

# The State of Research on Early-Modern Islamic Sermons in an Ottoman Context

Ozgen Felek

The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Yale University, CT, USA

## Abstract

This chapter reflects preliminary findings on how Muslim preachers constructed gender identities and roles in early modern Ottoman world. Despite their significant roles in bringing the teachings of Islamic ideas on gender roles to Ottoman Muslims, their function and influence in this regard has not been studied yet. In studying this, there are two sources that could provide insight on the content of the sermons delivered by Ottoman preachers: the books of sermons and the *cönks*. Following a short introduction to these sources, I will briefly analyze two popular texts: the *Tarīkatü'l-Muhammediyye fī beyāni's-şirāṭi'n-nebeviyye ve'l-Ahmediyye* (The Way of Muḥammad in Interpreting the Prophetic and Most Praiseworthy Path) by Birgivî Mehmed İbn Pîr 'Alî (d. 1573), and *Naşāyih ve'l-mevā'iz* (Advices and Sermons), a compilation of 'Azîz Maḥmūd Hüdāyî's (d. 1628) sermons. A close reading of these texts shows that preachers had different approaches to gender.

## 1. Introduction

On February 11, 2015, a 20-year old college student, Özgecan Aslan, was raped and brutally killed in Turkey. This tragic event generated enormous public anger and indignation against both the government—for the weakness and insufficiency of its rape laws—and the Directorate of Religious Affairs, which prepares the weekly sermons and distributes them to all imams throughout the country to deliver at Friday prayers. The latter was accused of not paying sufficient attention to this event and others like it. In response to the public backlash, the Directorate ensured that the sermon for February 20, 2015 focused on respect, passion, and mercy towards women, integrating exemplary anecdotes from the sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad.

This one example demonstrates that preaching is still perceived to be an effective method of public instruction for shaping gender notions, morals, and ethics in Turkey. The role of preachers in shaping Ottoman society and the ways in which public opinion has influenced the subjects that preachers teach through their sermons have not yet been studied in detail. Nevertheless, numerous anecdotes scattered in early modern Ottoman texts reveal that public opinion was also effective then in determining the contents of preachers' sermons.<sup>1</sup> Though an audience “might have helped

1. For more on the use of public sermons in public education, see Naskalı, Emine Gürsoy (2017), «Cuma Hutbeleri ve Toplumun Talepleri», in *Hutbe Kitabı*, Istanbul, Kitabevi, pp. 343-356; Yüksel, Zeynep

to establish the contours of a preaching session through the questions that they put to the preacher”, preachers have maintained a significant role in Islamic societies throughout centuries.<sup>2</sup>

This study reflects preliminary findings from part of a broader research project on medieval and early modern Iberian and Mediterranean sermon studies.<sup>3</sup> As a sub-topic within this larger project, I aim to explore how pre-modern Muslim preachers (both *vā'iz* and *ḥaṭīb*) contributed to the shaping of gender identities and roles in an Ottoman context.<sup>4</sup> What follows is a short summary of the state of my on-going research in this regard. After a brief introduction to preachers in the Ottoman context, I introduce some major sources for Ottoman preachers to better understand the role of preachers in the creation of gender identity. I then share some excerpts from Birgivī Meḥmed İbn Pīr 'Alī's (d. 1573) *Ṭarīkatü'l-Muḥammediyye fī beyāni's-şirāṭi'n-nebeviyye ve'l-Aḥmediyye* (“The Way of Muḥammad in Interpreting the Prophetic and Most Praiseworthy Path”) and 'Azīz Maḥmūd Hüdāyī's (d. 1628), *Naşāyiḥ ve'l-mevā'iz* (“Advices and Sermons”) in order to demonstrate how early modern Ottoman preachers perceived gender roles in marriage.<sup>5</sup>

- 
- (2013), «Osmanlı'da Vaaz ve Vaizlik Geleneği», in *Vaaz ve Vaizlik Sempozyumu* (17-18 Aralık 2011) I-II, Ankara, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, pp. 163-185; Doğan, Recai (1999), «Osmanlı'nın Son Döneminde Yaygın Din Eğitiminde Vaaz ve Vaizlik», in *Diyanet İlmî Dergi*, 35/1, pp. 171-206.
2. Berkey, Jonathan P. (2001), *Popular Preaching & Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, p. 54.
  3. Interdisciplinary and Comparative Studies on Religious, Transcultural, and Gender Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean/Estudios interdisciplinarios y comparativos sobre identidades religiosas, (trans)culturales y de género en la Península Ibérica y el Mediterráneo medieval y moderno. Funding agencies: Spanish Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (MINECO) and the Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo Regional (FEDER) of the European Union. Ref. no.: FF12015-63659-C2-2-P, MINECO/FEDER, UE. Principal researcher: Linda G. Jones.
  4. Much has written on women and construction of gender identities in Islam; thus, the literature is too vast to discuss here. Yet, Leila Ahmed's *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* and Saba Mahmood's *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* warrants mentioning. As regards gender and sexuality in an Ottoman context, there are valuable studies. To name some of them, see for example, Peirce, Leslie P. (1993), *The Imperial Harem Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*, New York, Oxford University Press; and Andrews, Walter G. and Kalpaklı, Mehmet (2005), *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society*, Durham, Duke University Press. See also, Kuru, Selim S. (2000), *Scholar and Author in the Sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire: Deli Birader and his work Dâfi'ü 'l-gumûm ve Râfi'ü 'l-humûm*, Unpublished Ph.D. Diss., Harvard University; and Ze'evi, Dror (2006), *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500–1900*, Berkeley, University of California Press. Recently, manhood and masculinity have also attracted the attention of scholars. See, for example, Delice, Serkan (2010), «Friendship, Sociability, and Masculinity in the Ottoman Empire: An Essay Confronting the Ghosts of Historicism», in *New Perspectives on Turkey* 42, p. 107; idem (2016), «The Janissaries and Their Bedfellows: Masculinity and Male Friendship in Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Istanbul», in Gul Ozyegin (Ed.), *Gender and Sexuality in Muslim Cultures*, London, Routledge, pp. 115–38. However, the role of preachers, who were among the most effective agents in creating gender norms, remain as an understudied topic.
  5. In this paper, I will refer to the text as *Ṭarīkat-ı Muḥammediyye* and use its Turkish translation by Vedadī İbn Pīr 'Alī, Birgivī Meḥmed (2010), *Tekmile-i Tercüme-i Ṭarīkat-ı Muḥammediyye* trans. Vedadī ([Istanbul], 1278 (1862)). 'Aziz Maḥmūd Hüdāyī's *Naşāyiḥ ve'l-mevā'iz* (MS Üsküdar Hacı Selimağa Kütüphan-

