

OSMANLI'DA İLİMLER DİZİSİ | 3

# Osmanlı'da İlm-i Tasavvuf

Editörler

ERCAN ALKAN

OSMAN SACİD ARI

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# A Sufi Performing Empire: Reading Two Unpublished Works of Muḥyī-i Gülşenī (d. 1604-05)\*

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This contribution<sup>1</sup> starts from a minor footnote to the history of Ottoman Egypt at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century: an Ottoman punitive expedition against a band of marauding Bedouins, organized by the local governor, Ḥāfiẓ Aḥmed Paşa. This expedition was by no means exceptional: throughout the ages, hundreds, if not thousands of similar *tecrīdes* must have been organized. The non-exceptional nature of this event might explain why historiographical narrative either omitted it all together, or referred to it most briefly. Nonetheless, three small, unpublished Ottoman works have come to light that all deal exclusively with this expedition: a *meşnevī* and a *risāle* written by Muḥyī-i Gülşenī, and another *meşnevī* written by Kelāmī-i Rūmī<sup>2</sup>.

Obviously, these texts are meaningful on the local level first and foremost, as these strongly supplement our scant knowledge of the expedition, of Aḥmed's

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- 1 The topic of this contribution will be dealt with more exhaustively in a forthcoming article, which will present, among others, a more detailed account of Aḥmed's beylerbeylicate and of the history of the 'Azāle Bedouins, as well as a full edition of the two works of Muḥyī and the work of Kelāmī.
- 2 Kelāmī-i Rūmī, *Risāle-i 'Azāle-i Vācibū'l-İzāle*, Dār al-Kutub al-Waṭaniyya al-Tūniyya, Ms. 9592, ff. 1v-25r; Maktabat al-Malik 'Abd al-'Azīz, al-Şayḥ 'Arif Ḥikmat, Ms. 4227 (a *meşnevī* of 526 verses).

governorate, and of the 'Azāle Bedouins targeted. While I start by offering a "localized" reading, I will quickly move beyond Cairo of the 1590s. As I will argue, the true importance of these texts — that is, their actual relevance — lies elsewhere. Trifling as this expedition may have been, small as the texts are, and local as their topic and their intended audiences must have been, I suggest to zoom out of these texts and to juxtapose them. By doing so, I argue that these texts transcend the triviality of the incident and the circumscribed spatial and temporal locality of the Egyptian countryside of the 1590s. Thus, refocusing I will demonstrate how we can relate these texts to transformative trends of much greater, indeed, of imperial scale. We can use them to further our understanding of some major realignments of political, religious, spiritual and judicial authority, and through them, we can illustrate the era's intense experimentation in the area of rule, law, and religion.

In the following, I start by introducing the three key players: author Muḥyī-i Gülşenī, the Egyptian governor Aḥmed Paşa, and the marauding 'Azāle Bedouins. Kelāmī is not included here, as I will deal with his *meşnevī*, the *Risāle-i 'Azāle-i Vācibü'l-İzāle*, elsewhere. Having thus set the scene, I will zoom in onto Muḥyī's two texts, thus allowing the reader to familiarize himself with the particular expedition and the two distinct ways in which Muḥyī dealt with this. Next, I will zoom out of the texts and out of Cairo of the 1590s. I will identify some of the multiple dimensions of the author's identity, as these transpired in his two *'Azāle-Nāmes*, and relate these to a number of larger, imperial-wide transformative trends. I conclude by juxtaposing the two texts. Rethinking these as the two halves of a literary dyptich allows us, so I argue, to appreciate how Muḥyī reified a particular vision of empire.

## I. Setting the scene

Before looking into the two texts, it is worthwhile to set the scene by introducing the three main characters.

First, there is the author of these two unpublished texts, Muḥyī-i Gülşenī (1529-1604). While, for a long time, Muḥyī was remembered first and foremost as the author of the *Menāḳib-i İbrāhīm-i Gülşenī* —the hagio-biography of the founder of the Gülşenīye *ṭarīka*<sup>3</sup> — and as the inventor of Bāleybelen — one

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3 Finally some good news regarding the Cairo *tekke*, which is in a dilapidated state: it has now been included on the 2018 World Monuments Watch, so there is still hope for this unique site! See <https://www.wmf.org/project/takiyyat-ibrahim-al-gulshani>.

of the oldest artificial languages attested — our current understanding of this prolific author has grown considerably, both in scope and in depth. Not only are there ever more of his roughly forty titles becoming available - through the editorial work of Berat Açı, Abdullah Arı, Mustafa Koç, Çelik Nülüfer, Abdullah Tümsek, and Ceren Ulusoy, to name but a few — also our understanding of his milieu and of the Hılvatî *tarîka* that gave him his *nisba* is developing at great pace — through the studies of, among others, Abdurrahman Adak, Mehmet Akay, Hüseyin Akpınar, Muhsin Macit, Özkan Öztürk, and Uğurtan Yapıcı in Turkey, and John Curry and Side Emre in the United States of America. In light of this growing body of literature, there is little need to introduce the Gülşenîye and Muhyî, especially in a volume such as the present one. Here, it should suffice to highlight three elements of Muhyî's biography that remain little explored. First, there is his networking in İstanbul and Cairo, as reflected by, among others, his active search for patronage<sup>4</sup> through panegyric poetry and other works dedicated to the sultans Süleymân and Murâd III<sup>5</sup>, and to a range of local officials in Egypt<sup>6</sup>, including pashas, *başdefterdârs* and muftis. Second, there is his judicial activity, being appointed as a *nâ'ib kâzî* in Cairo (the qadiship offered to him in the mid-1560s he turned down).<sup>7</sup> Third, there is his acquaintance with grand mufti Ebû's-Su'ûd, which dates back to his İstanbul days in the 1540s.<sup>8</sup> These three dimensions are highlighted here for a reason, as they actually meet in the two works that are the subject of the present chapter, the 'Azâle-Nâme-i Manẓûm and the 'Azâle-Nâme-i Menşûr. Both works are small as compared to some of Muhyî's other titles, and — at least on the surface — their significance is highly circumscribed, both local-

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4 It would be interesting to explore whether - and if so, how - his active search for patronage was connected to his position at the Cairo *tekke* of the Gülşenîye. Did he lose the battle over its leadership in 1579 because of a patronage all too close, or was this patronage rather his response to lost status? For his patronage and network ties in general, see Emre, *İbrahim-i Gülşani and the Khalwati-Gulshani Order. Power Brokers in Ottoman Egypt*.

5 For Muhyî's *Sîret-i Murâd-ı Cihân*, see Arı, "Muhyî-i Gülşenî, Eserleri ve Sîret-i Murâd-ı Cihân (İnceleme-Metin-Sözlük)", Arı, "Muhyî-i Gülşenî'nin Sîret-i Murâd-ı Cihân İsimli Eseri"; Öztürk, "Muhyî-i Gülşenî'nin Sîret-i Murâd-ı Cihân'ında Medenî Hikmet Tasavvuru". For Muhyî's meeting with the sultan, see Curry, "'The meeting of the two sultans'. Three Sufi mystics negotiate with the court of Murâd III".

6 For his panegyric poetry dedicated to a later governor of Egypt, Yavuz 'Alî Paşa (1601-1603), see Kelâmî-i Rûmî, *Vekâyi'-i 'Alî Paşa*, pp. lv-lvii.

7 Muhyî-i Gülşenî, *Bâleybelen*, p. 38.

8 Muhyî-i Gülşenî, *Bâleybelen*, especially pp. 26-27; Muhyî-i Gülşenî, *Menâkıb-ı İbrâhîm-i Gülşenî*, especially pp. 383-384 [re-edited by Mustafa Koç and Eyyüp Tanrıverdi: *Menâkıb-ı İbrâhîm-i Gülşenî, Muhyî-i Gülşenî* (İstanbul, 2014)].

ly and temporally, as they deal but with one particular event in one particular locale at one particular point in time: a punitive expedition organized by the local governor, Aḥmed Paşa, against a band of marauding Bedouins, the 'Azāle, in the Egyptian countryside in 999/1594. Before zooming in on these texts, however, let us first familiarize ourselves with the governor and the Bedouins as the second and third main character of this chapter.

As for Ḥādım Ḥāfız Aḥmed Paşa, who governed Egypt from 999/1591 to 1004/1595, his full biography remains to be written<sup>9</sup>. However, a starting point — sufficient for the present purpose — is offered by the *Sicill-i 'Osmānī*:

"Of Albanian origin, he was raised in the Enderūn and was appointed as *kilerci başı*. Following the beylerbeylicate of Cyprus, in 998/1590 he became vizier and *vālī* of Egypt, followed by the governorship of Bosnia in 1003/1594-95. While he defeated 2,000 enemies in a battle [i.e. the siege of Eger as part of the Long Turkish War] in 1005/1596-97, he suffered defeat at the Danube in 1006/1597-98 and was subsequently dismissed from office. He was reappointed as vizier and became the *kāymaḳām* of the grand vizier in 1008/1599-60. Dismissed from the latter office after 10 months, he was appointed as the *muḥāfız* of Anatolia. In 1012/1603-04, he was imprisoned in Yedikule. In Muḥarrem 1013/1604, he was appointed as *kāymaḳām* a second time. Dismissed again, he performed the Hajj in 1016/1607-08 and retired. He passed away in Istanbul on Ramadan 23 1022/November 6 1613. He is buried in the Küçük Karaman Camii in the Fātiḥ neighbourhood. He had a mosque, a medrese and a *dārü'l-ḳurrā'* built in 1004/1595-96. The people loved listening to him reciting the Quran, given his beautiful voice, He was a wise and moderate man."<sup>10</sup>

Drawing on Ḥasan Bey-Zāde's *Tārīḥ*, Kātib Çelebī's *Fezleke* and Muştafā Şāfī's *Zübde'tü't-Tevārīḥ*, Kaçan Erdoğan and Bayrak have elaborated on Meḥmed Süreyyā's entry, adding some dates and other details regarding the ups and downs of Aḥmed's overall career and the military operations he was involved in, against, among others, several Celālī leaders.<sup>11</sup> Yet, when it comes to his

9 Quite some Ottomans went by the name of Ḥāfız Aḥmed Paşa, and the present Aḥmed has been confused especially with his more famous namesake, the 17th-century grand vizier Filibeli Ḥāfız Aḥmed Paşa (see Köprülü, "Ḥāfız Aḥmed Paşa", p. 76, for Aḥmed's misattributed mosque complex in Fātiḥ, and his endowed book collection in the Süleymaniye Library; Eyice, "Ḥāfız Ahmed Paşa Camii ve Külliyesi", p. 86).

