

POWER, PATRONAGE, AND CONFESSIONALISM:
OTTOMAN POLITICS THROUGH THE EYES OF A CRIMEAN SUFI,
1580-1593[†]

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THERE IS A PARADOX INHERENT IN LATE MEDIEVAL and early modern Sufism:¹ even though its practitioners believed this world to be nothing but an apparition, and aspired to eschew it in their pursuit of divine reality, Sufi masters who had fully detached themselves from this world were also thought to be in possession of tremendous power in the here and now. Even if the rise of more powerful territorial empires – most notably, those of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals – reined in the political ambitions of the Sufis in the early modern era, charismatic Sufi leaders continued to use their spiritual authority and worldly connections to weigh in on a variety of political matters in the new imperial contexts also. Because of a narrow conceptualisation of early modern Ottoman politics as the affairs of an increasingly bureaucratised state, however, Ottomanists have paid only scant attention to the political roles of Sufis after the fifteenth century.²

[†] I dedicate this article to the memory of my dear friend Vangelis Kechriotis. He was a brilliant historian, a kind-hearted person, and a true embodiment of the Aristotelian idea of “man as a political animal”.

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1 The results of the present article are based on research funded by the European Research Council under the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme (FP/2015-2020)/ERC Grant Agreement 648498, ‘The Fashioning of a Sunni Orthodoxy and the Entangled Histories of Confession-Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th-17th centuries’. I wrote the final version of the article as a visiting researcher at the Institut für Islamwissenschaft at the Freie Universität in Fall 2016. I would like to thank Gudrun Krämer for having made this affiliation possible. I would also like to thank Denise Klein, Gülru Necipoğlu, Günhan Börekçi, Helen Pfeifer, Peter Campbell, and Tijana Krstić for reading over and offering comments on this article. Needless to say, I remain responsible for all remaining errors and deficiencies.

2 On the Sufi input in Ottoman political thought in the sixteenth century, see H. Yılmaz, ‘The Sultan and the Sultanate: Envisioning Rulership in the Reign of Süleymān the Lawgiver (1520-1566)’, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2005; B. Flemming, ‘Şāhib-ķirān und Mahdī: Türkische Endzeiterwartungen im ersten Jahrzehnt der Regierung Süleymāns’, in G. Kara (ed.), *Between the Danube and the Caucasus: Oriental Sources on the History of the Peoples of Central and Southeastern Europe* (Budapest 1987); eadem, ‘Der Ğāmi’ ūl-Meknūnāt: Eine Quelle ‘Ālīs aus der Zeit Sultan Süleymāns’, in H. R. Roemer and A. Noth

The present article aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of both the politics of Sufism and the practice of politics in the Ottoman Empire in the late sixteenth century through a contextual study of the collection of letters written by the Halveti sheikh İbrahim-i Kırımî (d. 1593) to Murad III (r. 1574-1595). This was a period when Sufism became especially prominent in Ottoman courtly politics thanks, in no small part, to the strong interest Murad III took in Sufism. In the earlier scholarship, Murad's infatuation with Sufism was linked with his purported lack of interest in politics and was mentioned among the factors that contributed to the onset of Ottoman 'decline' in his reign. Today, however, this approach no longer finds favour, as the decline paradigm has been rejected as a useful framework for understanding Ottoman history after the sixteenth century, and as religion and politics are no longer seen as having represented separate and competing spheres of activity in the early modern Ottoman world. Instead, the most recent study on the topic has argued that Murad turned to Sufism not to withdraw from politics, but to fashion himself as a ruler who combined in his person the highest spiritual *and* temporal authority as part of his efforts to transition to a more 'absolutist' mode of government.³

Curiously, however, even as Ottomanists have reconsidered the political dimensions of Murad's Sufi entanglements, they have paid little attention so far to the politics of the Sufis who attached themselves to his court.⁴ This omission stems from a rather one-sided understanding of the relationship between the Ottoman Sultan and the Sufis in his court,

(eds), *Studien Zur Geschichte und Kultur des Vorderen Orients: Festschrift für Bertold Spuler zum siebzigsten Geburtstag* (Leiden 1981), 79-92; C. Fleischer, 'The Lawgiver as Messiah: the Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymân', in G. Veinstein (ed.), *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps, Actes du colloque de Paris, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, 7-10 mars 1990* (Paris 1992), 159-179; idem, 'Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences: Prophecies at the Ottoman Court in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries', in M. Farhad and S. Bağcı (eds), *Falnama: the Book of Omens* (London 2009), 232-243; N. Clayer, 'Quand l'hagiographie se fait l'écho des dérèglements socio-politiques: le *Menâkıbnâme* de Münîrî Belgrâdî', in G. Veinstein (ed.), *Synchrétismes et hérésies dans l'Orient seldjoukide et ottoman (XIVe-XVIIIe siècle): Actes du Colloque du Collège de France octobre 2001* (Paris 2005), 363-381; for explorations of Sufi political thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see D. Terzioğlu, 'Sufi and Dissident in the Ottoman Empire: Niyâzî-i Mısrî (1618-1694)', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1999, 277-354; eadem, 'Sunna-Minded Sufi Preachers in Service of the Ottoman State: the *Naşihatnâme* of Hasan Addressed to Murad IV', *ArchOtt*, 27 (2010), 241-342; M. Tabur, 'İsmail Hakkı Bursevi and the Politics of Balance', unpublished M.A. thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2011; and B. Tezcan's contribution in this volume.

3 Ö. Felek, '(Re)creating Image and Identity: Dreams and Visions as a Means of Murâd III's Self-Fashioning', in Ö. Felek and A. D. Knysh (eds), *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies* (Albany 2012), 249-272; eadem (ed.), *Kitâbü'l-menâmât: Sultan III. Murad'ın rüya mektupları* (Istanbul 2014).

4 For a rare exception, see J. J. Curry "The Meeting of the Two Sultans": Three Sufi Mystics Negotiate with the Court of Murâd III', in J. J. Curry and E. S. Ohlander (eds), *Arrangements of the Mystical in the Muslim World, 1200-1800* (London and New York 2014), 223-242. See also A. Niyazioğlu, *Dreams and Lives in Ottoman Istanbul: A Seventeenth-Century Biographer's Perspective* (Abingdon 2017), Chap. 3, for a discussion of Sufi and scholarly perspectives on the Ottoman bureaucracy in this period.

not to mention the dynamics of court relations more generally. As the voluminous scholarship by early modern Europeanists has shown, the growing importance of royal courts as centres of power and patronage after the late sixteenth century did not necessarily bring about the eclipse of other power groups; rather, the royal courts became the new settings in which a variety of powerful individuals and groups strove to exert 'influence' over royal policy.⁵ While Ottomanists have only recently begun to explore the politics of patronage, faction, and court, a number of pioneering studies have also demonstrated the significance of court factions in the making of Ottoman domestic, and even more so, foreign, policy in the second half of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.⁶

Even though the Sufis are yet to be integrated into the aforementioned scholarship, we know of at least one area of policy-making that was of direct relevance to them, and in which some Sufis began to have a greater say in the second half of the sixteenth century: namely, religious and, especially confessional, politics. Here I have in mind primarily the Ottoman promotion of Sunnism as the only acceptable form of Islam and the policies of Sunnitisation which were implemented by the state authorities, and secondarily, various steps undertaken to demarcate the confessional boundaries between Muslims, Jews, and Christians of various denominations living under Ottoman rule.⁷ In this article, I use the

5 For key studies on court, faction, and patronage in early modern Europe, see S. Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York and Oxford 1986); R. Mettam, *Power and Faction in Louis XIV's France* (Oxford 1988); R. G. Asch and A. M. Birke (eds), *Politics, Patronage and the Nobility* (Oxford 1991); P. Campbell, *Power and Politics in Old Regime France, 1720-1745* (London and New York 1996); M. Fantoni, *The Court in Europe* (Rome 2012); for a comparative perspective on royal courts, see J. Duindam, T. Artan and M. Kunt (eds), *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires: A Global Perspective* (Leiden and Boston 2011).

6 For studies that explore the sixteenth-century Ottoman royal court from diverse perspectives, see İ. M. Kunt, 'Sultan, Dynasty and the State in the Ottoman Empire', *The Medieval History Journal*, 6 (2003), 217-230; idem, 'Turks in the Ottoman Imperial Palace', in J. Duindam, T. Artan and M. Kunt (eds), *Royal Courts*, 289-312; B. Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge 2010); G. Börekçi, 'Factions and Favorites at the Courts of Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603-17) and his Immediate Predecessors', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The Ohio State University, 2010; E. Fetvacı, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court* (Bloomington and Indianapolis 2013). For studies on the importance of court factions for policy-making, see G. Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford 2010), Chap. 4; E.S. Gürkan, 'Espionage in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean: Secret Diplomacy, Mediterranean Go-Betweens and the Ottoman-Habsburg Rivalry', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 2012; idem, 'Fooling the Sultan: Information, Decision-Making and the Mediterranean Faction (1585-1587)', *OA*, 45 (2015), 57-96.

7 On Ottoman Sunnism and Ottoman policies of Sunnitisation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see H. Sohrweide, 'Der Sieg der Safaviden in Persien und seine Rückwirkungen auf die Schiiten Anatoliens im 16. Jahrhundert', *Der Islam*, 41 (1965), 95-223; M. Dressler, 'Inventing Orthodoxy: Competing Claims for Authority and Legitimacy in the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict', in H. T. Karateke, M. Reinkowski (eds), *Legitimizing the Order: the Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power* (Leiden 2005), 151-173; Nabil al-Tikriti, 'Kalam in the Service of State: Apostasy and the Defining of Ottoman Islamic Identity', in *ibid.*, 131-149; D. Terzioğ-

term ‘confessionalism’ to highlight the new centrality of doctrinal and ritual conformity to social and political forms of belonging in the early modern era – a phenomenon that cut across boundaries of confession and state in a vast geography extending from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean.⁸

Because Sufis were a rather heterogeneous group in their religious, social, as well as political orientations and affiliations, their experiences in the Ottoman age of confessionalism also varied substantially. In the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, it was mostly the antinomian Sufis with Alid tendencies and questionable political loyalties who tended to find themselves at the receiving end of a variety of punitive and disciplinary measures. Sufis who were, or who were perceived to be, sharia-abiding, on the other hand, largely preserved their place within the religious mainstream, and some of the Sufis in the second

lu, ‘How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnization: A Historiographical Discussion’, *Turcica* (2012-2013): 301-338. On the demarcation and reinforcement of boundaries between Muslims, Jews, and Christians in the early modern Ottoman Empire, see N. Al-Qattan, ‘Dhimmi in the Muslim Court: Legal Autonomy and Religious Discrimination’, *IJMES*, 31 (1999), 429-444; B. Tezcan, ‘Ethnicity, Race, Religion and Social Class: Ottoman Markers of Difference’, in C. Woodhead (ed.), *The Ottoman World* (London and New York 2012), 159-170; K. Barkey, *Empire of Difference: the Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge 2008), 109-153.

8 I prefer the term ‘confessionalism’ to ‘confessionalisation’, because it allows us to recognise the importance of confessional identities for early modern forms of social and political belonging without positing a strong causal link between confessional differentiation, state-building, and social disciplining. It seems to me that while the first phenomenon is broadly attested in different parts of the Eurasian world, the evidence for the second is rather patchy especially outside the German-speaking areas. While the literature on this debate is huge, for a sampling of some of the more important studies, see T. A. Brady, ‘Confessionalization – The Career of a Concept’, in J. M. Headly, H. J. Hillerbrand and A. J. Papalas (eds), *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555-1700: Essays in Honor of Bodo Nischan* (Aldershot 2004), 1-20; U. Lotz-Heumann, ‘The Concept of ‘Confessionalization’: A Historiographical Paradigm in Dispute’, *Memoria y Civilización*, 4 (2001), 93-114; A. Pettegree, ‘Confessionalization in North Western Europe’, in J. Bahlcke and A. Strohmeyer (eds), *Konfessionalisierung in Ostmitteleuropa: Wirkungen des religiösen Wandels im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert in Staat, Gesellschaft und Kultur* (Stuttgart 1999), 105-120; R. C. Head, ‘Catholics and Protestants in Graubünden: Confessional Discipline and Confessional Identities without an Early Modern State?’ *German History*, 17 (1999), 321-345; P. Benedict, ‘Confessionalization in France? Critical Reflections and New Evidence’, in *The Fate and Fortunes of France’s Huguenots, 1600-85* (Aldershot 2001), 309-325; T. M. Safley (ed.), *A Companion to Multiconfessionalism in the Early Modern World* (Leiden and Boston 2011). For discussions on the applicability of the paradigm of ‘confessionalization’ to the Ottoman context, see T. Krstić, ‘Illuminated by the Light of Islam and the Glory of the Ottoman Sultanate: Self-Narratives of Conversion to Islam in the Age of Confessionalization’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, 1 (2009), 35-63; eadem, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge 2011); Terzioğlu, ‘Where ‘İlm-i Hâl Meets Catechism: Islamic Manuals of Religious Instruction in the Ottoman Empire in the Age of Confessionalization’, *Past and Present* 220 (2013), 79-114; eadem, ‘How to Conceptualize’; G. Burak, ‘Faith, Law and Empire in the Ottoman ‘Age of Confessionalization’ (Fifteenth-Seventeenth Centuries): the Case of ‘Renewal of Faith’’, *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 28 (2013), 1-23.

category even began to lend their support to the campaigns of religious and moral indoctrination in the middle decades of the sixteenth century.⁹ It was also these politically loyal and religiously conformist Sufis who benefited most from elite and royal patronage and who found new opportunities to shape public opinion, and even royal policy as mosque preachers, army sheikhs, and royal companions, during the reign of Murad III.

The Sufi writer whose letters to Murad III are examined in this article, İbrahim-i Kırımî, was also one of these politically-connected and confessionally-minded Sufis. Specifically, he belonged to the *Muslihuddin Nureddinzade* branch of the Halveti order, which was perhaps the most active of the ‘Sunnitising’ Sufi groups and which was especially well-represented in Istanbul and the European provinces of the Empire. While Kırımî himself hailed from Crimea and retained his ties to his land of origin in later years, he also spent most of his adult life in eastern Rumelia and Istanbul, where he built up for himself a wide social and political network while serving as Sufi sheikh, preacher, and, ultimately, royal companion.

Kırımî’s letters to Murad III span the years 1580 to 1593, and provide fascinating insights into the religious and political issues that preoccupied a Sufi in court circles. These issues covered a wide range from the affairs of the ulema to the affairs of the Imperial Harem, and from state policies towards nonconformist Muslims living under Ottoman rule to military and diplomatic relations with Safavid Iran, Muscovy, and Poland-Lithuania. On most of these issues Kırımî articulated views that were strongly informed by the rampant Sunni confessionality of the time, but which were nevertheless also quite distinctive, owing to his Sufi beliefs, personal ties, and group loyalties.

