

OTTOMAN BIOGRAPHIES OF POETS, 1538-1610:

GENRE, LITERATI AND EMPIRE

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Genre, Literati and Empire

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ABSTRACT

Ottoman Biographies of Poets, 1538-1610:

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This dissertation examines the earliest Ottoman biographical dictionaries of poets (*tezķiretũ'ş-şu'arās* or shortly *tezķires*). The titles produced between 1538 and 1610, the dissertation argues, constituted a genre formation in its own right. The unique characteristics of this first phase of Ottoman *tezķire* literature are described and analyzed in the context of the era's political developments, elite sociology and cultural sensibilities. It is argued that the genre's unparalleled efflorescence in this period was directly linked with empire-formation and the rise of a new literary language and textual culture on which the administrative, ideological and cultural hegemony of the nascent early modern empire hinged. As the bedrock on which the new literate culture in Turkish rose, in this period Turkish poetry evolved into an independent field of learning and acculturation. It furnished many of the new servants of the state and infused any field of learning, practice and ideology that relied on Turkish. Poetry culture ran exclusively on informal patterns of sociability, with a substantial oral cultural aspect. Nevertheless, these patterns were consistent enough to allow the field to function as a quasi-institution. The *tezķires* further helped reify and institutionalize this informal field of social practice. As such, the texts perfectly reflected the nature of the elites that created this poetry culture: a small and cohesive community of imperial servants clustered around the court, which was relatively weakly stratified and professionalized and which distinguished little between their public and private lives.

ÖZET

Osmanlı Şair Tezkireleri, 1538-1610:

Edebi Tür, Edebiyatçılar ve İmparatorluk

Bu tez Osmanlı şair tezkirelerinin (*tezķiretü's-şu 'arā*) ilk evresini ele almaktadır. Tezin temel iddiası, 1538 ile 1610 arasında üretilen tezkirelerin kendine özgü bir edebi tür oluşturduğudur. Tezde Osmanlı tezkireciliğinin bu ilk aşamasının özgül yönleri betimlenmekte ve dönemin siyasi gelişmeleri, elit sosyolojisi ve kültürel kaygıları bağlamında anlaşılmaya çalışılmaktadır. Tezkirenin bu dönemdeki benzersiz gelişimi, imparatorluğun on altıncı yüzyılda yeni bir gelişim evresine girmesiyle, özellikle de erken modern bir imparatorluğun idari, ideolojik ve kültürel hegemonyasını tesis etmek için muhtaç olduğu yeni bir edebi dil ve yazılı kültürün kuruluşuyla ilişkilendirilmektedir. Yeni yazılı kültürün üzerinde yükseldiği temel olan Türkçe şiir, bu dönemde müstakil bir bilgi ve kültürlenme sahası haline geldi. Devlet hizmetinde çalışacak yeni kadroların yetişmesinde rol oynadı ve Türkçe'ye dayalı her türlü entelektüel, uygulamalı ve ideolojik sahaya nüfuz etti. Dönemin şiir kültürü tamamen enformel sosyalleşme örüntüleri üzerinden yürüyor ve önemli bir sözlü kültürel boyut taşıyordu. Ancak bu örüntülerdeki istikrar sahaya bir kurumsallık veriyordu. Tezkireler de bu enformel sahanın adı konmuş somut bir nesneye dönüşmesine ve kurumsallaşmasına büyük katkıda bulundular. Tezkireler bu şiir kültürünü yaratan elitlerin yapısını mükemmel bir şekilde yansıtıyorlardı: Saray çevresinde kümelenmiş, küçük ve kaynaşmış, kendi içinde görece tabakalaşmamış ve uzmanlaşmamış, kamusal hayatları ile özel hayatları iç içe geçmiş bir imparatorluk hizmetkârları topluluğu.

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Altok, Z. (2022). The 18th-century 'Istanbul tale': Prose tales and beyond. In Ç. Kafescioğlu and S. Hamadeh (Eds.), *A companion to early modern Istanbul* (pp. 581-604). Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022.

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*To my mother Nebiye Altok,
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ABBREVIATIONS

AÇ	Aşık Çelebi (2010). <i>Meşâ 'i'rü's-şu 'arâ</i> (F. Kılıç, Ed.). İstanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü
AHD	Ahdi (2005). <i>Ahdî ve Gülşen-i Şu 'arâsı (inceleme- metin)</i> (S. Solmaz, Ed.). Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi.
HÇ	Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi (1981). <i>Tezkiretü's-şuarâ</i> (İ. Kutluk, Ed.). Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu
LAT	Latifi (2000). <i>Tezkiretü's-şu 'arâ ve tabsıratü'n-nuzamâ (inceleme-metin)</i> (R. Canım, Ed.). Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı)
LAT1	Latifi's first recension, as represented by <i>Tezkiretü's- Şu 'arâ</i> , Kayseri Library, Raşid Efendi, 1160
LAT2	Latifi's final recension, as represented by <i>Tezkiretü's- Şu 'arâ</i> , Nuruosmaniye Library, 3725
MALİ	Mustafa Ali, Gelibolulu, (2024). <i>Künhü'l ahbâr</i> (Vols. 4-5) (S. Donuk, Ed.). İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı
SEH	Sehi Beg (1978). <i>Heşt bihişt: The tezkire by Sehî Beg</i> (G. Kut, Ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University
TDVİA	<i>Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi</i>

NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION, USAGE AND DATES

For the transliteration of Ottoman Turkish names, words and titles, I follow the *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Millî Eğitim Basımevi) system. For the sake of simplicity, I apply this system and Ottoman vocalizations to the few Chagatai Turkish, Azeri/Turkoman and Mamluk Kipchak sources I refer to as well. For Arabic and Persian, I use the IJMES transliteration system, with the exception that in Persian I write the *tā' marbūṭa* endings as *-a*, and not as *-ih*. For non-English terms in common use, I use the Anglicized forms as found in the online Merriam-Webster dictionary (<https://www.merriam-webster.com>). Names of historical personages are not transliterated, but Latinized with vocalizations appropriate to their native tongues and with *ayns* and *hamzas* cleared.

In general, I have used the common English counterparts of Ottoman terms where possible. However, with the most frequently occurring term in this dissertation, *tez̤kiretü'ş-şu'arā* and its short form *tez̤kire* (biographical dictionary of poets, biographies of poets), I have mostly preferred the original term mainly for the sake of economy but also because of the inadequacies of the possible translations, such as the incongruence between the idea of “biography” in modern and/or Western sense and that between the Islamicate “circumstances” notices (*tercüme-i ḥāl*). I use the original term in several other cases for similar reasons, e.g., *naẓīre* and *dīvān*.

As for dates, where a Gregorian year is known for sure I use it. Where only a Hijri year is available for a date, I cite both, first the Hijri and then the Gregorian equivalents, separated by a slash: 1050/1640-41. I am only meticulous about the dates of *tez̤kires* and related literature, main objects of my study. For other historical works and death dates for poets, I follow the Gregorian dates commonly accepted in

scholarship without questioning their correctness or preciseness unless it is important for my discussion.

I normally use the published *tezkiye* editions, but where I do not agree with the editors' readings or textual amendments, I directly quote from the manuscripts. This has been particularly necessary in the case of Latifi's *tezkiye*. Where I refer to Latifi manuscripts, I follow the pagination indicated for these manuscripts in the edition (even if it is not correct) so that readers can easily navigate between the two versions.

In order to avoid a plurality of transliteration styles in quotations from Ottoman sources, I have opted for applying the same *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (MEB) transliteration style in all quotations, including those from published sources, which use a variety of transliteration methods. In converting the published sources' transliterations, I have been careful not to change their readings, including the vocalizations.

All translations from Ottoman Turkish and Persian are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE *TEZKİRE*

This dissertation is a genre history. It comprehends the Ottoman *tezķiretũ'ş-şu 'arās*, or biographical dictionaries of poets known shortly as *tezķires*, produced between 1538 and 1610 as a historically limited genre formation with unique features that reflected and served the era's elite sociology and cultural sensibilities. The existing literary historiography strongly emphasizes, on the one hand, the “influence” of Timurid precursors as the leading factor that motivated the Ottomans to produce *tezķiretũ'ş-şu 'arās* of their own and, on the other hand, the unbroken continuity of the genre into the early twentieth century. Thus, the history of the genre is understood as one long formal textual continuum, hardly connected with the genre's changing historical contexts and social uses over the course of this long period. The goal of this study is to describe the idiosyncratic features of this first phase of Ottoman *tezķire* writing and to account for these in light of the social, political and cultural developments of the era.

This type of a study that attempts a synthesis of a large number of *tezķire* titles and the social, political, and cultural historiography of the period could not have been possible without the accumulation of earlier work on the *tezķires*. Most fundamental are the critical editions, which have felicitously facilitated navigation within and between voluminous texts often written in difficult *inşā* prose. Mustafa İsen has authored an important work of reference that surveys and catalogues the entire Ottoman *tezķire* literature and its manuscript legacy; he is also one of the first

analysts of Ottoman biographical literature on poets.¹ Several scholars have published works that break down the rich material covered in the *tezkires* into thematic chunks and offered discussions of these, which are also helpful as a basis for further studies. Notable among these are Haluk İpekten's study on places of poetic activity in the sixteenth century and Harun Tolasa, Filiz Kılıç and Pervin Çapan's studies on literary critical concepts and terminology in sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century *tezkires* respectively.² Yusuf Çetindağ's comparative study of Arabic, Persian and Turkish biographies of poets is fundamental for understanding Ottoman *tezkires* as part of a bigger tradition.³ As for studies that focus on individual *tezkires*, Walter Andrews's unpublished doctoral dissertation from 1970 continues to be a starting point when approaching Latifi.⁴ Similarly, Niki Gamm's 1976 dissertation on Riyazi's *tezkiye* is still unsurpassed.⁵ The volume devoted to Aşık Çelebi's *Meşā'irü's-şu'arā* edited by Hatice Aynur and Aslı Niyazioğlu brings together multiple viewpoints on this complex text and poses a model for future compilations on other *tezkires*.⁶ These are just some highlights from a vast literature that has been accumulating since E. J. W. Gibb's (d. 1901) *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, which can be read indirectly as the earliest total assessment of the *tezkires*, as they constituted Gibb's primary source.

There are only a few studies that address the broader relevance of the *tezkires* in their historical context. The shared concern of these studies is how the *tezkires*

¹ İsen, *Şair Tezkireleri*; İsen, *Tezkireden Biyografiye*.

² İpekten, *Divan Edebiyatında Edebi Muhitler*; Tolasa, *Sehi, Latifi, Aşık Çelebi Tezkirelerine göre*; Kılıç, *XVII. Yüzyıl Tezkirelerinde Şair ve Eser*; Çapan, *18. y.y. Tezkirelerinde Edebiyat Araştırma ve Tenkidi*.

³ Yusuf Çetindağ, *Şiir ve Tenkit*.

⁴ Andrews, *The Tezkere-i Şu'ara of Latifi*.

⁵ Gamm, "Riyāzī's Tezkire."

⁶ Aynur and Niyazioğlu, *Aşık Çelebi ve Şairler Tezkiresi*.

formulated a literary canon and a set of aesthetic and cultural norms in age of empire formation. Walter Andrews's dissertation on Latifi, mentioned above, can be considered the earliest specimen of this line of thinking. Andrews argued that Latifi's *tezkiye* documented and reacted against "the classicizing transition" that Ottoman poetry was undergoing in the sixteenth century. By this term, he referred to Ottoman poetry's departure from its roots in the ecstatic Sufi experience of mystical love and its evolution into a carefully crafted aesthetic artefact that reflected the empire's grandeur and cultural identity. Two later scholars, Selim Kuru and Sooyong Kim, wrote their seminal works at a time when broader Ottoman historiography had begun to formulate the key achievements of the sixteenth century as a series of "canonizations" in many areas from art and architecture to legal culture, from historical writing to sectarian religion. Their pioneering studies integrated the literary field into the mainstream of Ottoman historiography through the fundamental concept of canonization in an age of empire formation. Sooyong Kim's monograph is also unique in paying attention to the role played by particularly powerful social groups in the shaping of the canon.⁷

My dissertation is built on this rich and multifarious scholarly legacy as well scholarship on Ottoman bureaucratic institutions, education and imperial identity. It starts out from the basic observation that the nine *tezkiye* titles produced between 1538 and 1610 constitutes a distinct period in the genre's history, in terms of both content features and exceptional contemporary popularity. The broadest argument of the dissertation is that the *dīvān* poetry culture of the sixteenth century was a novel development, and that the rise of the *tezkiye* literature and the unique shape in which

⁷ Kuru, "The Literature of Rum"; Kim, *The Last of an Age*.

it emerged were a result of the linguistic, cultural, and social characteristics of this nascent field.

Although the rise of Turkish poetry in the Persianate tradition went back about a hundred years to circa 1400, the decades around the turn of the fifteenth century into the sixteenth marked the beginning of a series of interrelated developments: the rise of what is alternately described as a new register or historical phase of Western Turkish; a new phase of imperial growth; a territorialization of culture and cultural identity accompanying empire formation and the increasing weight of Turkish in Ottoman letters; and the rise of a new, expanded service elite as the carrier of this new literate culture in Turkish.

The conjunction of imperial growth and the rising importance of Turkish took place under conditions of weak institutionalization in both domains. Bureaucratic institutions, which relied partly (the religio-judicial hierarchy) or near-completely (bureaucratic offices) on Turkish, were relatively underdeveloped and not fully capable of reproducing themselves through internal mechanisms of training. At the same time, not only were there no widespread institutional solutions for the mastery of high-register Turkish comparable to the madrasa, but also, by the end of the fifteenth century, Turkish letters were still marred by lack of sophistication and prestige, according to the perception of its practitioners, as well as poor textual circulation.

In the early sixteenth century, imperial growth under conditions of weak bureaucratic and educational institutionalization on the one hand and an underdeveloped Turkish textual culture on the other, pretty suddenly catapulted *dīvān* poetry to a position of immense cultural and political relevance. Over the course of Bayezid II's reign (r. 1481-1512) *dīvān* poetry grew out of its earlier

confinement in the court circles and began to be practiced pervasively among a growing body of military, administrative, and religio-judicial functionaries clustered around the political center as well as other groups socially integrated to the former, like Sufis and professional litterateurs, who provided ideological and cultural services to the empire. Of all other branches of Turkish letters, it was *dīvān* poetry, and especially the ghazel, that achieved the greatest spread because of its unique capacity to thrive in oral and communal settings. In this first great phase of the spread of *dīvān* poetry, poetic practice, including training, composition, transmission and literary critical activity, remained embedded in the face-to-face relations and forums of sociability of the new servants of the empire, which comprised a small, close-knit group that was relatively unstratified and professionally undifferentiated.

Nevertheless, although embedded in informal social relations, the field gained quasi-institutional character through regularized patterns of sociability like the salon (*meclis*), polite conversation (*şoḥbet*), and master-apprentice (*üstād- şākird*) relationships as well patronage. In the sixteenth century, *dīvān* poetry developed into an independent field of learning, social practice, and channel of elite recruitment, complementing *‘ilm* and Sufism, as the third main branch of literate culture. Regularization of the patronage extended to poets and the multiple forms this patronage took, from official appointments to assignment of long-term revenue sources, showed that the vital role *dīvān* poetry played for the empire as the pillar and fountainhead of Turkish literate culture was recognized by the ruling elite. The institutionalization of *dīvān* poetry was completed with the emergence of a literary consciousness preoccupied with delineating the genres, registers, history, geographical span and political character of this newly crystallizing field. This literary consciousness was likewise first developed in the oral-communal realm, but

ultimately monumentalized in the great *tezkiye* literature of the sixteenth century. The emergence of the *tezkiye* literature, as texts that potentially carried poetry culture from its communal home to a broader and anonymous public, ironically, already adumbrated the waning of the early community culture that created the “second formation” of *dīvān* poetry and the coming of a broader, more robust and more heterogeneous domain of Turkish textuality.

1.1 Defining the period of study

The first nine Ottoman Turkish *tezkiyes*⁸ studied in this dissertation had common characteristics that distinguished them from the texts of the later periods. They all relied on a particular configuration of linguistic, political, geographical, chronological and generic parameters that interlocked to shape the works' contents. Briefly, the (long) sixteenth-century *tezkiyes* were all about Turkish-language courtly poetry in the classical Persianate tradition produced in the empire's core Rumi lands over the course of entire Ottoman history but with an emphasis on the recent past and the present. Because they all operated with this same template (with a few partial exceptions to be discussed in the following chapters), their contents largely overlapped.

Linguistically, the early *tezkiyes* were devoted to Turkish poetry and they showed little interest in Persian and Arabic poetry produced by Turkish speakers in Rumi lands. Secondly, sixteenth-century *tezkiyes* delineated their field of interest in strictly political terms and keyed Rumi poetry to the Ottoman polity, beyond any

⁸ Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt* (1538), Latifi's *Tezkiretü 'ş-şu 'arā* (first recension 953/1546-47), Garibi's *Tezkire-i Mecālis-i Şu 'arā-yı Rūm* (circa 1560), Ahdi's *Gülşen-i Şu 'arā* (first rec. 971/1563-64), Aşık Çelebi's *Meşā'irü 'ş-şu 'arā* (957/1568-69), Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi's *Tezkiretü 'ş-şu 'arā* (994/1585-86), Beyani's *Tezkiretü 'ş-şu 'arā* (circa 1597), poets' biographies in Mustafa Ali of Gelibolu's *Künhü'l-aḥbār* (circa 1599), and Riyazi's *Riyāzū 'ş-şu 'arā* (1610).

“civilian” kind of Rumism. This feature markedly distinguishes Ottoman *tezkires* from, for example, the Timurid and Safavid specimens of the genre, which are perfectly open to poetry under other dispensations. Not only did the sixteenth-century *tezkires* invest a lot of energy in “Ottomanizing” important early figures who flourished in other Anatolian principalities in the fifteenth century, but they created, for the first time, a narrative of literary history perfectly aligned with Ottoman dynastic history. Within the vast domains of the sixteenth-century Ottoman empire, however, they focused on the core land of Rum as a geo-cultural unit. As a matter of fact, Ottoman Turkish poetry was practiced in areas other than Rum, mainly by members of the Ottoman officialdom but also by local elites, as evinced for late sixteenth-century Baghdad by Ahdi’s *tezkiye*. The *tezkires*, however, largely ignored these other loci of Ottoman Turkish poetry, no doubt because they were hard to access practically, but more fundamentally because Rumi cultural identity had become the kernel of imperial identity in its sixteenth-century form, creating that outer circle of influence in the first place. At the same time, sixteenth-century Ottomans left behind, even rejected, the legacy of the prior century and a half when Persianate poetry in Old Anatolian Turkish had flourished in a wider portion of the Near East, including Iran, Iraq, Syria and Egypt, with poetry being received irrespective of political borders to the extent they existed. Earlier Rumis had taken great interest in Turkish poetry from these distant lands (e.g., poetry by Hasanoğlu and Nesimi) and vice versa. The sixteenth-century *tezkires*, however, represented a fresh start, a new poetic canon that was the product of an age of territorialization of culture. Place, polity, literary language and poetry overlapped to a degree unprecedented in Ottoman history. Last but not least, the *tezkires* confined themselves to what may be called courtly or worldly poetry, for lack of a better term,

centered around the ghazel and occasional genres including the qasida and the chronogram. The texts categorically left out mystico-religious poetry in the same Persianate tradition and opened up a specifically civic, political, and temporal space for poetry, arguably to a degree unprecedented in Persian literature. This particular constellation of content parameters is seen neither in later *tez̤kires* (see Chapter 6 “Conclusion”) nor in a number of earlier texts that can be characterized as precursors to the Ottoman *tez̤kire* in regard of their preoccupation with representing the realm of Ottoman/Rumi poetry as a whole (see Chapter 2 “Before the Ottoman Imperial *Tez̤kire*”).

Besides being commonly preoccupied with defining the contours of an entire poetic field, the field we call *dīvān* poetry today, the *tez̤kires* under study here also shared an idiosyncratic style of biographical writing that is more or less confined to this period. In fact, there are two main styles, but, as I shall argue, these are manifestations of the same underlying social situation. One style is highly minimalist in giving biographical information but generous in what can be called performative uses of language, mainly praises of the biographee and generic descriptions of his, or rarely, her poetic talent, personality, piety, etc. Another style is highly anecdotal and entertaining, providing novelesque instances of interactions between poets and between poets and patrons. Although it appears to provide relatively more biographical information, this style, too, is neither consistent in the quantity of information it provides nor entirely reliable factually because, similar to the first style, it relies on oral reports and the author’s own memory more than it does on written record, e.g., tombstones for dates of death or government documents for official appointments. In both styles the author is very much present in the text as a participant in the world he is describing and not invisible and anonymous like an

objective encyclopedist. Both styles, I argue, are the product of a situation where the author assumes as his audience a close-knit community that is largely already familiar with the world and people being described. Thus, the amount or quality of biographical information is secondary to the performative functions of the text. However, towards the end of the period studied, these shared features begin to wane and a more objective, fact-based biographical style begins to emerge, although it takes at least a century for this trend to crystallize and dominate the scene.

The *tezki*res of the era not only had characteristic content features and styles but were also exceptionally popular by comparison to the *tezki*res that came later, which calls for an explanation. The era covered in this study by far outweighs later centuries of the early modern era in terms of not only the number of *tezki*re titles produced but also the numbers of near-contemporary manuscript copies. Whereas nine *tezki*res (including Mustafa Ali's biographies of poets embedded in his *Künhü'l-ahbār*) were composed in the long sixteenth century, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries together produced the same number.⁹ More importantly, there is a radical difference between these two periods in the numbers of extant copies. Latifi and Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi are no doubt the greatest stars of sixteenth-century *tezki*re writing. For Latifi's *tezki*re, R. Canım, the editor of the text, lists 71 copies in Turkish libraries and another 20 in world libraries, with the latter figure, apparently, representing only a random selection.¹⁰ Similarly for Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi, İ.

⁹ For a quick overview of Ottoman *tezki*re titles, see İsen, *Şair Tezki*releri though my list for the period after 1610 would be slightly different, as will become evident shortly. İsen's manual also does not mention Garibi's *tezki*re, which was not known at the time the manual was published.

¹⁰ Some well-known collections with copies of Latifi's *tezki*re appear to have not been searched at all in this edition. See LAT, 39-69.

Kutluk, the editor of the text, lists 51 copies in Turkish libraries alone.¹¹ A substantial portion of dated copies in both cases comes from the decades following their composition. In terms of circulation, Aşık Çelebi's *Meşā'irü 'ş-şu 'arā* is overshadowed by these two works (33 copies in Turkish and world libraries),¹² but, nevertheless, not only does it still outdo all of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *tezkires* in number of copies, but also its zone of influence reaches further than what this figure would suggest, since its contents got incorporated into highly influential texts of the following decades such as Hasan Çelebi's *tezkiye* and Mehmed Mecdi Efendi's expanded translation of Taşköprülüzade's *al-Shaqā'iq al-nu'māniyya*. Even Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt*, which is reported by late sixteenth-century writers to be unpopular and "rare," has 18 copies, with at least five from the sixteenth century. The first recension of Ahdi's *tezkiye*, too, is represented by 11 copies, a substantial number given that the work was never considered an essential part of *tezkiye* literature, including by contemporary Ottomans, owing to its author being an Acem.

After Riyazi's *Riyāzü 'ş-şu 'arā* (1610), however, one notices a drastic decline in the *tezkiye* genre, which is partially reversed in the early eighteenth century with the voluminous *tezkires* of Safayi (1132/1719-20) and Salim (1134/1721-22), both of which have around 20 copies in Turkish manuscript libraries.¹³ In fact, it would not be wrong to speak of a seventeenth-century hiatus in the history of the genre. In the more than hundred years between the *tezkiye* of Riyazi and the reawakening of the genre around 1720, there are only three new *tezkiye* titles, those by Rıza (1050/1640-

¹¹ HÇ, 41-68. In the cases of both Latifi and Hasan Çelebi, İsen, *Şair Tezkiireleri* provides more expansive lists of extant manuscripts, but these are not exhaustive of Turkish and world libraries either.

¹² AÇ, 70-89.

¹³ Safayi, *Tezkiye*, 23-24; Salim, *Tezkiye*, 16-22. Written around the same time, Şeyhi's *Vekāyi 'u l-fużalā* (1134/1721-22), a sequel in the *Şakāyık* corpus with at least thirty-nine copies, also includes poets' biographies.

41), Güfti (circa 1660) and Mucib (1122/1710-11), which have only five, four and two copies respectively (in Turkish manuscript libraries); moreover, these are small-scale works incomparable to the sixteenth-century *tezkires* in terms of size and chronological scope, as well as being derivative texts based largely on previous sources (except for Güfti's).¹⁴ Although the difference with the sixteenth century is quite evident, scholars, especially in Turkish academia, have placed so much value in the idea of a smooth continuity in the genre that the post-Riyazi decline has not been properly acknowledged and problematized. In Turkish scholarship, it has become customary to consider Kafzade Faizi's (d. 1622) poetry anthology *Zübdetü'l-eş'ār* and its sequels into the eighteenth century as *tezkires*. This seems to be an artificial modern decision meant to compensate for the gap in *tezkiye* writing as such, justified by the minimal biographical notes, especially death dates, these anthologies include; however, the same categorization is not even considered for late sixteenth-century *naẓīre* anthologies (anthologies of similar poems) with brief biographical captions.¹⁵ I could not locate either an extant manuscript or a near-contemporary source that explicitly refers to Kafzade Faizi's work as a *tezkiye*, except for Şeyhi's *Veķāyi'u'l-fuzalā* (1134/1721-22).¹⁶ The work is almost uniformly referred to as a miscellany of selected poetry (*mecmū'a*, *müntehabāt*, etc.), including by Kafzade's close friend Nevizade Atayi.¹⁷ Moreover, references to previous Ottoman *tezkires* such as found

¹⁴ Zehrimarzade Seyyid Mehmed Rıza, *Tezkiye-i Rızā*; Güfti, *Güfti ve Teşrifâtü's-şu'arâsı*; Mucib, *Tezkiye-i Mucib*.

¹⁵ Zülfe, "Biyografik Bilgiler Açısından"; Ahmet Kemal Gümüş, "Câmi'u'n-Nezâ'ir."

¹⁶ Şeyhi, *Veķāyi'u'l-fuzalā*, 1101. My research in this regard is not exhaustive. I have only checked most extant manuscripts of Faizi's anthology, and this work's mentions in later *tezkires* and in Şeyhi's *Veķāyi*.

¹⁷ *Merhūmuñ dişār-ı hāşşu'l-hāşş-ı āsārındandır ki Zübdetü'l-eş'ār cem' itmişdür. Her şā'irüñ bütün dīvānını ve mecmū'-ı meşneviyâtını görüp vāşıl-ı nişāb-ı belāğat olan ebyātını işbāt eylemişdür. Hakkā ki münakkaḥ mecmū'adur. Arabī ve Fārisī devāvīni daḥı tettebbu' eyleyüp intihāb itmiş idi. Beyāza çıkmadın defter-i ömri temām oldu. Atayi, Hadā'iku'l-hakā'ik, 1648.*

in the laudatory forewords (*taḳrīz*) to Safayi's *tezḳire* do not mention Kafzade's *Zübde* or its sequels; the latest title mentioned in this case is Riyazi's *Riyāzū 'ş-şu 'arā*, and Safayi Efendi himself writes in his introduction that no *tezḳires* were written since 1050/1640-41, with probably Zehrimarzade Rıza's work in mind. While an exploration of the reasons for the seventeenth-century decline of the *tezḳire* genre is beyond the scope of this study, this later era throws into sharp relief the enormous cultural relevance of the genre in the sixteenth century.

Importantly, the biographical dictionary of poets was the first Ottoman group biography to emerge, preceding ulema and Sufi biographies by two decades. Farid al-Din Attar's *Tadhkirat al-awliyā* and its numerous fifteenth-century Turkish translations were highly popular, but this corpus comprised an edifying collection of the deeds and sayings of saints of the distant past from the wider Islamic geography. Other early hagiographies like Ahmed Eflaki's *Manāqib al- 'ārifīn* (1353) on the leading Mevlevi figures and Lamii Çelebi's entries on Rumi Sufis in his expanded translation (1521) of Abd al-Rahman Jami's *Nafahāt al-uns* discussed a small number of important Sufis and cultic figures from likewise former times and were not interested in representing Rumi Sufis as a contemporary social group. The first group biography pertaining to the contemporary Rumi world to emerge in the Ottoman context was on poets. This was Hakim Shah Muhammad Qazvini's added chapter on poets active during Selim I's reign in his translation (929/1522-23) of Ali Shir Navai's *Mecālisü 'n-nefā 'is*. Although many of the poets Qazvini discussed were protégés of the Ottoman court, the chapter comprised Persian émigrés composing in Persian and ignored the domain of contemporary Turkish poetry. In 1538 came Sehi Beg's biographies of poets, *Heşt Bihişt*, the first Ottoman group biography to be devoted exclusively to the Rumi Ottoman context; this was soon followed by Latifi's

Tezkiretü 'ş-şu 'arā (953/1546-47), which immediately became a “best-seller.” Next was Taşköprülüzade's similarly influential *al-Shaqā'iq al-nu 'māniyya* (1558) on Rumi ulema and Sufis, organized according to the reigns of Ottoman sultans. Taşköprülüzade's work started an entire textual tradition with its numerous Turkish translations and sequels that extended into the following centuries. Thus, the *tezkiretü 'ş-şu 'arās*, or poets' biographies, and the *Şakāyık* tradition on the ulema and Sufis became the two main lines of biographical writing in the Ottoman Empire into the modern era, with a particular concentration in the sixteenth century. However, it should be noted that ulema and Sufi biographies were modeled on the Arabic *tabaqāt* and covered only dead scholars and Sufis, with only a mediated relevance to the present day through their constructions of canon, tradition, and ideology. Poets' biographies, on the other hand, were an offshoot of the Persian *tezkiye* tradition and were at least as much preoccupied with the contemporary poetry scene as the literary past and therefore reflected with journalistic immediacy trends that were prevalent at the moment of composition.

Not only did the *tezkiye* emerge as the first group biography in the Ottoman context but also throughout its most popular phase, the long sixteenth century, it inflected other contemporary genres. Foremost among these, arguably, is the *Şakāyık* corpus. *Al-Shaqā'iq al-nu 'māniyya* in its original form found few followers. Soon after its composition, multiple Turkish translations were published. Its sequels, too, came mainly in Turkish, implying that whatever ecumenic considerations Taşköprülüzade might have had in composing his work in Arabic, these were not prioritized by subsequent authors.¹⁸ Following this early shift of the corpus to

¹⁸ *Al-Shaqā'iq* did have Arabic sequels as well (e.g., those by Aşık Çelebi and Munuk Ali bin Bali) though these are fewer than Turkish ones and confined to the sixteenth century.

Turkish, which can be seen as part and parcel of the general rise of Turkish literature in this period, the corpus began to incorporate poetic activities of the ulema and Sufis, with much of the information coming from the *tezkires*. The sequels also began to insert more poetry, in Turkish and Persian, as organic parts of the text, a typical procedure in many prose genres in the sixteenth century. These trends are most evidently seen in Mecdi's expanded translation (1587) and then in Atayi's sequel (1634), but earlier translations, too, incorporate Turkish poetry by the authors to explain or summarize the prose sections, such as Habibi Ahmed's translation from 972/1564-65.¹⁹ Thus, there occurred a “hybridization” in the *Şakāyık* genre with the switch to Turkish and the refashioning of the genre's contents to include Turkish poetry, which were arguably complementary trends since the sixteenth-century realm of Turkish letters as a whole relied largely on poetry as its foundation, as will be shortly discussed.

The inflection of genres by the highly popular *tezkiye* was not confined to the *Şakāyık* corpus. Anthologies of formally similar poems (*naẓīre mecmū'ası*) began to incorporate biographical material. Though this genre from its inception had remarkable similarities with the *tezkiye*—such as covering the field of Rumi poetry as a whole and showing a biographical awareness by giving the full names and titles of poets before poems—substantial biographical captions appeared in the second half of the sixteenth century, likely under the influence of *tezkiye* literature.²⁰

Another case is that of the genre of *fālnāme* or prognostication manual. The Turkish specimens of the genre had a long history in Anatolia that went back to pre-Ottoman times. Most of this literature was translated from Arabic or Persian originals

¹⁹ Mecdî, *Hadâ'iku 'ş-şakâ'ik*; Atayi, *Hadâ'iku 'l-hakâ'ik*; Habibi, *Ed-Devhatü 'l-irfâniyye*.

²⁰ See, for example, Zülfe, “Biyografik Bilgiler Açısından.”

and mainly concerned with the instruction of methods of prognostication, interpretation of omens (e.g., which bird means what), or provided tables and charts that could be utilized in prognostication.²¹ Towards the end of the sixteenth century Kefevi Hüseyin (d. 1601) produced a very localized or Ottomanized version of this genre.²² Unlike a conventional *fālnāme*, his *Rāznāme* (first recension 1585) is a quasi-biographical work which shows Ottoman personages in real-life situations. Kefevi records anecdotes about actual instances of prognostication by poetry including many cases from the contemporary Ottoman world. The protagonists of the anecdotes also include members of Kefevi's own social circle, and some of the prognostications are performed using Turkish *dīvāns* by Ottoman poets, instead of the more conventional Quran or *dīvān* of Hafez. Moreover, the anecdotes involve themes that are commonly depicted in sixteenth-century *tezkires*, such as boy love, wine and drunkenness, and relations with grandees. These factors caused the work to be confused for a *tezkiye* by some researchers before the text was published in a critical edition.²³

A third example of the spread of the influence of the *tezkiye* to other genres would be Talikizade Mehmed Subhi's *Şemā'ilnāme* (1001/1592-93),²⁴ which describes the superior qualities (*ḥāṣṣa*) of the Ottoman dynasty in twenty chapters, such as their adherence to the sharia, their bravery and good health, and the value of Istanbul as a capital city. While some chapters are as short as a couple of pages, the longest chapter, with 35 folios (44a-78b), is the fifth, the one on the dynasty's love of poetry. The chapter gives an account not only of Ottoman sultans' and princes'

²¹ Ertaylan, *Falname*.

²² Kefeli Hüseyin, *Rāznāme*.

²³ Levend, *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, 156.

²⁴ Topkapı Palace Museum Library, III. Ahmed, no. 3592.

activities as versifiers but also of their leading court poets. The chapter contains the kind of material found commonly in *tezkires* such as anecdotes on poets and verses presented in their original historical or apocryphal context of composition, making parts of this chapter read like a *tezkiye*. Some of these accounts have precedents in *tezkires*, but Talikizade has a lot of new material to offer, rendering this an especially valuable source for sixteenth-century poetry studies. This may have to do with Talikizade's lengthy presence at the court, first as scribe and later as official historiographer, as well as his Fenarizade relatives, who for generations had served the Ottoman dynasty. Finally, a very well-known source, the fourth volume of Mustafa Ali's *Künhü'l-ahbār*, is the first history of the Ottoman dynasty that includes regnally organized poets' biographies in addition to the more usual categories of scholars and Sufis.

1.2 The second formation of *dīvān* literature

Thus, the idiosyncratic content features and styles of biographical writing seen in sixteenth-century *tezkires*, on the one hand, and the exceptional popularity and cultural relevance of the genre at this time, on the other, are the objective phenomena that this dissertation departs from and seeks to explain. The overarching idea of the dissertation is that the *tezkires* both reflect and participate as active agents in the “second formation” of the field of *dīvān* poetry over the course of the sixteenth century, and that this second formation was intimately linked with the simultaneous process of empire formation. In other words, the broadest idea informing this study is that the sixteenth century was an age of radical formation in literature and in state-making, in spite of all the scholarly legacy that emphasizes continuity with the

fifteenth century (especially from Mehmed II's reign [r. 1451-1481] onwards) in state "institutions" and in poetic tradition.²⁵

The histories of both *dīvān* poetry and the Ottoman imperial polity indeed go back to the fifteenth century. The rise of *dīvān* poetry is commonly accepted to have taken place in the aftermath of Timur's invasion, under the patronage of internecine Ottoman princes and other Turkoman principalities, and then even more robustly under Murad II (r. 1421-1451). The evolution of the Ottoman polity into an empire and full blossoming of *dīvān* poetry is usually associated with the reign of Mehmed II.²⁶

However, the sixteenth century brought with it an entirely new situation. From Bayezid II's reign (r. 1481-1512) onwards, there is a veritable explosion in the production of *dīvān* poetry and in Turkish letters as a whole. The stark difference between the numbers of Turkish *dīvāns* and other poetry collections (anthologies and miscellanies) that have survived from the two centuries—both titles and their manuscript copies—is a well-known fact. *Dīvān* poetry was now practiced by a much wider social group, mostly servants of a rapidly bureaucratizing state, and no longer confined to the courts as was more or less the case until the late fifteenth century.

The sixteenth century also saw a phenomenal expansion of Turkish literate culture in general, in which poetry played a key role owing to its pervasiveness

²⁵ For a thoughtful article that reflects upon the great cultural and political shift between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the context of *tezkiye* literature and "monumental" sixteenth-century genres that produced meta-literary discourses (namely, *naẓīre* anthologies and exegeses of Persian literary classics), see Kuru, "Anadolu'da Türkçe Edebiyatın Büyük Dönüşümü."

²⁶ It is common in literary histories of the Ottoman Empire to treat 1450-1600 as one block. See, for example, Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry* (6 vols); Halman et al, eds., *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (4 vols); Kuru, "The Literature of Rum." There are, however, other historians who consider the sixteenth century as period in its own right. E.g., Tekin, "Othmanli: Literature" and Kut, "Turkish Literature in Anatolia." For Kut, Selim I's reign marks the beginning of a new era. I argue that that the latter half of Bayezid's reign was a threshold.

across genres and social groups. Many new prose and verse genres were born, one of which was the *tezkiye*, and there were now many titles that attained great circulation within a few decades of their composition, suggesting improved conditions of circulation and transmission.

A key development was the emergence of a new idiom of written Turkish, what came to be called “Ottoman Turkish” in modern parlance. Although a continuation of the fourteenth and fifteenth century’s written idiom, known in historical linguistics as Old Anatolian Turkish (OAT), a new form of written Turkish was consciously cultivated by the intellectuals of the era who began to find the received idiom uncouth and unsophisticated, more precisely, marked by lexical, grammatical and phonetic features that reminded of the rural Turkoman past and the late-comer status of Turkish into Persianate high culture. The new idiom of the sixteenth century was more thoroughly infused with Arabic and Persian lexical and grammatical elements and characterized by a tendency to further aestheticize language use. Yet, although at a greater remove from everyday speech than Old Anatolian Turkish, the new idiom was in fact richer and very heterogeneous. It comprised a diverse array of registers some of which also incorporated elements from urban colloquials, which had now become a source for proudly cultivating a specifically Rumi-flavored imperial language, beyond slavish importation of features from the two Islamicate cosmopolitan languages, Persian and Arabic. Thus Ottoman Turkish, at the hands of expanded cadres of men of letters, developed into a very versatile idiom that lent itself for use in different contexts and genres. As the *tezkiyes* of the era evince, the literati of the era were deeply conscious, and proud, of partaking in an age of linguistic and literary innovation and coming of age.

It is generally accepted in scholarship that the language used in *dīvān* poetry and in government documentation, especially those produced in the chancery, are both parts of Ottoman Turkish and developed in tandem.²⁷ Although a precise description of the nature of the affinity between the two registers is still lacking, it is of paramount significance that the men of letters active in *dīvān* poetry and the secretarial offices not only belonged to the same circles, but there were also many individuals active as poets and secretaries simultaneously (see the discussion on scribe-poets in Chapter 5). This overlap between the domains of poetry and bureaucratic service can be broadened beyond secretaries as such to include all learned servants of the state, most prominently the ulema hierarchy.

Turning to the Ottoman polity in the sixteenth century, a great spectrum of changes in the imperial order and ideology is associated with the long reign of Süleyman, when the first four imperial *tezkires* were composed (also considering Aşık Çelebi's *Meşā'ir*, completed in 957/1568-69). In his "Mahdi and Millennium," Cornell Fleischer mentions the 1555 Peace of Amasya as a threshold after which "the imperial enterprise turned increasingly inward, toward internal regional consolidation"; this peace agreement which entailed the Safavids' and the Ottomans' mutual recognition of their shared border meant that the Ottomans were abandoning their universalist imperialism and accepting a geographically limited political existence.²⁸ Fleischer's geopolitical "inward turn" can serve as a metaphor for the multiple dimensions of the new orientation the empire was taking. It entailed a search for greater hegemonic penetration in the core Rumi lands. The era is associated with the intensification of bureaucratization processes, especially in the

²⁷ Woodhead, "Ottoman Languages"; Darling, "Ottoman Turkish."

²⁸ Fleischer, "Mahdi and Millennium," 50.

second half of Süleyman's reign.²⁹ The boom in the volume of official documentation from the middle decades of the sixteenth century is perhaps the most tangible result of these efforts.³⁰

A concomitant process, that of confessionalization, which took the form of Sunnitization among the Ottomans, was as much about disciplining and controlling Ottoman Rumi Muslims as about antagonizing rival confessional formations, mainly the Shiite Safavids.³¹ Süleyman's era is also known for its canonizing drive in the area of legal culture, where the Sharia and dynastic law were brought into a new reconciliation, the madrasa curriculum crystallized and the proceedings of the religio-legal hierarchy, the ulema, brought under a centrally controlled and rule-bound system to a far greater degree;³² this reorganization of the religio-legal domain was mainly valid for Rum, with more flexible arrangements that accommodated local legal and educational traditions and local ulema continuing in other regions. Although the older "classical age" paradigm tended to think of Ottoman military, bureaucratic and religio-legal institutions to have been built before the sixteenth century in an already mature and stable form once and for all, it was only from around the middle of the sixteenth century that these institutions evolved from

²⁹ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*; Şahin, *Empire and Power*.

³⁰ See, for example, S. Faroqhi's survey of Ottoman archival sources in the third chapter of Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History*, and Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650*, 191. For the early modern development of an "archival consciousness" among the Ottoman elites and Ottoman subjects, see Burak, "In Compliance with the Old Register." For recent innovative approaches to the Ottomans' massive "imperial paper trail" as a mobile medium of governance and negotiation between diverse actors with different perspectives, see Burak, Rothman and Ferguson, "Toward Early Modern Archivality"; and Ferguson, "Unseating 'State' and 'Archive'."

³¹ See "Introduction" by Krstić in Krstić and Terzioğlu, *Entangled Confessionalizations*; Krstić and Terzioğlu, *Historicizing Sunni Islam*; Shafir, "Moral Revolutions"; Terzioğlu "Where 'İlm-i Hāl Meets Catechism." For a succinct and helpful overview of the concomitant processes of bureaucratization, confessionalization and vernacularization in the Turkic Near East, including the Ottomans, see Csirkés, "Chaghatay Oration," 12-21.

³² Imber, *Ebu's-Su'ud*; Burak, *The Second Formation*; Yıldırım, *Osmanlı Medreselerinde Eğitim ve Öğretim*; Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul*; Ahmed and Filipovic, "The Sultan's Syllabus," *Studia Islamica* in 2004 (Volume 98/99, pp. 183-218). Cf. Şen, "The Sultan's Syllabus Revisited."

incremental or nebulous beginnings into more complex, expanded and rule-bound structures.

During Süleyman's reign, these processes of institutionalization, confessionalization and canonization were also accompanied by a cultural inward turn whereby the transregionalist cultural outlooks of the former periods were replaced by an enthusiasm for developing an authentic Rumi identity. The arts and architecture, but especially literature played a key role in the creation of a specifically Rumi/Ottoman culture that could compete with and even excel established cosmopolitan models.³³ In terms of human resources this "inward turn" manifested itself in a transition from an elite culture where transregionally acclaimed learned émigrés occupied an important place to an intellectual life and bureaucratic service near completely at the hands of home-grown scholars and men of letters.³⁴

Poetry was arguably the domain where this turn to more localized forms of culture, religion and political hegemony manifested itself the earliest. As mentioned above, poets' biographies was the first group biography to emerge, decades before ulema and Sufi biographies. Its Timurid formal models aside, the emergence of the genre was made possible by the actual expansion of the poetic field and the achievements—linguistic and stylistic innovations and the phenomenal volume of production—from Bayezid II's reign onwards. This period of fifty years or so prior to the emergence of the *tezkiye* actually forms a chronological block that is at the heart of sixteenth-century *tezkiye* writing, having furnished the first great masters of the new *dīvān* poetry and the rich anecdotal lore about them. The period before circa 1490, on the other hand, seems another world from the perspective of the *tezkiyes*: It

³³ Necipoğlu, "A Kānūn for the State"; Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*; Kim, *The Last of an Age*.

³⁴ Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 215-16.

is not only largely inaccessible biographically and textually, but also the linguistic and literary legacy of this early period was largely rejected by the sixteenth-century Ottomans who wanted to start anew according to what they felt were higher standards.³⁵

In fact, my concept of a second formation of *dīvān* literature in the sixteenth century draws first and foremost on the Ottomans' own perception as reflected in the *tezkires* and other contemporary sources; as I argue extensively in Chapter 3 especially, an overall picture of linguistic, literary, cultural and mnemonic break with the past and self-consciously fresh beginnings emerges. In particular, the sixteenth-century Ottomans saw the new Ottoman Turkish in the making to be a language deeply divorced from the legacy of the past and the poetry they were creating to be not only infinitely better than what came before but also largely independent of it. They salvaged half-heartedly only a few names and/or titles from the fifteenth century, which I argue was motivated less by literary/aesthetic concerns than a political urge to align literary history with dynastic history. Almost no early texts are cited as models for new literature, and pride in the literary achievements of the new Ottomans is widely articulated. The rejection of literature before the fifteenth century is near total and is probably one of the main reasons behind the very poor survival of texts from this early period: The sixteenth-century Ottomans may be largely responsible for the loss of much early literature through their neglect and contempt.

