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THE POWER OF POETRY IN THE OTTOMAN CONTEXT

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Introduction

This article examines the relationship between poetry and politics in the Ottoman context roughly between the late fourteenth to the late sixteenth centuries, privileging the reigns of Murad II (r. 1421-44, 1446-51) and Süleyman (r. 1520-66). Within this context, my focus is going to be on poetry writing by members of the dynasty. In contrast to the idea that perceives literature and arts, including poetry, as elegant pastimes of the elite, I argue that cultural activities were often practiced as integral parts of political projects. More specifically, poetry was frequently used as a political tool to communicate the image of a civilizing sultan as well as to challenge adversaries and shape political opinion.

I contend that patronage as a sign of the magnanimity of the ruler was often only one facet of the cultural involvement of early modern dynasties in the post Chinghizid Islamicate environment. By extension, a refined taste in literature and the arts or a developed intellectual appreciation of philosophy and the sciences were not mere signs of the sophistication of a sultan or a prince that would augment his prestige. At least in the period between the fourteenth to the mid sixteenth centuries in the Islamic east, where the definition of rulership was closely associated with, if not totally based on, the epistemology of Ibn ‘Arabi and the Brethren of Purity, a sultan’s composing poetry was also a practicing of an applied science/art. As such, he was engaging in and promoting a civilizing activity, which was

considered a part of the mission of ideal rulers, prophets, and imams, such as Adam, Enoch (Idris), Solomon, and Jafer al-Sadiq.[1]

The Ottoman sultans' adventure with poetry begins with Murad II. So will this paper. The following summary of the political and cultural history of the Jalayirid dynasty aims to offer a political and cultural comparison for the Ottoman dynasty and state during the same period. It is also planned to serve as an example of the great mobility of artists, writers, their works, and influences in an extensive geography. The effects of this mobility and its synthetic outcome in the lands ruled by the Ottoman dynasty still offer much uncharted territory for research despite the recent interest of art historians.

In continuation, I move to the understanding of poetry as an applied science, a notion that formally entered the Ottoman intellectual world by ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Bistami's (d. 858/1454) categorization of sciences, prepared for Sultan Murad II and remained alive at least well into the reign of Sultan Süleyman as it is witnessed by the lines of his poetry quoted in this section. I then suggest similarities between the practice of learning and writing poetry and that of artisanal mastery. I suggest that the teaching of manual trades that was included in the education of princes should be also studied in relation to their activities as poets.

The last section treats the second part of my argument on the potential political power of poetry. Here I discuss how writing and reading poetry cut across the private-public dichotomy by serving both as a medium to express the most intimate feelings and as an instrument to form public opinion. I give two examples from the reign of Sultan Süleyman: a

[1] In the universal history of five volumes, *Şāhnāme-yi Āl-i ʻOs̲mān*, which Fethullah Çelebi (ʻArif) wrote for Sultan Süleyman in 965/1558, he singles out these figures in their capacity as civilizing kings by describing them as the founders of sciences like geomancy as in the case of Jafar al-Sadiq, or as teachers of trades as in the case of Enoch (Idris). The latter is also pictured tailoring in one of the ten illustrations of the first volume, titled *Enbiyānāma* (The Book of Prophets). I argue that these political and religious leaders are presented as antecedents of Sultan Süleyman, 'Arif's patron, whom he projects as the prophet-like sultan of his age. See Fatma Sinem Eryılmaz, "The *Shehnameci*s of Sultan Süleymān: 'Ārif and Eflātūn and Their Dynastic Project," Dissertation thesis, University of Chicago, 2010.

well-known dirge after his assassination of his oldest son, Mustafa, and a verse conversation between him and another one of his sons, who incidentally was also assassinated.

Historical Background

As far as we know, the first Ottoman sultan who coined verse was Murad II (r. 1421-1444; 1446-1451). We cannot say with certainty if any of his predecessors in the dynasty expressed themselves in verse, but his are the first that are included in the Ottoman biographies of poets.[2]

Both culturally and politically, Murad's reign was one of transition, one from a politically agile principality to a sultanate. The Ottoman principality had found its niche by the Byzantine border in the aftermath of the Mongol invasions in the second half of the thirteenth century when western Asia, including Fars and Anatolia, had undergone a significant demographic, political, and cultural transformation. Two decades prior to Murad's ascension, Anatolia had lived through another great invasion from Central Asia with new consequences. Most ostensibly for the Ottoman dynasty, the project of unifying former Byzantine territory under their dominion had lived a serious draw back with Murad's grandfather, Bayezid's defeat in 1402 before Timur (r. 1370-1405). When with Mehmed I, the Ottoman dynasty could get back on its feat under one leader, they had to accept being vassals of the Timurids. In short time, however, the project of a unified empire was revived with Murad II. With the privilege of hindsight, we can suggest that this time, both the political traditions and more importantly, the cultural resources of the "Ottomanizing" milieu was ready to realize such an ambition that had seemed too early in the time of Bayezid I.[3]

[2] Sultan Murad II is included among the sultan poets in the biographies of Sehi (d. 955/1548-49), Latifi (d. 990/1582), and Kınalızade (d. 1012/1604).

[3] Cornell Fleischer used the term "Ottomanizing" 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 and Sovereignty in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in

Before progressing to the Ottoman dynastic practice of poetry, I will offer an example for comparison with the Jalayirids who ruled over eastern Persia *(ʿIrāq-i ʿAjam)*, after the dissolution of the western Ilkhanid branch (1256-1353) of the Mongolian empire.[4] I hope that this comparison will serve to better understand the state of Ottoman cultural inheritance in relation to the political and cultural possibilities of the greater geography within which it was shaped.

There are several reasons for my choice. Firstly, the Jalayirid contention in the politically variegated and culturally synthetic map of post-Mongolian west Asia as well as their drastic military experience with the Timurid forces invite opportune comparisons with the Ottoman principality operating in a similarly politically divided albeit geographically different area. Secondly, their political history resulted in the forced mobility of many accomplished artists, writers, and their cultural products of high quality, an important part of which landed in the Ottoman court and treasury. In this context, in addition to effectively exemplifying the great mobility of people, ideas, and influences in this period, they represent possibly one of the most important sources of inspiration and instruction for the developing Ottoman culture.

The Jalayirids and Cultural Mobility

A branch of the Mongols that had migrated to western Asia with the Chengizid armies, the Jalayir tribe had formed part of the Ilkhanid military aristocracy. In 1340, exploiting the chaotic situation engendered by the death of the Ilkhanid ruler Abu Saʿid (r. 1317–35), Hasan (r. 1336-1356), the founder of the dynasty, declared his independence in Bagdad. Less than six decades later, when still young as a state, the Jalayirids, received a crippling blow by

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Treasures of Knowledge An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3-1503/4), vol.1: Essays, (Leiden, Boston, 2109), 155. A century earlier, this was even more the case.

[4] H. R. Roemer, "The Jalayirids, Muzaffarids and Sarbardārs," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6, *The Timurid and Safavid Periods*, ed. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart (Cambridge, 1993), 5–9.

Timur and his armies and faced tribal revolts especially in the hands of their former allies, the Turcoman Karakoyunlu tribe. The latter finally brought their political end in 1432.

Despite their short-lived political success, the Jalayirids left a remarkable cultural track. Nourished both by the rooted cultural heritage of Bagdad and Tabriz, and the burgeoning one of the Ilkhanid court, when the Jalayir dynasty began ruling independently, they did so with cultural pretensions. According to the *Tazkira-i Şuʿarā* of Dawlatshah written in 1487, already the second ruler of the dynasty, Shaikh Uvays (r. 1356-74), was known for his artistic skills along with administrative ones.[5] His generous patronage and aesthetic taste were attested by his patronage of the renowned painter ʿAbd al-Hayy and the equally famous poet Salman Savaji, who, coincidentally, was to become one of the most frequently evoked names in the Turkish ghazels of the Ottoman sultan Süleyman (r. 1520-1566). Shaikh Uvays's own reed pen and ink paintings had brought him admiration among his contemporaries.[6]

Shaikh Uvays is known to have passed his artistic interests and knowledge to his sons. In addition to being a painter, he was also a skilled calligrapher, and taught the classical calligraphic styles of *thuluth* and *naskh* to his son Ahmad (r. 1382-1410).[7] Sultan Ahmed followed his father in cultivating various aspects of the arts and literature and, along with Kadi Burhaneddin of Eretna, he was one of the first sultans in the Islamicate environment to compile an anthology, or *divan*, of his poems.

This summary information on the Jalayirids provides sufficient elements that contrast with the political and cultural state of the Ottomans in the same period. Not only the Ottoman success of political and territorial recovery after the Timurid debacle stands out in

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5 Dawlatshāh Samarqandī, *Devletşah tezkiresi: (Tezkiretü'ş-Şuarâ)*, trans. Necati Lugal, 3 vols. (Istanbul, 1977), 2:318; Filiz Çağman and Zeren Tanındı, "Selection from Jalayirid Books in the Libraries of Istanbul," *Muqarnas* 28 (2011): 221-264.

[6] Çağman and Tanındı, "Selection from Jalayirid Books," 222.