## 2. Preachers as Agents

There are two kinds of public preaching in the Islamic tradition: *va'z* and *huṭbe*. Both entail giving religious advice concerning, and warnings against wrongdoing based on Islamic canonical texts. The primary differences between the two traditions lie in the nature of their messages, the timing of their delivery, and their duration. A *va'z*, derived from the word to warn, can be delivered in any language (in our case, in Turkish) by the *vā'iz* at any time and location, without a specific occasion, and with no duration limits. In the early modern Ottoman world, mosque preachers were generically described as *vā'izān* (sng. *vā'iz*).<sup>6</sup> As advice givers, their duties included commenting on the Qur'ān, transmitting hadiths, and reminding people of God's blessings and of their own obligations (*tezkīr*).

The *huṭbe*, by contrast, literally means the word through which one speaks; as such, it entails both the *huṭbe* of the Prophet Muḥammad, which refers to all teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad in the general Islamic context, and the talk itself given by an addresser, the *ḥaṭīb*, on the pulpit to his congregation.<sup>7</sup> Unlike the *va'z*, the *huṭbe* is short and linked to particular times: it is delivered on Fridays as part of the weekly prayer and on the annual holy days of Islam, namely *Eid el-Adha* and *Eid el-Fitr*. Besides, the *huṭbe* is delivered in Arabic, in a prescribed order.<sup>8</sup> In the present study, when using the English word “preacher”, I refer to both *vā'iz* and *ḥaṭīb*.

When considering preachers in the Ottoman context, what first comes to mind is the *Ḳāḏīzādeli* movement, led by anti-mystical, strict mosque preachers, such as *Ḳāḏīzāde Meḥmed Efendi* (d. 1635), *Üstüvānī Meḥmed Efendi* (d. 1662), and *Vānī Meḥmed Efendi* (d. 1684). This religious and political movement became highly influential and controversial in the seventeenth century by offering a clear example of how preachers maintained a significant role in Islamic societies.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Muslim preachers not only gave religious advice and warned against wrongdoing, but they also functioned as instruments through which social messages were delivered,<sup>10</sup>

---

esi, İstanbul—Hüdāyī Efendi Bölümü nr 266, dated 1093/1682) was published by Arpağuş, Sâfi. *Sohbetler Aziz Mahmud Hüdāyī*, İstanbul, Vefa Yayınları.

6. The words *kāş/kuşşāş* (storytellers) and *müzekkir* (reminder) were also used for preachers. For the discussions regarding storytellers and preachers in medieval and late middle Islamic world, see Berkey, *Popular Preaching & Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East*.
7. For detailed information regarding the *huṭbe*, its features, and history, see Baktır, Mustafa (1998), «*Hutbe*», in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 18, pp. 425-428.
8. For an extensive study on the history and tradition of *huṭbe* in the Ottoman and early Republican periods, see Yarıcı, Güler (2017), «Osmanlı'da *Hutbe*», in *Hutbe Kitabı*, İstanbul, Kitabevi, pp. 3-102. See Taşköpri-zāde Aḥmed Efendi, *Mevzū'ātü'l-'ulūm*, trans. Kemaleddin Mehmed Efendi, İstanbul, Dersaadet İkdām Matbaası, 1313, pp. 98-100.
9. On the *Ḳāḏīzādeli* movement, see Zilfi, Madeline C. (1988), *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age (1600-1800)*, Minneapolis, Bibliotheca Islamica, pp. 129-181; Terzioğlu, Derin (2010), «Sunna-minded Sufi Preachers in Service of the Ottoman State: The *Naşihatname* of Hasan Addressed to Murad IV», in *Archivum Ottomanicum*, (Ed.) György Hazai, 27, pp. 241-312.
10. Especially during the Second Constitutional Era (1908-1918), preachers became more important than ever, effectively creating public opinion. Sermons had an important role in explaining the Second Con-

served as motivational speakers to inspire soldiers during war,<sup>11</sup> and played a role in shaping the political environment.<sup>12</sup>

Yet what has been disregarded thus far is the fact that their privileged access to the people meant that preachers did more than provide instruction about morals, ethics, and ideologies. If, as other research has already shown, gender identity (including manliness) is a social and cultural construction tied to a particular place, we must then question where and by whom this construction was produced in the early modern Ottoman world.<sup>13</sup> Here, gender identity was produced and perpetuated through constant reinforcement, shaped according to Islam's foundational concepts and rules and promulgated through a wide range of "agents".<sup>14</sup> Of all these agents, preachers — who were to a large degree highly educated and trained — played one of the most central roles in bringing the teachings of Islamic ideas on gender roles to Muslims.<sup>15</sup> They were thus frontline agents who taught the masses and shaped

---

stitutional to the public, and "cleansing" Islam from religious innovations. See, Yüksel, «*Osmanlı'da Vaaz ve Vaizlik Geleneği*»; and Yazıcı, Nesimi (2005), «Tanzimat Dönemi Ramazanlarında Vaaz ve İrşad Hizmetleri Üzerine Değerlendirmeler», in *Diyanet İlmî Dergi* 41/3, 105-110.