Despite their rich contents, however, Kırımî’s letters have not yet received the critical attention that they deserve. In fact, Kırımî’s name barely surfaces in Ottomanist scholarship, while his letters to Murad III have been widely (but erroneously) attributed to a more famous Sufi: the Celveti master Aziz Mahmud Hüdayî (d. 1628). Remarkably, this misattribution has not been corrected either by the numerous Hüdayî scholars, who have used the letters to add fanciful elements to this master’s biography, or by Mustafa

9 For a general treatment of the issue, see D. Terzioğlu, ‘Sufis in the Age of State-Building and Confessionalization’, in C. Woodhead (ed.), *The Ottoman World* (Abingdon and New York 2012), 86-99; cf. R. Öngören, *Osmanlılar’da tasavvuf: Anadolu’da sûfiler, devlet ve ulemâ (XVI. Yüzyıl)* (Istanbul 2000); on Ottoman policies directed at Sufi groups deemed ‘heretical’, see A. Tietze, ‘A Document on the Persecution of Sectarrians in Early Seventeenth-century Istanbul’, *Revue des études islamiques*, 60 (1992), 161-166; S. Faroqhi, *Der Bektaschi-Orden in Anatolien: vom spätem fünfzehnten Jahrhundert bis 1826* (Vienna 1981); A. Y. Ocak, *Osmanlı toplumunda zındıklar ve mühlidler (15.-17. yüzyıllar)* (Istanbul 1998), Z. Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire: The Politics of Bektashi Shrines in the Classical Age* (Birmingham 2012); A. Karakaya-Stump, *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık: Alevi kaynaklarını, tarihini ve tarihyazımını yeniden düşünmek* (Istanbul 2016); on ‘Sunnitizing’ Sufis, see N. Clayer, *Mystiques, état et société: les Halvetis dans l’aire balkanique de la fin du XV^e siècle à nos jours* (Leiden 1994); J. J. Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire: the Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350-1650* (Edinburgh 2010); and Terzioğlu, ‘Sunna-Minded Sufi Preachers’.

Salim Güven, who prepared a modern Turkish transcription of the letters in his unpublished M.A. thesis.¹⁰ Even the Ukrainian scholar Mykhaylo Yakubovych, who has recently published an informative article on another work by Kırımı, does not seem to be aware of his letters to Murad III.¹¹

This article, then, represents essentially the first attempt to situate the letters of Kırımı in their proper historical context. In the first section of this article, I shall present the evidence for Kırımı's authorship of the letters, and provide a brief biographical sketch of the author. Readers who are willing to take me at my word can skip this section and proceed directly to the next two parts, in which I examine the letters (in dialogue with other sources from the period) to gain insight into Kırımı's politics. In the second section, my aim will be primarily to analyse Kırımı as a participant in Ottoman court politics. Close attention will be paid in this regard to his relations with the Ottoman Sultan as well as a number of other Ottoman and Crimean political players. The social, political, and cultural codes that informed these relations and the ways they are represented in the letters will also be analysed. Then, in the third part, I will examine the interplay between religion and politics, and between ideology and personal and group interests, in Kırımı's advice about which policies to follow towards 'heretics' and 'infidels'. The uses and limits of Sunni confessionalism will be a major focus of this discussion. Finally, I will conclude by considering some of the broader implications of the letters regarding Ottoman court and confessional politics and the place of Sufis in it at the turn of the sixteenth century.

The authorship of the letters: a correction

There is a simple reason why modern scholars have, until now, unanimously identified Aziz Mahmud Hüdâyî as the author of the *Tezakir*, as the letters of Kırımı are known. While the author does not mention his name in the individual letters, in all of the 14 extant manuscript copies of the epistolary compilation, he is identified either by the copyist or by a later reader as Aziz Mahmud Hüdâyî.¹² Before we review the textual evidence

10 For the principal biographical studies which use the letters to reconstruct Hüdâyî's life, see Z. Tezeren, *Seyyid Aziz Mahmûd Hüdâyî*, 2 vols (Istanbul 1984-1985), and K. Yılmaz, *Aziz Mahmûd Hüdâyî: Hayatı - Eserleri - Tarikatı* (Istanbul 1990); for a modern Turkish transcription of the letters, see M. S. Güven, 'Çeşitli yönleriyle Aziz Mahmûd Hüdâyî'nin mektupları', unpublished M.A. thesis, Marmara University, 1992.

11 M. Yakubovych, 'A Neglected Ottoman Sufi Treatise from 16th century: *Mawâhib al-Raḥman fî bayân Marâtib al-Akwân* by İbrâhîm el-Qirîmî', *OA*, 45 (2015), 137-160.

12 Thirteen of these manuscript copies are located in diverse public libraries in Turkey: Hacı Selim Ağa Ktp. (hereafter HSAK), Hüdâyî 251 (copied in H.1225/1810); HSAK, Hüdâyî 260 (copied in H.1271/1854); HSAK, Hüdâyî 277; Süleymaniye Ktp. (hereafter SK), Fatih 2572 (copied before 1748-1749); SK, Hacı Mahmud Efendi 2508; SK, Kasıdecizade 323 (copied in H.1288/1871); SK, Yazma Bağışlar 213/1; Arkeoloji Müzesi 141/1, 1b-84b (copied in H.1273/1856); Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Ktp. (hereafter TSMK), Hazine 269 (copied in H.1265/1849); Bayezid Ktp. 3497 (copied in H.1252/1837); İstanbul Üniversitesi Ktp. (hereafter İÜK), T.Y. 447 (copied in H.1241/1825); İÜK, T.Y. 6444 (copied in H.1285/1868); İÜK, T.Y. 9927. The fourteenth manuscript copy, which belongs to a private collection, forms the ba-

that suggests otherwise, it might be worth pointing out that the earliest extant manuscript copy of the *Tezakir* was made at least a century and a half after the original letters were written. We learn from a reader's note that prefaces one of the later copies that the original letters remained in the form of loose sheets in a chest in the Imperial Treasury until the reign of Mahmud I (1730-1753), and came to light only after this Sultan ordered all loose tracts (*resail*) and letters (*tezakir*) in the palace collections to be collected, re-arranged, bound, and deposited in the library that was to be constructed adjacent to the recently rebuilt Fatih Mosque in 1749.¹³

While the whereabouts of the original letters remain unknown, it is almost certain that MS. Fatih 2572 is the earliest extant manuscript copy of the original letters. The manuscript in question was previously part of the manuscript collection of Mahmud I at the aforementioned library, and appears under the title *Kitab-ı Tezakire-i Hüdayî Mahmud Efendi* in the library's first catalogue, prepared in H.1162 (1748/9).¹⁴ Despite this entry, neither the individual letters compiled in MS. Fatih 2572 nor the manuscript as a whole bears a title that identifies the text as the work of Aziz Mahmud Hüdayî. The latter's name is mentioned only in the final notes appended to folio 303b by a later reader. This suggests that the original letters also bore no trace of their author's name, and that the letters were attributed to Hüdayî only after this compilation was made, though no later than the mid eighteenth century.

As we shall presently see, the attribution to Hüdayî is actually not supported by textual evidence, and can only be explained by the fact that when the letters were rediscovered in the mid eighteenth century, memory of their actual author had faded, while Hüdayî was remembered as the most famous of the Sufis to have hobnobbed with the Ottoman Sultans a century and a half earlier. Once the letters were connected with Hüdayî, moreover, this, in effect, created a ready readership for the letters, as Hüdayî enthusiasts, many of them Celvetis, rushed to make their own copies of the letters as a relic from this beloved Sufi.¹⁵ This dynamic seems to have been especially evident in the nineteenth century, when most of the dated manuscript copies were made.

sis of the modern Turkish transcription made by Güven. Even though this manuscript copy was copied at the relatively late date of H.1258/1842, it actually closely follows the earliest extant manuscript copy, which is SK, Fatih 2572 (Güven, 'Çeşitli yönleriyle', 33-36). I have myself checked all thirteen of the publicly available manuscript copies, but will make references here to Güven's transcription, as it is more readily accessible to modern readers than the manuscript versions. References will be given to the manuscript copies only when they contain an additional remark not found in Güven's transcription.

13 [Kırımı], *Tezakir*; İÜK, T.Y. 447, ib-iva.

14 *Defter-i Atik-i Sultan Mahmud-ı Evvel*, SK, Yazma Bağışlar 242, 36b. The same manuscript is mentioned with the same attribution in a later catalogue, dated H.1284/1867: *Fatih Cami'i Kütüphanesinin Kadim Defteri*, SK, YB 252, 29b.

15 For instance, Seyyid Salih Mehmed, who made the abovementioned note about how the letters were originally discovered in the reign of Mahmud I, also relates how he learned of the letters' existence from the Celveti sheikh Ali Efendi in his hometown of Ilbasan in Albania and how he remained restless until he obtained a copy for himself ([Kırımı], *Tezakir*; İÜK, T.Y. 447, ii-iva.). Quite possibly, the three manuscript copies of the letters preserved in the library of the

Because Hüdayî was known to have been particularly close to Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603-1617), in several of the manuscript copies, the addressee of the letters is identified as Ahmed I.¹⁶ In other manuscripts, however, no such identification can be found, while at least one Ottoman reader was careful enough to note the references to the Hijri year of 1001 (1592/93) and to conclude on this basis that the letter(s) must have been written in the reign of Murad III.¹⁷ Interestingly, even though modern scholars have found further evidence linking the letters to Murad III, they have not entirely given up on the idea that at least some of the letters could have been addressed to Ahmed I.¹⁸

In fact, however, there is overwhelming textual evidence that the *Tezakir* brings together letters addressed to one Sultan, and that is Murad III. Apart from the references to the new millennium, Murad is mentioned by name in at least three other letters.¹⁹ In numerous other letters, we find references to well-known officials who served under the same Sultan, including the royal tutor Hoca Sadeddin (d. 1599), the *şeyhülislams* Bostanzade Mehmed (d. 1598) and Bayramzade Zekeriyya (d. 1593), Dügmeçizade, the Chief Justice of Rumelia, Hızır Pasha, the Beglerbegi of Rumelia, and Hâfiz Ahmed Pasha, the Governor-General of Cyprus, and later, Egypt.²⁰ The letters also contain references to various events that took place during the reign of Murad III, including Ferhad Pasha's

Hüdayî lodge in Üsküdar were also reproduced by such Celveti devotees. In fact, it is explicitly stated in the colophon of one of these manuscripts that a certain Hâfiz Halil İbrahim of Üsküdar made this copy and then gave it as a gift to the Hüdayî lodge in the same neighbourhood ([Kırımî], *Tezakir*; HSAK, Hüdayî 251, ib).

16 [Kırımî], *Tezakir*; HSAK, Hüdayî 251, ib; SK, Hacı Mahmud Efendi 2508, 1a; TSMK, H.K. 269.

17 [Kırımî], *Tezakir*; Bayezid Ktp. 3497, ia.

18 See Bayezid Ktp. 3497, ia for a reader's note which reads: "The ninth folio contains congratulations on account of the arrival of the year H.1001/1592, which shows that the text should date not from the time of Sultan Ahmed but from the time of Murad III". Among the more recent scholars to address the topic, Güven has argued that while many letters can indeed be shown to have been addressed to Murad III, the possibility cannot be discarded that others were addressed to Ahmed I, and even Mehmed III, Osman II, and Murad IV, the latter also being rulers who ruled when Hüdayî was alive. The only piece of evidence that Güven presents in support of his argument about Ahmed I being the addressee is a letter in which the author interprets a dream of the Sultan about a meeting with the Prophet, and mentions the mystical properties of the letters in the name 'Ahmed'. However, since Ahmed was also one of the names of the Prophet Muhammad and since the said passage discusses the esoteric meaning of the name Ahmed to draw a link between the sighting of the Prophet (Ahmad) and the sighting of God, literally the One (*Ahad*), I am inclined to read the name here as a reference to the Prophet, and not to the Sultan. ('Çeşitli yönleriyle', 37-39; for the letter referred, see 139-140.) In any case, whether one finds Güven's reading or mine to be more convincing, the fact remains that the letters contain no other reference to Ahmed I or to events in his reign.

19 Güven, 'Çeşitli yönleriyle', 56, 177, 186.

20 For Kırımî's remarks on Hızır Pasha, who served served as *Beglerbegi* of Rumelia between Şaban H.997/June-July 1589 and Rebiü'l-ahir H.999/January-February 1591, see *ibid.*, 57-59; for the beginning and end of the tenure of Hızır Pasha as *Beglerbegi* of Rumelia, see Selanikî, *Tarih*, 222-223, 231. References to the specific passages discussing the other names and events will be given when discussing them in greater detail below.

entry into Tabriz (1586), Âdil Giray's capture and execution by the Safavids (1579), and the banishment of the royal astronomer Takiyüddin (1580). These references, together with the thematic continuities and cross-references between the different letters, indicate that the vast majority of the letters were written during the reign of Murad III.

There is nevertheless one clear exception to this rule, and it is a letter addressed to Selim II (r. 1566-1574). The main subject of this letter (or at least the part that is extant) is the *Şeyhülislam* Ebussuud (d. 1574), who is referred to as "deceased" and who is praised as a high-ranking official who served "Islam, Muslims and the padishah of Islam", a scholar who authored a highly commendable Qur'an commentary during "the serene days of your reign" (*eyyam-ı saltanat-ı selimelerinizde*) [note the pun on the name of Selim, meaning 'serene'] and a Sufi-like figure who is "possessed of God-fearingness (*takva*) and gnosis and who is the son of a Sufi sheikh (*şeyhzade*), who brings together in his person the sharia, the Sufi path (*tarikât*) and divine truth (*hakikat*) and who has reached the state of sainthood [literally, the state of one who can be asked for succour (*istimdad makamındadır*)]".²¹ The letter must have been written sometime in the second half of the year 1574, after the death of Ebussuud in August and before the death of Selim in December. Interestingly, the letter lacks a proper ending, and a marginal note made by the copyist in the earliest extant manuscript copy, MS. Fatih 1572, and which reads "I have copied this letter until this point", suggests that it was left incomplete on purpose.²²

Even though it is theoretically possible that the *Tezakir* brings together the letters of more than one Sufi, there is compelling evidence that all the letters addressed to Murad III were penned by the same writer. The letters begin and end in the same stylised manner, make use of the same turns of speech, evoke the same concepts, evince interest in the same types of issues, and contain many autobiographical passages which were clearly the product of the same pen. Below are the facts that we can ascertain about the author in the light of these autobiographical passages:

- 1) The author completed his education during the reigns of Süleyman I and Selim II.²³
- 2) He became a disciple of Muslihüddin Nureddinzade (d. 1573), a Halveti sheikh at the dervish lodge of Küçük Ayasofya in Istanbul, and lived in the same lodge two years before the Szigetvar campaign (1565-1566).²⁴
- 3) At an unspecified point, the author moved to Babaeski (called Baba in the text), where he lived until shortly after the "martyrdom" of his beloved patron, the Crimean *kalga*, Âdil Giray, in Safavid captivity (1579). While in Babaeski, the author also clashed with some of the local Muslims, whom he characterises as Shiites (*rafizî*), *Kızılbaş*, and *Simavnîs* (i.e., followers of the teachings of Sheikh Bedreddin).²⁵
- 4) Apart from Babaeski, the author was also familiar with and had contacts in a number of other places around the Black Sea and the region of Thrace, including Bender

21 Güven, 'Çeşitli yönleriyle', 35-36.

22 [Kırımı], *Tezakir*, SK, Fatih 2572, 53a.