[7] Çağman and Tanındı infer from Shaikh Uvays' teaching these styles to his son that he might have earned a diploma (*ijāzāt*) in calligraphy. Çağman and Tanındı, "Selection from Jalayirid Books," 222.

comparison, but also their less developed state of literary and artistic culture. The sixteenth century Ottoman bureaucrat and intellectual Mustafa ʻĀli's words in the biographical section of his magna opus *Künhü'l-aḫbār* support the relatively poor literary scene of the fourteenth century:

> It is not a secret that in the times of Osman Han and Orhan Han and Sultan Murad [I] no one was known from among poets. Even those who were capable of singing only unadorned verses had not attained fame. For it is known that at that time, the residents of the realm of Rum (*mülk-i Rūm*) in their majority were Turkish and Tatar champions of Islam (*ġuzāt*) and it is understood that the rest of the habitants of the region were a squadron of simpletons who generated from the children of infidels, so that among them there was not even one who knew poetry…As a consequence of this there was no one in the name of a poet. No one with a penname was known to anyone until the time of Bayezid Han [I] and some Iranian poets and graceful litterateurs of Nevayi's tongue came to the realm of Rum with Timur Han.[8]

Still, one has to be careful not to take this assessment of the level of early Ottoman poetry wholesale. Not all Ottoman biographers of poets of the sixteenth century include earlier poets in their works. Those, like Mustafa ʻĀli, who do, do not represent a complete or perfectly accurate picture of the literary environment for the fourteenth century "realm of Rum". The literary cannon the first Ottoman biographers were in the process of making left even some of the more well-known figures out. One example is Gülşehri. A relatively successful and famous poet of the fourteenth century, he was not mentioned in any of the sixteenth century biographies and hence did not enter the Ottoman literary cannon.[9] At the

[8] Mustafa ʻĀli, *Künhü'l Ahbâr'ın Tezkire Kısmı*, ed. Mustafa İsen (Ankara, 1994), 101. "The Nevayi's tongue" is Chagatai Turkish. Aside from being one of the most prominent literary figures of his time, ʻAli Shir Nevayi (844/1401-906/1501) was a leading member of the court, for many years the head of the state council (divan) and a close friend of the Timurid ruler of Khorasan Sultan Husayn Bayqara (r. 873-75/1469-70 and 875-911/1470-1506). His literary work, particularly in Chagatai, was an important source for Ottoman literature especially in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. For general information on Nevayi, see Maria E. Subtelny, "ʿAlī Shīr Navāʾī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd edition. Consulted online on 07 November 2020 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_23837. For his influence on Ottoman literature, see Mehmed Çavuşoğlu, "Kanuni Devrinin Sonuna Kadar Anadolu'da Nevâyi Tesiri Üzerine Notlar," in *Atsız Armağanı*, ed. Erol Güngör, M.N. Hacıeminoğlu, Mustafa Kafalı, and Osman F. Sertkaya (Istanbul, 1976). As it is reflected in the very similar organization of both works in eight parts, Nevayi's biography of poets, *Mecālis al-Nafāis* (Excellent Gatherings), appears as the main model of reference for Sehi Bey (d. 955/1548-49), the first Ottoman compiler in this genre. When introducing his biography, Sehi Bey gives the names of two other models for his biography. These are *Bahāristān* (Land of Spring) of Jami (1414–92), and the *Tazkira* of Dawlat-shah (d. 1487), both in Persian. Mustafa İsen, *Sehî Bey Tezkiresi, Heşt Behişt* (Ankara, 1998), 36-37. Here and thereafter all translations are mine.

[9] See Selim Kuru, "Portrait of a Shaykh as Author in the Fourteenth-Century Anatolia: Gülşehri and His

same time, it would not be wrong to state that the territories controlled by the Ottomans had not yet made a special name for the quality of their poetry production when Murad II started coining his own verses in the first half of the fifteenth century.

In contrast, the panorama of literature both in verse and prose on the side of the Jalayirids was rich and multi-colored. The political rivalries especially with the Muzaffarids and the Karakoyunlu, while at times endangering a tranquil court culture and hence artistic production, also led to a mobile artistic scene in terms of people, their works, and with them, stylistic influences. As a result, several fields of cultural activity reached a high level of sophistication in an area that had Shiraz, Tabriz, and Bagdad as its main centers.[10] Timur's incursion at the end of the fourteenth century added yet another dimension to the picture. When he attacked Bagdad in 1393 and again in 1401, for example, he took many of the Jalayirid poets, artists, and scholars with him to Samarqand. Later in the courts of his descendants, particularly those of his son Shahrukh (r. 1405-1447), and grandsons Baysunghur Mirza (d. 1433), Ulugh Bey (d. 1449) and Iskender Mirza (d. 1415), Samarqand, Herat, Shiraz, and Isfahan developed as leading cultural centers of the Islamicate world.

The impact of Timur and his dynasty on the mobility of artists and intellectuals was severalfold. They were at times forced to move to their courts as in the case of the Jalayirid artists mentioned above or in the case of those who were brought to Baysunghur Mirza's court after his capture of Tabriz in 1421. Some also sought patronage in their courts willingly, for the Timurid courts offered them attractive financial resources and facilities. The famous mathematician and astronomer Qadizade Rumi (d. in the second quarter of the fifteenth century), is one well-known example. He began his studies in Ottoman Bursa,

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Falaknāma," in *Islamic Literature and Intellectual Life in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Anatolia*, ed. A.C.S. Peacock and Sara Nur Yildiz (Würzburg, 2016), 173-196. For an assessment of the literary environment of core Ottoman lands (Rum), see by the same author, "The literature of Rum: The making of a literary tradition (1450–1600)," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*. Edited by Suraiya N. Faroqhi and Kate Fleet, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 2012), 548-592.

[10] Çağman and Tanındı, "Selection from Jalayirid Books," 221.

continued in Konya and Central Asia, finally settling in Samarqand as the head of Ulugh Bey's madrasa and observatory.

At other times, whether before the devastating armies of Timur or during succession troubles between his sons, scholars and artists had to flee their homes and seek alternative places in which to live and work. The Ottoman lands enjoyed the fruits of this mobility as, in Mustafa 'Āli's words, some "Iranian poets and graceful litterateurs of Nevayi's tongue" arrived to the Ottoman lands and enlivened the literary scene.

The Jalayir ruler Ahmad, himself, together with the Karakoyunlu leader Kara Yusuf (r. 1389-1420) took refuge in the Ottoman lands from Timurid forces in 1400. We do not know whether some of the books that must have been with him remained in the Ottoman lands. What we do know is that many of the poems he penned entered the Ottoman royal library at least by the beginning of the sixteenth century. The most extensive copy of Sultan Ahmad's collection of his own poems (*divan*) mentioned previously is presently in the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum in Istanbul (Ms. 2046). It was twice stamped by the seal of Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512) indicating its presence in the Ottoman palace collections at the time of the reorganization of the royal library in 1502/3-1503/4. Another copy, famous for its *qalam-i siyāhī* drawings and currently preserved in the Freer Gallery of Art, is likewise stamped by the same oval seal. Aside from these illustrated copies, there are other unillustrated and partial copies in various libraries of the Ottoman capital. One of the oldest is the *Kitāb al-Sharkiyyāt*, produced in Baghdad in 800 (1397– 98) during Sultan Ahmad's lifetime. Another one is preserved in the Topkapı Palace library, and though lacking in pictures, was copied by the same royal calligrapher, who produced the above-mentioned luxurious and extensive anthology of Sultan Ahmad's poems.[11]

Among the considerable number of works of Jalayirid origin at one time in Ottoman

[11] *Kitāb al-Sharkiyyāt* is in Süleymaniye Library, Ayasofya, Ms. 3924; the unillustrated Topkapı library copy bears the code number Hazine 909. Çağman and Tanındı "Selection from Jalayirid Books," 230.

possession, we should also mention the two volumes belonging to his father, Shaikh Uvays, likewise bearing the oval seal of Sultan Bayezid II. One of them is the only known copy of an Arabic work in nastaʿlīq script on Islamic sciences and the guiding sayings and action (hadith) of Muhammad titled *al-Tuḥfat al-najībiyya li-haḍrat al-salṭanat al-Uwaysiyya* (A Beautiful Present for the Ruler of the Uvaysid Sultanate). The other is *Farhādnāma* written by Muhammad b. Muhammad al-ʿArif al-Ardabili as the work's author and scribe between 1369 and 1372. [12] This work consists of two Persian *masnavis*; the first and longer one is dedicated to Shaikh Uvays while the other, to his vassal, Shirvanshah Hushang (d. 1382), whose son the author was instructing.

These works associated with the sophisticated Jalayirid court entered the Ottoman treasury through various channels, including gift exchange, booty in conquest, and/or with the fleeing artists, writers, and officials themselves. The five albums known as the Diez albums after the Prussian envoy to the Ottoman Sublime Porte between 1784 and 1790, for example, contain many examples of Jalayirid art and calligraphy taken from Timurid-Turkoman albums which had entered the Ottoman treasury no later than early sixteenth century and reorganized in the palace ateliers. They were possibly first compiled as albums in Timurid workshops in Herat in the second quarter of the fifteenth century. A recent publication on these albums, examines them in the context of Persian, Ottoman, Chinese, and European art. Some of the articles also study their relationship to several other Istanbul albums, the divan of Ahmad Jalayir, and the dispersed Jalayirid *Shāhnāma*.[13] Further studies concerning these collections both in Istanbul and dispersed in private and foreign collections, treating, among other aspects, their histories of provenance, would be useful in understanding

[12] Topkapı Palace library A. 656 and H. 678. Çağman and Tanındı, "Selection from Jalayirid Books," 223-226.
[13] *The Diez Albums, Contexts and Contents*, ed. Julia Gonnella, Friederike Weis, and Christoph Rauch (Leiden, Boston, 2016). See especially the introduction by Julia Gonnella, Friederike Weis, and Christoph Rauch for its literary survey ("Introduction", 1-12), and the articles of Bernard O'Kane ("The Great Jalayirid Shāhnāma", 469-484), Massumeh Farhad ("The Dīvān of Sultan Ahmad Jalayir and the Diez and Istanbul Albums", 485-512), and Gülru Necipoğlu ("Persianate Images between Europe and China: the 'Frankish Manner' in the Diez and Topkapı Albums, c. 1350-1450", 531-591).

their influence on Ottoman literature and the arts of the book.