11. Çakır, Ömer (2017), «Harp Sirasında Çanakkale Kahramanlarına İki Hitâbe», in *Hutbe Kitabı*, İstanbul, Kitabevi, pp. 371-392, and Kaymak, Suat, «'Ya Muzaffer Olurum Ya da Şehid' Sultan Alp-Arslan'ın Malazgirt Savaşı Öncesindeki Hutbesi», in *Hutbe Kitabı*, pp. 393-405.
12. Yılmaz, Metin, «Haccâc b. Yusuf'un Hutbelerinin Emevi Siyasi Hayatındaki Yeri», in *Hutbe Kitabı*, pp. 429-461; Akkaya, Ahmet Yaşar, «Darbe Döneminde Diyanet Hutbeleri», in *Hutbe Kitabı*, pp. 331-341.
13. The study of the body, gender, and sexuality in early modern Islamic sermons is still in its infancy. One significant example is Linda G. Jones' article "Bodily Performances and Body Talk in Medieval Islamic Preaching", in which she examines how the body was perceived and taught in medieval Islamic sermons. See, Jones, Linda G. (2013), «Bodily Performances and Body Talk in Medieval Islamic Preaching», in Suzanne Conklin Akbari/Jill Ross (Eds.), *The Ends of the Body Identity and Community in Medieval Culture*, Toronto, Buffalo, London, University of Toronto Press, pp. 211-235.
14. One lively example of the effectiveness of a preacher is Mu'in el-Miskîn (d. 1502), a fifteenth century Herati preacher. As reported by the biographers, he was such an effective and lively preacher that people came from far and wide to listen to his sermons. See, Felek, Ozgen (2010), «Reading the Mi'raj Account as a Theatrical Performance: The Case of Ma'arîj al-Nubuwwa», in Guber, Christiane; Colby, Frederick (Eds.), *Exploring (Other) Worlds: New Studies on the Prophet Muḥammad's Ascension (Mi'raj)*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, pp. 271-296. Regarding medieval Muslim effective performances, see also Jones, Linda G. (2010), «Prophetic Performances: Reproducing the Charisma of the Prophet in Medieval Islamic Preaching», in Jansen, Katherine L; Rubin, Miri (Eds.), *Charisma and Religious Authority Jewish Christian and Muslim Preaching 1200-1500*, Turnhout, Brepols Publisher, pp. 19-47. For the effective Ottoman preachers, see Akgündüz, Murat (2016), *Osmanlı Döneminde Vaizlik*, İstanbul, Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı, pp. 52-57.
15. During the early Ottoman Empire, preachers were trained and educated in the madrasas, where they were taught Islamic sciences (i.e. Hadith, exegesis, jurisprudence, and the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad), history, literature, and mathematics. After the seventeenth century, the madrasa curriculum focused mainly on Islamic sciences. In 1912, a special college named the Medresetü'l-vâ'izîn was opened. Yet, it was closed after a few years, and the Medresetü'l-irşad was launched in 1919. The curriculum lists courses on Islamic sciences, Turkish literature, History, Philosophy, Sociology, Public Health, and Preaching. See, among other works, Öcal, Mustafa (2014), «Geçmişten Günümüze Vâizlik, Vâizler ve Vaazlar Hakkında Bazı Tespit ve Teklifler», in *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 23/2, pp. 127-128; Doğan, Recai, «Osmanlı'nın Son Döneminde Yaygın Din Eğitiminde Vaaz ve Vaizlik».

notions of gender identities and roles. It should be noted here that, as Zilfi writes, most of the prominent Sufi Sheikhs started and continued their preaching careers while continuing their positions as spiritual leaders.<sup>16</sup>

According to philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre, “(Social) space is a (social) product... [It] also serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power”.<sup>17</sup> As Doreen Massey notes, space and place are important in the construction of not just gender identities, but also gender relations: “from the symbolic meaning of spaces/places and the clearly gendered messages which they transmit to straightforward exclusion by violence, spaces and places are not only themselves gendered but in their being so, they both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is constructed and understood”.<sup>18</sup> Preachers delivered sermons in mosques, madrasas, and dervish lodges, making these places social spaces in which piety became a primary and essential part of the construction of gender identities. Although there were some integrated gatherings of men and women to listen to preachers, in particular, mosques were (and still are) architecturally divided into separate gendered spaces for men and women.<sup>19</sup> They were also the most often visited public spaces for Muslim men of different cultural, social, racial, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Mosques were thus spaces that brought together numerous notions of manhood, filled by male believers led by male imams on behalf of a male Sultan, the Caliph (The Shadow of God on the Earth). They served as, however, as primary spaces that enabled the creation of a particular “Sunni” male image in the Ottoman context. That is, mosques were the spaces in which variant concepts of masculinity and manhood were silenced and made uniform via sermons that conveyed the traditional Sunni Islamic teachings.<sup>20</sup>

In studying the early-modern Islamic preaching tradition, it should be emphasized that “the *wa'z* is the only form of preaching where one finds female actors”.<sup>21</sup> As such, even though mosques were the major gathering sites that facilitated the ne-

16. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, p. 133.

17. Lefebvre, Henri (1991), *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Oxford: Blackwell, p. 26.

18. Massey, Doreen (1994), *Space, Place, and Gender*, Oxford: Polity Press, p. 179.

19. Berkey, *Popular Preaching*, pp. 30-31.

20. Through the calligraphic works that included the names of the most significant five men of the Sunni Islamic history (namely, Prophet Muḥammad, and his close companions and successors Ebū Bekr, 'Ömer, 'Oṣmān, and 'Alī) as well as the beautiful names of God, Qur'ānic verses and phrases were mentally imprinted into the minds of Ottoman Muslim men. Their names were also often brought up in the daily prayers and weekly sermons as exemplary figures for their certain characteristics, such as piety, loyalty, generosity, and bravery.

21. Romanov documents the existence of female preachers, although their number is relatively small compared to the male preachers. For a brief survey on female preachers in early Islamic period, see Romanov, Maxim (2013), *Computational Reading of Arabic Biographical Collections with Special Reference to Preaching in the Sunnī World (661–1300 CE)*, Unpublished Dissertation, University of Michigan, pp. 225-227.

gotiation and reshaping of different notions of manliness and masculinity, women's occasional attendance and engagement from the time of the Prophet Muḥammad complicates this picture. Even though in most cases women accessed preachers' teachings through their intimate male acquaintances and relatives, they did occasionally attend the mosques themselves (in particular on holy days), but only as a passive audience in the area reserved for them or behind a curtain.

Chronicles further inform us that women were allowed to listen to preachers directly at mosques, although only rarely. For example, while narrating a lightning bolt hitting the minaret in 1575, a poet and compiler of a seventeenth-century biographical work 'Aṭā'ī reports the death of 17 women and two children due to a fire caused by lightning at the mosque.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, according to a *Tenbīh-nāme* (the book of orders) published on March 21 1860, the mosques Sultan Ahmed, Şehzade, and Laleli in Istanbul were devoted to enabling women to fulfill their prayers and listen to sermons. Except for the mosque servants, men were not allowed to enter these mosques outside of regular prayer times, which further emphasizes sexual segregation even in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> Based on a court record, Leslie Peirce reports that a woman named Hacıye Sabah of Aintab was exiled from the city in mid-sixteenth century for hiring a male teacher (and his apprentice) to preach to the girls, young women, and brides at her home.<sup>24</sup> These anecdotes indicate that preachers were, one way or another, able to reach out not only to men but also to women—although again only occasionally.