23 Güven, 'Çeşitli yönleriyle', 80.

24 Ibid., 80, 167-168.

25 Ibid., 58-59, 61.

- (Bendery) in present-day Moldova, Akkirman (Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiyi), and Kili (Kiliya) in present-day Ukraine, Dobruja in present-day Romania, Zağra (Stara Zagora) in present day Bulgaria and Yanya (Ioannina) in present-day Greece.
- 5) The author visited Istanbul twice during the reign of Murad III. It was already during his first visit (which he dates in one passage to H.985/1577-1578 and in another to circa 1579) that he established a close relationship with the royal tutor Hoca Sadeddin (d. 1599), who tried unsuccessfully to persuade him to stay in Istanbul.²⁶ He then came to Istanbul for a second time, “seven years ago”, and this time he ended up staying there, when Sadeddin and several other high dignitaries once again insisted that he stay. Since the author wrote this note shortly after the establishment of peace with the Safavids (1590), his second arrival at Istanbul must have taken place around 1583.²⁷
 - 6) Five months into his second stay in Istanbul, the royal tutor, the Agha of the Porte (*kapu ağası*), and Hafız Ahmed Ağa/Pasha, who was “previously chief storekeeper (*kilercibaşı*) and currently governor of Cyprus”, helped secure the author the position of sheikh at the lodge of Küçük Ayasofya, which had fallen vacant upon the death of the previous sheikh.²⁸
 - 7) The author accompanied the Ottoman army led by Ferhad Pasha when it entered Tabriz (H.994/1586).²⁹
 - 8) The author was still sheikh in the Küçük Ayasofya lodge at the time of his writing. He also writes of having been appointed preacher in the Sultan Mehmed Mosque “this year”.³⁰
 - 9) One of the author’s works was about the twelve modes of spirituality that are exhibited by the spiritually “perfect” in twelve regions of the world, which are identified as follows: 1) the Black Sea, Crimea and what is around them; 2) Istanbul; 3) Antioch; 4) Cairo; 5) the tomb of Moses and its environs; 6) Jerusalem and its environs; 7) the tomb of Abraham and Mecca; 8) Medina; 9) Damascus; 10) Basra and Baghdad; 11) Qazvin and its environs, and 12) Bukhara and its environs. The author wrote this work in instalments. He had already completed the part on the five manners when he came to Istanbul seven years previously, but he finished the rest of the work around the time peace was concluded between the Ottomans and the Safavids following the long-drawn-out wars in Transcaucasia (i.e., circa 1590).³¹
 - 10) Sometime during his residence in Istanbul the author also completed the commentary that his master Nureddinzade had begun to write on the *Nusus* of Sadreddin-i Konevî and presented it to Murad III.³²

26 Ibid., 16-19.

27 Ibid., 80.

28 Ibid., 150-151.

29 Ibid., 59-61.

30 Ibid., 119-120, 132, 167-168.

31 Ibid., 80-81; see also 105-106 for a letter that was composed prior to the completion of the work, and which mentions that three chapters still remained to be written.

32 Ibid., 80.

- 11) The author also mentions various other tracts that he had recently completed and submitted or was about to submit to the Sultan for his approval. These consist of a) a tract titled *Merâtib-i kulûb ve menâzil-i 'izzeti'l-guyub*;³³ b) a tract on the staff of Moses;³⁴ c) a tract about the esoteric meaning of the the Qur'anic verse al-Qalam 68/1;³⁵ d) a tract on the night of *Kadir*;³⁶ e) a tract which was a reworking of one of his sermons about the esoteric meaning of the stories of Zachariah, John (Yahya), Mary, and Jesus,³⁷ and f) a tract titled *Feth-i medain ve keşf-i menazil u meyardin*, which was inspired by one of his dreams.³⁸

When we compare these snippets of biographical information with the facts that we can ascertain about Hüdayî based on his certified writings and the entries about him in the earliest biographical sources, a number of incongruities become apparent. To begin with, items 3, 4, and 9 above indicate that the author of the *Tezakir* was a man with strong connections to both Crimea and Rumelia, whereas no such strong connections can be documented for Hüdayî.³⁹ Secondly, neither Hüdayî nor any of his contemporary and near-contemporary biographers mentions his having attached himself to Nureddinzade in any period of his life.⁴⁰ Even if we presumed, as have several modern scholars, that Nureddinzade had been one of several sheikhs with whom Hüdayî had associated prior to his attachment to the Celveti sheikh Üftade, we could hardly explain how he could omit

33 Ibid., 167-168.

34 Ibid., 10.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., 130-131.

37 Ibid., 135.

38 Ibid., 62, 88, 100.

39 Hüdayî had spent the early years of his life in Koçhisar and Sivrihisar in Central Anatolia; then as an aspiring scholar and junior member of the judiciary he had lived briefly in Edirne (H.978/1570-1571), Damascus, and Cairo, before moving to Bursa in H.981/1573, where he attached himself to the Celveti master Üftade and devoted himself entirely to Sufism; and finally, as a Sufi sheikh in his own right, he had first spent a few years back in the region of his birthplace as well as Bursa and then settled and spent the rest of his life in Üsküdar on the Asian side of Istanbul.

40 Tezeren, *Seyyid Azîz Mahmûd Hüdâyî*, I:19-21; and Yılmaz, *Azîz Mahmûd Hüdâyî*, 49-52. The most reliable source of information about Hüdayî is, of course, his own writings, particularly the diary that he kept in Arabic during the period of his spiritual training, *Kalimât 'an tibr al-masbûk al-mushtamilu 'alâ mâ jarâ bayna hâdhâ al-faķîr wa ḥaḍrat al-shaykh fî athnâ al-sulûk* (Words of gold which were exchanged between this poor one and the venerable master during initiation), also known as *Wâķî'ât* (Occurrences), and another autobiographical piece, in Turkish, which brings together the dream visions that he had after the completion of his training and which is known by the title *Tecelliyât* (Manifestations). Important complementary information on his life can be found in the biographical dictionaries of Atayî and Muhibbî as well as in the commentary written by Abdulgani Nablusî on the *Tecelliyât* and in the *Silsilename-i Celveti* by İsmail Hakkı Bursevî. For a brief but nonetheless reliable piece that reconstructs Hüdayî's life on the basis of these sources and not the *Tezakir*, see I. Beldiceanu-Steinherr, 'Hüdâ'î', EI².

mention of his final and beloved master and instead identify himself as the disciple of Nureddinzade as late as 1592-1593. Likewise, there is no indication in any of Hüdayî's own writings or in those of his contemporary and near contemporary biographers that he lived for any period in Babaeski, or that he was sheikh in the Küçük Ayasofya lodge in Istanbul. Nor do we find among his numerous works any tracts that bear a resemblance to the texts the author of the *Tezakir* mentions as his own.

By contrast, the autobiographical information provided in the letters matches remarkably well the information which we can gather about İbrahim-i Kırımî from his own writings as well as from several Ottoman and Tatar biographical and historical sources.⁴¹ The full name of this Sufi was Sheikh İbrahim b. Hak Muhammed el-Kırımî, but he was also popularly known as the 'Tatar Sheikh'. As his epithets indicate, Kırımî was a Tatar by descent, and a Crimean by birth, though his father, Hak Muhammed Efendi, had originally come to Crimea from Desht-i Qipchak, namely the steppes north of the Black Sea.⁴² Kırımî is presumed to have received his early education in Bahçesaray, where, according to the Tatar historian Gulnara Abdullaeva, he also made the acquaintance of the Crimean Khan Devlet I Giray (r. 1555-1577).⁴³

Eventually, however, Kırımî left Crimea for the lands of Rum, where his path seems to have crossed that of the 'Sunnitising' Sufis of Rumelia. Both the Ottoman and Tatar sources report that once in Istanbul, Kırımî attached himself to the Halveti master Muslihuddin Nureddinzade at the lodge of Küçük Ayasofya, who, it will be remembered, is none other than the master mentioned in the letters. In his *Mawāhib al-rahmān fî bayān marātib al-akwān* (The Gifts of the Merciful in the Exposition of the Cosmic Hierarchy), Kırımî further relates that he also spent some time in Sofia, where he stayed in the lodge of his master's master, Sofyalı Bâlî (d. 1552).⁴⁴

The eighteenth-century Tatar historian Seyyid Mehmed Rıza reports that after a while Kırımî returned to Crimea, where he stayed until certain unjust and unlawful incidents that he witnessed led him to return to the lands of Rum.⁴⁵ Yakubovych dates Kırımî's second sojourn in Crimea to between the death of his master Nureddinzade in 1573 and

41 The earliest Ottoman biographical sources are Atayî, *Ḥadāi'ku'l-Ḥakāi'k fî Tekmīletü'ş-Şakā'ik* in A. Özcan (ed.), *Şakaik-ı Nu'maniye ve Zeyilleri*, 5 vols. (Istanbul 1980), III:370, and Belgradî, *Silsiletü'l-mukarrebîn ve menākıbu'l-muttekin*, SK., MS. Esad Ef. 105a-105b; for the modern Turkish transcription, see T. Bitiçi, 'Müniri-i Belgradî ve *Silsiletü'l-mukarrebîn* adlı eseri', unpublished M.A. thesis, Marmara University, 2001, 188. Some information on Kırımî can also be found in Bursalı Mehmet Tahir, *Osmanlı müellifleri*, 3 vols. (Istanbul 1975), I:118. The earliest Tatar history to mention Kırımî, Seyyid Mehmed Rıza's (d. 1755/56) *Es-seb'ü ş-seyyar fî ahbar-i mülük-i Tatar* (Kazan 1832), was actually written considerably later, in the early eighteenth century; nevertheless, this text makes use of some earlier written and oral sources, and is generally considered the most important Tatar source on the history of the Khanate.

42 Seyyid Mehmed Rıza, *Es-seb'ü ş-seyyar*, 152.

43 Gulnara Abdullaeva, *Zolotaya epoha Krymskogo hanstva* (Simferopol 2012), 143-148, cited in Yakubovych, 'A Neglected Ottoman Sufi Treatise', 140-141.

44 Kırımî, *Mawāhib al-rahmān fî bayān marātib al-akwān*, cited in Yakubovych, 'A Neglected Ottoman Sufi Treatise', 142.

45 Seyyid Mehmed Rıza, *Es-seb'ü ş-seyyar*, 153

the death of his patron Devlet Giray in 1577.⁴⁶ If Yakubovych's reconstruction of this period of Kırımî's life is correct, it might have been in this period that the Sufi sheikh developed an attachment to Âdil Giray, who was one of the eight sons of Devlet Giray and who became *kalga* (the second highest rank after the khan) after the latter's death. While neither the Ottoman nor the Tatar sources mention Kırımî's link with Âdil Giray specifically, a particularly important Ottoman writer, Münirî-i Belgradî, who was a disciple of Nureddinzade and a contemporary of Kırımî's, confirms that the Crimean Sufi spent some time in Babaeski, where, it will be remembered, the author of the *Tezakir* mentions having been when he learned of the news of Âdil Giray's death. Since Babaeski was a region with a significant Crimean Tatar presence since at least the late fifteenth century, it is quite likely that it was once again his Crimean connections that had led Kırımî there.⁴⁷ Interestingly, the Tatar historian Seyyid Mehmed Rıza also mentions Kırımî's sojourn in "the mountain of Baba", which he attributes to the latter's divine mission to fight against heresy and rebellion.⁴⁸

However long he stayed in Babaeski, Kırımî also seems to have had a foot in Istanbul between the years 1577 and 1580. In an autobiographical passage of the *Mawâhib*, he writes that he was already in Istanbul at the beginning of H.985/1577, the same year that is identified in the *Tezakir* as the date of his first visit to the capital during the reign of Murad III. From the same text we learn that while in Istanbul, the Sufi sheikh stayed in the lodge of Koca Mustafa Pasha, where he may have briefly attached himself to the *post-nişin* and Halveti sheikh Yusuf Sinaneddin (d. 1581), to whom he refers as "my master" (*şeyhinâ*). Since Sheikh Yusuf actually left Istanbul as *Şeyhü'l-harem* in the same year, however, Kırımî's discipleship to the latter must have been of short duration; in any case, he does not refer to it in his other writings.⁴⁹

As we have seen above, the author of the *Tezakir* dated his second and final trip to Istanbul to 1583, adding that it was five months after his second arrival in the city that his highly-placed patrons arranged for him to be appointed sheikh at the lodge of Küçük Ayasofya. That Kırımî eventually settled in Istanbul and served as sheikh at the lodge of Küçük Ayasofya is also corroborated by both the Ottoman and Tatar sources. This was, of course, the lodge where Kırımî's one-time master Nureddinzade had once been sheikh. Upon Nureddinzade's death, the office had fallen to his eldest son, Sheikh Mahmud, who had in turn died in 1583, clearing the way for Kırımî.⁵⁰ The biographical sources confirm that in addition to serving as *postnişin* at the Küçük Ayasofya lodge, Kırımî also began to

46 Yakubovych, 'A Neglected Ottoman Sufi Treatise', 142.

47 On the settlement of Crimean Tatars in general and some members of the Giray family in particular in Babaeski, see H. Kırımlı, *Türkiye'deki Kırım Tatar ve Nogay köy yerleşimleri* (Istanbul 2012), 8-9.

48 Seyyid Mehmed Rıza, *Es-seb'ü's-seyyar*, 153.

49 For a discussion of the passage, see Yakubovych, 'A Neglected Ottoman Sufi Treatise', 155. It seems that a slightly different version of the same passage circulated as a free-standing text, and it is from this version that the reference to Yusuf Sinaneddin is taken. See Kırımî, [Kızılbaşlık hakkında risale], SK, H. Hüsni Paşa 132a-133b.

50 For information on Sheikh Mahmud, see Bitiçi, 'Münirî-i Belgradî', 188, and BOA, Mühimme

double as a mosque preacher. He seems to have served first in more minor mosques like the Cerrah Mosque, but eventually made his way to the prestigious Fatih Mosque, where the author of *Tezakir* also mentions having preached.⁵¹

At least one early Ottoman source, Belgradî, mentions that the Crimean Sufi became sheikh and advisor to Murad III at this period.⁵² Corroborating evidence comes from another piece by Kırımî, a short text that he seems to have composed to preface the letters that he had received from Sultan Murad, but which are missing from the only known manuscript copy. In this text, Kırımî writes that he became Murad's sheikh only after the latter's first master Sheikh Şüca died in H.996/1587-1588. He also claims to have been completely taken by surprise when the Sultan invited him to become his "companion".⁵³ However, we need not take him at his word on this matter. In all likelihood, he wanted to represent the beginning of his attachment to Murad III in a manner that would fit the time-honoured ethos of the ideal man of religion, who would be courted by, rather than court the company of, Sultans. In fact, judging by the datable letters in the *Tezakir*, he was already addressing letters to Murad III a decade earlier, during his first stay in Istanbul.⁵⁴ However, these letters are relatively few in number, and there is a long hiatus between them and the next and much larger corpus of letters, dating from circa 1590 and 1593. This suggests that even if Kırımî started to seek the audience of Murad III from the time of his first visit to Istanbul in the late 1570s, it was only after the death of Şüca that the Sultan returned the attention that Kırımî had been lavishing on him, and chose the Crimean Sufi as his master.