Yet another interesting cultural connection between the Jalayirid and Ottoman courts involves a courtier of Sultan Ahmad Jalayir. The theorist-composer-performer ʿAbd al-Qadir Maraghi was one of the most important musicians of the late medieval world. He was also among those taken to Samarqand during Timur's first sack of Bagdad. He dedicated one of his major works, *Maḳāṣid al-Alḥān* (Purports of Music), which he wrote between 1418 and 1421 when he was at the court of Shahrukh in Herat, to the new Ottoman sultan Murad II.[14] This codex is now in a private collection while another copy of the same work prepared by Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Ilyas in 1434 is in the Topkapı Palace library (Revan 1726). One of the two autograph copies of his earlier musical encyclopedia, called *Jami' al-Alḥān* and dedicated to one of his sons, is preserved in the Nuruosmaniye Library (n. 3645) in Istanbul.

Maraghi's dedication is worth our attention for several reasons. To start with, it is a clear indication that already within the musician's life span, the Ottoman dynasty not only had recovered its political standing, but Murad's court and dominion began to offer possibilities of satisfying patronage and career opportunities for him, but perhaps even more importantly, for his sons. The remarkable increase in the number of madrasas (38) established in his reign, in comparison to the number of madrasas (47) he inherited from the times of the former members of the Ottoman dynasty reveals the heightened rhythm of cultural activities and the augmented possibilities for scholars looking for career opportunities in the Ottoman lands.[15] Indeed, the relationship of patronage between Maraghi's lineage and the Ottoman

[14] It is not clear whether or not he presented the book in person to the Ottoman sultan. Yılmaz Öztuna writes that he dedicated this book previously to Shahrukh's son, Baysungur Mirza. For more information and an extensive bibliography on the musician, see Yılmaz Öztuna, *Türk Mûsikîsi* (Ankara, 2006), 1:19-21.

[15] Ertuğrul Ökten sees the reign of Murad II as a threshold for the mobility of scholars to and from Ottoman lands, where the attraction of madrasa openings was an important factor. Ertuğrul Ökten, "Scholars and Mobility: A Preliminary Assessment from the Perspective of al-Shaqāyiq al-Nu'māniyya," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/Journal of Ottoman Studies* 41 (2013): 62, 63. Murad II himself established four madrasas, one in Bursa in 1430 and three in Edirne (at least one between 1437-1447). Before him his father Mehmed I had opened two madrasas (Edirne, Bursa), his grandfather Bayezid, one (Bursa), Murad I, one (Bursa), Prince

sultans strengthened with his youngest son ‘Abd al-Aziz who dedicated his *Naḳāwāt al-Adwār* to Murad’s son Mehmed II. After him Maraghi’s grandson Mahmud Çelebi worked during the reign of Bayezid II, Murad’s grandson, and wrote his musical treatise known as *Maḳāṣid al-Adwār* (Purports of Music Theory).[16] Later, another copy of this work, which is originally titled *Muḥtaṣar der ‘İlm-i Mūsikī* (An Abridged Study in the Science of Music) was prepared for Sultan Süleyman for whom Mahmud Çelebi was working as the highest paid court musician in 1525.[17]

ʿAbd al-Qadir Maraghi’s dedication certainly found the right ear in Murad, whose interest in music is attested by his patronage. The sultan had asked the well-known musician Hızır bin Abdullah to write a book on the science of music *(‘ilm- mūsikī*). A copy dating from 845/1441 of this work on musical modes, *al-Edvâr*, is now in the Topkapı Palace manuscript library.[18] Bedr-i Dilşad’s *Murādnāme* is another fruit of his patronage. This work, which was prepared in 830/1426-1427 at Murad’s behest, is a comprehensive encyclopedia of sciences including a significant section on music. Another music theorist, Fethullah Shirvani, found patronage in Murad’s grand Vizier, Çandarlızade Halil. The historian, statesman, and musicologist Şükrullah, who served many Ottoman sultans and princes in his career, translated Safiyyu’d-Din Abdu’l-Mu’min’s *Kitāb al- Adwār* (Book of Music Theory) for Murad II.

Maraghi’s decision to dedicate his book to Murad also demonstrates the recognition of his and his court’s prestige as far away as Herat. In the general sense, this recognition underlines the existence at this time of a coherent civilization and active communications in

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Süleyman, son of Orhan, one (Iznik), and Orhan, two (Bursa, Iznik). See Atçıl, Abdurrahman, “Mobility of Scholars and Formation of a Self-sustaining Sholarly System in the Lands of Rūm during the Fifteenth Century,” in *Islamic Literature and Intellectual Life in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Anatolia*, ed. A.C.S. Peacock and Sara Nur Yildiz (Würzburg, 2016), 328.

[16] For more references and a short biography for Maraghi’s son and grandson, see Yılmaz Öztuna, *Türk Mûsikîsi*, 1:15, and 2:9, respectively.
[17] Topkapı Palace Archive n.7843 and n. 9706; Yılmaz Öztuna, *Türk Mûsikîsi*, 2:9.
[18] Revan 1728. Other copies of the work are in Berlin and Paris (Bibl. Nat., Ancien Fond Turc, n. 150). Another copy was in the Rauf Yekta Bey collection. Yılmaz Öztuna, *Türk Mûsikîsi*, 1: 346.

an immense geographical area from the Nile to the Oxus as Marshall Hodgson would have it, with shared criteria of knowledge in the arts and sciences.[19] This was to a significant extent made possible by a vast intellectual network of scholars, who came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and territories and travelled to a number of centers in the mentioned geography for their academic and spiritual training.[20] In their cultural journeys, they also enhanced the networks of their teachers and formed new friendships. In their later careers, they maintained these social and intellectual connections through missives, occasional visits, and by sharing students when they themselves became teachers in madrasas. The biographies of poets and scholars, such as Taşköprülüzade's (d. 968/1561) *al-Shaqāyiq al-Nu'māniyya* and Aşık Çelebi's (d. 979/1572) *Meşā'irü'ş-Şu'arā,* as well as hagiographies, such as that of Muhyi-i Gülşeni (d. after 1014/1605-6) on his father-in-law, İbrahim Gülşeni, and that of Hafız Halil (d. after 857/1453) on his grandfather Shaikh Bedreddin, offer us many valuable glimpses of these relationships.

Returning to the Rumi lands, we observe that the period from roughly the last quarter of the fourteenth century to the first quarter of the fifteenth saw an increased activity of such scholars in Anatolia and Thrace. Among the most relevant figures for the Ottoman cultural environment, we can list Ahmedi (d. after 812/1410), Shaykh Bedreddin (d. 819/1416), Molla Fenari (d. 834/1431), Hajji Pasha (d. 827/1424) and ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Bistami (d. 858/1454).

These scholars shared many common elements in their backgrounds and training. They came from prominent families with intellectual ambitions, espoused a solid training in Hanafi jurisprudence, theology, and logic, with a formation in various natural and occult sciences, including mathematical astronomy, the science of letters (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*), and

[19] In his three-volume seminal work, *The Venture of Islam*, Hodgson names this civilization, "Islamicate". Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 3 vols. (Chicago and London, 1974).
[20] For a rigorous study of fifteenth century intellectual networks operating in the Islamicate western to central Asia, see İlker Evrim Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran, Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī and the Islamicate Republic of Letters* (Cambridge, 2016).

medicine. They had begun their studies in cultural centers in Anatolia (Iznik, Bursa, Konya, Antioch) or Thrace (Edirne), and continued to Cairo for further study. With few exceptions like the above-mentioned Qadizade Rumi, who made a successful career in Ulugh Bey's observatory in Samarqand, they then returned to Anatolia, often to work in Ottoman lands. Their intellectual preparation in Cairo was marked by two names of great prestige and influence: Husayn Akhlati (d. 799/1397) and Akmal al-Din Babarti (d. 786/1384), both of them originally from Anatolia, the former from the eastern Anatolian town of Akhlat by the lake Van and the latter from the northeastern one of Bayburt. Their education also had a mystical-philosophical nature defined by the positions of Ibn Arabi and the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwan al-Safa'*). Upon returning to Anatolia, they secured places as judges and madrasa teachers in centers governed by the leading principalities including the Ottoman.

The presence of these scholars energized the existing intellectual networks and strengthened the communication of flowering Ottoman cultural centers with established centers outside of the Ottoman territories, among them Cairo, Shiraz, Aleppo, Samarqand, and Herat. The vision of knowledge these scholars shared in great part was closely associated with the concepts of political leadership and responsibility. As a result, their activities played an important part in transforming the political as much as the cultural composition of what was prior to their arrival. Shaykh Bedreddin's millenarian revolt in 1416 is the most famous product of this cultural and political environment. It is also the most exceptional one as the other members of these networks invested in a sultan or a promising heir prince and collaborated with him.

