before the extensive and in-depth study across several genres of written and visual material that this burgeoning sub-field of intellectual history requires, we have decided to embark on an intellectual journey, paced by our individually and jointly signed articles on different aspects of our larger project, hoping, along the way, to cultivate more discussion on the issues that ignited our own research in the first place.

In this article, our references to the encyclopedic fraternity and the knowledge disseminated by their *Rasā'il* come from three universal histories. The first is *Iskendernāme* (Book of Alexander) that Taceddin Ibrahim Ibn Hızır Ahmedi (d. 1413) wrote in Turkish in the period between the last quarter of the fourteenth century and the first quarter of the fifteenth. The second, *Naẓm al-sulūk fī musāmarat al-mulūk* (The Ordering of Ways for the Conversation of Kings), is the work of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī (d. 1454), a significant intellectual figure and expert in occult sciences protected by Sultan Murad II (r. 1421–44, 1446–51), and is written in Arabic. The third is the first volume of *Shāhnāmā-yi Āl-i ʿUs̱mān* (The Book of Kings of the House of ʿUs̱mān) written in Persian by the Sufi intellectual and litterateur Fethullah Çelebi (d. 1561/62), better known by his pen-name ʿArif.

The reasons for our choice of these three works are several. Firstly, their production dates mark the temporal frame of our project, enabling us to push the dates associated with the Brethren's influence at both ends further than is accepted at present in the literature. Secondly, the close proximity of all three works to the Ottoman dynastic court is essentially related to our argument for the strong presence of the Brethren's work in the previously mentioned courtly milieu, whether the work reflected its author's search for stable patronage (Ahmedi) or a strengthened and long term collaboration (al-Bisṭāmī) or whether it was an outright vehicle eloquently delivering and promoting a cosmological vision privileging the dynasty and its sultan while advancing the career of its author (ʿArif). Moreover, the shared genre of the three works is meant to align with our intention to treat the relationship between history and knowledge, a perspective common between these texts and the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*. Finally, we wanted to use texts where the presence of the Brethren's influence was readily conspicuous through direct references to the Brethren's appellation, linguistic choices, and emphatically treated ideas.

AHMEDI'S *ISKENDERNĀME*

The Anatolian-born, Cairo educated Taceddin Ibrahim Ibn Hızır Ahmedi composed his *Iskendernāme* originally for the Germiyanlı prince Süleyman Bey (r. 1363–88), but the version that gained much popularity in the Ottoman literary world is the later version dedicated to the Ottoman sultan Bayezid's son Emir Süleyman (d. 1411). By now, it is generally accepted that narrating the story of Alexander was not the primary concern of *Iskendernāme*'s writer, but rather constituted 'the frame-work within which the author sought to enclose an epitome of all the science, whether sacred or secular, of his time'.[10] Indeed, following the general outline of Alexander's story and borrowing from the Persian mythological history of Firdowsī's *Shāhnāmā*, Ahmedi shares his knowledge of a variety of fields, such as astrology, medicine, music, ethics, and geography. Ottomanists have generally studied the last part of his 8000 couplets, where Ahmedi narrates the history of the Ottoman dynasty. The more explicit examples that tie his work to the Brethren come from other sections.

In roughly the second quarter of the text, we read that Alexander hears of an Indian doctor (*ṭabīb*), who is also a philosopher and has inherited the science of the prophets (*ʿilm-i enbiyā*). From the Indian sage, Alexander inquires about the creation of the human being and his physical and spiritual nature, and implores:

> Explain its [i.e., the human body's] composition to me *Şerḥ èt baŋa anuñ terkībini*
> Describe me its entire organization one by one *Vaṣf èt bir bir ḳamu tertībini*
> Pray, explain me this talisman *Bu ṭılısmuŋ baŋa şerḥin eylegil*
> Pray, tell me what is exoteric and what is esoteric *Ẓāhirü bāṭın nècedür söylegil* [11]

The Indian sage replies with an allegory of the structure of the body as a well built and fully equipped city with 248 pillars, 360 rivers, 10 treasures of various gems, 12 doors guarded by 5 doormen, and so forth. With slight numerical variances, this allegory in which the limbs of the human body are meant to correspond to the different parts of an ideal city follows very closely that of the Persian geographer Zakariyyā b.

[10] E. J. W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry* (London: Luzac, 6 vols., 1900), i. 266. For the entry on Ahmedi with examples of his work in English translation, see 260–98. For the critical edition of *Iskendernāme*, see Ahmedî, *Iskendernâme*, critical edition by Robert Dankoff (Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi, 2 vols., 2020).

[11] Ahmedî, *Iskendernâme*, i. 479: 2533–4.

Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī (d. 1283) in his well-known cosmography *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharāʾib al-mawjūdāt* (The Wonders of Creation and the Peculiarities of Existing Things).[12]

Indeed a few couplets later, Ahmedi reveals his source with his choice of vocabulary:

That it is full of unique marvels *Kim bedāyi'le ʻ**acāyib**dür ṭolu*
It is also full of artful wondrous things *Hem ṣanāyi'le **garāyib**dür ṭolu*[13]

Interestingly, al-Qazwīnī himself had followed another text, most probably the section from *Epistle* 23 (On the Composition of the Corporeal System) of the Brethren where the same allegory is used with a few numerical differences.[14] Unless there is a third text prepared chronologically between the *Rasāʾil* and the *ʿAjāʾib* that he consulted, the 'wise men' to whom al-Qazwīnī refers in introducing the analogy would be the Brethren of Purity.[15]

Ahmedi also makes a direct reference to the Brethren in the section on the reign of the third mythical Iranian King, Tahmuras (or Tahmūrath). The king is described as a ruler possessing both political and spiritual authority, one who provided shelter for the city and the clime (*şehr ü iḳlīm*) for thirty years. He notes that Tahmuras governed with justice and adorned his land with many edifices. He declared the Oneness of God (*tevḥīd*) with proofs and made the evidence for the Day of Resurrection and Judgment manifest. Tahmuras advised his people to keep their bodies healthy and their souls clean, and make worship a habit for

[12] al-Qazwīnī, *Zakarija ben Muhammed ben Mahmud el-Cazwini's Kosmographie* (*ʿAjāʾib al-makhluqāt wa-gharāʾib al-mawjūdat*) (ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld; Göttingen: V. der Dieeterischen Buchhandlung, 1849), 354–5.

[13] Ahmedî, *Iskendernâme*, i. 491: 2598. It is also possible that the reference to the '*acāyib*' and '*garāyib*' is a more generic one. However, its location in Ahmedi's text as well as the close resemblance between the two texts on the allegory of the structure of the human body point towards a more direct reference to al-Qazwīnī's work. Serpil Bağcı notes several close parallels between the different illustrations of both works. Confirming our interpretation, she states that 'one of the most important sources of his [Ahmedi's] chapters on geographical, astrological, botanical, and other scientific fields was probably the *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharāʾib al-mawjūdāt*', an observation that appears to be clear to the painters of various scenes in Ahmedi's work. Serpil Bağcı, 'Old images for new texts and contexts: wandering images in Islamic book painting', *Muqarnas*, 21 (2004): 21–32.

[14] *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ wa-Khullān al-Wafāʾ*, Epistle 23 (ed. Buṭrus Bustānī; Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 4 vols., 1957), ii. 380–2.

[15] For a comparison of both texts, see Inka Nokso-Koivisto, 'The microcosm–macrocosm analogy in Rasāʾil Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ and certain related texts' (Ph.D diss., University of Helsinki, 2014), 110–16.

themselves. Just as the way the heart needed the purging of evil intentions (*taṣfiye*), the king said, not only the soul but also customs (*resm*) needed purification (*tezkiye*). All of these recommendations Tahmuras made so that:

> They may all be **brethren of purity** *Olalar ḳamusı* ***Ivānu's-ṣafā***
> In this way, they may be the **friends of loyalty** *Şöyle ki ͡olur ola Ḫullānü'l-vefā*
> May they all be constant companions to one another *birbiriyle cümle hemdem olalar*
> May they be loving friends and intimate to one another *birbirine yār u maḥrem olalar*[16]

Is it by chance that the reference to the Ikhwān corresponds to the reign of the mythical Iranian king Tahmuras, who ruled his community like an Islamic Imam? Curiously, Tahmuras' qualities match perfectly with those of Yaʿsūb, 'the commander and chief of the bees' (*amīr al-naḥl wa-zaʿīmu-hā*) in the famous animal fable known as 'The case of the animals versus man before the king of the jinn' as narrated by the Ikhwān in Epistle 22.[17] In this highly symbolic narrative, each species of animals is ruled by a king and represented at the tribunal by a spokesman philosopher. The insects are the only group whose spokesman is also their chief. In a long speech, Ya'sūb explains the reason of the insects' choice as his coming from a lineage to whom God had granted both 'kingship and prophecy' (*al-mulk wa-l-nubuwwa*). He adds that the community he rules has developed many capacities. Aside from the production of honey, he lists among these capacities architectural skills, perfection of the body, social organization, promoting friendship, and mutual help.[18] Ahmedi composed practically the same list for Tahmuras and his community.