It is clear that Kırımî had become a political player of considerable significance during the early 1590s. This was a particularly turbulent period, characterised by monetary instability and military rebellions, and it was also a military revolt that tested Kırımî's skills as a power-broker. The military revolt in question broke out on 23 Rebiü'l-ahir 1001/27 January 1593, when members of the imperial cavalry, in protest at being paid in defective coins, demanded the heads of the Grand Vizier Siyavuş Pasha, the Treasurer Emir Efendi, and the Imperial Stewardess (*Kethüda Kadın*). Kırımî and another Halveti sheikh and preacher, Emir Efendi, rushed to the scene with Qur'ans in their hands and pleaded with the rebellious soldiers to give up their demands. The angry soldiers, however, were clearly not at all impressed with these appeals to the Qur'an and Islam, and mocked the sheikhs, saying that they (the soldiers) had become infidels and were

Defteri 25, entry no. 2024, dated 3 Ramazan H.982/1574. This seems to have been the year that Sheikh Mahmud replaced his father as sheikh at Küçük Ayasofya.

51 For references to his appointments as preacher, see Seyyid Mehmed Rıza, *Es-seb'ü's-seyyar*, 154 and Bursalı, *Osmanlı müellifleri*, I:118; for the relevant passage in the *Tezakir*, see fn. 29.

52 Bitiçi, 'Müniri-i Belgradî', 188. Note that the Tatar historian Seyyid Mehmed Rıza also stresses Murad III's strong love for and faith in Kırımî when describing the appointment of his son Afifüddin as *müderri*s to a Dahil *medrese* (Seyyid Mehmed Rıza, *Es-seb'ü's-seyyar*, 154-155).

53 Kırımî, [Sultan Murad'a dair bir risale], SK, H. Hüsnü Paşa 763/19, 103b-111b. The specific reference is from folios 103b-104a.

54 See, for instance, Güven, 'Çeşitli yönleriyle', 92, 162; and Kırımî, [Kızılbaşlık hakkında risale], SK, H. Hüsnü Paşa 763/23, 132a-133b.

not even beyond slaying Hasan and Hüseyin, if it came to that. In the end, it was only a bloody counter-attack by the imperial gatekeepers which prevented the cavalymen from entering the Imperial Harem and from taking the lives of the targeted officials with their own hands.⁵⁵

Even though Kırımî was not able to prevail upon the rebellious cavalry on this occasion, his efforts in this direction did not damage his standing at the Ottoman court, and possibly even enhanced his reputation as a loyal servant of the Ottoman house, for when he died a few months later, on 13 Cumadelûlâ 1001/15 February 1593 according to Selanikî, or in the month of Şevval/July according to Atayî, his funeral was held at the Fatih Mosque and was attended by “all men of the state, viziers and ulema dignitaries”. Selanikî, in his obituary, memorialised the sheikh as “the elect of the ulema and the sheikhs” (*muhtarü ’l-ulema ve ’l-meşayih*) as well as “the ascetic of the age, a singular worshipper, a teller of truths and preacher to the people” (*zâhid-i zemanê, âbid-i yegâne, natik-ı hakaik, vaiz-i halaik*).⁵⁶

This, then, sums up the story of Kırımî’s life, which as we have seen, matches remarkably well with the biographical information provided in the *Tezakir*. There is also a significant degree of matching between the certified works of Kırımî and the texts that the author of the *Tezakir* mentions as his own. At least four texts mentioned in the *Tezakir* can be identified as Kırımî’s. They are: 1) *Risâla fî bayân asrâr aşâ Mūsâ wa yadd al-bayḍâ* [Treatise explicating the secrets of the staff of Moses and the white hand];⁵⁷ 2) *Kitâb fath marâtib al-ḳulûb wa kashf manâzil ’izzat al-ḡuyûb* [Book on the conquest of the degrees of the heart and the discovery of the way-stations of the glory of the unknown], which appears in the *Tezakir* under the slightly abbreviated title *Merâtib-i kulûb ve menâzil-i izzetü ’l-guyûb*;⁵⁸ 3) *Madârij al-malik al-mannân fî bayân ma’ârij al-insân* [The paths of the beneficent ruler in explication of the stages of ascent of the human], which was originally written as a work that associates the seven stages or circles of the soul (*el-devâ’ir el-seb’a*, or *el-eḫvâr el-seb’a*) with the seven climes, and 4) *Mawâhib al-raḥmân fî bayân marâtib al-akwân*, which was originally written as a work that discusses the five stages of descent (*nüzûl*) as part of the 12 stages of the cycle of existence. Later, however, Kırımî combined these last two pieces in a single work which discusses the 12 stages of the cycle of existence in connection with the 12 regions of the world. The longer work, dealing with all 12 stages, can be found listed under either title in various manuscript collections of Turkey. Both works are described in the *Tezakir*, albeit without mention of the title, as a work on the 12 modes of spirituality that are prevalent in the 12 regions of the world. The dates of composition given in the letters are also identical with those

55 Selanikî, *Tarih-i Selânikî (H.971-1003/1563-1595)*, ed. M. İpşirli, 2 vols., Vol. 1 (Ankara 1999 [2nd ed.]), 302.

56 Ibid., 306-7 and Atayî, *Ḥadâi’k*, 370. In contrast to Selanikî and Atayî, Belgradî erroneously gives H.999/1590 as the date of Kırımî’s death. See Bitiçi, ‘Münîri-i Belgrâdî’, 188.

57 Kırımî, *Risâla fî bayân asrâr ’aşâ Mūsâ wa yadd al-bayḍâ*, SK, Laleli 1512/5, 46b-51a.

58 Kırımî, *Kitâb fath marâtib al-ḳulûb wa kashf manâzil ’izzat al-ḡuyûb*, SK, H. Hüsnü Paşa 763/5, 43b-49a; Carullah 2079/11, 68-82.

mentioned in the preface of the actual work: accordingly, Kırımî started writing this text in H.991/1583-4 and completed it in Şaban H.998/June-July 1590.⁵⁹ In addition to these, Kırımî also authored many short treatises on the esoteric meaning of various verses of the Qur'an, and further examination of these texts, which are often untitled, might enable us to match them with the untitled exegetical pieces referenced in the *Tezakir*.

In the light of all the evidence presented above, we can now safely conclude that the letters wrongly attributed to Aziz Mahmud Hüdayî were, possibly with a single exception (the letter addressed to Selim II), authored by İbrahim-i Kırımî. This discussion has also revealed several facets of Kırımî's background, which will be of central importance to us when we examine his political entanglements. These include his life-long links to Crimea and its political elites, his membership of a circle of Rumelian Sufis known for their strong advocacy of Sunni Islam, and the close relationship he cultivated with the Ottoman Sultan Murad III, as well as various other figures in his court. In the next two sections, we shall see how Kırımî negotiated these three dimensions and reconciled the contradictory demands they made upon him when he sought to comment on and steer the direction of Ottoman politics.

Sufi as courtier: negotiating power and patronage at the Ottoman court

As is well known, politics, even high politics, in the late sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire was not restricted only to the Ottoman Sultan and members of the Imperial Council. Some of the ulema dignitaries, Sufi sheikhs and preachers, royal women, and even some wealthy Jewish and Christian merchants and bankers with court connections could also have a say in it. At the same time, of course, there were unwritten rules of protocol that governed who could say what, when, and in what ways. We primarily learn of these unwritten rules of protocol when they became the subject of debate. In the late sixteenth century, members of the scribal service and military administration frequently expressed exasperation at mosque preachers, because they thought that the latter were exceeding their formal duties by discoursing on state matters. Critics like the bureaucrat and man of letters Mustafa Âli (d. 1600) argued that the duty of preachers was simply to recite and expound the Qur'an and hadiths, and not to opine about matters about which they had little experience and knowledge. To Âli, preachers who "interfere[d] in the business of state and (...) compete[d] at arrows with vezirs and sancak beyis" represented "the height of impertinence".⁶⁰ It was considered less objectionable if a preacher informed a

59 For copies of manuscripts, listed under the title *Madârij al-malik al-mannân fî bayân ma'ârij al-insân*, see SK, Bağdatlı Vehbi 699/1, 1b-195a; *Reisülküttab* 1135 (copied in H.1088/1677); Musalla Medrese 120; for works listed under the title *Mawâhib al-raḥmân fî bayân marâtib al-akwân*, see Kastamonu İl Halk Ktp. MS. 3649. For a recent study of the longer work, based on Kastamonu İl Halk Ktp. MS. 3649, see Yakubovych, 'A Neglected Ottoman Sufi Treatise', 137-160. More research is needed to reconstruct the short and early versions of the text and to establish the relationship between the extant manuscripts. For the passage in the *Tezakir*, see fn. 32.

60 Mustafa Âli, *The Ottoman Gentleman of the Sixteenth Century: Mustafa Âli's Mevâ'idü'n-*

grandee of his views on politics in private, but even in this case, a considerable degree of delicacy was expected. In a *telhis* to Murad III, the Grand Vizier Koca Sinan Pasha complained extensively about the above-mentioned Halveti master and preacher, Emir Efendi, because the latter was constantly commenting on state affairs and statesmen in his sermons, writing letter upon letter to Murad III and giving him political advice, and as if all this was not enough, he was adding insult to injury by reading the Sultan's letters to others to show off.⁶¹

This raises the question of how Kırımî himself managed to write so many letters of advice to Murad III, and to guide and steer him on not just religious but also political matters. It is easiest to account for the letter-writing. Writing was the primary medium of communication between Murad and the outside world, because he had taken the Ottoman custom of royal seclusion to a new high, and was spending nearly all his time in the inner sanctuary of his palace, refusing to go on campaigns, and towards the end of his reign, even failing to present himself to the public for the Friday prayers, as custom dictated.⁶² Clearly, however, Murad still wished to be in touch with the outside world, and being fond of reading and writing, he had very much taken to corresponding on a regular basis with his Grand Vizier, as well as with his favorite Sufis.⁶³ It is clear that the correspondence between Kırımî and the Sultan was not one-sided; the Sultan was also writing to Kırımî.⁶⁴

It probably helped, too, that Kırımî wrote to Murad not just as any ordinary Sufi or preacher, but as his personal sheikh. However, it was no light matter to act as spiritual guide to a monarch who was said to be the shadow of God on earth, and who very much aspired to be Sultan of both this world and the next. This must be why in the preface he wrote to the (now missing) letters of Murad, Kırımî cleverly chose to represent the Sultan as an active seeker of his own gnosis rather than an ordinary disciple who is required to submit his will to that of his master. As Kırımî put it, Murad had recognised "out of the perfection of his sagacity and intelligence" the meaninglessness of this lowly world and re-orientated himself towards the higher realms. In his great wisdom, he had also unders-

nefâ'is fî kavâ'idî'l-mecâlis, 'Tables of Delicacies Concerning the Rules of Social Gatherings', annotated English translation by D. S. Brookes (Cambridge MA 2003), 172-173.

61 H. Sahillioğlu (ed.), *Koca Sinan Paşa'nın telhisleri* (Istanbul 2004), 69-71.

62 On the formulation of the Ottoman custom of royal seclusion, see G. Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge MA and London 1991), 15-30, see esp. 25-26 for remarks on developments in the reign of Murad; for a different appraisal of Ottoman royal ceremonial, which emphasises royal presence over royal seclusion, even while noting the reclusive habits of Murad III, see E. Boyar and K. Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge 2010), 28-41; esp. 31-32, 37-38.

63 On the institutionalisation of *telhis*-writing, see P. Fodor, 'The Grand Vizierial *Telhis*', *ArchOtt*, 15 (1997), 137-188; S. Faroqhi, 'Das Grosswesir-telhis: eine aktenkundliche Studie', *Der Islam*, 45 (1969), 96-110; C. Orhonlu, *Osmanlı tarihine âid belgeler: telhisler (1597-1607)* (Istanbul 1970).

64 In one letter, Kırımî wrote that he sometimes had misgivings about sending the Sultan so many letters, only to add immediately afterwards that he also feared that neglecting to write back to the Sultan would also be insolent. Güven, 'Çeşitli yönleriyle', 114-115.

tood that spiritual perfection can be attained only through attachment to a “master of training” (*mürşid-i irşad*), and he had consequently entered into an intimate companionship (*musahabet ve mukarenet*) first with Sheikh Şüca, and later with Kırımı.⁶⁵

The concept of ‘companionship’ evoked by Kırımı had both religious and political connotations. On the one hand, *musahabet* was a close cognate of *sohbet*, which in the technical sense of companionship and conversation with an authorised master was seen by many Sufis as a valuable tool in attaining spiritual insight.⁶⁶ On the other hand, *musahib*, derived from the same trilateral Arabic root *s-h-b*, denoted a ‘royal companion’ or ‘favourite’. Even though Ottomanists have until now discussed under this rubric mainly *musahib*-viziers or *musahib*-aghas, it could be argued that in the reign of Murad III, a number of Sufis who became sheikhs to the Sultan, most notably Şüca and Kırımı, also fit the bill as “‘creatures’ of the Sultan, empowered to act as his power-brokers”.⁶⁷

The ambiguity of Kırımı’s position as sheikh and ‘creature’ of the Sultan is in full evidence in his letters. On the one hand, the Sufi sheikh assumed the voice of a humble subject when he referred to the Sultan as the “shadow of God on earth”, “Caliph of God”, and “Caliph of the Messenger of God”, as well as “renewer of faith” (*müceddid-i iman*) of both the new century and the new millennium.⁶⁸ He also described meeting the Sultan, when he (Kırımı) was with the Grand Vizier in the palace, as a rare incident that threw him off base and transported him to a different state almost like experiencing an intimation of the divine.⁶⁹ On the other hand, Kırımı also guided the Sultan, as a master would guide an initiate on the Sufi path. When, for instance, Murad chided Kırımı for not showing him the essence of divine reality and for making him suffer as a result, the Sufi sheikh politely explained that God hides himself from the ignorant but reveals himself in signs and allusions to the gnostic. Hence the Sultan should know that it is on account of his gnosis that God has been shown to him in this manner.⁷⁰ On another such occasion, the Sufi master uncharacteristically allowed himself to address the Sultan in the second person singular, saying “Your passion (*iştîyak*) for the divine exceeds all bounds; it is too much. I have seen so many seekers, adepts, and visionaries in my life but have found none to surpass my Padishah in his yearning (*hurs*) and passion for divine gnosis”.⁷¹

Perhaps because Murad considered himself an already ‘arrived’ Sufi by the 1590s, he no longer reported his dreams and asked for their interpretation, as he had done earlier with Sheikh Şüca. Rather, it was Kırımı himself who related his dreams to the Sultan and who then provided his own interpretations of them. In most cases, the reported dre-

65 Kırımı, [Sultan Murad’a dair bir risale], SK, H. Hüsnu Paşa 62, 103b-111b. The specific reference is from folios 103b-104a.

66 *TDVİA*, s.v. ‘Sohbet’ (Süleyman Uludağ).

67 Börekçi, ‘Factions and Favorites’, 17, 151-152; also see E. Turan, ‘The Sultan’s Favorite: Ibrahim Pasha and the Making of the Universal Sovereignty in the Reign of Sultan Süleyman (1516-1526)’, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2007.

68 See, for instance, Güven, ‘Çeşitli yönleriyle’, 7, 15-16.

69 *Ibid.*, 98.