10 Süreyyā Meḥmed, *Sicill-i 'Osmānī*, II: 556.

11 Kaçan - Bayrak, "Ḥādım Hafız Ahmed Paşa'nın Mısır'daki Evkafı", here pp. 2-5.

years in Egypt, Erdoğan and Bayrak do little more than specifying this tenure, which lasted from the middle of 999/1591 up to the beginning of Receb 1003/March 1595. Consequently, it is clear that, when zooming in onto Aḥmed's Egyptian years, we need to look into the local Egyptian sources first and foremost. This exercise, however, is neither as easy nor as rewarding as one would hope. While the aftermath of the Ottoman conquest is fairly well-covered by authors such as İbn İyās and al-Diyārbakrī, and historiographical production picks up speed again by the time of the "Second Ottoman Conquest of Egypt"<sup>12</sup> in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the intermediate decades are hardly covered. Admittedly, more recent research of, among others, Daniel Crecelius, Nelly Hanna, Jane Hathaway, Seyyid Muhammed, Otfried Weintritt and Michael Winter has enabled us to fill in some of the many gaps and to move beyond the pioneering works of Peter Holt and others. Still, at present we are able to reconstruct his governorate in its broadest possible outlines.<sup>13</sup> Making due with what we have got, let us now cull some of the major sources, starting at the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and then moving up to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. As fraught with problems as it may be, al-İshāqī's *Aḥbār al-Uwal*, which ends in 1031/1621-22, does offer us a convenient starting point:

"Then Aḥmed became governor on Ramaḍān 17 999. He was affectionate towards the 'ulamā' and the *fuḳarā'*, a wise man and a good administrator. He built a large rest house (*wakāla*) and a small rest house, a market place, a coffeehouse, houses and apartments at Būlāk, Cairo, in the vicinity of the firewood storehouses. He built a place of worship in the large rest house that overlooked the Nile, thereto appointing some personnel; it is a place of Islamic rites. He also built in Rosetta a rest house, a coffeehouse and apartments, and a pond on the Pilgrims Road, to the benefit of the pilgrims. When he was dismissed from the office of *paṣa* of Egypt and returned to the imperial thresholds, divine providence came to his aid and he was appointed to the office of grand vizier (*wizāra 'uẓmā*) (sic). The people thanked him and he was praised during his office. He then resigned from the office of vizier and asked permission to go on Hajj. This permission was granted,

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12 Sabra, "The Second Ottoman Conquest of Egypt": Rhetoric and Politics in Seventeenth Century Egyptian Historiography", pp. 149-177.

13 Good starting points are offered by, among others, Hanna, "The Chronicles of Ottoman Egypt: History or Entertainment?", pp. 237-250; Hathaway, "Sultans, pashas, *taqwims*, and *mūhimmes*", pp. 51-78; Holt, "Ottoman Egypt (1517-1798)", pp. 3-12; Shaw, "Turkish source-materials for Egyptian history", pp. 28-48; Weintritt, *Arabische Geschichtsschreibung in den arabischen Provinzen des Osmanischen Reiches* (16.-18. Jahrhundert).

and he thus came to Egypt by sea. He was given a very good welcome by the notables, and received gifts. He performed the Hajj, came back and went to Jerusalem and Hebron, and then returned to the domains of Rum. He passed away there. He had held the office of *paşa* of Egypt until his dismissal on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Şa'bân 1003, that is, 3 years, 10 months and 22 days.”<sup>14</sup>

Next we have a contemporary to al-İşhākī, yet writing in Ottoman: Çerkesler Kâtibi Yūsuf. In his *Selīm-Nāme*, finished in 1620, he adds not only that Aḥmed was inclined to worldly affairs (*Eğerci şüretā mufti-i vüzerā' görünürdü, veli hubb-i dünyāda şāki Ḥasan Paşa idi*), but also that all was not well under Aḥmed's tenure: unnamed Bedouins leaders had rebelled to the extent that Aḥmed retaliated with an *ılğar*, as a result of which many Bedouins perished, and their women, children and cattle were sold on Rumayla.<sup>15</sup> İbrāhīm b. Yaḥyā Mollāzāde's *Tevārīḥ-i Mısr-i Nādirati'l-'Aşr*, which was finished in 1620-21, fills in some more details. These 'uşāt-i 'Urbān, this *bāḡi ve tādī kabīle* were apparently called the 'Azāle, and *fitne ve fesādleri haddan füzün olmaqla*, Aḥmed had sent out an expedition, killing over two thousand!<sup>16</sup> Another classic, as (in)famous as al-İşhākī's work, is Süheylī's *Tārīḥ*, which runs up to the 1630s. While Süheylī does not mention the Bedouin trouble, he does elaborate on Aḥmed's *hubb-i dünyā*, stating that Aḥmed had:

“(...) a worldly inclination, (aiming at) acquiring everything. He gave posts to those who helped him acquire earthly goods, and he profited thereof. In particular he valued the rank of those of wisdom and knowledge and showed them various kinds of kindness and benevolence.”<sup>17</sup>

In his *Minaḥ*, *Rawḍa al-Ma'nūsa*, *Nuzhat*, *Rawḍat al-Zahīya*, *Ḳatf al-Azhār* and *Kawākib*, the prolific İbn Abī l-Surūr (d. c. 1661) adds a detail here and there, but these should not detail us here. Having thus reached the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, there is Meḥmed b. Yūsuf el-Ḥallāk's history<sup>18</sup>. The author sheds no new light on the *tecrīde* against the 'Azāle *eşkıyā*, prompted by their *ziyāde tuḡyān-lık*, but he does add some new details regarding Aḥmed, which suggest that this author was more cognizant of Aḥmed's background than the previous sources. He indicates Aḥmed's Albanian (*Arnavud*) background, and records

14 Al-İşhākī, *Aḥbār al-Uwal fī Man Taşarrafa fī Mısr min Arbāb al-Duwal*, p. 157.

15 Çerkesler Kâtibi Yūsuf, *Selīm-Nāme*, published in Doğan, “Çerkesler Kâtibi Yusuf'un Selīm-Nāme'sinin Mukāyeseli Metin Tenkīdi ve Değerlendirmesi”, pp. 151-152.

16 İbrāhīm b. Yaḥyā Mollāzāde, *Tevārīḥ-i Mısr-i Nādirati'l-'Aşr*, ff. 43r-v.

17 Süheylī, *Tārīḥ-i Mısr i-Ḳadīm*, *Tārīḥ-i Mısr i-Cedīd*, II: 58b.

18 Meḥmed b. Yūsuf el-Ḥallāk, *Tārīḥ-i Mısr*, BnF, Supp. Turc 512, ff. 57v-58r.



that he had been a *kilerci başı* in the sultan's palace before leaving the palace (*taşra çıkup*) in 997 for the governorship of Cyprus. Furthermore, Ahmed is said to have been a sweet-voiced *mücevvid* and *hâfız*, who recited the Quran from beginning to end once a week. A last new element he adds is a big flood, which entered "through the Bâb al-Naşr, like sea waves, banging the dead from the graves and destroying the houses and buildings." Obviously, other sources could be brought in, including Mar'î b. Yûsuf's *Nuzhat al-Nâzirîn*; Ridvânpaşazâde 'Abdullâh Çelebi's *Târîh-i Mısır*; al-Şawâlihî's *Tarâcim*, al-'Ubaydî's *Qalâ'id al-'İkân*, the *Zubdat İhtisâr*, the so-called *Paris Fragment*, İbn al-Wakîl's *Tuhfat*, Ahmed Şalabî's *Awdaḥ*, al-Şarkâwî's *Tuhfat al-Nâzirîn*, al-Cabartî's 'Acâ'ib al-Âthâr, and al-Qal'âwî's *Şafwat*. However, as it turned out, these either leave Ahmed's tenure unmentioned, or merely fill in some more details that are less relevant in the present context. In sum, what do we have? There are Ahmed's extensive building activities, his greed and favouritism, an undated flood, and a punitive expedition against the 'Azâle Bedouins. For a governorate of 4 years, the annals are meagre by all means, and it is safe to say that, if anything, Ahmed's tenure proves the paucity of the historiographical material at hand.<sup>19</sup> Of the handful of items, only that of his building activities appears to be well documented, and, consequently, has been studied in detail. Behrens-Abouseif, Hanna, and Kaçan Erdoğan & Bayrak have all dealt with his real estate in Egypt and the *wakf* related to it this, the former two working solely from his Egyptian *wakfiya* kept in Egypt's *Daftarhâna Wizârat al-Awqâf*, and the latter working on all of his *wakfiyes* (in Egypt, Cyprus, Rhodes, İstanbul, etc.) kept in Turkey's *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi*<sup>20</sup>. While none of Ahmed's Egyptian real estate seems to have survived, his mosque complex in İstanbul, financially supported by, among others, his *wakf* at Bülâk, is discussed by Eyice, Bilge, and Çobanoğlu.<sup>21</sup>

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19 In order to fill in the many gaps, archival materials will prove indispensable. See, e.g., Orhonlu C., *Osmanlı Tarihine Âid Belgeler. Telhîsler (1597-1607)* (İstanbul, 1970), *passim*.

20 *Daftarhâna Wizârat al-Awqâf*, 911, dated 8 Şa'bân 1003/195; Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi. d, nr. 6972, ff. 2a-45a. See Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule: Institutions, Waqf, and Architecture in Cairo* (Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries); Hanna, *An Urban History of Bülâk in the Mamluk and Ottoman Periods*; Kaçan Erdoğan & Bayrak, "Hadım Hafız Ahmed Paşa'nın Mısır'daki Evkafı".

21 For his *külliyet*, sometimes wrongly attributed to his near-contemporary namesake, grand vizier Hâfız Ahmed Paşa, see Bilge, "İstanbul Fatih'deki Hâfız Ahmed Paşa Külliyesi'nin vakfiyesi", pp. 277-330; Çobanoğlu, "Hâfız Ahmed Paşa Külliyesi", pp. 492-493; Erünsal, *Osmanlı Vakıf Kütüphaneleri*, pp. 150-151; Eyice, "Hâfız Ahmed Paşa Camii ve Külliyesi", with pictures of the exterior and the interior of the mosque, and of the inscription; Eyice, "Yok olmaktan Kurtarılan Bir Eser: İstanbul'da Hafız Ahmed Paşa Külliyesi", p. 227-330; Soysal, *Türk Kütüphâ-*

Another one of the handful of items that capture Aḥmed's tenure in Egypt, one mentioned by Çerkesler Kâtibi Yūsuf and İbrāhīm b. Yaḥyā Mollāzāde, was his *tecrīde* or punitive expedition against a band of marauding Bedouins. These 'Azāle Bedouins are the third and last key player that needs to be introduced.<sup>22</sup> While their history too remains to be written, a fairly clear picture emerges from the evidence culled from Mamluk and Ottoman, Egyptian and Arabian sources.<sup>23</sup> As to be expected and as confirmed by the scattered evidence, their relation with the state — Mamluk and then Ottoman — fluctuated strongly: co-optation wherever possible, open conflict and state repression if needed. On the one hand, there were the 'Azāle 'Urbān<sup>24</sup>. These made their first appearance in the early days of the sultanate of Qāyṭbāy (r. 1468-1496), as they nomadized between Buḥayra and the north of Upper Egypt, and centred on Giza, just southwest of Cairo.<sup>25</sup> On the few occasions they appear in the Mamluk sources, they are depicted in a negative light. The first to mention them is al-Şayrafī. In the 1468 entry of his chronicle, he calls them *ra's al-sharr wa al-fitna*; while in the 1469 entry, he has sultan Qāyṭbāy replying to complaints over their *fasād* and *nahb* by summoning the district heads to decapitate them.<sup>26</sup> Little surprise then that these 'Azāle were the target of various *tecrīdes*. The 1498 *tecrīde*, for example, is depicted in fairly gruesome detail by İbn İyās: men in iron chains, women bound with ropes and with decapitated heads hung around their neck, nailed onto boards and paraded through town on camel back....<sup>27</sup> Of course, all this strikes a familiar chord. These Mamluk sources prove that there is nothing new, neither in the 'Azāle's brigandage at

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*neciliği*, IV: 234.