Should we take this reference as corresponding to the Brethren of Purity of the tenth century or an evoking of the original Brethren's legacy to describe a desirable, or even an ideal, state of fraternity? The usage of

[16] Ahmedî, *Iskendernâme*, ii. 39: 5141–2. The section on Tahmuras begins on line 5132, after the title *Pādişāhī-i Ṭahmūres-i dīvbend* (King Tahmuras, the Enslaver of Giants).

[17] *The Case of the Animals versus Man before the King of the Jinn: an Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 22 [Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā']* (eds. Lenn E. Goodman and Richard McGregor; Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2009), 172–8 (Arabic text).

[18] On this passage, see Godefroid de Callataÿ, 'For those with eyes to see: on the hidden meaning of the animal fable in the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*'', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 29/3 (2018): 357–91, at 375–8.

the heavily Arabic phrasing, which contrasts with the rest of the text written in Anatolian Turkish, hints at the first possibility as the principal one, while not rejecting the second.

By referring to themselves as *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ wa-Khullān al-Wafāʾ* ('the Brethren of Purity and the Friends of Loyalty'), the original tenth-century fraternity had not only found a manner to conceal their identities as authors of a corpus of epistles, but the flexibility of the appellation also allowed them to address whomever they felt could share their doctrine and adhere to the programme of their brotherhood, whether in their own time or in a distant future. Along similar lines, by using the name as a description that Tahmuras aspired to for his society, we believe that Ahmedi diminishes the historicity of the appellation in the quotation above while underscoring the qualities that actually define the fraternity. Indeed, cooperation and mutual friendship in this world but also, and more importantly, with an eye to the other world, are at the core of their teaching and are exalted in countless places of their intellectual corpus. It is even the subject of an epistle of its own, namely *Epistle* 45, whose title in manuscripts is usually given as 'On the Companionship of the Brethren of Purity and their Mutual Assistance by Virtue of Sincere Friendship, Sympathy, Compassion, and Mercy' (*fī kayfiyyat ʿishrat Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ wa-taʿāwun baʿḍi-him baʿḍi-him li-ṣidq al-mawadda wa-l-shafaqa wa-l-taḥannun wa-l-raḥma*).[19]

Ahmedi's direct reference to the Brethren's appellation indicated above occurs after an interesting dialogue between Alexander and Aristotle. According to the text, one day, Alexander ponders on the Grand Conjunction that was being observed and causing all kinds of havoc in the world. Seated on his throne with Jamshīd's cup in hand, he asks Aristotle, who is sitting by his side, to explain the phenomenon to him. Aristotle answers with astrological references and tells the world-ruler that every 240 years, at the time of the conjunction (*ḳırān*) of Jupiter and Saturn, a 'Lord of the Conjunction' (*ṣāḥib-ḳırān*) appears to rule the world.[20] The fourth of such conjunctions that occurs every

[19] *On Companionship and Belief: an Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 43–45 [Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ]* (ed. and transl. Samer F. Traboulsi, Toby Mayer and Ian Richard Netton; Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2016), 95 (Arabic text).

[20] The 'Lord of the Conjunction' was a title already claimed by Timur (r. 1370–1405) and later also used by a great number of Muslim 'world-rulers' in the Near East and Central Asia to express their supernal qualities and messianic pretensions. On the title and its significance, see for instance: Naindeep Singh Chann, 'Lord of the auspicious conjunction: origins of the *Ṣāḥib-Qirān*', *Iran and the Caucasus*, 13 (2009): 93–110; A. Afzar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign. Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); id., 'Millennial

960 years provokes a more significant impact on the world and great changes happen. Among these changes, Aristotle lists the annulment of religions and (their) laws (*nes-i edyān u ṣerāyiʿ*).[21]

Upon hearing Aristotle's answer, Alexander implores for more. He tells the philosopher that since he—i.e., Aristotle—knows Idrīs's calculations and has the books of Daniel and of Jamasp,[22] he has acquired the knowledge of everything that happened since the time of Adam. So, Alexander continues, would he repeat for him what all of the great kings of history have done? And with these words, Ahmedi's narrative flows incessantly, combining Aristotle's political reading of astrology and Alexander's reference to the inspired knowledge of astrology, eschatology, and mathematics communicated in the books of Jamasp, Daniel, and Idrīs, on the one hand, with universal mythic-history, on the other. Alexander expects to see his teacher's accumulated knowledge reveal itself in the course of history. Indirectly, Ahmedi's readers are also promised a similar unveiling

sovereignty, total religion and total politics', *History and Theory* (Wesleyan University) 56/1 (March 2017): 89–97. For the significance and implication of this title in the Ottoman world, see Cornell H. Fleischer, 'The lawgiver as messiah: the making of the imperial image in the reign of Süleymân' in Gilles Veinstein (ed.), *Soliman le magnifique et son temps* (Paris: Documentation franaise, 1992): 159–77; id., 'Ancient wisdom and new sciences. prophecies at the Ottoman court in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries' in Massumeh Farhad and Serpil Bağcı (eds.), *Falnama, the Book of Omens* (Washington, DC: Arthur Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institute, 2010): 231–43; id., 'A Mediterranean apocalypse: prophecies of empire in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 61 (2018): 18–90.

[21] Ahmedî, *Iskendernâme*, ii. 25: 5066–9. We discuss the theory of Saturn/Jupiter conjunctions and its centrality to the doctrine of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* in the section of this article devoted to al-Bisṭāmī.

[22] Here, Ahmedi might be referring to *Jamasbnāmā*, the Middle Persian book of revelation on cosmogony, Zoroastrian doctrine, and mythic Iranian history organized as a dialogue between two of the leading disciples of Zoroaster, Vishtasp (or Vishtaspa) and Jamasp. Ahmedi's reader might also be reminded of another *Jāmāsbnāmā*, a short work of 33 couplets on astrology written by Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 1274). This work was translated and adapted by several Anatolian writers in the early fifteenth century, such as Ahmed-i Dai (d. after 1421). Murād II (r. 1421–44, 1446–51) ordered at least one translation from a Persian codex with the same name from Mūsā, who used the penname Abdi. Abdi's book explains the mythical story of the sage-prophet Daniel's son, Jamasp, who after an unpromising childhood and hardship, acquires absolute knowledge thanks to the secrets told him by the subterranean king of the snakes and explained in his father's books. See Mustafa Erkan, 'Câmasbnâme', TDV Islâm Ansiklopedisi. https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/camasbname, last accessed 24 February 2022.

in the allegorical story-telling of the author. As such, the chapters on the mythological history of the Iranian kings begin.[23]

These examples from *Iskendernāme* offer us several insights into the author and his milieu. Firstly, they display a marked ease with which he was able to use the ideas of the *Ikhwān* on cosmology and epistemology, revealing an intellectual background where the *Epistles* formed a fundamental part. Moreover, they indicate Ahmedi's intention in *Iskendernāme* to diffuse the Brethren's epistemological perspective, where the place of knowledge, in both its esoteric and exoteric forms, is essential in understanding Creation and giving meaning to the unfolding of history, and where historical knowledge, in turn, provides the key to access the Divine design and Absolute knowledge. In the episode between Alexander and Aristotle, in particular, we can observe how books of sages (Jamasp, Daniel, Idrīs), astrological happenings, and the history of the great kings function as 'texts' guiding their 'readers' in attaining knowledge, an activity that is presented as especially desirable. Furthermore, we note that unless Ahmedi completely misjudged his audience, there were, in the Germiyanlı and Ottoman courts, minds and ears attuned to the rich resonance of the ideas of the *Ikhwān* projected in *Iskendernāme*. What is more, they included the respective dynasties.