While preachers are very significant for understanding how gender identities and roles were constructed in the Ottoman period, direct access to early modern sermons remains limited. In addition, the extent to which the sermons offered to men, to women, or to mixed audiences differed, especially in terms of their gendered messages, remains to be examined. Research on these issues through Ottoman preachers and sermons thus relies on two major sources: the books of sermons and *cönks*.

### 3. Sources: Collections of sermons and *cönks*

Books of sermons are compilations of sermons, usually under generic titles, such as *va'z*, *hutbe*, and *mev'ize*.<sup>25</sup> They mainly consist of short religious opinions on particular issues and function as a sourcebook for preachers or others interested in the

22. 'Aṭā Allāh ibn Yaḥyā 'Aṭā'ī, *Ḥadā'ikü'l-hakā'ik fi Tekmileti'ş-şekā'ik: Zeyl-i şekā'ik*, Istanbul: 1268/1852, p. 361.

23. The *Tenbīh-nāme* used here is quoted in Nesimi Yazıcı, "Ramazan Tenbihnāmeleri", in: Aüifd (2005) XLVI: II, 1-11; p. 8. *Tenbīh-nāmes* were special issues published before or during the month of Ramadan to regulate social life. The *tenbīh-nāmes* first emerged during the 1800s, in particular between 1834 and 1871. See, Yazıcı, "Ramazan Tenbihnāmeleri".

24. Peirce, Leslie (2003), *Morality Tales Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab*, Berkley/Los Angeles, University of California Press, pp. 258-275.

25. For example, *Mev'izeler*, MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Istanbul—Hacı Mahmud Efendi nr 1681/1.

topic, rather than as complete sermons ready to be delivered. These books touched on a variety of issues, from praying to marriage and inheritance rights, and they draw from a variety of sources.<sup>26</sup> For the most part, though, they mainly employed the canonical texts of Islam, namely the Qur'ān and the Hadith (the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muḥammad), as reference works. In addition, certain other texts written by previous scholars were used to support the authors' arguments, pointing to the importance of knowing and understanding all kinds of religious texts when studying sermons.

In addition to these generic collations of short opinions, compilations of actual sermons delivered by well-known preachers, scholars, and religious figures shed additional light on the specific contents of sermons and their teachings. Among these, the *Ḥuṭbetü'l-emîrî'l-mü'minîn*, which is believed to be the collection of the sermons of 'Alî b. Ebî Tâlib, who was the fourth caliph and the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muḥammad, should be mentioned.<sup>27</sup> 'Alî is known not only as a heroic figure but also an effective preacher.<sup>28</sup> Other sermon books are attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad and the Rightly Guided Caliphs, under the titles *Ḥuṭbe-i nebiyyunâ 'aleyhi's-selâm*, *Ḥuṭbe-i Ebû Bekr*, *Ḥuṭbe-i 'Ömer*, *Ḥuṭbe-i 'Osmân*, and *Ḥuṭbe-i 'Alî*.<sup>29</sup> Among the best examples of this kind is the *Nehcü'l-belâğa*, a compilation of 239 pieces of 'Alî's sermons, letters, and advice to his son Ḥasan. Some collections of sermons are attributed to other preeminent companions of the Prophet, such as *Ḥuṭbe-i Ebû Eyyüb-i Enşârî*, or to other Muslim scholars.<sup>30</sup> Sufî masters also delivered sermons, not only in their own Sufî circles to their disciples, but also to the masses at mosques. One of the most well-known of this kind is the *Mecâlisü'l-Va'ziyye ve Mecmû'a-i Ḥuṭab*, a 496 folio collection of sermons in Arabic by the seventeenth-century Sufî master 'Azîz Maḥmûd Hüdâyî Efendi.<sup>31</sup> Besides, the *Naşâyih ve'l-Mevâ'iz* provides a 237 folio collection of Hüdâyî's Turkish sermons, compiled from those that he delivered in his Sufi lodge on Fridays and other holy days as well.<sup>32</sup> These sermons were read in his Sufi lodge for many years, even after

26. In regard to sermons on marriage, for example, see *Ḥuṭbetü'n-nikâh*, MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, İstanbul—Yazma Bağışlar nr 6580/5; *Ḥuṭbe Mecmû'ası*, MS İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Balıkesir—nr 196, fols. 36v-37v; *Mecmû'atü'l-Ḥuṭbe*, MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, İstanbul—Reşid Efendi nr 1193/2, fols. 183v-189r; *Risâle-i Ḥuṭbe*, MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, İstanbul—Üsküdar Hacı Selimağa Kütüphanesi-Kemankeş Koleksiyonu, nr 394; *Mecmû'a-i Ḥuṭbe-i şerif*, MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, İstanbul—Reşid Efendi 1377, H. 1284; *Risâle-i mev'ize*, MS İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Manisa—Akhisar Zeynelzade Koleksiyonu 45 Ak Ze nr 5720/1.

27. *Ḥuṭbetü'l-emîrî'l-mü'minîn*, MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, İstanbul—Ayasofya nr 2052/11.

28. Ahmadov, Şahî (2013), «Hz. Ali'nin Vaaz Açısından Yeri ve Konumu», in *Vaaz ve Vaizlik Sempozyumu* (17-18 Aralık 2011) I-II, Ankara, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, pp. 535-544.

29. For example, *Ḥuṭbetü'l-emîrî'l-mü'minîn*; *Ḥuṭbe Mecmû'ası*, MS Adnan Ötügen İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Ankara—nr 06 Hk 3554, fols. 32b-34r.

30. *Ḥuṭbe Mecmû'ası*, MS Adnan Ötügen İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Ankara—nr 06 Hk 3554, 34v-35r.

31. *Mecâlisü'l-Va'ziyye*, MS Üsküdar Hacı Selimağa Kütüphanesi, İstanbul—nr 276. For his other *Ḥuṭbes* see, MS Üsküdar Hacı Selimağa Kütüphanesi—Hüdâyî Efendi Bölümü nr 270/7, and 593/2.