My second source for the idea of a second formation of *dīvān* literature is the theories of vernacularization and vernacular literary orders in world history by

³⁵ For a recent study that focuses on the literary and linguistic developments during the reigns of Mehmed II and Bayezid II and links these developments to empire formation, see Aguirre-Mandujano, *Occasions for Poetry*.

Alexander Beecroft and Sheldon Pollock. Their varying understandings of this literary phenomenon have led me to conceptualize the development of Ottoman Turkish in the sixteenth-century from Old Anatolian Turkish (13th-15th centuries) as a distinct stage of vernacularization, a “second vernacularization.” This is an intermediary, prosthetic term I will use only until I explain the rapport between vernacularization and the second formation of *dīvān* literature because the two phenomena are, at bottom, one and the same thing as shall be seen.

A third source I should mention pertains to the name itself. Originally suggested by Oleg Grabar for post-Mongol Islamic art, the formula has been aptly used recently by Guy Burak in his study on the rise of an official school of law under the direct control of the Ottoman dynasty in the sixteenth century.³⁶ The Ottoman sixteenth century was indeed a time when received traditions in multiple areas were recast in unprecedented frames and infused with predominantly novel features; however, these novel canons, often developed under the auspices of the political center, were as a rule presented in the guise of tradition continued.

Pollock and, partly drawing on Pollock, Beecroft offer typologies of polity-literary field complexes in history.³⁷ Pollock is well-known for his description of the cosmopolitan and vernacular literary-cum-political orders in South Asian history and the transition in between around the beginning of the second millennium. From his South Asian examples, Pollock moves outward to postulate that a similar transition occurred throughout Eurasia over the course of the first half of the second millennium. Pollock’s cosmopolitan order is characterized by imperial polities with

³⁶ Burak, *The Second Formation*.

³⁷ Pollock, *The Language of the Gods*, “Cosmopolitan and Vernacular,” “India in the Vernacular Millennium”, and “The Cosmopolitan Vernacular”; Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature*.

universalist ambitions partaking in supra-imperial literary continuums in prestige languages entirely divorced from location, such as Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and Latin. The vernacular order, on the other hand, entails the regionalization and territorialization of both polity and literary language; for the first time in history, the two become mutually constitutive, with their domains fully overlapping. The new vernaculars are, emphatically, not transcriptions of native speech or oral culture, but written idioms, created by liberally assimilating linguistic, formal and stylistic elements from the cosmopolitan language and literature, with which the nascent vernacular competes as a power language. They are often products of highly learned courtly elites who are already steeped in the cosmopolitan order, but who have decided, politically and culturally, to build and rule over a much smaller local world.

The benefit of Beecroft's discussion of the rise of vernacular "ecologies"—a term he prefers over "order" or "regime"—from within cosmopolitan ones is that he introduces greater historical variety and nuance into Pollock's rather schematic descriptions. Beecroft does not limit vernacularization to Pollock's "vernacular millennium" but identifies several major vernacularization phases throughout history and then generalizes on the types of historical and political contexts in which vernaculars are more or less likely to emerge. He relies on a solid survey of historical cases that range from ancient vernaculars like Hittite and Ugaritic, which emerged against Akkadian and Sumerian, the cosmopolitan languages of the era, to Roman-era vernaculars of Coptic, Armenian and Syriac; and from the breakout of medieval European vernaculars to Japanese, Korean and South Asian examples, which are part of Pollock's vernacular millennium, to conclude that a convergence between political territorialization and vernacularization was not universal or necessary but contingent on a multiplicity of conditions. Neither was the role of the state in initiating or

harnessing vernacularization for its own political agendas uniformly witnessed. The late medieval literarization of Romance languages, commonly epitomized in by the name of Dante, is one clear case where territorialization of language and literature was weak, if at all existent. Beginning around the twelfth century multiple Romance “dialects” began to be literarized; in other words, the dialectal continuum was broken at multiple points to create written idioms that competed with Latin but also with each other, sometimes also merging to create dialectal hybrids in writing. This virtual vernacular breakout took place in an environment of political fragmentation and shifting political and religious borders and did not mirror political agendas in any direct way. Rather, questions of genre and function determined the dialect of choice, a feature that is seen in multiple literary cultures, according to Beecroft. Other historical contexts, however, such as King Alfred’s Wessex, saw coherent vernacularization programs initiated by the political center and keyed to agendas of political hegemony. During King Alfred’s time “[l]anguage and literature, for the first time in Europe, was representable as the monopoly of a particular polity, where the polity in question was also understood as defined at least partly by the language.”³⁸

In sum, Pollock spends a lot more intellectual effort toward understanding the rapport between poetry and polity in vernacular states, primarily because he takes that rapport as a structural given, whereas Beecroft takes this convergence to be historically contingent and seeks to understand diverse cultural and political configurations that can produce vernacular literatures. In my view, the two thinkers together cast a mirror to the history of Western Turkish, in spite of the fact that

³⁸ Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature*, 173.

neither's work offers a model that dovetails the history of vernacularization in Anatolia. Pollock's rigid model does not explain the rise of OAT in the thirteenth century, as has been duly noted,³⁹ but Beecroft's versatile grid can perfectly accommodate it. On the other hand, Pollock's model has very direct similarities to the sixteenth-century Ottoman case and thus offers a rationale for thinking of this period as a "second vernacularization" phase. These thinkers, in short, allow us to reconsider Anatolian/Ottoman vernacularization as an ongoing process with two distinct phases.

For OAT (13th-15th centuries), the first vernacular written idiom to emerge in Oghuzid Turkish, Beecroft's survey of cases of vernacular emergence under conditions of weak political and territorial anchoring opens up a comparative world-historical perspective. His survey of different historical types of vernacularization, moreover, includes direct emergences into literature without precedents in documentary or religious texts, i.e., functional transcriptions of speech, which seems to be the case with OAT. In fact, Andrew Peacock has already objected to Pollock's scenario of literization (transcription of speech for practical purposes, especially administrative records) followed by literarization (emergence of a new literary culture) at royal courts: OAT, by all appearances, emerged directly as a literary language with no documentary precedents and "without any obvious patrons at all."⁴⁰ Sufi and religious literature, rather than courtly and political, is more prominent in the earliest dated OAT corpus. Although OAT shows some key features of a vernacular revolution vis-à-vis a cosmopolitan order that Pollock describes, such as

³⁹ Peacock, *Islam, Literature and Society*, 149-51; Hagen, "Towards a Social Prehistory"; Oktay Uslu, "The Şaṭhiyye of Yūnus Emre," 15.

⁴⁰ Peacock, *Islam, Literature and Society*, 150.

imitation of and competition with the cosmopolitan parent literature, in the OAT period, the spaces of polity and vernacular language did not at all coincide as postulated by Pollock for South Asian “vernacular polities”. The Old Anatolian situation resembled in some ways Beecroft’s panchoric ecology:⁴¹ multiple small-scale polities, comparable to the Greek city states, using the same written idiom (levels of standardization in this idiom is still a matter of debate) and with the same intellectuals moving around among the different courts, although a Panchoric canon and the literary apparatus Beecroft associates with this ecology, such as anthologies and catalogues, appear to be missing. Indeed, as a post-cosmopolitan language, OAT’s similarity with the panchoric ecology is only formal and not historical: A situation of relative literary and cultural unity coupled with intense political fragmentation. Moreover, the domain of OAT was not confined to Rum, but was spread across different Near Eastern courts and other contexts outside Rum, behaving like a small-scale cosmopolitan language, although it is not clear whether non-native speakers of Turkish ever adopted it as a language of literary composition, a main criterion for cosmopolitan status. This overall picture of OAT is very different not only from Pollock’s superimposed “vernacular polities” and vernacular literary spaces, but also from vernacularization in Latinate Europe as described by

⁴¹ A panchoric ecology (see Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature*, chapter 2), an ecology without contact with a cosmopolitan idiom, is made up of small polities with a shared native language and culture and an awareness of their own cultural unity. A typical example, according to Beecroft, is the Panhellenic civilization of archaic and classical Greece. Panchoric ecologies imagine their literature, language and culture to be the sum of a series of local (“epichoric”) members; therefore catalogues, anthologies and genealogies are important literary devices, a famous example being Homer’s “catalogue of ships,” and Homeric epics’ very language which incorporate elements from different Greek dialects. However, in reality, there is no authentic desire to preserve the local from the perspective of the Panhellenic canon-makers: “What gets understood as ‘local’ in the presence of a panchoric culture is often a fiction of the local, a generic element in a set rather than a genuinely autonomous tradition” (p. 65). Indeed, Panchoric constructs obliterate traces of the authentically local.

Beecroft where there was a swarm of weakly territorialized Latinate vernaculars competing and breeding with each other.⁴²

For Ottoman Turkish (16th-20th centuries), however, which Beecroft somewhat unfortunately glosses over as a cosmopolitan language, Pollock's frame of vernacularization seems to offer interesting parallels. It is not customary to speak of the sixteenth-century rise of Ottoman Turkish as a phase of vernacularization since it was already preceded by two hundred years of OAT and it is, linguistically speaking, an evolved form of OAT. Yet, I believe there are grounds for describing the sixteenth century as a vernacularization moment in its own right, rather than as simply a maturation of earlier trends. First of all, the contemporary Ottomans themselves saw this as a new phase, as discussed above.

Put bluntly, the sixteenth-century Ottomans saw the vernacularization of the 13th-15th centuries as a failed venture that needed to be renewed according to higher standards, including a more thorough infusion of cosmopolitan languages into Ottoman Turkish. In more objective terms, it is the sheer expansion in the scope of literary production in Ottoman Turkish that justifies describing the sixteenth century as a second vernacularization. Not only did the volume of textual production expand phenomenally, as attested by the difference in the number of extant manuscripts, titles, and authors associated with the fifteenth century versus the sixteenth, but also most cosmopolitan genres were invaded by Turkish in addition to entirely new genres emerging directly in Turkish. The space that Turkish literature occupied in the sixteenth century, in terms of both generic scope and physical circulation, was nowhere nearly comparable to the fifteenth-century situation.

⁴² Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature*, chapter 4.

The sixteenth century displays all of the three features that Pollock associates with vernacularization. Chief among these is a complete identification of literature with the polity, spatially as well as ideologically. According to Pollock, this manifested itself in the emergence of literary representations of literary-cultural space, which often overlapped with political space. Pollock calls this emergence of the geocultural sphere of literature as an object of literary representation “literary territorialization.”⁴³ *Tezkires* are perhaps among texts in any literary culture that, in Pollock’s words, most explicitly “plac[e] literary culture in the world,” in this case the Rumi world, by “plotting out its specific geocultural sphere.” These texts are virtually obsessed with documenting Rumi locales down to the smallest town or village and projecting an image of a consolidated, homogenized Rum, politically and culturally (Chapter 3). A similar trend can be seen in other types of Ottoman biographical and historical literature that emerged at this time as well as in poetry itself.⁴⁴

The second major feature is intensive appropriation of elements of the cosmopolitan language(s)—an ongoing process for Ottoman Turkish over the course of the sixteenth century—and localization of cosmopolitan genres. In Pollock’s examples, localization of cosmopolitan epic traditions occupies an important place and a similar example can be cited from the Ottoman context, the rise of the official post of *Şehnāmeçi*, in addition to a host of shorter military narratives (*ğazavātnāme*) formally modeled on Ferdowsi’s *Shahnāma*.⁴⁵ Pollock also notes that a profound self-consciousness about writing in a vernacular as opposed to an established

⁴³ Pollock, “India in the Vernacular Millennium,” 49.

⁴⁴ See, for example, the “city thrillers” (*şehrengīz*) and descriptive-laudatory city poems written for most Rumi cities over the course of the sixteenth century.

⁴⁵ Woodhead, “An Experiment in Official Historiography”; Tezcan, “The Politics of Early Modern Ottoman Historiography”; Fetvacı, “The Office of Ottoman Court Historian.”

cosmopolitan language accompanies these efforts of appropriation.⁴⁶ This feature is also common in the OAT period (e.g., Aşık Paşa's famous apology on writing in Turkish), but in the Ottoman Turkish period it takes a new form. As noted above, concerted efforts towards assimilation of cosmopolitan models took the form of reassimilation with new linguistic and stylistic criteria. Moreover, no longer apologetic in tone, sixteenth-century Ottomans introduced an additional layer into Ottoman Turkish poetry and prose, elements from urban colloquials so as to cultivate a specifically Rumi-flavored imperial language. This feature is not witnessed in Pollock's South Asian vernaculars, which seem to imitate the cosmopolitan language wholesale without worrying about constructing an authentic local cultural and linguistic identity. As such, the Ottoman sixteenth century represents a mature phase of vernacularization and a more complex relationship between local and cosmopolitan identities.

And finally, the third feature Pollock argues was seen across first millennium vernacularizations is the key role of royal courts in patronizing and executing vernacularization programs. Only partially valid for OAT, especially in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, this feature is fundamental in the Ottoman Turkish period. The new language and literature developed at the hands of none other than the members of expanded the military, administrative and religio-legal servants of a rapidly bureaucratizing state, and under the direct and intensive patronage of the dynasty and the political elites (Chapter 5). Parallel developments in the language of official documents and of literature were an immediate result of this convergence.

⁴⁶ Pollock, "India in the Vernacular Millennium," 49.

Of course, the Ottoman empire was not a territorially limited “vernacular polity” like the South Asian regional states that Pollock drew his theory from. It was an expanding empire with a universalist ideology, which is a category Pollock associates with the cosmopolitan order. Nevertheless, Ottoman Turkish never became cosmopolitanized like Latin or Chinese, other languages with empires behind them, and continued to behave like a vernacular, at least as far as literature is concerned. During the Ottoman period, local and community languages, spoken and literary, continued to thrive both within Rum and on the peripheries, although intermediary or hybrid forms that were the results of cultural and political negotiations with the political center did emerge⁴⁷ and interactions with the state took place increasingly in Turkish. Instead of being cosmopolitanized, Ottoman Turkish as a literary language remained very strongly territorialized in Rum, with its use in Rum becoming intensified to unprecedented degrees. Its use outside Rum simultaneously declined, with the Azeri written language, which also descended from OAT, beginning to develop in a separate direction under the Safavid polity and other courts, like the Mamluk, that showed interest in texts in Old Anatolian Turkish going extinct. Thus, Rum emerged as the core region of the empire that gave it its cultural identity, which arguably constituted the hard core that evolved into a national literary ecology in the era of the modern nation state.

Nevertheless, Pollock’s insistence on the significance of the overlap between the vernacular literary field and vernacular political territory can help us reflect upon the special type of hegemony that the Ottoman Empire sought to establish in its core lands as versus its periphery, in parallel fashion to Pollock’s relatively small South

⁴⁷ One excellent recent study on Ottoman Serbian texts in Arabic is Mišević, “Writing Slavic.”

Asian regional states. The processes of political and cultural territorialization and centralization, bureaucratization, and confessionalization occurred in the most penetrating fashion in Rum, while the conquered lands outside Rum remained more dependent on local arrangements and local elites, and wide border zones remained contested by rival powers. Rum was also the homeland of the Ottoman elites, the main source of the empire's human resources.

The vagueness with which Pollock often describes this significance of the overlap between the domains of poetry and polity shows that the theory still needs development; often, he contents himself with pointing out the developments in the same direction taking place simultaneously in literary culture and polity, without exploring the causality involved: In Sri Lanka, for example, political unification and appearance in literature of localized versions of cosmopolitan epics and mirrors for princes, of grammatical and poetic treatises, and of literary descriptions of the country *coincided*. Pollock, however, does raise some specific points beyond concurrencies. He points out that “the most significant representations of a society's self-understanding and a polity's power” are couched in literary form.⁴⁸ Secondly, he emphasizes that choosing a literary language implies entering or summoning into existence a sociotextual community.⁴⁹

In the sixteenth-century Ottoman case (as versus the earlier OAT) this sociotextual community was directly linked to the political center, the expanded military, administrative, judicial and scholarly servants of a bureaucratizing empire. Hence the literature they created had conspicuous political overtones. Pollock also points out that programmatic imitation and assimilation of cosmopolitan models

⁴⁸ Pollock, “India in the Vernacular Millennium,” 41.

⁴⁹ Pollock, “India in the Vernacular Millennium,” 46.

result in a unification and homogenization of the vernacular, which can in turn be deployed in new projects of territorialization.⁵⁰

How are the sixteenth century's "second vernacularization" and "second formation of *divān* poetry" related? It should be reemphasized at this point that for Pollock and Beecroft, vernacularization has nothing to do with the entry of prewritten natural colloquials—also known as vernaculars—into the domain of writing. The "vernacular" language they talk about is a new artificial written idiom heavily infused by the cosmopolitan language it contends with, although it may have its origins in a local dialect. Ottoman Turkish, too, is a literary language and not a spoken tongue, although it had a complex relation with the colloquials, even blending into the latter in its certain lower registers, unlike Pollock's "cosmopolitan vernaculars" which were entirely and self-consciously distinct from natural speech. In this paradigm, therefore, it is often redundant to talk about vernacular "language and literature" because vernaculars in this sense emerge only as literature; vernacularization and literature formation are one and the same thing. In the Ottoman case, this is signaled even more clearly by the absence of a feature that both Beecroft and Pollock highlight as an essential part of vernacularizations: the appearance of grammars and dictionaries. In the Ottoman case, this did not happen, at least in the sixteenth century, indicating an especially weak abstraction of language from literature. Also given the absence of schooling in Ottoman Turkish, it was mainly the practice of short-form poetry, the most pervasive or "universal" form of sixteenth-century written culture, that fulfilled all the basic pedagogical functions that were

⁵⁰ Pollock, "India in the Vernacular Millennium," 41.

relatively more individuated in other cultures and carried the rest of the literary structure on its shoulders.

1.3 Poetry as the “third way”

This dissertation, at bottom, is an effort to flesh out the idea of a second formation of *dīvān* literature since it was this formation process, I argue, that preoccupied the *tezki*res and gave them their immense contemporary relevance. A common concept that has been deployed in scholarship to describe some of the procedures involved in this field formation has been “canonization.” While useful as a way of talking about the new aesthetic norms that arose in the sixteenth century and became explicitly formulated in *tezki*res and other media, the concept of “canon” cannot address the multiple aspects of the rise of a new literature and, by extension, of the *tezki*re corpus: A literature does not consist of a collection of texts and their hierarchy, but is also a social field of practice. Moreover, the very idea of canon implies a retrospective streamlining or reorganization of a tradition and, as such, tends less to perceive acts of innovation and break with the past than authoritative reevaluation, appropriation and codification. Over the course of the dissertation, I will instead use the concept of “field formation” and break down the conceptual, physical (circulatory) and socio-political layers that interlocked to comprise *dīvān* poetry in the sixteenth century (see the section “Tiers of Analysis” below).

My analytical framework allows me to also talk about canonization, but in a way that permits exploration of historical variations in notions of canonicity that often remain inaccessible because of the imprint of modern literary canons in scholarly perspectives that singly focus on canonic lists of poets. Instead of “field,” other similar terms have been commonly used in scholarship to describe literary

traditions as a whole, such as “system,” “regime,” “order,” and “ecology.” These terms, however, have often been deployed in typologizing world literatures, whereas I have no such intent and want simply to focus on the internal workings of a particular historical case. Moreover, these terms are highly abstract and imply a closed unit of analysis, as if literature exists in isolation from other types of discourse and social practice. I prefer “field” because of the spatial metaphor it involves. “Field” is both more physical and open-ended or fluid around the borders. It can be imagined as neighboring or overlapping with other fields of knowledge and practice. It therefore allows us to consider the intellectual and social roles that go beyond the “literary” as such, whatever limited, and possibly essentialist and modern, definition of the “literary” we might have in mind. It is in my opinion more suited to historical, as versus literary typological, analysis as it sits closer to the level of actual social practice.

Rather than thinking of *dīvān* poetry as an exclusively literary-aesthetic field at the margins of the political world, related to the latter simply as recipient of patronage, this dissertation comprehends *dīvān* poetry as the pillar on which the new, pervasive Turkish literate culture of the empire rose, beginning in the sixteenth century and arguably continuing until the very end of the empire in the twentieth. The key role played by Turkish literature in Ottoman state-making is explained by the simple yet often overlooked fact that although the state had to rely on a very complex spectrum of vernacular functions, both spoken and written, there was no formalized schooling in Turkish and fields of knowledge associated with it, comparable to the Arabic-based madrasa. From the composition of official documents and legal texts, to political propaganda and creation of hegemonic discourses in fields such as historiography, ethics, and Sufi/religious piety; from

sociability among the ruling elite to communication with the populace through ceremonies, rituals and entertainment, state power hinged on a sophisticated, imperially-inflected register or dialect of Turkish that increasingly distinguished itself from forms of common speech and attained remarkable orthographical and lexical standardization simply through practice.

Just as there was no formal vernacular schooling, there were also no meta-literary pedagogical tools in Turkish such as dictionaries and grammars, as already noted. There is, moreover, no evidence that, in the sixteenth century at least, governmental offices, like the various secretarial branches, offered vernacular education outside task-based professional training. Nor were these offices ever entirely capable of self-reproducing. That they continued long after the oft-cited Süleymanic bureaucratization to rely on the informal yet recognized *bildung* or *paedeia* acquired through literary practice is epitomized by Mustafa Ali's late sixteenth-century formulation that the imperial chancellor should be chosen “from among the ulema or the *münşîs* (writers of rhymed artistic prose).”⁵¹ Towards the end of the empire, Namık Kemal (1840-88) pointed out the same reality when he complained that because there are no direct pedagogical resources for acquiring active literacy in Ottoman Turkish such as grammars, dictionaries and style manuals as found in European countries—Kemal seems to take the absence of schools for granted at this historical point—anyone who wanted to compose a text worthy of reading, government functionaries especially, had to study and practice literature; therefore it was only through reforming literature that the language of the government could be modernized to become more accessible to the people.⁵² This

⁵¹ Mustafa Ali, *Menşei’l-inşâ*, 128, 141.

⁵² Namık Kemal, “Lisan-ı Osmanînin edebiyatı Hakkında.”

model of literature-embedded acquisition of active literacy, i.e., a notion of literacy in which the capacity to compose high-quality texts and all the acculturation and learning required for it is inherent, also applied to Persian in the Ottoman context: There was practically no study of the language outside and independent of literary studies; that is why one of the most common forms of teaching the language was writing exegeses (*şerh*) of Persian literary classics like Sadi's *Gulistān* and *Būstān*. Literature-embedded literacy is also seen in many premodern cultures with elite literacy such as Imperial China, known for its examinations for entry into civil service, which included demonstration of literary skill, including poetry, and knowledge of literary and philosophical classics.

I argue that in tandem with the rise of Ottoman Turkish as a power language, *dīvān* poetry emerged in the sixteenth century as an independent and quasi-institutional intellectual field comparable to the Arabic-based *‘ilm* (religious sciences) and Sufism, which drew on all of the “three languages” (*elsine-i selāse*), constituting a “third way.” No doubt there are significant overlaps between these three language-based fields of learning. Poetry's theoretical aspects must have been nurtured, at least for some, by the rhetorical studies at the Arabic-based madrasa. Sufi learning was strongly associated with the Persian language and literature, and, unsurprisingly, many Sufis practiced Turkish *dīvān* poetry either exclusively or in addition to Sufi poetry. Nevertheless, the rise of poetry as an independent intellectual field is signaled by several interrelated phenomena. Throughout the sixteenth century the practice of Turkish poetry became increasingly independent from the study and composition of Persian literature. Contrary to a frequently repeated idea that Ottoman poets had to compose in Persian as well as in Turkish in order to be taken

seriously,⁵³ there were very few poets who compiled Persian *dīvāns* in the sixteenth century,⁵⁴ and the most celebrated poets of the era like Zati, Figani, Revani and Hayali left behind little to no Persian poetry.

There were also, uniquely in this period, illiterate (*ümmî*) poets as mentioned above. Even if some of these so-called illiterate poets might have had some form of elementary literacy, it was widely accepted that poetry could be learned by the ear and composed extemporaneously without recourse to pen and paper. The poetic culture of the era developed forms of socialization that would allow aspiring poets to train themselves without studying in the madrasa, possessing a good command of Persian, or, evidently, even basic Turkish literacy.

Master-apprentice (*üstād-şākird*) relationships were definitely common among poets as in a wide array of other practices, from scribal arts to astrology and medicine; a well-known example is the illustrious late sixteenth-century poet-scholar Baki's early mentoring by Zati, a man with no formal education. Participation in particularly literarily inclined Sufi circles like the Mevlevîs or Gülşenis would have worked like an education. Private tutoring must have played a role in this area as it did in many others, especially for sons of grandees. However, participation in forms of sociability around poetry was by far the most widespread and inclusive channel of training in poetry. It has recently been argued that the ulema dominated the field of poetry from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards and, based on their madrasa learning, enforced higher standards of linguistic and stylistic refinement that led to the exclusion of unlearned poets like the shopkeeping geomancer Zati and the

⁵³ E.g., Kafadar, "A Rome of One's Own," 15.

⁵⁴ Kuru, "The Literature of Rum," 560. Kuru notes that if a poet did compose in Persian, this would commonly be in the form of a few isolated couplets placed at the end of his Turkish *dīvān*. Ahmet Kartal identifies only 23 *dīvāns* composed in Rum between the eleventh and seventeenth centuries, some of which were by Acem émigrés; Kartal, "Şiraz'dan İstanbul'a," 15-195.

illiterate poets, mentioned above.⁵⁵ However, as the very case of Zati mentoring the madrasa-student Baki shows, the body of knowledge and linguistic skills required for Turkish poetry had nothing to do with the Arabic-based madrasa, except for some theoretical knowledge, which was not seen as particularly necessary in a context where poetry mainly proceeded through socially embedded practice. Rather, in order to become competent poets, scholars, too, had to partake in the same informal patterns of sociability that any other aspiring poet turned to. Moreover, given that some of the most learned and highly placed members of the ulema or the bureaucracy composed in the exact same poetic styles and registers as the more modest profiles, it is highly doubtful that even these high-caliber madrasa graduates' skills in poetry came from their madrasa education. The way the *Şakāyık* corpus shifted to Turkish soon after its appearance and began to incorporate the Turkish poetic activities of the ulema is one strong indication of the new prestige and independent rise of Turkish literature and its socially most pervasive basis, poetry. In other words, this looks more like a “vernacularization” of the Ottoman ulema and not as the ulema's disciplinary intervention in an unregulated poetry scene through their scholastic erudition as has been claimed.⁵⁶ In no period was madrasa education or any other formal kind of learning—as would be available, for example, in the Palace School or at the secretarial offices with their internal professional training protocols—was considered a technical or social prerequisite for success in poetry. Like Persian, but unlike Arabic, the acquisition of Ottoman Turkish was entirely

⁵⁵ Kim, *The Last of an Age*.

⁵⁶ Kim, *The Last of an Age*.

dependent on *meşk*-style⁵⁷ informal practices in loosely designated frameworks, which had nevertheless gained quasi-institutional stability through repeated practice.

The emergence of Turkish *dīvān* poetry as an independent field of knowledge—i.e., not parasitic on madrasa learning, Sufism or Persian studies—and its institutionalization in comparable fashion to the ulema hierarchy and Sufi brotherhoods are also evident in the poets' relations with the state. The sixteenth century stands out in the entire history of Ottoman poetry with unparalleled levels of patronage extended to poets. In fact, most studies on poetic patronage in the Ottoman Empire give nearly all of their examples from the sixteenth century, especially the earlier part, albeit without problematizing this chronological concentration.⁵⁸ Rather than an incidental concentration of particularly artistic-minded patrons, this period feature is better understood as systemic: It suggests that the ruling elite of the era intuitively grasped poetry's infrastructural role in the development of Turkish letters, the significance of Turkish letters in establishing a more profound imperial hegemony, and that their generation was living through a formative period of empire and literature. Moreover, direct bonuses were not the only way poetry was remunerated in this period. Some individuals with modest social, educational and/or professional backgrounds obtained official appointments, especially scribal positions, through displaying their poetic talent, and many young madrasa students reportedly quitted their studies “to seek a career in poetry,” probably with such broader scribal career opportunities in mind, in addition to direct rewards they must have expected to flow given the economy around poetry at the time. This phenomenon, concentrated

⁵⁷ The term *meşk* is most commonly used in Ottoman music and calligraphy and refers to training through repeated practice under the guidance of a master as versus theoretical learning.

⁵⁸ See, for example, İnalçık, *Şair ve Patron*. İnalçık, *Has-bağçede 'Aş u Tarab* discusses one late sixteenth-century text and snippets from the “Tulip Era” poetic culture, but the bulk of the work is similarly devoted to the early period.

in the early sixteenth century, once again attests to the fact that poetry was seen as an independent track of learning and acculturation that could lead to entry into state service. That government service and financial resources of the state were open to poets also suggests that other, relatively more institutionalized tracks of learning and upper mobility were, at this historical moment, not capable of supplying the human resources required by a rapidly expanding state apparatus, which must have been recognized by members of the ruling elite who appointed poets to various scribal or administrative posts (Chapter 5 “Poets and Ottoman Officialdom”).

Perhaps the most concrete manifestation of the rise of poetry as a socio-intellectual field in its own right was the appearance of *tezkiye* literature. As underlined above, *tezkiyes* were the first group biography to emerge in the Ottoman context. Their appearance reified “Rumi poets” and “Rumi poetry” and made them objects of critical and historical discourse arguably for the first time in history. After some sparse early references (see Chapter 3), both “poets” as a professional/artistic group and “poets of Rum” as a geo-cultural and political category definitively emerge with the appearance of the first *tezkiye* in Ottoman Turkish, Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt* (1538). The composition of the first *tezkiye* by 1538 is no doubt first and foremost due to an increase in the sheer numbers of poets from the reign of Bayezid onwards. However, it also implies consolidation of group identity and a form of institutionalization. In fact, the genre of biographical dictionary has often been associated with the institutionalization of particular professional or religious groups, either as a result and record of this process or as an institutionalizing agent in its own right in the absence of more durable objective institutional structures. The emergence of Ottoman ulema and Sufi biographies, namely the corpus made up of *al-Shaqā'iq al-nu'māniyya* (1558) and its numerous Turkish translations and sequels, has aptly

been viewed as a consequence of the Ottoman institutionalization of the ulema as a religio-bureaucratic hierarchy and the cooptation of Sufis into the imperial project.⁵⁹ Along similar lines, the decline of the ulema biographies genre in the eighteenth century and the concomitant rise of grand viziers' and their civilian bureaucrats' biographies has been interpreted as a manifestation of the actual change in the weight of these groups in the make-up of the political center.⁶⁰ Scholarship on Arabic and Persian biographical dictionaries has also emphasized the intimate connection between the emergence of a professional, religious, intellectual or crafts group identity with some claim to social and/or political power and the appearance of corresponding biographical dictionaries. For example, Michael Cooperson has discussed how various professional groups and competing religious traditions in medieval Arab society expressed their claims to knowledge and authority mainly in the form of biographical dictionaries that delineated chains of transmission leading back to the Prophet Muhammad.⁶¹ In a similar vein, Wadad al-Qadi associates the rise of Arabic biographical dictionaries of religious scholars with the rise of a “group consciousness” among scholars following the affair of the *miḥna* (beg. 218/833), the Islamic inquisition against scholars who did not accept the caliph al-Ma‘mūn's official doctrine of the “created Quran.” Although scholarly knowledge resided in the individual and not in an institution, the moment of the scholars' alienation from the state made them perceive their shared field of activity as a “quasi-institutional” totality that lends itself to historicization like any other institution. The biographical dictionary, which is based on the individual, emerged as an ideal medium for

⁵⁹ Hagen, “The Order of Knowledge”, 445-46; Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul*, chapter 2; Anooshahr, “Writing, Speech, and History.”

⁶⁰ Tezcan, “Politics of Early Modern Historiography,” 192-93.

⁶¹ Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*.

creating an alternative history of the ulema and the Islamic society distinct from the history of the state as couched in the genre of the political chronicle.⁶² Michael Chamberlain, in a similar vein, sees biographical dictionaries of the ulema written in late medieval Damascus as the true “archives” of a city from which little government documentation has survived. The distribution of the extant sources reveals, according to Chamberlain, the true locus of power: It was not in formal institutions like the government, the bureaucracy or the madrasa that power resided but in the elite household and its highly personalized complex relations with the rest of society. For these households, controlling religious knowledge and madrasa appointments was a way of establishing authority that could then translate into social, political or economic power. Accordingly, biographical dictionaries that documented their personal histories, social bonds and rivalries emerged as the main type of source to survive.⁶³

Ottoman poets were not a power group like the medieval Damascene elite households or carriers of an age-old tradition that had fluctuating relations with the state like Ottoman Sufis; nor were they even a distinct professional group like the Ottoman ulema. A great majority of the sixteenth-century Ottoman poets were already part of different sectors of the state apparatus: qadis and muftis, secretaries and scribes, janissaries and cavalry, mosque personnel and waqf administrators; professional poets, i.e., individuals who made a living mainly out of poetry, were not many, although this track, too, was particularly open in the early sixteenth century. Nevertheless, the diffuse character of the field and its deep entanglement with other

⁶² Al-Qadi, “Biographical Dictionaries.”

⁶³ Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*.

fields of knowledge and social practice should not preclude us from perceiving a structure with its own social networks and forms of sociability, economy of remuneration from state resources, and pathways of elite recruitment as well as a self-consciousness as expressed in the *tezkires*. The social and professional diffusion of poetry was reflected in its textual diffusion as embedded in most other genres, in addition to the pervasiveness of *dīvāns* and other types of poetry collections; a prose writer who did not also compose poetry was a very rare creature in the sixteenth century. For this reason, *tezkires* are also the primary sources for the biographies of the greatest prose (*inşā*) stylists of the era. This is also true for a number of other disciplines that similarly relied largely on Turkish: Sixteenth-century *tezkires* provide ample information on musicians, especially songwriters, physicians, astrologers and geomancers, and on historical writing, advice literature and ethical writings. In this formative era, in the absence of formal educational institutions, Turkish *dīvān* poetry—along with the social structures surrounding it—provided the lifeblood that sustained the broader ecosystem of Turkish literate culture.

1.4 Tiers of analysis

Before moving on to my chapter outlines, I would like to explain the underlying grids of thought that inform my discussion throughout but are not directly reflected in my chapter divisions. The first of these is my “tiers of analysis,” which refers to the three layers that comprise my notion of the “field” of *dīvān* poetry. This is an analytical abstraction of a complex reality and therefore, at times, my discussion might have implications for more than one tier. Nevertheless, it provides a guideline for both me and the readers for the main themes that I explore.

After “tiers of analysis,” I outline “axes of change.” Unlike the static analytical categories, this template summarizes the main trajectories of historical change, i.e., the narrative that my dissertation builds. The period under study here, 1538-1610, including accounts of what came before and after, is not a frozen moment in history. It begins as one world and ends up as quite another. While the dissertation is heavy on the first part of this period (ending with Aşık Çelebi’s *Meşā’ir* of 957/1568-69), which saw the composition of entirely original *tezkires*, the second part, during which summaries of previous *tezkiye* literature were produced with some added contemporary material, is mostly treated as a whole to point out general trends that represent changes from the first period.

A third guiding clarification I need to make involves the frequent shifts in my object of discussion. Although the dissertation is a history of the *tezkiye* genre, I often talk about *dīvān* literature itself, for which the *tezkires* can only be one source among a plethora of others. Thus, a shift between levels of discourse frequently occurs, as has been the case with this introduction. This may seem unwarranted but is inevitable because the *tezkires* themselves are, in my view, motivated by and preoccupied with the formation of the field, as I have already formulated above. Their perspective is holistic (the whole of Rum, the entire Ottoman literary history, and the placement of the new *dīvān* poetry within a cosmopolitan order and vis-à-vis other local Rumi traditions such as folk and Sufi poetries) and imbued with a sense of mission, that of consolidating a field in the making. One sign of the consummation of this formative period will be the demise of the holistic *tezkiye* and its close kin, the comprehensive *naẓīre* anthology, and the rise of new, partial representations of the poetic field, by locale, profession or Sufi community (Chapter 6 “Conclusion”). I, therefore, proceed with the working assumption that the *tezkires*, especially when

considered together, faithfully reflect developments in the broader world of letters around them, as programmatic texts that are devoted to representing and contributing to a bigger cultural project and as formulators of community-based ideas of literary canon and biographical knowledge (Chapter 4 “A Community Culture”). My knowledge of the other sources of the period, though inevitably limited, has not led me to suspect the existence of substantial currents outside the “mainstream” expressed in the *tezkires*, which goes to show the hegemonic position of the literary order that was being instituted in the sixteenth century. One exception to this pattern might be the lingering presence, both in more marginal milieus like the ghazi warlord courts and within the *tezkire* literature itself, conceptions of courtly and Sufi poetries as part of single continuum, an approach largely abandoned by the Ottoman mainstream which comprehends “worldly” poetry as a distinct field not in need of a religio-mystical justification (Chapters 2 and 3). Further studies that might discover smaller and more marginal literary field formations, hypothetical nether regions of the field of *dīvān* poetry, would require delving into other types of sources such as miscellanies, which remain largely untapped.

Turning to my tiers of analysis, the first and the fundamental tier involves the drawing of the conceptual boundaries of *dīvān* poetry as a field, and a definition of its relations with coexistent traditions: What genres and linguistic registers comprised *dīvān* poetry in the sixteenth century? What contemporary traditions were carefully and self-consciously separated from the field? What is the historical span of the field? What is its geographical extent and its conceptual relation with polity? The configuration underlying the *tezkires*, a ghazel-centered, temporal artistic field in Rum under the tutelage of the Ottoman dynasty and in Ottoman Turkish, was, I argue, a historical field definition that crystallized only around the beginning of the

sixteenth century (Chapters 2 and 3) and was modified in certain respects in the following centuries (Chapter 6 “Conclusion”). These developments were reflected in *tezkiye* literature throughout the different periods.

The second tier of my analytical model addresses the physical literary space made up of actual circulation and transmission pathways. Besides the sheer difference in the volume of textual production in Turkish between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, I point out examples that strongly suggest that as late as the first half of the sixteenth century Rum was far from being an integrated and homogenous circulatory space, which, in Sheldon Pollock’s model, is a key requirement for vernacular polities seeking to achieve political territorialization as well as cultural and ideological hegemony over a delineated region. In premodern societies there is often a gap between images or concepts of geo-cultural territory on the one hand and the material reality of connectivity at any historical moment on the other. *Tezkires*, for example, powerfully project the idea of a united and homogenized Rumi cultural and political space, but the idea in all likelihood ran ahead of reality. An analysis of this gap can show us how these two types of spatial organization, one cognitive and the other physical, interact and mutually influence one another, leading to changes in the long run. I argue that *tezkiyes*’ representations of relatively isolated local poetic milieus of Rum helped improve circulation by rendering them visible all at once to a broader public. The gradual rapprochement between concepts of space and actual circulation over the course of the sixteenth century, in which *tezkiyes* played a seminal role, I argue, contributed to the bureaucratic, ideological, and cultural hegemony of the emergent early modern state of the sixteenth century.

The third tier, the social practice of poetry, is perhaps the most complex because it comprises patterns of socialization, training, and transmission on the one

hand and relations with officialdom, including patronage, remuneration, and ideological engagement on the other. The key idea here is a diffuse and informal type of institutionalization embedded in social practice. Though poetry, and the entire Turkish literate culture it formed the basis of, lacked designated educational institutions, like the madrasa or Sufi brotherhoods, or pedagogical tools, like dictionaries and grammars, a culture of sociability around poetry (*meclis*, *şoḥbet* and other forms of social interaction such as the cultures of response poetry and of lampoon and eulogy), personal relations like master-apprentice relationships, and the *tezḳire* genre itself, functioned as quasi-institutions that gave the practice of poetry a regularity and order that was recognized as such by the participants. In the sixteenth century, it became possible, for the first time in history, to speak of poets and poetry as a reified group and field of practice respectively. This new field and its practitioners were also recognized by the state as a human resources pool deployable in state service, both administratively and ideologically. I show that poetry became a channel in its own right of entry into state service at this time, an age of bureaucratic expansion under conditions of a dearth of literate and learned men in Turkish and fields of knowledge associated with Turkish such as scribal arts. Most poets, however, were already employed in state service in diverse capacities—as jurists and madrasa professors, soldiers, secretaries, and scribes—and were accordingly remunerated from state resources in the form of salaries, fiefs, right to extract fees.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Strictly speaking, the salaries of madrasa professors came from waqfs, but their access to their posts, like the qadis', was through centralized and state-controlled mechanisms of appointment. Moreover, as A. Atçıl discusses at some length, the central government actively sought to impinge on the autonomy of the waqfs, and through procedures like systematic surveys, "acquired the ability to develop strategies to overcome the limitations outlined in the endowment deeds and to incorporate many professorships into the official career tracks" in addition to establishing control over surplus income of the endowments. Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans*, 155-61. For the remuneration of qadis mainly through the fees they collect in return for court services, see Aykan and Ergene, "Shari'a Courts," 215-18; Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans*, 99-100, 162-66.

Others were Sufis and men of letters ideologically aligned with the empire, remunerated through waqf economy controlled by the dynasty and the grandees, or direct bonuses.

The “system” of poetic patronage in this period followed a logic that shows that the field of poetry was thoroughly integrated into the bigger system of elite recruitment and remuneration that applied to the entire Ottoman officialdom. It was widely believed that success in poetry qualified an individual to a *manşib*, an official post, and where new *manşibs* or promotions for those already employed were not available or not preferred by the individual for any reason, it was only then that direct bonuses were considered applicable as compensation. That the phenomenon of individuals entering state service through poetry alone and of widespread allocation of direct bonuses were near-exclusively seen in the sixteenth century, especially the earlier part, indicates that this was a time of rigorous elite recruitment and expansion in Ottoman officialdom and that informal, non-institutional pathways played as much role as formal institutional ones.

The socio-intellectual complex formed by the interlocking of these three tiers comprises the field of *dīvān* poetry or any other poetic tradition for that matter. *Dīvān* poetry as we know it today was a historical formation that was born in the sixteenth century and that continued to evolve in the following periods. The sixteenth-century *tezkiye* was a result of this historical field formation, both reflecting the process and actively contributing to it.

1.5 Axes of change

The first axis of change that I present an account of is the formation of the field. I begin with the moment before *dīvān* literature as such and the *tezkiye* were born and I

survey early texts that attest to multiple different conceptualizations of Rum and Rumi poetry. I show the absence of a single hegemonic discourse on what constitutes Rumi poetry in the decades around the turn of the fifteenth century, which throws into sharp relief the emergence of the *tezḳire* and novel constellation of the field it rests on. The new discourse on *dīvān* poetry drew former conceptualizations to extinction. Throughout the period under study, this discourse stays more or less stable. I note, however, in Chapter 6 “Conclusion,” some of the later developments that point to shifts in the configuration that emerged in the sixteenth century.

A second axis of change concerns the make-up of the elites that created the *tezḳires*. The *tezḳire* grew out of a small cultural-cum-bureaucratic elite clustered around the political center in the decades surrounding the turn of the fifteenth century, that is, several decades before the *tezḳire* was born. This new elite could be described as the product of the first major wave of elite recruitment from the local Rumi context to meet the human resources needs of an expanding vernacular empire. Early *tezḳires* depict an elite relatively undifferentiated professionally. Multitasking and “career” switches are common. There are also many individuals with no clear and continuous professional life; these can take on official duties occasionally, but otherwise live off of waqfs as Sufis, the monetary gifts they receive for their poetry, and the shops they open at the marketplace. The professions of the early poets are highly varied, and all levels of officialdom are well represented, implying a less strictly stratified elite, with the social and physical distance between different levels remaining relatively small, connected as they are in the same networks of patronage and sociability. This was a non-contentious, culturally and ideologically homogenous elite that relied on close personal relations and an oral culture. These face-to-face relations constituted the cornerstone not only of their cultural life, including poetry,

but also their functionality as members of Ottoman officialdom. As such, for decades they did not need *tezkires* although poetic activity in Turkish was intense.

The rise of the first *tezkires* around the middle of the sixteenth century already suggests a growth out of this first phase of face-to-face relations. The very rise of the *tezkiye* genre, which offered reified representations of the elite's everyday activities, implies the evolution of this small, personally connected community increasingly towards an imagined community that was growing too big to be contained in personal relations alone. By the last quarter of the century, however, it can be clearly observed in *tezkiye* literature that the culturally homogenous and non-contentious community of the early and mid-sixteenth century, to whom we owe all the amusing and witty anecdotes that the earliest *tezkires* teem with, was breaking down. Signs of professionalization and increased stratification between the upper and lower tiers appear. The professional and social variety of the early *tezkires* decreases, with new entries mostly given to relatively highly-stationed members of Ottoman officialdom. Lower social profiles like the *ehl-i cihet* and artisans disappear entirely. Parallel to this development is the decline of direct monetary gifts extended to poets. Both of these developments suggest that the early sixteenth-century situation of lavish patronage coupled with undefined career lines and relative weakness of intra-elite hierarchies was an effect of the rapid expansion of the elite under conditions of weak bureaucratic institutionalization. As Ottoman officialdom became more expansive, institutionalized and capable of self-reproducing, some of the gateways of recruitment from below, like poetry, closed flexible remuneration closed gave way to more regularized forms.