The atemporality in Ahmedi's usage of the Brethren's appellation also resonates perfectly with the ease with which a number of Muslim scholars active five or six hundred years after the composition of the *Rasā'il*, such as Sayyid Ḥusayn Akhlaṭī (d. 1397), Ṣā'in al-Dīn Turka Iṣfahānī (d. 1432), and Sharaf al-Din ʿAli Yazdi (d. 1454), referred to themselves as 'Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa-Khullān al-Wafā''.[24] In a recent article, Noah Gardiner defined these 'New Brethren of Purity' as 'an extraordinary network of religious scholars, mystics and intellectuals connecting the

[23] Ahmedî, *Iskendernâme*, ii. 23–9: 5055–77.

[24] Scholarship on this network was paved by Evrim Binbaş in his Ph.D thesis, 'Sharaf al Dīn ʿAlī Yazdī (*ca*. 770s–858/*ca*. 1370s–1454): Prophecy, politics, and historiography in late medieval Islamic history' (University of Chicago, 2009)and has rapidly expanded since. See in particular: Fleischer, 'Ancient wisdom'; Matthew S. Melvin-Koushki, 'The quest for a universal science: the occult philosophy of Ṣā'in al-Dīn Turka Iṣfahānī (1369–1432) and intellectual millenarianism in early Timurid Iran' (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2012), 240–7; id., 'The new Brethren of Purity: Ibn Turka and the renaissance of Neopythagoreanism in the early modern Persian cosmopolis' in *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World*, José Bellver (ed.) (forthcoming); Ilker Evrim Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran. Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī Yazdī and the Islamicate Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, esp. 104–13 ('The Ikhvān al-Ṣafā: a clandestine network'); Noah Gardiner; 'The occultist encyclopedism of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī', *Mamluk Studies Review*, 20 (2017): 3–38.

Mamlūk, Timurid, and Ottoman courts of the late eighth/fourteenth through ninth/fifteenth centuries, a network whose ideas were loosely unified by a shared interest in the occult sciences (especially the science of letters), millenarian speculation, and [...] reverence for ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and many of his descendants as recipients of ancient wisdom that had passed down through the prophets since Adam'.[25] In effect, all of our observations point towards the possibility that Taceddin Ahmedi belonged to such a confraternity of the Neo-Ikhwan, a possibility still awaiting a final confirmation.

AL-BISṬĀMĪ'S *NAẒM AL-SULŪK FĪ MUSĀMARAT AL-MULŪK*

What is not in doubt, on the other hand, is that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī (1380–1454), the second of the three authors under consideration here, was part of this cosmopolitan brotherhood. Born in Antioch and died in Bursa, al-Bisṭāmī was a Sufi influenced by the metaphysics of Ibn ʿArabī and an expert in everything occult. He is known to have travelled extensively across the lands of Eastern Islam, visiting various courts, and studying and teaching the esoteric sciences. He was especially interested in the 'science of letters and (divine) names' (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf wa-l-asmā*') as inherited from Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) and Shams al-Dīn al-Būnī (d. 1232-3), and which he posited as 'both root and pinnacle of all forms of learning'.[26] Al-Bisṭāmī's affiliation to the 'New Brethren of Purity' network is traceable in many of his works both with respect to his ideas

[25] Noah Gardiner, 'Forbidden knowledge? Notes on the production, transmission, and reception of the major works of Aḥmad al-Būnī', *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, 12 (2012): 81–143, at 117.

[26] Cornell H. Fleischer, 'Learning and sovereignty in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries' in Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar and Cornell H. Fleischer (eds.), *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)* (Leiden: Brill, 2 vols., 2019): i.155–60, at 156. On al-Bisṭāmī's science of letters, see esp. Denis Gril, 'E¨sotérisme contre hérésie: ʿAbd al-Raḥmân al-Bisṭâmî, un représentant de la science des lettres a Bursa dans la premiÉre moitié du XVe siÉcle' in *Syncrétismes et hérésies dans l'Orient seldjoukide et ottoman (XIVe–XVIIIe siÉcles)*. Actes du Colloque du CollÉge de France, octobre 2001 (Paris: Peeters, 2005): 183–95. On al-Bisṭāmī's inspiration from al-Būnī see: Gardiner, 'Forbidden knowledge?', at 114–17; Jean-Charles Coulon, 'Building al-Būnī's legend: the figure of al-Būnī through ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī's *Shams al-āfāq*', *Journal of Sufi Studies*, 5/1 (2016): 1–26. On al-Bisṭāmī's encyclopaedic activities, see also Gardiner, 'The occultist encyclopedism'.

and the many shibboleth-like references to the Brethren of Purity in his works, as have already been pointed out by various scholars.[27]

At the crossroads of the Mamluk and Ottoman worlds, al-Bisṭāmī also stands as a major representative of the encyclopaedic genre of his time, as shown by his *al-Fawāʾiḥ al-miskiyya fī al-fawātīḥ al-Makkiyya* (Musky Scents on the Makkan Revelations), a massive compilation to which he put an end in 1441 after about fifty years of collecting material. In this treatise, as well as in other of his works such as the *Naẓm al-sulūk fī musāmarat al-mulūk* (The Ordering of Ways for the Conversation of Kings) or the suggestively titled *Durrat tāj al-rasāʾil* (The Pearl in the Crown of the Epistles), al-Bisṭāmī elaborates on the classification of sciences, which he visually presents in the form of a tree, a figuration technically referred to as *tashjīr*. As was pointed out already by both Cornell Fleischer and Veysel Kaya,[28] al-Bisṭāmī's arboreal representation is directly modeled on the threefold division of knowledge into propaedeutical (*riyāḍiyya*), religious conventional (*sharʿiyya* / *waḍʿiyya*), and genuine philosophical (*falsafiyya* / *ḥaqīqiyya*) sciences that the Brethren of Purity describe in *Epistle* 7 (On the Theoretical Speculative Arts).[29] In his scheme, al-Bisṭāmī not only maintains these divisions but also most of the subdivisions that the Ikhwān include. While the source

[27] In addition to the bibliography above, see also: I. Fazlıoğlu, 'Ilk dönem Osmanlı ilim ve kültür hayatında Ihvanu's safâ ve Abdurrahmân Bistâmî', *Dîvân Ilmî Araştırmalar Dergisi* (1996): 229–40. For examples of shibboleth-like references to the Brethren of Purity in the *al-Fawāʾiḥ al-miskiyya fī al-fawātīḥ al-Makkiyya*, *Durrat tāj al-rasāʾil*, and *Risāle Siyāsiyye* see Veysel Kaya, 'Abdurrahman Bistâmî'nin bilimler tasnifi', *Istanbul Üniversitesi Ilahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 35 (2016): 187–216, at 199, n. 28. Evrim Binbaş gives more references to al-Bisṭāmī's works where the Brethren are mentioned: Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks*, 106, esp. n. 84.

[28] See Kaya's previously mentioned 'Abdurrahmân Bistâmî'nin bilimler tasnifi' and his 'Abdurrahmān Bisṭāmī' in H. Lagerlund (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy between 500 and 1500* (Dordrecht: Springer Nature B. V., 2nd edn., 2020), 1–4, as well as Fleischer, 'Learning and sovereignty'. Kaya's second article contains the reproduction of the *tashjīr* representation in the *Fawāʾiḥ* (Süleymaniye Library, Hamidiye 688, fol. 12b), while Fleischer's article includes (p. 156) the reproduction of another variant of the *tashjīr* from al-Bisṭāmī's *Naẓm al-sulūk* (Topkapı Palace Museum Manuscript Library, A. 1597, fol. 53a).

[29] *On Composition and the Arts: an Arabic critical edition and English translation of Epistle 6–8* (ed. and transl. Nader El-Bizri and Godefroid de Callataÿ; Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2018), *Epistle* 7, 47–96 (Arabic text). On the Brethren's classification of the sciences, see Godefroid de Callataÿ, 'The classification of knowledge in the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*' in Nader El-Bizri (ed.), *The Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and their* Rasāʾil, 58–82; Godefroid de Callataÿ, *Ikhwan al-Safa'. A Brotherhood of*

of his classification is clear, his exposition in the representation of a tree, and the minor changes between the two classifications need to be treated.