32. *Naşâyih ve'l-Mevâ'iz*.

his death. The collections of many other preachers were also popular in the late Ottoman period, as was the History of Ṭaberī and numerous eschatological and *mi' rāj* works that warned believers by describing heaven and hell.<sup>33</sup>

The *huṭbes* are also named according to their contents, such as the *huṭbe* on the Word of Oneness,<sup>34</sup> or the *huṭbe* on marriage, which teaches readers the conditions and rules of a legal marriage.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, sermons delivered on the merits of certain holy days, nights, and months, such as *huṭbe* on the month of Ramadan,<sup>36</sup> the [holy] night *berāt* or *mi' rāj*,<sup>37</sup> or *Eid el-Adha*<sup>38</sup> were named accordingly. In addition to these sermons dedication to a specific topic, there were sermons under the title *huṭbe-i muṭlak*, which were generic sermons.<sup>39</sup>

Another genre called *cönk* (known as *danadili*, cow tongue, due to its shape) also can be useful sources to understand preachers' roles in the construction of gender roles and identities. These are personal anthologies which gathered favorite poems, hymns, songs, riddles, stories, mealtime prayers, daily notes, significant dates (the birthday of a child or death of a loved one), receipts for remedies, notes on black magic, notes regarding credit and debits, as well as sermons written down by the *cönk* keeper.<sup>40</sup> Different handwriting in some *cönks* suggest that they did not belong to one individual, but rather that they may have been passed down from one person to another, each of whom added what was personally important. It is perhaps be-

33. The most popular sermon books are listed as Ebū'l-Leys Semerqandī's (d. 985) *Tenbīhü'l-Gāfilin* and Bustānū'l-'Ārifin; Gazālī's (d. 1111) *İhyā'ü 'Ulūmī'd-dīn* and *Kimyā-yı Sa'ādet*; İmām-zāde Muḥammed b. Ebī Bekr (d. 1177)'s *Şir'atü'l-İslām*; Ahmed b. Muḥammed b. 'Abdu'r-Raḥmān b. el-Ḳudāme el-Maḳdisī's (d. 1223) *Minhācü'l-Kāşidīn*; 'Abdu'r-Raḥmān b. 'Abdi's-selām eṣ-Şafūrī's (d. 1480) *Nizhetü'l-Mecālis*; and Birgivī Mehmed İbn Pīr 'Alī's (d. 1573) *Ṭarīkatü'l-Muḥammedīyye*. Besides these books, the following books were among the popular texts among preachers: Celāle 'd-Dīn Rūmī's (d. 1273) *Meşnevī*, Sinān-zāde Ḥasan b. Ümm-i Sinān's *Mecālis-i Sināniyye* (d. 1677); Erzurumlu İbrāhīm Ḥaḳkī's (d. 1780) *Ma'rifet-nāme*; 'Oṣmān b. Ḥasan. Ahmed ez-Zākir el-Hopavī's (d. 1826) *Dürretü'n-Nāşihīn*, also known as *Dürretü'l-Vā'izīn*; Oflu Muḥammed Emīn Efendi's (d. 1902) *Necātü'l-Mü'minīn*; Muḥammed Şākir's *İrşādü'l-ġāfilīn* (published in 1908); and Muḥammed Cemāle'd-dīn el-Ḳāsimī's (d. 1914) *Mev'izātü'l-Mü'minīn min İhyā'ü'l-'Ulūmī'd-dīn*. Abdullah Kahraman, "Vaizlerin Kaynakları", in: *Vaaz ve Vaizlik Sempozyumu* (17-18 Aralık 2011) I, Ankara, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2013, pp. 235-254; 239-240.

34. *Huṭbe Mecmū'ası*, MS Adnan Ötügen İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Ankara—06 Hk 3554, fols. 26v-27r.

35. See, for example, *Huṭbe Mecmū'ası*, MS İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Balıkesir—nr 196; *Huṭbe Mecmū'ası*, MS Adnan Ötügen İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Ankara—nr 06 Hk 3554; and *Huṭbe Mecmū'ası*, MS Adnan Ötügen İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Ankara—nr 06 Hk 3554, fols. 36v-37v.

36. *Huṭbe Mecmū'ası*, MS Adnan Ötügen İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Ankara—nr 06 Hk 3554, fols. 18v-19r. For the sermons on other holy months, see also *ibid.*, 18v-21v.

37. There is more than one sermon on holy nights. See for example, *ibid.*, fols. 24v-25r, and 24r-24v.

38. *ibid.*, fols. 22v-23r.

39. See, for example, *Huṭbe Mecmū'ası*, MS Adnan Ötügen İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Ankara—06 Hk 3554 fols. 25r-25v. I would like to thank Sheikh Ashraf Ibrahim of the Masjid al-Mustafa in Waterbury, Connecticut, for his insights on the *huṭbe-i muṭlak*.

40. For a typical sample of *cönks*, see [Cönk], MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, İstanbul—Yazma Bağışlar nr 2356; MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, İstanbul—Mehmet Taviloğlu nr 310 and 311.



cause of their different keepers that *cönks* are especially rich in their content.<sup>41</sup> The contents of *cönks* also vary according to where they were penned.<sup>42</sup> Although it was common to keep a *cönk*, these books appear to have been especially popular among those who combined urban and rural traditions through education in madrasas (college) and Sufi lodges.

The *cönks* are understudied materials. Part of the challenge is that there are so many of them, and few offer any indication of their owner's identity. A thorough analysis of their contents is thus necessary to understand if those that contain sermons actually belonged to a preacher who wrote them down, or to a regular Muslim man who took notes on sermons that he enjoyed. In the limited examples that I have examined thus far, I have not noticed any strong reference to male-female relations in the sermons noted in *cönk* texts.<sup>43</sup> Yet, considering the abundance of the *cönks*, it should be kept in mind that a thorough study of the sermons in these texts might reveal further insights on the topic.

What follows is a closer look at two of the most popular Ottoman texts: The *Ṭarīkatü'l-Muḥammediyye fī beyāni's-sırāṭi'n-nebeviyye ve'l-Aḥmediyye* on ethics (aḥlāk) and Islamic belief system (aḳā'id) by Birgili Pīr 'Alī oğlu Muḥammed, the intellectual inspiration of the Kāḏīzādeli movement (referred to as Birgivī from here on); and the *Naṣāyih ve Mevā'iz*, a compilation of the aforementioned 'Azīz Maḥmūd Hüdāyī's sermons.