A third axis of change is the shift from a literary culture marked strongly by orality to one dominated by textuality. This trend is seen in both the poetry culture of

the period—language, styles and transmission patterns—and in biographical writing. The poetry of the early sixteenth century was relatively “easy,” i.e., closer to patterns of everyday speech and based on a relatively limited vocabulary and set of tropes as analyzed by Walter Andrews.⁶⁵ This type of poetry was easily assimilable by the ear, which led to the uniquely early sixteenth-century phenomenon of “illiterate” *dīvān* poets. Accordingly, forms of sociability played key roles in both training and transmission. This linguistic and stylistic topography, I argue, was perfectly conducive to constant elite recruitment from below. The later sixteenth century saw the emergence of more “bookish” styles with complex vocabulary and syntax at a much greater remove from the colloquial registers; these depended to a far greater degree on writing for both composition and transmission. Soon after the period studied in this dissertation, these trends would be taken to an extreme with the emergence of the so-called “Indian style.” Biographical writing, too, saw a departure from the early styles that harmoniously wedded urban colloquials with rhymed artistic prose (*inṣā*) and the appearance of erudite styles that self-consciously excluded any colloquialisms and made highly ornate, bookish *inṣā* its norm. It also lost much of its early anecdotal aspects that drew on oral culture. These developments in poetry and prose writing paralleled the late sixteenth-century social elitism of *tezkiye* writing. Whereas earlier *tezkiye*s were motivated to holistically include as many *dīvān* poets as possible, even “bad” poets, to portray the totality “Rumi poetry,” works composed from the end of the sixteenth century onwards manifested a new kind of selectivity based on aesthetic criteria.

⁶⁵ Andrews, *Poetry's Voice*.

In a nutshell, the *tezkiye* of the sixteenth century mirrored and participated as an active agent in a number of deep-seated social, cultural and political transitions that took place in the Ottoman Empire in this period. The genre emerged out of the initial wave of expansion of the domain of Turkish letters that began in Bayezid II's reign and that gradually supplanted the transregional or ecumenic literary topographies of the former era. Its rise partook in the bigger trend of codification and canonization of the Rumi and Ottoman way of doing things in many areas from legal culture and creation of a Sunni confessional identity to arts and architecture.

Although it emerged out of a world of orality and culture of face-to-face sociability, it contributed to the development of a wider, more integrated and more anonymous space of textuality. It reflected the earliest phase of the onset of bureaucratization and the many informal arrangements that this phase involved including the exceptional role given to poets and poetry. It is a genre, in other words, that accompanied and contributed to the waning of the conditions that initially gave rise to it. Although *tezkiye* writing continued until the demise of the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century, it did not have another "golden age."

1.6 Chapter outlines

Chapter 2, titled "Before the Ottoman Imperial *Tezkiye*," portrays the historical moment before the rise of the *tezkiye* literature so that *tezkiyes'* delineation of the field of *dīvān* poetry is put into perspective and its historical contingency highlighted. The chapter focuses on three texts on Rumi poetry, which have two overarching characteristics that differentiate them from imperial *tezkiyes*. They all attach Rumi poetry to transregional continuums, unlike the Rum- and Ottoman-centric imperial *tezkiyes*; and they display an absence of a strict separation between

the domains of Sufi and courtly or temporal poetries that is characteristic of the Ottoman imperial *tezki*res. The first text discussed in this chapter is Hakim Shah Muhammad Qazvini's *Hasht Bihisht* (929/1522-23), a significantly expanded Persian translation of Ali Shir Navai's Chagatai-language *Mecālisü 'n-nefā'is* (897/1491-92), which incorporates the first *tezki*re composed in Rum on poetry culture in Rum, but only covers the domain of Persian poetry. The second is the former Ottoman subject Garibi's miscellany presented to Shah Tahmasb (r. 1524-1576), which includes a *tezki*re of Rumi poets that portrays well-known Ottoman poets as devotees of Ali b. Abu Talib and potentially sympathetic to the Safavid cause; the miscellany is slightly later in date (ca. 1560) but partakes of the transregionalist cultural ethos and political ideologies that characterized the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The chapter finally discusses Hacı Kemal of Eğirdir's *Cāmi 'ü'n-nezā'ir* (1512), a massive anthology of Rumi poetry past and present; while this text adumbrates the Rumism of the imperial *tezki*re, it also marks a different literary regime with its sympathy to older layers of Old Anatolian Turkish literature and its harmonious combination of Sufi and courtly traditions, both of which were to be rejected by the *tezki*re literature.

Thus, these three main texts of Chapter 2, and a host of others mentioned briefly to sketch the broader context of the pre-*tezki*re era, serve to throw into relief the historical moment that created the *tezki*re literature and reveal why the first phase of *tezki*re literature was so preoccupied with delineating contours of an emergent field as a whole.

Chapter 3, "Imperial Integration: The Rise of the Ottoman *Tezki*re and the Formation of the Field of *Dīvān* Poetry," is devoted to the delineation of the new field of Ottoman *dīvān* poetry. While *tezki*res are the main texts in which formulations of the new parameters of the field are expressed, the analysis is

complemented with “similar poetry” anthologies (*naẓīre mecmū‘ası*), which I see as a close relative of the *tezkiye* genre. The first three sections of this long chapter are devoted to the spatial aspects of the constitution of the field of *dīvān* poetry. Through much of these three sections, I simultaneously look at spatial dimensions of tier one, the abstract template of what goes in and what stays outside the field, and of tier two, the physical pathways of circulation and transmission, primarily because it is very difficult, and ultimately not useful, to engage in separate discussions of imagined and actual spaces as these mutually constitute one another. I emphasize how the scale of poetic field has now shrunk from transregional continuums to Rum. I argue that the *tezkiyes* and *naẓīre* anthologies not only dissociate Ottoman-Rumi poetry from the broader traditions it branched off from (the Persian and the Turkic) but also make a deliberate effort to unify and homogenize Rum from within, connecting local pockets of poetic activity to one another to create, partly fictionally, a whole. I engage in a discussion of the levels of circulatory integration and efficiency as of the early sixteenth century and argue that Rum as textual space may have been far more poorly integrated at this stage than assumed. I speculate that the representational tour de force of the *tezkiyes* and *naẓīre* anthologies of a united Rum must have contributed significantly to the integration of circulation networks by making pockets of local poetic activity visible to one another for the first time in history. I wrap up the first three subsections on spatial matters by proposing that Ottoman political territorialization would not have been complete without its literary counterpart, the rise and consolidation of *dīvān* literature, understood here as the pillar of Ottoman Turkish literate culture.

In the final two sections of Chapter 3, I analyze two other key parameters of the new definition of *dīvān* poetry, again part of tier one: the birth of a literary

historical discourse, which created a chronologically integrated narrative echoing dynastic history, and the relatively strict separation of Sufi poetry from the domain of temporal poetry. I argue that Ottoman literary-historical consciousness arose, paradoxically, under conditions of a multi-faceted break with the past. Virtually no authentic biographical memory had survived from the period before Bayezid's reign. Similarly, textual transmission from beyond the same threshold was limited. But, most importantly, the literature of the past was largely rejected on linguistic and stylistic grounds. At the same time, however, there was a strong ideological drive to construct the semblance of a literary history that aligned with dynastic history. This paradoxical situation resulted in a "pseudo-history" of Ottoman poetry, with a very selective appropriation of poets of the past and creation of apocryphal anecdotes that were built on nothing other than the poets' verses. Many of these anecdotes, moreover, were geared towards the Ottomanization of early poets associated formerly with multiple Anatolian principalities. This section offers a detailed analysis of this pseudo-historical anecdote corpus as well as other pseudo-historical constructs, such as the association of each relatively well-known early poet with an Ottoman sultan as his "court poet."

The final section of Chapter 3 continues the discussion I began in Chapter 2 on two distinct hermeneutics of poetry current in the early sixteenth-century context, one that accepts a harmony or continuity between courtly and Sufi poetries and/or imposes Sufi hermeneutic on *all* poetry and another that opens up a legitimate space for temporal poetry. I argue here that the Ottomans took a markedly temporalizing course and dissociated *dīvān* poetry from Sufi poetry, defining the two as two different kinds of discourse. I mainly discuss Aşık Çelebi's lengthy preface (*faşl-ı evvel*) to his *tezkiye* and highlight his liberal and humanizing approach to poetry, to

the degree that even Sufis and ulema are confidently invited in. Against Aşık Çelebi's eloquent defense of worldly poetry, which represents the Ottoman mainstream, I place Latifi's approach, which remains loyal at heart to the principle that all poetry should express Sufi meanings but concedes that this view does not have much currency in the Ottoman context. I finally speculate on the possible connection between this Ottoman attitude, which may represent a divergence from the dominant trends in the broader Persianate poetic ecumene, and the process of Ottoman Sunnitization in the context of the Kizilbash and Safavid question. I suggest that the Ottoman political center's increasing control over the domain of religion and Sufism was one key factor that opened up a free space for temporal discourses in poetry.

Chapters 4 and 5 are dedicated to poetry as social practice, my tier 3. Chapter 4 "A Community Culture," focuses on the oral culture of the elites as the background that shaped both the poets' biographies and the poetry of the sixteenth century. The first of the two main divisions of the chapter analyzes sixteenth-century styles of biographical writing on poets as the product of a close-knit community of poets and poet-functionaries clustered around the political center. The argument of this first part is that most of the contents and unique features sixteenth-century *tezkires* can be accounted for with reference to the informal but quasi-institutional forums of sociability, the *meclis* and the *şoḥbet*. Hence the title of 4.1, "Biographical style: The sixteenth-century *tezkiye* as *meclis* transcript." This approach departs from scholarly views of the *tezkires* as the ultimate authoritative texts that defined canons and imposed norms from above on an otherwise heterogeneous poetic field. I argue, instead, that the *tezkiye* authors, as a rule, took up the voice of a member of the

community, either reflecting communal consensuses that had developed over time or participating in ongoing debates as any member of a *meclis* would.

In the second section of Chapter 4 “A Poetics of Presence,” I argue that sixteenth-century poetics was deeply rooted in physical presence and everyday social interactions of the community of poets. A complete liberation from individuals’ materiality that textualization provides could not be assumed or imagined. Under this heading, I draw attention to phenomena like the sixteenth-century pervasiveness of *naẓīre* (similar or parallel poetry), especially spontaneous in situ compositions; the popularity of occasional genres, such as the chronogram, the *şehrengīz* and the verse conundrum; and the widespread idea that the love lyric, the ghazel, was autobiographical in nature. I also, point to the immense influence spoken Turkish exerted on sixteenth-century poetry, an intrusion of the here and now in a textual tradition largely inspired by Persian precedents. After a brief survey of these themes that together point toward a poetics of presence and community, I focus on a set of apocryphal anecdotes about Ahmed Paşa (d. 1496) and analyze how they express a poetics of presence as narratives that encode the ghazel as a spontaneous and uncontrollable response to an emotional situation. Finally, I broach a discussion on notions of canonicity. I argue that sixteenth-century Ottomans did not have a literary canon in the modern sense of the term. A continuously updated, radically “presentist” canon, I argue, was an inevitable consequence of a poetics of presence that required the poet to perform in situ, which in turn was predetermined by the community structure and its forums of sociability in which sixteenth-century poetry flourished. Canonical formations more similar to modern ones could only develop after poetry culture was more thoroughly textualized from the seventeenth century onwards.

In the closing pages of the chapter, I reflect upon how the *tezkires*, by the very fact of their existence, contributed to the decline of the community-based and sociability-embedded poetry culture. In particular, *tezkiye* titles produced from the last quarter of the sixteenth century, I argue, presaged a new world with a broader reading public and anonymous textual space that was beyond the purview of any actual social community. I especially focus on the decline of the early biographical language that frequently gave reference to community and the rise of a more objective, fact-based, informative style of writing based on written records. Other indications in the same direction, I argue, include the emergence of more erudite styles in both poetry and prose, that self-consciously avoided drawing on forms of everyday speech; and a new anxiety and antipathy about “poetasters” and “common folk” (‘*avāmm*’) reflected a new drive to monopolize an expanding and increasingly heterogenous textual culture.

Chapter 5, “Poets and Ottoman Officialdom,” is on the relationship between the poets and the Ottoman political center. I argue that the *tezkires* provide us with a unique, albeit oblique, view of the development of Ottoman officialdom by virtue of the fact that most poets were either already government functionaries in different capacities or became so through their success in poetry; others, like Sufi *ḏīvān* poets, who often did not engage in gainful work, too, were often both ideologically aligned with the state and moreover lived on resources allocated to them through dynastic and grandee waqfs and patronage. The historiography on the development of Ottoman bureaucracy has largely focused on the uppermost tiers of various branches and on the period after the middle of the sixteenth century. The *tezkires*, on the other hand, open up a unique window onto the middling and lower sectors of Ottoman

officialdom and on the earlier period especially, an opportunity that has not been adequately capitalized on in extant historiography.

In this chapter, I first present an overview of the changing social profiles of the poets covered and the aspects of their “biographies” foregrounded in the *tezkires* between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries and discuss how these longer durée changes in *tezkires*’ prosopographical and biographical contents reflect an evolving officialdom. I then move on to a discussion of what I believe is the ultimate underlying factor that creates such an overlap between poetry and officialdom: the nexus of literacy in Ottoman Turkish, the shared language of Ottoman literature and officialdom. I show that the Ottomans almost entirely relegated the acquisition of literacy in Ottoman Turkish to non-institutional and informal practical settings, of which poetry was one of the most pervasive. Building on the discussions of *meclis* and *şoḥbet* in Chapter 4, here I introduce the topic of master-apprentice relations in poetry as yet another quasi-institutional forms of transmission of knowledge and skills that led poetry to evolve into a new independent channel of learning and acculturation independent from the more established fields of *‘ilm* and Sufism. The rest of the chapter is devoted to demonstrating how this autonomy translated into entry into officialdom and/or entitlement to patronage and remuneration from state resources in a world of undefined career tracks. I demonstrate that poets’ patronage fitted into the generalized system of remuneration and elite recruitment that was applicable for the entire body of service elites gathered around the political center. Finally, I discuss the artisan poets of the early sixteenth century as a case that demonstrates the points raised throughout the chapter.

1.7 Definition of terms

Before concluding the introduction, a definition of terms is in order, proceeding from the broadest to the more specific. I refer to as “Ottoman/Ottoman Turkish literate culture” all texts emanating from high cultural milieus, both texts produced by Ottoman officialdom, i.e., government documents, and “Ottoman literature.” By “Ottoman literature” I refer to all high-cultural aestheticized textual artefacts in Ottoman Turkish, in prose and in verse; this definition excludes folk literature (oral and rural) and official documentation but includes pretty much everything else, chronicles, biographical and ethical literature, epistolography, religious writings, among others, and all forms of poetry in Ottoman Turkish including Sufi poetry. This broad definition of “literature” is necessary firstly because we need a convenient name for the overall topography in which *dīvān* poetry flourished and delineated its own borders, and because Ottomans did not distinguish as strictly between imaginative and aesthetically pleasing texts on the one hand informative or documentary texts on the other as modern cultures do. A whole array of informative texts, from dictionaries to histories, could come in verse and prose could become highly aestheticized in *inşā* compositions, rendering modern distinctions like “fiction-non-fiction,” “artistic-factual” or “utilitarian-non-utilitarian” inapplicable. Obviously, the term “literature” has no authentic Ottoman counterpart⁶⁶ and because the meaning of this English term itself varies historically, we might be justified in

⁶⁶ The Arabic term *adab* (pl. *ādāb*) is the ancestor of the modern Turkish *edebiyat* as well as the modern terms meaning “literature” in Arabic and Persian languages. *Adab* is a highly complex term with changing meanings over time. However, the tendency to associate it with belle-lettristic writings outside the domain of religious sciences has been strong in modern scholarship. More recent scholarship, on the other hand, tends to question this duality and introduces further complexities into the notion of *adab/ādab*. See Enderwitz, “Adab b”) and Islamic scholarship in the ‘Abbāsīd period” and Bauer, “Adab c”) and Islamic scholarship after the “Sunnī revival.” However, in the sixteenth century, at least, the term was rarely used in the Ottoman context, except in the phrase *‘ulūm-i edebiyye*, which refers to language and literary sciences.

refashioning the term to suit our needs for discussion of any particular historical context.

I use the phrase “*dīvān* poetry” to conveniently refer to a particular tradition within Ottoman literature, that of courtly Persianate poetry in Turkish. Like “Ottoman literature” above, this is a category and a name that did not exist for the Ottomans. The term was coined in the early twentieth century by its modernist critics, who associated the tradition with the crumbling Ottoman regime and its elitist culture, *dīvān* being the name for the Imperial Council or any grandee council for that matter. In other words, “*dīvān* poetry” was born as a deeply pejorative term. However, over time its use became more or less neutralized, in my opinion because there has been no better name available for it.⁶⁷ Another common term used instead is “*klasik Türk/Osmanlı şiiri*,” which seems to go back to M. Fuad Köprülü.⁶⁸ Through much of his career, Köprülü referred to the entire Persianate tradition as “classical,” in the sense of “cosmopolitan” or “civilizational,” i.e., not confined to a particular region or language; since Ottoman literature partook of this high-cultural standard idiom that was spread across much of Islamized Asia and Near East it should be called “classical.”⁶⁹ However, the tag “classical” imparts a rather frozen and backward-looking aspect to the field, emphasizing its traditionalism rather than its dynamism, which discourages a historicist outlook, and significantly tones down its local character, an aspect that I want to emphasize. Hence my decision to use “*dīvān* poetry” for lack of a better common alternative.

⁶⁷ For a survey of alternative names proposed, see Köksal, “Klâsik Edebiyatımızı İsimlendirme Meselesi.”

⁶⁸ Köksal, “Klâsik Edebiyatımızı İsimlendirme Meselesi,” 12.

⁶⁹ Köprülü, *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, 100.

Finally, a word is in order on my shortcut for the *tezkires* of the period between 1538 and 1610. I sometimes refer to this corpus as “imperial *tezkires*” for the sake of convenience. This is, in my opinion, justified on two grounds: Not only were they decidedly holistic in their coverage of the empire’s Rumi poetry past and present, but they were also deeply identified with the empire ideologically and saw their service as the consolidation of a new, authentically Rumi cultural identity for the empire.



CHAPTER 2

BEFORE THE OTTOMAN IMPERIAL *TEZKİRE*

Strictly speaking, the first Ottoman *tezkiiretū'ş-şu 'arā* was *Hasht Bihisht* (929/1522-23), or *Eight Paradises*, by Hakim Shah Muhammad Qazvini, an Iranian émigré at the Ottoman court, and not the better known *Heşt Bihişt* (1538) by Sehi Beg. Whether a coincidence or not, the identity of the two works' titles beautifully marks two radically different, yet simultaneously valid ways of conceptualizing Rumi poetry at the very beginning of the age of the Ottoman *tezkiire*. They were modelled after the same text, Ali Shir Navai's biographical dictionary of Timurid poets titled *Mecālisü'n-nefā'is* (897/1491-92, with additions made as late as 904/1498-99), although the end result was very different in each case. In modern—mostly nationalist—histories of Ottoman *tezkiire* literature, Sehi's *Heşt Bihişt*, a completely original composition in Ottoman Turkish, has been unanimously hailed as the pioneer of the Ottoman *tezkiire*, while Qazvini's substantially expanded translation of Navai's Turkic *Mecālis* into Persian, has not been accorded a place at all, evidently because of its “foreign” language and author. Yet, Qazvini was an esteemed religious scholar in the Ottoman realm, memorialized by an entry in Taşköprülüzade's *al-Shaqā'iq al-nu'māniyya*, and a court physician for Bayezid II and Selim I. His *Hasht Bihisht* could be unequivocally called “Ottoman”, not only because it was produced in the Ottoman court milieu and eulogized the recently deceased Selim I, but also because it included many Persian (Acem) and Turkoman poets under Ottoman protection and active in Rumi lands at that time.

This work diverges in fundamental ways from Sehi's *Heşt Bihişt* and the ensuing specimens of the Ottoman imperial *tezkiire* genre that was going to burst

forth in a few decades' time. The standard sixteenth-century Ottoman *tezki*res are all in Turkish and depict the culture of Turkish-language poetry in the Persianate classical tradition (i.e., *dīvān* poetry) issuing from the core Ottoman regions known as Rum (Rumelia and Anatolia); they all manifestly key the history of this Rumi or Ottoman Turkish classical-style poetry to the history of the Ottoman polity; and finally, they all self-consciously exclude mystico-religious poetry as such and cover only a poetic domain they see as pertaining primarily to human affairs, i.e. the political, the civic, and the erotic, no matter how much the received poetic idiom may have been already infused with Sufi language and concepts. Qazvini's *Hasht Bihisht*, on the other hand, is written in Persian and focuses exclusively on Persian poetry produced across a wide geographical and chronological expanse. Stretching from Central Asia all the way to Rum and going back in time to the eleventh century, this text goes much beyond Navai's original scope. Although certain contemporary rulers—namely, the Timurid Husayn Bayqara, from Navai's core text, the Aqqoyunlu Uzun Hasan, and the Ottoman Selim I—figure prominently in the text as patrons, the plethora of power-holders mentioned, both big and small, transient and more enduring, go to show the relative independence of an ecumenic Persian poetry from any particular political enterprise. In fact, conversely, the text musters up the entrenched transregional character of Persian poetry to legitimize and empower latter-day transregional imperial ambitions. Finally, Qazvini's text is much less keen than the Ottoman imperial *tezki*res when it comes to delineating the domains of Sufi and “worldly” poetries, including as it does many sheikhs and dervishes but also, more importantly, ample selections of the brand of Persian lyric sometimes referred to in modern (Persian) scholarship as the *ghazal-i 'irfānī/ārifāna* or the “gnostic ghazal”—best represented by the *dīvāns* of Sanai (d. 1131?), Attar (d. 1221), Rumi

(d. 1273), and Fahr al-din Iraqī (d. 1289)—as distinct from the erotic, courtly *ghazal-i ‘āshiqāna*.⁷⁰

In short, Qazvini's *Hasht Bihisht* differs from sixteenth-century imperial *tezki*res in all of the content-defining parameters: language (of poetry as well as of biographical writing), geographical space, chronological span, and poetic genres of focus. This chapter is built on the observation that Qazvini's work was not alone in this early period in presenting a holistic image of Rumi poetry that was radically different from the image projected by the imperial *tezki*res of the subsequent era. The early sixteenth century was indeed a time when a strongly Ottomanized Rumi poetry entered critical discourse as a conceptual entity.⁷¹ But before the imperial *tezki*res prevailed and consolidated a particular definition of what constituted Rumi poetry, there was clearly a multiplicity of perspectives on this matter, expressed in a variety of genres. Although heterogeneous among themselves, these early texts together attest to a historical moment when the political, confessional, cultural and linguistic borderlines of “classical” Ottoman imperialism, which directly informed the Turkish-language imperial *tezki*re literature, had not yet been firmly drawn. This moment was rather characterized by a synergy or concert between rival universalist political militancies, often with mystical fervor, on the one hand, and ambitious cultural projects that aimed to construct a variety of large, continuous ecumenes, on the other. However, the outward grandeur of such political or cultural ideologies does not indicate their actual power. In fact, the very heterogeneity of the poetry-related texts of this era, in genre, scope, and intellectual or ideological concerns as well as

⁷⁰ Lewisohn, “The Life and Poetry of Mashreqī Tabrizi,” 106-7; Ingenito, “Tabrizis in Shiraz,” 102-3.

⁷¹ Earlier discussions of Rumi Turkish poetry focused more on the question of the adequacy of the nascent Turkish literary language (OAT) for artistic and intellectual purposes and not on Rumi poetry under Ottoman aegis as such. See, for example, Hoca Mesud's complaints about writing in Turkish in mid fourteenth century in Csirkés, “Turkish/Turkic Books of Poetry,” 673.

provenance, bespeaks the absence as yet of a hegemonic discourse on Rumi poetry and the authors' lack of involvement in the same stable social networks around a political center, conditions the fulfillment of which would give the imperial *tezkiye* its remarkable generic stability and continuity over time. By zooming in on a constellation of texts that attest to discarded alternative visions of Rumi poetry, this chapter makes the first move towards building the dissertation's central argument that the imperial *tezkiye* of the sixteenth century was a historically contingent generic formation, with a beginning and an end. Thus, the chapter constitutes the prequel to a narrative of sixteenth-century Ottoman *tezkiyes*' history as intimately tied to the rise and subsequent transformation of a territorial, Sunni, bureaucratic state with a heavy dependence on the rapid development of the received Turkish-language textual culture, still dwarfed by the Persian and the Arabic in terms of sophistication, generic scope and prestige by the turn of the sixteenth century.

The texts I associate with this early historical moment are mostly concentrated in the first decades of the sixteenth century, i.e., they antedate by a couple of decades Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt*, the first in the series of interlinked imperial *tezkiyes*. However, I refrain from defining this earlier phase in strictly chronological terms. The cultural and intellectual trends I associate with each of these two phases, like almost any trend of this kind in world history, do not begin or end abruptly, but rather develop and wane gradually, coexisting with the dying or newly burgeoning ones. It will be seen in Chapter 3, "Imperial Integration," that some key ideas of the first phase's texts lingered on in some of the earlier imperial *tezkiyes*, albeit in marginalized or toned-down fashion. In the case of one main text I use, Garibi's miscellany (ca. 1560), the special circumstances of its Safavid provenance might account for the late date of a work shaped by a vision of politico-cultural ecumenism.

This work by an Ottoman Kizilbash who defected to the Safavids suggests that the ethos of the first phase lasted longer in the Safavid court milieu, although probably not as the dominant current, till long after Ottoman poetic culture definitively “turned inward”,⁷² a decision without which the imperial *tezkiye* genre could not have existed. It is thus themes and spatial or categorical constructs as much as a roughly construed chronology that defines my periods or “historical moments”. Ultimately, however, the few, in my opinion insignificant, chronological incongruences do not change the big picture. The main direction of historical development towards the elimination of the first period’s ideas and the near-absolute hegemony of the new paradigm expressed by the imperial *tezkiye* genre is clear. Hence my decision to stick with the chapter title “Before the Ottoman *Tezkiye*”.

The centerpieces of the chapter are, by order of discussion, Qazvini’s *Hasht Bihisht* (1522-23), an expanded Persian translation of Ali Shir Navai’s Chagatai-language biographical dictionary of poets, as mentioned above; Garibi’s formally structured miscellany, also mentioned above, which was prepared for Shah Tahmasb I (r. 1524-76) in the latter part of his reign and which includes, among other material, Garibi’s own poems in Turkish and a biographical dictionary of Rumi—mostly Ottoman—poets written to prove that the latter are all adherents of a philo-Alid, Sufi kind of piety in common with the Safavid; and finally Hacı Kemal of Eğirdir’s massive anthology of Rumi “parallel” or “similar” poems (*naẓīre mecmū‘ası*), titled *Cāmi’ü’n-neẓā’ir* (1512, with some later additions). A poetry anthology, with only minimal biographical hints in the introductory captions to the poems, is considered here along with biographical works because it is the first compilation of any kind that

⁷² See “Introduction” for this phrase, which I borrowed from Cornell Fleischer.

presents a holistic view of Rumi Turkish poetry past and present, harbingering the coming of the *tezkiye*. In fact, throughout this dissertation the big, encyclopedic *naẓīre mecmū'ası* (as versus the small, personally customized miscellanies that are literally ubiquitous from the middle of the sixteenth century onwards) will be treated as a genre that closely parallels the *tezkiye*, especially in view of their shared claim to comprehend the poetic field in its entirety, in whatever way they may define it. Moreover, though the amount of biographical information provided varies from one *naẓīre* anthology to another, there is evidence that even those with very scanty biographical notes, like *Cāmi'ü'n-nezā'ir*, rely on a deep awareness of who is who and do not normally confuse poets with the same penname, of which there are many in this period. Last but not least, since the sixteenth-century consolidation of the profane and public field of Ottoman *dīvān* poetry as distinct from religio-mystical poetry is a theme to be explored, Hacı Kemal's *Cāmi'ü'n-nezā'ir* provides an invaluable comparison to the poetry content in the imperial *tezkiyes*. The same is also true for Garibi's miscellany which includes a large selection of Garibi's own poems in Turkish and poetry by others, mostly in Persian. I complement my discussion of these three main texts, with references, some brief, others more elaborate, to a wider array of generically heterogenous texts from the same period. These include Fakhri Harati or Haravi's expanded Persian translation of Navai's *Mecālisü'n-nefā'is* for a Safavid ruler, executed near-simultaneously with Qazvini's; Ottoman and Chagatai Turkish translations of the Timurid luminary Abd al-Rahman Jami's Sufi biographies *Nafahāt al-uns*, a textual cycle whose history closely echoes that of Navai's *Mecālis* and its translations; major library catalogues from around the turn of the sixteenth century, namely Atufi's palace library catalogue prepared for Bayezid II and the inventory of Müeyyedzade Abdurrahman's (d. 1516) personal collection; several

other major anthologies that feature Ottoman or Rumi Turkish poetry, such as the Mamluk ruler Qansu Gawri's (r. 1501-1516) personal miscellany and the *Cāmi`ü'l-me`ānī*, a mixed-language collection of Sufi poetry; and a Bayezid-era palace book of outgoing gifts and bonuses for poets, artists, Sufis and scholars (*in`āmāt defteri*). Overall, the chapter will throw into sharp relief the decline of Persian and Turkic cultural ecumenes and the rise of a new kind of Ottoman literary vernacularism epitomized in the *dīvān* literature of the sixteenth century, the subject matter of Chapter 3.

2.1 Qazvini's *Hasht Bihisht* (*Tarjuma-i Majālisu'n-nafā'is*) (929/1522-23)

2.1.1 Qazvini and the contents of his work

Hasht Bihisht (929/1522-23), or *Eight Paradises*, by Hakim Shah Muhammad Qazvini, was the first *tezkiye* title to be produced in Rum to celebrate and record poetic activity in Rumi lands. This is a substantially expanded Persian translation of Ali Shir Navai's Chagatai-language biographical dictionary of Timurid poets, *Mecālisü'n-nefā'is*, i.e., a *tercüme/tarjuma* (translation) and *tezyıl/tazyıl* (sequel, expansion) in one.⁷³ The author was one of the many Persian émigrés recruited by the Ottoman court during the reigns of Bayezid II and Selim I.⁷⁴ Over the course of

⁷³ Storey, "Biography: Poets (1)," 13.1.1, §1094. All extant discussions of the work, including mine here, rely on the Iranian edition by Ali Asghar Hikmat, first published in 1944-45, Tehran, together with Fakhri Harati's expanded translation of Navai; Hikmat, *Alī Shīr Navā'ī*, 181-409. Also see fn. 85 for the manuscript copies of the work. The following studies discuss the work and/or make use of it as a source: Sohrweide, "Dichter und Gelehrte"; Subtelny, "The Poetic Circle"; Kuru, "The Literature of Rum"; Lingwood, *Politics, Poetry, and Sufism*; Csirkés, "Chaghatay Oration"; and Markiewicz, *The Crisis of Kingship*.

⁷⁴ Qazvini does not have an entry for his name in Brill's *EIs*, MEB's *İA*, or the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. *TDVİA* appears to be the only modern reference work (in English or Turkish) to treat the author; Fani, "Hakīm Şah el-Kazvînî." However, the entry appears to be poorly written judging by the faulty information on *Hasht Bihisht* and the absence of Aşık Çelebi's *Meşā'irü's-şu`arā* in the bibliography, the second most important contemporary source on Qazvini's biography after Taşköprülül's *Al-Shaqā'iq*.

these decades, the political turmoil in Iran pushed many Persian intellectuals—scholars, Sufis, secretaries, and poets—to seek the protection of rival courts.⁷⁵ As Christopher Markiewicz has shown in his masterful study of Idris Bidlisi, the Persian intellectuals in Istanbul at this time formed a veritable network and cultivated a particularly Persianate “subculture” in both letters and the bureaucracy.⁷⁶ The trajectory of Qazvini's career across Near Eastern courts parallels in many ways that of his more famous compatriot Bidlisi, whose seminal Ottoman history in Persian was also called *Hasht Bihisht*. Both polymaths came to Istanbul during Bayezid's reign, soon after the Safavids toppled the Aqqoyunlus and took control of Iran (1502). Before that, Bidlisi was a longtime servant at Sultan Yakub Aqqoyunlu's chancery. And, though sources on Qazvini's life do not mention his direct service to the Aqqoyunlus, his *Hasht Bihisht* reveals an intimate knowledge of Sultan Yakub's court; moreover, he was a student of the renowned scholar Jalal al-Din Davani who was on very close terms with the Aqqoyunlu dynasty throughout his career.⁷⁷ Thus there is every reason to surmise that Qazvini, too, was in Aqqoyunlu service before his engagement with the Ottoman court. Both Bidlisi and Qazvini were welcomed and extended patronage by the Mamluk sultan Qansu Gawri at some point in their lives, Bidlisi when he was temporarily alienated from the Ottoman court and Qazvini just before coming to Istanbul.⁷⁸ Both were polymaths—religious scholar, Sufi, poet and historian/biographer combined—with the added specializations of chancery and diplomacy in Bidlisi's case and medicine in Qazvini's. Their intellectual make-up

⁷⁵ For surveys of Persian émigré poets and writers in the Ottoman Empire see Sohrweide, “Dichter und Gelehrte”; Riyahi, *Zabān wa Adab-i Fārsī*; Yazıcı, “Persian Authors.”

⁷⁶ Markiewicz, *The Crisis of Kingship*.

⁷⁷ Newman, “Davānī, Jalal-al-dīn Moḥammad.”

⁷⁸ Aşık Çelebi gives a copy of the letter sent from the Ottoman court to the Mamluk sultan Qansu Gawri, Qazvini's former patron, requesting the physician's transfer to Istanbul for the ailing Bayezid. AÇ, 1421-23.

particularly drew on the great fifteenth-century Timurid efflorescence of culture epitomized by the names of Jami and Ali Shir Navai; just as Bidlisi contributed to Ottoman political thought by adapting the “Timurid vocabulary of sovereignty” into the Ottoman context,⁷⁹ Qazvini appended the western Islamic poetic milieu he participated in to Ali Shir Navai's slightly earlier Khorasan- and Transoxania-centered biographical dictionary. In short, Qazvini exemplifies a particular intellectual prototype of this period, the internationally renowned polymath, capable of independent movement between different princely patrons across a sizeable geography, disseminating ideas as he moves, especially the intellectual achievements of Timurid Khorasan.⁸⁰

The main additions by Qazvini to Navai's *Mecālis* are the two largely original chapters he authored (*bihishts* 6 and 8), though he also expanded some of Navai's entries throughout, including updates on poets who had come to Rum since then.⁸¹ In Chapter 6, he presents around 40 new biographies from the time and milieu of the Aqqoyunlu Sultan Yakub (d. 1490), son of Uzun Hasan, which, as mentioned above, suggests Qazvini's prior service to Yakub.⁸² This chapter also contains the original chapter or *meclis* 6 of *Mecālisü'n-nefā'is*, devoted to poets outside Khorasan; apparently, Qazvini found the core Aqqoyunlu regions (the Tabriz court, in

⁷⁹ Markiewics, *The Crisis of Kingship*, 276-89.

⁸⁰ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories” emphasizes the role of increased elite circulation between regions in the dissemination of ideas in the early modern period. For a meticulous study of particular regional and transregional networks that enmesh preeminent fifteenth-century Timurid intellectuals, see Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks*. For exemplary cases of a renowned court poet and a court calligrapher catapulted between rival courts in the political turbulences of early sixteenth-century Iran and Central Asia, see Melville, “Hilali and Mir ‘Ali.” For other major figures receiving the patronage of different dynasties through their careers, see, for example, the biographies of Abd al-Rahman Jami, Jalal al-Din Davani and İbrahim Gülşeni.

⁸¹ It should be noted that Qazvini also eliminated some of Navai's entries in his translation. For more detail on poets in Navai's *Mecālis* who were in Rum in Qazvini's day, see fn. 105 below.

⁸² In his *Politics, Poetry, and Sufism in Medieval Iran: New Perspectives on Jāmī's Salāmān va Absāl*, Chad Lingwood utilizes, among other sources, Qazvini's Aqqoyunlu chapter to reconstruct the poetic milieu at Sultan Yakub's court.

particular) to be out of Navai's field of vision and conceived of his additions as a chronologically appropriate complement. Chapter 8, on the other hand, does not draw on Navai at all. It comprises two sections (*ravzas*, or gardens), the second of which covers poets active during Selim's reign (1512-20), discussed below. In the first section, Qazvini relies largely on Abd al-Rahman Jami's *Bahāristān* to present biographies of poets composing in Persian who lived "before the time of Selim Khan the Sultan of the Auspicious Conjunction". Evidently, the author's purpose here is to treat the canonical poets of old not covered by Ali Shir Navai, such as Firdawsi, Rumi and Hafez. The addition of this section clearly attests to Qazvini's intention to present a total history of Persian poetry, past and present as well as transregional, so that the Persian court poetries of the last century or so are stitched to the classical legacy to form a seamless whole. In other words, his Persianization of Navai entailed not simply a linguistic "cosmopolitanization" (Pollock), but also a concomitant opening up of Navai's chronological and territorial parochialism.

It appears that some basic pieces of information on Qazvini's *Hasht Bihisht* that recur in scholarly publications discussing the work go back to the editorial introduction by Ali Asghar Hikmat in his widely used Iranian edition, and not to Qazvini's own text. These include the claims that the work was presented or dedicated to Selim I,⁸³ and that the second *ravza* of *bihisht* 8 (i.e., the section on Selim-era poets), treats Selim's court poets.⁸⁴ These statements are not exactly confirmed by the text.⁸⁵ There are no dedications in the (published) text. The work's

⁸³ Page ٥ in Hikmat, *‘Alī Shīr Navā’ī*.

⁸⁴ Page ٧ in Hikmat, *‘Alī Shīr Navā’ī*.

⁸⁵ The two MSS in Istanbul do not appear to include a dedication either. However, a definitive study on Qazvini's *Hasht Bihisht* would have to go back to the manuscripts, which I cannot undertake in any detail here. I, too, use Hikmat's edition, which is primarily based on Esad Efendi 3877 at Süleymaniye Library and also another ms in the collection of Said Nafisi in Tehran; for Hikmat's references to these mss, see Hikmat, *‘Alī Shīr Navā’ī*, pages ٣, ٥. A third copy is Fatih 4523 at Süleymaniye Library.

completion date is marked at the end by a chronogram which yields 929 AH (1522-23 CE) in *ebced*, and the final biographies in *bihisht* 8 include references to Süleyman's early military victories. The dates mentioned throughout in relation to the composition process of the work (927, 928, 929 AH) are all after Selim's death (926 AH), and all discussions of Selim are retrospective, referring to him in the past tense. Thus, a dedication or presentation to Selim seems to be out of question.⁸⁶ A presentation to Süleyman, however, is plausible, given that Qazvini was a long-time court physician. As for the claim that the second *ravza* of *bihisht* 8 treats Selim's "court poets", a broader definition would be more appropriate since it is not possible to link many of the individuals in this *ravza* to Selim, or even to Rumi lands. Of the 80 or so poets treated here only about 14 are explicitly linked to Rum, including Selim himself. Many of these émigré poets were renowned scribes, calligraphers, artists, physicians, scholars and sheikhs who had been drawn by the patronage opportunities in Istanbul, perhaps even before the reign of Selim, like Qazvini, or were forcibly brought to Istanbul by Selim after the Battle of Çaldıran (1514).⁸⁷ Some were apparently Sunnis who sought refuge with the Ottomans in order to escape Kizilbash persecution.⁸⁸ Qazvini is especially keen to note the numerous

Hikmat's edition contains some serious typological errors which need to be fixed by recourse to the mss in cases where Qazvini's exact phrasing is important; for example, the final paragraph on p. 182, where Qazvini defines the contents of his original chapter on poets active during Selim's reign, is unintelligible. The errors in the individuals' names in entry headings of the print edition often stem from Esad Efendi 3877; Fatih 4523 presents different names or different forms of the same name in many instances and appears to be more reliable in this regard.

⁸⁶ For an earlier discussion of the lack of concord between the dates mentioned in the text and the idea of its presentation to Selim, see Tokmak, '*Alişir Nevā'i*', 13-14.

⁸⁷ See for example the entries on Shaykh-i Kabir (Hikmat, '*Alī Shīr Navā'ī*', 396-97; Tokmak, '*Alişir Nevā'i*', 301-303), qadi of Ardabil, taken captive by Selim after the Çaldıran battle but released in deference to his high learning and then sponsored by Selim as the author of a *Tevārīḫ-i Selīm Hān*; and on Mavlana Fath Allah/Fethullah-i Kātib (Hikmat, '*Alī Shīr Navā'ī*', 393; Tokmak, '*Alişir Nevā'i*', 296-97), a former scribe at the court of Shah İsmail now serving Selim I (discussed further below in this chapter).

⁸⁸ For instance, about 'İyşī/Iyşī's (Hikmat, '*Alī Shīr Navā'ī*', 403) reasons for coming to Rum, Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi relates the following: *Babası . . . ol diyārda tamām-ı tesennün ile iştiḥār bulmağın anda ta'ayyüş ü süknāya iktidārı qalnamağla karārı 'ayn-ı firār bilüb . . . diyār-ı Rūm[a]*

Selīmnnāmes and qasidas for Selim composed by these individuals.⁸⁹ However, an additional point here is that in spite of the literary works they wrote for or (posthumously) on Selim, it may not be appropriate to characterize all of these figures as “poets” exclusively or primarily: Eminent sheikhs and scholars would have broader roles and a higher standing,⁹⁰ and the numerous physicians mentioned were probably part of Qazvini's own professional network.⁹¹ So the poets that can be described summarily as “Selim's court poets” are quite few in number in view of both their professional or intellectual identities and their current place of activity.

The majority of the remaining biographies in this *ravza* mention places, social relations and events in the East alone. In fact, Qazvini himself describes the subject matter of this *ravza*, in more than one place, as poets who were active *during* Selim's reign, referring to Selim as simply a time marker, with no suggestion of his actual patronage.⁹² The entries with exclusive Eastern references can be grouped into two: a small group of Transoxanians, from cities like Samarkand and Bukhara, which had recently passed from the Timurids to the Shibanid Uzbeks;⁹³ and a much larger group from the Safavid-ruled territories, including Khorasan, which was in Timurid hands when Navai wrote his *Mecālis* roughly two decades before, and the previously

ḳudūm itdükde sā'ir muhācirān-ı Ā'cām gibi esbāb-ı 'ıyş nıẓām u intizām bulmağıçün kātib-i dīvān-ı sultān-ihtişām olmışdur. HÇ, 710.

⁸⁹ For the *Selīmnnāme* literature see, Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 140-75. This otherwise thorough monograph with an extensive discussion of *Selīmnnāmes* and other types of historiographical works on Selim's reign does not mention Qazvini's *Hasht Bihisht*.

⁹⁰ E.g., Mavlana Shams al-Din Bardai (penname Hamdi) who came to Istanbul from Khorasan in 917/1511-12 and became instructor to Selim's pages of the court (Hikmat, '*Alī Shīr Navā'ī*', 370-77; Tokmak, '*Alişir Nevā'ī*', 256-69); and Sheikh Abd Allah Shabistari, who arrived in 926/1519-20 and was allocated by Selim a daily stipend of 30 *akçes*, in addition to other generous monetary benefits. Sheikh Abd Allah was a descendant of Sheikh Mahmud Shabistari, the famous author of *Gulshan-i Rāz*. (Hikmat, '*Alī Shīr Navā'ī*', 366-99; Tokmak, '*Alişir Nevā'ī*', 251-56).

⁹¹ Such as Mavlana Sadīd of Qazvin (Hikmat, '*Alī Shīr Navā'ī*', 381; Tokmak, '*Alişir Nevā'ī*', 274-75) and Mavlana Sadīd of Gilan (Hikmat, '*Alī Shīr Navā'ī*', 384; Tokmak, '*Alişir Nevā'ī*', 280).

⁹² In the main introduction to the work, and in the introductions to *ravza* 1 and *ravza* 2 in *bihisht* 8; Hikmat, '*Alī Shīr Navā'ī*', pages 182, 317, 359 respectively.

⁹³ Barthold and Frye “*Bukhārā*”; Schaeder et al., “*Samarkand*”.

Aqqoyunlu ruled Western Iran and Azerbaijan. The Transoxanian group includes Sultan Ubayd Allah, the incumbent ruler of Bukhara,⁹⁴ Kh^waja Hashim, the Sheikh ul Islam of Bukhara, and a few poets Qazvini reports to be based in Samarkand at the time he was writing his biographies.⁹⁵ The individuals active in Safavid-ruled lands with no apparent connection to the Ottoman world seem to be concentrated in the second half of the *ravza*;⁹⁶ Ottomans encountered and annihilated some of these in the borderlands during the battles of the Safavid war.⁹⁷ Outside the three main groups mentioned so far (émigrés in Rum, poets active in Safavid Iran and in Shibanid Transoxania), there are also a few short-term visitors to Rum mentioned.⁹⁸ All in all, then, there is no reason to doubt the veracity of Qazvini's statement that *ravza* 2 covers Persian poets active at the time of Selim, that is, irrespective of place.

Yet, caution is required in the reverse direction as well. There are at least four cases where the Rumi connection can be easily established from other sources but is not even implied by Qazvini. Basiri, another Acem who had served the Aqqoyunlu court before coming to Rum and had also personally met with Ali Shir Navai in

⁹⁴ In Hikmat's edition (and in Tokmak's, who simply translates Hikmat), this name is given as Abd Allah instead of Ubayd Allah, an error that stems from the MS Esad Efendi 3877 Hikmat's edition relies on. Fatih 4523 writes the name correctly. During Selim's reign the ruler of Bukhara was the Shibanid poet-prince Ubayd Allah, and not an Abd Allah. Ubayd Allah contacted Selim I through several letters, recorded in Feridun Beg's well-known miscellany of epistolography, but he is not known to have visited Rumi lands. His poems (in Chagatai Turkish) are featured in the early sixteenth-century anthology *Cāmi 'ū'l-me'ānī*, which brings together Sufi poetry in Old Anatolian and Ottoman Turkish, Persian and Chagatai. Uydu Yücel, "Ubeydullah Han"; Thackston "'Ubayd Allāh Sultān Khān".