22 For Bedouins in the Mamluk and Ottoman period, see, among others, Aharoni, *The Pasha's Bedouin. Tribes and state in the Egypt of Mehmet Ali, 1805-1848*; Rapoport, "Invisible Peasants, Marauding Nomads: Taxation, Tribalism, and Rebellion in Mamluk Egypt"; Schwartz, *Die Beduinen in Ägypten in der Mamlukenzeit*; Winter, *Egyptian Society Under Ottoman Rule 1517-1798*.

23 References are scattered over a wide array of sources, including the works of al-Şayrafī, İbn Taḡrībīrdī, İbn Zunbul, İbn İyās, al-Nahrawālī, Damurdāşī, İbn Abī l-Surūr, and al-Cazīrī. Still, their history can be reconstructed only piecemeal.

24 Either with 'ayn or ḡayn, and with a single zā' or a double zā'. While Murtaḍā al-Zābīdī's *Tāc el-'Arūs* records only 'Azzāla, the manuscript evidence of both Muḥyī and Kelāmī rather point at 'Azāle.

25 Evliyā Çelebi's Nile Map records a locality called *Ḥabīroḡlu kaşabası* (see Dankoff R. & Tezcan N., *Evliyā Çelebi'nin Nil Haritası*, p. 80, Ja6, Ja10, Ja11). The *Déscription de l'Égypte* records a locality called Ma'ādī Ḥabīrī, close to the Pyramids, where they used to operate a ferry (*ma'diya*) over the Nile.

26 Al-Şayrafī, *İnbā' al-Ḥasr bi Abnā' al-'Aşr*, pp. 32, 125.

27 İbn İyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr fī waqā'i' al-duhūr*, III: 405-410.

the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, nor in Aḥmed Paşa's expedition against them. In fact, there is even nothing new in the fact that Aḥmed's 1594 *tecrîde* received a literary rendering, both by Muḥyî and by Kelâmî-i Rûmî. The 1498 Mamluk *tecrîde*, for example, was the subject of a long *zâcal* by Badr al-Dîn al-Zaytûnî that begs comparison with Muḥyî's *meşnevî*: "In the domains they spread corruption \* Because of which killing them is a religious duty!" (*Fî al-arâdî sa'aw fasâd \* Li ajli dhâ qatluhum wâjiba*)! Every now and then, the 'Azâle weighed politically as well: in 1495, they sided with Aḳbirdî al-Dawâdâr in his struggle against Muḥammad b. Kâytbây, and in 1516, they fought on the side of the Ottomans against Tûmânây, the last Mamluk sultan. Supposed to keep them in check and acting as the main liaison between the group and the state was their leading family of the Banû Ḥabîr (or Ḥabîr Oğulları or Ḥabîrî). Indeed, it was always one of their ranks whom the Ottomans appointed as the şeyḫ el-'Arab of the district of Giza: İbn Sallâm (or Sâlim?), circa 1499; Ḥammâd, circa 1517, who attained the rank of *sancaḳ bey*; Ca'far, murdered in 1594; the latter's son, 'Alî, at least until 1608; 'Umrân, circa 1713; and Aḥmad, circa 1799. Whereas the 'Azâle were clearly a liability, these Ḥabîrîs were not. Ḥammâd and his brother, Sallâma, for example, were fully o-opted, even joining Sinân Pasha in his Yemen Campaign.

## II. Zooming in on the texts

Having familiarized ourselves with the prolific Muḥyî-i Gülşenî, beylerbey Aḥmed Paşa, and the marauding 'Azâle Bedouins as the three key players, let us now turn our attention to Muḥyî's texts themselves: the 'Azâle-Nâme-i *manẓûm*, or versified 'Azâle-Nâme, and the 'Azâle-Nâme-i *menşûr*, or prose 'Azâle-Nâme. While this chapter explicitly aims at zooming out of these texts, thus moving beyond their immediate and highly circumscribed evidential value, it should be clear that we cannot proceed without at least briefly zooming in on the texts and detailing the history that "took place" in these texts themselves. Both texts are preserved as a unicum in a single *mecmû'a* (Dâr al-Kutub al-Mişriyya, Mejâmî' Turkiyya, 23).<sup>28</sup> This convolute is dated around 1010/1601-02, and contains thirty-five works by Muḥyî's hand, all copied by one of his pupils in a fairly legible *ta'liq*.

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28 See Hilmî al-Dāğistānî, *Fihrist*, pp. 335-338, 398; Fihris al-Makhtûṭât al-Turkiyya al-'Uthmāniyya allatî qtanahâ Dâr al-Kutub al-Qawmîya mundhu 'Âm 1870 ḥattâ nihâyat 1980 M 1870-1980, III: 150-151.

As common for poetry on a heroic theme, the first text, the 'Azāle-Nāme-i Manzūm (folios 407v-412v)<sup>29</sup> is an Ottoman-Turkish *meşnevî* of 361 *beyts*, written in the mütekārip mahzūf meter (*fe'ülün fe'ülün fe'ülün fe'ül*). The poem is divided in a number of sections, but — perhaps due to the poor quality of the black-and-white scans available to the present author — many of the Persian section headers are illegible. Skipping the stock *hamdele* and *na't* — something every tongue falls short in doing anyway (*Anıñ medh'in etmekde kâşır zebân \* Kaçan na'tını ede vaşf u beyân*) — sultan Murād III (r. 1574-1595) is hailed as “he who the world wishes for” (*murād-i cihân*), the “custodian of justice and mercy of the world \* helper of the Sharia and surety of the era” (*Emîn-i 'adālet emān-i cihân \* Mu'in-i şer'at zamān-i zemān*), the “climes' protector, sultan Murād \* world's aid and diffuser of justice and equity” (*Ḥafız-i eḳālīm sulṭān Murād \* Naşır-i cihân nāşir-i 'adl u dād*), in whose obedience shahs continue to be, and whose realm stretches between Mecca and Egypt, Yemen and Abyssinia, East and West, Baghdad and Basra, Jaffa and the Desht-i Kipchak. Next, Muḥyī zooms in onto Egypt. Reference is made to an 'adil-nāme sent to Egypt by the sultan, “filling its cities and abodes with justice” (*'Adil-nāme irsāl édüb şehriyār \* 'Adāletle pür oldı şehir ve diyār*). Undoubtedly, this 'adil-nāme (referred to as *cümle Mısr ehline 'arż-i hāl*) is a short form — perhaps for metrical demands — of the more common term 'adālet-nāme.<sup>30</sup> The sultan's rescript, redressing the malpractices of provincial authority, was read and studied by all qadis and beys (*Kuzāt ile beğler olub müctemi' \* Oğundı ve hep oldılar muṭallı*), and was not without its effect: “All forever submitted to şer' and kânūna, through which Egypt attained order” (*Hemîşe olub şer' ve kânūna rām \* Bulur Mısr dāyım bular-dan nızām*). As “the people of Cairo heard (the 'adil-nāme), it was as if an ocean of God's favour boiled over” (*Mısr halkı çün anı gūş eyledi \* Yemm-i luṭf-i haḳḳ şanki cūş eyledi*). Indeed, sheikhs, beys, qadis and troopers alike, all “opened their lips to utter praise and salutation (*Meşāyihle beğler kuzāt ve sipāh \* Sipās ve tahīyetle açub şifāh*). One particular blissful measure taken by the sultan to rectify matters in Egypt was his appointment of Ḥāfız Ahmed as its governor. Punning on his agnomen, *ḥāfız*, Muḥyī calls him no less than the “protector of Egypt” (*ḥāfız-i Mısr*), who “always increased justice, who made a Nile(-size river) of favour flow to Cairo” (*Ziyād eyleyüb 'adilni her zemān \* Kerem Nilini Mışra kıldı revān*).

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29 Muḥyī, 'Azāle-Nāme-i manzūm, Dār al-Kutub wa l-Wathā'ik al-Ḳawmīya, Mecāmī' Türkiye 23, ff. 407v-412v.

30 See Darling, “Justice and Power in the Ottoman Empire”; İnalçık, “Adāletnāmeler”.

In spite of Murād's blessed sultanate, and in spite of the justice of his appointed representative in Egypt, Hāfız Aḥmed, however, all was not well in Egypt, for Bedouins are causing trouble. Indeed, so the people say, if the ruler really wants to put a stop to tyranny (*ki şeh def'-i zulm isteriyse eğer*), he ought finish off those Bedouins who bring cruelty and affliction over Egypt (*Gelür Mıṣra her dem cefā ve miḥen*), and then especially the main evildoers among them, "their leaders in mischief" and "the like of (the people of) 'Ād (*Huṣūṣan bulardan re'is el-fesād \* Muḥārib çü 'Ād işleri hep 'inād*), "those called 'Azāle and obedient to (the devil) 'Azāzīl \* Whose rebellion and scandalous behaviour continue" (*'Azāle be-nām ve 'Azāzīle rām \* Rezāletle tuğyānları ber-devām*), and who "revel in (shedding) illicit blood" (*Daḥi ḥūn-i nā-ḥakḥdī cūmbişleri*). In the past, the Mamluk sultan Kāyıtḡāy (r. 1468-1496) had sent some swift-footed punitive expeditions against them (*Niçe kere merḥūm şeh Kāyıtḡāy \* Cerīde edüb 'asker-i tēz-pāy*), yet, while he was able to put down the enemy's burning and fire (*Sūz u nār-i a'dāyī söndürmiş ol*), time and this flared up anew. On more than one occasion, they even entered the city of Cairo through the Bābü'n-Naṣr, bringing calamity to the very heart of Mıṣır. As the Circassian sultans (r. 1382-1517) fell short to mend this (*Selāṭīn-i Çerkes ḡalub 'ācizīn \* 'İlāc etmemişler o derde hemīn*), a general lawlessness ensued, with wine being drunk, people being roasted, and women being abused rather than married. In short, whatever sacred observances there were in İslam, quickly these 'Azāle disposed of them. Never did they turn to a judge; never did they humble themselves before the governors, acting instead as their own mufti and their own judge. They roamed Giza, Şübrement and Ümm Ḥunān, Deḥşūr and Dimnāvī, stealing gold and other goods from the people, traders, pilgrims and travellers alike. After the Ottoman take-over in 1517, the Ottoman governors had sent expeditions against them (*Görüb anlarıñ cevriñi dāyīmā \* Êderlerdi irsāl ilḡar añā*). These efforts were never to any lasting avail, given these governors' short tenure (*Veli çāre hergez bulunmazdı \* Ki varanlarıñ müddeti azdı*). But now, under Aḥmed's beylerbeylicate, these mischievous 'Azāle had taken it too far: in Giza, they murdered Ca'fer b. Ḥabīr, a member of one of their own leading families, who, significantly, had been appointed by the Ottoman sultan as the şeyḥü'l-'Arab of Giza (*Daḥi Cīzede şimdi şeyḥ alub \* Olar Ca'feri bir şeb taleb edüb, Bulub ḡāfil anı o ḡavm-i nijend \* Kesserler baş eyleyüb çok gezend*).