70 *Ibid.*, 134

71 *Ibid.*, 133.

ams were about the Sultan. Considering how rarely Kırımı̄ and Murad met in real life, it is tempting to think that the Sufi sheikh relied on these dreams to compensate for the absence of physical contact with the Sultan. At the same time, however, the Sufi sheikh often used his dreams as a pretext to advise Murad about political matters.⁷² In several instances, Kırımı̄ also justified his advice-giving as an integral part of his duties as a man of religion, citing the hadith ‘Religion is counsel’ (*El-dīn el-naṣīḥa*).⁷³ Interestingly, the word *meşveret*, or ‘consultation’, never surfaces in the letters, even though it was also part of the juridical language of Islamic rulership and would have been well known to Kırımı̄ as a learned sheikh with the equivalent of a madrasa education.⁷⁴ Perhaps the Sufi master avoided the latter concept because it implied an obligation on the Sultan’s part, and by extension, a limitation of the latter’s power.

Yet it would be wrong to read Kırımı̄’s letters as if they were presenting a programmatic case for Ottoman ‘absolutism’, not only because there was no one else in sight making a contrary argument, but also because Kırımı̄’s primary reader was the Sultan, who did not need to be convinced of his great power. It seems that in many cases Kırımı̄ evoked the Sultan’s power and used sacralising language to do so also because he wished him to realise that this great power brought responsibilities. In one letter, the Sufi writer assured his royal reader that he (Murad) possesses greater political power (*devlet ve kuvvet*) than all the Sultans before him, but he should, for this reason, be all the more vigilant to maintain it.⁷⁵ In other letters, Kırımı̄ evoked the quasi-sacral nature of the royal office to get Murad to forgive the trespasses of various high-ranking officials, arguing that forgiveness and mercy are divine qualities.⁷⁶

In one letter, Kırımı̄ also reminded Murad that his power ultimately depends on the “soldiers of Islam and the *reaya*”, and that he should show “mercy and affection” (*merhamet ve şefkat*) to the *reaya*, and “respect and service” (*riayet ve hizmet*) to the soldiers of Islam.⁷⁷ That royal power depended on the prosperity of the *reaya* and the strength of the army was a point that was often made in the political literature of the time, and often a connection was made between all three through the metaphor of the circle of justice, which, in the most common version, went something like this: “No power without troops – No troops without money – No money without prosperity – No prosperity without justice and good administration”.⁷⁸ Interestingly, however, Kırımı̄ chose not to mention the treasury in this connection, and in fact hardly ever alludes to fiscal and monetary

72 See, for instance, *ibid.*, 6, 28-30, 56, 83-84, 84-85, 88-89, 92, 125-126, 132.

73 *Ibid.*, 7, 145; Buhari, İman, 42; Müslim, İman, 95.

74 On *meşveret* in sixteenth-century Ottoman political thought, see H. Yılmaz, ‘Osmanlı devleti’nde batılılaşma öncesi meşrutiyetçi gelişmeler’, *Dîvân: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 13, 24 (2008), 1-30; M. Sariyannis, ‘Ottoman Ideas on Monarchy Before the Tanzimat Reforms: Toward a Conceptual History of Ottoman Political Notions’, *Turcica*, 47 (2016), 33-72.

75 Güven, ‘Çeşitli yönleriyle’, 53.

76 *Ibid.*, 15, 16.

77 *Ibid.*, 127.

78 L. T. Darling, *A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East: The Circle of Justice from Mesopotamia to Globalization* (Abingdon 2013), 2, 127-148.

matters in his letters. This omission is striking, because fiscally-motivated monetary debasements were the primary cause of grievance of the discontented *kul* soldiers in this period, including in the incident in which Kırımî himself had played the role of mediator between the palace and the imperial cavalry on 27 January 1593.⁷⁹

Unfortunately, we do not know in which context Kırımî made the above-mentioned remark about the need to respect and serve the soldiers, but the overall analysis of his letters indicates that he was much more likely to speak on behalf of specific high-ranking officials than for larger entities like “the *reaya*” or even the “soldiers”. He was, in this regard, very much a man of the Ottoman court, concerned first and foremost with the power games in this ultimately rather constricted, privileged environment.

The late sixteenth century was a time when factional struggles were particularly intense at the Ottoman court. The personal and factional rivalries that divided it are, however, barely visible in Kırımî’s letters. Perhaps the Sufi sheikh thought it best for a man of religion to position himself above the worldly squabbles for power. Perhaps, too, he was extra cautious because his letters could have been read by any one of the officials who conveyed them to the Sultan, or because the Sultan himself could have the letters read in the presence of others. Either way, in most cases, the Sufi sheikh prudently limited his criticisms to unnamed “scoundrels” (*erazil*), and when he named specific officials to the Sultan, it was almost always to praise them, and not to criticise. A rare exception to this rule would be his remarks about the “accursed Takiyüddin”, but in this case, too, Kırımî was actually playing it safe, since the controversial astronomer had already been banished at the time of writing. Kırımî was also obviously jealous when he learnt that Davud Efendi from the *zaviye* of Ali Pasha had been invited to the palace. However, rather than malign his rival, he simply made it clear to Murad that there was nothing special about this man, who was just one of the Sultan’s many well-wishers.⁸⁰

At the same time, however, as the Sultan’s sheikh and companion, Kırımî also did what any self-respecting courtier would do: namely, he used his proximity to Murad to procure benefits for himself and others. It was presumably for his own benefit that he asked Murad to convert the Arslanhane (literally, Lion’s Den) into a Sufi lodge, or that failing, to allow the *kapu ağası* to do the same instead.⁸¹ The said building had originally been a Byzantine church, before its basement was converted by Mehmed II into a royal menagerie in the late fifteenth century, and in the sixteenth century, its upper floor served as the workshop of court artisans (*Nakkaşhane*). Presumably, Kırımî wished to move to the Arslanhane, because it was in very close proximity to the Topkapı Palace, and would have facilitated his access to the court even further.⁸²

79 C. Kafadar, ‘Les troubles monétaires de la fin du XVIe siècle et la prise de la conscience ottomane du déclin’, *Annales. Économies, Sociétés et Civilisations*, 46 (1991), 381-400; Ş. Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge 2000), 131-148.

80 Güven, ‘Çeşitli Yönleriyle’, 120-121, 136.

81 *Ibid.*, 87-88, 167-168.

82 On the royal menagerie, see Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, 46, 48, and Ç. Kafesçioğlu, *Constantinople/Istanbul: Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision, and the Construction of the Ottoman Capital* (University Park 2009), 204, 263.

When Kırımî intervened on behalf of others, he typically stressed his indebtedness to them. Significantly, the people on whose behalf Kırımî interceded came from several different branches and ranks of the imperial administration. Among the men of religion, he put in a good word not only for fellow Sufis like Medeni Sheikh Ahmed, Sheikh Mehmed Efendi of the *Şabani* branch of the Halveti order, and a certain “holy fool” (*mezcub*) from Kastamonu, but also for top-ranking ulema like the royal tutor Hoca Sadeddin, the *şeyhülislams* Bostanzade Mehmed, and Bayramzade Zekeriyya, and the *kadiasker* of Rumelia, Dügmeçizade.⁸³ Kırımî also hastened to the defence of the kadis who had angered Murad III and the Grand Vizier Koca Sinan Pasha, when a large group of them had convened at the Fatih Mosque to protest against the dismissal of the kadi of Samakov. Since Kırımî himself was a preacher at the same mosque, he might also have been involved in the incident, but writing one month after the event, he clearly found it in his power to plead with the Sultan to forgive the errant kadis. He argued that the latter had already apologised for their “disobedience” (*tuğyan*) and that “they, being members of the ulema should not be treated like other people” (*ulema zümresindedir; saire kıyas olunmaya*).⁸⁴

In addition to men of religion like himself, Kırımî also lent his support to various members of the palace corps and military administrators of *kul* background. In connection with the ulema protest over the dismissal of the kadi of Samakov, for instance, he asked Murad to forgive “the fault, if there is any” of a certain Hüseyin Ağa, who “was formerly master of the stables (*mirahur*) and who now serves as *kapıcıbaşı*”.⁸⁵ He also closely followed the career tracks of his patrons and clients among the palace-reared *kul* administrators. He congratulated Murad for appointing a certain Hüseyin Beg as the Governor of Jerusalem, while he recommended his benefactor Hâfız [Hadım] Ahmed Pasha for the lucrative governor-generalship of Egypt. Kırımî’s wish was granted, and Ahmed Pasha was appointed Governor-General of Egypt in H.999/1590-1591.⁸⁶

Perhaps the most interesting person the Crimean Sufi recommended to Murad from within the palace was, however, the *Haseki Sultan* Safiye. In a long and elaborate letter, interwoven with mystical themes, Kırımî praised Safiye Sultan as Murad’s “loyal servitor of many years” (*kadim emekdarınız*), and he urged the Sultan to reward her services by manumitting and then marrying her. He argued that such an act would also be good for the Sultan’s own spiritual progress.⁸⁷ It might be worth pointing out that Kırımî could give this kind of advice not only because he was the Sultan’s sheikh, but also because sex and marriage in the royal household were very much regarded as “state affairs” and thus open to some degree of public scrutiny and comment. As for the content of Kırımî’s

83 Ibid., 16-19, 102-103, 120, 165.

84 Ibid., 15-16. It is worth noting that in the letter that immediately precedes the one written on behalf of the kadis (Ibid., 14-15), Kırımî himself submits his apologies for an unspecified misdemeanour. On the protest by the ulema and the responses to it by the Sultan and the Grand Vizier, see *TDVİA*, s.v. ‘Zekeriyya Efendi, Bayramzade’ (M. İpşirli); Sahillioğlu (ed.), *Koca Sinan Paşa’nın telhisleri*, 27-28.

85 Güven, ‘Çeşitli yönleriyle’, 55.

86 Ibid., 150-151; Selaniki, *Tarih*, 242, 335.

87 Güven, ‘Çeşitli yönleriyle’, 125-126.

advice, it went against the royal tradition that maintained that Ottoman Sultans were not supposed to marry, but to enjoy sexual relations with and reproduce through their female slaves; however, it was not entirely unprecedented either. Murad's grandfather Süleyman had broken with the existing norms by manumitting and marrying his favorite consort, Hürrem, circa 1534. There is some evidence that this unprecedented action created scope for similar action, even if it did not completely overturn the existing norms. The Venetian ambassador Jacobo Ragazzoni claimed that Süleyman's son and successor, Selim, had also manumitted and married his royal consort, Nurbanu; however, this marriage is not reported in any of the Ottoman sources. In Murad's case, only one Ottoman writer, Mustafa Ali, and no European contemporary, reported his having manumitted and married Safiye. Ultimately, we do not know whether Murad heeded Kırımî's advice and followed the example of his father and grandfather, but if he did so, he, too, seems to have been discreet about it like his father.⁸⁸

In addition, Kırımî mentioned in his letters a variety of high-ranking officials in a highly complimentary manner, though without necessarily asking for a favour for them. One of the officials he praised in this manner was the Venetian-born Gazanfer Ağa (d. 1603), who was one of the most powerful officials at the time as the holder of two major offices within the palace, that of Agha of the Porte (*Kapu ağası*, *Babüssaade ağası*) and Head of the Privy Chamber (*Hasodabaşı*).⁸⁹ Another official of whom Kırımî spoke with praise was the Grand Admiral Cigalazade Yusuf Sinan Pasha (d. 1606), who had been a member of the aristocratic Genoese family of Cicala, before being taken captive by Ottoman corsairs, and entering Ottoman imperial service.⁹⁰ Significantly, both of these men were part of the same court faction as Safiye Sultan and Hoca Sadeddin, which was in fact the most powerful court faction at the time.

That Kırımî, too, participated in Ottoman court politics thanks in part to his links with this powerful faction seems clear. In fact, the Sufi sheikh seems to have shown a remarkable propensity to work with whoever was in a position of ascendancy in this period. A case in point would be his relations with Koca Sinan Pasha, a powerful official who was appointed to and dismissed from the office of Grand Vizier a total of five times in the late sixteenth century (three of them in Kırımî's lifetime). It seems that particularly during Sinan Pasha's second term as grand vizier, Kırımî went out of his way to express support for the Grand Vizier. He specifically praised Sinan Pasha's aborted plan to connect the

88 For a discussion of the actual and/or imputed marriages between Süleyman and Hürrem, Selim and Nurbanu, and Murad and Safiye on the basis of Ottoman and Venetian sources, see L. P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York and Oxford 1993), 58-63, 92-95.

89 Güven, 'Çeşitli yönleriyle', 87-88, 150-151. On Gazanfer Ağa, see E. R. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore 2006), 119-123; Börekçi, 'Factions and Favorites', 49-50; A. E. Dikici, 'The Making of Ottoman Court Eunuchs: Origins, Recruitment Paths, Family Ties and 'Domestic Production'', *ArchOtt*, 30 (2013), 105-136.

90 Güven, 'Çeşitli Yönleriyle', 96. On Cigalazade Yusuf Sinan Pasha, see *EL²*, s.v. 'Cigālā-zāde Yūsuf Sinān Pasha' (V. J. Parry); Dursteler, 122-123.

Black Sea with the Gulf of İzmit via the Sakarya river in order to bring wood to Istanbul, and he compared this project to the restoration of Istanbul's water supply system during the reign of Süleyman I. He even related having had a dream in which the Grand Vizier was building "a grand bridge" over the Bosphorus.⁹¹ Despite these words of praise, however, the Crimean sheikh did not always see eye-to-eye with the Grand Vizier. As we shall see in the next section, Sinan Pasha favoured peaceful relations with Poland-Lithuania, while Kırımî preferred all-out war, or at least an extension of the diplomatic bickering. Sinan Pasha wanted to punish the top ranks of the ulema for their role in the protests at the sacking of the kadi of Samakov, while Kırımî wished them to be forgiven. Sinan Pasha was engaged in a bitter feud with Ferhad Pasha, whereas the latter was a long-time associate of Kırımî. Significantly, however, even as Kırımî let his views be known on some of these matters, he was careful not to directly target the Grand Vizier.⁹²

Political prudence was probably also the reason why Kırımî made so few references to the Crimean ruling elites in his letters to Murad III. Even though the Crimean Khanate was a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire, it nevertheless enjoyed a great deal of autonomy, and Kırımî might have found it impolitic as a Crimean at the Ottoman court to profess his attachment to members of another, albeit vassal, dynasty.⁹³ Quite appropriately, the only Crimean royal whom Kırımî mentioned by name to Murad was one who was safely dead: namely, the *kalga* Âdil Giray, who had been killed by the Safavids while in captivity in Iran.⁹⁴ From the way Kırımî describes his grief upon learning of Âdil Giray's death, it would seem that he was quite close to the *kalga*.

It is not clear how Kırımî comported himself when relations between the Ottomans and the Crimean Khan Mehmed Giray soured shortly after the *kalga's* death, and when Mehmed Giray was forcibly replaced with İslam II Giray in 1584. However, considering

91 Güven, 'Çeşitli yönleriyle', 84-85, 162. Judging by the references in them, the first of these letters was written during the second grand vizierate of Sinan Pasha (1589-1591), while the second was written at the beginning of his first tenure as Grand Vizier (1580-1582). See *TDVİA*, s.v. 'Koca Sinan Paşa' (M. İpşirli).