In the case of Murad II, the Ottoman ruler encouraged their activities, which projected him as an enlightened Islamic sultan and patron of both literary and scientific works. He endorsed Molla Fenari as the Grand Mufti of his dominion and requested from Bistami to prepare a 400-page classification of the sciences. In the short run, this request provided a

response to the Antiochean scholar's enemies questioning of "Bistami's scholarly and spiritual rectitude." In the long run, Bistami's categorization, just like his "transformation" of the Ottoman ruler thorough his literary-scientific output "from regional march lord to universal emperor of Islam and representative of the millennial dynasty", had a much enduring influence in Ottoman intellectual life, dynastic culture, and political vision.[21]

Practicing Poetry

Şi'rüm Muḥibbī irse kemāle 'aceb midür
İletdüm bu fenni ilerüye ben ayak ayak

If my poetry, Muhibbi, reaches perfection, would it be surprising?
I have advanced this science step by step

It is noteworthy that in the distich mentioned above, Sultan Süleyman, using his penname "Muhibbi", refers to poetry as *fenn*, or (applied) science. From Aristotle through an important part of the Greco-Arabic tradition to the tenth century encyclopedic society Brethren of Purity, poetry had been considered and categorized as a branch of the sciences. The Brethren of Purity treated it under the title of *riyāziyye* or the "disciplinary or training sciences," a category traditionally including the four mathematical sciences, known as the "Pythagorean quadrivium": arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music.[22] In contrast to al-Kindi or Ibn Sina, they did not place the four mathematical sciences in this group, however. It is true that in their *Epistles*, there is a section named "calculations and operations," but it designates a limited application of numbers to mundane matters rather than covering the entire breath of arithmetic and treating its theory. Instead of the mathematical sciences, in this category they listed various branches of the sciences of language, such as poetry, along with

[21] Fleischer, "Learning and Sovereignty," 156.
[22] Godefroid de Callataÿ, "The Classification of the Sciences according to the Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa'," in *The Ikhwân al-Safâ'and their Rasâ'il. An Introduction*, ed. Nader El-Bizri (Oxford, 2008), 60 (3 online). http://hdl.handle.net/2078.1/74131

crafts, trades, cultivation, alchemy, and magic, hence making poetry one of applied arts/sciences closely attached to the material world.

In the fifteenth century, the main representative of the Brethren in the Ottoman territory, Abd al-rahman al-Bistami, also followed this order in his categorization of sciences prepared on Sultan Murad's behest mentioned previously. His categorization was used for ʿAtufi's inventory of the Ottoman library in 1502/3 for Sultan Bayezid II, listing poetry or rather *ʿarūż* (prosody) as a branch of *riyāziyye*.[23] About a century after Bistami's classification, Sultan Süleyman was only repeating the same notion of poetry as a practical science, like crafts, trades, and alchemy.

Going back to the couplet above, it is also difficult not to notice Sultan Süleyman's happy pride in these lines. His is not the arrogance of an artist boasting about his creativity, but rather the pride of one observing his progress after hard work. How did the sultan practice on his path to perfection? Benedek Péri's study of Süleyman's poetical responses, or *nazires*, to Persian models displays a method that the sultan exercised as a student in the field. The fact that Süleyman was less skillful in Persian than in Turkish facilitates the demonstration of his technique "between the two extremes: producing a close replica of the chosen model by replacing its key elements with synonymous expressions and composing an emulation that is only loosely related to the poem that inspired the poet to write a poetic reply to it."[24] Indeed the *nazires* that fall into the first group appear as studies in Persian vocabulary and straightforward repetition exercises rather than full-fledged poetic responses.

This practice of imitation as a didactic method is also one used for training in the arts

[23] Fleischer, "Learning and Sovereignty," 155-160; see especially the schematic presentation of the categorization in the form of a tree from Bistami's autograph copy of *Naẓm al-sulūk fī musāmarat al-mulūk* (The Ordering of Paths for the Accompaniment of Kings) in the Topkapı Palace library A. 1597, 56b–57a on page 157.

[24] Péri Benedek, "The Persian Imitation Gazels (Nazires) of Kanuni SultanSüleyman "Muhibbi" (1520–1566) as They are Preserved in a Hitherto Unnoticed Early Copy of his Divan," *Amasya Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi (ASOBİD)* 5 (2019): 117-118. The examples that Péri analyze come from a recently discovered and yet unpublished manuscript of the sultan's poems Persian poems in the National Library of Israel (Yahuda Ar. Ms. 1065).

and crafts as Mustafa ʻĀli describes in his *Menāḳıb-ı Hünerverān* (Exploits of the Skilled) on the quality of the Ottoman arts and artists of the book. [25] Accordingly, a novice would first try to directly imitate a classical model by trying to produce a perfect copy. The next step in the training would be to prepare a work that could formally match the model and then, if possible, to surpass it. Finally an exceptional artist would be able to create an *obra* surpassing the qualities of the first model while offering originality. In the case of Süleyman's Persian *nazires*, we can observe the first two stages of the training.

The similarity of the training technique of artists of the book and the sultan's poetry in Persian, and most probably also in Turkish, is in line with the tone of his distich quoted above reflecting the pride of an artisan. This association between poetry writing and manual/artisanal work confirms poetry's place as an applied art/science in Bistami's classification. It also brings to mind the manual trade that was included in the education of each Ottoman prince. Both Sultan Süleyman and his father Selim I were goldsmiths, where as Bayezid II was a calligrapher. While the training in poetry did not necessitate a direct relationship with a master as it did in the training of an art or craft, the practice of writing *nazire*s creates many similarities between the two practices. Aside from the similarities in the technique used to develop one's skills in the arts of the book that Mustafa ʻĀli addressed in his book, both poetry writing and artisanal work taught qualities like patience, hard work, and modesty. I believe examining the Ottoman dynastic practice of poetry writing in conjunction with the training in manual trades would provide insights to the qualities expected from an ideal ruler at least through the first two and a half centuries of Ottoman culture as it evolved into a mature synthesis in the late sixteenth century.

When talking about *nazires*, we should not forget that they were often written with two purposes in mind: as individual exercises and as public pieces for comparison. This was

[25] Mustafa ʻĀli, *Menakıb-ı Hünerverān*, with introduction by Ibn'ül Emīn Maḥmūd Kemāl Bey (Istanbul: 1926).

due to the social function of *nazires*, for composing *nazires* offered new venues for dialogue between poets. When one of the best poets of the sixteenteenth century, Baki, wrote two nazires for a poem that Sultan Süleyman had written, these, above all, communicated recognition from a literary authority.[26] There could hardly be a better way to flatter the sultan, who took poetry composition very seriously. When Sultan Süleyman's sons Bayezid and Selim each wrote a *nazire* to a poem by the contemporaneous poet Firaki of Kütahya, they indirectly invited comparisons between the three poems, that is, the original and the two *nazires*. Indeed, as Mehmet Kalpaklı observes in his article on Selim II as a poet, the princes Bayezid and Selim had started measuring swords in the literary field before they did so in the political and military arena.[27] Both princes were acutely aware of the vast and rapid dissemination, and hence the potential political power of poetry.

The Potential Power of Poetry

In discussing poetry as an instrument of political power, I will give two examples from Sultan Süleyman's reign (r. 1520-1566). The first telling example is the history of the dirge (*mersiye*) that the well-known soldier poet Yahya Beg (d. 1582?) wrote in the autumn of 1553, shortly after the execution of the most likely heir Prince Mustafa.[28] In short time, this

[26] We know of Baki's nazieres from a letter he sent to the sultan with his two poems. The letter has been published twice. See Zarif Orgun, "Şair Baki Hakkında," *Yeni Tarih Dergisi*, 4 (April 1957): 108-109; Orhan Şaik Gökyay, "Tanzimat Dönemine Değin Mektup," *Türk Dili*, Mektup Özel Sayısı, v. XXX, n. 274-279 (1974): 44-46. For the identification and examination of Baki's nazires, see Fatma Meliha Şen, "Kanuni Sultan Süleyman (Muhibbi) ve Baki," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* (*The Journal of Ottoman Studies*) 28 (2006): 183-193.

[27] Mehmet Kalpaklı, "Bir Osmanlı Padişahının Şair olarak Portresi: Selîmî (II. Selîm)," *Journal of Turkish Studies/Türklük Bilgisi Araştırmaları: Festschrift in Honor of Walter Andrews II*, 34/11 (2010): 149-156 at 153. Firaki's ghazel celebrating Bayezid's transfer from the governorship of Karaman to Kütahya is included in Aşık Çelebi's biography of poets, *Meşā'irü'ş-Şu'arā* (*Senses of Poets*). Aşık Çelebi, *Meşā'irü'ş-Şu'arā*, ed. Filiz Kılıç (Istanbul, 2010), "Firāḳī" at 3:1157.

[28] Ahmet Atilla Şentürk, *Yahyâ Beğ'in Şehzâde Mustafa Mersiyesi yahut Kanunî Hicviyesi* (Istanbul, 1998). For more information on the poet, see Mehmed Çavuşoğlu, "Yahyā Bey, Dukagin-zâde," *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, v. XIII, 343-347; Kathleen R.F. Burrill, "Tashlîdjalî Yaḥyā," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_7430

poem that consisted of seven strophes of six distichs was known to many in and outside of the army, who were enraged by the murder.

The beloved prince, who was particularly popular with the army, was killed by the order of his father, Sultan Süleyman. Yahya Beg's poem blamed the sultan's grand vizier and son-in-law, Rustem Pasha, for making false accusations against the prince to defame him before his father and to frame him as a traitor complotting to steal his father's throne. Behind the more overt accusations against the grand vizier, there laid a poignant criticism of the sultan for his unjust action.