As such flagrant disrespect of Ottoman authority could not be left unanswered, the pasha decided to solve the problem of the 'Azāle once and for all (*'Azāle izālesi oldı merām*). Having prayed for their removal day and night, Aḥmed receives divine inspiration and draws his plan of attack. Setting up

camp in Giza, he assembles the beys, judges and leaders and consults with them (*Gelüb Cîzede eyledi çün maḳām \* Otaḳlarına geldi beğler tamām; Ḳuzât ve ehālî-i tedbîr hem \* Gelüb fetihle kesr için oldu şanem*). The flaw of the previous expeditions was quickly identified: following the initial attack, the 'Azâle used to flee and scatter, and the Ottomans refrained from pursuing them. Hence, lasting only for a few days, these *tecrîdes* failed to solve the problem once and for all (*Bilindi ki sâbıḳda ılḡar olan \* Bir iki gün ançuḳ olurmıř revân, Zafer-siz dönerlermiř âhir ḥazîn*). Clearly, the solution lay in a more sustained *tecrîde*, and a prölonged pursuit of the fleeing Bedouins, as far as Girgeh in Upper Egypt, if need be (*Ve bi l-cümle 'arâz-i şeh-i kâmyâb \* Mařûn ola dëyü bu oldu cevâb*)! Once the necessary provisions were made, messengers are sent out to summon the brave and bold horsemen, each a hero in the hunt for enemies (*Şecâ'etde cür'etde mümtâzlar \* Şikâr-i a'âdide şehbâzlar*). The messengers' call is answered in great number, for all are as eager to see an end to the 'Azâle, as the lion is eager to hunt the gazelle (*'Azâle izâlesine her diler \* Ğazâle şikâra gider şan-ki şîr*). As news spread across Egypt, all district *kâşifs* come with their troops: 'Abdü'l-Laṭîf from Şarkîye, Ḳâsim from Manûfiye, Ca'fer Ğâzî from Ḳalyüb, Aḥmed from Behensâ, ... Ḥakîm OḒlı is selected to lead the operation (*Dënildi Ḥakîm OḒlı serdâr ola \* Ki ḥikmetle ḥukm eder ol dâyimâ, Şecâ'etle meřhûr dur ol emîr \* Ne var 'askere olurısa emîr*), while several other officials are assigned their specific tasks: the *ḳapucı bařı* Hızır AḒa, Hıřım Maḥmûd Beğ, Muḥammed Beğ Cündî Hüseyin, the *emîr-i kebîr* Küçük Sinân, *cebeci* 'Alî Beğ, *ḳâzî* İbrâḥîm, Pîrî Beğ. All of these, it goes without saying, excel in courage and military prowess, and take up position and narrow the escape routes for the Bedouins (*Menâfız olub cümle 'Urbâna teng \* Yüridi fezâya hizebrân-i ceng*). The following 150 *beyts* portray in full colour the Ottoman soldiery as Firdawsian lions that successfully hunted down the cowardly 'Azâle gazelles. Attacks and retreats follow in quick succession, and Muḥyî makes sure several Ottoman officials have their moment of glory. Ḳâzî Maḥmûd, e.g., is highlighted first, as he closed in together with those who roar as lions, each of which a mail-clad crocodile and a bright-faced leopard (*Nehengân-i cevřen-ḳabâ her biri \* Pelengân-i rüşen-liḳâ her biri*). With all its confusion, it was like the day of resurrection, with the enemy heading for hell (*Çü oldu bu âřübla restehîz \* 'Adü düzaḥa tutdı râh-i gürîz*). When the falcon flies, the crow flees; when the leopard attacks, the fox runs off; and when the lion charges, the dog makes itself scarce (*Ḳaçar cümle şan şîr önünden kilâb, Ḳaçar rûbah eyleirse ḥamle peleng*). Hence, those Bedouins who lived to see another day set tot heir heels and positioned themselves on top of a mountain. Three Bedouins mount a counter-attack, advancing side by side, heedlessly



and shouting (*Gelür anlar üstine üç ték 'adū \* Urub na'ralar bī-ḥazar sū-be-sū*). As they see Ḥakīm Oğlu, they understand that he will show no mercy, and, finding no refuge, they take up position at Saḡar<sup>31</sup> (*Ḥakīm Oğlını çün görerler hemān \* Bilürler ki ḥükminde vërmez emān, Mefer bulmayub ol nefer-i bī-zafer \* Muḡarrar ederler Saḡarda maḡar*). The Bedouins decide to try and wear down the Ottomans, attacking and retreating consecutively (*Döner cümlesi kerr-ü-ferrīyle hep \* Tā ki vëreler döne döne ta'ab*). To the tune of death playing its lute (*Ecel nāyı çünkim şalā eyledi*), fierce fighting takes place, and many enemies are brought down on the road to perdition (*Reh-i mevte a'dāyı kıldı revān*). Some Bedouins seek refuge at the Pyramids, like the Pharaohs, but Moses' wrath had come down upon them like a dragon. The enemy suffers blows from swords, maces, arrows and lances; some are cut up, some split up, some sliced up and some struck (*Kimi tığla kimi kūpāl ile \* Kimi tırle kimi evşāl ile, Kimin biçdiler kimini kırdılar \* Kimin dildiler kimini vurdılar*). Then another day of fighting ensued. Twenty Ottomans wolves set out to tear the foxes (*Yiğirmi nefer gür-g-i nerler çıkar \* Ki rübahları çāk çāk edeler*). Even though the enemy numbered over two thousand, the Ottoman troops faced them and encircled them. Şaḡır 'Osmān takes one down, intent to sever his head. Several hundreds of 'Azāle crows swoop down onto his single Ottoman falcon, wanting to roast him on their spears (*O bāz üzere üşer niçe yüz ḡurāb \* Ki rümḡiyle anı kıllalar kebāb*). His companions then forsake him, as they believe that he cannot be saved, yet, 'Osmān unsheathes his sharp sword, and puts some to the ground (*O ḡod tığ-i bürrānı 'uryān kılar \* Niçesin hemān ḡāka yeksān kılar*). Cutting one, he turns to the others, his skills as deadly as a wide-cast cobweb (*Kesüb birisini döner anlara \* Yayık örümcekdür hüner anlara*). Bedouins take to their heels, crying for a way out (*Çaçarlar dër, "Ey ḡavim eyne l-mefer?"*). Several hundreds are killed that time, while the remainder flees. Following other exploits, now those of Dāvud Aḡa and Cellād Ḥışmī, there is a duel. The "asses' leader" (*re's-i ḡarān*), İbn 'Aclān, one of the 'Azāle, challenges the Ottomans, calling for his "match" ('adīl) in fighting. İbn 'Ādil, another Bedouin leader who had been co-opted by the Ottomans as *kāşif*, takes up the challenge and wins the duel. Also fighting on the Ottoman side is the son of murdered sheikh, İbn Ca'fer 'Alī, who is mocked by one of the Bedouins, "It was I who killed your father!" (*Babañ ḡātīliyim!*). 'Alī ends up decapitating the provocative Bedouin, thus avenging his father's death.

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 31 To be identified as Saqqāra in Giza? Possibly a deliberate pun on Saḡar, one of the seven Hells in Islam.

Three hundred and thirty-seven verses down in the *meşnevî*, following a period of 13 days of fighting, at last, victory! Admittedly, the enemy remains combative: "Before long, Cairo will be ours! The sultan's sword is long, you say? Beware, for our spears are even longer!" ("Biz ze-âkıbet Mıṣra ḥākim tamām, Deseñ seyf-i sulṭān ṭavīl ét ḥazer \* Mezārīkunā eṭvalū minhū," *dér*). Yet, taking these claims for what they are — empty threats — the Ottoman troops returned, unharmed, laden with booty, and confident that the 'Azāle's disrespect of both *kānūn* and *şer'* (*bī-vech-i kānūn ve şer'*) has been set straight. There is an interesting dissonant note here: not only the servants and mounts of the 'Azāle are sold at the qadis' order, but also their wives, children and deserted slaves, even though the sale of these was not entirely lawful (*Ġulām-i buġāt ve devābb-i 'uşāt \* Gelüb bey' olundı bi-emr-i kuzāt, Anıñ k'olmadı bey'i cāyız tamām \* 'İyāl ile evlād ve hārib ġulām*). Having witnessed the sharpness of the Ottomans' sword (*Ki 'Osmānīyān seyfi kātı' imiş*), those who had escaped the Ottoman's wrath now cried, "We've become Muslims! Mercy!" (*Bu ḥālī görüb çağrışub bī-ġümān \* "Muslimān olub" dēdiler "El-emān!"*). As the granting of *emān* has been part of the Ottoman *kānūn* since old, this is duly granted (*Çün evvelde kānūn-i 'Osmānīyān \* Emān vèrimdür pes vèrildi emān*), and those who survived return to obedience. The beys enter the city, and the enemies' heads, displayed on their bayonets (*Serneyzede rū'us-i a'dā nişān*), are ignominiously paraded through the city (*Çū şehir içre teşhīre oldı şalā*). As the news of the victory spread, other Bedouins drew their lesson (*Alub cümle-i A'rāb bundın ḥisāb*), and before long, all Arabs made peace, obediently and unconditionally (*İṭā'atle şulḥ étidiler bī-ṭaleb*). Especially the Ḥayvāre, praying God to defend them "from want after plenty" (*ḥūr u kevriyle*), pledged their loyalty to the Sharia. Everywhere begs on guard could now make room for pilgrims and traders, and youth can carry property again unattended (*Gider mālā yalnız bir şabī*). Most fittingly, the poem concludes with lavish praise of God and of sultan Murād, the *sāye-i ḥaḳ*, *melce'-i ḥāfikeyn*, *melāz-i cihān*, *imām-i enām*, *kerem-ġüster-i dehr*, *sedād-i bilād* and *menā-i fevād*. Indeed, "May (Murād) always be victorious over his enemies, \* Just as Muḥyī may always be merry at the feast!" (*Adūya zaferler bulub dāyīmā \* Düġün içre şādān ola Muḥyiyā*).

Let us now move over to Muḥyī's second work, the 'Azāle-Nāme-i Menşūr (folios 412v-415v)<sup>32</sup>, an Ottoman-Turkish *risāle* of some 1,900 words that consists of an introductory part, three *maḳāles*, and a concluding dyptich. Mostly consisting of continuous text, several items, such as the *maḳāle* titles, the sultan's

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32 Muḥyī, 'Azāle-Nāme-i menşūr, ff. 412v-415v.



name and Quranic verses are highlighted through overlining, bold characters or rubrication, and occasionally a *dāre* (small circle) is used as a textual divider. The opening *hamdele* and *na't* are both in Arabic Especially God's suppression of those prone to war and coercion is highlighted:

"Praise be to God, who, through His light, has lifted the affliction (caused by) the one who has kindled a fire for war, and who, through His power, has annihilated the one who has been stubborn in coercion (*alladhī adhaba bi nūrihi ḥuzn man istawqada li al-ḥarb nāran, wa dammara bi qudratihi man kāna 'anīd ijbāran*), and God bless Muhammad, who has been sent to mankind as an admonishment and as a good tiding, as well as His family and his Companions, who were (as numerous as) stars and (as splendid as) flowers."

The full scale of Muḥyī' invocation of God is made clear by bringing in the Quranic parallel of Noah's plea with God (LXXI: 26-27) (ll. 5-6):

"My Lord! Leave not one of the disbelievers in the land. If thou shouldst leave them, they will mislead Thy slaves and will beget none save lewd ingrates."

Referred to as the "The exposition (*ma'rūz*) of the humble Muḥyī, who is destitute of the Almighty" (*Ma'rūz-i faḳīr-i ḳadīr Muḥyī-i ḥaḳīr*), the author then lays out the topic of this *nāme*:

"In the region of Egypt, there is a group of wicked Arabs, a band of unjust highway robbers, whose treacherous character and proneness to doing wrong (*tāyīfe-i A'rāb-i bāḡīye, ki cemā'at-i ḳuṭṭā'-i tāḡīye dur, ḥıyānetle mevşūf ve cināyetle ma'rūf olduḡı*) are more manifest and clearer than the sun, and more plain and better known than the moon. In particular (I am referring to) the group of the 'Azāle, who are highway robbers and rebels outside of God's favor. As the people of the villages and of Old and New Cairo are constantly under the terror of that unparalleled band, their repulsion has become a debt and a loan to the rulers, necessary (to be redeemed), and their suppression has become an indispensable and individual duty for all people (*def'i ḥukkāma ḳarz ve deyn-i lāzım, ve ref'i ḥāş ve 'amma farz-i 'ayn ve mūhim olmuşdı*)."