92 Sinan Pasha's animosity towards the royal tutor and the *kadıasker* of Rumelia as well as Ferhad Pasha comes through quite clearly in the *telhises* he sent to Murad III, even if the grand vizier was forced to be a bit more circumspect and indirect in his attacks against Hoca Sadeddin on account of the latter's special status as a top-ranking member of the ulema as well as royal tutor. See Sahillioğlu (ed.), *Koca Sinan Paşa'nın Telhisleri*, 51-53, 65-66, 69-71, 90-91, 133-134, 153, 182-183, 195-197; 199-200, 228-229, 260. See also İpşirli, 'Koca Sinan Paşa'.

93 On the special relationship between the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire, see N. Królikowska, 'Sovereignty and Subordination in Crimean-Ottoman Relations (Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries)' in G. Kármán and L. Kunčević (eds), *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden and Boston 2013), 43-65.

94 Reportedly, Âdil Giray had been killed because of his involvement in an adulterous love affair with a Safavid royal woman, but there are also counterclaims that the murder of both Âdil Giray and his alleged romantic liason were all part of a power struggle between different factions in the Safavid palace. On this affair, see L. Uluç, 'The Representation of the Execution of the Safavid Princess Begum from the Ottoman Historian Mustafa Ali's *Nusretname*', in F. Hitzel (ed.), *14th International Congress of Turkish Art: Proceedings* (Paris 2013), 799-806.

that the Crimean Sufi did not suffer any setback in his Istanbul career in subsequent years, we may presume that he had successfully adapted to the new political situation. In fact, there is considerable parallelism between the political positions of the Crimean Sufi and the new Crimean Khan: just as Kırımî would position himself as a loyal subject of the Ottoman house in his letters to Murad III, İslam II Giray, too, would prove himself an ardent Ottoman loyalist and initiate the custom of having the Ottoman Sultan's name read before his own in the Friday sermons delivered in Crimean mosques.⁹⁵

The next person to be appointed Khan, Gazi Giray (r. 1588-1597), was also a son of Devlet Giray like Âdil and Mehmed Giray. He too participated in the Transcaucasian campaign under Âdil Giray's command, was taken captive by the Safavids, but managed to return safely to the Ottoman lands before being appointed Khan. Given Kırımî's reputed acquaintance with Devlet Giray during his youth in Crimea, and his attachment to Âdil Giray during his Rumelian years, and given the fact that his patron Hoca Sadeddin himself had warm relations with Gazi Giray, it would be surprising indeed if the Crimean Sufi did not know the new Khan personally. It seems, however, that in his correspondence with Murad III, Kırımî also refrained from making references to this Khan for the reasons stated above.

To recapitulate, the discussion so far has revealed Kırımî to have been a skilled political player who was able successfully to juggle his roles as Sufi sheikh and royal favourite, to maintain an impressive web of connections that extended from Crimea to Istanbul, and even to weather the intense infighting and factional struggles at the Ottoman court. Yet it would be wrong to say that Kırımî's concern as a court player was simply to preserve his privileged position as the Sultan's sheikh and favourite. As a 'Sunnitising' Sufi, with loyalty to both the Ottoman and Crimean dynasties, Kırımî also had a distinctive perspective on Ottoman politics, and he used his influence over the Ottoman Sultan to promote policies in line with this distinctive vision. It is only when we examine these policy recommendations of his and place them in their proper historical context that we can truly appreciate how an early modern Sufi with multiple affiliations navigated his way through the complex demands of religious and political ideology as well as *realpolitik* at the turn of the sixteenth century.

Religion in the service of the state?

The uses and limits of Sunni confessionalism

Even though in his letters to Murad III Kırımî dwelt more on practical politics than on political theory, his basic approach to Ottoman politics can be said to have followed the line of the 'Sunnitising' Halvetis of Rumelia such as his master, Muslihuddin Nureddinzade, and his master's master, Sofyalı Balı. On the one hand, he drew on the Sufi, and particularly Akbarian, idea of the body politic as a mirror image of the cosmic order to describe the Sultan as the soul (*ruh*) and sometimes the heart (*kalb*) of the body politic and the guarantor of order in this world. On the other hand, he also drew on the juridical

95 *TDVİA*, s.v 'Giray' (H. İnalçık).

discourse of Islamic rulership to emphasise the duties of the Sultan to dispense justice, to enforce the sharia and the Sunna of the Prophet, and to wage war in the name of religion (*gaza* and *jihad* being words he used interchangeably and often jointly in this connection).

For Kırımî, as for other confessionally-minded Halvetis, the only admissible form of Islam was Sunnism, albeit a Sunnism that was tempered by Sufism, and which accommodated the historical experiences and political needs of the Ottoman state. In fact, the Sufi writer equated political loyalty to the Ottoman house and religious conformity to such an extent that he even claimed that someone who refuses to pray for the well-being of the Ottoman Sultan can no longer be considered “a believer and a Muslim”.⁹⁶ Kırımî also highlighted the Islamic credentials of the Ottoman Sultan as well as the Ottoman harmonisation of Sufism with the sharia when he contrasted Ottoman religio-political history with that of Safavid Iran. He argued that it was because the ulema, the sheikhs, and military rulers (*ümera*) of Iran had tried to pursue the path of gnosis (*mearif-i ilâhiyye*) without showing respect for the sharia and the Sunna that the “*Kızılbaş* tribes” (*kabail-i Kızılbaş*) had managed to extend their rule over that geography. The lands of Rum, by contrast, had been spared the same calamity, as the Ottoman rulers from the beginning had shown great respect for the sharia and the Sunna, and as they had built countless “*imarets*, mosques, dervish lodges (*tekve*), *medreses* and other charitable foundations, which extend in an unbroken line from Istanbul to Yanya”.⁹⁷

Even though Kırımî mentioned the dervish lodges and *imarets* (a term which had originally denoted a multi-functional hospice but which by the late sixteenth century had come to mean a soup kitchen) along with mosques and *medreses* among the institutions that had helped implant religious orthodoxy in the lands of Rum, he clearly excluded from this category the *ışık zaviyeleri*, namely the dervish lodges frequented by the Shiitising antinomian dervishes in the Ottoman lands. In fact, Kırımî called on the Ottoman Sultan actively to survey and punish the antinomian dervishes, whom he regarded as “heretics” (*zındık*, *mülhid*), and “not Muslim”. He also specifically targeted the *Bedreddinîs* – or as he called them, the *Simavnîs* – a heterodox Muslim community which had its origins in the messianic movement associated with the famous Sufi and scholar Bedreddin of Simavna (d. 1420), but which by the sixteenth century had come under Shiitising influences and “turned *Kızılbaş*”. According to Kırımî, the *Bedreddinîs* lived mainly “on the other side of the Balkans”, in Dobruja and in the villages known by the name of *Taviçeler* (or *Toyçalar*)⁹⁸ in the same region, but they were also to be found in Babaeski,

96 Güven, ‘Çeşitli yönleriyle’, 133.

97 Ibid., 29.

98 Even though Güven has transcribed the word as ‘Duçeler’, I have learnt from Nevena Grammatikova, courtesy of Rossitsa Gradeva, that the correct reading should be *Taviçeler* or *Toyçalar*, a word that is thought to be of either Slavic or Mongol origin, and which denoted officers of the light cavalry stationed along the Danube. I thank both scholars for their assistance in this matter. For a reference to the *Taviçes* in the Ottoman archival records as well as a discussion of the word’s etymology, see A. Kayapınar and E. Erdoğan Özünlü (eds), *Mihaloğullarına ait 1586 tarihli akıncı defteri* (Ankara 2015), 6, 260.

where the Crimean sheikh himself had come into contact and clashed with them. On the basis of his own experiences, and, presumably, also of information that he would have picked up from his numerous associates in the region, Kırımî labelled the *Bedreddinîs* as *Rafizîs* (a derogatory term for Shiites), and claimed that they supported or were even indistinguishable from the *Kızılbaş* (*Kızılbaşla birdür*). He directed at them the standard forms of accusation that were directed at the *Kızılbaş*, such as having no respect for the sharia and the Sunna, and habitually cursing the first four (!) Caliphs openly in public. He also highlighted the threat that these groups presented to the Ottoman political order by referring to the incidents of banditry and Celali disturbances that habitually erupted in places where this community lived. He also blamed the widespread incidents of military desertion among the timar-holding cavalymen in the region on their being *Bedreddinîs*, claiming that these men regularly abandoned their timars in order not to fight against the *Kızılbaş* (i.e., the Safavids).⁹⁹

When Kırımî wrote to Murad about the *Bedreddinîs*, the Ottomans had just signed a peace treaty with the Safavids (1590), but the Sufi writer urged the Ottoman Sultan now to channel his campaign inwards and to perfect his *gaza* and jihad by going after the *Bedreddinî* heretics. He advised the Sultan first to target the military personnel in the fortresses and to subject them to inspections (*yoklama*) to weed out the heretics. He also called for inspections to be undertaken at the lodges of the *ışık*: “if the dervishes agree to give up their reprehensible practices such as cursing the Companions of the Prophet and the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs and to abide by the Sunna and the Sharia, fine; if not, then they should also be eliminated (*ref*)”. The Sufi sheikh was a little more optimistic about the possibility of reforming the *reaya*. He argued that they would largely follow suit, if they saw their religious and military elites brought into line. However, he also advised in more proactive fashion that “a Sunni imam should be sent to every village, and he should be in charge of educating the children, women, and men”.¹⁰⁰

Kırımî’s advice about the *Bedreddinîs* may seem a good deal harsher than the policies that the Ottoman state officials were implementing on the ground. Scholarship based on the Ottoman *mühimme* records has pointed out that at this period the political authorities were mainly going after those *Kızılbaş* who had recently ‘converted’, or who were actively helping the Safavids by sending them taxes, by missionising on their behalf, or by trying to migrate to the Safavid lands. Moreover, the *Kızılbaş* and Shiite communities which bore the brunt of the state surveillance and punishment were located in the frontier provinces of the Empire, most notably in the provinces of Rum, Dulkadir, Şehrîzor, and Baghdad, while the *Kızılbaş* communities which inhabited the Empire’s western provinces as well as Mt Lebanon were largely spared.¹⁰¹ Still, it would be wrong

99 Güven, ‘Çeşitli yönleriyle’, 57-59.

100 Ibid., 58-59.

101 H. Sohrweide, ‘Der Sieg der Safaviden in Persien und seine Rückwirkungen auf die Schiiten Anatoliens im 16. Jahrhundert’, *Der Islam*, 41 (1965), 95-223; C. Imber, ‘The Persecution of the Ottoman Shi’ites according to the Mühimme Defterleri, 1565-1585’, *Der Islam* 56 (1979), 245-273; M. Salati, ‘Toleration, Persecution and Local Realities: Observations on the Shiism

to dismiss Kırımı's harsh discourse on the *Bedreddinîs* as ideological ranting which had no chance of application. Even if in the late sixteenth century the extreme persecuting measures advocated by Kırımı were not put into action in a domestic context, it should be borne in mind that shortly after Tabriz had come into Ottoman lands, the Ottoman soldiers stationed there had reportedly killed "thousands" of civilians (mostly merchants and shopkeepers) in retribution for the killing of some Ottoman soldiers in a public bath.¹⁰² Since Kırımı himself had arrived in the same city a year later, he would almost certainly have heard of this massacre and possibly had this kind of purge in mind when he advised Murad to eliminate the *Bedreddinîs* living in Ottoman Rumelia.

In addition, it is important to remember that Kırımı was not alone in targeting the *Bedreddinîs* as he did; rather, several other Rumelian sheikhs in his branch of the Halveti order, including his master, Nureddinzade, and his master's master, Sofyalı Bâlî, had done the same, and would continue to do so in the decades to come.¹⁰³ This suggests that the non-conformist Muslims in Rumelia were not exactly left alone, as some recent studies would seem to suggest, but, rather, that they were pressured by a number of local groups, including, no doubt, the Sunnitising Halveti sheikhs as well as their followers and sympathisers among the military administrators and the civilian population.

At present, we do not know through what channels a network of Sufis in Ottoman Rumelia could internalise imperial discourse that paired heresy with political treason. What is clear, nevertheless, is that these Sufis still viewed confessional matters through a highly localised perspective. In fact, as intimately as Kırımı knew the distribution of *Bedreddinîs* in the eastern Balkan countryside, he had only the vaguest idea about the presence of *Kızılbaş*-Alevi, Shiite, or other non-conformist Muslim communities in other parts of the Ottoman Empire. He had nothing to say about the *Kızılbaş*-Alevi communities living in different parts of Anatolia, for instance, presumably because he was not

in the Holy Places and the Bilad al-Sham (Sixteenth- Seventeenth Centuries)', in *Convegno sul tema La Shi'a nell'Impero Ottomano, Roma, 15 Apr. 1991* (Rome 1993), 121-148; S. Savaş, *XVI. Asırda Anadolu'da Alevilik* (Ankara 2002); S. Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1788* (Cambridge 2010); A. Baltacıoğlu-Brammer, 'The Formation of Kızılbaş Communities in Anatolia, and Responses, 1450s-1630s', *IJTS*, 20 (2014), 21-48.

102 It should be noted, however, that most of the Ottoman accounts relate the massacre with a degree of disapproval and try to absolve the Ottoman commander Özdemiroğlu of direct responsibility for them. See Mustafa Ali, *Künhü'l-ahbar. Dördüncü rükn: Osmanlı tarihi*, (Ankara 2009), 530b-531a; Âsafî Dal Mehmed Çelebi, *Şecâ'atnâme: Özdemiroğlu Osman Paşa'nın şark seferleri (1578-1585)*, ed. A. Özcan (Istanbul 2006), 540-542; B. Özkuzugüdenli, 'Tâ'likî-zâde Mehmed Subhî Tebrîziyye', unpublished M.A. thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi, 2005, 68-70; Y. Zeyrek (ed.), *Târih-i Osman Paşa: Özdemiroğlu Osman Paşanın Kafkasya fetihleri (H. 986-988/M. 1578-1580) ve Tebriz'in fethi (H. 993/M. 1585)* (Ankara 2001), 71-72; M. Karanfil, 'Harîmî'nin *Zafernâme* ve *Gonca*'sına göre Özdemiroğlu Osman Paşa', unpublished M.A. thesis, İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1998, 101-102; Selanikî, *Tarih*, 162-163; Peçevî İbrahim, *Tarih-i Peçevî* (Istanbul 1980), with an index and introduction by F. Ç. Derin and V. Çabuk, 98-99.