⁹⁵ For this Transoxanian group see Hikmat, *Alī Shīr Navā'ī*, 378-80; Tokmak, *Alişir Nevāī*, 270-73.

⁹⁶ Roughly between pp. 382-403 in Hikmat and pp. 278-312 in Tokmak.

⁹⁷ For example, Mir Abd al-Baki, grandson of Shah Nimat Allah-i Vali and Shah İsmail's vizier, was shot dead at the Çaldıran battle by Ottoman soldiers who took him for Shah İsmail, as he happened to stand in the Shah's usual post on the battle field (Hikmat, *Alī Shīr Navā'ī*, 382-83; Tokmak, *Alişir Nevāī*, 280).

⁹⁸ Mavlana Khazani and his father Mavlana Yahya Samarkandi came to Rum in 928/1521-22 from the Kipchak land. Then they proceeded to Mecca (Hikmat, *Alī Shīr Navā'ī*, 377-78; Tokmak, *Alişir Nevāī*, ...). Similarly, the merchants Qazvini mentions were probably visitors to Istanbul at one point or another; see, for example, the entry on Haca Muhammad from Andijan (Hikmat, *Alī Shīr Navā'ī*, 381; Tokmak, *Alişir Nevāī*, 274).

Harat, was a very well-known figure in the poetry scene of Istanbul,⁹⁹ but is given by Qazvini a very brief entry that is confined to praises for his poetry and his lack of greed for material wealth. İyshi/İyşi is presented to the reader merely as a Shirazid with a penchant for satire. The only clue that might point to a lengthy presence in a Turkish-speaking environment is the piece of information that he is popularly known as “Kel İyşi”, İyşi the Bald, in Turkish. Indeed, Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi spares a short entry for him in his own *tezkiye*, where we read that İyşi “like other Persian émigrés, worked as a scribe in the sultan's administrative council in order to make a living”.¹⁰⁰ Yari, whom Qazvini briefly describes as a caring and loyal friend (*yār*),¹⁰¹ must be the Acem Latifi talks about at length, citing examples from his Turkish poetry.¹⁰² Sheikh Fath Allah, who died at a young age from the plague in 920/1514-15,¹⁰³ must also have been a resident of Istanbul since his father Sheikh Muzaffar al-Din Ali, as the *Al-Shaqā'iq* entry on this émigré scholar tells us, taught at Istanbul madrasas including the Sahn, in spite of being a Shafi'i. This had become possible through the intervention of Müeyyedzade Abdurrahman, the chief justice of Rumelia, with whom Muzaffar al-Din Ali had studied together in Shiraz under the great scholar Jalal al-Din Davani, who was also Qazvini's teacher and Bidlisi's friend.¹⁰⁴ Further inquiries could reveal more cases of this kind. In short, the number of émigrés under Ottoman patronage in this *ravza* is likely to be higher than can be

⁹⁹ Hikmat, 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī, 381-82; Tokmak, 'Alīshīr Nevāī, 276.

¹⁰⁰ Hikmat, 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī, 403; Tokmak, 'Alīshīr Nevāī, 313. Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi, *Tezkiret'ü-şu'arā*.

¹⁰¹ There are two Yari entries in *ravza* 2 and they are similar in content; Hikmat, 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī, 390, 404; Tokmak, 'Alīshīr Nevāī, 291-92, 314-15.

¹⁰² LAT, 575-77. Note that greater part of the entry is added in a later recension (abbreviated as Ü in LAT). The additions involve the circumstances of Yari's death, which suggests that he was still alive at the time Latifi completed the first recension in 953/1546-47.

¹⁰³ Tokmak, 'Alīshīr Nevāī, 289; Hikmat, 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī, 389.

¹⁰⁴ For Sheikh Muzaffar al-Din Ali's biography, see Taşköprülüzade, *eş-Şaka'iku'n-nu'māniyye*, 526-28, followed immediately by Qazvini's (pp. 528-29). See Markiewicz, *The Crisis of Kingship*, 61 for Bidlisi-Davani relationship.

immediately recognized, although this does not change the inaccuracy of the oft-reiterated statement that this *ravza* depicts “Selim's court poets”.¹⁰⁵

2.1.2 *Hasht Bihisht* and the Acem network in Istanbul

Only a very small number of Qazvini's Ottoman-protected poets occurs in imperial biographical dictionaries of poets covering the same period.¹⁰⁶ This is primarily explained by the fact that the series of Ottoman *tezkires* beginning with Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt* were devoted to (Persianate) Turkish poetry in Rumi lands and therefore only recorded the few Persian or Turkoman poets who could compose well in Rumi Turkish. Although Persian poetry was and remained for many more centuries the main model for Rumi Turkish *dīvān* poetry, the actual production of Persian-language poetry in any significant volume was rare among Ottoman poets of this period.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, as Chapter 5 of this dissertation (“Poets and Ottoman

¹⁰⁵ It should also be noted that Qazvini's reports of poets who came to Rum from the East are not confined to the Selim-era poets in Istanbul he discusses in the second *ravza* of *bihisht* 8. Others who occur in Navai's dictionary and came to Rum after Navai wrote about them are noted in the chapters Navai originally placed these poets in, at end of the translated entries. See, for example, the expanded entries on Saili (Nevayi, *Mecālisü'n-nefāyis*, 92-93; Hikmat, *‘Alī Shīr Navā’ī*, 241-42; Tokmak, *‘Alişir Nevāī*, 189-90). Qazvini seems to conflate the two different Sailis that occur in Navai's *Mecālis*. For the other expanded Saili entry, see Nevayi, *Mecālisü'n-nefāyis*, 182; Hikmat, *‘Alī Shīr Navā’ī*, 289; Tokmak, *‘Alişir Nevāī*, 201) and Maili (Nevayi, 98; Hikmat, 248; Tokmak, 196). Qazvini's addendum to the latter entry includes an interesting anecdote about Bayezid II's display of exceptional knowledge of Persian poetry in his encounter with the poet.

¹⁰⁶ Examples of important litterateurs not mentioned in imperial *tezkires* include Adai, author of a lengthy *Selīmnāme* (Adai, *Adā’ī-yi Şīrāzī ve Selīm-nāmesi*); Niyazi or Sheikh Abd Allah Shabistari (Kanar, *Fehmi ve Şeyh Abdullah-ı Şebisteri-i Niyazi*); and Shah Mahmud, son of the renowned Aqqoyunlu bureaucrat and historian Abubakir Tihriani and an important former member of the Aqqoyunlu court.

¹⁰⁷ Kuru, “The Literature of Rum”, 560. Kartal, “Anadolu’da Farsça Şiir” gives some idea of the relative volume of poetry composition in Persian, which is not high, but the author does not adequately distinguish between authors who were native speakers of Persian, usually émigrés, and those who acquired it as a foreign language. Kim, “Persian Literature in Anatolia” reveals how even during Mehmed II's reign, when Persian purportedly rose to a new prominence as a key language of Ottoman imperialism, Persian poetry at the court by Ottoman subjects remained largely confined to historiographical genres like the *şāhnāme*. Inan, “Imperial Ambitions, Mystical Aspirations” argues that “mastery of Persian reading and writing became an indispensable component of Ottoman imperial identity” although his survey of pedagogical sources does not attest to composition practices as such. Ahdi's biographical dictionary *Gülşen-i Şu ‘arā* pays exceptional attention to Persian poetry by Ottoman poets in an era when Turkish poetry bloomed, projecting a unique image of relatively

Officialdom”) will argue, there were many poets who could not even read Persian, or Arabic for that matter, let alone compose in these languages. Thus, the world of poetry represented in the imperial *tezkires* was by and large one in Rumi Turkish. However, beyond linguistic competence as such, the absence of many of Qazvini's émigrés from imperial *tezkires* strongly implies their lack of socialization in Rumi-Turkish poetic and intellectual circles. As Chapter 4 “A Community Culture” will show, the sixteenth-century *tezkire* genre grew out of actual, face-to-face elite sociabilities and relied on everyday *meclis* (salon) and *şoḥbet* (polite conversation) practices, orally transmitted material and shared memories at least as much as text-based research and anthologizing efforts. Sometimes, the influence of social bonds and shared *meclis* experiences in the shaping of Ottoman imperial *tezkires* was so great that it could even lead to the inclusion of some non-poets that were important presences on these social occasions as hosts, patrons or connoisseurs. Qazvini's *tezkire* and in particular the second *ravza* of *bihisht* 8, appears similarly to rely on a social network, but one of its own, quite separate from the much more extensive network of the Ottoman poets. The second *ravza* barely includes a reference to the vibrant milieu of Turkish poetry of the day, but establishes various types of links between the émigré intellectuals it discusses. As a result, it gives the impression of a veritable ghetto of Persian émigrés in Istanbul, where they continued to cultivate culture and learning in Persian without interacting in any significant degree with the local environment. Based on the information provided by the text, these émigrés' socialization does indeed appear to have followed different patterns than the Rumi

widespread practice of composition in Persian, although poetic samples he quotes cannot indicate the actual volume of production. Ahdi was originally from Baghdad, likely of Turkoman origin. His zoom on Persian poetry by Rumi poets may perhaps have been meant to foreground the language he felt was his own forte as an Acem in search of Ottoman patrons, although he was also highly proficient in Rumi Turkish and had become fully naturalized into Ottoman poetic circles.

poets'—e.g., a closer proximity to the court and an Istanbul-centered residence, in contrast to Ottoman poets' wide variety of loci of sociability and patronage as well as high degree of circulation across the empire for purposes of education and official duties. The impression of separation between the two milieus is further reinforced by the stark difference between the intellectual and social profiles of the Persian court protégés, who were the *crème de la crème* of their time sought after by rival courts, and the much more heterogeneous society of Ottoman Rumi poets that included, besides the high literati, low-grade administrators and scholars, ordinary soldiers, artisans and even some individuals characterized as “unlettered” (*ümmî*). It was the weight of orality in the teaching, production and circulation of Turkish poetry at this time and the stylistic focus on the possibilities offered by the vernacular tongue including its colloquialisms that allowed for this social and intellectual spectrum and distinguished Turkish poetic culture from the inevitably text-based Rumi culture of Persian poetry.¹⁰⁸

A striking omission from *ravza* 2 is telling in terms of the social dynamics that appear to have shaped the contents. Mavlana Hafiz al-Din Muhammad (d. 1551), or Hafız-ı Acem by his nickname among the Ottomans, was one of the most famous Acems in Rum at this time. He was a Hanafi scholar who, together with his brother Kukla Acem, had left Iran for Rum in 1501 after Shah Ismail ascended to power. Hafız-ı Acem once told the biographer Aşık Çelebi that, as two reputed scholars and men of letters, their arrival in Rum was greeted with such pomp and fanfare that

¹⁰⁸ The claim that Persian was actually spoken in Rumelia, raised in a recent essay, is not supported by the sources cited; Inan, “Imperial Ambitions, Mystical Aspirations,” 86. The phrase *Rumili Fārsīsi* (Rumelian Persian) that occurs in *tezkires* and is interpreted in this essay as spoken Persian should be referring to the phenomenon of the rise of certain Rumelian towns like Prezrin, Priştine and Yenice as centers of literary Persian education in the early sixteenth century, with perhaps a hint at the unique accent with which the language was pronounced by Rumelian learners. Cf. AÇ, 459, where the phrase *Üngürî Fārsīsi* (Hungarian Persian) occurs.

people were literally befuddled. As a longtime professor at prestigious Istanbul madrasas and a prolific scholarly author, Hafız was given an entry in Taşköprülüzade's *Al-Shaqā'iq*, but he was also a common presence in Ottoman Turkish *tezkires* as a poet who composed in Turkish and Persian and had a vast knowledge of both literatures. Qazvini's exclusion of Hafız-ı Acem is all the more puzzling because he shared many features with other Acems in the court milieu. He was initially a protégé of Müeyyedzade Abdurrahman, who was the first contact and/or patron in Rum for many others, and he was originally from Barda, a town in Azerbaijan from which several eminent émigré intellectuals in Istanbul hailed, as will be shortly seen. Moreover, if Aşık Çelebi is to be believed, Hafız had earned his first appointment to an Istanbul madrasa by presenting a poem in Chagatai Turkish to Selim in Amasya, where the sultan and his army had come to spend the winter. In short, there is no reason why he should not be included in a *tezkire* chapter that discusses Selim-era Persian poets in Rum. Unless there was some personal hostility between Qazvini and Hafız-ı Acem, of which there are no signs on record, the only plausible reason would have been Hafız's embeddedness in both the Ottoman religious establishment and the Rumi Turkish poetic circles, rather than a life centered on the court. A comparison with Basiri, for example, might be telling. Basiri was another well-known Acem that was fully integrated into Turkish poetic circles, but he was featured in Qazvini's *ravza* 2 of *bihisht* 8. The contrast with Hafız-ı Acem might be understood with recourse to Ottoman imperial *tezkires*' portrayal of Basiri as closely involved with courtly figures whereas Hafız-ı Acem tends to be characterized in the same sources primarily as a member of the *ulema* and madrasa habitus.

The set of Acem poets in Rum in *ravza* 2, then, is not simply a catalogue, but a picture of a very particular social milieu or network. While the text, minimalistic in solid biographical detail, does not always explicitly link individuals, certain clues from inside and outside the text help connect them in more particular ways than their shared court patronage. For example, the *Selīm-nāme* by Adai-i Shirazi (Mavlana Baha al-Din Ali) helps illuminate how the actual émigré network in Istanbul found its way into and shaped the *tezkiye* by Qazvini, who himself appears to be a critical node in this network along with other figures like Idris Bidlisi and the Shiraz-trained Ottoman scholar Müeyyedzade Abdurrahman. Adai is one of the Acem poets not mentioned in any imperial *tezkiye*. In the preamble to his verse *Selīm-nāme*, Adai explains that when he first arrived in Rum, he was given a helping hand by Hakim Shah Qazvini and another individual he describes as “a man of artistry (*honar*) from Barda,” a town in Azerbaijan; it was these two that introduced Adai to the chief justice (*kāzī* ‘*asker efendi*) who then became the patron for his *Selīm-nāme*.¹⁰⁹ The latter of the two connections Adai mentions is, in all likelihood, Shams al-Din Bardaizada/Bardai (Şemseddin Berdei), also discussed by Qazvini in the second *ravza* of *bihışt* 8. Originally from the same town as Adai, this scholar became a preceptor at the court of Selim and was a well-known figure in Rumi Turkish poetic circles by the penname of Molla Hamdi. The entries on Adai and Bardaizada in *ravza* 2 are placed very closely, exemplifying once again Qazvini's tendency to cluster together individuals related one way or another (by being from the same town, in the service of the same ruler, in the same profession, or through some other type of

¹⁰⁹ Adai, *Adā 'ī-yi Şīrāzī ve Selīm-nāmesi*, 20-22 (Persian text), 26-28 (Turkish translation). Sara Nur Yıldız identifies this unnamed *chief justice* as Fenarizade Mehmed Şah Çelebi (d. 1523); Yıldız, “Ottoman Historical Writing in Persian,” 464-65.

social connection). Thus, although the entries on Adai and Bardaizada present no clues about the connection between the two, or their shared connection to Qazvini for that matter, in this fortunate example, an external record allows us to account for *tezkiye* contents and entry placement.

Moreover, these two entries, along with a third entry in between, that on Sheikh Abd Allah Shabistari (this is a son of Muhammad Shabistari, the famous author of *Gulshan-i Rāz*), are the first three entries right after Selim I.¹¹⁰ These are also the longest entries in the entire *ravza*, with unusually generous selections of poetry. In this *ravza*, which does not appear to rely on a consistent principle of organization (e.g., alphabetical or chronological order), the precedence and length of the three entries clearly attest to Qazvini's desire to exalt these individuals as prominent scholars, sheikhs, or members of renowned families. However, an additional motivation is very likely Qazvini's desire to foreground members of his own clique at the time of writing. Sheikh Shabistari seems disconnected to the other two as far as their individual entries are concerned. However, when we come to the pages where poets associated with Transoxania are clustered, deeper layers of their social connectedness begins to come into view. In the entry for Hayrati,¹¹¹ a young and attractive poet resident in Samarkand, we encounter Bardaizada, Shabistari and Mavlana Habib, an émigré tile artist at Selim's court, all together, infatuated with the young poet. We had not been informed of Bardaizada and Habib's prior residencies in Samarkand, but the entry on Sheikh Abd Allah Shabistari does relate that he came to Rum from Samarkand in 926/1519-20 when Selim was still on the throne.

¹¹⁰ For the consecutive biographies of Adai, Shabistari and Bardaizada, see Hikmat, *‘Alī Shīr Navā’ī*, 364-66; Tokmak, *‘Alişīr Nevāī*, 247-50; Hikmat, 366-69, Tokmak, 251-56; and Hikmat, 370-77, Tokmak 256-69.

¹¹¹ Hikmat, *‘Alī Shīr Navā’ī*, 379; Tokmak, *‘Alişīr Nevāī*, 272.

According to Qazvini, Bardaizada came to Rum from Khorasan in 917/1511-12. So there clearly was a prior phase, probably before this latter date, when these three had met in Samarkand. In fact, it is very likely that Qazvini's entry on the young Samarkandian relies completely on what these three told him, given that his coverage of contemporary Transoxania is otherwise confined to the incumbent ruler and a few grandees.

In short, the second *ravza* of *bihisht* 8 gives us a picture of the émigré society clustered around the court during Selim's reign, with many pointers to prior Eastern connections between individuals reunited in Istanbul and intimations of Qazvini's own smaller clique within the greater Istanbulite Acem community. When we move beyond *ravza* 2, however, the scope and depth of Qazvini's transregional connections past and present, which also partly informed his local Istanbul Acem network, come into clearer view. For Qazvini, Ali Shir Navai's *tezkiye* is not simply a text, as it is for Sehi Beg or other Ottoman *tezkiye* authors: Qazvini is an actual part of the political and intellectual world Navai wrote about, a world that spans the different, often competing, courts in Iraq, Azerbaijan, central and western Iran, Khorasan, and Transoxania. He apparently knows many individuals Navai mentions, either directly or secondhand through reliable contacts. As both Navai's and Qazvini's texts document, regional and transregional travel—for purposes of education, search of patrons and flight from war or persecution, among others—played an enormous role in the lives of these elite men of letters. Most importantly, the political instability in post-Mongolian Central Asia and the Near East, and the constant changes of the ruling houses in major cities of culture¹¹² created an environment where intellectuals'

¹¹² For example, Harat, under Timurid rule until the death of Husayn Bayqara (d. 1506), changed hands many times between the Safavids and the Shibanid Uzbeks over the course of the following

political allegiances were contingent and adaptable.¹¹³ In most cases, the change of the ruling houses did not lead to significant cultural change and the same intellectual cadres were shuffled around between different dynastic courts.¹¹⁴ In contrast to the long-term dynastic stability in the Ottoman realm and the resulting bureaucratization of the intellectual class, the Turkoman- and Turco-Mongol-ruled East developed intellectual cadres that retained their transregional mobility and could exercise a higher degree of freedom from the polities they were temporarily attached to. The dispersing impact of political volatility and fragmentation was, on the other hand, offset by the unifying force of Persian as the shared language of culture in this part of the world, in spite of the sporadic efforts to promote Turkic poetry and prose (e.g., the courtly Chagatai literature associated with Ali Shir Navai and the rule of Husayn Bayqara in Harat, or, the political and liturgical uses of Turkic/Turkish poetry in the formative period of the Safavid polity). All these factors effectively downscaled the importance of native and local identities in the formation of intellectual communities and partly de-territorialized their networks at the highest echelons.¹¹⁵

Admittedly, *Hasht Bihisht* does not allow us to conclude that Qazvini spent significant time in Khorasan or Transoxania, the main geographical focuses of Navai's text. Navai, on the other hand, has a weak grasp of the contemporary

decades. The Aqqoyunlu capital Tabriz passed to the Safavids in 1500 but was occupied by the Ottomans several times in the sixteenth century from early in Süleyman's reign onwards. The Timurid Samarkand was occupied by Babur in 1497 and then by the Shibani Khan in 1500; after the latter's death an alliance of Babur and Shah Ismail recaptured the city, but the Uzbeks soon struck back and ruled the city for many centuries to come. Bukhara similarly passed from the Timurids to the Shibaniids in 1500.

¹¹³ Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks*; Markiewicz, *The Crisis of Kingship*.

¹¹⁴ As an example, see Shibaniid continuity with the Timurid in court arts and literature; Soucek, "The Shaybanids."

¹¹⁵ Cf. *Intellectual Networks* where Binbaş argues that informal networks of this type were influential only until the middle of the fifteenth century, after which they were ousted by emerging hierarchically organized formal Sufi brotherhoods like the Naqshbandi order built by Ubayd Allah Ahrar (d. 1490) in the second half of the fifteenth century.

Aqqoyunlu milieu centered in Tabriz, which Qazvini is very familiar with, as his numerous new entries on Sultan Yakub's court poets show. Yet, in addition to their own travels, both authors comprehended a wider region through indirect methods such as reports of visitors to the region in question and written correspondence. Thus, for example, Navai's contact with the Aqqoyunlu court relied on and was probably confined to such indirect channels: Navai has heard of the recent murder of Qazi Isa Savaji, Yakub's preceptor, in the fight between factions within the Aqqoyunlu government, but cannot verify the news.¹¹⁶ Similarly, when accounting for the contrast between Navai's negative appraisal of Qazi Isa Savaji and his positive comments on Sheikh Najmi, Qazi Isa's relative and Yakub's courtier, Qazvini points to Sheikh Najmi's determination to sustain a distant relationship—*gāyibāne muḥabbet ve yārliḡ*—with Navai through exchanging letters—*mürāselāt ve mekātibāt*—whereas Qazi Isa did not care to engage in a similar effort.¹¹⁷

Qazvini, too—although he might not have stayed in Khorasan or Transoxania at all—certainly knew key people who did know the intellectuals there, which allowed him to confidently comment on, even challenge the information Ali Shir Navai provided on poets from these regions. In his entry on Mavlana Sulaymani, a poet in the service of Babur Mirza (clearly Shahruh's grandson Abu al-Qasim Babur Mirza, the Timurid ruler of Khorasan, 1449-1457; not to be confused with the well-known founder of the Mughal Empire, d. 1530),¹¹⁸ Navai attributes two famous

¹¹⁶ See the sixth chapter of Woods, *The Aqqoyunlu* for the faction war that led to the killing of Savaji.

¹¹⁷ Paul Losensky's comment in his monograph on the reception and legacy of the poet Baba Fighani (d. 1519) that “The literati of Harat and Khorasan apparently knew next to nothing about poets of western Iran who did not visit their region” appears to be corroborated by Navai's lack of knowledge of the Aqqoyunlu poetic milieu as observed here. However, Losensky mistakenly assumes Qazvini, too, to be a member of the Khorasan/Harat literati and misses out on his unique grasp of the Aqqoyunlu milieu. Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī*, 22-24.

¹¹⁸ This poet is placed in the first chapter (*meclis*) of Navai's *Mecālisü'n-nefā'is*, devoted to poets who passed away before Navai (born 1441) came of age.

verses to the mavlana, although he is aware of the alternative attribution to Mihri, a contemporary female poet. Qazvini, on the other hand, thinks Navai is wrong and argues in favor of the Mihri attribution by bringing up the testimonies of reliable informants he personally knows. Qazvini explains that Mihri was the wife of Shahruh's court physician Mavlana Hakim. Qazvini's own master in medicine was a student of this Mavlana Hakim and had personally heard from Mihri that the verses were hers. It is on his master's and "many other well-known individuals" authority that Qazvini corrects Navai's information.¹¹⁹ The same correction is made by Harati as well, however with no reference to a source.

Other cases where Qazvini objects to Navai concern poets he has personally met. Mavlana Shahidi, originally from Qum in central Iran (or Iraq-ı Ajam, by the region's historical name; this region is consistently referred to as "Iraq" by Ali Shir Navai), visited Khorasan twice, as a result of which Ali Shir Navai came to know him. Navai writes that Shahidi pretended to be a madman. Qazvini, on the other hand, states that he spent a lot of time conversing with Shahidi (probably either in Qazvin where Shahidi stayed for a year, or in Tabriz where Shahidi worked for Yakub, as Qazvini likely also did) and that he saw no signs of madness whatsoever. Qazvini's additional information on Shahidi includes the latter's service to Sultan Yakub Aqqoyunlu as boon companion and then to the ruler of Gujarat, where he still was as of the year 927/1520-21 when Qazvini was writing this entry.¹²⁰ Qazvini also spares an entry for Shahidi's nephew whom Navai despised and did not include in his *Mecālis*. Another acquaintance Qazvini shared with Navai manifests the same pattern

¹¹⁹ Nevayi, *Mecālisü'n-nefāyis*, 24-25; Hikmat, *‘Alī Shīr Navā’ī*, 194-95; Tokmak, *‘Alişir Nevāī*, 175.

¹²⁰ Nevayi, *Mecālisü'n-nefāyis*, 186-87; Hikmat, *‘Alī Shīr Navā’ī*, 296-97; Tokmak, *‘Alişir Nevāī*, 207-208.

of diverging meeting places: The poet Dihaki the dervish became known to Navai when he travelled to Khorasan, and to his compatriot Qazvini either at the Aqqoyunlu court and/or in the city of Qazvin.¹²¹ In his additions to the notices on several shared acquaintances with Navai, Qazvini, rather unexpectedly, includes anecdotes that project a rather negative image of the Timurid luminary. Individuals who Navai disliked and characterized as arrogant (*mütekebbir*) are defended by Qazvini through anecdotes that reveal the egotism and arrogance of Navai himself. A striking example is the case of Mavlana Banai or Bannai, who was a long-time presence in the court of Husayn Bayqara in Harat but was forced to leave because of his personal and intellectual differences with the powerful Navai.¹²² He then entered the service of Aqqoyunlu Sultan Yakub, where Qazvini must have gotten to know him closely and to appreciate his many talents; the poet could return to Harat only when the Shibanid Shahi Beg Khan took over the city circa 1510. The anecdotes between Banai and Navai that Qazvini relates present Banai as a poet with a biting but witty sense of satirical humor; Navai, on the other hand, is portrayed as an uptight man utterly unable to take jokes because of his obsession with his reputation as well as physical appearance.

2.1.3 A non-sectarian and non-partisan culture at the Ottoman court on the brink of the age of confessionalization

Thus, Qazvini was one of the few exceptionally well-placed and well-connected individuals who could legitimately attempt a *zeyl*, or sequel, to Navai's *Mecālis*.

¹²¹ Nevayî, *Mecālisü'n-nefāyis*, 183-84; Hikmat, '*Alî Shîr Navâ'î*', 290-93; Tokmak, '*Alişîr Nevâî*', 201-4.

¹²² Nevayî, *Mecālisü'n-nefāyis*, 80-81; Hikmat, '*Alî Shîr Navâ'î*', 232-33; Tokmak, '*Alişîr Nevâî*', 187-88.

Another was Fakhri Harati,¹²³ who in 928/1521-22, i.e., near-simultaneously with Qazvini, executed another expanded Persian translation of *Mecālis* for the Safavid court in Harat, under the title *Leṭā'ifnāma*.¹²⁴ Soon after the death of Husayn Bayqara in 1506, the Timurids lost control of Harat; the city was contested between the Safavids and the Shibanids through the following decades but remained mostly in Safavid hands. Fakhri Harati, who would work as a court poet for the Safavids into the reign of Tahmasb I (r. 1524-76), dedicated his *Leṭā'ifnāma* to Habib Allah Sawaji, *vazīr* for the governor of Khorasan, Shah Ismail's son and future *tezgīre* author Sam Mirza, then only a child of five. Being a native of Harat, and having been in the service of the recently-toppled Timurid court, Fakhri could provide a satisfactory update especially on the poetic scene of the city and the greater Khorasan region, which constituted the core of Navai's geographical scope in the *Mecālis*. His additional ninth *majlis* constitutes a small *tezgīre* of contemporary poets in the same region. His knowledge of Navai himself and the Timurid court circles is reflected in the many anecdotes involving Navai he incorporated into relevant places. He also seems to know about Western Iran much more than Navai did and is likely to have shared not a few acquaintances with Qazvini, as his personal relation with a student of Jalal al-Din Davani suggests.¹²⁵

The symmetry between Qazvini and Harati goes beyond their near-simultaneous expanded Persian translations of the same Chagatai text for two rival Western Turkish-speaking courts. The way they construe the relationship between

¹²³ Storey, "Biography: Poets (1)," 13.1.1, §1094 and §1099; Qasemi, "Fakrī Heravī, Solṭān-Moḥammad."

¹²⁴ Published by Hikmat in the same volume with Qazvini's translation of the *Mecālis*, cited above; Hikmat, '*Alī Shīr Navā'ī*'. Similarly, Tokmak has translated into Turkish Harati's addenda on the *Mecālis* along with Qazvini's addenda in the same volume, cited above; Tokmak, '*Alişir Nevāī*'.

¹²⁵ Hikmat, '*Alī Shīr Navā'ī*', 141; Tokmak, '*Alişir Nevāī*', 88.

intellectuals and political power, and their attitudes vis-à-vis the various Turco-Mongol and Turkoman/Turkish dynasties competing across the Near East and Central Asia are also very similar. As such the two texts mutually illuminate one another as instances of a transregionally valid politico-cultural mindset at this time. The lack of political and ideological antagonism and exclusionism is striking in both authors' works. The intellectual moves between different courts in different regions on his own accord, as Qazvini did, or serves the successive conquerors in his homeland, as Fakhri did,¹²⁶ and retains an unapologetic respect for all, a respect that is assumed to derive automatically from the power holders' might, and not from some sublime ideological value they are supposed to uphold against forces of evil. It appears that this attitude was also palatable to their patrons. Thus, Fakhri of Harat adds a section on poets from among Timurid and Shibanid *emirs*, or the aristocratic warrior class, and another one on Timurid and Shibanid dynasts in a biographical work dedicated to a Safavid *vazīr*. Moreover, he concludes his work by paying a heart-felt homage to the bygone Husayn Bayqara, referring to him as *ṣāhib-qirān* multiple times. Fakhri has at least one other major work that does not discriminate between rival dynasties: In the anthology *Rawza al-salāṭīn* (Garden of the Sultans), he gathers together Persian poetry by royal poets, creating a transregional pantheon. The work comprises ethno-regionally divided chapters of selected poetry by sultans, among others, from Sasanid, Samanid, Seljukid, Chingizid, Uzbek/Shibanid, Timurid, Aqqoyunlu, Safavid and Ottoman dynasties and sultans of India, with brief introductory biographical captions.¹²⁷ The work was prepared for Shah Hasan

¹²⁶ At a later stage of his life Fakhri also became an émigré and entered the service of the Arghunid court in north-western India.

¹²⁷ Fakhri Harati, *Tazkira-i Rawza al-salāṭīn*; See Storey, "Biography: Poets (1)," 13.1.1, §1099.

Arghun (r. 1524-55), under whose patronage Fakhri entered after years of service to Tahmasb I. Just as he had done in the *Laṭā'ifnāma* previously, Fakhri does not shy away in this anthology from showing his deep knowledge of and sympathy for the Timurids by making the Timurid chapter the largest. Nevertheless, overall, he takes a balanced and positive view of all the sultans and dynasties he treats, as equally worthy holders of power. It should be noted, however, that the Turkish poetry by and eulogistic remarks on the two Ottoman sultans, Selim I and Süleyman I, given in the footnotes of the printed anthology, are almost certainly interpolations by an Ottoman sympathizer: Material other than the Persian poetry of these sultans are found only in one manuscript copy.¹²⁸

A similar politically detached and unideological attitude is manifest in Qazvini's work as well. This shows itself not only in the treatment of Aqqoyunlu Sultan Yakub and his court, as we have seen, but also in the ease with which Qazvini could mention the former careers of scribes or artists who served Shah Ismail until being brought to Istanbul by Selim I after the Çaldıran Battle. It is so much harder to come across such references in imperial *tezkires*, which are the products of a much more antagonistic politico-religious environment. One striking example is Qazvini's entry on a Mavlana Fath Allah-i Katib, a former scribe and expert calligrapher at the court of Shah İsmail now serving Selim I.¹²⁹ This individual should be none other than the first official *şehnāmeçi* at the Ottoman court, Fethullah Arifi/Arif Çelebi (appointed c.1555, d. 1562), an Acem, likewise praised for his calligraphy, whose early life and career are strangely missing from the imperial *tezkires*. After mentioning his illustrious lineage as a maternal grandson of İbrahim Gülşeni, Ottoman accounts jump to the

¹²⁸ Fakhri Harati, *Tazkira-i Rawża al-salāḫīn*, 72-76.

¹²⁹ Hikmat, *‘Alī Shīr Navā’ī*, 393; Tokmak, *‘Alīşīr Nevāī*, 296-97.

middle years of Süleyman's reign when Fethullah suddenly appears as a man at the height of his career. Aşık Çelebi's grammatically ambiguous note *Elkās Mīrzā'nuñ nişāncısı oldu*, later reproduced verbatim by Mustafa Ali, has led many modern scholars to conclude that Fethullah Çelebi came to Rum in the retinue of the rebellious Safavid prince Elkas Mirza when the latter took refuge with the Ottomans in 1547.¹³⁰ References indicating Fethullah's earlier presence in Rum were also discovered, but these went back only a couple of years more.¹³¹ However, multiple sources attest to the improbability of such a late entry into Ottoman service. Most notable among these is Ahdi-i Bagdadi's *tezkiye* (971/1563-64), which describes Fethullah Çelebi as someone who came of age and/or lived his adult life in Rum in spite of being the grandson of the 'Acemzāde (progeny of an Acem) Sheikh İbrahim Gülşeni.¹³² He also states that Fethullah's Persian *şehnāme* was not highly regarded by the "Acem poets who had relocated to Rum," implying Fethullah was not one of them.¹³³ All the

¹³⁰ E.g., Woodhead, "An Experiment in Official Historiography." For a critical survey of the historical sources on Fethullah Arifi's life and their contradictions that also extended into modern scholarship see Eryılmaz Arenas Vives, "The Shehnamecis of Sultan Süleyman," 24-36.

¹³¹ Cornell Fleischer found Fethullah Arifi's name on a palace payroll from 1545; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 30, fn. 46. And yet, in his *Encyclopaedia Iranica* article on Elkas Mirza, which he announces as "forthcoming" in his discussion of Fethullah Arifi in *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, Fleischer confusingly states that "Alqās also left in Istanbul his *neşānjī*, Faḥallāh 'Āref Çelebi" and that the Ottoman *şehname* tradition was "established by Alqās' retainers"; Fleischer, "Alqās Mirza." Tahsin Yazıcı draws attention to an episode from 1546 recorded by Muhyi in his hagiography of Sheikh İbrahim Gülşeni, where the young Muhyi joins a literary salon featuring several *ağas* of the palace, the famous poet Zati, and Fethullah Çelebi among others; Yazıcı, "Ārifi Fethullah Çelebi"; Muhyi-i Gülşeni, *Menāḳib-i İbrāhīm-i Gülşenī*, 413-15. However, still intent on preserving the Elkas connection, Tahsin Yazıcı argues that Fethullah must have been sent by the Ottoman court to serve Elkas *after* the latter's arrival in Istanbul. Another modern scholar who wants to keep the idea of Fethullah's service to Elkas is Eryılmaz Arenas Vives, who conjectures that he had worked for Elkas at an earlier time and was already in Rum when Elkas arrived in 1547. Eryılmaz also speculates that an illuminated and illustrated copy of Mahmud Arifi Haravi's (d.1449) Persian mesnevi *Gūy u Chawgān*, lodged at the palace library and copied in 1539-40, might be representing an earlier stage of Fethullah Çelebi's activity at the court, bearing visual and other similarities to the later *şehnāme* productions as it does; Eryılmaz Arenas Vives, "The Shehnamecis of Sultan Süleyman."

¹³² 'Acemzāde Şeyḫ İbrāhīm 'ün kızı oğludur lākin Rūm'da neşv ü nemā bulmuş. AHD, 411. In some manuscripts, it is Fethullah Çelebi who is clearly designated as 'Acemzāde; see the apparatus on the same page.

¹³³ Bināen 'alā-zālik Rūm'a gelen şu 'arā-yı 'Acem yanında edā-yı güftārı pesendide olmamışdur. AHD, 413.

sources, including Aşık Çelebi's *Meşā'ir* mentioned above, present Fethullah as routinely versifying in Rumi Turkish and as a natural presence in Rumi Turkish poetry circles; on the other hand, Acem émigrés, especially recent ones, are almost always marked as such. There is, in particular, a conspicuous contrast in *tezkiye* literature between the characterization of Fethullah Arifi and Eflatun, the next official *şehnameci*, who had definitely arrived in Rum with Elkas Mirza in 1947: Eflatun is not even mentioned by name in Aşık Çelebi's, Hasan Çelebi's and Riyazi's *tezkiyes*, and Ahdi and Mustafa Ali's entries evince his lack of acceptance into Rumi poetry circles as a recently-arrived ambitious Acem at the court. Moreover, in Fethullah's *Süleymānnāme*, his father Derviş Mehmed Çelebi appears as Sultan Süleyman's personal envoy to Elkas after the relations between the Ottomans and the Safavid prince had turned sour, indicating perhaps a family association with the Ottoman court that goes back some time.¹³⁴ Lastly, but perhaps most tellingly, Fethullah Çelebi appears to have faced at some point in his palace career a smear campaign that accused him of being a Kizilbash and/or a Safavid supporter, which will be discussed in greater detail in the next section on Garibi's *tezkiye*. In short, the “Mavlana Fath Allah-i Katib” in Qazvini's *Hasht Bihisht*, a former scribe and calligrapher for Shah Ismail is, in all likelihood, the *Şehnāme*ci Fethullah Arifi Çelebi of the late 1550s, though we do not know how he first ended up at Ismail's court.

The effort to circumvent the obvious question of when and how Fethullah came to Rum and entered palace service has led his first Ottoman biographer and acquaintance Aşık Çelebi to throw in a cryptic and confusing note in this regard, which

¹³⁴ Çelik, “Fethullah Arifi Çelebi,” 138-39. How much of the content in Arifi's *Süleymānnāme* is original is an unanswered question that awaits source critical analysis. For a take on the value of the *Süleymānnāme* as historical source, see Eryılmaz, “The *Sulaiman-nama* (*Süleyman-name*).”

was then conveniently replicated in later accounts. The obfuscation of Fethullah's early life was no doubt deliberate since, given his high station as official *şehnāmeçi* and personal relations with a wide array of Ottoman intellectuals including several biographers,¹³⁵ lack of access to biographical information would have been out of question. That courtiers' prior service to Shah Ismail had become something of a taboo by the 1560s, if not earlier, is also suggested by a very similar distortion in *tezkiye* literature of the circumstances of the Acem artist Şahkulu's (d. 1556) entry into Ottoman service. Also known as a poet under the penname Penahi, Şahkulu was appointed by Süleyman as chief artist of the court's workshop (*nakḳāşhāne*) in 1545, and thus occupied a position comparable to that of Fethullah Çelebi after 1555 as official *şehnameçi*. In his *Meşā'irü's-şu'arā* (1568), Aşık Çelebi claims that Şahkulu first came to Rum during Bayezid's reign and joined the court of Prince Ahmed in Amasya. However, in a register that list artists and artisans at the court, dated 1526, "Şahkulu Ressam" is named among the artists forcibly brought from Tabriz (*Tebriz'den sürgün*) in the aftermath of the Çaldıran Battle (1514); it is noted that he was first brought to Amasya and allocated a salary (*cihet*) there and then transferred in 1520 to the Istanbul court.¹³⁶ In the cases of both of Fethullah Çelebi and Şahkulu's biographies, Aşık Çelebi appears to be the earliest recorder of the versions that erase their past service to Shah Ismail. But, of course, Aşık's narratives cannot be ascribed to him alone; rather, he must be voicing biographical constructs and entire attitudes

¹³⁵ Aşık Çelebi, Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi and Mustafa Ali claim to have met him.

¹³⁶ Uzunçarşılı, "Osmanlı Sarayı'nda Ehl-i Hiref," 26. Though, as Faruk Sümer notes, "Şahkulu" was a very common name among the Safavids, with precedents among the Aqqoyunlu and the Qaraqoyunlu elites, it is possible to trace this particular Şahkulu's career through the *ehl-i hiref*, *mevācib* and *müşāhere-ḥorān* registers of the subsequent decades nearly until his death; Sümer, *Türk Devletleri Tarihinde*, 15, 18. Meric, *Türk Nakış San'atı Tarihi*.

shared by a significant portion of the Ottoman elite in the 1560s.¹³⁷ In the early 1520s when Qazvini translated and authored his *Hasht Bihisht*, Selim's legendary mass killings of the Anatolian Kizilbash had just taken place.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, there was apparently an unembarrassed acceptance of the new Shiite Safavid recruits of the court and a continued relative tolerance for different types of Sufism including antinomian versions, as exemplified by Selim's protection of the Hurufi poet Muammayi.¹³⁹ It seems that at this point in the history of Ottoman confessionalization the center's attitudes vis-à-vis rural tribal Kizilbash groups and Safavid or antinomian Sufi learned elites diverged. The ideological and intellectual homogenization of the learned elite as bureaucratized servants of a Sunnitized imperial state would be achieved only several decades later, during the reign of Süleyman.

Qazvini's Selim partakes of a particular image of the ideal sultan that was shared across the Persianate Near East at this time: a conqueror who is at the same time a Sufi and a great poet.¹⁴⁰ However, this combination of features apparently materialized in quite different tonalities in different contexts. Most studies on the sacralization of sultanic power in the post-Mongol period tend to highlight the messianic role or other kinds of divine grace sultans wanted to associate with themselves. In these apocalyptic messianic political discourses geared towards

¹³⁷ A parallel case is provided by Garibi's biographies of Rumi poets, discussed in the next section. There, Sadi Çelebi, the famous poet and secretary of Prince Cem, is uniquely described as *Karaman evlādından*. This phrase means, in all likelihood, that Sadi was a scion of the ruling family of the Karamanoğulları principate, which was definitively conquered by the Ottomans in the 1570's. Garibi also uses the same phrasing with respect to his own father, who used the intriguing title *Emîr Hân*, and says he is *Menteşe evlādından*. That this phrase means "a descendant of Menteşe Beg," the eponym of the Menteşe Principate, is confirmed by Mustafa Ali's use of the phrase *evlād-ı Menteşe'den* to refer to İlyas Beg, the last representative of the Menteşe dynasty in power; MALI, vol. 4, 594. Cem Sultan's friendly relations and political alliances with the Karaman house are also well known. Yet, no Ottoman source links Sadi Çelebi to the house of Karaman.

¹³⁸ Yıldırım, "The Safavid-Qizilbash Ecumene," 458.

¹³⁹ LAT, 501; AÇ, 818-22.

¹⁴⁰ Aqqoyunlu Yakub, Shibanid Ubayd Allah, Safavid Ismail and Ottoman Süleyman are other well-known examples of this profile.

legitimizing universal imperialisms, the image of the sultan is one of *insān-ı kāmīl* (perfect man), *ḳutb* (spiritual axis of the human world), or at least *velī* (God's friend, a saint). Among other sultanic epithets scholars associate with this novel religio-political synthesis are *mehdī-yi āḥīr zamān* (messiah of the last days), *ẓillullah* (shadow of God), and *ḥalīfe-i ilāhī* (God's caliph). As scholarship has shown, such larger-than-life attributions were attested in contexts both before and after the time of Selim among different dynasties.¹⁴¹ However, at least as far as Qazvini's *Hasht Bihisht* is concerned, Selim appears more like a humble dervish than a *velī* or sheikh: He preferred to sit on a simple rug (*kilim*) rather than a sumptuous throne and possessed the witty humor of a Sufi, as illustrated by an anecdote related by the author. According to Qazvini, although he was ruthless with rebels and wrongdoers (*celāl*), he was always smiley and very gentle with his close circle. An unbeatable Alexandrine world-conqueror, he was at the same time a paragon of justice and wisdom. Moreover, he was a great poet, indeed the greatest of his own time according to Qazvini, by which he perhaps means that Selim is the greatest Rumi poet composing in Persian. As such, the text reinforces Erdem Çıpa's conclusion that “the messianic, millenarian, and apocalyptic pretensions attributed to Selim are largely constructs of the post-Selimian era”, being found exclusively in works from the Süleymanic era.¹⁴² The dervish-like aspect in Qazvini's description above bears none of the connotations of a military leader-cum-Sufi sheikh that Shah Ismail embodied and that Cornell Fleischer believed also to be part of Selim's deliberate

¹⁴¹ Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*; Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*; Melvin-Koushki, “Early Modern Islamicate Empire”; Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*; Markiewicz, *The Crisis of Kingship*; Şahin, *Empire and Power*; Fleischer, “The Lawgiver as Messiah.”