We should start by repeating Fleischer's observation that with the form of the tree al-Bisṭāmī underlines 'the organic relationship of the sciences to one another'.[30] We should add that the positioning of the propaedeutical (*riyāḍiyya*) and the religious conventional (*sharʿiyya*) sciences on the bottom two sides of the trunk representing the philosophical sciences (*al-funūn al-falsafiyya*) indicates a structure of knowledge where the understanding of religious sciences with its own methodology as represented by the subdivisions (the sciences of revelation/*al-tanzīl*, asceticism/*al-zuhd*, jurisprudence/*al-fiqh*, interpretation/*al-taʾwīl*, reports/*al-riwāyāt*, remembrance/*al-tadhkār*) complements the propaedeutical sciences (writing/*al-kitāba*, language/*al-lugha*, grammar/*al-naḥw*, prosody/*al-ʿarūḍ*, divination/*al-faʾl*, magic and incantations/*al-siḥr wa-l-ʿazāʾim*, alchemy and mechanical devices/*al-kīmiyāʾ wa-l-ḥiyal*, commerce/*al-bayʿ wa-l-shirāʾ*, biography and history/*al-siyar wa-l-akhbār*) with which humans were to relate themselves to the world, using their creative powers. These two principal categories inherited from the Ikhwān give support to the trunk of the tree of knowledge, that is the philosophical sciences, which itself extends its four subcategories of mathematical (*riyāḍiyyāt*), logical (*manṭiqiyyāt*), natural (*ṭabīʿiyyāt*), and divine (*ilāhiyyāt*) sciences in the forms of branches. In this scheme, while the function and significance of the principal categories of propaedeutical and religious sciences are parallel, that of the philosophical sciences is different. Besides, the branching out of the latter, with each branch displaying its own subcategories, offers more space to this third principal category of the Ikhwān in al-Bisṭāmī's conceptualization.

Not only did al-Bisṭāmī introduce minor yet noticeable changes to the *Epistle*'s categorization of sciences, but he also presented different versions of his own figurative representation. The tree in his earlier *Naẓm* completed in 1429-30, for example, includes the additions of medicine, veterinary sciences, and falconry to the Ikhwān's categorization of natural sciences, whereas the *Fawāʾiḥ*'s tree only preserves falconry in the same subcategory. Furthermore, in the latter an entire half of the branch of natural sciences, including the subtitles 'veterinary', 'medicine', 'plants', and 'generation and corruption', is missing. The red captions in the two versions of the tree of sciences do not correspond perfectly, either: in the *Fawāʾiḥ* the words 'writing', 'logic', 'prophetic', and 'revelation' are in red, whereas in the *Naẓm*, 'arithmetic', 'minerals',

Idealists on the Fringe of Orthodox Islam (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005): 59–72 ('Encyclopaedism').

[30] Fleischer, 'Learning and sovereignty', 156

'rhetoric' (?), and 'prophetic' are. These alterations clearly indicate a repeated revisiting of the concepts of knowledge and a reworking of its communication, manifesting the central significance of epistemology in al-Bisṭāmī's intellectual production.[31]

As Fleischer notes, the chief librarian of Bayezid II (1481–1512), ʿAtufi, used al-Bisṭāmī's classification in 1502–03 as the organizing structure for the Ottoman royal library he catalogued, thereby extending the influence of al-Bisṭāmī and the Brethren solidly into the sixteenth century.[32] Calling attention to the particular significance of the science of governance (*ʿilm maʿrifat al-siyāsa*) in this overall scheme, Fleischer also observes that 'Bisṭāmī's inclusion of Politics as a branch of Metaphysics—as well as his use of Greek terminology for the Propaedeutic arts—represents, without reference or citation, a direct appropriation of the scheme of the original Brethren, which is also to say that the Brethren of his own time, rather than their predecessors, were the Sunni Muslim objects of Bisṭāmī's address'.[33]

Of the three above-referred works, it is al-Bisṭāmī's *Naẓm al-sulūk fī musāmarat al-mulūk* that will retain our attention the most here. Like the *Fawāʾiḥ* and the greatest part of al-Bisṭāmī's literary production, the *Naẓm* has remained unedited thus far, but a detailed description of its content and scope has recently been provided by Noah Gardiner.[34] What makes the exploration of this work so fascinating is that it presents itself not only as a universal history, but also as a history of science or, more exactly, a history of the progressive unveiling of science to humanity from Adam to al-Bisṭāmī's own times. That astrology conditions this historical timeframe in every respect is made clear from the introduction, where the author uses a historical scheme of seven thousand years. Accordingly, beginning with Adam, a distinct prophet with special knowledge in the science of letters and associated with a specific planet appears every thousand years, dividing the time period into regular intervals. The astral-prophetic sequence is given as: 1. Adam—Saturn;

[31] We are currently preparing a separate study on al-Bisṭāmī's *tashjīr* representations of the Ikhwān's classification.

[32] Fleischer, 'Learning and sovereignty', 156.

[33] Ibid, 157. The extra five-fold subdivision of governance into 'prophetic' (*nabawiyya*), 'royal' (*mulūkiyya*), 'public' (*ʿāmmiyya*), 'domestic' (*khāṣṣiyya*), and 'private' (*dhātiyya*) is indeed a very conspicuous borrowing from the *Epistles*.

[34] Noah Gardiner, 'Lettrism and history in ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī's *Naẓm al-sulūk fī musāmarat al-mulūk*' in Liana Saif, Francesca Leoni, Matthew Melvin-Koushki and Farouk Yahya (eds.), *Islamicate Occult Science in Theory and Practice* (Leiden: Brill, 2021): 230–66. See also Fleischer's above-mentioned article for an earlier treatment of the *Naẓm*, especially in relation to Ottoman historiography and the work's influence in the conception of sovereignty.

2. Idrīs—Jupiter; 3. Noah—Mars; 4. Abraham—Sun; 5. Moses—Venus; 6. Jesus—Mercury; 7. Muḥammad—Moon. Each millennium is further divided into ten-century periods in which exceptional Sufi saints, political figures and scholars, acting as *mujaddidūn* ('renewers') or *aqṭāb* ('poles'), also receive their share of the hidden science and transfer it to posterity despite the vagaries of time. The material of this narrative is distributed in two books, with the Prophet Muḥammad as the hinge between the two.

Much of this is closely reminiscent of the conception of prophetic history that the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ develop in several parts of the *Rasāʾil* as one of the fundamental elements of their teaching.[35] Like other scholars before them, such as the astrologers Mashāʾāʾ allāh (d. 815) and Abū Maʿshar (d. 886), the Ikhwān attach great importance to the Sasanid theory of the periodic conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn, the two further-removed planets in the geocentric system of the ancients. Like them, they make a special case of the 'grand type' of these conjunctions in the zodiac, which takes place every 960 solar years and which is meant to provoke a change of religion in the world, the type of momentous change Aristotle explained to Alexander in Ahmedi's *Iskendernāme*. Also, like other thinkers of their age, in this case mainly Ismāʿīlīs, the Ikhwān integrate these periods, conventionally called 'thousands' (*ulūf*), in a larger seven-thousand-year system in which a prophet heralds each millennium. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, respectively heralded the first five. According to their messianic views, they assume themselves to be part of the sixth millennium, inaugurated by Muḥammad, in expectation of the 'resurrector' (*qāʾim al-qiyāma*) to annul the life-guiding regulations that Muḥammad announced and to begin the seventh and last one.

Yet what makes the scheme of the Ikhwān definitely more original, and immediately recognizable, is that they give it an astrological turn by associating each millennium, and therefore each prophet, with a specific planet. They do this in the following sequence: 1. Adam—Sun; 2.

[35] For the significance of prophetic history for the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, see Godefroid de Callataÿ, 'Astrology and prophecy, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and the legend of the seven sleepers' in Charles Burnett, Jan P. Hogendijk, Michio Yano and Kim Plofker (eds.), *Studies in the History of the Exact Sciences in Honour of David Pingree* (Leiden: Brill, 2004): 758–85; id., *Ikhwan al-Safa'*, 35–58 ('Millenarianism'); id., 'Introduction to Epistle 36' in Paul E. Walker, Ismail K. Poonawala, David Simonowitz and Godefroid de Callataÿ (eds. and transl.), *Sciences of the Soul and Intellect. Part 1: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 32–36* (Epistles of the Brethren of Purity), (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2015): 142–53.

Noah—Saturn; 3. Abraham—Jupiter; 4. Moses—Mars; 5. Jesus—Venus; 6. Muḥammad—Mercury; 7. *Qā'im* of resurrection—Moon.