Indeed, Rustem's slurring campaign mentioned in the poem against the prince had born fruit. The ailing sultan, who was wary of losing his authority to his mature and popular son, had arranged for his execution in his presence in the royal tent, when the latter came to the military encampment to kiss his hand. The incident took place when the army was on its way to meet the Safavid forces and stationed near Amasya, where Mustafa was the governor.[29]

In the immediate aftermath of the execution, fearing an outburst of protests and riots in the military camp, the sultan dismissed his Grand Vizier and appointed in his stead, a name close to Mustafa, Ahmed Pasha. However, Ahmed Pasha was not to maintain his position for long. Two years later in 1555, he was accused of not reacting adequately against the uprising led by a Mustafa look-alike. He was executed and Rustem Pasha was restored to his position.[30]

Once again, it is the prolific sixteenth century intellectual and bureaucrat Mustafa 'Āli who gives a detailed account of the consequences of his poem on Yahya Bey's career in both

[29] For a treatment of the Mustafa incident see Fatma Sinem Eryılmaz, "Bir Minyatürün Anlattıkları: Arif'in Süleymannamesi'nde Şehzade Mustafa'nın Katlinin Ele Alınışı," ("What a miniature can explain: the treatment of Prince Mustafa's death in the Suleymanname of Arif") in *Filiz Cağman'a Armağan* (*Festschrift for Filiz Cağman*), (Istanbul, 2018).
[30] For an account of the Düzme ("Impostor") Mustafa uprising, see Şerafettin Turan, *Kanuni Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları* (Ankara, 1997), 44-49.

the historical section of his *Künhü'l-aḫbār* and the section devoted to the biography of Ottoman poets.[31] According to these accounts, Rustem Pasha held a big grudge against Yahya Bey because of the bad press and humiliation his poem had caused and intended to procure a royal order to have the poet executed to secure the "order of the world" (*nizām-ı 'ālem*), a fundamental notion for Ottoman law and a common reason given by the Ottoman dynasty and state for unwanted persecutions. "However," writes Mustafa 'Āli "the wise khan Sultan Süleyman, the ocean of justice and unique gem singled for his gem-scattering verses of poetry," whose "penname of "*Muḥibbī*" [i.e. the one who loves] making his affection to the eloquent known and hinted at," gave advice to his grand vizier not to hold grudges against poets.[32] The Grand Vizier had to contend with summoning the poet for chiding.

Once he had Yahya Bey before him, he asked the poet how he could afford saying such verses and not fear that his tongue would be cut off when the mighty sultan had had his son killed for the sake of the order of the world (*nizām-ı 'ālem*) and due to the situation of the landed cavalry (*aḥvāl-i sipāh*), and when most of the religious establishment had approved and consented to the execution order.[33] Mustafa Ali reports Yahya Bey's version of the encounter:

> I asked for assistance from the Omniscient Inspirer. [Then] I dared to declare whatever was made evident to my heart by the Divine Will. [I said] I murdered the deceased with those who murdered him, afterwards I agreed with those who mourned and cried after him. In fact, instead of saying our own sultan committed an error, I

[31] Mustafa 'Āli, *Künhü'l Ahbār*, Süleymaniye library Halet Efendi 598, 81b-82a; Mustafa 'Āli, *Künhü'l Ahbâr'ın Tezkire Kısmı*, 287. Aşık Çelebi and following him Kınalızade mention that before the incident Rustem Pasha favored the poet to counter balance the favor that a rival poet, Hayali, received in court. However later, Yahya Bey lost his lucrative position as a trustee of several royal waqfs (pious endowments) when Rustem made "a trifling thing an excuse for taking back his magnificent beneficence" (*cüz'ī nesneyi şehāne iḥsānlarından rücū'a bahāne idüp*). Neither provides details concerning the poem, its reception, or the conversation between the Grand Vizier and the poet. See Aşık Çelebi, *Meşā'irü'ş-Şu'arā*, 2:677; Kınalı-zade Hasan Çelebi, *Tezkiretü'ş-şuarâ*, ed. İbrahim Kutluk, 2 vols. (Ankara, 1989), 2:1078.

[32] Mustafa 'Āli, *Künhü'l Ahbār*, Süleymaniye library Halet Efendi 598, 81b-82a; Şentürk, *Yahyâ Beğ'in Şehzâde Mustafa Mersiyesi*, XCIV.

[33] Here, Rustem Pasha is referring to the Grand Mufti Ebussuud's fetwa to a very generally phrased question concerning a slave, who acts treacherously towards the family and possessions of his master, who has entrusted them to his slave while on a business trip, and even complots to murder him. Charles T. Forster and F.H. Blackburne Daniell, *The Life and Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*, 2 vols. (London, 1881), 1: 116.

> saw it best to adhere to the path of education and say that the experts in malice (*ġaraż ehli*) slandered him and plotted [against the prince] (*iftirā ve fesād eyledi*).[34]

The poet was excused, but despite the superb quality of the odes (*ḳaṣīde)* he composed for various festive occasions, he never received any sizable gift or aid from the court until his death in poverty.

Yahya Bey was not the only one reacting to the incident in verse. Indeed, the execution of the prince inspired a boom of dirges in the weeks following. Among the 68 *mersiyes* written in the exceptionally productive sixteenth century, around 15 were composed in reaction to the Prince's execution by poets most of whom signed their poems with their pennames instead of leaving them anonymous.[35] Yahya Bey's was the most successful.

These dirges are significant in displaying the psychological function that poetry served as well as its wide practice in the Ottoman society in the mid-sixteenth century. It is also important to note that none of these poems were written with even the remote prospect of attaining patronage even though the particular genre was ordinarily used for lamenting the death of individuals significant for society in order to seek a material reward. In this case, some of the dirges even placed their writers in danger because of the critical and even offensive tone they used for members of the dynastic family and the Grand Vizier. In other words, these poems were pure expressions of anger and disappointment.

If the dirges on Mustafa's execution were expressions of personal sadness and rage, and did not promise any economic benefit, but threatened the well-being of their writers, why were they not anonymous? Clearly these poems were not only representations of intimate feelings, but also expressions of fearless protest against the sultan, his family and the Grand Vizier Rustem Pasha. This explosion of poetry was first of all, a stark reflection of the heartfelt gravity of the Prince's execution for people from different echelons of the empire's

[34] Mustafa 'Āli, *Künhü'l Ahbār*, Süleymaniye library Halet Efendi 598, 81b-82a; Şentürk, *Yahyâ Beğ'in Şehzâde Mustafa Mersiyesi*, XCIV-XCV.
[35] Mustafa İsen, *Acıyı Bal Eylemek. Türk Edebiyatında Mersiye* (Ankara, 1994), 283-323.

population. At the same time, as boldly claimed protests in verse, they not only mouthed but also contributed to forming a powerful public opinion that held the reaction of the state in check.

In an environment with heightened sensitivities such as in the aftermath of Mustafa's execution, it might have been too provocative to punish individuals for the poems they wrote in fury. At the same time, Yahya Bey's account in his friend Mustafa 'Āli's words reveal other possible reasons why the composers of *mersiyes* that called the sultan's wife a Russian witch and blamed him for losing his sense of justice and fatherly compassion were not punished.[36] According to the narrative, a part of which is quoted above, the wise and just Sultan Süleyman was known as a good poet himself and his penname meaning "one who loves" indicated his affection towards eloquent writers. This contrasts with what Mustafa 'Āli says in the same passage about the Grand Vizier Rustem as one who showed enmity towards poets and eloquent people and was famous for calling jestful verses "writing that is open in the middle."[37]

There are two points made here. The sultan's good disposition to the literary minded and the generally articulate (*fuṣaḥā*) is one. Aside from the many literary sources relating anecdotes of his relations with writers and poets of his reign, a rare register for gifts given to writers and poets (*in'āmāt defteri*) that has survived to our day from the earlier part of the sultan's reign demonstrates the frequency and quantity of the gifts given by the palace. The period covered, the nine years between Rajab 933/3 April-2 May 1527 and Rajab 942/ 26 December 1535-24 January 1536, was one that saw five large scale military campaigns to which the register appears to have been carried. Aside from punctual yet generous gifts in

[36] See for example the poem of Sami strongly questioning the sultan's justice on pages 305-307, the two *mersiyes* of the woman poet Nisayi criticizing the sultan for his lack of fatherly compassion and justice in İsen, *Acıyı Bal Eylemek*, 308-311. In her second poem, Nisayi refers to Süleyman's wife as the "Russian witch" (*Urus cādūsı*) and "(treacherous) old hag" (*acūze*).
[37] Here the reference is to the space left empty between stiches. Mustafa 'Ali makes the same reference in his entry for Kandi. See Mustafa 'Āli, *Künhü'l Ahbâr'ın Tezkire Kısmı*.

celebration of a victory or a wedding, this register demonstrates that the palace paid a group of poets regularly on dates corresponding to the two main annual religious festivities.[38]

The other point concerns Süleyman's own condition as an esteemed poet. It seems that part of the reason why the sultan advised Rustem not to act with enmity towards poets was his comprehension of the art and his appreciation for the craft of poetry writing because he was a poet himself. Ordering the execution of poets would not have been an act befitting a magnanimous sultan. Nor would killing a fellow-poet because of his offensive verses conform to the rules of etiquette in the literary milieu.[39]

In effect, Sultan Süleyman was a prolific poet who had composed in various verse forms to make for two anthologies, a sizable one in Turkish and another one in Persian.[40] Most of his poetic compositions consisted of ghazels of which he had written 2799. Among his output, there are several verses that have survived time and are still remembered today. One of his most famous poems is the *murabba'* of seven quatrains that he wrote as a response to his son Bayezid's verse letter addressed to him.[41] This poetic exchange between the father and son is another example of the potential political power of poetry that could simultaneously reflect the most intimate feelings and be used to bend public opinion.

Conversations in Verse: Between the Private and the Public Spheres

[38] Of the forty names included in the register thirty seven had presented poems to the court and in appreciation, they were given gifts, most often in specified amounts of money, but also very occasionally in cloth or garments. The other three belong to the religious and scholarly elite, who we were also prolific writers. İsmail E. Erünsal, "Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemine Ait Bir İn'âmât Defteri," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/Journal of Ottoman Studies*, IV (1984), 1-17.