¹⁴² Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 215.

projection of himself.¹⁴³ Neither Qazvini, nor Harati for that matter in his two works mentioned here, speak of a single world-conqueror, the divinely ordained one. Rather, they draw much more approachable human portraits, especially for sultans they personally knew, though they appear to use *ṣāhib-ḳirān* (lord of the auspicious conjunction) and similar epithets pertaining to phenomenal military success, such as *İskender-i devrān* (Alexander of the times), mostly for Selim and Husayn Bayqara respectively. The very plurality of sultans, princes and emirs their works are teeming with, and the generally moderate language of praise they deploy tone down whatever political engagements they might have had in actuality. It is doubtful, then, that extant scholarship on post-Mongol political ideologies across Islamic Eurasia can yet fully accommodate the myriad variations in the manifestations of the themes of sacralized rulership, both at any given moment or diachronically over the more than three centuries that such currents washed the Islamic world.¹⁴⁴ Apparently, the idea of the ruler as mystic could, at one point, bear much less political and confessional antagonism, and the divine or saintly qualities of ruler could be confined to realistic depictions of personal piety.

It is also partly ironic that an era that produced some of the most extreme forms of personalization of (asserted) sovereign power also produced some of the greatest biographical compendia that were virtual celebrations of cultural ecumenism built on extensive transregional communities of thousands of Sufis, scholars, poets, artists and scribes including many nameless ones. These communities were both

¹⁴³ Fleischer's argument is found in Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah." For Çıpa's take on Fleischer's essay and a broader discussion of the chronology of the ascendancy of apocalyptic and messianic motifs in formulations of Ottoman imperial ideology see Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, chapter 5.

¹⁴⁴ Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*; Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*; Melvin-Koushki, "Early Modern Islamicate Empire"; Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*; Markiewicz, *The Crisis of Kingship*; Şahin, *Empire and Power*; Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah."

textual and social, whose subtle but diffuse and durable powers the awe-inspiring monarchs of the era certainly wanted to harness. After all, world dominion through military means was in reality a myth or an ever-elusive destination: Timur had to reconquer many of the areas he captured, as did Ottomans in zones like western Iran and northern Iraq where their radius of logistic capability hit a limit by the mid sixteenth century. Continental conquests only resulted in the breakdown into manageable political units, as in the case of the Timurid Empire, or in other forms of delegation of power to local magnates as exemplified by Ottomans' various methods in this regard. Before the rise of the great centralized bureaucratic empires of the Mughals, Safavids and Ottomans over the course of the sixteenth century, these transregional intellectual communities, and their weblike formation of a Persianate—but also Turkic, albeit in a smaller scale—politico-religio-literary ecumene must have been the ideological powerhouse that Alexandrine political enterprises relied on.

The ecumenic biographical compendia and their expanded translations were a characteristic genre of this era, shared across “borders” where territorial, linguistic, cultural and confessional borders were yet relatively fluid. Thus, in 927/1520-21, i.e., only two years before Qazvini's and one year before Fakhri's expanded translations of Navai's *Mecālis*, the Ottoman author Lamii Çelebi (d. 1532) completed an expanded Turkish translation of the Timurid luminary Abd al-Rahman Jami's *Nafahāt al-uns* (1478), a comprehensive biographical dictionary of Near Eastern and Central Asian Sufis.¹⁴⁵ Lamii added Sufis active in Rumi lands but also some from other regions whom Jami failed to include. An earlier translator of the *Nafahāt*, into

¹⁴⁵ See the relevant essays in d'Hubert and Papas, eds., *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*.

Chagatai Turkish, was none other than Ali Shir Navai, the head of the cycle of poets' biographies discussed so far. Jami's work did not get translated in the Safavid milieu, presumably due to the well-known confessional polarity; and the reverse direction of the translation in the two textual cycles is to be noted. But otherwise, the main gesture of these two Timurid biographical dictionaries and their expanded translations are the same: They map regional and transregional intellectual networks, expanding the map spatially and chronologically at each step. However, beyond recording extant communities, they create a new, exhaustive totality that was not in any historical individual's ken until the textual act rendered it comprehensible. These cycles thus connected Timurid Harat, Safavid Tabriz, Ottoman Istanbul and slightly later, Uzbek Harat,¹⁴⁶ to one another.

However, the age of the expanded translations of Timurid biographical works would soon come to an end, at least among the Ottomans, with changes in the nature of the Ottoman state and the intellectual cadres the empire worked with. With the gradual calcification of territorial and confessional borders, the major bureaucratic growth and restructuration associated with the reign of Süleyman, and ascendancy of an official culture in Turkish carried by homegrown Turkish speakers, the Rumi/Ottoman-framed biographical works, the imperial *tezkiye* and the *Al-Shaqā'iq* cycle, would reign supreme.

¹⁴⁶ Another Persian translation of the *Mecālis* was executed during the reign of Sultan Din Muhammad bin Jani Beg, the Uzbek of ruler of parts of Khorasan and, for a short time, Harat at the end of the sixteenth century.

2.2 Garibi's miscellany (circa 1560?)

2.2.1 Introduction: The rise of sectarianism

The former Ottoman subject Garibi's miscellany (ca. 1560), a multi-genre anthology of his own prose and verse works including a *tezkiye* of Rumi poets, is very different from the cycles of Timurid biographical dictionaries and their expanded translations in that it reflects a highly partisan view of the world as divided between “us” and “them”. In his political engagement to the Safavid state and militant championship of Twelver Shi'a, Garibi might have more in common with Aşık Çelebi and other proud Sunni Ottomans of his day than the ideologically indifferent, or reticent, Qazvini or Harati of the early 1520s. Both authors wrote at a time when the confessional and political polarity between the Ottomans and Safavids had intensified to the degree that official ideologies and quotidian discursive practices of the elites on either side entailed a far greater degree of hostility. Likewise, in contrast to the thin, and inevitably short-lived, layers of conquest-based Alexandrine (or Chingissid and Timurid) “world empire” enterprises that overspread local identities and political allegiances without attempting to transform and homogenize them, the “age of confessionalization” produced authors like Aşık Çelebi and Garibi who were interested in making the “other” they wanted to incorporate into their system look like themselves. Thus, Aşık Çelebi Ottomanized and Sunnitized preeminent Acem court officials of Süleyman's reign, as we saw above; he was embarrassed, evidently like many others in his milieu, by Fethullah Arifi Çelebi and Şahkulu's origins at the Safavid court (and possibly also their former Shi'i faith) and actively suppressed this phase of their biographies. In a parallel gesture, Garibi portrays Ottoman poets, including some of the most canonical ones, as devotees of Ali b. Abi Talib and the Prophet's Household, if not outright Shi'is and/or Safavid sympathizers. His

biographical work boils down to the idea that the land of Rum and its best human resources could well become part of the Safavid Empire, since they already were in spirit.

Yet, the distinctiveness of Garibi's project is also clear. The Ottoman imperial *tezkiye* is a product of the cultural “inward turn” (see “Introduction”), that is, the waning of the hegemony of transregional poetries—mainly in Persian, but also in Eastern Turkic—and the rapid flowering of Rumi Turkish poetry beginning circa 1500. *Dīvān* poets before this new phase of vernacularization relied mostly on a relatively small corpus of “cosmopolitan” model texts by chronologically and/or spatially distant grand masters like Sadi of Shiraz (d. 1292), Jami (d. 1492), and Ali Shir Navai (d. 1501), which they translated, adapted, explicated and emulated. The new boom in Turkish *dīvān* poetry, on the other hand, was embedded in the quotidian life of the community of Rumi poets and deeply attuned to the local social and political context. In other words, a poetic culture where purely textual ties weighed heavy gave way to an environment where face-to-face sociability and patron-client relations constituted the main channels of interaction. The Ottoman imperial *tezkiye* literature, too, preoccupied itself exclusively with the here-and-now of the vibrant Rumi vernacular poetry scene and displayed little interest in Turkic poetry beyond Ottoman borders. Even if there must have existed local circles who followed the latest developments in Western Turkish high-register poetry under the Safavids or in Chagatai poetry under the later Timurid and Chinggisid kingdoms in Central Asia, these transregional connections did not make it to the *tezkiye* literature in any significant way.¹⁴⁷ However, at a time when Ottomans' attention to Turkic

¹⁴⁷ It seems that Fuzuli is the last non-Rumi Turkic poet, in this case one composing mostly in the Azeri dialect, whose oeuvre as a whole left a lasting imprint on Rumi Turkish poetry. His influence

poetry outside their territories was waning, Garibi and the particular Safavid stance he represents continued to espouse the ecumenic politico-cultural mode they had inherited from the Timurid era, but with a different content. Whereas the Timurid-dominated trans-regional culture of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was mainly in Persian and only secondarily in Chagatai (Eastern Turkish), Garibi envisioned an Oghuzid (Western Turkish) linguistic, cultural and politico-religious continuum in the Near East under Safavid rule. His work may also be reflecting the existence of an interest in Ottoman poetry at the court of Tahmasb I, which fits in with the early sixteenth-century phenomenon of an internationalized Turkic/Turkish poetic culture, including Ottoman *dīvān* poetry, across different Near Eastern Turkish-speaking courts, as discussed briefly under the rubric “a Turkic poetic ecumene” in the conclusion of this chapter.

Importantly, Garibi's miscellany as whole, and not just the *tezkiye* that is the focus of this section, also reflects a very different attitude in the key problem of the relationship between worldly and Sufi poetries than the view that dominates the imperial *tezkiyes*. Garibi's insistence that worldly amorous poetry is justified only as long as it is intended as a metaphor for divine love is going to be treated in the next section, together with Hacı Kemal's and Qazvini's positions in this matter, so that a picture, markedly heterogeneous in self, will begin to emerge of what preceded the imperial *tezkiyes*' paradigm of carefully separating the domains of these two major poetic fields. In brief, with respect to both his religio-cultural Turkic ecumenism and his insistence on the unity of Sufi and courtly erotic poetries, I see Garibi's vision of

probably began with the Ottoman capture of Baghdad from the Safavids in 1534 and Fuzuli's first contacts there with Sultan Süleyman and Ottoman elites. Hatai (Shah İsmail) also had a lasting impact on Rumi Kizilbash-Alevi liturgical culture but not on *dīvān* poetry. Nor did any Chagatai poet after Navai had a comparable influence.

poetry as belonging to a passing age, at least among the Ottomans, in spite of the relatively late date of his miscellany.

2.2.2 Garibi's life and his miscellany

Garibi (born ca. 1509), a former Ottoman subject who defected to the Safavids, is unknown except for a mixed verse and prose miscellany of his own authorship, lodged at the Majlis Library in Tehran.¹⁴⁸ An edition that comprises Garibi's poems spread across this manuscript and the short *tezkiye* of Rumi poets found therein has been published in Iran.¹⁴⁹ An edition of the *tezkiye* section has also been published in Turkey.¹⁵⁰

Polemical and propagandistic in tone and spirit, this miscellany is dedicated to championing Twelver Shi'a against Sunna and the Safavids against the Ottomans. The autobiographical sections of the work show that Garibi came from a highly learned family of Kizilbash Sufis based in Bozüyük (in the modern province of Muğla), one which descended from the defunct house of Menteşe that ruled the region until about the middle of the fifteenth century. After receiving some education in religious sciences and Sufism from his father, Garibi became a pupil to İbrahim Şahidi Dede (d. 1550), the famous Mevlevi who authored the extremely popular Persian-Turkish verse dictionary for young learners, *Tuhfe-i Şāhidī* (920/1514). When Garibi was about eleven years old, his father Muslihuddin, the leader of his

¹⁴⁸ Garibi, *Dīvān-ı Ğarībī*, Kitabkhana-i Majlis-i Shura-yi İslami, Tehran, no. 7012. This is a later copy from 998/1590; see the catalogue information on the library's web page for the digitized version of the MS; accessed October 02, 2021, https://dlib.ical.ir/faces/search/bibliographic/biblioFullView.jspx?_afPfm=-bt41uo1i2. The leaves of the codex were clearly disbound and then reassembled, as there are many misplaced and missing leaves. For the sake of convenience, I will use the page numbers occurring on each page, added after the miscellany took its present form.

¹⁴⁹ Garibi, ed. Sadiq, *Dīvān-i Ğharībī va Taḏkira-i Majālis-i Shu'arā-yi Rūm*.

¹⁵⁰ Garibi, ed. Babacan, *Tezkire*.

clan, was arrested on charges of heresy and executed in Istanbul a month before the death of Selim I; one substantial section in the miscellany is devoted to Garibi's father's tribunal and defense speech before a jury of hostile Ottoman mullahs, clearly an imaginative reconstruction that reads as a scholarly defense of Twelver Shi'a. After the execution, the clan was exiled to the Teke region, and Muslihuddin's sons were forcibly taken into the service of the Ottoman sultan as soldiers, including an older brother of Garibi, Lutfullah Çelebi, who was placed in the imperial cavalry. Garibi may have shared the same fate, since about eight years after his father's death he was in Istanbul during Sheikh İbrahim Gülşeni's summons from Egypt in 1528-29; moreover, his *tezkiye* shows that he knows quite a few cavalry soldiers (*sipāhī*), both imperial and timariot, who he might have met either during his service in the Ottoman army or in Iran after they had defected like Garibi. After 1528-29, we find Garibi writing his miscellany to be presented to Shah Tahmasb I (r. 1525-76).

In addition to the numerous poems that eulogize Shah Tahmasb, the miscellany includes references to the Shah's building projects, which allows us to roughly date the work to the latter part of his reign. The work's organization into four chapters, each representing a season, closely resembles that of another work likewise dedicated to Tahmasb and his gardens, Abdi Bayk Shirazi's *Jannat-i Adn* (Garden of Eden, 967/1559-60).¹⁵¹ The identity of theme and form suggests that the two works might have been composed in a competitive context; this would indicate a completion date for Garibi's work around the same year.

The miscellany offers a unique window into the literary and scholarly sophistication of Anatolian Kizilbash elites. Rural Kizilbash clans are more

¹⁵¹ Losensky, "The Palace of Praise."

commonly associated in scholarship with the predominantly oral Turkic folk tradition in syllabic verse and its mystical offshoot known as *abdāl* poetry. However, poetry of this kind does not occur in the miscellany. Instead, the work, clearly representing a broader milieu in which it partakes, draws on the same classical Persianate mystico-literary tradition that informs Ottoman *dīvān* poetry, albeit with characteristic accents of its own. In the circles Garibi belongs to, Rumi's lyrics play a foundational role, more than any other classical figure. The ghazel, or the love lyric, which took a relatively more temporal course of development among the Ottomans preserves here its strong connections to Sufism (see below for more detail on the role of Rumi and the Mevleviyye in Garibi's miscellany, as well as a general discussion of the problem of Sufi versus worldly conceptions of the ghazal). The love lyric is represented in the miscellany mainly by Garibi's mini *dīvān*, embedded in the fourth and final chapter ("autumn") though his ghazels occur throughout the work. Encomiastic lyrics, i.e., qasidas, however, are not included in the *dīvān* but are placed in thematically relevant places, mostly in the opening and closing parts of the "seasons"/"chapters" (*faşl*) where Tahmasb's gardens and pavilions are described and eulogized. What might be described as Alid devotional and liturgical poetry also occurs throughout, both by Garibi and others such as Shah Hatai and Shah Nimat Allah Vali. *Meşnevî* form is used in lengthy didactic or descriptive pieces. In addition to poetry, artistic prose adorns the chapter introductions; elsewhere simpler styles of expression can be seen. Garibi, like his father before him, appears to be proficient in Arabic and Persian, judging by the many religious, scholarly and literary quotations in these languages. Garibi's father Hacı Muslihuddin was a highly learned man. He had built for himself a library-cum-study-cum-cloister, an independent structure in the garden of their home in Bozüyük. There, we are told, he worked on an exegesis

of the Quran, consulting for the purpose the great works of past scholars and mystics. He would also immerse himself in the ecstatic poetry and hagiographies of saints (*budelā*). In Garibi's account of the trial that led to Muslihuddin's execution, Ottoman mullahs address him with his penname "Mullah Halimi," purportedly recognizing him as both a scholar and a poet. Garibi himself appears to have reproduced this intellectual profile. In several pieces that revolve around doctrinal issues, such as his father's defiant speech at the trial, the story of a Jew who decided to convert to Islam but was unsure about what sect (*mezheb*) to choose (titled *Hikāyet-i Yūḥannā*),¹⁵² and another story where Ali b. Abi Talib boasts his superiority over Abrahamic prophets, Garibi displays his knowledge of the Quran, the hadith and scholarly literature, an analysis of which is yet to be undertaken.

All in all, Garibi's learning and literary culture is not too far off a "mainstream" Ottoman gentleman's *bildung* and that must be one main reason why he was interested in appropriating Ottoman *dīvān* poets into the Safavid cause. The dialectal features of Garibi's language are likewise to be analyzed by experts, but it appears to be in Garibi's own native Rumi idiom. A few spelling quirks do occur, such as [ñ] being written with nun+kaf, instead of with kaf alone, the Rumi way. The sixteenth century corresponded to the beginning of the bifurcation between Rumi and Azeri dialects and writing conventions, and Garibi's miscellany attests to the fact that Rumi Turkish was fully intelligible at Tahmasb's court. This linguistic continuity must have been a key aspect of the religio-literary continuum between Iran and Rum that Garibi had in mind.

¹⁵² Csirkés, "Popular Religiosity."

2.2.3 Garibi's *tezkiye* of Rumi poets

Garibi's small *tezkiye* of Rumi poets with Alid loyalties is found on pages 271-325, excepting the four misplaced leaves between pages 284-291. The entry right before the text breaks off on page 283, that on Nizami Çelebi, is incomplete. We know this because Garibi always gives the entire piece when he announces a ghazel (*bu añuñ eñ 'ārından bir gazeldür*), yet here there are only three couplets with the signature couplet missing. The *tezkiye* text resumes on page 292 with the final lines of an otherwise lost entry, which must belong to Halili of Diyarbekir, the Sufi sheikh who authored the mystical *mesnevî Fırkatnâme* (876 /1471-72), judging by the ghazel couplet quoted.¹⁵³ (There is, however, the caveat that Garibi can misattribute poems, as in a striking example involving Rumi's Turkish poetry, discussed below.) In any case, one or more leaves are definitely missing between 283 and 292. Likewise, the end of the *tezkiye* comes rather abruptly at the bottom of the page, with no concluding words or transition to the next section in the miscellany. Nevertheless, on the basis of the roughly chronological order of the *tezkiye*, we can conjecture that the lost leaves are probably not too many: There is a small chronological leap between the group of poets before the text break and after (from early to mid/late fifteenth century), and the death of the last poet in the work (Deli Birader, d. circa 1535), which Garibi is aware of, more or less represents the chronological limit of the *tezkiye* as a whole. Garibi also knows about the death of İbrahim Gülşeni (d. 1533), but not of Zati's (d. 1546). The entry on Fevri, whom Garibi introduces as a skilled cavalryman (*sipāhī*) from Akşehir in Karaman, is perhaps the clearest instance of Garibi's incognizance of developments after the late 1530s. This individual is no

¹⁵³ Kavaklıyazı, "15. Yüzyıl Şairlerinden Diyarbakırlı Halilî." For the couplet in question, see pp. 32-33.

doubt the celebrated poet and member of the Ottoman ulema of the future years by the same penname (Ahmed Fevri Efendi, d. 1571). The single ghazel couplet Garibi quotes is found in manuscripts of Fevri's *dīvān*.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, Fevri's close friend Aşık Çelebi describes him as '*Alevī* and *peyrev-i Muḥammed 'Alī*'; Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi appears to refer to the same philo-Alid disposition when he introduces the poet as "*mevālīnün mevālīsindendür*," playing on the two meanings of the word *mevālī* as "high-ranking members of the ulema" (plural of *mevlā*, lord) and as "a follower/followers of 'Alī" (see below). In other words, Ottoman imperial biographers' descriptions of Fevri's religio-mystical orientation accord with Garibi's. Aşık Çelebi also mentions Fevri's early career as a cavalry soldier (*sipāhī*). If he was a child levy (*devşirme*) collected from Albania, as some sources say, it is plausible that Fevri spent his first years in central Anatolia as Garibi claims, under the tutelage of a Turkish Muslim family. In any case, his penchant for learning was quickly recognized by his masters, and he soon entered the path of '*ilm*. Fevri's first job as a professor was in 954/1547-48 at a twenty-*akça* madrasa,¹⁵⁵ and he eventually rose as high as qadi of Damascus and professor at Sahn. Garibi appears to be entirely ignorant of Fevri's later training and career as a scholar and jurist, which again points to the late 1530s as the chronological end of Garibi's grasp of the Ottoman poetic scene. He must have left the country around this time and composed his *tezkiye* and other historical sections of his miscellany later in the 1550s, remembering and

¹⁵⁴ Fevri's *dīvān* has not been edited, but his selected poems are printed in several publications. Studies on Fevri cite less than ten manuscripts of the *dīvān* in Turkish libraries. The following MSS of Fevri's *dīvān*, randomly chosen, have been consulted for the couplet in question: Edirne Selimiye Library, Selimiye Yazmalar 2301; Süleymaniye Library, Lala İsmail 00474; National Library (Milli Kütüphane), Milli Kütüphane Yazmalar Koleksiyonu, 06 Mil Yz A 730.

¹⁵⁵ Atayî, *Hadā'iku'l-hakā'ik*. The other sources used here to reconstruct Fevri's biography are AÇ, HÇ, and TDVİA entry on Fevri by Mehmet Kalpaklı.

recounting the Ottoman world as it was when he—and likely also his informants—left the country.¹⁵⁶

Garibi's *tezkire* diverges from Ottoman imperial *tezkires* in intriguing ways. First and foremost is his representation of well-known canonical poets, including court poets like Veliyüddinzade Ahmed Paşa, as sharing the same philo-Alid, Shi'a-leaning mystical pieties that innervated the Safavid enterprise. He even puts viziers and members of the Ottoman dynasty under this rubric. The author has a very particular vocabulary set for describing the Ottoman poets he treats as closer to Shi'a than Sunnism, the official denomination of the Ottoman state.¹⁵⁷ As mentioned above, although his miscellany as a whole is dedicated to championing Shi'a and the Safavid enterprise against Sunna and the Ottoman state, Garibi does not normally characterize his Rumi poets as Shi'is. Rather, he deploys a wide range of terms associated with Sufism and devotion for Ali b. Abi Talib and the Household of the Prophet Muhammad (*ehl-i beyt*), which experts working with Kizilbash and Sufi sources of the era should recognize as familiar.

The sheer variety of the terms, extending from the particular to the most general and each bearing unique shades of meaning, is remarkable. Some poets are associated with a particular denomination (*mezheb*),¹⁵⁸ mystical brotherhood (*ṭarīkat*),¹⁵⁹ or disposition (*meşreb*),¹⁶⁰ though it should be kept in mind that the

¹⁵⁶ . . . işbu bende-i ğarīb Rûm vilâyetinde şu 'arâ . . . ki ba 'zınuñ hıdmetine irüp ve ba 'zınuñ hıdmetine iren ve ahlvâllerinden haberdâr olan gerçekler naklinden işidüp . . . Garibi, *Tezkire*, 65.

¹⁵⁷ See Derin Terzioğlu's survey of Garibi's nomenclature of philo-Alid groups, to which my discussion here is greatly indebted. Terzioğlu, "Confessional Ambiguity."

¹⁵⁸ E.g., Mevlana Hasan Halife is *Şî'a-i pâk*; Garibi, *Dīvân-ı Ğarībî*, 322; Garibi, *Tezkire*, 95.

¹⁵⁹ E.g., Şahidi Dede is *Mevlevî*; Garibi, *Dīvân-ı Ğarībî*, 322; Garibi, *Tezkire*, 95. Caferi-i Meddah is *Edhemî*; Garibi, *Dīvân-ı Ğarībî*, 301; Garibi, *Tezkire*, 78.

¹⁶⁰ E.g., Vedai *Nâşirîlik meşrebi ile zıkr olunur*; Garibi, *Dīvân-ı Ğarībî*, 305; Garibi, *Tezkire*, 81. Garibi is perhaps referring to the Nasiriyya school of the Shi'a branch Zaydiyya. For the well-known early poet Aḥmedi, author of *İskendernâme*, Garibi comments *Mevâlî-meşreb añılır ammâ Hüseyñîveş fehm olunur*; Garibi, *Dīvân-ı Ğarībî*, 281; Garibi, *Tezkire*, 69.

distinctions between these types or levels of devotional affiliation were markedly fuzzy in the period Garibi was writing.¹⁶¹ Garibi's obvious effort to mention by name these multifarious positions on the Alid Sufi-Shi'i spectrum might have been meant to emphasize the breadth and pervasiveness of the Safavid coalition. There are also several broad terms he uses especially when he cannot acknowledge a specific group identity but also, frequently, alongside the *mezheb*, *tarikat*, or *meşreb* identifications mentioned above. These include *ehl-i dil* (people of the heart), *ehl-i imān* (people of faith), *derdmendler* (sufferers), but also *muhibb-i hānedān* (lover of the Household) which appears to be applicable to non-Shi'i devotees of Ali as well.¹⁶² Yet, among such broad terms the two that crop up most frequently are *Şūfî* and *mevālî*, along with derivatives such as *Şūfîzāde*, *Şūfî-dost*, *mevālîveş*, and *mevālî-dost*. *Mevālî* is a general term that refers to philo-Alids and is used quite profusely by Garibi.¹⁶³ The term might also have had a more narrow use as referring to Shi'a as such, especially among the Ottomans.¹⁶⁴ Derin Terzioğlu interprets the term *Şūfî* as used by Garibi to primarily mean “a Safavid devotee”, and not just any member of a Sufi brotherhood, complementing clear instances of such usage found in Garibi's *tezkiye*, often in contexts of persecution by Ottoman authorities,¹⁶⁵ with parallel evidence from contemporary Kizilbash-Alevi poetry and Ottoman official documents. However, as Terzioğlu also points out, the comprehensiveness of the term *Şūfî* was undeniable,

¹⁶¹ The following words by Latifi, for example, capture the loose and interchangeable manner these terms could be used at the time: *Rumilinden bir sipāhî ve meşrebi şāhîdür. Abdāllar meşrebin ve dedeler mezhebin ve Fazlullāh Hürûfî âyinin kullanurdu*; LAT2, 68b.

¹⁶² See for example Terzioğlu's explanation on the philo-Alid connotation of the seemingly neutral term *ehl-i imān*. Terzioğlu, “Confessional Ambiguity,” 576, fn. 59.

¹⁶³ The term *mevālî*, its meaning, possible origins and use in sixteenth-century Alevi-Kizilbash and mainstream Ottoman sources is discussed at some length in Terzioğlu “Confessional Ambiguity,” 576-77.

¹⁶⁴ E.g., in his entry on Vali, a handsome young janissary, Aşık Çelebi comments that fear of Vali's *zülfikār*-like (like Ali b. Abi Talib's double-pointed sword) glances caused many Sunnis to turn *mevālî*: *Ol 'ālî-şānuñ Zül'-feķār-ı ğamzesinüñ hayfından niçe Sünnî mevālî oldu*. AÇ, 550.

¹⁶⁵ e.g., ‘*Osmānlu tāvîfesi şūfîlik isnādı ile . . . haylî eziyyet virdükleri sebebeden*. Garibi, *Tezkire*, 95.

and this compelled Ottoman authorities to switch, from the 1510s onwards, to *Kızılbaş* to separate the Safavid supporters and other kinds of “deviant” Sufis from those they did not seek to incriminate. Garibi's use of the term too retains some ambiguity, but in a different way. He seems to also use the term to generally refer to Alid loyalty, more or less in equivalence with *muhibb-i hānedān*, *mevālī*, and the other general terms denoting a philo-Alid sensibility I have mentioned above. This use, however, appears near exclusively in the form “son of a Sufi” (*Şūfī oğlu*, *Şūfīzāde*; in one instance, *Şūfī müderris kızı*),¹⁶⁶ and might be linked with the significance of the familial aspect in the Kizilbash-Shi'i identity, as exemplified by Garibi's own biography and the Safavid order's leading family. Thus, for example, the early fifteenth-century Germiyanid-Ottoman poet Şeyhi, the well-known author of *Hüsrev ü Şīrīn*, is described as *Bursa şehrinde Şūfīzāde-i mevālī-meşreb ve muhibb-i hānedān-ı hūb-sīret yiğit imiş*. Hamzavi, the legendary figure believed to have authored the *Hamzanāme* epic cycle, is also said to be the son of a Sufi. From a later period, Revani and Mihri, both very well-known and court-connected poets, are characterized in the same way. It is highly dubious that Garibi had access to actual biographical information on these poets' fathers as he gives no further particulars; more likely, he must have simply dropped in the phrase to link, in the most general and vague manner, famous Rumi poets with no known Shi'i-leaning affiliations to the ethos of his *tezkire*.

In many cases *mevālī*, too, is used in this way. Sometimes, Garibi also uses, for some individuals, combinations of the above terms with “-dost” as in *Şūfī-dost*, *mevālī-dost*, and *muhibb-dost*; these terms may mean that though not *Şūfīs*, *mevālīs*,

¹⁶⁶ The only exception appears to be in the phrase *şūfī geçinür* in Zātī's biography; Garibi, *Dīvān-ı Garībī*, 316, Garibi, *Tezkire*, 90.

or *muhibbs* themselves, these individuals were sympathetic towards the followers of Alidism and possibly also to the Safavid enterprise.

Finally, the recourse to a poet's *seyyid* identity seems to similarly operate like a “last-resort” excuse for including a canonical poet, as in the case of Veliyyüddinzade Ahmed Paşa, whose biography, here and in other sources, includes no trace of a mystical orientation, just like Şeyhi, Revani and Mihri above.¹⁶⁷ Thus, while some poets' Alid loyalties are confirmed by imperial *tezkires*, as in the case of Fevri, there are many others who are inserted to the picture, often through the vaguer identity markers. After all, it would be hard to prove that Şeyhi is not a devotee of the Household, since in this era many Sunnis also venerated, Hasan and Hüseyin in addition to Ali.

Garibi's picture of the Ottoman realm in the early decades of the sixteenth century is far more inquisitorial than what we can find in more mainstream Ottoman sources. While the predicament of his father and clan, told in the section *Hikāyet-i Hacı Muşlihuddīn*, is less surprising given their Kizilbash identity, the *tezkiye* section refers to the persecution of well-known and highly-respected members of the Ottoman establishment, of which no Ottoman source gives a clue. About İshak Çelebi (d. 1538), professor at the prestigious Sahn colleges and later magistrate of Damascus, Garibi relates that “Sunni mullahs” were jealous of him and mounted a smear campaign saying that he was a Shi'i. Though Garibi nowhere openly affirms İshak's identity as a Shi'i, his wording makes it clear that İshak was not one of these “Sunni mullahs” who were, according to Garibi, by far inferior to İshak as scholars.

¹⁶⁷ Trying to rationalize Ahmed Paşa's inclusion in the *tezkiye*, Garibi also adds that the court poet's *dīvān* is highly regarded by “people of the heart” (*ehl-i diller*). Another *seyyid* is Fahrüddin, a scribe of the court, whose only marker as a non-Sunni is his *seyyid* identity.

Similarly, the Mevlevi dervish Şahidi Dede (d. 1550), author of *Tuḥfe-i Şāhidī*, also suffered persecution, according to Garibi.¹⁶⁸

Garibi's portrayal of the Ottoman establishment as pervaded by philo-Alid, Shi'a-leaning Sufism and of an atmosphere of witch-hunt that also afflicted members of the Ottoman learned elite cannot be simply written off as propagandistic fiction. No doubt, some of Garibi's reports may not stand fact checking, and he does appear to have tweaked some biographies to serve his purposes. Nevertheless, his account, read with caveats, may, in turn, help reveal the acts of suppression that shaped mainstream Ottoman sources' representation of members of the Ottoman elite of this rather murky period. Garibi's report on Şahidi Dede, for one, deserves to be taken seriously since the latter was Garibi's teacher and a fellow native of Menteşe.

Abdūlbaki Gölpınarlı identifies—uniquely, according to Derin Terzioğlu¹⁶⁹—an Alid streak in the Mevleviyye. Gölpınarlı's survey of this line from Rumi's grandson Ulu Arif Çelebi (d. 1320) into the modern times lays out significant overlaps with *abdāl* mysticism, especially with Melami, Kalenderi and Bektaşī style antinomian practices (alcohol and drug consumption, shaving of all facial hair, itinerancy, barefoot walking, etc.).¹⁷⁰ Şahidi Dede's own master in the Mevleviye was Divane Mehmed Çelebi, one of the most extravagant representatives of this *abdāl*-like philo-Alidism within the order, as the sobriquet *Dīvāne* (crazed) was probably meant to evoke.¹⁷¹

Mehmed Çelebi venerated the Twelve Imams in his poetry and visited the shrines of

¹⁶⁸ *Ammā 'Osmanlı t̄ayīfesi Şūfīlik isnādī ile ol nā-murād evkātna ḥaylī eziyyet virdükleri sebebeden kendözini 'uzlet ü ferāḡat kūşesine çeküb ve Meşnevī-i Mollā-yı Rūm peyrevliḡin idüb nazīre yazmaḡa meşgūl idi.* Garibi, *Tezkire*, 95.

¹⁶⁹ Terzioğlu, "Confessional Ambiguity," 577.

¹⁷⁰ Gölpınarlı, *Mevlānā'dan Sonra*, 199-243; see also the sections on Ulu Arif and Divane Mehmed Çelebis.

¹⁷¹ On the confusion about the sobriquet being *Dīvāne* or *Dīvānī*, see Gölpınarlı, *Mevlānā'dan Sonra*, 103 and 111.

the Imams in Iraq and Khorasan with a large retinue of Bektaşî and Mevlevî dervishes. From his visit to the shrine of the eighth Imam Ali al-Rida in Mashhad, he brought home many relics and souvenirs, such as a big cauldron which was used in Divane's own Mevlevî lodge (in Karahisar, modern day Afyon) to cook *'aşûre*, the ritual soup communally consumed in commemoration of the Karbala tragedy and other important events in Alid history. Pilgrimage to the shrines of the Imams, and especially that of Imam Ali al-Rida appears to be a common practice among the Alid Sufis of the era, as also exemplified by the travels of Yusuf Sineçak, another well-known Alid, *abdāl*-like Mevlevî of the period, and Garibi's *tezkiye* where the eighth Imam's shrine plays a key role in the biographies of Nizami of Karaman and Dede Ömer Ruşeni (see below). Şahidi and his son Şühudi are similarly remembered in later Mevlevî sources as devotees of Ali and followers of the *ṭarīkat-ı 'ışkiyye-i Mevleviyye* (the Mevlevî path of love), a phrase that refers in Mevlevî sources to the ecstatic esotericism drawing on Rumi's love lyrics in the *Dīvān-i Shams* (or *Dīvān-i Kabīr*).¹⁷² More directly relevant from the perspective of the Ottoman authorities, however, would have been the proselytizing and organizational activities of Divane Mehmed and his *ḫalīfes* including Şahidi. Divane Mehmed is known as one of the most energetic spreaders of Mevlevism and founder of numerous new lodges in Western Anatolian towns and on Aegean islands. The final portion of Şahidi's Persian mystical *meşnevî Gulshan-i Asrār* is autobiographical and provides a glimpse of the author's lengthy travels with his sheikh, although he does not specify locations. What he does convey, however, is a culture of itinerancy among these Mevlevis and other dervish groups in Western Anatolia as well as a village-level penetration of

¹⁷² Gölpınarlı, *Mevlânâ'dan Sonra*, 208-209.

Mevlevism.¹⁷³ Şahidi's account of his own phase of itinerant preaching before he joined the Mevlevi brotherhood mentions by name many villages across Western Anatolia as loci of Sufi activity, apparently with rural populations already exposed to mystical currents. Gölpınarlı does not shy away from designating Divane Mehmed as an Imami Shi'i and wonders how come he was not persecuted by Ottoman authorities.¹⁷⁴ Given the Imami sympathies of Divane Mehmed and his cohort's village-level organizational efforts in Western Anatolia at a time of intensive Kizilbash activity, Ottoman authorities might have indeed grown suspicious of Şahidi as Garibi asserts.

As for İshak Çelebi, although Ottoman sources never implicate him with anything like Shi'a or Safavid sympathies, his *abdāl*-like behavior and temperament, extraordinary for a scholar and jurist of his level, is routinely noted in Ottoman sources. İshak's refusal to wear headgear, which was commonly associated with abdalism, had become his hallmark, so much so that his portrait in the illustrated copy of Aşık Çelebi's *Meşā'irü's-şu'arā* represents him this way.¹⁷⁵ He is also known to have never married his entire life, haranguing to his friends on the moral-mystical hazards of marital/sexual relations with women, and was openly given to pederasty. In the context of his love affairs and drinking, Aşık Çelebi describes him as “flexible in matters of religion” (*meşrebi küşāde*) and reports that in the year 909, i.e., 35 years

¹⁷³ Şimşekler, “Şāhidī İbrāhim Dede'nin Gülşen-i Esrār'ı”; Şahidi's memoirs, starting with the story of his own family, are found on pp. 104-142 in the edited text (in Persian). For Turkish summaries of the section that narrates Divane Mehmed and Şahidi's meetings and travels, see Şimşekler, “Şāhidī İbrāhim Dede'nin Gülşen-i Esrār'ı” 19-27 and 83-87. Gölpınarlı also provides a summary of Şahidi's account of the lengthy expeditions he went on together with his sheikh across Western Anatolian towns and villages; Gölpınarlı, *Mevlānā'dan Sonra*, 104-109.

¹⁷⁴ Gölpınarlı, *Mevlānā'dan Sonra*, 114-118.

¹⁷⁵ Aşık Çelebi describes him as *Şahn-ı Semāniyye'nün baş açuk mollası* (AÇ, 333). *Dīvān* poetry of the era includes many attestations to the association between abdalism and the shunning of head-dress. E.g.: *Ben Hayālī baş açuk bir Rūm eli abdālīyam / Tekye-i hayretde Mecnūn ihtiyārumdur benüm* (Hayali Beg, *Hayālī Bey Dīvānı*, 294); *Biz pā-bürehne baş açuk abdālīyuz anuñ / Ol şoydī Zātīyā bizi ol eyledi terāş* (AÇ, 1595).

before his death, he took a formal renunciatory oath (*tevbe*) to quit both of these religiously prohibited practices. The first-person account of the oath Aşık Çelebi puts in İshak's mouth unequivocally expresses that his pederasty, at least before 909, went much beyond the widespread practice of gazing at and adoring boys' faces especially (known as *şāhid-bāzī*) and entailed sexual relations, of which Sunni elites often accused itinerant *abdāls* like the Kalenderis.¹⁷⁶ Besides his socialization in Ottoman learned and political elite circles—which included Sultan Selim, for whom İshak served as boon companion and authored a Selimname—İshak clearly mingled with antinomian dervishes. One is Yusuf Sineçak, the Alid Mevlevi mentioned above, who would be seen chanting and dancing (*semā*) along as İshak rode on horseback to his madrasa post in Edirne; Aşık Çelebi implies İshak was in love with Sineçak.¹⁷⁷ Another of İshak's loves was Hüseyin, a sweets seller in the Edirne market, who is described in LAT2 as a Shi'a leaning Hurufi *abdāl*.¹⁷⁸ Muammayi, a renowned master of the verse conundrum (*mu'ammā*) during Selim I's reign, celebrated İshak's appointment to the Edirne *dārü'l-ḥadīṣ* with a chronogram; according to Latifi, he, too, was a Hurufi and had formerly traveled the East as part of celibate itinerant Kalenderi bands. Aşık Çelebi records an amusing anecdote featuring İshak Çelebi with a man known as Işık Kasım, a low-grade member of the ulema and an *abdāl* (*ışık*) in one. It must have been all these social relations in addition to his own *abdāl*-like habits and behavior that gave rise to the nickname “Baba İshak”¹⁷⁹ and prompted Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi to compare his celibacy to that of the *kalenderān*.

¹⁷⁶ Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 20-21, 130.

¹⁷⁷ Aşık Çelebi describes Yusuf's funeral. See also Gölpınarlı's discussion of Yusuf Sineçak.

¹⁷⁸ *Rumilinden bir sipāhī ve meşrebi Şāhīdūr. Abdāllar meşrebin ve dedeler mezhebin ve Fazlullāh Hurūfī āyinin kullanırdı*. LAT2, 68b.

¹⁷⁹ This nickname appears in Gazali's (Deli Birader) verse letter of greetings from Mecca to Istanbul's men of letters (c. 939/1532-33) as well as in AÇ; Kut (Alpay), “Gazālī'nin Mekke'den İstanbul'a Yolladığı,” 228. Kut does not recognize the identity of “Baba İshak” mentioned in the letter and

Thus, Garibi's representation of preeminent members of the Ottoman learned elite is not entirely without parallels or echoes in Ottoman sources, albeit in bits and pieces and as embedded in Ottoman authors' own "grand narratives". There is now a substantial scholarly literature on the concomitant processes of "confessionalization" in Safavid Iran and Ottoman Rum, which entailed the "disambiguation" of previously fluid or unmarked religious categories.¹⁸⁰ On the Ottoman side, the relatively non-normative, latitudinarian religious environment infused by versions of philo-Alid Sufism that allowed "eccentric" individuals like Fevri Efendi, İshak Çelebi and Molla Işık Kasım to flourish at the heart of the Ottoman religious establishment apparently survived into the early decades of the sixteenth century, though persecutory orthodoxy was also rising as a concurrent trend. Thus, the early decades of the sixteenth century produced many figures with ambivalent posterior images, lending themselves to being reframed as devout Sunnis in one context and as Kizilbashs or antinomian Sufis in another. As previously uncategorized religious beliefs and practices got to be isolated and renamed as designating a particular position on the emergent confessional matrix, individuals and entire communities became trophies in a war of identity politics. İshak Çelebi is Shi'itized by Garibi, but

thinks this is an obscure figure unrelated to poetry; Aşık Çelebi's reference to "Baba İshak" appears tangentially in the entry on Hüseyini (Emir Hüseyin Helvayi) with no additional identity markers; AÇ, 626. However, that Baba İshak is İshak Çelebi is confirmed, for example, by Atayi, *Hadā'iku'l-hakā'ik*, 515-516.

¹⁸⁰ The simultaneous rise of the two empires in rivalry and especially the shared nomadic rural population they sought to control have been seen as the main driver of this twin process of confessionalization. For the Ottoman side of the story other key factors such as the conquest of the Mamluk territories along with the caliphate, the rise of the ulema as a bureaucratized power group, and the Ottoman state's desire to exert greater control on the daily lives of its Sunni Muslim subjects in its core lands have also been cited. For overviews of these discussions and relevant bibliography, see Krstić, "Historicizing the Study of Sunni Islam" and Terzioğlu, "How to conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization." Also see the relevant essays in the volumes *Historicizing Sunni Islam* and *Entangled confessionalizations?* both edited by Krstić and Terzioğlu. For the concepts of confessional/religious "ambiguity" and "disambiguation" used in the context of the transformations in the Ottoman Empire and the broader Near East between roughly 1200 and 1700, see Woods, *The Aqqayunlu*; Terzioğlu, "Confessional Ambiguity."

also, if Garibi is to be believed, by his own scholar fellows at the Sahn. Imperial biographies from later decades, on the other hand, Sunnitize him, foregrounding his renunciation of alcohol and sexual relations with boys early in his life; and yet, the unmistakable apologetic tone in these latter accounts suggests an awareness of some kind of vulnerability or an actual attack he had faced.

Accusations or rumors of heresy (*ilhād*), Shi'ism/Kizilbashism (*rafz*) or Safavid sympathies that Garibi talks about were not a rarity among the Ottoman ruling class, especially in the early years of Süleyman's reign. One such smear campaign involved the *şehnāme*ci Fethullah Arifi Çelebi and the court's chief artist Şahkulu, both discussed above in the section on Qazvini's *Hasht Bihisht*. According to Aşık Çelebi, Şahkulu and an Acem friend of his, who Aşık says is known as a man of *rafz*, *sebb* (blasphemy), and *fisq* (moral perversion), compose and spread fake “nonsense verses” (*terzîk ebyât*) by Arifi's name in order to injure his reputation. The only time marker Aşık Çelebi offers for the possible date of this incident is that it happened *evâ'il-i hâlinde* (early in his life), which might be understood to mean in that specific point in the text either early on in Fethullah's career or before his tenure as official *şehnāme*ci. In any case, “the people of truth/the right path (*ehl-i haqq*)” are not tricked by “falsehood/heresy (*bâıl*)” and Arifi survives the attack unharmed. Aşık Çelebi's pregnant vocabulary indicates that the fabricated verses in question were meant to show Arifi to be a Kizilbash and/or Safavid sympathizer at a time when political and confessional tensions between the Ottomans and the Safavid were paramount and the Ottoman state persecuted unorthodox religious views; most probably, the attackers were also evoking memories of Fethullah's origins as Shah Ismail's secretary, as argued above in the section on Qazvini. However, even more interesting is the way Aşık Çelebi refrains from explicitly referring to the Kizilbash

question in relation to preeminent courtiers, just as he put into circulation biographical accounts that obfuscate their former careers at Ismail's court, as we have also seen the previous section.

Where members of the elite were concerned, accusations of heresy and Kizilbashism, i.e., pushing out of the Ottoman system, was one form of religious “disambiguation”, but this seems to be quite rare, with some concentration in the early part of Süleyman's reign. As evinced by imperial biographical literature, the predominant strategy appears to be the rehabilitation of early ambivalent figures into Ottoman Sunnism, especially from the middle of the century onward. This could even entail an apologism on behalf of individuals who had been executed, such as Molla Lutfi.¹⁸¹ First by Sehi Beg, but most forcefully by Taşköprülüzade, Lutfi's image was salvaged from the stigma of heresy by attributing the accusations of his fellow Sahn mullahs to their “jealousy” of a superior but complacent mullah. İshak Çelebi and Şahidi's legacies in the later Ottoman context were completely rehabilitated, ending up with only very oblique references to aspects of their life that were problematic at their own time. Aşık Çelebi appears to be the Sunnifying biographer par excellence along with Taşköprülüzade. We have already discussed his treatment of Fethullah Arifi and Şahkulu. In the case of Muammayi and Hüseyini, the Hurufi abdāls mentioned above as İshak Çelebi's friends, it is only thanks to Latifi that we can learn about their unorthodox *meşreb* and *mezhebs*. Aşık Çelebi adds no substantial biographical information to what is found in Latifi, and also leaves out the information on Hüseyini's abdalism and Hurufism, indulging instead in a lengthy passage of artistic prose built on figures of speech related with sweets and desserts as

¹⁸¹ See, for example, Taşköprülüzade's highly apologetic entry on Lütfi in *al-Shaqā'iq*.