103 For a discussion of the views of Bâlî and Nureddinzade, see Clayer, *Mystiques, état et société*, 78-79, 85-86.

familiar with this region. Likewise, regarding the province of Baghdad, his sole comment was that “the people of Baghdad have been mired in heresy (*ilhad*) and libertinism (*ibahat*) since the time of Hallac-ı Mansur”, suggesting only a vague, and rather bookish, familiarity with the confessional make-up and history of this province.¹⁰⁴

In comparison, Kırımî must have been more familiar with the confessional map of Iran, since he had accompanied Ferhad Pasha into Tabriz in 1586, and since he had followed the development of the rest of the Ottoman-Safavid wars of 1578-1590 quite closely. As we have already seen, Kırımî’s discussion of Safavid Iran, both during and after the end of the Ottoman-Safavid campaigns, was extremely negative. In fact, he denied the Safavids even the minimal respect that was granted by Ottoman officials in diplomatic correspondence, and even in some of the Ottoman histories. Rather than acknowledge the Safavid Shah as a rival dynasty, Kırımî described Iran simply as a land overrun by “*Kızılbaş* tribes” and “*Kızılbaş* gypsies” (*Kızılbaş kıptîsi*) and in a permanent state of chaos. It is worth noting that even though tribalism was also a potent force in the Tatar polity as well as in parts of the Ottoman Empire, Kırımî, with close links to the Crimean and Ottoman dynasties, associated tribes with lawlessness and chaos. Simultaneously, he coupled the *Kızılbaş* with the gypsies because he associated both with a lack of respect for Islamic social and religious norms.¹⁰⁵

In many letters as well as in his *Mawāhib al-rahmān*, Kırımî gave strong support to the Ottoman campaign against the Safavids, and in one letter, written in 1579, a year after the start of that campaign, he even expressed hope for a total conquest of the Safavid realms.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, even after a peace treaty was signed between the two empires in 1590, he reminded Murad that peace with heretics could not be permanent and he urged the Sultan to come to the aid of the people of Gilan, as they were “Sunni” but were now facing political subjugation by the Safavids.¹⁰⁷ Still, the Crimean sheikh was not an indiscriminate advocate of continual warfare against the Safavids. Quite the contrary: in several letters he composed after the conclusion of the Ottoman-Safavid peace treaty, he stressed the futility of waging war against the Safavids. Interestingly, it was less on an ideological basis and more on pragmatic grounds that Kırımî urged the Sultan to wage war against the “infidels” in the West instead. “If only one-tenth of the effort invested in the Safavid campaigns had been invested in campaigns against the Franks, many lands would have been conquered”, he wrote. He also urged the Sultan to take advantage of the peace with the *Kızılbaş* and turn to the much neglected western frontier. Possibly with the Qur’anic verse 2:115 (*Unto Allah belong the East and the West, and whithersoever ye turn, there is Allah’s Countenance. Lo! Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing*) in mind, he reminded Murad that perfect justice is bounded neither by the West nor by the East.

104 Güven, ‘Çeşitli yönleriyle’, 40-41.

105 On the place of and attitudes towards gypsies in the Ottoman Balkans, see E. Marushiakova and V. Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire: A Contribution to the History of the Balkans* (Hatfield 2001).

106 Güven, ‘Çeşitli yönleriyle’, 92; Yakubovych, ‘A Neglected Ottoman Sufi Treatise’.

107 Güven, ‘Çeşitli yönleriyle’, 59-61.

Hence if Murad was to perfect his rule, he was not to occupy himself with the conquest of the East alone, but also turn his attention to the West, where the infidels had been harassing Muslims for some time.¹⁰⁸

It might be presumed that Kırımî's greater enthusiasm about war against the "infidels" in the West reflected, in part, the general mood at the Ottoman court, where many saw the conclusion of the Safavid campaign as an opportunity to attend to more profitable military engagements on other fronts. Circa 1590-1591, different factions had different ideas about which of these fronts they wanted to prioritise. Some favoured going after Venetian-held Crete, while others favoured targeting Malta as part of a broader effort to weaken Spain. To all appearances, Kırımî himself did not have a strong opinion about whether the Ottomans were to take on Venice or Spain. Instead, he advised Murad simply to attend to the "gaza on the seas" and try to take Crete *and* Malta.¹⁰⁹ In another letter, possibly written sometime in 1592, he related a dream about the capture of Vienna, seemingly in a gesture of support for those who favoured a war against the Habsburgs instead.¹¹⁰

If, however, Kırımî played it safe by making rather generic remarks in support of war against the "Franks", he was far more specific and informed when he advised Murad about how to deal with Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy. It is reasonable to think that the author's Crimean background had much to do with the strong interest he took in these two major powers of eastern Europe. Both the Grand Duchy of Muscovy and Poland-Lithuania were immediate neighbours of the Crimean Khanate, and intricate ties of military conflict and rivalry as well as diplomacy connected the three states closely. Of course, relations with both countries also mattered to the Ottomans, but not as much as did relations with their more immediate rivals, the Safavids and the Habsburgs.

This basic difference between Ottoman and Crimean priorities came to the fore especially during the Ottoman-Safavid wars of 1578-1590. As Ottoman vassals, the Crimeans had to contribute actively to the war efforts, and this took a heavy toll on the security of the Khanate itself, tipping the power balance in favour of Muscovy and Poland-Lithuania and exposing the Khanate to numerous raids by the Muscovites as well as by the irregular Cossack units which inhabited the Ukrainian steppes and were controlled only very loosely by Poland-Lithuania. All these developments caused a good deal of resentment among the Crimean ruling elites,¹¹¹ and it is more than likely that Kırımî was also voicing

108 Ibid., 96, 116, 186.

109 Ibid., 7.

110 Ibid., 88-89.

111 The mounting tensions had led the Crimean Khan Mehmed II Giray to clash with the Ottoman authorities, and eventually to lose first his post and then his life. The next Khan, İslam Giray, in turn, had had to contend with the threat posed by two sons of Mehmed Giray who had sought refuge in Muscovy, and who periodically attacked the Khanate with the Tatar forces they summoned. On these developments, see D. Kolodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania: International Diplomacy on the European Periphery (15th-18th Century): A Study of Peace Treaties Followed by Annotated Documents* (Leiden and Boston 2011), 105-106.

some of this resentment, when he complained about the neglect of the defences of the Empire's western territories during the Ottoman-Safavid wars.¹¹²

In the late 1580s, however, Ottoman and Crimean interests had begun once more to converge, as both parties blamed Poland-Lithuania for her failure to stop the Cossacks of Dnieper from raiding Ottoman, Crimean, and Moldavian settlements around the Black Sea. In 1587, the Ottomans authorised the Crimeans to organise a punitive raid on the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and even sent a contingent of Janissaries to support them in this effort. However, Islam Giray died unexpectedly before the raid was undertaken, and in 1588, the new Khan, Gazi Giray, extended offers of peace to Cracow in return for overdue "gifts". The tensions were once again stirred up when the expected gifts failed to arrive, and there was talk, for a while, of an Ottoman invasion of Poland-Lithuania. It seems that at this point in time, opinion was also divided at the Ottoman court between those who favoured peaceful relations with the Poles (largely because they prioritised military confrontation elsewhere) and those who wanted, rather, an all-out war against them. A powerful official favouring the former position was Koca Sinan Pasha, while the opposing faction included the new *Beglerbegi* of Rumelia, Saatçi Hasan Pasha, and the influential Jewish dignitary David Passi, who had been playing the role of go-between between the Ottoman and Polish courts. Ultimately, it was Sinan Pasha's clique that had its way, mainly by convincing the Sultan that members of the other faction were in the pay of the Spanish or the Venetians, and were purposefully sabotaging Ottoman-Polish relations behind Murad's back. The disgrace of Passi and the arrival of a diplomatic mission from Cracow with the promised gifts finally sealed the Ottoman peace with Poland in 1591.¹¹³

It seems that Kırımî himself sympathised with the losing faction in this affair. In a letter that he must have written shortly after the arrival of the Polish envoy, the Crimean Sufi expressed relief that the "Polish treasury" (*Leh'in hazinesi*) was finally delivered, and he reported with a touch of disbelief that he had heard rumours that the Poles had promised to send the agreed amounts on a yearly basis thereafter. Even though Kırımî was prudent enough not to go against the prevailing trend at the Ottoman court, he still

112 In fact, Kırımî was already addressing these issues in a letter written in 1580. Specifically, he informed the Sultan about the Cossack raids in the vicinity of Akkirman, Bender, and Özü, and reported that people in Kili and Babaeski were said to be 'in great fear and consternation'. Güven, 'Çeşitli yönleriyle', 162.

113 On the military and diplomatic negotiations between Istanbul, Bahçesaray, and Cracow, see Kolodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate*, 104-109; for a discussion of the complex relations between Cracow, the Polish-Lithuanian nobility, and the Cossacks, see S. Plokhly, *Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine* (Oxford 2001); on the divisions within the Ottoman court on the same issue and the Passi affair, see S. Faroqhi, 'Ein Günstling des osmanischen Sultans Murād III: David Passi', *Der Islam*, 47 (1971), 290-297; E. Özgen, 'The Connected World of Intrigues: the Disgrace of Murad III's Favourite David Passi in 1591', *Leidschrift*, 27 (2012), 75-100; E. S. Gürkan, 'Mediating Boundaries: Mediterranean Go-Betweens and Cross-Confessional Diplomacy in Constantinople, 1560-1600', *Journal of Early Modern History* 19 (2015), 107-128; Sahillioğlu (ed.), *Koca Sinan Paşa'nın telhisleri*, 12-15, 17-18, 64, 82-83, 90-91, 182-183, 205, 258-260.

urged the Sultan not to tolerate similar insolence from these “infidels” in the future. If the Poles are remiss in paying their tribute again, he advised, then the Ottomans should go and simply conquer their lands. To whet Murad’s appetite for such a venture, Kırımî portrayed Poland-Lithuania as a weak power, and downplayed the distance that separated this country from the Ottoman capital, claiming that “it would take no more than ten days to go from here to Poland, if only the Black Sea were land”.¹¹⁴

Kırımî likewise followed the Ottoman negotiations with Muscovy very closely. In a letter he wrote in Muharrem 1001/October-November 1592, he told the Sultan that he had heard of the arrival of the Muscovite ambassador in Istanbul. He added that if the Muscovites should ask for the renewal of peaceful relations with the Ottomans, a deal could be struck with them so that the Muscovites could get to keep the fortress they had built over the Terek river, but give Astrakhan (Han in the text) and Kazan in return. Muscovy should also promise not to build a fortress over the Kuban river. However, even in the event of such a truce, the Sultan would do well to watch the Muscovites carefully, Kırımî cautioned, as the latter were known for their deceit and as they had close to 10,000 soldiers with rifles in the fortress on the Terek river alone.¹¹⁵

It could be argued that Kırımî advised Murad to offer to the Muscovite ambassador terms of peace that served Crimean more than Ottoman interests. The Terek fortress, which the Sufi sheikh was willing to leave in Muscovite hands, was in the North Caucasus and thus much closer to the Ottoman sphere of operation than both Kazan and Astrakhan, which he wanted “back”. In fact, it had been the Muscovite construction of the Terek fortress that had first alarmed the Ottomans about Muscovy’s expansion to the south, but clearly, by 1592, Muscovite control of this fortress was firmly established, and the issue was now simply to prevent the Muscovites from building further fortresses in the region.

Kazan and Astrakhan, which Murad was supposed to demand from Muscovy, were important former centres of the Golden Horde, whose capture by Moscow in the mid sixteenth century had been a major blow to the Girays, undermining their claims of succession to the Golden Horde, while bestowing on the Grand Duchy of Muscovy a new imperial prestige and aura. Even though Kazan and Astrakhan lay far beyond the Ottomans’ conventional areas of operation, between 1567 and 1569 the latter had also briefly toyed with the idea of evicting the Muscovites from Astrakhan by digging a channel between the Don and the Volga and using it to transfer the Ottoman ships and heavy guns up north. Yet the plan had come to nothing, in part because of logistical difficulties and in part because the Crimeans had failed to render the Ottomans their full support, probably because they had not wanted their powerful Ottoman overlords to extend their rule and influence over lands that they regarded as their own patrimony.¹¹⁶ In any case, after the failure of

114 Güven, ‘Çeşitli yönleriyle’, 62-63; also see *ibid.*, 186.

115 *Ibid.*, 11.

116 H. İnalçık, ‘The Origins of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry and the Don-Volga Canal (1569)’, *Annales de l’Université d’Ankara*, 1 (1946-1947), 47-110; A. N. Kurat, ‘The Turkish Expedition to Astrakhan in 1569 and the Problem of the Don-Volga Canal’, *Slavonic and East European Review*, 40 (1961), 7-23; A. A. Novoselskiy, *XVII. yüzyılın birinci yarısında Moskova*

this project, the Ottomans had lost pretty much all interest in the issue, and it is unlikely that their interest would have been revived at a time when they were turning their attention from their eastern frontiers to the west, and preparing for a new campaign against the Habsburgs. On the other hand, around the time that Kırımî wrote his letter, Gazi II Giray was threatening Muscovy with an Ottoman invasion of Astrakhan to strengthen his hand in negotiations. In this context, it is quite possible that Kırımî gave Murad the advice that he did not because he actually expected the Ottomans to go to war over Kazan and Astrakhan, but because he thought that the renewal of Ottoman demands as to these two important lands would help the Crimean Khan's negotiations with Moscow.

Having discussed at some length Kırımî's views on Ottoman policies towards the Empire's non-Sunni Muslim subjects as well as towards non-Sunni and non-Muslim neighbouring states, it might be appropriate to round off this discussion by considering what the Crimean Sufi had to say on Ottoman policies towards the non-Muslim, specifically Jewish and Christian, communities which lived under Ottoman rule. This is a question of considerable significance, since the second half of the sixteenth century also witnessed the beginning of a long process within the Empire whereby the confessional boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims would become progressively hardened. Until now, scholars have tried to account for this process in a number of different ways. Some have stressed the toll that the growing social, political and economic tensions and intensified inter-elite conflicts took on intercommunal relations, while others have put the emphasis instead on the growing weight of shar'î norms among the Ottoman ruling elites as well as ordinary Muslim subjects, leading them to reject the earlier accommodationist policies in favour of policies that would institutionalise the subordinate position of Jews and Christians under the legal category of *dhimmi*hood. Of course, the two explanatory frameworks do not actually exclude each other. In fact, several scholars have pointed out that both religious and pragmatic considerations impacted the policies of the Ottoman state, and that the state authorities actually engaged in a complex process in the intercommunal conflicts that flared up, going along with the Islamising demands when and where it suited them, but restraining them at other times to safeguard intercommunal peace and public order.¹¹⁷ Interestingly, nevertheless, scholarship has tended to present a more monochrome picture as far as the so-called 'non-state' actors and especially religious figures are concerned. In some of the recent studies, the latter have been portrayed almost exclusively as agents of Islamisation rather than as complex actors with complex material as well as ideological considerations.¹¹⁸

devletin Tatarlarla mücadelesi, translated into Turkish by K. Ortaylı, ed. E. Afyonlu and İ. Kamalov (Ankara 2011), 1-42; M. Khodarkovsky, 'The Non-Christian Peoples on the Muscovite Frontiers' in M. Perrie (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Russia*, Vol. 1: *From Early Rus' to 1689*, (Cambridge 2002), esp. 317-327; Kolodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate*, 90-111.

117 For nuanced discussions of the roles played by Ottoman state officials in cases of intercommunal conflict, see R. Gradeva, 'Apostasy in Rumeli in the Middle of the Sixteenth Century', *Arabic Historical Review for Ottoman Studies*, 22 (2000), 29-73; Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, esp. 143-164.