[39] It is true that fierce personal rivalries at times turned physical as in the case of the previously mentioned poets Kandi and Hayali who lived and produced during the reign of Süleyman. Kandi barely saved himself from Hayali's organized attack against his shop of sweets—hence his penname that means "Candy like"—with stones. What provoked the attack was Kandi's verses ruthlessly mocking Hayali.

[40] For the most recent of the three publications of Sultan Süleyman's Turkish poetry, see Coşkun Ak, *Muhibbi Divanı, İzahlı metin-Kanuni Sultan Süleyman* (Ankara, 1987).

[41] The two poems are printed in various publications. For these two and other examples of poetry composed by Ottoman sultans, see Mustafa İsen, Ali Fuat Bilkan, and Tuba Işınsu Durmuş, *Sultanların Şiirleri Şiirlerin Sultanları* (Istanbul, 2012).

Before I examine the poetic exchange prompted by Bayezid's letter, a snapshot of the Bayezid incident, the second succession tragedy of Süleyman's reign, is in order.

According to the Ottoman tradition of succession until the incident of Bayezid, the right to ascend the throne was to be contested among the male offspring of the sultan. To train for the position, the princes were sent to governorships (*sancaks*) in Anatolia with an instructor called *Lala*. The seats of the governorships were generally chosen from the capitals of principalities annexed earlier by the Ottoman state. After Prince Bayezid was executed, his brother, Selim, was left as the only heir to Süleyman's throne and the tradition of princes going off to governorships was further regulated and limited. From then on, only the oldest prince was assigned a *sancak* seat and always in the western Anatolian city of Manisa. In this way, during the father's reign, a prince was chosen *de facto* and prepared for the position of ruling the empire. Selim's grandson Mehmed III (r. 1595-1603) was the last sultan to serve as the head of a *sancak* as a prince. After him, princes were not allowed to leave the capital and the succession rule was changed again to establish the oldest member of the dynasty as the new ruler.[42]

After Prince Mustafa's death mentioned previously, between Süleyman's two remaining sons, it was Prince Selim who appears to have secured a more favorable place in his father's esteem.[43] Nevertheless, the situation between the two brothers, Bayezid and Selim, remained more or less stable during the lifetime of their mother, Hurrem. After she died in 1558, however, the relationship between them worsened. The machinations of Lala

[42] Halil İnalcık, "The Ottoman Succession and its Relation to the Turkish Concept of Sovereignty," in *The Middle East and Europe under the Ottoman Empire: Essays on Economy and Society*, ed. idem (Bloomington: 1993), 37-69.

[43] Süleyman's oldest son from Hurrem, Mehmed had died in 1543, and the younger one, Cihangir, soon after Mustafa's death, in 1553. Selim had the chance to spend much time with his father during the military campaign of Nakchevan at the beginning of which Mustafa was killed. The sultan's inclination towards Selim can be observed when the references to each prince is compared in the court writer Fethullah Çelebi's ('Arif) *Süleymanname* composed in 1558. Soon after the completion of this work, the same writer wrote an account of the Bayezid incident titled *Vaḳ'a-yi Sulṭān Bayezid ma'a Selīm Ḫān* (The Incident of Sultan Bayezid with Selim Khan). This account was finished after the second of June in 1559 C.E. (25th of Shaban 966) and is now preserved in the Topkapı Palace library (Revan 1540 mük.). See Fatma Sinem Eryılmaz, "The *Shehnameci*s of Sultan Süleymān: 'Ārif and Eflātūn and Their Dynastic Project."

Mustafa Pasha, the former mentor of Prince Bayezid whom Sultan Süleyman sent later to Prince Selim, might have elevated the tension as he manipulated the fear of the princes for their future prospects.[44] Scrutiny of the letter exchange between the brothers and their father displays how Bayezid's rashness and Selim's calculating and calm nature served to turn the situation against the former and project the latter as the obedient and well-behaved son in comparison.[45]

If we have to mark the beginning of the visible tension in the relationship between Prince Bayezid and the sultan, Süleyman's order of moving his seat of governorship from Kütahya to Amasya (Prince Mustafa's former governorship) and Selim's from Manisa to Konya would be a pertinent choice. Thereafter, sensing that his father favored his older brother Selim, Prince Bayezid grew outwardly suspicious of his father's intentions.

The physical closeness of a prince's seat of governorship to Istanbul was of utmost importance for reaching the capital, hence the throne, after the sultan father died. Each prince had his trusted people installed in the court so as not to miss a beat in receiving the news of his father's death. These men sent messengers to each contender so that he could hurry to Istanbul as fast as possible. Intersecting messengers to unable them to reach their destinations was common. Some were killed on their way. Moreover, the Law code (*Ḳānūnnāme*) of Mehmed II (r. 1444-14446, 1451-1481) legalized fratricide for the winner, i.e. the new sultan,

[44] In his *Nādiru'l-Meḥārib*, Mustafa 'Āli explains how Lala Mustafa Pasha's provocation of the princes and his manipulation and interception of their letters played a major role in aggravating the situation and turning it against Bayezid. See *Nādiru'l-Maḥārib* the section *'İnān yāften-i Bāyezīd Ḫān ve gürihten-i gürūh-u bāġīyān ve resīden-i īşān bi-ḥıtta-ı Amasya ve nāme firistāden-i ān şāh-ı cihān ve resīden-i fermān-ı gītī-sitān ve mütābi'at-ı ān şehriyār bi-ṭūmār-ı sa'ādet şi'ār ve teveccüh nümūden-i an serkeşān be-ser-ḥaddi zemīn-i Īrān* in *Nādiru'l-Maḥārib*, Topkapı Palace library Revan 1290, 9b-11a. The manuscript can be reached as an appendix to the MA thesis Gülhizar Kara, *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali'nin Nadiru'l-Meharib adlı eserinin edisyon kritiği ve muhtevasının değerlendirilmesi*, MA thesis, Dokuz Eylül *Üniversitesi* Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2009. This sections is also paraphrased in Turan, *Kanuni Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 55-56. (Turan does not specify the manuscript he used).

[45] For published examples of the letters of the two princes, see Şerafettin Turan, "Şehzade Bayezıd'ın Babası Kanuni Sultan Süleyman'a Gönderdiği Mektuplar," *Tarih Vesikaları* 1 (16) (1955): 118-127 and idem., *Kanuni Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 170-172 and 176-177.

in order to safeguard "the order of the world" (*nizām-ı 'ālem*).[46] This was generally accompanied by the killing of nephews, a practice the population detested even more than fratricide.

Below is a translation of the first, fourth, fifth, and the seventh (last) quatrains of both poems. In order to emphasize the dialogue the poetical exchange generated, I have placed Süleyman's response in italics immediately after the corresponding quatrain of his son.

1.Oh sultan to the world from end to end, my Solomon father,
The life in my body, the beloved in my soul, father,
Would you not spare your Bayezid, my dear father?
God (*Ḥaḳ*) knows, I am free of sin (*bī-günāh*), my auspicious sultan father

Oh, my manifestation of occasional insubordination and rebellion, son
Not always wearing the ring of my royal order around his neck, son
Would I have not spared you, oh my Bayezid Han, son?
At least do not say, "I am free of sin," repent, my dear son
…
4. Who would present my situation to you, oh generous (*kerīm*) Shah?
Having separated from mother and siblings, I have become an orphan (*yetīm*) [47]
I don't have even a speck of rebellion against you, God (*Ḥaḳ*) is omniscient,
God knows, I am free of sin, my auspicious sultan father

Fatherhood originates from God (Ḥaḳ)*; one who submits, becomes generous* (kerīm)
*The one who rejects the saying "*do not say uff*,"*[48] *is left an orphan (*yetīm*)*
The Merciful (kerīm) *Almighty knows obedience as well as rebellion*
At least do not say, "I am free of sin," repent, my dear son

5. Don't you know that I have many innocent children, oh Shah?
Are you not wary of being guilty for the spill of their blood?
Or would you not [care to] arrive at the Divine Threshold [of Justice] (*Ḥaḳ Dergāhı*)
together with me, your slave?
God knows, I am free of sin, my auspicious sultan father

Don't you know that pity and compassion are adornments of the faith?
Or, are you not wary of spilling innocent blood?

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[46] Appendix to *Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni Mecmuası*, Istanbul, 1330 (1911/12), 27; Abdülkadir Özcan, *Kānunnāme-i Āl-i Osman (Tahlil ve Karşılaştırmalı Metin)* (Istanbul, 2003), XXIII, 18, facsimile of Bosnalı Hüseyin Efendi's *Bedāyiü'l-veḳāyi*, v.2, 281b: "ve her kimesneye evlādımdan salṭanat müyesser ola, karındaşların niẓām-ı 'ālem içün ḳatl itmek münāsib görilüb ekṣer-i 'ulemā daḫī tecvīz itmişdir, anuñla 'āmil olalar."

[47] The word "*yetīm*" means one who has lost his/her father. There is another word in Turkish, "*öksüz*," for someone who has lost his/her mother.

[48] "And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and treat parents well. Whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], "uff," and do not reprimand them but speak to them with generous kindness (*kerīmen*)." Qur'an, Sura Isra 17:23.