Hüseyini was a sweets seller by trade. In his entry on Muammayi, Aşık achieves a similar feat by deleting his Hurufism and translating his Kalenderi itinerancy as “travels”; he also foregrounds Muammayi’s exceptional talent in the verse conundrum and relates the recognition he received from Selim I. Aşık Çelebi is in general very critical of *abdāls* and *ışıklı*s, whom he sees as useless and sinful scums of society.¹⁸² However, both Hüseyini and Muammayi were connected to the upper echelons of the Ottoman establishment, so Aşık Çelebi has apparently chosen to mute unpalatable aspects of their profiles and to rehabilitate them to fit the norms of Ottoman elite society of the 1560's. In either case, by that time, *abdāls*' status in society had to be disambiguated in one way or another: through persecution or public scorn and ridicule; or through a deliberate hewing of their images to conform to present-day norms. In relation to the Alevism of his close friend Fevri Efendi, who was mentioned above when discussing the chronological limit of Garibi's knowledge of the Ottoman poetic scene, Aşık Çelebi does not suppress information, but instead offers ingenious interpretations that would, hopefully, make Fevri's Alevism look less unseemly. Born a Christian (either a slave bought into the household of İskender Çelebi or a *devşirme*), Fevri is, according to Aşık, like Ali b. Abu Talib because both adopted Islam before they had reached puberty, in Fevri's case following a dream visitation by Ibn Arabi. Fevri is also like Muhammad being the son an Abdullah (*‘Abdullah oğlu*). He is thus a “follower of Muhammed Ali”. Aşık also plays on the homographs *‘Alevī* (Alid) and *‘ulvī* (superior), and associates Fevri's love of Ali with his superiority in *‘ilm* and *ma‘rifet*. While Aşık Çelebi felt compelled to account for Fevri's Alevism through some convoluted act of domesticating interpretation, later

¹⁸² See for example, Aşık Çelebi's delightful vitriol on the *abdāls* of the Seyyid Gazi shrine in modern-day Seyitgazi, Eskişehir; AÇ, 1081-84.

biographers, Hasan Çelebi and Mustafa Ali chose not to mention the topic at all, finally fully Sunnifying Fevri.

It was not, however, only members of the ulema within the Ottoman central establishment that were influenced by philo-Alid currents including some which also involved Safavid sympathies. Garibi discusses several members of the Ottoman ruling class in his biographical dictionary. Cezeri Kasım Paşa, vizier and chancellor under Bayezid II, Prince Cem, son of Mehmed II, and Prince Mahmud, son of Bayezid II are given entries and linked to the Alid ethos. For Kasım Paşa, Garibi highlights the Paşa's poems on the Twelve Imams and how under his protection Sufis wearing "Sultan Haydar's cap" (the special headgear believed to be designed for his followers by Sultan Haydar, sheikh of the Safavid *tariqa* and Shah İsmail's father) used to walk freely in Istanbul and perform their rituals as they pleased. For Prince Cem's devotional proclivities, he has no more to say than *mevālī-dost*, but elsewhere for Prince Mahmud, son of Bayezid II, he uses the much stronger characterization "sovereign of the spiritual realm" (literally, ruler of the throne of the spirit, *ma'nā tahtına hākim olan Sultān Maḥmūd*). As is well known, the era offers many examples of Ottoman princes who defected to the Safavids or built alliances with Safavid supporters among the Anatolian Turkoman tribes in order to fight the center or rival siblings that were seeking to eliminate them, including at least one prince's son who publicly converted to Kizilbashism. So, Garibi's references to such sympathies among Ottoman princes and viziers refers to a phenomenon recognized by imperial Ottoman sources, although the latter present these rapprochements exclusively as political alliances whereas Garibi foregrounds the pietistic aspect.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ Several sons and grandsons of Bayezid II allied with the Safavids or their local supporters, or became Kizilbash by faith. Talikizade Mehmed (d. 1606?) claims that Korkud became a follower

In addition, for a *tezkire* of such small size, Garibi's work includes a particularly high concentration of cavalry soldiers, both timariot and imperial; there is also one janissary and other individuals described as “son of a cavalryman” (*sipāhizāde*). As mentioned in his short biography above, Garibi's brothers were enlisted in the sultan's army after their father was executed and their clan exiled. That his *tezkire* includes a significant number of cavalymen is one indication, among several others, that Garibi too was, in all likelihood, placed in the imperial cavalry. Garibi's interest in timariots in particular might be also have been motivated by timariots' role in Kizilbash insurgencies across Anatolia.¹⁸⁴ Garibi's picture of Shi'a and other brands of philo-Alidism being common among early sixteenth-century imperial, timariot and other types of soldiers is corroborated by Latifi's *tezkire* for this early period, in addition to well-known evidence from other historical records such as those on Janissary Bektashism and frontier warriors' (*gāzi*) cults.

Because members of the central Ottoman elite who flourished in the early sixteenth-century or before are often viewed in historiography through lenses that were only constituted as a result of the great mid-century Sunnitization drive, Garibi's freedom from these lenses can open up new windows. A fortunate surge of new scholarship has explored multiple aspects of the confessionalization in early-modern Ottoman society and state. However, there is still more specific research to be done on particular social groups, from a perspective attuned to the ambiguities of the pre-confessional context that the early decades of the sixteenth century

(*muhibb*) and patron of Şahkulu shortly before the latter's armed rebellion of 1511 although other sources relate the prince's participation in the efforts to suppress the rebellion; Talikizade, *Şemā' ilnāme*, 66a-67b. Prince Ahmed's son Şehinşah was, in Uzunçarşılı's words, “the Shah's most trusted man” in Anatolia; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. II, 237-38. Another son of Ahmed, donned the Kizilbash taj; Yıldırım, “An Ottoman Prince.”

¹⁸⁴ See, for example, Karakaya, *The Kizilbash/Alevis*, 264 for the participation of timariots in the Şahkulu rebellion and their motivations.

represented. A history of the Ottoman ulema from a non-Sunni perspective remains a desideratum; moreover, the still robust obsession with the “*‘ilmiyye*” institutionalism (a very notable modern terminological invention)¹⁸⁵ appears to be particularly debilitating for the historiography of Ottoman religious elites in such a confessionally and institutionally fluid period. Similarly, more research is needed to explore to what degree the entanglement of members of the Ottoman dynasty and highest executive cadres with the Safavids, Kizilbashism and Turkoman insurgency in Anatolia involved pietistic aspects beyond mundane political and military calculations. The pervasiveness of these sympathies at the very heart of the Ottoman establishment from the highest military-political and religious elites to petty soldiers makes a “post-Sunni” revisionism in the historiography of the era sorely needed. Garibi's text helps more by alerting us to the live coals that continue to glow under the ashes in later “Sunitized” Ottoman sources, rather than by unveiling a totally new reality.

2.2.4 Alternative traditions in Garibi

Garibi's unusual picture of the confessional character of early-sixteenth-century Ottoman elites seems to be propagandistic in purpose and accordingly warped under the ideological concerns in question. However, as I have tried to demonstrate, his claims were not necessarily factually false as such but intentionally disambiguated, an act his contemporaries among the Ottomans, like Aşık Çelebi, were routinely engaged in as well. However, Garibi's representation of the Ottoman poetic world

¹⁸⁵ To the best of my knowledge, the use of the word *‘ilmiyye* as a noun that denotes the Ottoman religious hierarchy is of modern origin; Ottomans used the word as a feminine adjective. The same applies to “*kalemiyye*” and “*seyfiyye*” which, along with the *‘ilmiyye*, are conceptualized as the three “institutions” that made up the Ottoman administration. No doubt, these linguistic habits reflect an underlying institutional bias in historiography.

has other dimensions than the aspect of confessional identities that depart from the Ottoman *tezki*res. He presents highly unusual versions of anecdotes, biographies, poems or factual information we know all so well from the imperial *tezki*res. These variations can be grouped into two: discarded, possibly earlier, versions of anecdotes related with famous court poets; and traditions and anecdotes about Sufi poetry which survived among Mevlevi and/or Kizilbash circles but did not get recorded in Ottoman imperial *tezki*res.

The most conspicuous example for the first group is a variant of a well-attested cycle of anecdotes on Veliyyüddinzade Ahmed Paşa, Mehmed II's court poet and the canonical name that early sixteenth-century poets had to contend with. As discussed in Chapter 4, "A Community Culture," Ahmed Paşa's biographies are made up of fictive anecdotes about his affairs with boys and the ensuing wrath of Mehmed II, followed by a resolution through the poems the poet presents to the sultan. Garibi's version is simply another variant, with the exact same motifs that occur in the other variants we know from the imperial *tezki*res and *leṭā'if* collections but combined in a slightly different way. Therefore, it would not be too bold to suggest that this version too originated in the same milieu as the Ahmed Paşa anecdotes that occur in imperial *tezki*res.

However, when we come to imaginative constructions of family ties between two poets of the past, Garibi's versions are rather unusual. This phenomenon is also evinced in Ottoman *tezki*res and, similar to the fictive anecdotes such as those on Ahmed Paşa, are efforts to give a biography to poets of old with lasting textual legacies but totally obscure lives. In the imperial *tezki*res, Hamzavi, the legendary persona associated with the highly popular *Ḥamzanāme* cycle of epics in simple prose, is often presented to be the brother of Ahmedi, the famous author of

İskendernāme. In these sources Hamza is also attributed with an *İskendernāme* in prose, which justifies the pairing with Ahmedi. Thus, the two brothers are together conceptualized as the fountainhead of the *İskendernāme* traditions in Rum, in popular prose and high-register verse, revealing a critical awareness of genre and register. This narrative never occurs in entries on Ahmedi, whose biography can stand alone since he was a major court poet with a varied and abundant textual legacy; rather, the pairing serves to give a pseudo-biography to the obscure Hamzavi, that is, if he existed in the first place.

In Garibi's version, however, Hamzavi is paired up with Şeyhi as his paternal cousin. He is also claimed to be Şeyhi's student (*şākird*) in medicine. In this version, Hamzavi is attributed with a *Vamık and 'Azra*, in *mesnevī* form, which constitutes another point of similarity with Şeyhi, the master of the *mesnevī*. When Şeyhi dies before finishing his masterpiece *Hüsrev ü Şirin*, it is Hamzavi who completes it (In Ottoman imperial *tezkires* this role is attributed either to Cemali, also known as Şeyhoğlu, who is said to be Şeyhi's nephew by his sister, or to Molla İzari Kasım Çelebi, a Sahn professor also said to be a nephew of Şeyhi).

Another strange pairing by Garibi is that between Veliiüddinzade Ahmed Paşa and Süleyman Çelebi, the author of *Vesiletü'n-necāt* or, as popularly known, the *Mevlid*. According to the tradition recorded by Garibi, Süleyman Çelebi was originally a Christian slave boy (*gülmām-ı Fireng-beççe*) working at a bathhouse. In a visit to the bathhouse, Ahmed Paşa sees a glimpse of the boy's talent for poetry and buys him from his master. He embraces the boy as an adopted son and gives him away as a gift to Sultan Mehmed II. The boy is raised under the aegis of the Sultan to become the famous Süleyman Çelebi, with the penname Sücudi. I will leave aside for now the question why Garibi does not take stock of the blatant chronological

impossibility of this story.¹⁸⁶ In Ottoman sources, too, the coverage of the family origins and biography of Süleyman Çelebi is full of speculation and contradictions.¹⁸⁷ However, importantly for our purposes here, both Ahmed Ateş and Faruk Timurtaş, early editors of the *Vesîletü'n-necât*, state that there are sources which name an Ahmed Paşa as Süleyman Çelebi's father, although they do not specify what these sources are.¹⁸⁸ In any case, Garibi's version of Süleyman Çelebi's lineage may not be without basis in oral tradition; after all, Latifi, too, reports that he is the son of a vizier, but one who served under Murad II (r. 1421-1444, 1446-1451), Hacı İvaz Paşa. Moreover, the idea of Christian origins purported in the story also finds an echo in Latifi's entry where a social context of conversion is implied: A preacher in Bursa claims on the basis of a verse of the Quran that the Prophet Muhammad is not superior to Jesus Christ. The city folk loves and supports the preacher while a devout Arab manages to get him executed after much effort for procuring the necessary fatwas. Süleyman Çelebi composes his masterpiece on Muhammad during these troubled days that shook the city.

In one small instance, we can directly verify that Garibi's unique version of a biographical element is not his own invention. He relates that Ahmed Paşa wrote a *Leylā vü Mecnūn meşnevī* but, not being satisfied with the result, he burned it. There are two early sources that mention a non-extant *Leylā vü Mecnūn* by Ahmed Paşa:

¹⁸⁶ In all other sources, contemporary and modern, Süleyman Çelebi's lifetime is located between the reigns of Murad I (r. 1362-1389) and Murad II (1421-1444, 1446-1451); Veliyüddinzade Ahmed Paşa died in 902/1496-97.

¹⁸⁷ For critical surveys of biographical literature on Süleyman Çelebi, see Heinzelmänn, *Populäre religiöse Literatur*, chapter 2, and Ceyhan, Adem (2023). "Mevlid Sahibi Süleyman Çelebi'nin Hayatı."

¹⁸⁸ Their wording also does not allow us to tell whether they are referring exclusively to the sources (two pious foundation charters) used by Ali Emiri Efendi in a study where he claims that Süleyman Çelebi's father was Ahmed Paşa, a vizier of Murad I (r. 1362-1389), or whether there are other sources that mention an Ahmed Paşa as Süleyman Çelebi's fathers. Süleyman Çelebi, *Vesîletü'n-necat*, 24-25; Süleyman Çelebi, *Mevlid: Süleyman Çelebi*, II. Ali Emiri, "Kıblelizāde Fu'ād Beğ'in."

Behiştî Sinan in his *Leylā vü Mecnūn* dated circa 1510 claims that Ahmed Paşa attempted a *Leylā vü Mecnūn* composition but found himself quite inadequate to the task and gave it up. Sehi Beg writes that the work was actually written but that no copies have survived. Later *tezkires* do not mention a *Leylā vü Mecnūn* by Ahmed Paşa at all. The accord between the three early sources in this case, as well as the parallelism in themes and the shared biographical gestures (like pairing of early figures) in the examples above go to show that Garibi was operating within biographical oral traditions that grew out of the same milieus as the ones that got to be written down in imperial *tezkires*, but that his versions represented relatively archaic layers discarded over time, for reasons that would need to be explored separately for each specific case. In the case of traditions of a lost or unfinished *Leyla vü Mecnun* by Ahmed Paşa, for example, later literature appears to have lost interest in discussing Ahmed Paşa in relation to the *mesnevî*, identifying this genre and the critical discussions around it exclusively with the name and oeuvre of Şeyhi among the early poets. As Şeyhi became designated the one canonical *mesnevî* poet and the gold standard against which early sixteenth-century *mesnevî* writers were to be measured, so was Ahmed Paşa associated with the ghazel, and then with the qasida following the rise of Necati as the paradigmatic ghazel poet. Imperial *tezkires* reflect this canonical order and have apparently discarded earlier traditions that would conflict with this simplified but forceful conceptual apparatus for thinking on the main genres (see Chapter 4 “A Community Culture”).

In the case of fictive familial relations between poets of old, Garibi's versions and imperial *tezkires*' are equally devoid of historical basis. As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, the rich lore of apocryphal anecdotes on fifteenth-century poets recorded in the *tezkires* is glaring evidence of the fact that almost no actual

biographical information on these poets had reached the sixteenth century. In fact, this seems to be a more generalized phenomenon: The continuity between the early phases of Ottoman *dīvān* literature and the sixteenth century seems to be poor, in terms of the survival of both texts and biographical memory. To make up for this gap, the poetry of the past century and a half is in general comprehended by the imperial *tezki*res through anecdotes which seem to be of very recent origin, created under the same cultural drive that gave rise to the *tezki*res themselves, namely, the drive to construct the field of Ottoman *dīvān* poetry as a spatially, chronologically and politically coherent and continuous tradition. Garibi's versions are far less compatible with historical reality, as in the case of the author of the *Vesīletü'n-necāt* being the son of Ahmed Paşa. It seems that over the course of the sixteenth century, the more historically plausible versions of these traditions—ones that could more successfully mask the lack of actual historical knowledge and convince even modern literary historians—prevailed. However, the blatant lack of a sense of chronology in Garibi's versions must be part of a broader attitude towards the past, shared among particular learned circles. We will shortly see an extension of this lack of chronological and historical awareness in the form of a lack of sensitivity towards linguistic change, which allowed Garibi to unproblematically attribute poems in contemporary Turkish to Rumi. That Garibi and the broader learned Kizilbash circles he belonged to imagined the Anatolian Turkish cultural past as one big moment that seamlessly blended into the present represents a major point of divergence from the way historical consciousness developed among the Ottoman imperial elites over the course of the sixteenth century. Ottoman imperial notions of linguistic and literary history of Rum were shaped around the idea of a radical break between the achievements of the present and an uncouth Turkoman past despised as a cultural

failure. The imperial learned elites saw themselves as the *avant-garde* of a civilizational mission and rejected the legacy of the early Anatolian centuries, or selectively appropriated it to the degree it was necessary for constructing an Ottoman-stamped literary history. As argued in Chapter 4, their literary canon was, therefore, deeply presentist, to the detriment of early Anatolian literary heritage, including its manuscript treasures. Garibi's approach, on the other hand, emphasizes continuity, but a deeply ahistorical one that allows for a free movement of literary styles, linguistic features and biographies on the historical timeline and in both directions. It is worth exploring to what degree this ahistoricism was influenced by the particular brand of Sufism espoused by the Kizilbash circles that Garibi belonged to.

A distinct strand of biographical and literary tradition in Garibi's *tezkiye* that is *not* shared by imperial *tezkiye* literature is one coming down from within Sufi circles. The miscellany in its entirety attests to the close affinity between these learned Kizilbashes and the Mevleviyye, including the formative role ascribed to Rumi's lyrics in the *bildung* of a Sufi-cum-poet. Rumi is the first poet in the *tezkiye*, followed by a big leap to the early fifteenth-century context of an Ottomanizing Anatolia; in other words, he is the only Rumi poet in the *tezkiye* with no relation to the Ottoman polity. In the autobiographical section of the miscellany, a ghazel by Rumi with the end-line refrain '*Alī būd*' ("it was Ali") is the first poem Garibi's father makes the young Garibi memorize and contemplate by way of an initiation into Alid Sufism. This ghazel, however, along with several others in the miscellany, does not occur in the published editions of Rumi's collected lyrics *Dīvān-i Shams*, also known as *Dīvān-i Kabīr* or the Great *Dīvān*. Another non-standard feature of Garibi's Rumi is his Turkish poetry. In fact, in his *tezkiye* entry on Rumi, Garibi quotes the first

seven couplets of the *Mesnevî*, famously beginning as “Listen to the reed,” and then moves onto quotations from Rumi’s Turkish poetry. The first quotation is from a poem on the Twelve Imams and the other is from a didactic poem meant for the edification of dervishes. As is well known, Rumi left behind very few verses in Turkish, mostly as part of Persian-Eastern Turkish macaronic poems;¹⁸⁹ the languages of both of Garibi's samples are very modern anyway. Gölpınarlı came across the first Turkish poem, attributed to Rumi, in a miscellany that appears to be of Mevlevi provenance but he rejects the attribution as preposterous.¹⁹⁰ The second poem can easily be identified as belonging to Dede Ömer Ruşeni.¹⁹¹ Thanks to Gölpınarlı, we learn about a tradition of pseudo-Rumi poetry, in Persian and Turkish, originating from among the philo-Alid, *abdāl*-like streak within the Mevleviyye. Of the three non-standard poems attributed to Rumi in Garibi's miscellany mentioned so far, two are quoted in Gölpınarlı's discussion (the Persian poem with the refrain “it was Ali” and the poem on the Twelve Imams).¹⁹² These poems were collectively referred to as *Dīvān-ı Şağîr* (The Little *Dīvān*, as versus the Great *Dīvān*), but it is not clear in Gölpınarlı's discussion whether they circulated in the form of an actual

¹⁸⁹ Johanson, “Rumi and the Birth of Turkish Poetry.” Johanson locates the historical moment of the birth of Turkish poetry in the difference between Rumi's lack of interest in Turkish as a medium for his Sufi teachings and his son Sultan Veled's apparent efforts in this regard. For Johanson, this shift from father to son marks a shift in the social context which rendered writing in Turkish worthwhile or even necessary.

¹⁹⁰ Gölpınarlı, *Mevlânâ'dan Sonra*, 235-36.

¹⁹¹ Ruşeni, *Hayatı, Eserleri*, 194-98. This *tercî-i bend* by Ruşeni, also known as *Pendnâme*, must have been widely known in the early sixteenth century as it is the only poem cited from the oeuvre of Ruşeni in Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt* (SEH, 61b/192) and in Hacı Kemal's anthology of similar poems. (Ertek Morkoç, *Eğridirli*, 232-36).

¹⁹² More examples of Turkish-language *Dīvān-ı Şağîr* poems can be found in Yaltkaya, “Mevlânâ'da Türkçe kelimeler.” Yaltkaya does not question the Rumi attribution for poems written in a language belonging to the fifteenth-century or later. The poem on the Twelve Imams was also attributed to Nesimi; see Şenödeyici, “Nesîmî Şiirini Anlama Yolunda.”

anthology or appeared separately in miscellanies and other places but were understood to belong to a particular corpus by their copyists and readers.¹⁹³

Another very interesting alternative tradition that Garibi opens a window onto is that on Nizami of Karaman, a poet of Mehmed II's reign. Imperial *tezki*res remember Nizami as a Karamanid preacher's talented son who died young. Main points in a repetitive series of biographies are the recognition of the quality of his poetry by Sultan Mehmed II and Mahmud Paşa, his superiority over Şeyhi and Ahmed Paşa, and his unfortunate death as a teenager. In Garibi's *tezkire*, however, we find him the protagonist of a miracle narrative that involves the eighth Imam Ali al-Rida and the Mevlevi shrine in Konya. According to Garibi, Nizami's father, a local qadi, was a devotee of the Prophet's Household and a follower of the Eighth Imam Ali al-Rida, also known as the Shah of Khorasan. Any son born to him would die before he could reach adolescence. One day Imam Ali al-Rida intervenes from the realm of the unseen (*bātın âlemi*), promising the qadi a son and designating his name as Nizami. When the boy was born, he was placed in Rumi's shrine to grow up there. He became a famous poet already as a teenager but died at age seventeen before he could compile a *dīvān*. He was buried in the vicinity of the gardens of the Mevlevi shrine complex.

This biography assumes an intimate connection between the shrines of Rumi in Konya and Imam Ali al-Rida in Mashhad, Khorasan, which in turn points to an affinity between the early Mevleviyye and Twelver Shi'a and possibly with the Safeviyye. We have seen above how the Shi'a leaning, *abdāl*-like Mevlevi Yusuf Sineçak and Divane Mehmed Çelebi (Gölpınarlı designates this *meşreb* of the

¹⁹³ Gölpınarlı, *Mevlânâ'dan Sonra*, 234-36.

Mevleviyye as *Şemsî* branch) visited Ali al-Rida's shrine, the latter with a large mixed retinue of Mevlevi dervishes and Bektaşis from the Hacı Bektaş shrine in modern-day Nevşehir. This anecdote on Nizami is yet another evidence of the overlap between one particular *meşreb* of the Mevleviyye and the Safeviyye. There is, however, a third leg in this picture of overlapping early *tariqa* formations and it is the overlap between the Halveti and the Safevi orders. Garibi reports that Dede Ömer Ruşeni was a disciple of both Seyyid Yahya Haşimi (Şirvani), the second *pîr* or founding father of the Halvetiyye, and also of Shah Haydar, who was Shah Ismail's father.¹⁹⁴ He adds that Ruşeni performed a pilgrimage visit to Ali al-Rida's shrine like the Mevlevi mentioned above. The early entanglement between the Safeviyye and the Halvetiyye, in shared *silsiles* and other respects, is often mentioned in secondary sources, but by Ömer Ruşeni's time the paths are usually depicted as having diverged. Garibi, moreover reports that, like his master Dede Ömer Ruşeni, İbrahim Gülşeni, too, was a disciple of Shah Haydar.¹⁹⁵ At the same time, the close affinity between the Gülşeniyye and the Mevleviyye is well attested, most famously in Gülşeni's forty thousand-couplet response to Rumi's *Mesnevî*, titled *Ma'nevî*, which closes the triangle of *tariqas* mentioned above. Finally, in the entries on both Ruşeni and Gülşeni, Garibi asserts that they were persecuted on charges related with the Safavid conflict: After he returned to Rum from Iran, Ruşeni was accused of partaking in the pro-Safavid uprisings of tribal elements in Anatolia and, being exiled by the Ottoman authorities, had to go back east:

¹⁹⁴ For the early entanglement between Safeviyye and Halvetiyye, in shared *silsiles* and other respects, see Kissling, "Aus der Geschichte des Chalvetijje-Ordens"; Kissling, "Zur Geschichte des Derwischordens der Bajrâmijje"; Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought*, 31-32, 39-40; Curry, "Sufism in the Ottoman Empire," 405; DeWeese, "Spiritual Practice and Corporate Identity," 265-68; Uludağ, "Halvetiyye."

¹⁹⁵ . . . ol *dağı Sultan Haydâr küddise sırruhu cur'asından esrimişdür*. Garibi, *Tezkire*, 87.

Then he returned to Rum. After a short while, noble lords and eminent men of the tribes became his disciples and started their attacks and uprisings, as a result of which the administrators and military commanders exiled him. He once again returned to the East.¹⁹⁶

This passage, which comes right after Garibi's words on Ruşeni being a disciple of Shah Haydar and completing his walk on the Sufi path with him, can be understood to mean that Ruşeni, in Garibi's view, was one of the Safavid *ḫalīfes* that organized the insurgencies in Anatolia. Similarly, in Garibi's version, Gülşeni was summoned to Istanbul on suspicions of being a Twelver; Garibi's wording does not negate the accusation, but rather focuses on the way İbrahim's charisma rendered his accusers speechless. As in the cases of İshak Çelebi and Şahidi Dede discussed above, Ottoman sources usually present a far more Sunnitized picture for both of these Halveti sheiks, which has also shaped modern studies with their emphasis on the antagonism between the Iranian Halvetis and the new Kizilbash regime after 1502, and the subjective character of the “accusations” of heresy by the Ottoman state.¹⁹⁷ Garibi's references to the intimate links between the Safeviyye, Mevleviyye and Halvetiyye helps better contextualize the antagonism between the Ottoman state and the latter two tariqas before they evolved into more orthodox positions aligned with the state.

¹⁹⁶ . . . gine Rûm vilâyetine rücû ' idüb az eyyâmda her cānibden mîrzâdeler belki il ü ulus mâbeyninde olan âzâdeler mürîd olub hücum u gavgâ kıla başladıkları sebebeden hükkâm ü ümerâ kendülerini ol cānibden ihrâc idüb ve gine şark vilâyetine müteveccih olub . . . Garibi, Tezkire, 71.

¹⁹⁷ E.g., Emre, *Ibrahim-i Gulshani*.

2.3 Religio-mystical and temporal poetry: Configurations in Hacı Kemal of Eğirdir's *Cāmi 'ü'n-nezā'ir*, Qazvini's *Hasht Bihisht* and Garibi's miscellany

The third and final subsection of this chapter addresses another key parameter of the imperial *tezkires*, that of the relationship between the realms of Sufi and “profane” or temporal poetries. I see the relatively strict separation of these two domains as a key feature of sixteenth-century Ottoman *dīvān* poetry and aim to show the historically contingent formation of this paradigm by mainly discussing a text that displays a different configuration in this regard. Eğirdirli Hacı Kemal's *Cāmi 'ü'n-nezā'ir* (1512), otherwise a precursor to imperial *tezkires*, manifests a rapprochement between Sufi and courtly poetries that is not documented for the period before and is only suggested in rare instances over the course of the sixteenth century, pointing to a short-lived historical juncture around the turn of the century that promoted such a confluence. While most of this section is devoted to an analysis of this work's contents, I also touch upon the position of Sufi poetry in the other two main texts of this chapter, Qazvini's *Hasht Bihisht* and Garibi's miscellany, both of which similarly display a rapprochement between courtly poetry and Sufism, although in their own distinct ways.

Cāmi 'ü'n-nezā'ir, the anthology of similar poems (*naẓīre*)¹⁹⁸ compiled by Hacı Kemal of Eğirdir in 1512 is a precursor to the imperial *tezkires* to come in certain respects, yet represents a strikingly different vision of the relationship between *dīvān* and Sufi traditions. *Cāmi 'ü'n-nezā'ir* shares with the imperial *tezkires* the territorial boundaries it assumes and its vision of Rum as a chronologically and

¹⁹⁸ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the meaning of the term *naẓīre*. Not all *naẓīres* in *naẓīre* anthologies were intentional responses; many were simply brought together by the compilers on grounds of incidental similarities of rhyme and meter. Thus, in this study the common practice of translating *naẓīre* as “response poetry” or “imitatio” is rejected for the Ottoman context.

spatially integrated poetic field dominated by the courtly *dīvān* tradition, on the one hand, and its exhaustive encyclopedism and implicit reliance on biographical knowledge on the other; this aspect of the work will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, “Imperial Integration.” However, the way the text smoothly welds together courtly *dīvān* poetry, which constitutes its bulk, and diverse veins of Sufi poetry from the early fourteenth century onwards distinguishes it from the imperial *tez̤kires* and brings it closer to Qazvini's and Garibi's texts. Partly owing to their inclusion of Sufi poetry in their “mainstream”, all three of these texts are also perfectly open to the oeuvres of Sufi masters of the past; in other words, they are nowhere nearly as “presentist” as the Ottoman *tez̤kires*, which are by and large preoccupied with sixteenth-century poetry, an age of novelty and unprecedented development as the *tez̤kires* perceived it. Yet, because Hacı Kemal's is simply an anthology without any overt expression of the compiler's overall vision of how Sufi and courtly traditions relate to one another, only limited conclusions can be drawn in this regard, mostly pertaining to form. By contrast, Garibi offers explicit formulations of his vision of poetry. In his view poetry that remains anchored in temporal meanings and does not lead to a Sufi interpretation is illegitimate. In practical terms, this would often be a ghazel about profane love and eroticism without any metaphorical opening up towards the idea of divine love. In Qazvini's work, too, it is possible to make some observations about his position on the problem of the nature and/or interpretation of the ghazel, since he provides ample poetry selections placed in the context of the biographies of their authors. In all three cases, however, it is clear that the sixteenth-century Ottomans' resolution of the hermeneutic ambivalence that is historically built in Persianate poetics is not present.

There are no studies on the provenance of Hacı Kemal's *Cāmi'ü'n-nezā'ir*, but a sound speculation would be that it is also linked with a court, a provincial one likely in central Anatolia. In addition to the unmistakable weight of the best known court poets of the period between the early fifteenth century and the time of the anthology's compilation, the sheer breadth and chronological depth of the textual legacy the anthology has managed to garner suggests a milieu exceptionally rich in terms of its manuscript assets.¹⁹⁹ Mehmed Tahir Efendi's (Bursalı) report of a prose work by Hacı Kemal titled *Risāle fī ādābi'l-mülūk ve neşāyihī's-selāṭīn* (*Discourse on the ways of the kings and advice for the sultans*), also lends support to the idea of a courtly setting as the title suggests a mirror for princes.²⁰⁰ That the anthology is linked with a provincial court instead of the central one in Istanbul is indicated by the lack of awareness of the work among Istanbul-Edirne based circles as represented by *tezkiye* authors and compilers of later *naẓīre* anthologies. Last but not least, the strong presence in the compilation of the early Sufi poetic traditions that developed in Konya, Kırşehir and environs—for some of which the work continues to be the single extant manuscript witness—the inclusion of poetry samples by and about members of the Karamanid dynasty, and Hacı Kemal's own patronym all point towards a central Anatolian princely court, possibly that of Karaman.

Hacı Kemal's vision of the poetic field seem to fully accommodate the Ottoman *dīvān* tradition, without caveats like Garibi's. The bulk of the anthology's material is furnished by this tradition. Diverse and distinct traditions of Rumi devotional poetry are given a space *alongside* and, sometimes, in a dialogic

¹⁹⁹ For a list of the poets that occur in the anthology and the number of poems by each, from the greatest to the smallest, see Ertek Morkoç, *Eğridirli*, LXIII-LXIV.

²⁰⁰ Ertek Morkoç has located the codex at the Süleymaniye Library as Ayasofya K. 2841; Ertek Morkoç, *Eğridirli*, XXV.

relationship with *dīvān* poetry. As such the text looks intriguingly unique, raising questions about the milieu it originated from.

Around the “courtly core” the anthology incorporates a very rich and heterogeneous corpus of religio-mystical poetry. Aşık Paşa (d. 1333) and his son Elvan Çelebi (d. after 1358), progeny of the Vefai sheikh Baba İlyas who led a messianic rebellion against the Seljukids in 1332-33, are together represented by 21 poems.²⁰¹ Gülşehri (d. after 1317) and Şeyyad Hamza (d. after 1348) are represented by three poems each. Rumi is represented by one Persian-Turkish macaronic poem only, but there is another poem, entirely in Turkish and certainly not Rumi's, which mentions Shams-i Tabrizi in the signature couplet the way Rumi does in his *Dīvān-i Kabīr* lyrics. 6 poems are quoted from Yunus Emre's (d. 1320?) oeuvre. Hacı Kemal's anthology also includes the single extant copy of Ahmed Fakih's (flourished early 14th century?) *Çarḥnāme*, a mystical didactic qasida of about 100 couplets. This group of Sufi poets—sheikhs of their tariqas—from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries corresponds to the strongest vein of early Sufism in Anatolia, heterogenous in itself, that developed in the central lands ruled first by the Mongols and then by the Karamanid dynasty.

From the more recent past, Kemal-i Ümmi (d. 1475), a Sufi poet associated with multiple locations across Anatolia like Yunus Emre, and Halili (d. 1485), an Acem by origin and the author of the famous mystical *meşnevī Fūrḳatnāme*, are well represented. Kaygusuz Abdal (d. 1444?), representative of a distinctive poetic tradition that later became subsumed under the rubric “Alevi-Bektaşî,”²⁰² is featured

²⁰¹ The penname Muhlisoglu (poem no. 44) must also be referring to Aşık Paşa, who occasionally appears in other miscellanies as “Muhlis oğlu Paşa.”

²⁰² For a survey of the historiography that connects Alevism and Bektashism and the use of the term “Alevi-Bektaşî,” see Chapter 6 “Alevi and Alevilik” in Dressler, *Writing Religion*.

with three poems. I discuss Nesimi, amply quoted by Hacı Kemal, further below. In addition, a wide selection of mystical and/or didactic poetry by relatively obscure poets from around the late fifteenth century—judging by language—is presented.²⁰³ However, there are also conspicuous absences. Associated with Thrace is Yazıcıoğlu (four poems, likely by Yazıcıoğlu Mehmed, who flourished in the first half of the fifteenth century), but no other figure from the eastern Balkans, a core region of the Ottoman Empire, surfaces. Ruşeni Ömer Dede (d. 1487) and İbrahim Gülşeni (d. 1534), Halveti sheikhs from the recent past, are not within the anthology's ken, except for one poem by Ruşeni. Eşrefoğlu Rumi (d. 1470?), the İznik-based Kadiri sheikh and a follower of Yunus Emre in poetry, is a conspicuous absence, given that he had a well-known complete *dīvān*. Further analysis into Hacı Kemal's choices, which were no doubt constrained by the manuscripts available to him, should help us work towards a more complete description of the anthology's provenance.

Importantly, in spite of his interest in the diverse mystical poetic traditions in Turkish that flourished in and around Anatolia, Hacı Kemal does not include any samples in syllabic verse.²⁰⁴ Syllabic devotional poetry, an offshoot of Turkish oral folk poetry tradition that dates back to pre-Islamic times, also saw an efflorescence in the sixteenth century, especially among rural Kizilbash-Alevi communities. Pir Sultan Abdal, Kul Himmet and Kul Hüseyin from the middle and later decades of the century are among the earliest well-known representatives of this tradition, but certainly the tradition itself goes further back than these poets composing in an

²⁰³ See for example poems no. 942, 1451, 1327, 1481, and 1842 by Şirazi, Abdi, Resmi, Mümin and Safayi respectively.

²⁰⁴ Ertek Morkoç, editor of *Cāmi'ü'n-nezā'ir*, considers two Yunus Emre poems to be “possibly” in syllabic verse; Ertek Morkoç, Eğirdirli, LXI. In Yunus Emre studies, the characterization of the meter in Yunus Emre's verses has proved contentious, although it is generally agreed that he composed both in *arūz* and syllabic meters.

already mature, established poetic idiom. Hacı Kemal leaves out this entire poetic tradition, as does Garibi. In other words, both compilers seem to consider themselves as operating within the broader Persianate classical tradition, with *‘arūz* as the main distinguishing feature or cultural fault line; they do not introduce the religio-mystical vs. worldly divide that the imperial *tezkire* literature relies on.

The compiler sometimes welds mystical poems into *naẓīre* chains in which the *dīvān* style dominates. In other words, beyond simply including *dīvān* and Sufi poetry in his miscellany, he seems to assume that the linguistic, thematic, and technical (e.g., vocabulary and conventional tropes) differences between the *dīvān* and Sufi traditions to be insignificant enough to allow them to be represented as “similar” (*naẓīr*) poems. Thus, for example, Yunus Emre (no. 253) appears as writing a *naẓīre* to a poem by Ahmedî.

As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, the main drive of *naẓīre* anthologies was pedagogical. They were meant to work as aides for composers or young poets in training, providing in a nutshell as they did near-exhaustive lists of extant variations of particular figures, vocabulary sets and theme-defining end-line rhymes made up of meaningful words and/or morphemes (*redîf*). Their alphabetical organization lent them to being consulted as reference sources. That Hacı Kemal could bring together in such a functional—i.e., composition-oriented—setting what would come to be regarded in the following decades as incompatible linguistic (Old Anatolian Turkish vs. Ottoman Turkish) and artistic (Sufi vs. *dīvān*) traditions, suggests a unique juncture where poets did not yet see an incommensurability between these traditions from a compositional point of view, in addition to audiences equally open to simultaneously receiving them.

Another striking example of the rapprochement between *dīvān* and Sufi poetic traditions in the *Cāmi 'ü'n-nezā'ir* is offered by Nesimi's (d. 820/1417-18) Turkish *dīvān* and its differing roles in this anthology and Ömer bin Mezid's *Mecmū 'atü'n-nezā'ir*, the earliest known Ottoman *naẓīre* anthology, compiled in 840/1436-37. Already in Ömer bin Mezid's *naẓīre* anthology of 840/1436-37 we see Murad II's court poets composing parallels to each other's and older courtly masters' poems in an idiom which can hardly be described as infused with Sufism. The *dīvān* poetry in this *mecmū'a* is often repetitive and bland and the number of poets relatively small, but it has clearly gone a long way towards coming into its own as a new courtly tradition in Rumi Turkish. In both anthologies Nesimi occupies an important place. In Ömer bin Mezid's, Nesimi is the eighth most-quoted poet among the 84 poets featured in total, somewhat eclipsed by early fifteenth-century Ottoman court poets; still, about half of his poems are placed at the head of *naẓīre* chains, giving Nesimi the role of an originator and an influencer of later generations. In Hacı Kemal's *Cāmi 'ü'n-nezā'ir*, a much bigger anthology in terms of the numbers of both poets and poems, Nesimi's role seems to have expanded phenomenally. Here, he is the fourth most-quoted poet, after the most important court poets of the fifteenth century, Ahmed Paşa, Hufi [Hafî], and Şeyhi, respectively. Nesimi was not an Ottoman or Rumi poet; however, his Turkish *dīvān* was one of the first *dīvāns* in Oghuzid Turkish to achieve transregional popularity from Iran and Iraq to Rumelia, even into Khorasan where he received a laudatory entry from Ali Shir Navai as well.²⁰⁵ It seems that as late as the beginning of the sixteenth century, a non-Rumi poet could continue to exert major influence on local Rumi poets and even occupy a

²⁰⁵ Nevayî, *Nesāyîmü'l-maḥabbe*, 437.

key place in the current poetic canon; this would soon change with the arrival of the imperial *tezkires* and the switch to cultural localism from the ecumenic mindset. It can be surmised that both Ömer and Hacı Kemal had access to Nesimi's *dīvān*, not only because of its popularity, but also because, at least in Hacı Kemal's case, there are selected poems ending with almost all letters of the alphabet, which would likely have been culled from a *dīvān*. The compilers, then, had the opportunity to choose from among Nesimi's poems, and the end result is quite different in each anthology.

Ömer bin Mezid tended to omit Nesimi poems with overt references to Hurufism, picking ones that are as “mainstream” *dīvān*-style as possible. Ömer bin Mezid's compilation documents court poetry during the reign of Murad II (r. 1421-1444, 1446-1451), to whom the work is dedicated. The most frequently occurring poets are those associated with the Ottoman court, and several of these are mentioned in *tezkiye* literature as specifically Murad II's or Mehmed II's court poets.²⁰⁶ The overall orientation of the anthology is worldly and courtly, as the rather limited spectrum of types of poetry included reveal: qasidas praising Ottoman sultans; ghazels cataloguing the beloved's features almost in list form and describing the lover's sufferings without any overt mystical framing, which together constitute the bulk of the anthology; some “carpe diem” poems that call for enjoying life's pleasures while one can; and a very small number of mystically informed didactic poems, often by the few older Sufi poets like Gülşehri and Şeyyad Hamza (both fl. early fourteenth century). In the final group, the temporalizing inflection of older Sufi material can sometimes be observed in the progression of the *naẓīre* chains. For example, the starting poem in one chain celebrates the creator by observing the

²⁰⁶ For details on this and subsequent *naẓīre* anthologies, see Chapter 3.

created physical world (*Ƙamışdan şeker ü taşdan cevāhir / Ağaçdan dāneyi hırma kılan kim*).²⁰⁷ The poem belongs to Hasan Oğlı, an early fourteenth-century mystical poet from Khorasan who composed in both Oghuzid Turkish and Persian and achieved transregional fame.²⁰⁸ However, the two *naẓīres* that follow, by Ömer bin Mezid and Namusi, shift the idiom towards *hüsnıyyāt* (beloved's beauties) while preserving the end-line rhyme “-ā kılan kim?” or “who is it that made ...?”, now reduced to a rhetorical frame for cataloguing the beloved's features instead of the touching celebration of the God's omnipresence in nature found in Hasan Oğlı's poem. The rest of the codex that contains Ömer's *Mecmū'atü'n-nezā'ir* includes, in the same hand, chronograms, conundrums (*mu'ammā*) and riddles (*luğaz*) in verse, complementing the ghazel-centered courtly poetry culture of the main text with verbal and numerical games in verse. In addition to the courtly orientation of the miscellany, there could also be an underlying religious antipathy on Ömer's part regarding Hurufism and antinomian Sufism. In several places in his poems Ömer characterizes himself as a man of the sharia and Sunna, a *muvaḥḥid* who fights *ilhād* (champion of God's oneness against heresy), to quote his own vocabulary.²⁰⁹ Though the particular historical context for these antagonistic references is impossible to know, they might be referring to one of the earliest “orthodoxizing” moments in the long and complex history of Ottoman Sunnitization.²¹⁰

Seventy-five years forward and we find a very different engagement with Nesimi's poetry as part of a generalized accommodation of Sufism, including its antinomian shades, into the mainstream of court poetry. In Hacı Kemal's *Cāmi'ü'n-*

²⁰⁷ Ömer bin Mezid, *Mecmū'atü'n-nezā'ir*, 150 (poem no. CCVI).

²⁰⁸ Qayıbov, “Hasanoğlu, Pur-i Hasan İzzeddin.”

²⁰⁹ See for example Ömer bin Mezid, *Mecmū'atü'n-nezā'ir*, 205-206, 216.

²¹⁰ Terzioğlu, “Confessional Ambiguity.”

neẓā'ir, Nesimi's Hurufism is not only evident but perhaps intentionally foregrounded, given the consistency with which such verses appear (e.g., “Those who don't know the letters written on the slate of your face / Know not the count of their prayers and fasts on the Day of Accounts;” “The seven verses [of the surah al-Fatiha] are your lashes, brows and hairlock / Those who can understand these seven verses can give all the answers”).²¹¹ Moreover some of Nesimi's bolder assertions of the *bāṭinī* (gnostic, lit. “internalist”) rejection of the outward formal aspects of religion are freely quoted (e.g., “For the lover blasphemy and faith are the same / Wherever the lover dwells, he is the sovereign”).²¹² The Hurufi conception of man, especially his physical body, as “continual theophany of the inaccessible divine treasure,”²¹³ which is considered by Sunni thought as a perverse interpretation of the godly in man, is easily observed in Hacı Kemal's Nesimi selections (e.g., “The Absolute Unseen secretly reveals its mystique / It makes itself explicit in the human form”).²¹⁴ The anthology also includes Nesimi's encomium for the Twelve Imams; this poem is found in the opening pages of the anthology, which replicate a typical *dīvān*'s opening, beginning as it does with *tevḥīds* and *na'ats*, followed by encomia for the four caliphs, then followed by the poem on the Twelve Imams.²¹⁵ This might be rather unexpected when the process of Ottoman Sunnitization, usually claimed to have gained pace with the rise of the Safavid conflict, is considered; after all, Hacı Kemal's anthology was completed in 1512, the year Selim acceded to the throne and one year after the Şahkulu rebellion broke out in the Teke region. However, as also

²¹¹ These distiches are from poems no. 79 and 89 respectively in Ertek Morkoç, *Eğridirli*. For other examples of Hurufi poems by Nesimi see nos. 310, 340, 415, 466, 490.