#### 4. Gender Roles/Perception

One of the popular sermon books is the *Tenbīhü'l-Ġāfilīn* (Admonition for the Neglectful) by Ebū'l-Leyṣ Naṣr b. Muḥammed b. Aḥmed Semerḳandī (d. 983), a significant tenth century Hanafī scholar from Samarkand.<sup>44</sup> The *Tenbīhü'l-Ġāfilīn* deals with the topic of sincerity (iḥlās), Paradise, Hell, and the weighing of deeds; it also has a short section on the rights of women and men in marriage.<sup>45</sup> He lists the wife's duties and her husband's rights over her. Six hundred years after Ebū'l-Leyṣ, another Hanafī Scholar in Istanbul dedicated a short section to the same topic

41. Köktürk, Şahin (2007), *Cönklerden Bir Cönk Amasya Cöngü*, Samsun, Yazı Yayınevi.

42. For example, the *cönks* kept in Bosnia focus on mainly heroic poems. Yıldırım, Dursun (2013), *Elyazması Bir kitap Türü: Cönk/Cöng Kayıp Saraybosna Cöngü Bağlamında*, Ankara, Türk Kültürü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayınları, p. 27.

43. There are numerous *cönks* including copies of sermons in manuscript libraries. One interesting example among many is “*Huṭbe-i nikāḥ*” (sermon on marriage) in *Cönk, Danadili, Hutbeler, Çeşitli Şairlerden Şiirler, İlahiler, Şarkı Güfteleri*, MS Suleymaniye Kütüphanesi, İstanbul—Fuad Bayramoğlu Özel Koleksiyonu, Mikrofilm 3799 (undated), no pagination.

44. Van Ess, John, «Abu'l-Layṣ Samarḳandī», in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I/3, 332-333; retrieved from [http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abul-lay-nasr-b] (accessed on 28 April 2019).

45. Semerḳandī, Ebū'l-Leyṣ Naṣr b. Muḥammed b. Aḥmed, *Tenbīhü'l-Ġāfilīn*, The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, Call Number: 325; fols. 139r-140r. Retrieved from https://archive.org/details/tanbihalghafilin00unse

in his *Ṭarīkatü'l-Muḥammediyye*, almost repeating Ebū'l-Leys' words. That these arguments were incorporated directly into Muslim culture vividly demonstrates that gender identities and roles were repeatedly shaped by Muslim scholars, despite geographical and time distance.

Along with Ebū'l-Leys' *Tenbīhü'l-Ġāfilīn* and the *Bustānū'l-Ārifīn* and Muḥammad Ġazālī's (d. 1111) *Ihyā'u 'Ulūmu'd-dīn* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), the *Ṭarīkatü'l-Muḥammediyye* became one the favorite sermon books for preachers, not only in Ottoman lands, but also in East Asia and North Africa.<sup>46</sup> It was the first text to be printed in the Ottoman world. Although it deals with the duties of wives and husbands in marriage in only a short section, this text nevertheless sheds further light on how medieval and early modern Muslim preachers constructed gender identities and roles through their sermons.<sup>47</sup>

The *Ṭarīkatü'l-Muḥammediyye*, a handbook for many early modern and modern Ottoman/Turkish preachers, was originally written in Arabic in 1573, and then translated into Ottoman Turkish. Its popularity is attested by the almost 1,000 extant copies found in manuscript libraries in Europe and the Middle East.<sup>48</sup> Birgivī used approximately eighty Islamic sources in developing the *Ṭarīkatü'l-Muḥammediyye*, including thirty-three treatises on hadiths, twenty-nine on Islamic jurisprudence, nine on morals and mysticism, five on the beliefs of Islam, and four on exegesis.<sup>49</sup> He might not have consulted all of these sources personally, yet his copious references to these texts demonstrate his familiarity with them. This lengthy manuscript (472 pages) contains a short but insightful section on the rights of wives and husbands (four pages) that vividly depicts how Birgivī perceived gender roles and what he taught to his readers and audience about them. For example, the text discusses a wife's responsibilities and duties to her husband as follows. According to Birgivī, it is a man's essential right to be obeyed by his wife, so long as his commands do not conflict or contradict Islamic teachings and law:

46. Ġazālī's *Ihyā'u 'Ulūmu'd-dīn* has been one of the most influential texts in the Islamic world. For our purposes, especially see the detailed analysis of his discussion on marriage by Immenkamp, Beatrix (1994), *Marriage and Celibacy in Mediaeval Islam: A study of Ghazali's Kūāb ādāb al-nikāh*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cambridge.

47. While marriage appears to be one of the main topics for medieval and early modern Muslim scholars to discuss gender roles, celibacy, though not often, was also part of the discussion. In this regard, see Bashir, Shahzad (2007), «Islamic Tradition and Celibacy», in Olson, Carl (Ed.), *Celibacy and Religious Traditions*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 133-150.

48. For some of them, see Martı, Huriye (2012), *Et-tarīkatü'l-muḥammediyye-Muhteva Analizi, Kaynakları ve Kaynaklık Değeri*, Istanbul, Rağbet Yayınları, footnotes 81 and 82: The British Library, Near and Middle Eastern Collections, no: 13394, 14503; National Libraray of Chech Republic, no: XVIII G 148; Helsinki University Library, no: Arab-148, Arab-235; Amavutluk Devlet Arşivleri Osmanlı Yazmaları, no: 232-288; Jewish national & University Library, Arabic manuscripts, no: Ms. Ar. 281, Ap. Ar. 428; Penjab University Library, no: Ar. I 22; Ayetullah el-Uzma Mer'asi Necefi ktp no: 1998. 3039, 3713, 8112; and Merkezu'l-melik Faysal li'l-Buhus ve Dirasati'l-Islamiyye, no: 67896, 399430.