Interestingly, whereas elsewhere Muḥyī refers to this text as a *risāle*, here, he calls it a *ma'rūz*. Especially in light of the topic of the *risāle* and its connections to the writings of grand mufti Ebū's-Su'ūd Efendi (for which, see below), it is tempting to understand *ma'rūz* here as a technical term (i.e. as an 'arzu ḥāl

by the grand mufti addressed to the grand vizier), and thus to think of the *risāle* as a (literary reworking of) of an 'arzu ḥāl submitted by Muḥyī to beylerbey Aḥmed.<sup>33</sup> However, given the fact that Muḥyī refers to his *Menāḳīb* as a *ma'rūz* also, we should probably understand the term here in its more general meaning of "exposition". Through the auspiciousness of Murād III, this debt of repelling the 'Azāle has been paid by the sultan's representative in Egypt, Aḥmed Paşa. It was he who has made the laws of justice current in Egypt anew, and it was he who has worked tirelessly to liberate Egypt from the marauding Bedouins:

"Since the ruler of Egypt, the best of his kind and one who gave rise to conquest and victory, His Excellency Aḥmed Paşa (...) has become pasha of Egypt, through the prosperity and good luck, and the auspiciousness and majesty of His Excellency, the most lofty sultan and the most noble *pādişāh*, who holds the reins of the sultans of (all) climes, sultan Murād (...), and (since) the laws of justice and equity have become current, and (Aḥmed Paşa) has made a great endeavour and has relentlessly used all diligence in stopping the devilish 'Azāzīl who go by the name of 'Azāle ('Azāle nām 'Azāzīlīn izālesinde), who are outside of the rules of Islam."

Muḥyī has written this text, referred to this time as a *risāle*, in order to demonstrate the "vileness of the 'Azāle and (*mutatis mutandis*, the legality of) stopping them", a line that runs more smoothly in Turkish than it does in English translation: 'Azāleniñ rezālet ile izālesinde bu risāle ketb olub.

Mostly reiterating lines 1-146 of the *meşnevī*, the first section offers little new. It starts by explaining the 'Azāle's "treacherous nature and the wrongs they commit" (*hıyānet ve cināyetlerin beyān eder*). Already in the days of the "Kurdish and Circassian sultans" (i.e. the Ayyubids and the Mamluks), these Bedouins had been in control of some villages around the city of Giza, close to Cairo, exploiting their inhabitants, appropriating the share of their crops due to the treasury, and carrying off as booty their horses, garments and belongings (*Mıṣra qarīb Cīze nām kaşaba etrāfında Şübrement ve Ūm Hunān ve Dimnāvī ve Deḥşūr nām qaryelerin ehline ḥukm edüb, bī-vech şer'-i şerīf ve kânūn-i münif ehlerine taşarruf edüb, zer'leriniñ ḥarācını kable māl el-saltanat kabz edüb, esbān u esbāb ve māllarını hemīşe ğāret etmeğīn*). The Circassian sultans Baybars and Qāyıtbaş

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33 See Gerber, *State, Society, and Law in Islam*, pp. 88-92; Heyd, *Studies in Old Ottoman Criminal Law*, pp. 183-184; İnalçık, "Şikâyet Hakkı: 'Arz-i ḥāl ve 'arz-i maḥzar'lar", pp. 33-54. In fact, the Cairo *mecmū'a* contains a number of 'arzu ḥāls by Muḥyī (*Mecāmī' Türkiye* 23, ff. 416-455).

had organized several rapid incursions (ilğar) against them, but never to any lasting avail. Sometimes, the Bedouins gained the upper hand, killing some Muslims; sometimes, they suffered defeat and retreated to the deserts, hills and mountains, where they fortified themselves, safely out of the Ottomans' reach (*kaçub berārī ve tilāl u cibālda, ki 'asker varmaç 'asir ola, kendülere hişār eyleyüb varub onda qarār ederler idi*). Following the Ottoman take-over in 1517, things only got worse. Even though the governors had sent out several forays against them, these turned out to be nothing "but letters without grammar" (i.e., uncoordinated and meaningless) (*bi-'aynihi sâbıkda olan vech üzere şarf bi-lâ harf vâkı' olurdu*), as a consequence of which the Bedouins' oppression only increased. Not only the villages southwest of Cairo suffered, in fact, the 'Azāle sometimes even ventured into Cairo itself, causing havoc even at the Azhar Mosque (*miyân-i Mısırda ma'bed-i şulaḥā ve meclis-i 'ulamā olan cāmī' el-Ezherde fesādlar édüb*), before retreating to their mountainous strongholds (*yine ol tığıllaruñ hişārı olan tağlara tağılurlar idi*). Whomsoever Rūmīs they found, they showed them no mercy, killing the one and roasting the other (*ve niçe müdde-tdür Rūmilerden her kimi bulsalar bī-terahḥum édüb, kimini helāk ve kimini kebāb édüb*). Fleeing from the laws and observances of Islam (*hukūk ve şe'âyir-i islām-dan kaçarlar idi*), they saw no harm in drinking wine (*istiḥlāl ile dāyimā şerāb içerler idi*), took recourse to neither judge nor magistrate, and spilled the blood of merchant, pilgrim and traveller alike. At the time of sowing, they sowed nothing but the seeds of tyranny; at the time of harvesting, they cut nothing but the throats of their victims (*zer' zemânında re'âyāmın ḡallâtın alub toḥum-i zulm ekerlerdi, ve vaqt-i hişādda kimini keserler kimini biçerler idi*). But now, at the onset of Aḥmed Paşa, they have gone too far: "One night, through a ruse, they had invited Ḥabīr Oğlu Ca'fer, chosen and subsequently appointed as şeyḫ el-'Arab of the province of Giza by the sultan, and had murdered him, before scattering and returning to their usual plunder and sacking (*Ḥuşūşan şimdi cānib-i saltanatdan kendiler ihtiyār édüb Cize vilāyetinde şeyḫ el-'Arab ta'yin olan Ḥabīr Oğlu Ca'feri hile ile bir gece ziyāfet édüb katl ederler ve tağılub her cānibe nehb ve ḡarete giderler*). As soon as the news of İbn Ḥabīr's murder reached governor Aḥmed Paşa, he sent several envoys to the 'Azāle, summoning them to obedience (*iṭā'ate da'vet étidi*). Yet, their devilish nature proved obstinate and they kept to the path of error (*anlaruñ şeytānı 'inād eyleyüb tarīk-i zelālete alı gitdi*). Hence, the pasha pledged solemnly:

"Before long, we will find ourselves victorious inside Cairo, having found our objective and desires! Indeed, the outcome that we aim at is for the perfidious ones to be killed by the sword of the law, for their heads to be

raised onto the bayonet, thus publicly exposing (them) as criminals, and for them to find an awful doom in the Afterlife! (‘An qarīb zafer ile Mıṣra dāḥil oluruz ve maḵṣūd u münāmızı onda buluruz. *Fī l-vāḳi’ netīce-i maḵṣūd ḥāyīn seyf-i şer’le maḵtūl olmaḵdur, ve teşhīrle serleri serneyze serefrāz olub āḥiretde ‘azāb-i ‘azīm bulmaḵdur.*”

In the end, thus it happened (*nitekim vāḳi’ oldı*). Concluding the first section, Muḥyī praises God, for at last the ‘Azāle have been repulsed and suppressed, extirpated and put down (*Pes el-ḥamdü li-llāh, def’ ve refi’lerine tedbīr oldı ve ḳal’ ve ḳam’ları netīce boldı*).

While the first *maḳāle* laid out in sufficient detail the *fesād* wrought by the ‘Azāle, the second section — by far the longest — offers the Quranic proof (*naṣṣ*) that killing these “unjust brigands” (*zaleme ḳuṭṭā’*) is “obligatory” (*vācib*). In fact, this section is no more than a *tefsīr* of the infamous Quranic “Brigandage Verse” or Āyetü’l-ḥirābe (Quran, V: 33-34)<sup>34</sup>, defining both the meaning of brigandage and detailing its proper Quranic punishment, as this ranges between execution and banishment. This commentary taps into the linguistic and the historic strand of Quranic exegesis and, given its fairly elliptic nature, is no easy reading. For convenience sake, let us start with Pickthall’s translation of verses V: 33-34 in full:

“The only reward of those who make war upon Allah and His Messenger and strive after corruption in the land will be that they will be killed or crucified, or have their hands and feet on alternate sides cut off, or will be expelled out of the land. Such will be their degradation in the world, and in the Hereafter theirs will be an awful doom. Save those who repent before ye overpower them. For know that Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”

Rather than quoting the verses in full, Muḥyī presents them in eleven successive parts, each time giving the Arabic original, followed by a verbatim translation into Ottoman Turkish, and a commentary<sup>35</sup>. Without any introduction, Muḥyī starts his discussion of the *Brigandage Verse* by tackling the first part and second part, thus defining the crime that is dealt with:

.....

34 The literature on *ḥirābe* is considerable. See, among others, Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion & Violence in Islamic Law*; Hallaq, *Shari’a. Theory, practice, Transformations*; Kraemer, “Apostates, rebels and brigands”, pp. 34-73; Lange, *Justice, Punishment and the Medieval Muslim Imagination*. The concept of the *sāṭ bi l-fasād*, in its *longue durée*, has most recently been treated by Yavuz, “A Legal Concept in Motion: The ‘Spreader of Corruption’ (*sāṭ bi l-fesād*) from Qarakhaniid to Ottoman Jurisprudence”.

35 In the following quotations, what is translated from the Arabic is put in italics.

"God, exalted is He above all, has said, "*Innamā jazā'u alladhina yuḥāribūna Allāha wa rasūlahu*", i.e., the reward of those who have been making war upon the followers of God, exalted is He above, and of His messenger, (in other words,) upon Muslims."

(*Qāla Allāhu ta'ālā: "Innamā jazā'u alladhina yuḥāribūna Allāha wa rasūlahu", ya'nī: anlarıñ cezāsı, ki ḥaḳḳ-i ta'ālānıñ ve resūliniñ evliyāsı ile, ki muslimīn dur, muḥārebe ederler.*)

Having explained why it is necessary to extrapolate the meaning of waging war upon God and His Messenger to waging war upon Muslims in general, Muḥyī discusses what *ḥirābe* actually entails:

"This phrase is the first part of a discourse that has been revealed in relation to one (specific) type of (the various) types of killing, and it explains the *fesad* and *ifsād*, that is, the taking of property and the like that are connected with that (specific type of) killing, and the punishment that these deserve. Essentially, war is the seizing by force of spoils."