²¹² Ertek Morkoç, *Eğridirli*, poem no. 378.

²¹³ Bausani, “Hurūfiyya.”

²¹⁴ Ertek Morkoç, *Eğridirli*, poem no 533.

²¹⁵ Ertek Morkoç, *Eğridirli*, poem no. 13.

seen with Kasım Paşa's (d. 1484) encomia to the Twelve Imams, mentioned by Garibi, the spirit of the decades around the turn of the fifteenth century still allowed a high degree of confessional fluidity. It could also be recalled in this context that Idris Bidlisi, the author of an influential quasi-official Ottoman history dated 1506, included the Twelve Imams in the Ottoman dynasty's spiritual genealogy.²¹⁶

While in Hacı Kemal's compilation there is a conscious effort to merge and harmonize into a seamless whole the *dīvān* tradition and diverse Sufi poetries of Anatolia, though we cannot know how he read the *dīvān* tradition. Garibi's miscellany expresses a clear program for delineating the relative roles of Sufi and worldly outlooks, one which instrumentalizes worldly poetic idioms and totally subordinates them to Sufism. In the introduction to his *tezkiye* Garibi, a ghazel poet among other genres, openly expounds the view that amorous poetry or *hüsniyyāt*—poetry on human “beauty” or *hüsn*, as versus *ilāhiyyāt*, religious poetry that speaks directly of God—is rendered legitimate if and only if it is intended as a metaphor for divine love. In other words, *hüsniyyāt* is not rejected, as also shown by Garibi's own *dīvān* embedded in the miscellany, but its hermeneutic frame is restricted. In Garibi's view, worldly, lustful love poetry is evil while “truth-marking verses” (*eş'ār-ı hakāyık-şi'ār*) are an extension of divine logos. In several *tezkiye* entries he reiterates these ideas. In the entry on Halili (the incomplete entry right before Ruşeni, discussed above), he explains that Halili “compiled a *dīvān* but he took it over to true love through the path of immaculate metaphorical love by bringing it to bear on the station of dervishes and the people of the path.”²¹⁷ In the entry on Dede Ömer Ruşeni,

²¹⁶ Yılmaz, *Caliphate redefined*, 237.

²¹⁷ *Dīvān tertīb itmiş amma 'aşk-ı mecāz-ı pāklik sebebi ile anı 'aşk-ı hakīkiye irgürüb dervīşler ve ehl-i sülūk makāmına işāl kılınıştır*. Garibi, *Dīvān-ı Ğarībī*, 292. This passage is omitted in the *tezkiye* edition by İ. Babacan (Garibi, *Tezkire*).

Garibi describes Ruşeni's poetry as bearing the appearance of *hüsniyyāt* but pertaining to truth as a Sufi understood it.²¹⁸ Garibi himself achieves the same effect by including in his ghazels, especially towards the end of each poem, distiches that signal to the reader the intended interpretive frame of the piece. Many of the ghazels that speak of the beloved's beauties or the lover's painful longings are framed by distiches that either reveal the beloved in question to be the divine or the spiritual master, or postulate the necessity of sublimating earthly love to divine love.²¹⁹ As we shall see in the next chapter, Ottoman *tezkiye* authors were far more lenient towards worldly poetry; this includes even Latifi, who in many ways subscribed to Garibi's requirement of a mystical justification for love poetry (Chapter 3), and Aşık Çelebi, member of the ulema and Sunnitzer of problematic early biographies, who, it turns out, was one of the greatest and unabashed champions of temporal poetry in his time.

Strikingly, Garibi also interprets poetry by the Ottoman court poets, who are not associated with a Sufi outlook in the imperial *tezkiyes*, as expressing mystical meanings. In fact, only one of those court poets is singled out as different. Garibi anathemizes the poetry of Necati Beg (d. 1509) as being stuck in the realm of metaphorical appearances (*şuvar-i mecāz*), i.e., the false material reality that the ego seeks, a failure Necati shares with Ali Shir Navai: “He is reputed to be a friend of the Sufis, but because he succumbed to egotism, he only observed the visible world of

²¹⁸ . . . *hüsniyyāt vechi ile taşavvuf yüzinden hakikat fehvası üzre iş'ār kıldukları dīvān ü külliyyāt*. . . Garibi, *Dīvān-ı Garībī*, 293; Garibi, *Tezkire*, 71.

²¹⁹ For example, the ghazel that begins with the distiches “*Her geh ki idesin güzelüm nāza ibtidā / ‘Aşık kim ola kim dil ü cān itmeye fedā*” (Every time, my beauty, you display coyness / What lover won't sacrifice his life for you), and “*Boynumda müşgī silsiledür sevdüğüm seniñ / Gīsūlarıñ kemendine niçün direm belā*” (They are a musky chain choking my neck / That's why I call your locks trouble) moves progressively towards a clearer awareness of earthly love being a slave to fulfilment (“*Gitdi esir-i ‘aşk oluban yārin isteyü / Her kim ki geldi ‘āleme ger şāh eğer gedā*”) and finishes with the necessity of exchanging this earthly love for a superior version, “*Geç dünyeden Garībī dilerseñ ebed hayāt / Gel ārī i ‘tikād ile it ‘aşka ibtidā*” (Leave this world behind if you seek immortal life, oh Garibi / With immaculate faith make a new start in love). Garibi, *Dīvān-ı Garībī*, 161-62.

metaphorical appearances and failed to discover the true meanings; like Navai, he became disheveled in the street of the Sunnis.”²²⁰ For other court poets like Ahmed Paşa, Revani and Mihri he is far more generous. According to general opinion, these poets wrote in the exact same *dīvān* tradition as Necati. In fact, Ahmed Paşa is the protagonist of a whole cycle of apocryphal anecdotes that depict his love affairs as the *raison d’être* of his ghazels, which indicates how his poetry was widely interpreted. What factors, then, led Garibi to place Ahmed Paşa Necati in separate categories? Why did he only single out Necati, and Navai, as purely worldly poets? Are these factors intrinsic to these poets’ verses or do they pertain to the context of the poems (i.e., their lives and devotional profiles)? Similar to Garibi’s, Latifi’s *tezkiye*, too, offers a great deal of examples where the author discusses whether a poet’s verses pertain to *mecāz*—the false appearances of the material world, lustful profane love—or *hakikat*—the Truth, Logos, divine love—or both. In one case, that of Hayali Beg, Latifi makes the striking proposition that Hayali’s ghazels are “neither *mecāz* nor *hakikat*,” a statement the full meaning of which is hard to appreciate given our limited understanding of the underlying theory. In short, these discussions are complex, and sorely needed are systematic analyses that consider such critical statements together with the poems themselves on the one hand, and the theoretical background of these statements in Arabic and Persian language sciences on the other.

In Qazvini’s added chapter on Selim-era poets, there is no overtly devotional poetry and no discussion whatsoever of a distinction between two kinds of poetry, Sufi and worldly, the way Garibi and Ottoman *tezkiyes* are keen to delineate in their

²²⁰ *Şūfī-dost añılır ammā enāniyyeti gālib olduğu cihetden şuver-i mecāzda zāhir-i seyr eyleyüp ma’ānī-i hakikatden bāhir olmamış ve Nevā’ī kimi Sünniler kūçesinde sergerdān olmuş.* Garibi, *Dīvān-ı Ğarībī*, 307; Garibi, *Tezkire*, 83.

own ways. Nevertheless, there is overall a more austere atmosphere compared to the imperial *tezki*res, with only a few verses of wanton erotic poetry quoted, by poets of relatively lower social status. Many of the poets discussed are prominent sheikhs and scholars, some with truly illustrious lineages, such as Sheikh Abd Allah Shabistari son of Mahmud Shabistari, the author of the well-known mystical *mesnevi* *Gulshan-i Rāz*; Sayyid Sharif, a scion of Sayyid Sharif Jurjani's family; and Mir Abd al-Baki, grandson of Sheikh Nimat Allah Vali. The Persian poetry quoted from these figures, but also others, is in general of an abstract and contemplative nature, rather than focusing on *husn* as such, and is not normally presented in a biographical context of the poets' actual love affairs with boys or drinking parties and other scenes of sociability the way Ottoman *tezki*res often do. In the entry on Selim I, Qazvini cites several Persian ghazels by the sultan which he identifies as being in the styles of Kamal Khujandi, Hafez, and Amir Khusraw Dihlavi respectively. Other names that crop up in this chapter as comparative touchstones include Sheikh Sadi, Nizami and Firdawsi and Hasan Dihlavi. Together these names and their respective styles set the stylistic horizon and tone of the second *ravza* of the *tezki*re's eighth chapter. It seems Qazvini did not think the early Sufi masters like Sanai, Rumi, Attar and Iraki to be directly relevant models for the brand of poetry his chapter on Selim-era poets covered. Instead of these early (twelve- and thirteenth-century) Sufi sheikhs, his paradigms are representatives of the abstract style that welds Sufi and erotic traditions, developed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries at the hands of Sadi and Hafez of Shiraz among others. The ghazels of Selim I that are compared to Kamal Khujandi's and Hafez's are similar in theme: The bohemian (*rind*) ruminates on desire, self and loss as he is intoxicated in the winehouse which is a microcosm of the world. Davlatshah describes Kamal's poetry as *'ārifāna va pur-ḥāl* (in the style of

the gnostics and ecstatic), while Paul Losensky sees in Khujandi's poetry the ambiguous discourse that is externally erotic, as versus religio-mystical, but can equally lend itself to interpretations based on divine love and human love, or both at the same time.²²¹ This ambivalence is made possible by the high degree of stylization and abstraction achieved by these poets, which prevents strictly literalist readings that cancel all other layers of signification. Kamal Khujandi is remembered in later biographical traditions as a Sufi who hardly ever wrote any encomia for rulers, the sovereigns of the temporal realm. Although many of these thirteenth- and fourteenth-century paradigm-setting poets were not Sufi sheikhs like the previous generation, later traditions recognized them as sheikhs or saints as in the case of “Sheikh” Sadi and “Sheikh” Hafez. Hafez is known as the “tongue of the invisible realm” (*lisān-i ḡayb*); though this moniker itself might be of modern origin,²²² the concept of Hafez as divinely inspired must be much older given the Sufi explications (*ṣerḥ*) of his *dīvān* and the age-old tradition of prognostication by his verses. These traditions reflect continued perception of an intimate link between poetry and mystical inspiration even after the age of the great sheikh poets, the founding fathers like Rumi and Attar, came to a close.

The abstract, contemplative and sophisticated “Hafezian” poetics that dominates the second *ravza* of Qazvini's eighth chapter does not seem to have found much following in Turkish Rumi poetry, but Hacı Kemal and Garibi's poetic regimes were by no means unparalleled among the Ottomans and in the Kizilbash milieu. Just as Nesimi's *dīvān* brought together Hurufi mystico-religious poems with hermeneutically unmarked love poetry in the courtly tradition and therefore lent itself

²²¹ Losensky, “Kamāl Kojandi.”

²²² Rypka, *The History of Iranian Literature*, 269.

to the differing sets of selections by Ömer bin Mezid and Hacı Kemal, the *dīvāns* of Kaygusuz Abdal and Shah Hatai, too, have been described as comprising both Sufi and courtly love poetries.²²³ The latter two poets, associated with the Alevi-Kizilbash milieu, which has been described as a predominantly rural and illiterate culture by Köprülü and his followers, are in fact clearly steeped in the transregional Perso-Islamic high culture comprising classical Persian poetry and Islamic learning in Arabic. This profile, as we have seen, also applies to Garibi and his learned father “Mullah” Hacı Muslihuddin. Although the application of a Sufi hermeneutic to love poetry was rejected in Ottoman *tezkiye* literature, as will be discussed in the next chapter, this outlook continued to live on among Ottoman Sufi circles and other marginal communities like frontier ghazis. Poetry miscellanies provide ample evidence of the survival of this modality albeit weakly. For example, the National Library manuscript 06 Mil Yz A 3291, likely from the second half of the sixteenth century, includes, in addition to poets who represent the *dīvān* mainstream (Zati, Necati, Baki, Muhibbi [Sultan Süleyman], etc.), a large number of Rumelian *abdāl* poets composing in ‘*arūz*, poems by Shah Hatai and Nesimi, poems with philo-Alid themes, and verses in simple Turkish supposedly composed by Shah Tahmasb and Sultan Süleyman in the form of a dialogue on their mutual political claims. A copy of Nazmi of Edirne's *Mecma ‘ü'n-nezā’ir*, a *naẓīre* anthology that represents the *dīvān* mainstream, has added poems by Shah Hatai in addition to many other less striking customizing interventions by an Ottoman cavalry soldier.²²⁴ Miscellanies, as versus

²²³ Oktay Uslu, “The Şaḫiyye,” 24-25. Csirkés, “Messianic Oeuvres,” 156-57; Köksal, “Şah İsmail Hatâyî'nin Şiirlerinde,” 180.

²²⁴ See Köksal, “Edirneli Nazmi,” 302-303 for Köksal's observations on the intensity of scribal intervention in the case of Nazmi's *Mecma ‘ü'n-nezā’ir*; see Köksal, “Edirneli Nazmi,” 303-310 for descriptions of extant copies of the work. The six Hatai poems that do not occur in the other MSS are found in Nuruosmaniye 4915 (designated as N2 in Köksal's critical edition). Köksal identifies two more poems in this MS as belonging to Shah Ismail, which must be an error given that the poems are

the more central and canonically driven imperial *tezkire* literature, are likely to yield more examples of this increasingly marginalized poetics of the era. At the same time, however, the central canonical positions were not at all hermetically sealed either. The Ottoman poetic canon always accommodated some Sufi poetry on its fringes, sometimes even at its center as in the case of the *abdāl* poet Hayreti. In Latifi's *tezkire* the influence of the principle of applying a Sufi hermeneutic to love poetry can still be felt, along with the countercurrents that were gaining the upper hand. Nevertheless, over the course of the sixteenth century into the seventeenth, the influence progressively wanes in *tezkire* literature.

2.4 Concluding remarks: The Persian and Turkic poetic ecumenes

The era that gave rise to the texts discussed in this chapter was internationalist and courtly at its core. Characteristically, Persian and Turkic/Turkish courtly poetic cultures flourished side by side, with a much greater prestige attached to the Persian one (also Arabic in the Mamluk case) and intense translation and imitation activities going on in the Turkic/Turkish field.²²⁵ For the Ottomans it began with the second foundation of the Ottoman state in the aftermath of Timur's invasion, when a robust courtly poetry flourished in central and provincial Ottoman courts and the surviving Anatolian Turkoman principalities that were soon to be engulfed by the Ottomans along with their poets and other intellectual cadres. It lasted until about the 1530s when the first Rumi *tezkire* in Turkish, Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt* appeared. Nazmi of

written from the perspective of a *sipāhī* fighting for the Ottoman cause and are not found in Hatai's *dīvān*.

²²⁵ E.g., Bodrogligeti has discussed a fourteenth-century Mamluk miscellany in Kipchak Turkic which includes a translation of Sadi's *Gulistān* by Sayf-i Saray alongside courtly love lyrics in the same language; Bodrogligeti, "A Collection of Turkish Poems." For study an that provides a comprehensive bibliography of Ottoman and other Anatolian translations from Persian literature executed in the fifteenth century see Yazar, "Anadolu Sahası Klasik Türk Edebiyatında Tercüme."

Edirne's *Mecma'ü'n-nezâ'ir* (930/1524), the first poetry anthology that foreshadowed the *tezkiye* literature by focusing on Rumi *dīvān* poetry exclusively and systematically, compiling unprecedented numbers of poems by hundreds of poets, had also arrived shortly before. Both works signaled a decisive new focus on the rich vernacular poetic scene, which had been incubating in the background for some time although it did not find its full textual expression yet.

For other Turkish-speaking polities around the Ottoman realm this era expired earlier, as in the case of the Persian and Old Anatolian Turkish-Kipchak Turkic culture at the Mamluk court which came to an abrupt end with Selim I's conquest of Egypt, or survived a little bit longer, as in the case of the Safavids, exemplified in the present discussion by Garibi's miscellany presented to the predominantly Persian court of Tahmasb I. The Chagatai Turkish literature spearheaded by Ali Shir Navai in Timurid Khorasan remained overshadowed by Persianism. It is noteworthy that almost all poetic selections in Navai's Turkic *tezkiye* *Mecālisü'n-nefā'is* were in Persian and the *tezkiye* itself was transmitted at least as much, if not more, by way of its Persian translations executed soon after its composition. Safavid Iran, in spite of the survival of pockets of Kizilbash-Turkish literature, remained Persian.

In the case of the Ottomans, the library catalogues of Bayezid II and his scholarly friend Müeyyedzade, the greatest Ottoman library collections of their time, reflect the overwhelming weight of Persianism in literary textuality around the turn of the fifteenth century to the detriment of the fledgling vernacular culture.²²⁶ Qazvini's *Hasht Bihisht* was, significantly, the first *tezkiye* ever written in the

²²⁶ See the essays collected in the first volume of Necipoğlu, Kafadar and Fleischer, eds., *Treasures of Knowledge*, especially those by F. Csirkés and J. Pfeiffer.

Ottoman context; at the same time, however, it was the swan song of this internationalist Persian-dominated literary culture in this transitional period. In fact, a full-blown efflorescence of a Turkish literature as a near-complete replacement for the Persian would only be achieved by the Ottomans.

While these new post-Mongol Turkish/Turkic polities sought to integrate themselves into international Persianate high culture, the Turkish/Turkic culture they cultivated was also international in spirit and not locally focused. Just as there was a Persian poetic ecumene, a transregional cultural formation designated “cosmopolitan” by Sheldon Pollock, there was a Turkish/Turkic one, too. The Oghuzid written idiom had not yet bifurcated into Azeri and Rumi dialects and was shared across a large Near Eastern continuum.²²⁷ Ferenc Csirkés documents how Safavid poets like Hatai (Shah Ismail) and contemporary Ottoman *dīvān* poets not only wrote in the same dialect and literary idiom, but also operated within a (partly) shared pool of end-line rhymes (*redif*), a core compositional anchor, contributing to the same *naẓīre* chains.²²⁸ The shared influence of Chagatai literature in all Turkish/Turkic speaking areas added a wider layer of commonality. Navai's influence on Ottoman, Safavid and other Turkic literatures is well studied,²²⁹ but the spread of Chagatai literature went much beyond that. A striking example, is the appearance of a sizeable selection from the Sufi poetry of the Shibaniid ruler Ubayd

²²⁷ See for example Gottfried Hagen's discussion of a vita of the Prophet written and performed by Mustafa Darir of Erzurum at the Mamluk court in OAT at the end of the fourteenth century. Hagen, “Towards a social pre-history.”

²²⁸ Csirkés, “Chaghatay Oration,” 370-87. Most, though not all, of these are *naẓīres* in the sense of “similar” poems, defining a poetic ecosystem, rather than intentional responses (*imitatio*).

²²⁹ Birnbaum, “The Ottomans and Chagatay Literature.” Also see Osman Fikri Sertkaya's series of four articles on “Ottoman poets' Chagatay poetry.”

Allah Khan (d. 1539) in a Turkish-Chagatai-Persian miscellany compiled in Istanbul in 1534, i.e., during his lifetime.²³⁰

Owing to mutual intelligibility and adaptability of the literary idioms, Western Turkish also exerted some influence on Chagatai and Khwarezmian-Kipchak poetry cultures. The wide acclaim of Germiyanid-Ottoman poet Ahmedî's *İskendernâme*, with many copies reported to be executed or held in Iran, Azerbaijan and Central Asia during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and an anecdote about the Uzbek Shibani Khan (d. 1510) being pleased by a gifted copy.²³¹ Mamluk ruler Qansuh al-Ghawri not only composed poems in Old Anatolian Turkish, but also kept a miscellany of his own selections from Ottoman poets' works (e.g., by Mahmud Paşa, Cem Sultan, Ahmed Paşa and Nizami) showing that he followed the Ottoman poetic scene closely, albeit with a small time lag.²³² While “the widely drawn circle of princely poets and patrons of Turkish literature during the last decades of the 15th and first decades of the 16th,”²³³ from Husayn Bayqara and Shibani Khan in the east to Shah Ismail, Bayezid II and Sultan Qansuh al-Ghawri in the west, mark the courtly nature of this shared culture, there were also regional ramifications with other characteristics, such as the homiletic-ritual poetry culture of the Kizilbash that operated on the interface between orality and literate high culture.²³⁴

The era of Persian and Turkic poetic ecumenes, like all literary regimes, was aligned with a political order. Although each polity displayed unique characteristics,

²³⁰ Uzun, “Câmiü'l-meânî”; Ergin, “Câmi-ül-meânî'deki Türkçe Şiirler.”

²³¹ Goodwin Sawyer, “Alexander, History, and Piety,” 42-45.

²³² Barbara Flemming has written extensively on Sultan Qansuh al-Ghawri's engagement with Rumi and Kipchak Turkish languages and literatures, as patron, reader and poet. “Şerîf, Sultan Ğavrî and the 'Persians'” (1969), “A *Ġazel* by Hasan Oĝli (Unknown Poems in the *Dîvân* of Sultan Ğavrî)” (1975), and “From the Evening Talks of Sultan Ğavrî” (1976), all originally in German, have been translated in the 2018 volume Flemming, *Essays on Turkish Literature and History*.

²³³ Flemming, *Essays*, 88 (“From the Evening Talks of Sultan Ğavrî”).

²³⁴ Csirkés, “Chaghatay Oration.”

a shared typology was the conquest state with Alexandrine, i.e., transregional, political ambitions legitimized through messianic or caliphal religio-mystical ideologies. In this Sufism-infused politico-religious environment Sufi poetry and temporal courtly traditions merged or cohabited in unprecedented forms and degrees. Beneath all the rivalry and warfare was shared cultural and political patterns, sustained through shared cosmopolitan languages and literatures. Accordingly, elite émigré intellectuals and their transregional networks played the key role.

However, as Nile Green emphasizes for Persian, learned cosmopolitan languages, in spite of all their cultural and political achievements, are inevitably fraught with “functional limitations and social fractures”: they are “geographically broad but socially shallow: one might speak Persian (or Latin) with a fellow scholar from afar, but not with the cobbler next door.”²³⁵ The need to speak with the cobbler next door—or convince him to comply with taxation and conscription—arises when the state wants to penetrate further into the minds, hearts, pockets, and everyday practices of its subjects. This is the early modern situation where cosmopolitan courtly elites needed to be superseded by new, much more crowded cadres of administrators, ideologues, culturalists, and sermoners who could build a new everyday reality for an enlarged public if not for the whole society. The imperial *tez̄kire* was one major, and the earliest, manifestation of the rise of these cadres in the Ottoman context.

²³⁵ Green, “Introduction,” 2.

CHAPTER 3
IMPERIAL INTEGRATION:
THE RISE OF THE OTTOMAN IMPERIAL *TEZKİRE*
AND THE FORMATION OF THE FIELD OF *DİVÂN* POETRY

Chapter 2 discussed a number of early texts that proposed different definitions of the nature and boundaries of “Rumi poetry.” They each took up particular traditions in the rich and heterogeneous poetic topography of Rum and integrated these with others both within and outside Rum to postulate different totalities, in accordance with their idiosyncratic underlying political and cultural visions. It can be surmised that these texts represented ideas current in their broader milieus and were not built on their authors' individual opinions. This patchy picture of a multiplicity of early field definitions throws into relief the rise of a new hegemonic regime of Rumi poetry from the beginning of the sixteenth century onwards, expressed largely, though not exclusively, in *tezkiye* literature. In other words, it reveals that there is nothing self-evident or primordial about *dīvān* poetry as a field with particular spatial, political, linguistic and generic boundaries.

Although Ottoman *dīvān* poetry as a particular stylistic register deriving from the transregional classical Persianate tradition can be traced back at least to the beginning of the fifteenth century, in the early sixteenth century a new configuration of the field gained ascendancy, successfully overriding and ousting previous ones. The difference between scopes of influence of the new regime of *dīvān* poetry and the multiple older paradigms is immediately suggested by the difference in the numbers of surviving manuscripts of major meta-literary texts from each era: The

three main texts discussed in Chapter 2 have three or fewer extant copies each whereas *tezkires*' legacy can be measured by the dozen.

The poetic field that we refer to today as “*dīvān* poetry” is largely a product of this era of transformation or second formation. This second formation entails several dimensions, which I formulated as “tiers” of analysis in the “Introduction.” This chapter mostly deals with tier one, the conceptual definition of the new field. Main parameters under this heading are the decline of the transregionalist paradigms and the territorialization of poetry culture in Rum; the rise of a literary historiography in alignment with the history of the Ottoman dynasty; and finally, the separation of Sufi poetry from the field of *dīvān* poetry. However, tier two, circulation and transmission, is also integrated into this chapter. The rationale for combining a discussion of tiers one and two is the shared theme of spatiality that cuts across both. While tier one addresses, among the other themes listed above, the normativization of Rum as the geo-cultural space of poetry, tier two looks at the increasing unification and intensification of circulation pathways. Inspired by the work of Sheldon Pollock, I view the normative or conceptual aspect of *dīvān* poetry's spatiality and its actual material aspect as mutually constitutive. I argue that by making, for the first time in history, local pockets of poetic activity simultaneously visible under the totalizing frame of Rum, *tezkiye* literature as a whole contributed to the development and integration of circulation pathways. The two tiers of discussion are, therefore, inevitably enmeshed where spatial matters are concerned. The first three sections of the chapter on cultural geography and circulation have largely overlapping concerns and offer mutually complementary discussions that touch upon themes related with spatiality. Other aspects of tier one—creation of a history for the

field of *dīvān* poetry and the field's separation from Sufi poetry—are easier to isolate and are discussed in one section each.

3.1 Integration of Rum as the space of *dīvān* poetry

3.1.1 The Rise of the Rumi frame

The most important development of the sixteenth century in terms of the reconfiguration of the poetic field was a shift of focus from transregional poetic cultures in other languages (mainly Persian) or dialects (mainly Chagatai) as well as Western Turkish poetry produced in neighboring regions (mainly Iran and Egypt) to a more localized form of culture. The *tezkires* and the *naẓīre* anthologies together signaled the turn from a transregionalism with shallow impact on society outside the courts to a much deeper cultural penetration in a smaller zone. In Chapter 2 we saw how Qazvini imagined Rum, but especially Istanbul, as an extension of the Persian poetic ecumene that stretched from Transoxania to Western Anatolia without a gap, and how Garibi in turn thought of Rum as part and parcel of a philo-Alid/Kizilbash Western-Turkish politico-poetic continuum. The Ottoman court's intense protection of Persian émigré or Persian-composing local authors and poets from the reign of Mehmed II into the reign of Selim I, and the court library's predominant Persianism especially where poetry was concerned has also been noted. Also noted was the enormous popularity of Ali Shir Navai, the Chagatai luminary, as a role model for the Ottoman poets. However, from around the turn of the fifteenth century, i.e., during the reign of Bayezid II, a veritable explosion in the volume of production in Turkish poetry was set on; the huge difference between the numbers of *dīvāns* produced in and/or survived from sixteenth century and the fifteenth serves to evince this leap. There is also a parallel increase in the numbers of poets, with fifteenth

century *dīvān* poets being largely confined to court poets whereas the sixteenth century profiles show a great variety in terms professions, loci of activity and sources of patronage, reflecting the huge expansion of the learned servants of the state, as will be discussed in Chapter 5. The new prominence of Turkish *dīvān* poetry also brought with it a search for an authentic Rumi voice, which took its cue not exclusively from classical or contemporary transregional models but also from various local sources, from everyday experience to urban colloquials, including the unique possibilities of semantic and phonetic play offered by the peculiarities of Turkish grammar, morphology and idiomaticity.²³⁶ Thus, from about the end of the fifteenth century to the end of the first half of the sixteenth, a new field of untranslated and untranslatable, locally relevant kind of poetry developed at the hands of new, expanded cadres that carried out the imperial expansion. Towards the end of this initial developmental phase the *tezkiye* as born, reflecting a need for viewing this new field of intellectual activity and social practice from the outside, a need for reifying the field as an object of discourse and further consolidating it as a quasi-institutional entity.

The appearance of the idea of Rum as an independent geo-poetic unit in the context of poetry appears to date to no earlier than the first decades of the sixteenth century. As we saw in Chapter 2, already in Murad II's reign Ömer bin Mezid had compiled a *naẓīre* anthology mentioning around 85 poets. However, although the anthology is entirely in Turkish, it is not preoccupied with the idea of Rum or Rumi poetry. As I shall argue below (3.3 “*Naẓīre* anthologies”), the poets included seem to comprise mostly poets clustered around Murad’s court, and not to be geographically

²³⁶ Andrews, *Poetry's Voice*, chapters 2 and 3; Andrews, *An Introduction to Ottoman Poetry*, 30-45.

spread across Rum as would be the case with the imperial *tezkires* and *naẓīre* anthologies of the sixteenth century. Moreover, Ömer's anthology also includes numerous poems by Nesimi and Hasanoğlu, poets from the Azeri-speaking lands to the east of Rum, a transregional interest that would be significantly diminished in the *tezkires*. More importantly, the preface written by Ömer bin Mezid includes no reference to Rum or Rumi poetry. The only totality Ömer mentions is *yārān* (friends), a word he uses twice, for the poets and for the potential audience of his anthology; he also refers to *ümerā* (military-administrative office-holders), who are, interestingly, coupled with *şu 'arā* as composers of the poems compiled, which must also be ascribed to the courtly environment in which the anthology originated.

Another early *naẓīre* anthology, probably compiled during Veliyyüddinzade Ahmed Paşa's (d. 1497) lifetime, brings together poems by seven important poets of the fifteenth century, including Ahmed Paşa, Şeyhi, and Nizami, but again there is no reference to the Rumi context as the frame binding these poets.²³⁷ Hacı Kemal's 1512 anthology is a true monument of Rumi poetry from the fourteenth century onwards, but its preface, very similar to Ömer bin Mezid's in content and phrasing,²³⁸ does not mention Rum. Like Ömer, Hacı Kemal simply mentions *şu 'arā* and his audience, whom he directly addresses as *'azīzler*, noble friends.

As late as the first decade of the sixteenth century, it was not common to speak of Rum as a geo-poetic unit. The earliest texts that display a “literary critical” discourse, passages embedded in two turn-of-the-century *meşnevī*s, do not refer to Rumi poetry as the broader frame in which their criticisms gain significance. In their

²³⁷ Mermer, “XV. Yüzyılda Yazılmış.”

²³⁸ The similarity of the prefaces of these two texts separated by about 75 years and with no direct textual contact in between (discussed below) evinces a conventionalization of *naẓīre* anthology prefaces in addition to features in the main text such as headings. This strongly suggests that there may be other *naẓīre* anthologies from the fifteenth century that are lost or undiscovered.

meşnevîs, both Tacizade Cafer Çelebi and Behiştî Sinan harshly criticize Ahmed Paşa and Şeyhi, the two cornerstones of the literary canon of that day, as incompetent poets. However, Cafer and Behiştî seem to make comparisons both between Rumi poets and between Persian and Rumi poets as individual artists, and not as members of their respective “literatures.” Even the fact that the accusations directed against Ahmed Paşa and Şeyhi hinge on the blandness of their work as unsuccessful translations/adaptations from Persian originals does not lead to a discussion of the general state of Rumi poetry or to its status vis-à-vis the Persian.²³⁹

The first appearance of Rum as an explicit frame for poetry is, to the best of my knowledge, in Ata of Skopje's (d. 1523) *Tuhfetü'l-uşşâk* (ca. 1506?), a Turkish translation of Katibi of Nishapur's (fl. early fifteenth century) didactic *meşnevî Dah Bâb*, popularly known in the Ottoman context as *Tecnîsât-ı Kâtibî*. Ata's translation features at the end a *şâ'irnâme*, or a verse catalogue of poets, with one section devoted to *şu'arâ-yı Acem* and another to *şu'arâ-yı Rûm*.²⁴⁰ Ata only includes dead Rumi poets (*şu'arâ-yı mâzî*) and lists a total of 26 of them, which is a very small, selective cohort compared to the hundreds of names found in the *naẓîre* anthologies and imperial *tezkires* of the ensuing period, but this portion of the text nevertheless adumbrates the trends of the following decades.

The imperial *tezkires* develop what appears in germinal form in Ata's *Tuhfe* into a full-fledged discourse about an independent Rumi cultural and literary identity vis-à-vis the Persian. Prefaces to the *tezkires* are especially rich in formulations of this concern with Rum as a geo-poetic unit in its own right comparable to the

²³⁹ Sungur, “Tâcî-zâde Cafer Çelebi'nin Heves-nâme'si,” 243-45 (verses 517-28); Aygün, “Behiştî'nin Leyla vü Mecnun mesnevisi,” 399-401 (verses 1842-75).

²⁴⁰ Ata, *Tuhfetü'l-uşşâk*, 102-106.

Persian.²⁴¹ It has been rightly noted that Ottoman literati were trying in this period to distinguish themselves from the dominant Persian tradition and build an authentic Rumi cultural-literary identity.²⁴² Casting off the stigma of being slavish imitators of Persian poetry as latecomers into the world of high culture is indeed a recurrent concern in the *tezkires*, especially the earliest ones. The words *Rûm* and *Rûmî* do in fact often appear in the *tezkires* in contradistinction to *Acem*, and denote either geographical area, politico-cultural territory, language or poetic tradition. In an iconic anecdote related in Aşık Çelebi's *Meşâ'ir* and featuring Sultan Selim I and Mevlana Abdülvehhab Hayali Çelebi, Selim complains to the *mevlânâ* that his policy of forced migration of *Acem* masters in arts and crafts to Rum resulted in the Rumi populace turning to them for their services instead of the Rumi ones. His intention was to put Rumi and *Acem* masters in competition to prove that the Rumis were better, but it did not work out the way he had hoped. Selim is especially dismayed by an unbeatable *Acem* chess-player named Siyahça, so much so that he feels like slaying him. Abdülvehhab Çelebi replies that he can beat Siyahça and delivers a soliloquy based on double entendres with rich arts and crafts vocabulary, clearly a creation of Aşık Çelebi, where Abdülvehhab claims that the Rumis are superior in every single branch. Abdülvehhab indeed checkmates Siyahça and is then asked by Selim to prove his lofty claims about Rumi artisans. Abdülvehhab organizes a session with Rumi artisans where each presents the sultan with samples of his work.

²⁴¹ E.g., Latifi describes his project as *vilâyet-i Rûm şâ'irlerini ve Türkî-ibârât nâzımlarını nemaî-ı meşrûit u ma'hûd üzre ismi ve resmi ile tahrîr ü tasfîr idüp her biriniñ kemiyet ü keyfiyyetin ve isti'dâd u istiâtâtın bâzell ü fâka'alâ kadri't-tâka ta'yîn ü tebyîn idem*; LAT, 89. Sehi Beg wishes that Rumi poets were recorded in a *tezkiye* the way famous Persian poets are: ... *memâlik-i Rûm'da izhâr ü iştihâr bulan fuzalâ vü şu'arâ'azîzlerüñ adına dağı bir risâle olsa ki mürûr-ı zamânla bunlaruñ ismi rüzgâr-ı gaddâr u çarh-ı sitemkâr eliyle zamâne defterlerinden hebk ve devrân cerîdelerinden münfekk olmayub nesyen mensiyyen ferâmûş olmasa...* SEH, 4b-5a/78-79.

²⁴² Kuru, "The Literature of Rum," 548-60.

Selim lavishly rewards them all as well as Abdülvehhab.²⁴³ This anecdote, likely apocryphal, captures the sense of pride and superiority against Acem that pervades the *tezkires* and their conception of the rising status of Rumi culture, including poetry, vis-à-vis its cosmopolitan models.

The rivalry with Acem is not the only way the idea of a Rumi poetry is constituted, however. The *tezkires* also invest a lot of effort in the *internal* integration of Rum as homogenous cultural space, which will be my focus in this section. In addition to a general discourse on Rum as a geo-cultural entity, *tezkire* literature maps out in great detail Rumi locales, down to the smallest town, even village or metropolitan neighborhood. These place names are an essential part of biographical entries and mark the birth places, career stations and travels of the poets in this era of great inner-Rum elite mobility. Although heavy on the imperial cities in the center—Istanbul, Edirne, Bursa and environs—the imperial *tezkires* together draw an unprecedentedly detailed cultural spatial map of entire Rum, including the connections between cities and towns through circulation of texts and people.

It is also clear that there is a trend in sixteenth-century *tezkire*-writing towards broadening of scope, with growing numbers of Rumi poets included, no doubt reflecting an actual expansion of the poetic domain but at the same time projecting an increasingly denser image of Rum as poetic space. While Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt* (1538) includes around 240 poets, eight years later Latifi's *tezkire* (1546) discusses around 300 (with up to 40 additions in the second recension from c. 1570). The first recension of Ahdi's work (1563) includes around 300 contemporary poets, most of whom Ahdi, an Acem, personally met in Rum, so this number does represent an

²⁴³ AÇ, 1538-40.

increase since the prior two *tezkires* incorporated historical figures as well. Aşık Çelebi's *Meşā'ir* (1568) includes 426 poets, but this number excludes the poets and poet sultans discussed in the "First Chapter" or *Faṣl-ı evvel*. Finally, Hasan Çelebi's *tezkiye* includes around 640 poets, primarily because the work incorporates much of the material in the earlier *tezkires* in addition to a substantial number of recent poets. The trend toward expansion comes to a stall with Mustafa Ali's biographies of poets embedded in his *Künhü'l- aḥbār* (c. 1599, around 305 poets) and Riyazi's *Riyāzū 'ş-şu 'arā* (1610, around 430 poets), both of which self-professedly take up a more selective approach based on literary value, signaling the waning of the priority of establishing Rum as a politico-cultural territory.

The mapping out of places of literature in writing has been called "literary territorialization" by Sheldon Pollock, who regards this as an essential component or sign of "vernacularization" of literatures vis-à-vis a dominant cosmopolitan order of textuality.²⁴⁴ The similarity with the Ottomans' self-differentiation from Persian poetry is evident, although in the Ottoman case the ability to focus on Rum outside the paradigm of rivalry with the Acems marks a far more mature phase of vernacularization than the South Asian examples where imitation and assimilation of the cosmopolitan literature is primary. In Pollock's paradigm, moreover, literary and political territorializations are mutually enhancing processes and create "vernacular

²⁴⁴ Pollock, *The Language of the Gods*, 380. The many South Asian examples of "literary territorialization" Pollock discusses in the Chapter 10 of this book ("Vernacular Poetries and Politics in Southern Asia") are rather confusing because they involve at least two distinct types of literary representations of regional space. In some of these, it is a literary work, e.g., a poem, that describes the beauties of the country, that maps out the vernacular region in words, with no direct implications for literary space. In others, the circulatory space of literature is explicitly described in literary critical passages like prefaces to particular works. The term "literary territorialization" befits the former type since it involves the territorialization of a particular region through its literary representation. However, the latter type, which is much more similar to the case of the *tezkires*, is, in my opinion, better called "territorialization of literature," since the goal is to identify an ongoing literary practice with a place.

polities”; the localization or regionalization of literature takes place concomitantly with political territorialization on more or less the same geographical area, with literary representations produced by courtly elites emerging as the primary, often only, descriptions of political territories as well. Although the Ottomans were a world-empire, and not a regionally limited vernacular polity as the South Asian examples Pollock discusses, the appearance of a generalized literary discourse on Rum and more detailed literary territorializations may also be associated with a new, more intense kind of political and ideological hegemony that the Ottoman state was seeking to establish in its core lands. It also reflects the political unification of Rum, which, as Cemal Kafadar reminds us, was completed as late as 1526 with the annexation of the Dulkadirid territories and suppression of the Kalender Çelebi revolt; the destruction of the last remaining principality closed centuries of “*ṭavā’if*” rule in Anatolia, a term “used in late medieval Arabic sources with respect to Iberia, where the fortunes of a waxing and waning set of ‘party kings’ (*los reyes de taifas* or simply *taifas* in Spanish) rather than of a single polity are recognized as having constituted the framework of the narrative.”²⁴⁵

Biographers of the sixteenth century were very well-traveled men. It was especially their work-related travels as scribes (e.g., Sehi Beg and Latifi) and qadis (e.g., Aşık Çelebi, Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi) that allowed them to provide first-hand information on different corners of Rum. The practice of rotation that members of the judicial-religious hierarchy were subjected to made this group especially mobile.²⁴⁶ Indeed, travels for studies and rotation of officials and scholars on a regular basis was a feature of many premodern imperial cultures. For example, Cong

²⁴⁵ Kafadar, “A Rome of One’s Own,” 8.

²⁴⁶ Beyazıt, “Osmanlı İlmiyye Tarîkinde İstihdam.”

Ellen Zhang has devoted an entire study to this phenomenon in Song China (10th to 13th centuries) and argues that these travelling learned men played a key role in the social, political and cultural integration of Song China. In particular, through the literary pieces they composed in the places they traveled to, the officials described localities in every corner of the country. “Over time, records of renowned figures lingering at different places formed an overlapping web of collective memories. In this respect, elite travels brought disparate local areas and regions together, greatly contributing to China’s social and cultural cohesion.”²⁴⁷

In spite of their claim to represent Rumi poetry holistically and exhaustively, each *tezkiye* in fact privileges particular locales, rather randomly, because the biographer had a chance to visit that place or had family ties to it. In such cases, the biographer could introduce poets who were entirely out of the ken of other biographers. Aşık Çelebi, for example, notes several locally insulated figures that he got to meet or read the writings of during his many judicial appointments in Rumelia. While he was in Niğbolu (modern Nikopol, Bulgaria) as qadi, he had a chance to peruse the writings of a Nebati “of the Akçakoyunlu” (*Akçakoyunlu’dan bir kimesne*, probably referring to the Turkoman clan by that name),²⁴⁸ whom Aşık Çelebi deems, based on his writings, to be a *Şāhī* (i.e., Kizilbash) and possibly also a Hurufi. The writings apparently included some autobiographical information, perhaps a first-person account of Nebati’s fifteen-year captivity in Hungary. Aşık is the only biographer that mentions Nebati, whose poetry he reports to be “widespread” (*şāyi*) in Niğbolu. From Piriştine/Prishtina, another Rumelian town where Aşık served as qadi, he mentions a young man called Hatıfı, a cavalryman’s son who presented a

²⁴⁷ Zhang, *Transformative Journeys*, 4.

²⁴⁸ AÇ, 846.

qasida to the biographer, and the brothers Levhi, Nuhi and Azmi, for whose biographies Aşık is the only original source. Similarly, the time Sehi spent in Manisa and environs as a scribe at the princely courts of Sultan Mahmud, son of Bayezid II, and later Sultan Süleyman before his accession, has made it possible for us to know about several local figures from this region, otherwise unattested (except for derivative entries in later sources). The personal and physical details Sehi can furnish evince his first-hand knowledge of these individuals. These are Gubari, a judge from Urla near Aydın; Hâbibî, a preacher (*ḥaṭīb*) with a beautiful voice (*gāyet ḥoş-nefes*) at the Faik Paşa Mosque in Narda, who eventually lost his mind, left Narda, wandered about for some time and finally settled back in his home town Padra in Aydın to become an ascetic dervish; and Muḥyî, judge of Birgi, who was a pleasant conversationist (*muşāḥabeti laṭîf*) and a great cook, known commonly as “the rice chef” (Pilavcı Muhyi).²⁴⁹ In some cases, these localisms create more substantial clusters that can help throw light on an entire milieu. Latifi's portrayal of Kastamonu and environs, discussed below, is one such case. Although the very center of the Ottoman establishment, from a biographical point of view, the court milieu, especially during Bayezid's reign or earlier, also seems to be subject to more or less the same dynamics as local milieus accessible through the unique reports of a single observer. In this case, it is Sehi Beg's invaluable reports on courtly figures from the reigns of Murad II, Mehmed II and Bayezid II, and, in particular, his portrayal of early scribal culture at the court that has no counterparts in other *tezkires*. The discussion in the next subsection (3.1.2) delves into these latter two cases in greater detail.

²⁴⁹ 84b-85a/238-39, 91b-92a/252-53, and 95a/259 respectively in SEH.

Indeed, each *tezkiye* is deeply shaped by the biography of its author. Outside a core of canonical poets based in Istanbul and Edirne, each author could only portray particular niches that they could penetrate as a result of their unique career, travel and socialization patterns. This is especially true for the earlier *tezkiyes*, which relied on written sources to a lesser degree. For example, with only eight years between their composition dates, Latifi's *tezkiye* could, in theory, include all the poets covered in Sehi's *Heşt Bihişt*. But that is not the case. Similarly, many individuals active during the time interval Sehi and Latifi wrote their works or earlier are mentioned for the first time by Aşık Çelebi, or sometimes even by later biographers. Since no single *tezkiye* is perfectly exhaustive, a fuller picture of a particular period's poetry scene, e.g., during Selim I's reign, can only be arrived at by overlaying the partial views offered by different *tezkiyes*. While collectively the *tezkiye* literature of the sixteenth century did achieve considerable spatial and chronological coverage, for individual texts there is a clear gap between their claim to exhaustiveness and the patchiness of the collected material.