49. Martı, p. 90. For a full list of Birgivī's sources, *ibid.*, pp. 65-99.

The aforementioned treatise says that the right of a husband over his wife is that the wife serves her husband in all chores that are not illicit. Even if he asks her to carry stones from one mountain to another one, she has to obey him.<sup>50</sup>

He then reports another hadith account that “Even if a wife licks the blood and purulence that runs [from] her husband’s nose, she cannot fulfill his rights”.<sup>51</sup> A wife should obey her husband to the degree that she should not obey anyone else. Birgivî quotes another hadith account to support his rationale: “If I were to command a single person to bow in prostration to another person, I would have commanded a woman to bow down (in obedience and respect, not in worship) to her husband”.<sup>52</sup>

A wife should serve her husband physically and must be attentive to her husband’s sexual needs. She is recommended to beautify herself for him. If she refuses to respond to his legitimate sexual advances, she would be committing a monstrous sin, unless there is a legitimate excuse for her to do so, such as menstruating, making up an obligatory fast that she has previously missed, or being ill. If a wife opposes her husband, she is entitled to (deserves) divine wrath. As a matter of fact, he quotes, “The Messenger who is the most generous said: ‘Whenever a husband calls his wife to his bed, but the wife refuses to fulfill the call, then angels will curse such a wife until the morning’”.<sup>53</sup>

Birgivî also defines the wife’s duties in the home, emphasizing that the wife is responsible for household chores such as sweeping the house, cooking, making dough, and washing the clothes. If she does not fulfill these duties, he writes, she is a sinner. If she is a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad or paralyzed, she is not obliged to serve according to the Islamic law. If she is none of these two, she is expected to serve. While referring to some other texts to support his opinion, he states that when his daughter Fāṭıma married ‘Alī, the Prophet charged her with completing the chores inside the house and ‘Alī with the chores outside the house.<sup>54</sup>

A woman cannot leave her house without her husband’s permission; if she does, the angels will curse her until she returns home. And for every step she takes, a house is built for her in Hell. Even if she leaves home with permission, she should neither put on perfume, nor adorn herself. She should be wearing an old woman’s dress. What is necessary for women is that they should not make their hair styles look bigger under their scarves and not wear *pointed* toe heels. He continues:

[...] because the Prophet said, “I saw two kinds of women on the *mi‘rāj* night that I haven’t seen during my own time. And a group of demons of hell were holding whips of fire which were as big as the tail of a cow. They were beating these women [with those whips] in Hell”. He was asked, “O Messenger of God, what kinds of women

50. Birgivî, *Ṭarīkatü’l-Muḥammediyye*, p. 419.

51. *Ibid.* p. 418.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*, p. 419.

were those women”? He replied, “They are the kinds of women who wear thin dresses on the earth and look naked. The second kinds of women are those who make their heads as big as a camel’s hump. The smell of Paradise is felt like a thousand year-long road, but these women cannot feel that smell and they cannot enter Paradise.”<sup>55</sup>

The wife should not ask anything from her husband beyond his (physical and financial) capacity so that he would not try to fulfill her desires through illicit ways. If she knows that he goes astray in illicit ways to please her, she will be sharing his sin with him. It is as the wives of previous Muslim scholars are reported to have told their husbands, “We can tolerate hunger, but cannot tolerate hellfire”.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the wife should not give away anything from her husband’s house without his permission. If she does, she sins, while her husband gets the credit for her good deeds. She has the right to give very little, just one or two coins so that the beggar does not leave her door with empty hands, as the tradition requires.<sup>57</sup>

Another obligation that Birgivī mentions is that a wife should tolerate her husband’s shortcomings, and should not praise herself over her husband based on physical, financial, social advantages. For example, she should not brag about looking better than her husband:

One of the scholars narrates, “one day I stopped by a village. I came across a beautiful woman and heard that her husband was an ugly man. I [asked] the woman, ‘How can you be content with such beauty to be married to such an ugly-faced man?’ Hind [the woman] said, ‘You are making mistakes in your words. Perhaps, my husband did a beautiful deed between him and his Lord, and [thus] his Lord gave me to him as a response. It is also possible that perhaps I committed a sin against my Lord and my Lord gave me to him as a result of [my sin]. So now, I am content with the fortune and predestination that my Lord saw appropriate for me’”.<sup>58</sup>

When it comes to the obligations of the husband toward his wife, they are greater than the obligations of the wife toward her husband. Birgivī lists them as follows:

You should feed her with what you eat, you should dress her (provide clothes), you should not beat her on the face, you should not reveal [her defects] and embarrass her [in the presence of other people], and you should not abandon and leave her in a separate house.<sup>59</sup>

In case the wife fails to fulfill her obligations and responsibilities towards her husband, Birgivī states that the husband should try to resolve the issues with her:

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., p. 420.

57. Ibid., p. 419.

58. Ibid., p. 420.

59. Ibid.

If necessary, you may separate the beds at home and abandon her [within the same house]. It is narrated in the *Eşbāh*<sup>60</sup> that beating is permissible for four reasons: that she does not attempt to beautify herself for him; she refuses to meet his sexual demands; she leaves the house without his permission or for a legitimate reason; and she neglects her religious duties.<sup>61</sup>

In sum, according to Birgivī, the man is the caretaker of his wife and household. He is responsible for all of her affairs. He is responsible for training, educating, and disciplining his wife, if needed. He describes wives who tyrannize and oppose their husbands, and who do not follow the rules of wifehood, as “Calamities”.

It bears noting here that Birgivī and some other early modern scholars are acknowledged for their rich repertoire of the phrases, proverbs, and stories of hagiographical and prophetic figures. Nevertheless, contemporary scholars, among them Hayrettin Karaman, one of the prominent scholars of Islamic law (Shari‘a) in Turkey, have criticized them for quoting false hadith accounts and using concocted tales. Birgivī’s preference for using weak and fabricated hadith accounts shows that some preachers preferred to use their sources selectively to support and spread their opinions. In their teachings and sermons, they saw no harm in relating weak hadiths, or ignoring those that disagreed with their understanding of gender roles (such as the Prophet helping with house chores and laundry). Yet, it should be stated that such texts, canonical or fabricated, were practical and accessible for preaching. The authors preferred to quote the Qur’ānic verses and hadith accounts rather than interpreting them. If there was a conflict, they stated which opinion they took while providing textual evidence to support their reasoning. These early modern texts thus should be read carefully, taking their sources and references into consideration.<sup>62</sup>

While Birgivī, an anti-mystical mosque preacher, meticulously discussed all aspects of the responsibilities and duties of a wife in marriage along with the rights of the husband, ‘Azīz Maḥmūd Hüdāyī, the founder of the Jalwatiyya Sufi order and also known for his preaching, approached the topic quite differently in his sermons. Hüdāyī was a prolific author and poet. In addition to his poetry collection and treatises, his weekly sermons in both Arabic and Turkish given at his Sufi lodge have also been compiled. Among his approximately thirty books, his *Mecālisü’l-va‘ziyye* (496 folios, in Arabic), *Mecmū‘a-i Huṭab* (4 folios, in Arabic) and *Naşāyih ve Mevā‘iz* (237 folios, in Turkish) are especially important for our purposes.