(*Ve bu cümle kelām-i müste'nif dur, ki envā'-i katıldan bir nev' için sevḳ olunmuşdur, ve ol katla muta'allak olan fesād ve ifsād, ki aḥz-i māl ve neḫāyiri dur, ve anlara lāzim olan cezāyı beyān eyler. Ve aşılda ḥarb selb-i selebdir.*)

The crux of the matter is simple: "What is meant at this point (more specifically) is highway robbery (*Bu maḥalde murād kat'-i ṭarīḳdır*). Briefly discussing the importance of the locality of the crime (either in- or outside of the city), he then moves on to the second part of the verse, "*Wa yas'awna fī al-arḍ fasādan*", (i.e.,) "As well as [of] those who strive after corruption, either being corrupt or (merely) striving after corruption," in which the author engages in a fairly linguistic discussion of, among others, the syntactic relation between *yas'awna* and *yuḥāribūna*, and of the word *fasād*. The bottom-line is that *ifsād* and *fesād* are to be equated with *ḥirābe* (*Pes arz vücūdında ifsād ve fesād eyleyen iṣlāḥ-i ḥaḳīket edenin zıddı dur, belki muḥāribi dur*). The following four parts detail the various punishments meted out for *ḥirābe*, no small matter, since *ḥirābe* infringes not only on the *ḥuḳūk al-'ibād*, but on the *ḥuḳūk Allāh* first and foremost, thus constituting a *ḥadd*: killing, crucifixion, amputation, or banishment. All this is presented in such a condensed form, that it is often quite hard to digest the subtleties of the argumentation. Skipping over "*An yuqattalū*" and "*Aw yuṣallabū*", let us consider one of the more legible sections, Muḥyī's exegesis of the amputation:

"*Aw tuqatta'a aydihim wa arjuluhum min khilāfin*", (i.e.,) their right hand and left foot are cut off, or their left hand and right foot, in case they are

left-handed. This holds for those who have taken property without killing, that is, their hand is cut off because they have taken property (and) their foot is cut off because they have filled the road with fear, for the road's safety may not be lost. The cutting off on alternate sides is to (prevent the culprit from future) killing. Whether (the victim) is a Muslim or a *zimmī* makes no difference. Amputation is necessary whenever the (value of the) object stolen, when divided by the (number of) thieves, amounts to 10 dirham each, or if its value is equivalent to that. Otherwise, it (the value of the object stolen) is less or if (the victim) is an infidel, then the punishment is not necessary."

("Aw tuqaṭṭa'a aydihim wa arjuluhum min khilāfin": yā sağ eli şol ayağı kesilür, yā şol eli sağ ayağı kesilür eğer şolağ ise. Bu hāl eğer māl alub katl etmezler ise. Ya'nı: aḥz-i māl içün eli kat' olur, iḥāfet-i ṭarīk içün ayağı kat' olur, ki emn-i ṭarīk fevt olmaya. Hilāfan kat' olmağ öldürmemek içün dūr. Ve bu hāl cümle müslimler ve zimmīler olurlar isedir, ve aldıkları nesne, her bir sārīka taḥsīm olduğda, onar dirhem düşersedir, yā kıymeti aña berāber olursadır ki bu kat' lāzım gelür. Yoḥsa aḡal olsa yā kāfir olsalar, ol cezā lāzım gelmez.)

Regarding expulsion, Muḥyī discusses both the interpretation of "the *mezheb* of the greatest imam", that is Abū Ḥanīfe, and of al-Şāfi'ī. Next Muḥyī turns his attention to the important conjunction "aw": while, theoretically, the imam is left free choice (*bu cümlede imām muḥayyer dūr*), practically, he doesn't choose freely. Indeed, only "those who do not know the different classes of men don't understand that the word "aw" in the verse comes with a gradation" of punishments (*ki merātib-i nāsı bilmeyen bilmez, ki āyetde "ev" lafzı taḥsīm içündür*). Following a highly technical linguistic exegesis of "zālike", "*lahum khizyun fī al-dunyā*", "*Wa lahum fī al-ākhirā*", and "*adhābun 'aẓīmun*", Muḥyī turns his attention to the various opinions on the verse's *asbāb al-nuzūl*, either in relation to the Hilāl bin 'Uwaymir Aslamī or to the 'Uraynīyīn. Moving over the next Quranic verse, "Save those who repent before ye overpower them. For know that Allah is Forgiving, Merciful", Muḥyī's exegesis highlights the — for *ḥudūd* exceptional — possibility of repentance before being overcome, yet stresses the fact that such repentance only nullifies the *ḥadd* punishment (*ḥūdā-i ta'ālānīn ḥuḳūqına maḥşūş olduğına*), with the *kisās*, while no longer obligatory, remaining permissible (*vücübı tevbe ile sākıt olur, ammā cevāzı sākıt olmaz*). Hinting at two historical precedents — one involving 'Alī and Ḥārīş bin Bedr, the other involving Muḥammed and Vaḥşī, the murderer of his uncle Ḥamze — Muḥyī concludes the second section by addressing the *sālik-i mesālik-i ilāhī*



ve *ṭāriḳ-i ṭāriḳ-i nā-mütenāhī* and reiterating that highway robbers are nothing less than *Allāh ta'ālāya ve resūlına muḥārib*.

Whereas, in the first section, Muḥyī spelled out the mischief wrought by the 'Azāle, and, in the second section, he identified this mischief as nothing less than *ḥirābe* and detailed the appropriate Quranic punishment, in the third, concluding section, he brought his argumentation full circle, by spelling out the obvious outcome: the 'Azāle are to be labelled *muḥāribūn*; and, *mutatis mutandis*, the harsh punishment inflicted by the Ottomans is fully *ṣer'an*, in line with the Sharia (*mezḳūr 'Azāle ṭāyifesi bu naşla vācibü'l-ḳatıl olub*). Tellingly, Muḥyī highlights the importance of the "people of the law in delivering from ill those who rule" (*ḥuḳūk nāsi ḥākim olan ehline ḥalāş eyleye*). This is precisely what the "people of the law" did in the present case: providing a solid foundation for "those who rule" to act in accordance with God's law:

"It is on this solid foundation that the justice and equity of the *pādişāh* of the world, and the flags of the most noble *ḥākān*, the sultan of the rulers of the climes, sultan Murād, son of sultan Selīm, *may God make his power perpetual and may He furnish his proof with glorification and honor*, have emerged, (and) the ruler of the refuge of justice, the propagator of equity and *siyāset*, His Excellency Ḥāfiẓ Aḥmed Paşa, *may God make him obtain his objective in this world and in the Hereafter*, has summoned the Egyptian judges, emirs and 'ulemā, and has inquired about the conditions of the aforementioned."

(Aña binā'an 'adl ve dād-i pādişāh-i 'ālem ve rāyāt-i ḥākān-i ekrem, sulṭān-i ḥākimān-i aḳālīm, sulṭān Murād bin sulṭān Selīm, edāma llāh sulṭānahu ve aḳāme burhānahu bi t-ta'ẓīm ve t-tekrīm, zuhūr édüb, ḥākim-i maferr-i 'adālet nāşir-i dād ve siyāset ḥāzret-i ḥāfiẓ Aḥmed Paşa, enāla llāh maḳşūdahu fī l-dünyā ve l-uḥrā, ḳuzāt ve ümerā' ve 'ulamā-i Mıṣrī iḥzār édüb, mezḳūrlaruñ ḥālların istifsār étdi.)

In answer to that, the aforementioned "judges, emirs and 'ulamā" have established that "killing them is a religious duty, and that extirpating them and putting them down is an individual duty" (*vācibü l-ḳatıl olduḳların beyān, ve ḳal' ve ḳam'ları farz-i 'ayn olduḳın 'ayān kıldılar*). Here, the *risāle* again links up with the *meşnevī*. After briefly referencing the necessary provisions in terms of travel, supplies and the blocking of escape routes, Muḥyī concludes with the 'Azāle meeting their fateful doom, which he rendered elliptically, not to say laconically: *varub görüb irub girüb urub kırub dērub getürdiler, ve şer ve şūrların ortadan götürdiler*.

### III. Zooming out of the texts

As we have detailed above, the poem focuses squarely on the actors involved in the punitive expedition against the 'Azāle — making sure that a whole range of Ottoman officials got their “five minutes of fame” — and hardly addresses the issue of this punishment's legality. The prose text, on the other hand, focuses on the legal rationale behind it and wastes but few words on the actual execution of the punishment. Having thus familiarized ourselves sufficiently with the texts, let us now zoom out.

What do we find? First, it is clear that Muḥyī felt equally at home in the Firdawsi universe of leopards and panthers, as he did in the terse Arabicizing legalistic *tefsīr* vocabulary. Whereas the *meşnevī* depicts the *hizebr*, *şīr*, *neheng*, *peleng*, and *gürg*, and stars Ferīdūn, Cem, İskender and those other immortal heroes of the Persian pantheon, the *risāle* harks back to the Benī Kināne, imam 'Alī and His Excellency Ḥamze. Obviously, there is nothing new in finding people operating across discursive borders. Nonetheless, it remains worthwhile to stress that this observation holds true for Muḥyī as well.

Next, as said before, in the *meşnevī*, Muḥyī made sure that a long list of Ottoman officials got their “five minutes of fame”, highlighting, for example, the exploits of a Dāvud Ağa, who is otherwise left completely unidentified. As these references make little if no sense to outsiders, it is clear that the poem was geared towards a local audience of Ottoman-speaking officials in Egypt first and foremost. As for the *risāle*, there can be no doubt regarding its dedicatee and target of patronage: Aḥmed Paşa, whose *tecrīde* Muḥyī legitimized. As such, both 'Azāle-Nāmes suggest an intimate relation between Muḥyī and state officials, a relation that he sought to activate, maintain and strengthen. Again, to find proof of Muḥyī's mundane interests in Cairo, of his active pursuance of patronage, and — more broadly — of Gülşenīye-Ottoman rapprochement can hardly be considered a novelty. Still, it is worthwhile to remind the reader of the fact that, also when it comes to patronage as the main *modus operandi* of social actors, Muḥyī was very much a “man of his age”.

Third, when thinking of Muḥyī as a Sufi writer first and foremost, we can appreciate his *risāle* as an example of the rapprochement of Sufism and Sunni Islam, thus bearing witness to the process of Sunnitization — that “close interplay between imperial politics and confession building”<sup>36</sup>, as Derin Terzioğlu-

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36 See Terzioğlu, “Sunna-Minded Sufi Preachers in Service of the Ottoman State: The Naşihat-nāme of Hasan Addressed to Murād IV”; Terzioğlu, “How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion”.



lu put it so aptly — and, more specifically, to process of the institutionalization of the *Ḥalvetiye*<sup>37</sup>. Already before, Terzioğlu rightfully warned against a conceptualization of Sunnitization as a top-down process first and foremost, emphasising “that Sufis were not only at the receiving end of Ottoman confessionalization politics”. Hence, identifying Muḥyī as one such “agent of Sunnitization”<sup>38</sup> should hardly come as a surprise. But then again, when it comes to the prose ‘*Azāle-Nāme*, it remains useful to highlight this particular lens. Here — in a concise yet indisputable way — we find a “Sunnitizing Sufi agent” at work.

Summarizing, this “distant reading” has allowed us to recognize multiple dimensions of this author’s identity — both *edīb* and deputy judge, both seeking God and seeking patronage, both Sufi and Sunni — and to appreciate the way in which these — for us moderns sometimes seemingly contradictory — dimensions combine into one kaleidoscopic personality. Admittedly, neither the dimensions themselves nor their specific constellation are new in any particular way, for indeed research into these is booming more than ever. Still, it is quite refreshing to see how these varied dimensions can coalesce into works as small and “trifling” as the two ‘*Azāle-Nāmes*, and allow us to appreciate just how much Muḥyī was a “man of his age”.