Al-Bisṭāmī's indebtedness to the Ikhwān in his own astral-prophetic scheme is unmistakable, even if, as Gardiner rightly points out, he does not slavishly follow their sequence. By placing Idrīs between Adam and Noah, and thereby delaying Muḥammad's entry into the astral-prophetic history as the herald of the seventh (instead of the sixth) new era, he succeeds in 'rendering an altogether more Sunni version of the concept'.[36] Moreover, we note that al-Bisṭāmī's comfort in introducing changes to the particulars stated in the relevant section in the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* recalls to mind, aside from his own alterations to the Brethren's categorization of the sciences, what al-Qazwīnī and Ahmedi had done in their own texts dealing with the microcosmos *vs.* macrocosmos allegory between the human body and the ideal city discussed earlier. Both the clearly apparent inspiration that these works of the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries drew from the *Epistles* and the presence of several reworkings of this inspired knowledge highlight the longevity and dynamism of the *Epistles*' influence in the Islamicate intellectual environment.

Another shared position between the *Iskendernāme* and the *Naẓm* concerns the relationship of history and absolute knowledge of the divine. Ahmedi used the historical structure of his work to display his knowledge in various fields of the sciences to his readers. Within his narrative, in sections like the dialogue between Aristotle and Alexander, he also used his characters to elaborate on the role of history in revealing knowledge that could be acquired both through divine inspiration as in the case of prophets and by studying as in the case of philosophers.

Al-Bisṭāmī treats history in much the same way, and equally inspired by the *Epistles*, as 'a gradual unveiling of knowledge of the divine'.[37] In addition, at the very beginning of the introduction of the *Naẓm*, as he reflects on the significance of history (*'ilm al-ta'rīkh*) for the initiated, he also offers us a perfect shibboleth:

> The scholars of the schools and eminences eastern and western have gone to great lengths in the refining of its [the science of history's] fundamentals, the undoing of its knots, the rectification of its sources, and the establishment of its parts, because in it are treasures and a healing in the angel of illumination for **the brethren of purity and the friends of loyalty** (*ikhwān al-ṣafā' wakhullān al-wafā'*).[38]

[36] Gardiner, 'Lettrism', 236.
[37] Ibid, 231–2.
[38] Topkapı Palace Manuscript Library A. 1597, fol. 4a (Noah Gardiner's translation [p. 234], slightly modified).

In this way, al-Bisṭāmī defines the science of history as one bearing treasures and a means of self-improvement through 'the angel of illumination'. At the same time, the intermediary function of angels between worldly and divine spheres as well as their luminous nature intimate a framework associated with Ibn ʿArabī as the title of his encyclopaedic work, *al-Fawā'iḥ al-miskiyya fī al-fawātīḥ al-Makkiyya* ('Musky Scents on the Makkan Revelations') strongly suggests.[39]

FETHULLAH ÇELEBI'S *SHĀHNĀMA*

Fethullah Çelebi, better known with his penname ʿArif, is the writer of the third text we study in this article. His *Shāhnāma-yi Āl-i ʿUs̲mān* is a universal history in five volumes composed in Persian verse for Sultan Süleyman. ʿArif completed the first and the fifth volumes in 1558. The incomplete fourth volume is also extant, while the whereabouts of the second and the third volumes are unknown.[40]

The first volume of the Ottoman *Shāhnāma*, titled *Anbiyānāma*, begins with the creation of the universe and continues with a quasi-mythological history of the antediluvian prophets and a select number of Iranian kings, such as Kayumars, Jamshid, and Zahhak. ʿArif presents the first prophet, Adam, as the undisputable protagonist of the volume. After the 12 introductory pages, 15 of the remaining 35 are on his legacy. Adam's visual presence in the volume matches the textual: three of the ten illustrations of the book depict moments of his life.

The first of these depictions represents Adam on a pulpit about to deliver the first sermon (*khuṭba*) in human history. This comes after God's sharing with him the names of all things, a privilege that elevated Adam, and in his name, humanity, above the angels. The description of what happened afterwards communicates Adam's authority over the heavenly creatures as God's viceregent in a language imbued with Ibn

[39] Cornell Fleischer has also noted the clear reference to Ibn ʿArabi's *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Meccan Revelations) ('Learning', 157–8). Noah Gardiner suggests that the angel of illumination, signifying the angel of inspired knowledge (*kashf*) and the names of God in Ibn ʿArabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, indicated for al-Bisṭāmī the angel of history 'enabling the worthy to perceive the divine plan and the promise of ultimate redemption in the tumult and tragedies of the long course of human events'. Gardiner, 'Lettrism', 235.

[40] The first and the incomplete fourth volumes are preserved in the Bruschettini Foundation of Asian and Islamic Art, in Genoa, while the fifth is in the Topkapı Palace Museum Manuscript Library (H. 1517) in Istanbul.

ʿArabī's allegories and reminding us of al-Bisṭāmī's words quoted above.[41]

Adam first receives the two crowns of salvation (*hudā*) and Magnanimity (*karāmat*), and circumvents the heavens on a throne of divine light (*nūr*) carried by the angels.[42] Then, dressed in full royal attire, wearing a four-cornered headgear inlaid with gold and pearls, a golden girdle bearing 'moonlike disks' (*qurṣhā hamchū qurṣ-i qamar*) and his two long tresses shining with gems 'like the moon in nighttime', he goes up the pulpit of seven steps (*pāya*) prepared for him. 'To him', ʿArif writes, 'He taught the names of all (*asmā'-yi hama*); to him He subjugated (*taskhīr*) everything (*ashyā-yi hama)*'. ʿArif continues with his description of Adam's luminous appearance as he says that the celeste (*sipihr*) became illuminated with 'his beautiful light' (*nūr-i ḥusnash*) in the same manner that the day received its light from the sun (*mihr*).[43] After delivering his Friday sermon on Creation, Adam comes down the pulpit like the moon (*chū māh*).[44]

ʿArif's description succeeds in combining paraphernalia and signs of royal authority (kingly attire, throne, gems, the Friday sermon in the name of the sovereign, etc.) that underlines his 'political' position as the viceregent of God with elements describing Adam's special nature as the one chosen for and capable of reflecting Divine light, akin to the way the moon reflects the sun's light. After he receives the two crowns, Adam's movements (circumambulating on a throne of light on the shoulders of the angels, ascending and descending the seven steps up to and down from the top of the pulpit) resemble those of a planet reflecting light and moving in the seven heavens. This is no other than another poetic exposition of the metaphoric role of Adam, the Perfect Man, as the moon, that Ibn ʿArabī describes in his *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (The Makkan Revelations) when he writes,

> We say: As for the 'shining of the full moon' that God set up as an image in the cosmos for His self-disclosure through His ruling property within it, that is the

[41] For a more extensive treatment of Adam's double authority composed of 'political' and 'spiritual' aspects and its relevance for the Ottoman dynasty at the time of Sultan Süleyman, see Fatma Sinem Eryılmaz, 'From Adam to Süleyman: visual representations of authority and leadership in ʿĀrif's *Şāhnāme-yi Āl-i ʿOs̲mān*' in H. Erdem Çipa and Emine Fetvaeı (eds.), *Writing History at the Ottoman Court: Editing the Past, Fashioning the Future* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013): 100–28.

[42] *Anbiyānāma*, 14a (Genoa: Bruschettini Foundation of Asian and Islamic Art).

[43] Ibid, 14b.

[44] Ibid, 15a.

> divine vicegerent, who becomes manifest within the cosmos through the names and properties of God.[45]

Elaborating on the viceregency of Adam, and through him of the human, Ibn ʿArabī also states,

> The Real witnesses him with the witnessing of him who has bestowed the light of knowledge upon him. He says, *I am placing in the earth a vicegerent* [2:30]. He taught him all the names, and He had the angels prostrate themselves to him, because He knew that they were prostrating themselves to Him.[46]

What is particularly significant for us is that Adam's divinely revealed and all-comprehensive knowledge is presented as integral to the divine light he reflected, bringing to mind al-Bisṭāmī's usage of light imagery when writing on the specific field of historical knowledge. At the same time, in ʿArif's text, both the nature and the elevating properties of knowledge are greater while the intermediary agent of the transmission of knowledge are not the angels of illumination but the first human and prophet, Adam.