60. By *Eşbāh*, the author refers to Ibn Nüceym el-Miṣrī’s (d. 1563) *el-Eşbāh ve’n-nezā‘ir*, one of the most popular texts on Islamic jurisprudence.

61. Birgivī, *Ṭarīkatü’l-Muḥammediyye*, p. 420.

62. See, for example, Karaman, Hayrettin (1993), «Vaaz Kaynaklarının Tavsiye ve Tenkid», in *İslam Işığında Günün Meseleleri*, İstanbul: Nesil Yayınları, 2, pp. 484-503. See also, Süt, Abdülnasır (2013), «Klasik Vaaz Kaynaklarının Kelami (İtikadi) Açısından Değerlendirilmesi», in *Vaaz ve Vaizlik Sempozyumu* (17-18 Aralık 2011) I, Ankara, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, pp. 285-299; Kahraman, “Vaizlerin Kaynakları”.

Here, I will look at how the *Naşāyih ve Mevā'iz* relates to gender constructions. The text consists of forty-two *meclis* (chapters) devoted to his forty-two sermons compiled most likely by one of his disciples. The topics of his sermons vary from piety and devotion to generosity and are enriched and supported by short stories, anecdotes, and Qur'anic verses and hadith accounts. As opposed to Birgivî, 'Azîz Maḥmūd Hüdāyî does not appear to have been concerned about either the duties of the wife or the rights of the husband. His occasional anecdotes about men and women emphasize devotion to God and piety as the most important merits. However, even in these anecdotes, a hierarchy is established between men and women (and between husband and wife in marriage) based on piety. For example, in a story that addresses the importance of generosity, 'Azîz Maḥmūd Hüdāyî narrates the story of a man who refuses to give some alms to a beggar. His wife, however, gives what the beggar needs despite her husband's objections and harsh reactions, saying that the beggar has asked for help in the name of God.

Quite upset with his wife, the man asks her to enter a highly heated oven, in the name of God (as the beggar said), to show her how ridiculous her reasoning was. After ritually cleansing and adorning herself, she enters the oven with no opposition, saying "In the name of God". As soon as she enters, he closes the oven lid, cursing her, "Glad, I am released from her face. May she go to Hell!" and walks away. Yet, a divine call is heard, "Would God burn His friend"? Once she hears this divine call, she feels relieved and starts praying in the oven, as if it is not hot in there. Then, 'Azîz Maḥmūd Hüdāyî links this story to the story of Abraham, who is also believed to have been thrown into fire that turned into a rose garden with God's will.<sup>63</sup>

The story underscores that what matters to 'Azîz Maḥmūd Hüdāyî, a Sufi preacher, is one's piety and complete devotion to God, not his or her gender. While Birgivî stresses that a wife is not allowed to give anything from the home without her husband's permission, Hüdāyî praises the woman who ignores her husband's command when God's name is mentioned. Here, piety and devotion override gendered hierarchies.

In another anecdote Hüdāyî narrates the story of a blacksmith who puts his hand in fire with no fear or damage. When asked about the mystery behind that, he responds that years ago he forced a woman who came to him to ask for food for her children at the time of famine. She rejected his offer a few times, but eventually she agreed to have an illicit relation with him to be able to provide food for her children. Yet, during the relationship, she starts shaking with the fear of God. Having seen how fearful of God she is, the blacksmith regrets having forced her. He says, even as a woman, who lacks in religious commitment and inheritance rights, she fears God, and as a man he should be perfect in obeying God's law. In regret, he gives some

63. Arpağuş, *Sohbetler Aziz Mahmud, Hüdayî*, pp. 131-133. For the reference to Abraham's story in the Qur'an, see Qur'an 21: 69. This story was enriched upon through the narratives of storytellers, preachers, and poets in Islamic tradition. See, for example, the sixteenth century Ottoman poet Hîndî, Maḥmūd (2013), *Kıssa-ı Enbiyâ. Hindî Mahmûd, Kıssa-ı Enbiyâ Peygamber Kıssaları İnceleme-tenkitli Metin Tıpkı Basım*, İstanbul, Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, pp. 346-347 and 350-351.

alms to the woman and releases her. While leaving, she prays that God may never burn him.<sup>64</sup> While Hüdāyī emphasizes the insignificance of gender again through this story, he reflects the perception of women and gender inequality in that society.<sup>65</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

From the beginning of Islam, preachers have played a crucial role not only in teaching Islamic values and ethical conduct, but also in forming gender identities. Despite some recent studies on the functions of preachers in modern Turkey, the role of preachers in the Ottoman Empire has yet to be thoroughly studied. My current work is looking at how well-known sermon texts that circulated among Ottoman preachers and religious scholars can help us understand early modern Ottoman preachers' contribution to defining gender identities and roles.

As an exemplary text, Birgivī's *Tarīkatü'l-Muhammediyye*, one of the most widespread and cited sources among Ottoman preachers and scholars, demonstrates that some early modern preachers focused on the responsibilities of women to their husbands rather than on women's responsibilities to their children, neighbors, and society. Women are depicted as needing protection from and guidance by their husbands. As can be seen, piety, chastity, loyalty (that is, loyalty to God and her husband) are the wife's main responsibilities. Not only their responsibilities at home, but also their public appearances, were determined and dictated by preachers who had the opportunity to spread their ideas to hundreds of men in the mosques. By contrast, a preeminent Sufi preacher from the same time period, 'Azīz Maḥmūd Hüdāyī, focused on merits and piety, and disregarded gender differences and responsibilities in his sermons. This raises an important question about potentially conflicting messages between Sufi and non-Sufi preachers.

After consulting numerous primary and secondary sources in this topic, my next step will be to explore how popular these sermons/writings were, and how they were used and perceived by successor preachers. The integration of these texts and their teachings into society and the degree to which these ideas were accepted by men (and women) also needs to be studied. Furthermore, the influence of Sufi teachings through Sufi-minded preachers on constructing gender identities and roles deserves a more thorough analysis for a better understanding of the varied roles and influence of preachers within different social and religious groups in early modern Ottoman society.

64. Arpağuş, *Sohbetler Aziz Mahmud, Hüdāyī*, pp. 237-239.

65. For the Sufi perspective on gender and sexuality, see Shaikh, Sa'diyya (2012), *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy: Ibn 'Arabī, Gender, and Sexuality*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina University Press.