One final dimension remains to be explored in some greater detail, and this relates to Muḥyī’s *tefsīr*, one that is legalistically oriented rather than of the mystical bend. As he did not produce a full *tefsīr* himself<sup>39</sup>, what *tefsīr* did he follow? As to be expected, the usual suspects — such as al-Zamakhsharī’s *Kashshāf*, al-Qurṭubī’s *Jāmi’* and al-Suyūṭī’s *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, all enumerated in the imperial medrese curriculum analyzed by Ahmed and Filipovic<sup>40</sup> — show a lot of common ground. Yet, no perfect match turned up, that is, until I decided to follow up on a clue in Muḥyī’s *Menāḳib*:

“Whenever I was in the service of Ebū’s-Su’ūd Ḥoca Çelebi, he used to explain so much, be it in the field of *tefsīr*, *te’vīl* or ‘ilm-i *ṣūfiye*, that by (doing nothing but) writing all this down in detail, my life would have been fulfilled!

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37 Terzioğlu, “Sufis in the Age of State-Building and Confessionalization”, pp. 86-99.

38 Terzioğlu, “Sufis in the Age of State-Building and Confessionalization”, p. 96; Terzioğlu, “Suna-Minded Sufi Preachers in Service of the Ottoman State”, p. 251. For other “Sunnitizing” *Ḥalvetīs*, see Clayer, *Mystiques, État et Société*.

39 He did in fact produce partial *tefsīrs* (see Muḥyī, *Menāḳib*, p. xlii: “Tefsīr-i Sūratu’l-Ḳadr”).

40 Ahmed - Filipovic, “The Sultan’s Syllabus”, pp.183-218.

(Eğer tefsîr eğer te'vîl eğer 'ilm-i şüfiyeden ol kadar nevâdir beyân ederlerdi ki eğer anları 'ömrimde tafşîl édüb tahrîr édedim, kifâyet éderdi).<sup>41</sup>

Clearly, during his Istanbul days, Muhyî and grand mufti Ebû's-Su'ûd had met and had actually discussed the exegesis of, among others, Quran VIII: 9-10.<sup>42</sup> If we now turn our attention to Ebû's-Su'ûd Efendî's famous *tefsîr*, the *İrşâd al-'Aql al-Salîm*, we find a striking resemblance between the grand mufti's *tefsîr* and Muhyî's *risâle*. In fact, every now and then, the *risâle* is little more than a verbatim Ottoman-Turkish translation of the *İrşâd*'s Arabic original!<sup>43</sup> Consider the following prime examples:

Ebû's-Su'ûd: Kalâm musta'nif sîka li bayân hukm naw' min anwâ' al-kaṭl, wa mā yata'allaku bihi min al-fasād bi aḥd al-māl wa naẓā'irihi.<sup>44</sup>

Muhyî: Ve bu cümle kelâm-i müste'nif dur, ki envâ'-i kâtilardan bir nev' için sevğ olunmuşdur, ve ol kâtila muta'allak olan fesâd ve ifsâd, ki aḥz-i māl ve nezâyiri dur.

Ebû's-Su'ûd: Ammā kaṭ' aydihim fa li aḥd al-māl, wa ammā kaṭ' arculihim fa li ihāfat al-ṭarîq bi tafwîṭ amnihi<sup>45</sup>

Muhyî: Aḥz-i māl için eli kaṭ' olur, ihāfet-i ṭarîk için ayağı kaṭ' olur, ki emn-i ṭarîk fevt olmaya.

Ebû's-Su'ûd: "Wa lahum fi l-âḥira", ghayr hādā "adābuh 'azîmun" lâ yukādar kadruhu li gāyat 'uẓm cināyatihim. Fa kawluhu ta'ālā "lahum" ḥabar muḥaddam wa "adābun" mubtada' mu'aḥḥar wa "fi l-âḥira" muta'allak bi maḥdūf waḳ'a ḥālan min 'adāb, li annahu fi l-aṣl şifa lahu fa lammā kadama ntaṣaba ḥālan ay kā'inan fi l-âḥira.<sup>46</sup>

Muhyî: "Wa lahum fi l-âḥira": daḥi anlara âḥiretde bu 'azābdan gayrî "azābun 'azîmun", bir büyük 'azāb, var dur, ki ḥaḳîketde cezâları bu dur ki 'azāb-i âḥiret, şedîd ve 'azîm dur. Kawluhu ta'ālā "lahum" ḥaber-i muḥadd-

41 Muhyî, *Menâkıb*, pp. 383-384.

42 For Ebû's-Su'ûd's relation with the Halvetîs, see Terzioğlu, "Sufis in the Age of State-Building and Confessionalization", p. 94.

43 *İrşâd al-'Aql al-Salîm*, II: 46-48. While a convenient introduction is offered by Imber, *Ebu's-Su'ûd*. The vast literature on the şeyhül-İslâm is presented by Düzenli, "Şeyhülislâm Ebû-su'ûd Efendî: Bibliyografik Bir Değerlendirme", pp. 441-475. For his *tefsîr* in particular, see Naguib, "Guiding the Sound Mind: Ebu's-su'ûd's Tafsîr and Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'an in the Post-Classical Period", pp. 1-52; Aydemir, *Büyük Türk Bilgini Şeyhülislâm Ebû-su'ûd Efendî ve Tefsîrdeki Metodu*.

44 *İrşâd al-'Aql al-Salîm*, II: 46.

45 *İrşâd al-'Aql al-Salîm*, II: 47.

46 *İrşâd al-'Aql al-Salîm*, II: 46-47.

am dur, ve “*‘azābun ‘azīmun*” mübtedā-i muvaḥḥar dur, ve “*fi l-āhira*” maḥzūfe muta‘allaḥ dur, ki ‘*azāb*dan ḥāl-i vāḳi’ olmuşdur, zīrā aşıl-da aña şifatdur. Muḥaddam olmağın, ḥālīyet üzere menşüb dur, kāyinan fi l-āhīre dëmekdur.

In another sample, of the four interpretations regarding “*fasādan*” given by Ebū’s-Su‘ūd, Muḥyī leaves out the second:

Ebū’s-Su‘ūd: “*Wa yas’awna fi l-arḍ*” ‘atf ‘alā “*yuḥāribūna*”, wa l-cār wa l-macrūr muta‘allaḥ bihi. *Wa ḳawluhu ta‘ālā “fasādan*”, immā maşdar waḳa‘a mawḳi’ al-ḥāl min fā’il yas’awna ay mufsidīna, aw maf’ul lahu ay li l-fasād, aw maşdar mu’akkid li yas’awna li annahu fi ma’nā yufsidūna ‘alā annahu maşdar min ‘afsada bi ḥaḍf al-zawā’id, aw ism maşdar.

Muḥyī: “*Yes’avne*” “*yuḥāribūne*”ye ma’tūfdur, cār (“*fi*”) aña muta‘allaḥ dur. Ammā “*fesādan*” mevḳi’-i ḥālde “*yes’avne*”ye, mufsidūne fā’ilinden maşdar-i vāḳi’ olmuşdur, yā “*yes’avne*”yi mü’ekkid maşdardür, ki yufsidūne ifsāden dëmekdür, ḥamzenin ḥazfı ile, yā ism-i maşdardür.

While the correspondence is less obvious for this last sample, the congruence is still noticeable. Note how Muḥyī substitutes Ebū-Su‘ūd’s ‘indanā with *mezheb-i imām-i a’zam*:

Ebū’s-Su‘ūd: “*Aw yunfaw min al-arḍ*”, in lam yaf’alū ḡayr al-iḥāfa wa l-sa’y li l-fasād. *Wa l-murād bi l-nafy ‘indanā huwa l-ḥabs*, fa innahu nafy ‘an wajh al-arḍ li daf’ şarrihim ‘an ahlihā wa yu’zarūna ayḍan li mubāşaratihim munkar al-iḥāna wa izālat al-amn. *Wa ‘inda al-Şāfi’i raḍiya llāh ‘anhu l-nafy min balad ilā balad lā yazālu yaṭlub wa huwa ḥāribun fazi’an*, wa ḳila huwa l-nafy ‘an baladihi faḳaṭ. *Wa kânū yanfawna ilā Dahlak*, wa huwa balad aḳşā Tihāma, wa Nāşi’, wa huwa balad min bilād al-Ḥabaşa.<sup>47</sup>

Muḥyī: “*Ev yunfav mina l-arḍ*”: yā ol yerden nefiy olunurlar, eğer yalnız taḥvīfe ve fesād için sa’ya ḳaşr étdiler ise. Nefiyden murād beledde anın taşarrufı ḳılmamak dur. Pes ol ḥaseble ḥapisle daḥi olur, ki mezheb-i imām-i a’zamdur ki vech-i arzdan ol nefiy ile def’ dur, tā imām Şāfi’i rażiya llāh ‘anhu buyurur bir yerden bir yere muttaşıl nefiy étmek dur, ki def’ küllī ḥayşiyeti ile ola, ki bir yerde ḳarār étmeye. Ve şaḥābe-i kirām nefiy-i beled étdiklerini Dehlike irsāl éderler idi, ki aḳsā-i Tihāme dur, yā Şani’ (sic) nefiy éderler idi, ki bilād-i Ḥebeşdendur. Pes bunların ‘amelinde ḥapis ve tesyīr bulunur.

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47 Irşād al-‘Aḳl al-Salīm, II: 47.

In light of this compelling evidence, one can only state the obvious, that is, that Muḥyī's exegesis of the Āyetü'l-Ḥirābe is strongly indebted to the grand mufti's İrşād. Yet, admittedly, this alone is not all that remarkable: as said, we know that Muḥyī and Ebū's-Su'ūd had met in Istanbul, we know that they had discussed *tefsir*, and we know that Ebū's-Su'ūd's *tefsir* had found its way into the religious curriculum already by the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>48</sup>. Much more remarkable than the similarity *an sich*, however, are its implications. For Shuruq Naguib, who rightfully recognized the watershed quality of the İrşād:

"(...) the composition of *Irshād* could be thus conceived as an effort to extend and maintain control over the very meaning of the divine book and, hence, over not only the geographical realms of Islam but also the very realm of its religious truth, the Qur'an. Ebu's-su'ūd's dedication at the outset of *Irshād* (e.g. his claim to the universal viceregency of God, to the greater tradition of caliphate, and to the superior imamate), is a literary expression of that extension. With a work of Qur'an interpretation by the highest religious authority, the Shaykh al-Islam himself, the Ottomans would become defenders of the birthplace, the law and the central book of Islam."<sup>49</sup>

So not only is Muḥyī's exegesis not of the mystical bend, thus illustrating the institutionalization of Sufism, it also gives testimony to the Ottomanisation-cum-Hanafitization of the law in face of the realm's religious-legal pluralism. Muḥyī did not offer just any legalistic exegesis of the Quran and even not, more specifically, just any Ḥanafī interpretation! No, he gave Ebū's-Su'ūd's interpretation, which is about as close as one could get, in early modern times that is, to an "official" or "state-sanctioned" Quranic exegesis. In a 2005 article, Rudolph Peters raised the question as to "What does it mean to be an official madhhab?"<sup>50</sup> While the answer to such a complicated question can only be nuanced and many-sided, surely, Muḥyī's emulation of the İrşād must be part of it!

#### IV. Juxtaposing the texts

So far, by zooming out of the texts, we have observed some of the multiple dimensions of the author and of the empire he lived in, and we have relat-

48 Naguib, "Guiding the Sound Mind", p. 6. As it happens, included among the books deposited in the *vakıf* by Ahmed Paşa was Ebū'l-Su'ūd's *tefsir* (see Bilge, "İstanbul Fatih'deki Hâfız Ahmed Paşa Külliyesi'nin vakfiyesi", p. 313).