Similar to al-Bisṭāmī, ʿArif, too, treats the influence of Ibn ʿArabī synthetically. To the image of Adam as the mirror of the manifestation of—the self-revealing—God are added other, more subtle references. The unexpected mention of the geometrical apparatus of the compass, for example, hints at the role of knowledge as part of the Neoplatonic process of Creation by Emanation. From the top right corner of the illustrated page, we read:

> From the compass (*pargār*) of one countless point
> He declared the science (*ʿilm*) of thousands of books
> He became the mirror to the manifestation of the Essence (*Ẕāt*)
> This became the translator of thousands of attributes (*ṣifāt*).[47]

We interpret the 'one countless point' in the first line above as a reference to the golden spots covering the sky-blue background observable in the image. These countless light-bearing flakes emanate from the one divine

[45] Ibn ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ch. 256. The translated quote is from William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: The Principles of Ibn al-ʿArabī's Cosmology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 213. It is also cited in Esmé L. K. Partridge, 'The celestial "Polished Mirror": the mystical dimension of the moon according to Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi', *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabī Society*, 68 (2020): 103–16, at 104. Partridge's article has been useful in recognizing the parallels in ʿArif's text.

[46] Ibn ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ch. 256, see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure*, 213.

[47] *Anbiyānāma*, 15a (Genoa: Bruschettini Foundation of Asian and Islamic Art).

Adam delivering the first sermon, ʿArif, Anbiyānāma. Genoa, Bruschettini Foundation of Asian and Islamic Art, fol. 15a.

source embodying divine knowledge of the names and attributes and form the existential causes of all things. They then expand to form large circles and eventually engulf the whole universe. ʿArif's metaphor with the compass (*pargār*) appears to be a reference to this circular expansion. This sacred knowledge emanates as if through Adam's mouth as he 'declared the science of thousands of books' and spreads in flecks of light resembling a compass drawing larger and larger circles. As ʿArif says, 'Adam made the mystery of all names evident, he declared the states of all things'.[48]

The peculiar metaphor of the compass transports us, several folios later, to another, and even more particular usage of the geometrical apparatus. In the section explaining the 'caliphate' of Idrīs (or Enoch), we learn that one of the sciences that he taught humanity was writing and calligraphy. ʿArif likens the opening of the mouth to the hole of the reed flute. According to the text, he represents the harmonious sounds that come from the bodily instrument of the human mouth, with writing. And writing, the author adds, much like linear geometry, is itself made up of points and lines. Somewhere in the middle of this several layered metaphor, we read that:

> First his (Idrīs') mouth was one pure extension
> As though a line was drawn by a compass centred at the navel.[49]

Even in the midst of convoluted metaphors, this analogy stands out as rare. It is, in fact, a reference to the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*. In *Epistle 5* (On Music), in a chapter focused on physiology, we find a passage in which the Brethren discuss the ideal proportions of the human body and mention, as does ʿArif, a compass with one of its legs stationed at the navel of a human figure. They write:

> When he stretches his hand out above his head, and a pair of compass with one point on his navel (*ra's al-birkār ʿalā surratihi*) is extended to his fingertips, describing a circle to the tips of his toes, the distance between them is equal to ten hand-spans, that is, one quarter more than his height.[50]

[48] Ibid: '*Ayān kard asrār-i asmā'-yi hamah/ bayān kard aḥvāl-i ashyā-yi hamah*'.

[49] Ibid, 35b: '*Nukhustīn damash buvad yak madd-i ṣāf/ chū khaṭṭī kashīda zih pargār nāf*'.

[50] *On Music: an Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 5* (ed. and transl. Owen Wright; Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010), 133–4 (Arabic text). The compass is an important motif for the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', who emphasize its central role in geometry and other arts by defining it, along with the ruler, as 'the scales (*al-mīzān*) enabling one to discriminate evenness from unevenness', *On Logic: an Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 13* (ed. Carmela Baffioni; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 114 (Arabic text). In *Epistle* 22 (ed. Goodman and McGregor), 230, as part of the animal fable that makes up the greatest part of

The figure obtained by such a procedure inevitably reminds us of Leonardo da Vinci's well-known depiction of the 'Vitruvian man', even if a closer comparison also reveals some important differences in the mathematical proportions.[51] Yet what matters here for us is that this passage from the *Rasāʾil* is, in all likelihood, the source that directly inspired ʿArif.

This inspiration is confirmed by similarities other than the peculiar metaphor of the compass centred at the navel. The *Epistle* on music is also concerned with the ideal proportions in calligraphy (*ṣināʿat al-kitāba*), which the Brethren go as far as to call 'the most noble of the arts' (*ashraf al-ṣanāʾiʿ*).[52] There, in accordance with their syncretistic views, they explain that, even though different peoples of the earth have different scripts, such as Arabic, Persian, Syriac, Hebrew, Latin, Greek, or Indian, the structure of the letters in all these scripts is always fundamentally based on 'the straight line, which is the diameter of the circle, and the curved line, which is its circumference' (*al-khaṭṭ al-mustaqīm alladhī huwa quṭr al-dāʾira wa-l-khaṭṭ al-muqawwas alladhī huwa muḥīṭ bi-l-dāʾira*).[53]

For ʿArif, calligraphy is not only related to the ideal physiological proportions. Like the Brethren, he also associates calligraphy, numerical proportions and Euclidean geometry to the phenomena of sound, especially harmonious sound as in the case of music. Aside from the analogy between the reed flute and the human mouth, in the same section, he states that '[Idrīs] saw the origin of the word in a musical tune'.[54] Writing about calligraphy, he notes that 'a straight line (in calligraphy),

the treatise, they cite as one of the bee's most marvellous gifts its ability to make perfectly regular hexagonal cells without using any compass. In *Epistle 19* (*On the Natural Sciences: an Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 15–21* [ed. Carmela Baffioni; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013] 315 [Arabic text]), they stress the difficulty for humans to rationally figure out such problems as 'where the point of [God's] compass was when He shaped the globes of the spheres and set the planets in motion'.

[51] On this 'Vitruvian Man', see Wright's introduction (at 21–2) in the same volume, as well as El-Bizri's introduction to *Epistle 6* (32–4) part of *On Composition and the Arts: an Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles* 6–8 (ed. and transl. Nader El-Bizri and Godefroid de Callataÿ; Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2018) in the same series. Wright also notes the difference in the mathematical proportions with Leonardo's figure.

[52] *Epistle 5* (ed. Wright), 117.

[53] Ibid, 118.

[54] *Anbiyānāma*, 35b: '*Chū aṣl-e sukhan dīd andar navā/ṣadāyīst az iḥtirāq-i havā*'. In continuation, the second part of the sentence states that a sound is (produced) from the combustion of air.

just like a line in geometry / is congruous to the (geometrical) figures of Euclid'.[55]

Euclid was a major authority for the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, as well. The first two epistles of their corpus (respectively 'On Arithmetic' and 'On Geometry') derive much of their content from him, as well as from Nicomachus of Gerasa.[56] The same must be said of *Epistle* 6 (On the Arithmetical, Geometrical and Harmonic Proportions). In *Epistle* 5 (On Music), together with Pythagoras, Nicomachus, and Ptolemy, Euclid is mentioned among the first sages to have spoken about the science of music and to have informed about its secret.[57] In fact, it rather appears that, far from reducing Euclid to geometry, the Ikhwān link him to each of the four sciences of the mathematical quadrivium that opens their encyclopaedia.[58]

Having said this, it is ʿArif's reference to Idrīs in the section of the *Anbiyānāma* quoted above that makes the comparison with the *Rasāʾil* especially valuable. The Brethren explicitly refer to Idrīs in *Epistle* 5 when they write about the harmony of the spheres and their pleasurable effects on the souls that:

> [We] yearn to ascend to these places [i.e. the stars], to listen to these [sounds], and to consider these [motions], just as the soul of Hermes Trismegistus (*Hirmis al-muthallath bi-l-ḥikma*) ascended and saw this—for he is Idrīs, the prophet, peace be upon him, whom God referred to by saying: 'And We raised him to a high station' (Q. 19:57)—, and just like the soul of Pythagoras the Sage heard when it was purified of the dirt of bodily passions and refined by

[55] Ibid: '*Khaṭṭī-yi rāst hamchūn khaṭṭ-i handasī/movāfiq bā-(a)shkāl-i Iqlīdī*'.

[56] On these two sources, see: Carmela Baffioni, 'Euclides in the *Rasāʾil* by Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ', *E¨tudes Orientales*, 5–6 (1990): 58–68; id., 'Citazioni di autori antichi nelle *Rasāʾil degli Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*: il caso di Nicomaco di Gerasa' in Gerhard Endress and Remke Kruk (eds.), *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism: Studies on the Transmission of Greek Philosophy and Sciences Dedicated to H. J. Drossart Lulofs on His Ninetieth Birthday* (Leiden: Research School *CNWS*, 1997): 3–27.

[57] *Rasāʾil*, *Epistle* 5 (ed. Wright), 82.