Would you not [care to] arrive at the Divine Threshold [of Justice] together with freed slaves
At least do not say, "I am free of sin," repent, my dear son
…
7. Let us suppose both my hands are covered in blood from end to end
This proverb is often said: what does it matter if a slave commits a sin (*günāh*)?
Forgive Bayezid's offense (*suç*), spare this slave
God knows, I am free of sin, my auspicious sultan father

Let us suppose both your hands are covered in blood from end to end
If you ask for God's forgiveness, why should we not excuse you?
My Bayezid, I will forgive your offense if you come back to the path [of correctness]
At least do not say, "I am free of sin," repent, my dear son

Before we begin looking closely at these verses, we should bear in mind that the word "*kul*" in the original, or "slave" as I approximated above, does not indicate a person who is a human chattel of someone else, but subservient to him. The notion comes from Islam, where humans are subservient to Divine will. Muslims, as opposed to non-Muslims, submit to God willingly and find peace in this submission. Mimetically, all Ottoman subjects were "*kuls*" of the sultan as the representative of God's rule at least in the political realm. In this aspect, there was no difference between Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the empire. There was a difference, however, between a military or administrative official of the state and a regular subject. The bonds of servitude and obedience were tighter between the former and the state and its sultan for until roughly the end of the sixteenth century, most came from the ranks of levied children and war captives. Their identity was engineered by the state and based on a strict loyalty to it and the ruler.

Another important point that applies to the two poems is the repeated choice of the word "Ḥaḳ" in reference to God. Both poets choose this word among an ample list of vocabulary that included Arabic, Persian, and Turkish qualifications of and references to God. It must not be coincidence that the word "Ḥaḳ" also means "justice; the just; and the truth." In a poetic exchange treating themes such as justice, punishment, responsibility for one's actions, sincerity in intention, duties of fathers, sons, rulers and subjects, this choice

acquires functional significance and should be read with the awareness of its deliberate usage.

Going back to the poetical exchange, we see that Bayezid oscillates between beseeching for forgiveness and threatening his father against doing something drastically unpopular as having another son and his grandchildren killed and hence, ruining further his reputation among his subjects. According to Bayezid's lines, this would also null Suleiman's chances in the afterlife. This mixture of docility, affection, pleading for mercy, and barely restrained aggressiveness characterizes most of Bayezid's correspondence with his father, especially once their relationship began to sour.[49]

The poem begins with Bayezid's appeal to Süleyman's fatherly emotions. His words are both glorifying and affectionate. Furthermore, they emphasize the sultan's magnanimity with the comparison to the prophet-king Solomon.

Süleyman's reply, on the other hand, while affectionate, is admonishing. He takes every line as an opportunity to say that the prince has time and again been disobedient to him. His word choice for disobedient behavior is significant, as well, especially when we remember that the relationship between Bayezid and Süleyman is not merely filial but also one between a subject and the sultan. Within this political context and according to Ottoman law, Bayezid's "insubordination and rebellion" (*ṭuğyān u 'iṣyān*) were considered among the reasons for capital punishment. By his choice of vocabulary, his insistence on the topic of disobedience, and his reference to his royal order (*fermān*), which should have always been binding as a ring around the prince's neck, Sultan Süleyman is clearly hinting at the possible fatal consequences of Bayezid's actions. His answer in past tense to his son's question, "would you not spare your Bayezid, my dear father?" makes one think that these fatal

[49] See for example, Bayezid's letter preserved in the Topkapı Archive E. 3924/1, published in Turan, *Kanuni Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 170-172. For this letter and others that the prince sent to his father, see also Turan, "Şehzade Bayezıd'ın Babası Kanuni Sultan Süleyman'a Gönderdiği Mektuplar," 118-127.

consequences were perhaps not merely possible but rather, imminent. It seems like he has already made his decision not to spare his son.

In the fourth quatrain, Bayezid plays with his position as both a subject and son and Süleyman as the ruler and his father. The familial references in the second line invoke several shades of meaning. In order to draw his father's compassion he first mentions his separation from his recently deceased mother and his sister, both of them particularly dear to the sultan. These words must have struck an emotionally vulnerable chord for Süleyman. Then with a crafty move, he presents himself as one orphaned from his father rather than his mother, hence implying that his alienation from his father is an unnatural estrangement, one that is not forced on them by a natural cause like death. At the same time, the meaning of orphanage as an undesired condition due to the decease of a parent seems to be utilized to recall once more the memory of the death of Süleyman's beloved wife, who was also particularly close to Bayezid. In the third line, the prince denies any intention on his part of rebelling against Süleyman, which would have been the apparent basis for such an estrangement. Another peculiarity of this quatrain is his repetition of God's knowledge that he has not committed a sin not only in the last stich, but also in the one previous to it.

Süleyman's reply rings stern and cold. The sultan starts by talking about fatherhood, saying that it originates from God (the Just). He continues that generosity is the reward of obedience and submission. By placing the origin of fatherhood in God, he invites an analogy between God as the father of humanity and a human father, who mimics a similar position with his children. This analogy facilitates the next step concerning obedience: obedience is expected towards one's father just as it is expected towards God. The second line, which contains a section from the Qur'anic passage Sura Isra (17:23), confirms this interpretation. Aside from describing Muhammad's miraculous night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, this passage also includes topics such as the fundamental moral and religious codes of the divine

books revealed before the Qur'an, God's omniscience, and the importance of the submission of the faithful. Süleyman writes that Bayezid deserved his estrangement from him, his state of being an "orphan" so-to-speak, because he protested against his old father's wishes. In fact, by acting insolently—i.e. complaining with an "uff,"—he had also gone against the guidelines of conduct that God set for sons and daughters in the Qur'an, specifically in the Sura Isra. Responding to Bayezid's insistence on his sinlessness before God, the sultan's argument by extension is that He who has laid down the laws of conduct including those concerning filial relations, is without doubt capable of differentiating between obedient and rebellious behavior.

In contrast to the first and the fourth, Bayezid's fifth quatrain is more aggressive. Until the final repeated line, he refers to Süleyman in his figure as the ruler, and not as his father. From the very beginning of the first line, he reminds the sultan that he would be killing the prince's innocent children if he decides to order Bayezid's execution, for that is the inevitable next step to the execution of a contender to the throne. As mentioned previously, it was also a practice that was never accepted by the population and could hardly be reconciled by Islam. In fact, Bayezid indirectly but clearly refers to the inadmissibility of killing innocent children before God and the punishment that would be waiting Süleyman in the afterlife. The repeated fourth line fits perfectly with the meaning of the previous line as Bayezid presents himself guiltless before God, here and in the afterlife.

Süleyman's reply aims to turn the tables on Bayezid by accusing him of not showing Muslim pity or compassion and putting the lives of many innocent people in jeopardy by his rebellion against his father's orders. According to the sultan, it would be Bayezid who would be denied the good entrance to the Divine threshold.

Bayezid appears the most submissive and apologetic in the last quatrain. He is willing to assume that he had spilled blood and that he had committed an offense. Referring to

himself in the third person, he asks for forgiveness and beseeches to be spared—i.e. not killed.

Here, there is an incoherency relating to the prince's treatment of the concept of sin. On the one hand, he invites an association with him and a slave (*kul*) as he asks the hypothetical question concerning a slave, who, because of his subservient will, should not be blamed when he commits a sin. On the other, in the repeated last line, Bayezid reiterates that he is sinless. When we consider the third and the fourth lines together, we can suggest the reading that he claims to have committed an offence (*suç*) without any evil intentions, without having sinned. Still, this interpretation does not resolve the incoherency of the quatrain as a whole.

In reply, Süleyman writes that he will forgive his son's offense if he changes his ways and obeys his orders. At the end he reiterates his advice to Bayezid of repenting his sin before God.

We comprehend from other letters between the father and son that they shared a common taste for poetry. In a letter written shortly after he was given the governorship of Kütahya, a physically sick but content Bayezid wrote that one of his father's favorite poets, Hayali, arrived from Aleppo with two-three ghazels. Along with his own ghazels and another one he received from his brother Selim, he had sent Hayali's poems to his father.[50]

What we know about the dialogue between Sultan Süleyman and Prince Bayezid facilitates insights into the social and political role of poetry. It is interesting to observe, for instance, how a shared interest in poetry, which was at one time a vehicle for the prince to forge more intimate relations with his father, could easily turn into ammunition in a field of contention concerning succession. It is equally noteworthy that both in the case of the dirges

[50] Topkapı Palace Archive E. No 6572. Quoted in Çağatay Uluçay, "Selim-Bâyezid Mücadelesi," *Tarih Vesikaları* 3 (18) (1961): 374-387 at 382 footnote 26. Coincidentally, this letter also demonstrates that Bayezid was aware of the impudent tone with which he at times addressed his father in his letters. In this thankful note, he apologizes for his insolence in a previous missive.

lamenting Prince Mustafa's death and the versed communication between the sultan and his son treated above, poetry offered a perfect means to transform the expression of personal feelings into a public display that was potentially politically charged. Bayezid's letter, in this context, was not only a plea for amnesty from his father, but also a challenge to meet Süleyman in the literary battlefield. The tension in Bayezid's words between filial affection and plea for mercy on the one hand, and an adamant refusal of sin and a threatening attitude on the other, go hand in hand with the way he manipulated the genre. Proud and sure of his skill in poetry, Bayezid was communicating his feelings of fear and affection to his father as he was simultaneously daring him to respond at the same level. Using the literary genre as a double edged sword, he was also indirectly addressing the public by exhibiting vulnerability to evoke a reaction of compassion and conjuring the memories of the sultan's previous killing of his older son, Mustafa, and his grandchildren.