49 Naguib, "Guiding the Sound Mind", pp. 46-47.

50 Peters, "What does it mean to be an official madhhab? Hanafism and the Ottoman Empire", pp. 147-158.

ed these dimensions to a number of “-izations” of much grander, indeed, of imperial-wide scale, such as Sunnization and legal Hanafization. Indeed, it is very rewarding to read the texts against this background of larger transformative trends, researched by scholars such as Nabil al-Tikriti, Abdurrahman Atçıl, Guy Burak, Nathalie Clayer, Markus Dressler, Tijana Krstić, Reem Meshal, Rudolph Peters, Derin Terzioğlu, and Baki Tezcan. Yet, in the following, rather than dealing with any of these trends in more detail by reiterating their findings, I would like to take a different course, and I will do so by juxtaposing the texts.

Before doing so, it is useful to summarize the texts in a fairly radical way, and a lead to do so I found in the preamble to the Egyptian *Ḳānūn-Nāme* of 1525, dealt with by, among others Snjezana Buzov, Uriel Heyd, and Kaya Şahin<sup>51</sup>. This preamble, produced in tandem by grand vizier İbrāhīm Paşa and *nîşāncı* Celālzāde Muştafā, is well known, and deservedly so: in the words of Buzov, it is nothing less than the “political and legal manifesto of Süleymān’s early reign”. In this preamble, two potent symbols are juxtaposed: on the one hand, the *zebān-i tîğ* or “the tongue of the sword of those empowered to inflict heavy punishment” (i.e. the *ehl-i seyfiyye*), and, on the other hand, the *tîğ-i zebān* or “the sword of the tongue of the guardians of the holy law” (i.e. the *ehl-i ‘ilmiyye*):

“Since, in some matters it was not possible to cut dispute and opposition with the sword of the tongue of saints of the *sharī’a*, it was perceived necessary to treat them by means of the tongue of the swords of governors of secular punishment (*siyāset*).”<sup>52</sup>

(Ba’zı hūşūşiyatta kaṭ’-i nizā’ ve husūmet tîğ-i zebān-i evliyā-i şerī’at ile mümkün olmayub zebān-i tîğ-i vālīyān-i siyāsetle olmak vācib iḥşāş olunub.)<sup>53</sup>

In my view, we can use this highly evocative dichotomy of *siyāset* and Sharia as a radical summary of Muḥyī’s texts. What do we see when we keep sufficient distance? When summarizing the two works in the broadest possible strokes, one could say that each corresponds to one of the multiple strands of Ottoman imperial legitimation. On the one hand, there is the poem, which depicts the campaign as *siyāset*, that is, penal policy outside of or next to the realm of

51 Heyd, *Studies in Old Ottoman Criminal Law*, p. 3; Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleymān*.

52 Buzov, “The Lawgiver and His Lawmakers” p. 202.

53 Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri*, pp. 63-188, here p. 88.

the sacred Islamic law, the Sharia. Not the “people of the pen” perform here, but the “people of the sword”, who make their swords speak in defence of the cause of the Ottoman ruler, in his capacity of sultan, a worldly power and protector of the Ottoman realm. On the other hand, there is the prose text, which paints a picture of Sharia. The policy against the ‘Azāle is one that presented not as *siyāseten* but as *şer’an*, one obliged by the Quran, that is, legitimized by God’s Word. Here, we find the “people of the pen” who yield the pen and the Book as a sword in defence of the cause of the Ottoman ruler, now in his capacity of the imam/caliph, the representative of God’s Prophet and guardian of the Umma.

By thus zooming out, we can fully appreciate these texts as literary reflections of *siyāset* and Sharia, as two important strands of legitimation in the Ottoman imperial project. In relation to this, it is important to stress the fact that the meaning of the ‘Azāle-Nāmes — indeed, of any literary work — is constructed not only textually, but also extra-textually. Consequently, any interpretive effort needs to be informed by extra-textual elements as well. In this light, it is interesting to observe the ways in which these two strands of legitimation “wrote themselves differently into” the ‘Azāle-Nāmes, both textually and extra-textually. Even though we are dealing with a single author (Muḥyī), a common language (Ottoman Turkish) and a shared title (‘Azāle-Nāme), we are faced with two very different works: different in terms of genre (*meşnevī* versus *risāle*), in terms of linguistic register (Persianizing versus Arabicizing Ottoman Turkish), and in terms of discursive spheres (Firdawsian versus Quranic). Clearly, Muḥyī tailored the texts for the audience he had in mind. In order for his communication to be as strong as possible, he made sensible choices in terms of genre and register, drawing on very distinct knowledge systems and cultural literacy, making sure that all these textual building blocks were neatly aligned. *Siyāset* neatly aligns with *meşnevī*, with a Persianate vocabulary, and with Pre-Islamic figurative language. Sharia, on the other hand, requires the Quran and stern Arabic, and its technicalities were best served by prose, not poetry.

When we now juxtapose the two ‘Azāle-Nāmes, what happens? By doing so, I argue, these texts combine into a powerful literary diptych. This is not to say that the texts *ought* to be read together. Obviously, as in any diptych, the two texts can be read as stand-alone signifiers, so to speak: each text comes with its own meaning, and can be appreciated accordingly by an audience. Yet, so I argue, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Mutually comple-



menting and affecting each other's meaning, the two texts reach their fullest potential only and precisely through their juxtaposition. What then is their fullest meaning? Juxtaposed, the two texts were very much in tune with developments at the imperial centre, as they reify the Ottoman vision of empire. In the 1525 preamble, referred to above, crimes had multiplied to such an extent that "disputes and feuds could no longer be decided by the sword of the tongue (*tîğ-i zebân*) of the guardians of the holy law, but required the tongue of the sword (*zebân-i tîğ*) of those empowered to inflict heavy punishment." Clearly, in those cases where the canonical "sword of the tongue" failed, the Ottomans made their extra-canonical "sword" speak instead. Our two texts, dated some 70 years later, evoke the same instruments of empire, at least so I argued: in the *meşnevî*, Muhyî presents the "tongue of the sword"; in the *risâle*, he presents the "sword of the tongue". There is one difference, however: we can no longer distinguish the canonical from the extra-canonical. The soldier's "sword" does not come to the aid of the judge's "tongue", as some sort of extra-canonical backup for those instances where the canonical falls short. Instead, the "tongue" of the soldiers' "sword" is the judges'; and the "sword" of the judges' "tongue" is the soldiers'!

In a nutshell, when juxtaposed, what is it that these texts "do"? The reality that these shape is one where *siyâset* and Sharia coincide. The sultan's *siyâset* is nothing but the implementation of the "correct" interpretation of the Sharia, and the Sharia is nothing but the divinely sanctioned rationale of *siyâset*. Sultan and imam/caliph merge, as do soldier and judge. Whatever words the soldiers' swords utter, these are the judges' words; and whatever swords the judges' tongues yield, these are the soldiers' swords. Harassing people, drinking wine and local highway robbery to the detriment of a local Ottoman cause now amount to Quranic brigandage and waging war upon the Islamic Umma (*hîrâbe*). *Hizebrân u bebrân* setting out on an *ılğâr* and fighting upon the sultan's path now equal *mücâhidûn* setting out on a *cihâd* and fighting upon God's path. In short, juxtaposed, the two texts combine into a vision of *siyâset şer'îye*. They reify a vision in which the sultan's rule is in full accordance with God's word, is justified by it, and, in fact, is nothing but its implementation.<sup>54</sup> This particular vision of empire is not the vision as it transpired in the 1525 preamble;

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 54 *Siyâset şer'îye* is not to be misunderstood. Not only was it a "vision" rather than a "given", it was also two-pronged, produced as much through adjusting the *siyâset* to make it fit to Sharia, as through directing a particular understanding of Sharia to make it fit to *siyâset*. Compare to Burak G., "According to His Exalted *Ķânûn*", pp. 74-86.

instead, it is the updated vision, as it was championed first and foremost by Ebū's-Su'ūd Efendi.<sup>55</sup>

## V. A Sufi performing empire

In one of his articles, "Aspects of Legitimation of Ottoman Rule as Reflected in the Preambles to Two Early *Liva Kanunnameler*", Abou-El-Haj observed that,

"We, as historians, are the ones who give the document its historical meaning through interpretation. The premise is that the document does not speak, in and of itself, and especially only through internal analysis, but has to be made to speak (...)." <sup>56</sup>

This first call, I believe, has been answered, as I have made two minor texts of Muḥyī speak. In fact, I made them speak loud enough as to reach beyond their circumscribed spatial and temporal locality of Cairo and Giza in the 1590s, and to bear on a range of 16<sup>th</sup> century imperial-wide transformative trends, such as institutionalization of Sufism and legal Hanafization.

In this respect, an excellent case in point was offered by Muḥyī's emulation of Ebū's-Su'ūd's *tefsīr*, and this leads us to a second summons made by Abou-El-Haj in that same article:

"Most studies that focus on ideology in Ottoman history have portrayed it as a unilateral imposition by the ruling class on a seemingly passive population. Few scholars seem to emphasize the reciprocal dimension of ideology." <sup>57</sup>

This second call too I have answered. In the 'Azāle-Nāmes, Muḥyī discursively produced not only his own identity, but also that of the Ottoman Empire. He did not do so in splendid isolation, but in a reciprocal dialogue with other

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55 Compare to Ergene's observations regarding 'adālet-nāmes, in which she sees the Ottoman sultan depicted both as imam and as the archetypical benevolent despot, Husrev. Indeed, she noticed "the existence of not one but two distinct images of just rulership". On the one hand, there is the imam, whose authority "is derived from, and limited by, the dictates of religion", the "executive and the representative of the sharia", in line with "the basic ideals of the classical Hanafi definitions of caliphate". On the other hand, there is the sultan, "who wants to prove his Husrev-like character", and who "will not hesitate to use the 'sword of *siyāsa*'" if need be. (Ergene B., "On Ottoman Justice: Interpretations in Conflict (1600-1800)", *Islamic Law and Society* 8 (2001): 52-87, here pp. 61-62).

56 Abou-El-Haj R., "Aspects of the legitimation of Ottoman rule", p. 381.

57 Abou-El-Haj R., "Aspects of the legitimation of Ottoman rule", p. 372.



stakeholders, first and foremost Ebū's-Su'ūd Efendi. However absent the grand mufti personally was from Cairo in the 1590s, Muḥyī made him present there and then, precisely by reciprocating him. This he did most clearly through his *tefsīr*, where he simply emulated Ebū's-Su'ūd's interpretation. This he also did, I claim, by writing not one but two 'Azāle-Nāmes. As I have argued, somewhat more tentatively, these two texts, when read together, reify the vision of empire as championed by Ebū's-Su'ūd: a vision of *siyāset şer'iye*.

As a third and final point, I hope that, by reading the texts along these lines, we can now better appreciate — that is, in a non-utilitarian and non-cynical way — the multi-dimensional and kaleidoscopic identity of both Muḥyī and of the empire he lived in: the first, an intricate constellation of multifarious strands, including that of an *edīb* in search of patronage and a *nā'ib kādī* in the service of state, a Gülşenī Sufi and a Hanafi Sunni; the second, an empire in which belligerent sultans consulted with their *pīrs*, where the Ottoman *ılğar* was equalled with an Islamic *farz-i 'ayn*, where *Halvetī* cells sided with teeming caravanserais, and where Firdawsī's *Şāhnāme* shared its eager audience with the grand mufti's *İrşādü'l-'Aklī's-Sālīm*.

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