[58] On the quadrivium in Islam, see: Godefroid de Callataÿ, 'Trivium et quadrivium en Islam: des trajectoires contrastées' in G. de Callataÿ and B. Van den Abeele (eds.), *Une lumiÉre venue d'ailleurs: Héritages et ouvertures dans les encyclopédies d'Orient et d'Occident au Moyen Age: actes du colloque international de Louvain-la-Neuve, 19–21 mai 2005* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008): 1–30; Emily Cottrell, 'Trivium and quadrivium: east of Baghdad' in Alessandro Musco *et al.* (eds.), *Actes du XIIe CongrÉs International de Philosophie médiévale organisé par la SIEPM, Palermo 17–22 septembre 2007* (Palermo: Officina di Studi Medievali, 3 vols., 2012) iii. 11–26.

> spiritual thoughts and by arithmetical, geometrical, and musical mathematics (*bi-l-riyāḍāt al-ʿadadiyya wa-l-handasiyya wa-l-mūsīqiyya*).[59]

We find the celestial ascension of Idrīs, once more identified as Hermes Trismegistus, also mentioned in *Epistle* 3 (On Astronomy). The Ikhwān explain:

> It is told about Hermes Trismegistus—and he is the prophet Idrīs, peace be upon him!—that he ascended to the sphere of Saturn and revolved with it for thirty years until he had contemplated all the states of the sphere, after which he descended to the Earth and informed the people about the science of the stars (*ʿilm al-nujūm*). God—exalted be His name!—said: 'And We raised him to a high station' (Q. 19:57).[60]

The ascension of Idrīs is not the only such experience mentioned in the *Epistle*. In the same passage, the Ikhwān also allude to the similar experiences of other figures, such as Aristotle, Pythagoras, Jesus, and Muḥammad. In contrast to the case with Idrīs-Hermes Trismegistus, however, these spiritual journeys are stated with explicit references to other literary sources: the Pseudo-Aristotle's *Theology*, the Pythagorean *Golden Verses*, the New Testament, and the (Islamic) prophetic tradition, respectively. In fact, as far as we know, the reference to Idrīs' ascension to Saturn, the most remote planet in ancient cosmographical systems, right below the sphere of the fixed stars, is unique to the *Rasāʾil*, suggesting a singular intermediary role for the prophet between the mutable and immutable realms. We should note here that ʿArif's portrayal of Idrīs as a transmitter/teacher of divine knowledge to the humans echoes the role of transmission associated with him in the above quoted *Epistle* 3, where we read that he 'informed the people about the science of the stars' once he came down from the sphere of Saturn, after having revolved with the planet for thirty years.[61]

[59] *Rasāʾil*, *Epistle 5* (ed. Wright), 140. The mention of arithmetical, geometrical and musical mathematics recalls the three kinds of mathematical proportions—arithmetical, geometrical and harmonic—that the Ikhwān took up primarily from Nicomachus of Gerasa and Euclid and to which they dedicated an entire epistle (*Epistle* 6).

[60] *On Astronomia: an Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 3* (ed. and transl. F. Jamil Ragep and Taro Mimura; Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2015), 88–9 (Arabic text).

[61] In line with similar references to Idrīs-Hermes-Enoch in contemporaneous Islamic literature, see also Kevin van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes. From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 181: 'In the view of the Brethren of Purity, Hermes could learn all the states of the heavenly sphere by abiding with the outermost planet through one of its cycles. Here the

While ʿArif does not articulate the name of the Ikhwān as a source, the textual parallels between the passages we have quoted in *Anbiyānāma* and the various *Epistles* (the compass at the navel, the figure of Idrīs, the geometrical principles of calligraphy, the relationship between mathematical and musical sciences, and the ideal proportions of man) leave no doubt of their close association. The question comes to mind whether we could explain the close relation between *Anbiyānāma* and the *Rasā'il* with the author's personal stylistic choices. We think not. In the case of the Ottoman *Shāhnāma*, we are dealing with a tightly controlled text that was prepared piecemeal. Various accounts indicate that different parts of ʿArif's text were first shown to the recognized authorities of taste and propriety like the biographer and poet ʿAşık Çelebi (d. 1572) and the bureaucrat and intellectual Ebulfazl Mehmed (d. 1574).[62] Internal evidence also strongly suggests that the third vizier Sokollu Mehmed (d. 1579) and the Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha (d. 1561) had revised and approved ʿArif's text before it attained its final form suitable for the eyes of the sultan.[63] Furthermore, we can deduce from the exceptional regard of the head of Chancery, Celalzade Mustafa Çelebi (d. 1567), in his *Ṭabaḳātü'l-memālik ve derecātü'l-mesālik* (The Echelons of the Dominions and the Hierarchy of Paths), that he too was familiar with the text of the Ottoman *Shāhnāma*.[64]

Qur'ānic reference to Idrīs, the statement of the *Kitāb al-Tuffāḥa*, the equation of Hermes and Idrīs with Enoch, and the view that Hermes revealed astrology are all used together to testify that the purified spirit of the sage can ascend through the heavens without the body in order to experience a divine revelation of the foundations of science'.

[62] For the assessment of his contemporaries including that of ʿAşık Çelebi and Ebu'l Fazıl, see Fatma Sinem Eryılmaz, 'The *Shehnamecis* of Sultan Süleyman: ʿArif and Eflatun and Their Dynastic Project'. Unpublished Ph.D. diss. (University of Chicago, 2010), 41–6.

[63] For the likelihood of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's involvement in ʿArif's work and his patronage, see Eryılmaz, ibid, 53–7; Zeren Tanındı, 'Transformation of words to images: portraits of Ottoman courtiers in the Dîwâns of Bâkî and Nâdirî', *Res 43* (Spring 2003): 131–45, at 132; and Filiz Çağman in Marthe Bermus Taylor *et al.*, *Soliman Le Magnifique: 15 février au 14 mai 1990, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais* (Paris: MinistÉre des affaires étrangÉres, 1990), 95.

[64] Celalzade Mustafa Çelebi was the Head of the scribes (*reisülküttab*) in the Ottoman government between 1525–35, and then the Head of Chancery till his retirement in 1557. He is one of the founders of the Ottoman chancery style and administrative prose in Ottoman Turkish. According to Celalzade, ʿArif was one of the rare contemporaneous historians of trust. Celalzade Mustafa, *Geschichte Sultan Süleymān Ḳānūnīs von 1520 bis 1557* oder *Ṭabaḳāt ül-memālik ve derecāt ül-mesālik* von Celālzāde Muṣṭafā genannt Ḳoca Nişāncı (ed. Petra Kappert; Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1981), f. 10v.

These references associated with the elite intellectuals and officials of the highest positions of authority in the empire allow and even encourage us to make several observations. First, they demonstrate that ʿArif's *Shāhnāma* was not considered a mere luxurious court product for entertainment purposes, but rather an important document, the form and content of which had significant implications that required scrutiny while in draft form. Secondly, the result of numerous evaluations confirms the consensual approval of a text that elaborates on knowledge stemming from the encyclopedia of the Brethren as one of the principle sources of influence. This is the case especially because, aside from the two viziers, who were of *devshirme* origin[65] and a strictly military career, the other three figures mentioned previously all had intellectual backgrounds comparable to ʿArif's and, hence, were capable of understanding the references dispersed freely in the text. As a third observation, we can add that the green light given to the text implied a clear approval of its writer, who generously used and propagated such ideas through his references.

These observations guide us to our next one. The ancient and medieval knowledge articulated in the Ottoman *Shāhnāma* project was not coincidental but expressly communicated for his targeted audience, among whom were the contemporaneous sultan, his court, and his actual and future offspring. As the knowledge derived from the *Epistles* was used to different ends in the narrative, each reference confirmed the place of the Brethren's legacy for the informed readers. With each reference of the type we have mentioned in this paper, ʿArif was making another little 'wink' of intellectual intimacy to his reader—a reader who was expected to recognize the passages of the *Rasā'il* in the metaphors the writer used. Here, we might ask ourselves whether ʿArif's main intended reader, Sultan Süleyman, was well-versed in the *Epistles*. We cannot say much about the depth of the sultan's knowledge of the Brethren's work. We can say, however, that he was expected to at least feign his comfort with it.

[65] During Sultan Süleyman's reign most of the Ottoman officials were of *devshirme* origin, in other words, recruited from Christian families, mostly in the Ottoman ruled Balkans. Rüstem Pasha was recruited to the Ottoman system from a Christian family of Serbian or Croatian origin from near Sarajevo, and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, from an Orthodox Serbian family from Herzogovina. For the education of the *devshirme* and for further references to the practice, see Gülay Yılmaz, 'Becoming a *Devşirme*: the training of conscripted children in the Ottoman Empire' in Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers and Joseph C. Miller (eds.), *Children in Slavery Through the Ages* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009), 119–35.