118 This is especially evident in the growing literature on the Kadızadeli movement of the seven-

Kırımî's letters indicate the need to introduce greater nuance and complexity into our analyses of even the most confessionally-minded religious actors. Remarkably, even though the letters are suffused with a rhetoric of religious antagonism towards "heretics" and "infidels", this rhetoric is not deployed against the Christians and Jews living under Ottoman rule. The only statement in Kırımî's letters that could be construed as showing Islamic zeal against the Empire's Christian subjects would be his celebration of the conversion of the Pammakaristos Church into a mosque circa 1590.¹¹⁹ This was actually one of several instances in which churches were converted into mosques in this period, but it carried particular significance as the Pammakaristos Church had served as the seat of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate for about a century and a half prior to its conversion. It has been argued that the conversion of Pammakaristos was "driven by two factors: the search for imperial prestige in an age of diminished opportunities and the increasing difficulty of building in Istanbul".¹²⁰ Indeed, it was the rather modest Ottoman gains in Georgia against the Safavids that had provided the Ottomans with the pretext to seize the Pammakaristos and rename it the Fethiye (Conquest) Mosque in commemoration. In his comments on the incident, Kırımî himself emphasised the prestige that the conversion of the church conferred on Murad personally, arguing that it had been an act of divine grace (*inayet-i ilâhiyye*) that the Church of Pammakaristos had come intact down to Murad's time, allowing the latter to enjoy the unique honour of conquering this building for Islam. Unlike other sharia-minded commentators who showed an interest in the issue, Kırımî did not, however, urge Murad to convert other churches into mosques. It is true that the royal menagerie he wanted converted into a dervish lodge had once been a Byzantine church, but at the time he was writing, the building had lost its religious significance, or at least function.

If Kırımî displayed a relatively low dose of religious zeal against the local Christians in his letters to Murad, he did not display even that low dose towards the Jews. In fact, even though the Sufi sheikh barely commented on flesh-and-blood Jews in his letters, he often reminded the Sultan of the importance of the Old Testament prophets revered by both Jews and Muslims, and he urged Murad to take good care of the tomb of Abraham in Jerusalem.¹²¹ This neutral, and even positive, treatment of Judaic themes in Kırımî's letters is quite interesting, and demands further analysis. It is possible that as an Akbarian

teenth century. For a particularly monochrome characterisation of the Kadızadeli (and their Ottoman patrons) as diehard agents of Islamisation, see M. D. Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe* (Oxford 2008); for a more recent study which has emphasised the social and economic dynamics behind the movement, see M. Sariyannis, 'The Kadızadeli Movement as a Social and Political Phenomenon: the Rise of a "Mercantile Ethic"?' in A. Anastasopoulos (ed.), *Political Initiatives from the Bottom-Up in the Ottoman Empire (Halcyon Days in Crete VII, A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 9-11 January 2009)* (Rethymno 2012), 263-289.

119 Güven, 'Çeşitli yönleriyle', 167-168.

120 M. Greene, *The Edinburgh History of the Greeks, 1453 to 1768: the Ottoman Empire* (Edinburgh 2015), 65-66.

121 Güven, 'Çeşitli yönleriyle', 7-10, 16-19, 22-25, 26-28, 32, 52, 92-93, 146, 170.

Sufi, Kırımî was simply enacting Ibn Arabi's teaching that each and every Muslim saint would inherit the spiritual legacy of one or more of the earlier prophets; in his case, that of Abraham, with whom he shared his first name.¹²² It is also possible, though difficult to prove, that with this kind of statements the Crimean Sufi was subtly taking a more pro-Jewish position at the Ottoman court. This was, after all, a time when the Jewish dignitaries at the Ottoman court were coming under attacks from both disgruntled *kul* soldiers and some high-level officers. While opponents of Jewish court influence often expressed their objection in religio-legal terms, arguing that it went against the sharia and the Sunna to employ "infidels, and especially Jews" in state service, in reality, a variety of social, political, and economic as well as religious factors fuelled the conflicts. The *kul* soldiers, in particular, targeted the Jewish bankers and female courtiers known as *kiras* because they held the latter to be responsible for the monetary instability of the 1580s and 90s, and particularly, for the 1589 debasement of Ottoman coinage, which had reduced their purchasing power by nearly half. Other attacks on individual Jewish dignitaries were rooted in the incipient factionalism of the period, as was the case with the conflict that pitted Koca Sinan Pasha against David Passi. Considering that several of Kırımî's own patrons, including Safiye Sultan and Ferhad Pasha were aligned with the Jewish dignitaries under attack, it is tempting to think that the Crimean Sufi's sympathies, too, lay with the latter rather than with their Muslim critics.¹²³

Conclusion

Having discussed various facets of the political advice offered by Kırımî to Murad III between the years 1580 and 1593, we can now conclude by considering some of the broader implications of the letters for our understanding of Ottoman court and confessional politics at the turn of the sixteenth century. To begin with, Kırımî's letters have shown us that a Sufi sheikh and preacher who held no administrative office and who is not known to have done so at any point of his life could nevertheless be deeply involved in Ottoman

122 On Ibn Arabi's prophetology, see M. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn Arabi* (Cambridge 1993); for an exploration of the use of Akbarian prophetology by another politically-minded Ottoman Sufi, see D. Terzioğlu, 'Man in the Image of God in the Image of the Times: Sufi Self-Narratives and the Diary of Niyâzi-i Mısrî (1618-94)' *SI*, 94 (2002), 139-165.

123 On the Jewish bankers, merchants, physicians, and *kiras* connected with the Ottoman court, and the challenges they faced during the reign of Murad III, see J. H. Mordtmann, 'Die jüdischen Kira im Serai der Sultane', *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen*, 32 (1929), 1-38; C. Roth, *The House of Nasi: The Duke of Naxos* (Philadelphia 1948), esp. 187-221; S. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews: Late Middle Ages and Era of European Expansion* (New York and Philadelphia 1983 [2nd ed.]), XVIII:122-181; M. Rozen, *A History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul: the Formative Years, 1453-1566* (Leiden and Boston 2010), 197-214; S. A. Skilliter, 'Three Letters from the Ottoman 'Sultana' Sâfiye Sultan to Queen Elizabeth I', in S. M. Stern (ed.), *Documents from Islamic Chanceries* (Cambridge 1965), 119-157.

imperial politics. I have argued that what enabled Kırımî to become a prominent political player was, on the one hand, his proximity to the Sultan as his sheikh and companion, and on the other, his reputation and track record as a sharia-abiding, Sunnitising Sufi. Both of these facets of his identity appear to have served him well in a time when court and confessional politics together constituted much of what we might regard as Ottoman high politics.

While proximity to the Sultan had always been an important asset for those who wanted to participate in the making of Ottoman royal policy, recent scholarship has argued that it became even more crucial in the late sixteenth century. A number of different factors are thought to have contributed to this process, from “the sedentarisation of the Sultanate” to the “destabilisation of the Grand Vizierate” and from the empowerment of the palace aghas and royal favourites to the cessation of the practice of princely governorships (which started slightly later, during the reign of Murad’s son and successor Mehmed III). At the same time, however, it has been argued that this development towards ‘absolutism’ was countered by a powerful ‘constitutionalist’ coalition of religious and military elites, who invoked the *kanun* and the sharia to limit royal authority.¹²⁴ Finally, a number of pioneering studies in Ottoman conceptual history have traced the emergence of a more depersonalised and more institutionalised understanding of the Ottoman state in the writings of Ottoman literati between the late sixteenth and late seventeenth centuries.¹²⁵

While this study has concerned itself with a more micro-level, synchronic analysis of Ottoman imperial politics in the late sixteenth century, some of its findings might also have a bearing on what has been said so far about the transformation of Ottoman political culture during the early modern period. For instance, the letters reveal no evidence that there was anything resembling an ‘absolutist’ versus ‘constitutionalist’ divide in the Ottoman court in this period. In fact, just about every major player in the sixteenth-century Ottoman court can be said to have paid lipservice to the ‘absolute’ power of the Ottoman Sultan, regardless of his or her social and political affiliations and opinions. What is perhaps more crucial to note is that such lip service did not translate into ‘absolute’ power for the Ottoman Sultan. In fact, one could easily say of the Ottoman Sultans in the late sixteenth century what has already been said about the paradigmatically ‘absolutist’ French monarchs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, namely that, in actual practice, the power of these rulers was far from absolute, and depended on the successful management and co-option of diverse power groups within their realms. Along the same lines, the Ottoman royal court, too, was not just a site for the performance of the Ottoman rites of sovereignty and the production of cultural forms representing the power and magnificence of the Ottoman Sultans, but also a political platform where members of the ruling elites vied with one another to ‘influence’ the Ottoman ruler and royal policy. Kırımî himself was no exception. Even as this Sufi courtier eulogised Murad as the “shadow of God on earth” and the “renewer of faith”, he also felt free to inform, advise, and

124 Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*.

125 M. Sariyannis, ‘Ruler and State, State and Society in Ottoman Political Thought’, *THR*, 4 (2013), 83-117.

sometimes gently rebuke the Sultan on a wide variety of religious and political matters, no doubt conveying in the process not just his own thoughts and concerns but also those of his diverse patrons and clients.

While the early modern Ottoman state has been described as a polity with both 'bureaucratic' and 'patrimonial' features, Kırımî's letters point to a political system in which relations of patronage and clientage weighed far more than seemingly impersonal rules and regulations. In letter upon letter, the Sufi sheikh put in a good word for various officials in the military administration, the palace, and the religio-legal establishment with the aim of procuring for them better positions, or more often, to help them preserve their current positions, which was a difficult task given the rapid turnover of officials in this period. It is striking that when Kırımî recommended an official, he often stressed how he was personally indebted to the said official. Clearly, the reciprocity of patron-client relations and the exchange of favours and benefits were such taken-for-granted features of Ottoman court politics that Kırımî did not feel the need to hide his personal interests in recommending this or that official to the Sultan. Of course, in several instances, he also stressed the recommended officials' loyalty to the Sultan and their previous good service, but in general, 'experience' and 'expertise' were not central features of his political discourse, as they arguably were of the political discourse of a number of military administrators and civil bureaucrats in this period.¹²⁶ Neither do we see any references to *kanun* or Ottoman state law and tradition in Kırımî's letters, as we see in the political tracts and histories written by some other members of the Ottoman imperial administration.

It could be argued that Kırımî as the Sultan's sheikh with no administrative position represented the more 'patrimonial' features of the Ottoman political system, while its 'bureaucratic' face was represented by writers who held offices in one of the three principal branches of the state. This is a defensible position, provided that we remember that there were also serious limits to the sixteenth-century Ottoman bureaucratic mentality. As the letters of Kırımî remind us, members of the imperial administration, too, owed their offices in no small part to patron-client relations. Moreover, it remains an open question how much the Ottoman holders of administrative offices internalised principles that we associate with the bureaucratic mindset such as the separation of functions. For instance, Koca Sinan Pasha, who, like Mustafa Âli, argued that the job of preachers was strictly to recite Qur'anic verses and hadiths and not to meddle in 'state affairs', was not averse, when he saw it fit, to advising the Sultan about "his afterlife", or to quoting verses from the Qur'an to get him on his side.¹²⁷

This brings me to the third and last general issue, on which Kırımî's letters shed light: namely, the uses of religion and specifically, Sunni confessionalism, in sixteenth-century Ottoman politics. Until recently, the rise of Sunni confessionalism in the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire was discussed in a largely state-centric framework, as the result

126 On the importance of 'expertise' in early modern European state-building, see E. H. Ash, 'Expertise and the Early Modern State', *Osiris*, 25 (2010), 1-24.

127 Sahillioğlu (ed.), *Koca Sinan Paşa'nın telhisleri*, 12-16.

of state action, taken in response to the Shiitising policies of the rival Safavid dynasty, on the one hand, and to the multiple challenges of ruling a multi-ethnic, multi-religious empire, on the other. As scholars have begun to pay closer attention to the political developments and to the intellectual output of this period, however, a more nuanced picture has begun to emerge of sixteenth-century Ottoman confessionalism.¹²⁸ In a similar vein, this study, too, has been an attempt to bring to the fore both the multiplicity of agents involved in the making of Ottoman Sunnism and the complexity of considerations that informed their positions.

In a sense, Kırımî's letters might seem a peculiar choice for a scholar who wishes to introduce greater complexity to our understanding of sixteenth-century Ottoman confessional politics, since the Crimean writer belonged to a line of Sufis who had lent their active support to the Ottoman Sunnification efforts for about three generations, and since he, too, continued this position in his own lifetime. Add to this the fact that as a preacher in one of the most prestigious royal mosques in Istanbul as well as the Sultan's sheikh, Kırımî would almost certainly have considered himself to be a member of the imperial establishment. For all these reasons, it is not surprising to find a high degree of matching between Kırımî's religious discourse and what is sometimes labelled 'official' religious discourse at this period. In particular, Kırımî's emphasis on the performance of the canonical religious rituals, and especially, the five daily prayers as an indicator of orthodoxy, his synthesis of sharia-abiding Sufism with Sunnism, and his equation of *Kızılbaş* Islam with political treason were in perfect alignment with the dominant religio-political outlook among the Ottoman ruling elites in the last decades of the sixteenth century.

At the same time, however, this study has also revealed that as important as Sunni Islam was for Kırımî as a source of religious *and* political identity, it did not provide him with a ready-made political agenda. In fact, like other political players in this period, Kırımî was quite discriminating, when it came to advising the Ottoman Sultan about specific policies. Certain matters that we associate with the sharia-minded politics of this period – such as calls for banishing Jews and Christians from state service, converting churches into mosques, or imposing sartorial restrictions on non-Muslims – are discussed only marginally, or do not figure at all in Kırımî's letters. While we can only speculate about the social and political connections that might have made the Sufi sheikh less than vigilant on these matters, it is easier to account for the specificities of his foreign policy recommendations. It is quite clear, for instance, that in the early 1590s, Kırımî was much more enthusiastic about a possible Ottoman war against the Poles or the Muscovites than about the possibility of war against the Spanish, the Venetians, or for that matter, even the Safavids. It is quite clear, too, that his preferences had more to do with his desire to protect Crimean territorial interests than a concern for religious glory.

128 For recent notable studies that highlight the complexity of Ottoman religious and political alignments in the early sixteenth century, see Z. Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire: The Politics of Bektashi Shrines in the Classical Age* (Abingdon 2012) and E. Çıpa, *The Making of Selim: Succession, Legitimacy, and Memory in the Early Modern Ottoman World* (Bloomington and Indianapolis 2017).

In fact, Kırımî was not unlike other Ottoman court players with his multiple loyalties and affiliations. Recent research has shown that once in positions of power, Ottoman administrators of *devşirme* background often reactivated their ties to their original families and homelands, and tried to safeguard the interests of their family members and even their original countries without necessarily compromising their service to the Ottoman house. Even though as a freeborn Muslim and a member of the Crimean ruling elite, Kırımî's standing at the Ottoman court must have been different from that of *kul* administrators, his ability to serve *both* Ottoman *and* Crimean political interests is still strongly reminiscent of the endeavours of, say, Gazanfer Ağa or Cigalazade Sinan Pasha to safeguard Venetian interests even while serving the Ottoman house as a loyal Sunni Muslim administrator.

This article has argued that we also have to take into consideration all these personal ties and group loyalties when we examine how confessionalism worked as a political force in the early modern Ottoman Empire. In this regard, one of the important conclusions of this study has been that confessionalism in the sixteenth-century Ottoman context was less the straightforward implementation of religious 'ideology' from the top down, and more the working out of a loose set of religio-political orientations whose formulation (not to mention implementation) was mediated in practice by power relations as well as by personal and group loyalties.