Indeed, Prince Bayezid was not the only member of the Ottoman dynasty, who used his prowess in composing verse to rally familial compassion and public support. Süleyman's grandfather, Sultan Bayezid II had to answer the versed complaint of his brother Cem, one of the most talented poets of the dynasty in its entire history over six hundred years. After the death of their father, Cem's messenger was intersected and along with him, his chances of reaching the capital dispatched. Despite being the favorite of his father, Mehmed II, he could never attain the throne and finally he died in exile most probably by the regular administration of venom by Pope Alexander VI (t. 1492-1503), whom Bayezid II paid for keeping his brother under custody.[51]

One might wonder how the poetic exchange between family members, i. e. fathers and sons and siblings, can be considered a public as well as a private exchange. Firstly, both in oral and written form, poems had great mobility. The popularity of Yahya Beg's poem

[51] For more on the Cem incident see Nicolas Vatin's study based on two contemporaneous accounts, *Sultan Djem: un prince Ottoman dans l'Europe du XVe siecle d'apres deux sources contemporaines: Vaki'at-i Sultan Cem, Oeuvres de Guillaume Caoursin* (Ankara, 1997).

after Prince Mustafa's death and Bayezid's letter where he mentions his sending the new poems he had composed and those he received to his father demonstrate two clear instances of this mobility.

The second point concerning the historical context of poetry in premodern Ottoman society is even more important to bear in mind. As Walter Andrews and Mehmet Kalpakli remind us "most of all Ottoman poems were either composed to be recited at a particular meclis with particular participants or with the underlying assumption that they would, at some time, be recited at some meclis or another."[52] One of the most chatty—and hence for social and cultural historians invaluable—books of mid sixteenth century, Aşık Çelebi's above-mentioned biography of poets, *Meşā'irü'ş-Şu'arā*, for instance, is full of examples from these social gatherings where love poems inspired by—often male—beauties both present and elsewhere are recited, freshly composed poems on spring are shared, and rivalries between poets turned into nasty verse fights.[53] In these reports, we read how poets took part in a variety of such gatherings, where participants ranged from members of the royal court, to high officials, scholars, shopkeepers, artisans, and mischievous beauties, and the jestful conversations from the most sophisticated to the downright obscene.[54] In the context of the *meclis*, poetry began conversations and occasional rumors at all levels of society and the wit, sensitivity, skill, and daring of the poets increased its chances of dissemination as well as

[52] Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı, " Toward a Meclis-Centered Reading of Ottoman Poetry," *Journal of Turkish Studies/Türklük Bilgisi Araştırmaları:Cem Dilçin'e Armağan*, 33/1 (2009): 309-318 at 313. Here, the word "meclis" denotes any social gathering where usually several of the activities of eating, drinking, poetry reciting, musical performance, and dancing took place. For an assessment of scholarly *mecālis* after the Ottoman conquest of Mamluk-ruled Syria and the transmission of knowledge see, Helen Pfeifer, "Encounter after the Conquest: Scholarly Gatherings in 16th Century Ottoman Damascus," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47 (2015): 219-239.

[53] See for example the entry for "Ḫayālī-i Ma'rūf" in Aşık Çelebi, *Meşā'irü'ş-Şu'arā*, 3: 1541-1569. I thank Cornell H. Fleischer for bringing this detailed entry to my attention.

[54] The participants of these gatherings were generally but not exclusively male. We know that the well-known sixteenth century poet Ayşe (Hubbi) Khatun had become a constant presence and lady-in-waiting in the court of Selim II and afterwards his son, Murad III. For more information on her and examples of poetry, see the entries for "'Ā'işe Ḫātūn" in Aşık Çelebi, *Meşā'irü'ş-Şu'arā*, 2: 1135-1139; and for "Ḥubbī" in Kınalı-zade Hasan Çelebi, *Tezkiretü'ş-şuarâ*, 1: 280-281. Mihri Hatun (c. 1460-1515) was yet another poet who participated in such gatherings in the court of one of the sons of Sultan Bayezid II, Sultan Ahmed (d. 1513). See, for example, Latifi, *Tezkiretü'ş-Şuarâ ve Tabsiratü'n-Nuzamâ: İnceleme-Metin*, ed. Rıdvan Canım (Ankara, 2000), 511.

long life. Among all artistic products, poems were perhaps the quickest on their feet. They travelled registered in book format, but even more frequently, from the mouth of their composers and audience.

Conclusion

The fast moving and at times volatile premodern art/science of poetry in the Ottoman context had close associations with political leadership and power. I have tried to present this argument in two lines of analysis.

Firstly, I have noted that it was during the reign of Murad II that poetry writing was established among the members of the dynasty as a practice. After him, it seems that it quickly became a skill expected from the princes hoping to occupy the throne and continued as such until the end of Ottoman rule in the twentieth century. Murad's son Mehmed I, for example, aside from making a reputation for his patronage and having thirty poets salaried by the state, had written a sufficient number of poems for an anthology, or divan.[55] The reputation of his grandson Cem's skill in poetry has already been mentioned.

Why was this tradition established in the first half of the fifteenth century and during Murad's reign? I have suggested that we should search for an answer to this question in the works and biographies of the representatives of a powerful network of intellectuals operating between Cairo and Samarqand and welcomed and encouraged by Murad II. I have proposed that as a result of the political-cultural formulations of intellectuals in the likes of Molla Fenari and Abd al-Rahman Bistami, the dynastic activity of poetry writing at this foundational stage was conceived as a civilizing trait and civilizing was seen as integral to the mission of an ideal ruler.

A useful venue in this respect would be to consider Murad's marked patronage of

[55] Latifi, *Tezkiretü'ş-Şuarâ*, 141; Kınalı-zade Hasan Çelebi, *Tezkiretü'ş-şuarâ*, 1:77.

works on music, which was treated as a "science" based on the Pythagorean system and transmitted to the Islamicate milieu by al-Farabi, within the larger framework of interest in Neoplatonic knowledge, once again often, but not exclusively, presented in Ibn Arabian and Ikhwanian overtones. Did Bedr-i Dilşad, for example, write his encyclopedic work, *Murādnāme*, of fifty-one chapters, dealing with a range of topics from astronomy, medicine, and music to commerce and child bearing, invoking the encyclopedia of the Brethren, their Epistles of fifty-two books? [56] Another venue is to study the dynasty's poetry writing and training in manual trades as related phenomena both regarding the learning of a skill and the ethical education that accompanied it. As a matter of fact, it is the holistic understanding of training in any of the sciences which includes both the technical and the ethical aspects that make it a civilizing practice. Here we should add that Bedr-i Dilşad's *Murādnāme*, too, was as much a book on ethics, a mirror for princes for Murad II, as one on scientific knowledge. Similarly, ʿAbd al-Qadir's Maraghi *Maḳāṣid al-Alḥān* included sections on the rules of behavior for the musicians.

The Jalayirid example was principally used in this article to construct a comparison with the Ottomans. As importantly, it brings us to the observation of a growing current among the princes (and later sultans) of the Islamicate east of not only patronizing but also practicing poetry and arts of the book. We can follow this trend back to the Ilkhanids and especially to their followers, the Jalayirids. Even at the superficial level, such cultural expectations from a sultan must have influenced the Ottoman rulers aspiring to greatness and sophistication. Likewise, it is inevitable that the mobility of artists and writers especially with the arrival of the Timurids, and the incorporation to the Ottoman treasury of the more advanced cultural products of courts in Anatolia and the larger Iran, such as those from the Jalayirid, Akkoyunlu, Karakoyunlu, Karaman, and Timurid courts, had formative influences

[56] I have not yet had the chance examine this work, which was also studied and published by Adem Ceyhan. Adem Ceyhan, *Bedr-i Dilşad'ın Murâdnâmesi*, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1997).

in arriving at a cultural synthesis. Studying the dynamics and nature of this synthesis from the perspectives of art and literary history, intellectual networks, and political history is as complicated as it is essential to understand the "Ottomanizing" culture of the fifteenth century.

Why was the concept of a civilizing king, an ancient notion already existing at least in pre-Islamic Iran, revived in the post-Chenghizid period, and how was this done? These are questions that need further studying. Likewise, the notable cultural impulse in the Ottoman environment governed by Murad II demands further scrutiny.

The Ottoman synthesis continued to evolve in western Asia and the Balkans in the sixteenth century under the large political umbrellas of the Ottoman and Safavid states, adding new elements to the Ottoman (and Safavid) cultural formation and making understanding earlier stages indispensable. In the mid sixteenth century, during Sultan Süleyman's long reign, many of the earlier elements concerning the concept of the ideal ruler and his civilizing mission were revived, and the sultan's image was formulated by writers and administrators in and close to the court along the lines the contours of which were already drawn during Murad's reign.

At the same time, in the Ottoman context, by the sixteenth century, poetry writing had become an expected activity from any individual with some pretensions of finesse and, possibly, education. The popularity of the culture of poetry in the streets as well as the court also meant that the voice of the poet could reach many. Its easy accessibility and dissemination made poetry an effective potential instrument of political power.

This constitutes the second line of my argument on the tight relationship between poetry writing and politics. In this section, with the treatment of Yahya Bey's and his fellow poets' dangerously effective dirges after Prince Mustafa's death, I have first tried to demonstrate the power of poetry that changed the course of one's career and formed public

opinion strong enough to affect state decisions. The second example in this part, the conversation between Süleyman and his rebelling son Bayezid, takes the tension between the simultaneously private and public nature of poetry in the Ottoman context of the sixteenth century, further. The poems of the father and son reveal their feelings of love, anger, sadness, and feeble hope. At the same time, both poets take up their versed lines to a literary battlefield where, as skillful students of poetry, they challenge each other publicly. Coincidentally, once again, writing poetry becomes tangled with qualities expected from an ideal ruler. This time, aside from Bayezid's life, it is justice and responsibility that are at stake.

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