For our purposes here, let us make a final observation. ʿArif's references, their positive acceptance by the sultan and the chief authorities of taste and appropriateness, as well as the fraternization he proposes by constructing a narrative through these references that he assumes were recognizable by the worthy reader, all confirm that the cosmological vision and the epistemology mapped out in the *Rasā'il* were active and confidently visible participants in the Ottoman cultural environment well into the second half of the sixteenth century.

CONCLUSION: FROM THE IKHWĀN TO THE NEO-IKHWĀN

The larger project of following the steps of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' involves a scrutiny from a variety of perspectives, an examination of a multitude of narrative, scientific, and biographic texts, as well as diverse visual and architectonic sources. The fact that neither of the three authors whose works we have examined in this article, namely Ahmedi, al-Bisṭāmī, or ʿArif, was born in Ottoman lands, that all three had an important part of their intellectual and, at least in the case of ʿArif, spiritual education in Cairo draw our attention towards the ex-Ottoman influences they cultivated and transmitted to the Ottoman cultural environment. For ʿArif, we should also add the influence of Persian culture to this amalgam. His father was a Persian diplomat/Sufi/gentleman and his maternal grandfather, Ibrahim (d. 1534), the founder of the Khalveti-Gulsheni order, who had enjoyed Akkoyunlu, Mamluk, and Ottoman protection.[66] What is more, the strongly felt presence of the ideas and language of Ibn ʿArabī in his work, as well as in that of al-Bisṭāmī, invite us to research into the connections between mystic orders and the networks of intellectuals emulating the Brethren. All these influences that entered the Ottoman cultural environment from outside, in turn, point towards a receiving culture with a hearty appetite for absorbing external influences, one that is eager for experimentation, and open to adaptation and synthesis; in short, a culture in the making.

[66] For a more detailed biography of ʿArif, see Fatma Sinem Eryılmaz, 'The manipulation of ancient and medieval knowledge in the Ottoman court' in Godefroid de Callataÿ, Mattia Cavagna and Baudouin van den Abeele (eds.), *Speculum Arabicum. Intersecting Perspectives on Medieval Encyclopaedism. Proceedings of the International Conference at Louvain-la-Neuve and Cambron-Casteau, 22–24 May 2017* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut d'études médiévales, 2021), 113–40.

The road to uncover the traces of these and other intellectuals whose works, collaborations, rivalries, and debates formed and informed the premodern Ottoman intellectual environment is long and wide. As expressed previously, in this article we have limited ourselves to examining three texts (Ahmedi's *Iskendernāme*, al-Bisṭāmī's *Naẓm al-sulūk fī musāmarat al-mulūk*, and ʿArif's *Shāhnāmā-yi Āl-i ʿUs̱mān*), written in the three principle languages of the premodern Ottoman world (Turkish, Arabic, and Persian), and those, only partially. Our method was rather straightforward. On the one hand, we looked for direct references to the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'. On the other, we identified several nodes of resemblance, such as the significance of the geometrical apparatus of the compass, the highlighted role of Idrīs, or the astral–prophetic cycles, and used them to make in-depth albeit short incursions into the terrain of influence of the *Rasā'il*.

In two of the texts discussed above, Ahmedi's *Iskendernāme* and al-Bisṭāmī's *Naẓm al-sulūk fī musāmarat al-mulūk*, we have included examples of references to the name 'Ikhwān al-Ṣafā''. These 'direct' references, however, cannot be taken at their face value akin to direct references to a particular and historically specified person or persons. The historically elusive character of the Brethren's appellation, utilized originally for the protection that its anonymity provided, also created an ambiguity in its significance. It enabled Islamic scholars, even centuries after the death of the initial members of the fraternity, to use it as an instrument for self-identification. From Central Asia to Iran, from Egypt to Anatolia, these scholars considered themselves as members of networks and bearers of the banner of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', albeit in disputable degrees of formality. [67] At the same time, and in association with the formerly mentioned usage, these later Ikhwān used the same name when writing about the original fraternity and their ideas that so much influenced them. In other words, the same reference could appertain to a contemporaneous network of scholars or the original encyclopaedic fraternity. We should not disregard the possibility of usages where the ambiguity was intentionally manipulated to resonate both meanings, hence further confirming the continuance of the principally intellectual, but also spiritual and often political, mission that originated from the *Epistles*.

No matter to which of the possibilities the specific usage of the appellation corresponded, our textual examples in this article indicate the presence of serious knowledge of the *Epistles* in both the

[67] For several interesting examples of this kind of usage in Ottoman and Timurid environments in the fifteenth century, see Binbaş, *Intellectual networks*, 104–13.

Ottomanizing[68] territories of the fourteenth and fifteenth century and the more mature intellectual environment of the mid-sixteenth century, particularly in contemporaneous circles within or close to the court. Furthermore, they display an equally serious intention of its reworking with the aim of furthering the mission of the tenth-century fraternity to decipher and disseminate the knowledge of 'all things'. In other words, while the knowledge of 'all things' was complete and perfect in its Divine source, its human undertaking was in constant evolution. Within this framework, the knowledge expressed in the *Epistles* offered a seminal corpus to work with, by way of changing it and building onto it. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, with our examples from Ahmedi's and ʿArif's work from the late-fourteenth early-fifteenth century and the late 1550s respectively, we also add to the findings of Cornell Fleischer, Veysel Kaya, Ihsan Fazlıoğlu, and Noah Gardiner concerning the Ottomanizing and Egyptian intellectual environments of the fifteenth century, by expanding the dates of the clearly expressed presence of the epistemology of the Ikhwān at both ends of their chronology. We demonstrate that the strong influence of the Brethren's cultural legacy and their *Epistles* both predated al-Bisṭāmī's works and extended well into the second half of the sixteenth century in Sultan Süleyman's reign (1520–66).

Let us briefly recapitulate the findings we have presented for each of the three universal histories. In his *Iskendernāme*, Ahmedi referred to the Brethren in a section on Tahmuras. We have noted that the descriptions of the Persian mythical king suggested close comparisons to the philosopher and commander Yaʿsūb in *Epistle* 22: both figures exercised simultaneously spiritual and political authority. Moreover, this reference followed the astrological doctrine of the Grand Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn and the concomitant appearance of the messianic 'Lord of the Conjunction' (*ṣāḥib-ḳirān*) to rule the world. Added to the Imam-like double-sided authority of Tahmuras, the treatment of the Grand Conjunction and its Lord offered striking similarities between Ahmedi's text and al-Bisṭāmī's *Naẓm*. As Fleischer writes, this conception of history with its progressive unveiling to mankind by way of

[68] We use this term with reference to the environment in and for which Ahmedi and al-Bisṭāmī wrote their works. It was Cornell Fleischer who coined it first for the beginning of the sixteenth century 'in the sense that it represents an intermediate phase in the construction of a new formulation of dynastic legitimacy and its lineage, a new language (Ottoman Turkish), and a new genealogy of knowledge particular to the Ottoman lands and their dynastic inheritance'. Cornell Fleischer, 'Learning', 155.

divinely inspired harbingers of cycles was instrumental in 'Bistami and his Brethren's project to create a millennial society'. [69]

The allusions to the Epistles in our last example, the first volume of ʿArif's universal history, the Ottoman *Shāhnāma*, are made in a more kaleidoscopic manner: here, we encounter the metaphor of a compass to circumscribe the human form or the straight line used in calligraphy; there, the musical tune in which the word is meant to have originated. Looking at the text more closely, we discover that these allusions all revolve around the theme of ideal proportions and that the common thread between them is Idrīs, the Biblical figure mentioned in both Ahmedi's and even more emphatically in al-Bisṭāmī's texts.

All of these textual references to the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and especially the interpretations of their *Epistles* provide us clues to a written culture deemed particularly worthy of transmission to future generations. These activities of translation, interpretation, exegesis, and manipulation in the construction of new narratives also remind us that the written word had an essential place in the transference of both the knowledge and the epistemological view that the Brethren projected with their encyclopaedia. Perhaps most important of all, the reworkings of the Brethren's work stand testimony to the longevity of their relevance for Islamicate societies over the centuries.

[69] Fleischer, 'Learning and sovereignty', 156.