Revealing this random aspect of the content of *tezkiyes* is important, among other reasons, because it might be assumed that *tezkiye* authors, as canon-making authorities, chose to include and exclude poets according to their own ideas of aesthetic merit, picking names from a field which they omnisciently comprehended. Such omniscience simply did not exist in the sixteenth century. Chapter 4 “A Community Culture” will propose an alternative description of the sixteenth-century Ottoman literary canon as a communally developed, orality-based, traditional canon as distinct from modern canons that relied on authorities outside the literary field, such as centralized nation-states or the modern Western institution of literary criticism.

Representing the whole of Rum, past and present, as one homogenous literary space equally accessible from any vantage point within was the *tezkires'* tour de force. One dimension of this representation was the very idea of such a homogenous space; even if it did not match reality fully, it potentially further promoted centralized and homogenized forms of culture by representing it as hegemonic. Secondly, it may have contributed to the integration of actual circulation pathways. For the first time in history, dispersed local niches of poetic activity became visible to one another, which may have been conducive to textual circulation beyond their initial local milieus. *Tezkires* even played a quasi-journalistic function by recording some of the most recent young poets, basically nobodies at the time of writing, but this let unaware audiences of their coming. For the first time in history, Rumi poets became one big “imagined community” around a new medium of communication, the *tezkiye*. Although the *tezkiye* grew out of a small community of poets clustered mostly in Istanbul, Edirne and environs (Chapter 4 “A Community Culture”), its emergence marked a point in time when the domain of poetry could no longer be contained in personal and face-to-face relations.

The integration and homogenization of Rum as cultural space was achieved through meticulous work by intellectuals over the course of the sixteenth century, as most evidently seen in the *tezkires*. Part of it was actual tireless research—talking to people to collect information, chasing rare manuscripts and traveling to distant places. But, as already suggested above, as premodern individuals relatively locked in time and space, there was a limit to their capacity to cover the Rumi poetic scene in its entirety, despite their claims to that effect. It appears that the authors themselves were aware of the significant gaps in their knowledge of the field and did everything to mask the gaps, resorting to rhetorical strategies and even their own

imagination to fill in the blanks, as the examples from Latîfî and Aşık Çelebi discussed in the next subsection will show. As such, the Rumi totality they created, entry by entry, was as much an *effect* or simulacrum as reality. However, the two levels, may have been mutually enhancing.

This line of thinking is partly inspired by the work of historians of South Asia on “vernacularization” of cultures and polities in the second millennium. In a 1977 article Burton Stein makes a very similar conceptual distinction between “cognitive” (or formal) and “circulatory” (or functional) regions, which Sheldon Pollock also draws on.²⁵⁰ Cognitive regions are imaginary and are expressed mainly in literary representations; circulatory regions, on the other hand, entail the physical domains on which people and texts circulate. Stein looks at the changing relationship between two types or levels of regionality throughout the premodern history of Tamil country, which appears to be comparable to Rum as “an identifiable cultural region for almost two millennia.” For many centuries and through many different types and extents of polity, the two types of region in Tamil country do not completely overlap; the actual domain in which people and texts circulated was, more often than not, much smaller than the domains of cultural identity established in texts. In one period only, the Chola state of the tenth to thirteenth centuries, do the two regions become isomorphic, a process in which dynastic inscriptions in the vernacular erected across the territories of the Chola state play the key role. In other words, the rise of a new state is intimately linked with the overlapping of the cognitive and circulatory regions, though the causality at work here is not very clear in the work of either Stein or Pollock. The dynastic inscriptions not only formulate a new notion of cultural and

²⁵⁰ Stein, “Circulation and the Historical Geography”; Pollock, *The Language of the Gods*, 413 ff.

political space, but physically, as stone monuments, mark the land. In Pollock's succinct summary of Stein's main point "Regionalization is no mere artifact of our texts; on the contrary, Stein argues, it was the text-artifacts themselves that by their very presence and idiom, as well as their circulation and representations, produced in the minds and bodies of people the reality of the images they transmitted. They both articulated in their discourse and produced by their diffusion a new cultural-political space, one that excluded even as it included." Pollock himself places a greater emphasis on the political relevance of this isomorphism between regions of representation and circulation; the historical overlap of those regions constitutes Pollock's "vernacular polity," a concept whose relevance to the Ottoman case I had briefly discussed in the "Introduction."

3.1.2 The local and the Rumi whole: Rum as effect

In what follows, I examine the mechanics of representing the local through two specific cases, Latifi's accounts of Kastamonu-Amasya poets and Sehi Beg's portrayals of early court society and the world of courtly scribe-poets. These examples show how the early *tezkires* can open up unique windows onto particular pockets of poetic activity depending on their authors' personal histories. Latifi's account of the poetic milieus in Kastamonu, Amasya and environs is unique; no other author seems to have a more than superficial knowledge about this region, and later authors rely almost entirely on Latifi for their own accounts. Latifi's portraits from this region also demonstrate the difficulties suffered by the biographer in accessing information and manuscripts as well as the strategies he developed to overcome these difficulties, some entailing hard work such as looking for manuscripts, others rhetorical maneuvers. Sehi Beg's account of early court poets

and courtly scribe-poets, also unique in the entire *tezkiye* literature, is striking mainly because it shows clearly that even the court milieu was subject to similar circulatory dynamics as the provinces, with little information surviving from the recent past. The court environment in which Sehi grew up and spent his early career remained equally inaccessible to later biographers. These two case studies show that despite claims of a homogenous and integrated Rumi poetry, the biographers' accounts were random and uneven. The density or thinness of the representation of particular regions were largely determined by the biographers' own trajectories in life. Even where the individual biographers were strongest, there remained major gaps which the biographers sometimes tried to hide by way of rhetorical acrobatics. Nevertheless, the coming to light and juxtaposition under a common frame of disparate local milieus for the viewing of a broader public was an essential contribution.

3.1.2.1 Latifi's Kastamonu-Amasya poets

First, a note on method is in order. In order to gauge the nature of a biographer's relation to a locality, we need to be able to distinguish the different types of information he gathered for his entries. First of all, entries which are entirely based on texts—often the writings of the poet in question—can be discerned quite easily. These text-based entries typically assess the characteristics (style, language, etc.) and literary value of the texts seen and include little to no discussion of the poet's life or personality independent of the texts in question. At the other extreme, shared oral lore on men of letters—an elite “folklore” of sorts—such as humorous or hagiographical anecdotes can also be easily discerned owing to these narratives' distinctly stylized constructions (see for example the discussion on the anecdotes about the canonical poets Ahmed Paşa and Şeyhi in this chapter and in Chapter 4).

Third, when a biographer personally knew the individual in question, this usually manifested itself in solid detail about the man's personality or temperament and physical appearance or ailments. However, realistic details about an individual could also be effectively furnished by the fourth and last type of source, oral reports by third parties who knew the poet in question either directly or second-hand through participation in the same milieus. These last two categories of information blend into each other unless the biographer explicitly mentions the nature of his relation to the poet. For example, Aşık Çelebi often explains whether and how he knows a poet, whereas Latifi normally does not, making it problematic to align his entries that provide personal details with his own life stations since these could as well be based on third parties' testimonials. Ultimately, it must be acknowledged that many of the occurrences and gaps in *tezkires* have to remain totally unaccounted for because the historical web of relations and the minutiae of biographers' trajectories in life that led to that moment of inclusion or exclusion are irretrievably lost: One scribe at a particular sultan's administrative council gets recorded in this dictionary and another scribe in the same council in another, and it is impossible to know why. Nevertheless, for any *tezkire*, some idiosyncrasies can indeed be isolated. Proceeding by the less ambiguous cases can allow us to make some inferences about the relationship between the biographer's life and his biographies.

According to Aşık Çelebi, the weight of Kastamonu in Latifi's *tezkire* led the audiences to dub the work *Ḳastamonunāme* or the Book of Kastamonu. Aşık Çelebi accuses Latifi of a kind of regional chauvinism whereby the latter artificially credited Kastamonu with spawning some highly accomplished people who were in actuality from other places. This sardonic moniker for the work is not attested elsewhere, and, clearly, Aşık Çelebi was trying to downplay the value of Latifi's work which he saw

as a rival to his own (see the previous section for more detail on this rivalry). Nevertheless, Aşık Çelebi's accusation seems to reflect a general association of the city with a strong local identity beyond Latifi's own idiosyncrasy. In fact, Latifi's Kastamonu emerges as part and parcel of a broader regional ecosystem that includes other north-central Anatolian towns like Amasya, Tokat, Merzifon as well as Canik (modern Samsun) and Sinop further north. In the Ottoman sixteenth century, the region was administratively divided between the Anadolu and Rum provinces, but historically there were intense cultural connections and shared characteristics that cut through the administrative division, which Latifi's portrayal also evinces.²⁵¹

Latifi can provide local anecdotal lore or solid historical information on at least some of the poets from the region. There are several poets associated with Kastamonu that Latifi clearly knows in person. Zaifi, the local Kastamonid friend who motivated Latifi to write a *tezkiye*, is one. Others include Şemsi-i Edvari and Şemsi-i Hisari, both experts of music theory (*edvār*) active in the town; the entries furnish a lot of detail about the poets' professions and means of livelihood, areas of knowledge, social connections and times of death. None of these three poets occur in any other *tezkiye*. Some of the entries with solid detail and local lore are associated with the appanage courts in Amasya and Kastamonu, which appear to be the principal loci of poetic activity in the region. For example, Andelibî, poet and singer at the court of Prince Mahmud in Kastamonu, was famous for mimicking the nightingale's song and was therefore also known as “Hasan the Nightingale” (Bülbül Hasan). For the famous female poet Mihri, Latifi is the source that furnishes the identities her father and her purported lover (a qadi with the penname Belayî and

²⁵¹ Kafadar, “Between Amasya and Istanbul,” 86-88.

İskender son of Sinan Paşa, respectively). The case of Aftabi is even more important as it shows the similarities between poetry cultures at the central and provincial courts. Aftabi was apparently a local court poet in Amasya and remained so even after Bayezid acceded to the throne in 1481, taking many Amasya poets, scholars and artisans with him to Istanbul. After Prince Bayezid, Aftabi became associated with Prince Ahmed, the next governor of Amasya (gov. 1481-1511). He appears in Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt* as the only contemporary poet Sehi openly marks as not having personally met (*faķır ańı görmediüm*), clearly because Aftabi did not spend much time, if at all, in western cultural centers like Edirne and İstanbul and Sehi, as the contents of his biographical dictionary suggest, had probably not been to Amasya and environs.²⁵² Aftabi does not occur in Hacı Kemal's *nażire* anthology of 1512 and is represented in Nazmi's *Mecma'ü'n-neżā'ir* by two poems only. Nevertheless, the anecdotal lore recorded by Latifi, in addition to the one anecdote recorded by Sehi, reveals that he was, in his own day, a regionally preeminent figure around whose name a series of anecdotes had developed, very similar to the cycle of Ahmed Paşa anecdotes, discussed further below in this chapter as pseudo-historical narratives and in Chapter 4 as implicit statements of an Ottoman poetics. The anecdotes about Aftabi are similar to Ahmed Paşa anecdotes in the way they are created by imagining an occasional context for particular verses by the poet and in terms of their themes such as the poet attracting the wrath of the sultan and then begging for forgiveness through poetry, or a triangulation between the sultan, the poet and a courtly beloved. Sehi records one anecdote, and Latifi two lengthy ones, one of which appears only in some manuscripts. Nevertheless, the three anecdotes together suggest strongly, in

²⁵² SEH, 78b/226.

their structural and thematic similarity to Ahmed Paşa anecdotes that they used to be part of a bigger cycle and that the poetry cultures at the provincial courts closely followed and imitated the central courts in Edirne and Istanbul.

Interestingly, Latifi's most detailed local entries pertain to relatively marginalized ethnic and heterodox religious groups rather than the court society itself, although it is often through their interaction with the local courts that these lesser poets appear to have entered historical record. Among these unlikely figures that crop up in Latifi's biographical dictionary is, for example, Ferahi of Kastamonu, who presented a qasida to Prince Mahmud, son of Bayezid and governor of Kastamonu between 1584 and 1504. According to Latifi, Ferahi was "of the *kurbet* kind." The *ķurbets* or *ķurbets* were a rather elusive nomadic community in Ottoman history with a style of itinerancy that approximated the Romani peoples' rather than the transhumant clans' and were seen by the Ottoman administration as a threat to public order.²⁵³ A couplet by Talii, a poet from the same city, testifies to the group's association with burglary: "Your locks are karachis,²⁵⁴ your mole and facial hair *ķurbet* thieves / Thieves of seventy-two nations all in one place."²⁵⁵ Similarly, Latifi mentions a "Rus" (Ruthenian) slave named Esiri in Bakır Kűresi to the north of Kastamonu. Esiri was probably first brought to work in the forced labor corps at the famous copper mines of the town, which, in the author's words, was "a common destination for infidels of Esiri's kind". Latifi gives no explanation as to how this slave got to acquire poetic skills in Turkish; however, it should be remembered that Latifi associates with Bakır Kűresi with two preeminent poets of the late fifteenth

²⁵³ Koç, "Osmanlı Taşrasının Gezginci Gruplarından."

²⁵⁴ A group of Romani people living in eastern Turkey and Azerbaijan; probably used here broadly to refer to Romanis (gypsies) in general.

²⁵⁵ *Zűlfűñ ķaraķı ĥāl u ĥaťűñ ķurbet uķrısı/ Bir yire geldi yetmiş iki millet uķrısı*. LAT, 373; AÇ, 648.

century, Zeyneb and Andelib, both connected with the Ottoman courts in the region. Although the poetry scene in western Rumi political and cultural centers like Istanbul and Edirne also displayed some social openness (see the discussion in Chapter 4), members of severely outcast groups like the two examples above are unattested. It should also be noted that the two most famous female poets of the century Mihri and Zeyneb, mentioned above, were from the region and at least in the case of Mihri many anecdotes show her in interaction with male society, which is likewise unseen in the center. Although Latifi frames Esiri's biography with very unfavorable commentary, these diverse examples point towards a difference in social hierarchies and boundaries from what is known on the basis of evidence from the core Rumi lands to the west.

The region was also apparently rich in brands of religious heterodoxy. There are indications in Latifi's dictionary that non-Sunni pieties were not ostracized in the region,²⁵⁶ although Latifi is keen to frame his presentation of the Twelver Shi'i, Kizilbash and other antinomian poets with a derogatory discourse every time, especially in the latest recension (LAT2). There seems to be a particular concentration of such beliefs among the local *sipāhīs* (cavalrymen)—the term should be referring to timariots in this context—recalling the similar situation in Garibi's *tezkiye* as well as what is known about the role Twelver Shi'i and other philo-Alid timariots played in the Safavid-related insurgencies of the period across Anatolia, discussed in Chapter 2. Diliri, from a spot on the Kızılırmak, was a Süleyman-era

²⁵⁶ Cf. Cemal Kafadar's portrayal of the oscillation between two rival positions in Ottoman imperialism in the period from Mehmed II to Selim I, one belligerently centralizing and absolutist and the other peaceful and accommodationist. These differing attitudes at the Ottoman imperial center manifested themselves especially in the matter of sharing authority and resources with local magnates and in the problem of confessional ambiguity and tolerance as the Safavid state emerged as a threat. Kafadar, "Between Amasya and Istanbul," esp. 87-88.

timariot who “looked” Sunni but was actually a *Şāhī*, or Kizilbash (*şūretde sūnnī sīretde şāhī*); in Latifi's view, it is only thanks to his boundless generosity, a factor that overrode his Kizilbashism, that Diliri could attain martyr (*şehīd*) status at Süleyman's Budin expedition (1529). Zahiri (d. 944/1537-38) from Canik, a *sipāhī* and scribe under provincial administrators, rejected the creation and believed in the primordiality of the material universe—a *dehrī*, or materialist, in Latifi's terminology; notably, in this entry, the *emīr*, or provincial military commander, that Zahiri satirized for his stinginess is also a *mülhīd*, or heretic, according to Latifi. Another local cavalryman-scribe and a boon companion to grandees, Necmi, was a Shi'i and heretic in Latifi's view. These examples show that unorthodox religious inclinations were not rare among local administrators and grandees, in addition to the cavalrymen, at least not condemnable enough to deter local begs from employing and socializing with them, although Latifi does not fail to disparage the last two figures at some length.

That religious unorthodoxy might have historical roots in the region is suggested by the entry on the poet Haki, a Caferi, or Twelver Shi'i, who presented poems to the Çanderid court in the middle of the fifteenth century. Previously, Claude Cahen had discussed whether the Çanderids were Shi'is and noted some indications in that direction although he ultimately concluded that the evidence was inconclusive;²⁵⁷ the example of Haki might be added to the scanty evidence Cahen garnered.

Again, during Süleyman's early reign we see Saati, an itinerant Shi'i preacher and witch doctor of sorts, at the pulpit in Kastamonu; Latifi uses this entry as an

²⁵⁷ Cf. Cahen, “Le Problème du Shi'ism,” 125-126.

opportunity to elaborate on the piety of the Kastamonu mosque community, who forced Saati to leave by dropping notes on the pulpit that exposed the poet-preacher's fondness for wine and beautiful young boys. Perhaps Latifi's most positive entry in this group is the one on the peaceful mystic Türibi, a mid-fifteenth century figure who slept in graves, dwelt in the wilderness, befriended animals and avoided people; he would show utmost care not to step on ants when walking and treat Jews and Christians with the same respect he showed Muslims, apparently an exceptional behavior at the time. Finally, we should note that for most of the “marginal” Kastamonu-Amasya poets mentioned thus far, Latifi's dictionary is the only original source.

However, in spite of his pride in his regional identity and unique penetration of the region, there is something disappointing about Latifi's coverage from the historian's point of view. Somewhat unexpectedly, for poets from older generations, namely those who flourished between the reigns of Mehmed II and Bayezid II, Latifi does not seem to have had much access to either solid biographical information or anecdotal lore. His accounts appear to be largely built on these poets' surviving texts that he could lay hands on. For the more recent reigns of Selim I and Süleyman, Latifi's portraits change character; he has a lot more to say on these poets as historical individuals.

The enrichment of information for the later period could be related to multiple factors: Latifi would have personally met at least some of the poets, his co-generationalists; moreover, many of the more recent poets with origins in the region later developed careers in Istanbul and other western Rumi centers, which would have rendered them biographically more accessible. In addition, a deeper, structural explanation could be the absence of a social and cultural continuity in the region that

would allow historical/biographical memory and anecdotal lore to be transmitted. The reasons for this loss of connection with the past must be complex, although in the specific case of the Kastamonu-Amasya region, the sea change in the region's administrative organization and political significance during the reign of Selim I (as home of the losing bidder to the throne) might have led to discontinuities on several levels from court culture to communal memory.²⁵⁸

It is also noteworthy that the timing of this mnemonic break falls at about the same time as the break in poetic tradition represented by the threshold between Hacı Kemal's *Cāmi'ü'n-nezā'ir* of 1512 and Nazmi's *Mecma'ü'n-nezā'ir* of 1524(?), as will be discussed in section 3.3 below. We will most forcefully hit against the same rupture in memory in the next section “A pseudo-history of Ottoman literature” (3.4), where I argue that the *tezkires*' construction of a literary past is largely mythical and not historical, and that this is caused mainly by the gap between the sheer unavailability of historical information on the one hand and an urgent need for a narrative of dynastic literary history on the other; the *tezkires*' actual historical memory stretches at best to circa 1500 and the history of the era before that had basically to be invented. In multiple areas of cultural memory, then, there seems to be a break around the same time, which implies a bigger underlying transformation. This transformation should be related to the institution of a new imperial order, beginning with the Alexandrine conquests of Selim I and continuing with the establishment of imperial legal, administrative and aesthetic canons during Süleyman's reign. The shifts in the imperial regime and the structure of the elites that

²⁵⁸ Kafadar, “Between Amasya and Istanbul.”

sustained the empire appears to have led to the partly deliberate and partly incidental breaks with the past both in memory and in tradition.

An important cluster in Latifi's portrayal of the poetry scene of the region is the group of poets associated with Prince Mahmud as both poets and secretaries in his administrative council (*dīvān*), namely Necati, Taliî, and Suni.²⁵⁹ Given Latifi's foregrounding of Kastamonu as the locale that brought these famous poets and the prince together and Latifi's own ties to the city, one would expect some detail—historical information and anecdotes—but there is none. In fact, Latifi's association of these poets with Prince Mahmud's governorship in Kastamonu (1488-1504) is only an impression created indirectly by Latifi's emphasis on Kastamonu as the place of origin of these poets and his omission of a discussion of the prince's Manisa phase (his next appanage, 1504-1507), which appears in all other sources as the context in which these poets and the prince were together.²⁶⁰ Among the three, Suni is the most obscure, including for Latifi. Sehi and Aşık Çelebi report briefly on Suni's final years after the death of Prince Mahmud, when the poet entered the sultan's army (*bölüğe geçüb*) (Aşık), presumably as a scribe, and died in poverty in Edirne (Sehi). Thus, any crumb of biographical information on the poet belongs to his final years in the center. Latifi's entry rests purely on quoted poetry and he seems to have seen a wider corpus as suggested by his survey of the genres Suni wrote in. For Taliî the nature of the information in Latifi's and others' *tezkires* is the same: Text-based inferences for the early period, historical information and anecdotal material for Selim's reign when the poet was in Istanbul as a scribe in the janissary corps. For the

²⁵⁹ LAT, 359.

²⁶⁰ Aşık Çelebi, for example, writes: *Sultân Maḥmūd-ı merhûm Mağnisa'da iken Necâtî şevkine anuñ terbiyesiyle ol kapuya cem' olan dört şâ'irüñ biridür ki Necâtî ve Şevkî ve Tâlî 'î ve Şun 'î'dür.* AÇ, 1291.

early career of Necati, a canonical icon, Latifi states that he was first in the service Prince Abdullah, son of Bayezid, when he was governor of Karaman, and that after the prince's death (1484?) he moved on to serve Prince Mahmud as his chancellor (*nişāncı*). Other than that, the only local connection Latifi can establish for Necati is a brilliant philological survey by the biographer of the local Kastamonu words and idioms found in the poet's oeuvre. Necati, too, becomes visible in the historical record after he settles in Istanbul a few years before his death. Sehi the biographer, a student and friend of Necati in the later phases of the poet's life also has nothing to say about Necati's early career.

To demonstrate how, for many Kastamonu poets, Latifi relies near exclusively on surviving texts and musters up his rhetorical skills to translate the crumbs of historical references in poems and other types of work into something that looks like a biographical entry, I would like to focus on the example of the poet Şavur. The entry²⁶¹ includes one couplet by Talii and a total of four couplets by Şavur although Latifi may have seen more since he mentions the songs (*terennüm ü terâne*) Şavur composed, lyrics of which were probably written down. I argue that Latifi's entry relies entirely on these five couplets, except for the notes on Şavur's musical work and his death. The entry makes the following points: That Şavur was from Kastamonu, that he was a musician, specifically a composer of songs, that he was in the circle of Necati and Talii, that Necati and Talii admired his intelligence, that he followed the poetic style of Necati and Talii, that he was lame but a decent personality, that he became a qadi to a small town near Kastamonu called Arac, and that he died “in this period” (*bu ‘aşrda*) probably meaning during Süleyman's reign.

²⁶¹ LAT, 318-19.

The satirical couplet by Talii is the source of the information that Şavur was from Kastamonu, that he became a qadi to Arac, and that he was lame: “Şavur the lame (*a‘rec*) wishes to be the qadi of qadis / But even if he studies for a thousand years, A‘rac will be his peak (*mi‘rāc*).” Şavur’s reply confirms his lameness and his dedication to scholarly studies. The battle of words as a whole places Şavur in the circle of Talii, and by implication, Talii’s close associate Necati. Latifi’s remark that Şavur was a follower of the two in poetic style rests on the two ghazel couplets by Şavur; these are easily recognizable as being in the style of Necati and Talii’s poetry since they incorporate proverbs, a feature commonly identified in the *tezkires* with Necati. That Necati and Talii admired Şavur’s intelligence and that Şavur had a decent personality might just be rhetorical fodder, lacking any specificity as they do. The only piece of information not accounted for by the above-mentioned textual sources is Latifi’s report of Şavur’s death.

Aşık Çelebi’s entry on Şavur (“Şāver” in AÇ)²⁶² draws entirely on Latifi but inserts a liberally imaginative contribution, which makes Latifi seem restrained in his approach to biographical writing. In Aşık’s version Şavur becomes a madrasa professor (*müderriş*) instead of a qadi, probably based on the emphasis on scholarly studies in both Talii’s verse attack and Şavur’s reply. Aşık also appends at the end of the entry a short notice on a *müderriş* called Başcızade. Başcızade was given to drinking all his life and one day he fell off the roof of a winehouse and became lame; at the same time, a young beloved of his stabbed his hand which was then handicapped for good. Aşık Çelebi rather blatantly projects features from this narrative on to Şavur and makes him a drunkard, claims that he became lame after

²⁶² AÇ, 1411-12.

falling off the stairs in a winehouse and could not “walk straight” into the mosque. Given that Aşık Çelebi otherwise relies on Latifi's content and has nothing solid to add, the veracity of this expansion is highly dubious.

There are also a number of Latifi entries that look like detailed personal portraits at first sight but are likely simply rhetorical expansions of the poets' pennames. The entry on Bedii (Bedī'ī), for instance, consists largely of a lengthy passage, in ornate prose, on the poet's superb knowledge of linguistic sciences, the madrasa disciplines of *bedī'*, *kelām*, and *ma'ānī*; Latifi also describes the poet as a “*danişmend*,” a vague term that associates him with madrasa studies.²⁶³ Similarly, the entry on Ferruhi, literally “the joyful one,” dwells at length on his happy demeanor.²⁶⁴ Even the lengthy entry on Halimi Çelebi of Kastamonu, Selim's tutor and companion during his governorship in Trabzon, appears to be largely an elaboration of the contrast between the Halimi's calm and peaceful temperament, signified by his penname, and the prince's famous irritability and vengefulness (*mizāc-gīr ü zamīr-dān*, *kaṭṭāl u ğazūb*). Latifi explains at length how even the viziers and other high administrators would contact the prince indirectly through Halimi out of fear.²⁶⁵

The truly original part of most of Latifi's Kastamonu-Amasya biographies thus appear to be his textual quotations and reports on the texts he had seen, rather than his personal knowledge of the individuals. That these quotations were copied by later biographers suggests that they came from unique and possibly only locally accessible manuscripts. Later biographers rely to a great extent on Latifi's quotations

²⁶³ LAT, 188-89.

²⁶⁴ LAT, 428.

²⁶⁵ LAT, 230-32.

from Suni and Talii as well as from a host of other local Kastamonu-Amasya poets, which they complement with more recent material where available, such as poems belonging to Talii's Istanbul phase. Latifi also seems to have seen, for instance, one or more copies of Tac Beg's *münşe'ât*,²⁶⁶ and later biographers have no other poetry samples to offer besides Latifi's. Other rare manuscripts Latifi appears to have seen include the *dīvāns* of two Amasya poets that occur only in Latifi, Müniri,²⁶⁷ whom Latifi associates with Prince Ahmed, son of Bayezid, and the Bayezid-era poet Medhi;²⁶⁸ these two entries are also largely based on extrapolations from the quoted verses in the manner of Şavur's entry discussed above.

This analysis of Latifi's portrayal of his home region has shown that the author made an effort to make it look like he knew more than he actually did, imaginatively elaborating on crumbs of biographical information found in the poets' verses or minor cues like pennames. The occurrence of a similar phenomenon in Aşık Çelebi's *Meşâ'ir* (entry on Şavur, discussed above) should serve as a warning against a naive acceptance of the material presented in the *tezkires* of the era. Ultimately, the impression of comprehensiveness and the holistic image of Rum the *tezkire* projected was at least in part an “effect,” produced under compelling ideological and cultural needs.

3.1.2.2 Sehi Beg's court poets

²⁶⁶ *Neşr-i müsecca` dan neşr-i `ādīyi eyü dirdi. . . . Münşe'âtı vâfir müdevven kitâbdur ammâ eş'ârı nâdir ü kem-yâbdur.* LAT, 198.

²⁶⁷ *Fârisî ve Tûrkî iki pâre dīvânı ve dīvânında hayli âşâr-ı irfânı vardır.* LAT, 509.

²⁶⁸ *. . . kaçâyid ü eş'ârı müdevven ü meşûrdur.* LAT, 496.

Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt*²⁶⁹ is different from most other *tezkires* including Latifi's in that it leaves no room for doubt as to who Sehi knows personally, at least in the generationally divided final four chapters. Like his model Ali Shir Navai, the author of *Mecālisü'n-nefā'is*, Sehi explicitly places himself at the center of his work as the vantage point from which the Ottoman poetic world is viewed. Echoing Navai's introductions to his generational chapters, Sehi describes the contents of chapter 5 as poets of old who had died before he came of age and for whose biographies he relied on the testimonies of the elderly;²⁷⁰ chapter 6, poets he met as a young man, some dead, some still alive at the time of his writing;²⁷¹ chapter 7, his co-generationalists;²⁷² and finally chapter 8, the younger generation.²⁷³ Sehi's general introduction to the book also places an emphasis on his personal acquaintance with the majority of the poets he covers.²⁷⁴ In the final three chapters which coincide with his own lifetime, there is only one individual Sehi feels compelled to acknowledge that he has not personally met, adding strength to the claim put forth in the general and chapter introductions.²⁷⁵ This individual is Aftabi who lived in Amasya possibly for his entire life as already mentioned above in the discussion on Latifi's *tezkiye*. The first four chapters, devoted to the dynasty and the uppermost sectors of the Ottoman ruling class during the reigns of Bayezid II, Selim I and Süleyman when

²⁶⁹ For an overview of this work, see Kuru, "The Literature of Rum", 586-88.

²⁷⁰ . . . bu kemîne anlaruñ şeref-i muşāhabetleri ile müşerref olub mülākāt itmek müyesser olmayub evşāf-ı hamīde ve ahlāk-ı pesendīdeler pīrlerden ve rüzgār-dide kimesnelerden semā'ıla tevātüre yetişüb tahrīr ve taşvīr olundı. SEH, 49b/168.

²⁷¹ . . . bunlaruñ ba'zı fenā cāmından mest ü bī-ḥūd ve ḥāliyā ba'zı ḥayāt ābı ile bākī vü mevcūd olub bu fakīr yigitligi zamānında anlaruñ şeref-i muşāhabetleri ile müşerref ve sürūr-ı şafā-yâb mülāzemetleri ile naqd-i 'ömri şarf olduğı faşih ve belīg kimesnelerdür. SEH, 70b/210.

²⁷² . . . bu fakīr ile hem 'aşr ü zebān olub mezheb-i şī're bilece zāhib olmuşlardır. SEH, 97b/264.

²⁷³ . . . 'aşk mīşeyistānında şīr-i gāzel-efgen ve ba'zı mecmū'a-i ḥüsni ḥatm idüb bu tarīkda nev-niyāz olan cerb-i süḥān yigitlerdür. SEH, 110b/290.

²⁷⁴ See the passage from the general introduction that begins "Amma bu taifenün bazı mukaddem gelüb bu fakir anların musahabet-i şerif ve müvâneset-i latiflerine yetişmek müyesser olmayub . . ." SEH, 7b-8b/84-86.

²⁷⁵ Fakīr anı görmedüm. SEH, 78b.

Sehi was active, must also include many individuals Sehi knew in person, such as Fenari Muhyiddin Çelebi, to whom he presented a qasida when the latter was chief justice (*kāzī* 'asker), and other scions of the Fenarizade family that appear only in this dictionary as poets. In general, Sehi's *Heşt Bihişt* is probably the *tezkiye* with the least reliance on written sources and, along with Ahdi's *Gülşen-i Şu'arā*, the most heavily shaped by the author's immediate social circle.

Son of a non-Muslim father (*‘Abdullah oğlu*), likely a *devşirme*, much of Sehi's life was centered around the court and the scribal career, which is perfectly reflected in his *tezkiye*. Sehi cannot be associated with a provincial locale like Latifi, but his portrayal of court poets from the reign of Murad II to Süleyman on the one hand and scribal culture in the imperial center on the other is unique and includes a lot of material that remained inaccessible to other biographers. As Günay Kut's survey of what is known about Sehi's biography shows,²⁷⁶ he was close to the dynasty, viziers, high ulema and other grandees all his life, and worked as a scribe at the imperial and the provincial princely courts. An important phase in his career was his service to Prince Mahmud (d. 913/1507) in Manisa, where he enjoyed the company of fellow scribe-poets such as Şevki, Talii, and Suni as well as Necati, Mahmud's chancellor and Sehi's close friend. After the death of the prince, Necati and Sehi came to Istanbul to continue serving at the court of Bayezid II. Sehi then returned to Manisa, this time to serve at the district's incumbent governor Prince Süleyman's administrative council, and stayed there until the prince's enthronement in 1520. Sehi's later scribal career is less successful; apparently, he sought to attain a

²⁷⁶ SEH, 1-5.

position at the court once again by presenting his *tezkiye*, but he seems to have been disappointed.

As will be highlighted below in relation to Ömer bin Mezid's *naẓīre* anthology, Sehi's reports on otherwise obscure early court poets are invaluable. Born around 1570 and likely raised in the court environment, he would well have met and interviewed individuals who saw the reigns of Murad II and Mehmed II. In chapter V, he gives the biographies of several court poets under Murad II that accord with the most quoted names in Ömer bin Mezid's anthology. For poetry in the reign of Mehmed II, he furnishes some rare bits of information, e.g., that Mehmed's boon companion Molla Melihi was Veliyüddinoğlu Ahmed Paşa's teacher in poetry and Dede Ömer Ruşeni's pal in debauchery; according to Sehi, there are many anecdotes involving Ruşeni and Melihi, but none of these seem to have survived. Şehdi, author of an incomplete *şehnâme* for Mehmed II, Hayati, a protege of Mahmud Paşa, and Nahifi, a singer who performed for Mehmed II, are among the many figures that are associated with the court of Mehmed II and we know about only thanks to Sehi, in addition to details of interest on better attested poets from the same milieu.

Chapter 6 (“those I met in my youth”) attests to a youth spent in the courtly milieux of Edirne, Istanbul and Manisa and mentions many poets directly attached to sultanic, princely and vizierial courts. The chapter begins with the entry on Necati Beg, where Sehi takes the opportunity to emphasize his closeness to Necati, and by implication, to the dynasts that the duo served together. Next comes Vasfi, whom Sehi describes simply as a learned small-town qadi with no greed for money; from other sources, however, we know that Vasfi was a protégé of Hadım Ali Paşa, like his close friend Mesihi. Next is Mevlana Saruca Kemal, preceptor to the household of Mahmud Paşa (d. 1474). The rest of the chapter is likewise full of courtly figures

from the reigns of Bayezid II and Selim I, all of whom Sehi must have met if his words in the chapter preamble are to be believed. These include Katib Şevki and Talii, fellow scribe-poets at Mahmud's Manisa court; preceptors to the inner palace pages at Edirne and Istanbul courts like Mevlana Sayi, Mevlana Visali and Cefayi; court scribes like Behiştî, Ahdi, Katibi and Dividdar Mehmed Çelebi; servants of the court with various or unnamed duties Mevlana Şehidi, Sıdkî, Fehmi and the famous Revani Beg; Nihali Cafer Çelebi, boon companion to Selim I; Nihani associated with Hadım Ali Paşa like Vasfi above; court physicians Ahdi and Subhi (sons of Hekim Sinan), Emirek and Mevlana Şifai; poets associated with Prince Cem, Tûrabi, Sehayî, Lali, Haydar and Kandi; and finally palace musician Makami. Among this courtly crew there are quite a few for which Sehi is our only source. Especially compared to Latifi, Sehi's knowledge of the court of Bayezid II seems remarkable. In *behişt* 7 the weight of court-related officials continues to a degree, but by the eighth and final *behişt*, which covers the younger generation, the court recedes to the background presumably because Sehi himself was no longer in that milieu by the time he met the *behişt* 7 poets. Another reason could be that the locus of poetry was increasingly moving from the court to the city.

The details Sehi, a scribe, provides on late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century scribal culture is another distinctive feature of his *tezkiye*. Entries on Vefayi and Celalzade Mustafa, two chancellors, are among the longest in the entire work. These entries not only exalt these two individuals but also the art of *inşâ* itself. Mehmed II's chancellor Vefayi, i.e., Molla Fenari's nephew Cezerizade Mahmud, is largely forgotten in later sources,²⁷⁷ but, according to Sehi, he is the one who

²⁷⁷ Even Mustafa Ali of Gelibolu, the great chronicler who was himself a long-time aspirant to the post of chancellor and a champion of the post as the “mufti of imperial law (*kānūn*),” writes in his

introduced to Rum the art of *inşā* and the composition method of decrees and letters.²⁷⁸ One of the two anecdotes Sehi relates in this entry implies that Mehmed II valued his *nişāncı* above his viziers. The other anecdote is a rare instance that shows the perceived interchangeability between poetry and *inşā* prose, which might prove helpful in making sense of the many poet-scribes of this period (for a more detailed discussion of poet-scribes, see Chapter 5 “Poets and Ottoman Officialdom”). Here, Vefayi composes a decree to be sent to the ruler of Karaman and appends a Persian couplet that encapsulates the main idea. When Sultan Mehmed sees the decree, he comments “this couplet alone, together with the insignia, would have sufficed.” The entry on Celalzade Mustafa is clearly encomiastic and may have been meant to build a patronage relationship.

Sehi's random snippets of information on early scribal culture must definitely be considered in studies on the history of Ottoman bureaucracy.²⁷⁹ For instance, Sehi reports that contemporary scribes rely on Ahmed-i Dai's short chancery manual *Teressül* (before 1418) for their *inşā* compositions and carry the book around with them all the time; moreover, he relates that novices are taught with this book.²⁸⁰ This is rather surprising, given that Sehi completed his work in 1538, that is, decades after Tacizade Cafer Çelebi (d. 1515) and several years into Celalzade Mustafa's (d. 1567) office as chancellor, the two names associated with the institution of the new, ornate

Kühü'l-ahbār that the posts of chancellor and treasurer (*defterdār*) were first instituted in Bayezid II's reign (*defterdārılar ve nişāncılar ki pâdişāh-ı mağfūr 'aşrında vücūd bulmuşıdı*; MALI, vol. 4, 1078) and opens up a special section in his reign biographies for these two groups of officials only from then on.

²⁷⁸ *Vilāyet-i Rūm'a üslūb-ı inşāyı ahkām ü mekātibātı evvel o göstermişdür*. The entry occurs in four of the fifteen manuscripts Günay Kut used in her critical edition. SEH, 319-21 (“Appendix I”).

²⁷⁹ It is generally accepted that Ottoman bureaucracy entered a major phase of reorganization and professionalization from about the middle of the sixteenth century, and the earlier period is relatively less studied. For a very useful review of the scholarly literature on Ottoman bureaucracy prior to the mid sixteenth century, see Tusalp Atiyas, “Political Literacy,” 42-64.

²⁸⁰ SEH, 54b/178.

imperial *inṣā* style of the sixteenth century.²⁸¹ It is well known that in the high sixteenth century, early fifteenth century poetry and prose were generally disparaged especially from a linguistic perspective. The language of the ancients (*ḳudemā*) was found archaic and unrefined; this view also finds an objective counterpart in modern historical linguistics which has identified a shift between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries from the so-called Old Anatolian Turkish to Ottoman Turkish. Sehi's note, however, shows that change in linguistic and stylistic taste and/or practice was slow and that it perhaps took complete hold no earlier than the middle of the century.

Sehi's and his scribal milieu's archaicism, i.e., unproblematic relationship of continuity with the literary past, is a theme we will also encounter below (3.3) in the discussion of Eğirdirli Hacı Kemal's *Cāmi 'ü'n-nezā'ir*. Yet, in the following decades Sehi's biographical dictionary would meet the same fate as early fifteenth-century literature, being criticized for its crude prose and ending up not being read as much as the subsequent *tezkires*.

Sehi's dictionary is particularly informative about the scribal culture at the court and the typology of the “scribe-poet,” presumably owing to the fact that he was one. Sehi introduces many of these poets with the simple formula “he is the apprentice (*ṣāḳird*) of X,” implying that belonging to a particular master was an important identity marker. The masters are all casually mentioned as if they are well-known figures, not requiring further identification. In addition, the specific subject matter of the apprenticeship is often unspecified; this becomes a problem especially when both the masters and the apprentice show multiple areas of expertise, such as poetry, music or astrology in addition to the scribal arts. For instance, in the case of

²⁸¹ Also cf. Darling, “Ottoman Turkish,” 177-8, which mentions a host of more up-to-date *inṣā* manuals and collections that had been produced in the late fifteenth century.

Sehi's own master-apprentice relationship with Necati Beg, neither Sehi nor later biographers give particulars about the content of the apprenticeship; both Sehi and Necati's other *şākird* in historical record, Suni, were scribe-poets and the three men worked together in Prince Mahmud's Manisa court. Was Necati their master in poetry or scribal arts, or both? Neither Sehi nor later sources are explicit in this matter. In fact, the very lack of specificity sixteenth-century Ottoman sources display when talking about particular master-apprentice relationships across a variety of areas of expertise, might in itself be an indication of the open-ended and comprehensive character of this non-institutional educational framework. However, in the cases of the apprentices Sehi mentions some form of secretarial skill is doubtless involved. Often it is a poet-religious scholar (*‘ālim*) that trains a poet-scribe, pointing towards some overlap between the two sets of skills (see the more detailed discussion on master-apprentice relationships in Chapter 5).

It might also be important that Sehi's examples are all from the mid to late fifteenth century and not later, suggesting that patterns of scribes' training might have changed in the following periods. In particular, with the professionalization of Ottoman bureaucracy, the religious scholars who trained young scribes may have been gradually replaced by master scribes themselves trained within the offices, and the role of poetry on both sides of the master-apprentice relationship, pointing towards a more open-ended and diverse “training” process, may have given way to more professionally focused types of training. These courses of development indeed tally with the scholarly literature on the development of Ottoman bureaucracy in the sixteenth century.²⁸²

²⁸² Cornell Fleischer is the scholar who wrote extensively, through the eyes of Mustafa Ali of Gelibolu, on the sixteenth-century rise of a new scribal class that is professionally trained but

This time interval also corresponds to the time of Sehi's own early training, hence his knowledge of other partnerships at the time. For example, Ahdi, an otherwise obscure scribe from the court of Bayezid II, one that is placed in *bihişt* 6 (“those I met in my youth”), is described as “he is one of Katib Şeyhzade’s apprentices.”²⁸³ This places Ahdi's training period to roughly the latter part of Mehmed II's reign or early Bayezid when Sehi himself was trained. Unfortunately, this master scribe with many students does not seem to occur in any other contemporary source than Sehi's *tezkiye*.

Another master-apprentice relationship Sehi mentions is that between the *şākird* Fehmi, a poet likewise in *bihişt* 6, and Mu‘arrif Monla Hamdi, placed in *bihişt* V among the *ḳudemā* he was too young to have met. Sehi and Aşık Çelebi tell us that Fehmi began as a slave of the court in the cavalry division (*sipāhī oğlanları bölüğü*) and later became a trustee of dynastic revenues (*ḥāşşa ḥarāc emīni*, AÇ, 1256) and then overseer (*nāzır*) in the newly conquered North African territories, positions in the financial administration. Therefore, it is difficult to gauge in what subjects he was instructed by a *mu‘arrif*, someone who recites prayers in mosques for the souls of the endowers of pious foundations and receives some modest compensation for his services. However, Hamdi was a learned man and a descendant of Sheikh Sadi-i Shirazi, with an excellent command of the Persian language as well as his knowledge of Persian poetry. He may also have instructed Fehmi in Arabic since the latter spent

unlearned in the madrasa sciences and the literary arts. Fleischer, “Scribal Training and Medrese Education.” For the extended version of the argument, see Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*. Although there are no studies that focus on specifically on scribal *şākirds*, several studies contain information on the numbers, training, and payment of *şākirds* over the course of the sixteenth century. Fleischer, “Preliminaries to the Study of Ottoman Bureaucracy”; Woodhead, “From Scribe to Litterateur”; Woodhead, “Research on the Ottoman Scribal Service, c. 1574-1630.”

²⁸³ *Kātib Şeyhzāde şākirdlerindendir*. SEH, 89b/248.

most of his later career in Arab lands. Given Sehi's excessively laconic notices that assume an already informed audience, an unexpected intellectual profile may emerge from under that name. It may even be the case that Molla Hamdi was one of the many court-protected high-profile Acems during Mehmed II's reign.

Katibi, a poet-scribe under Bayezid II, is introduced as a *şākird* of Monla Işki, a poet and boon companion at Mehmed II's court. Because very little is known about Monla Işki other than his prolific poetic output and *tezki*res discuss him only as poet and boon companion, it is not really clear in what sense he was a “master” of Katibi. Because Katibi, was a scribe, as his penname name also implies, it is likely that it was in the secretarial arts, possibly in addition to poetry, that Işki instructed him. Sehi's wording also promotes this idea.²⁸⁴ Because Katibi was also a good musician, it has been conjectured that Işki might have been his teacher in music as well.²⁸⁵ Yet, in the entry on Fenayi, an obscure poet from the time of Mehmed II, Sehi quotes a very interesting poem by the poet, one where the latter compares the incomes of Işki, Sadi and himself and complains of his situation.²⁸⁶ The three couplets quoted by Sehi are part of ghazel that was apparently famous at the time, judging by its appearance in Nazmi of Edirne's *Mecma 'un'-nezā'ir*. Among the three poets mentioned in the poem, we know that Sadi was Cem Sultan's chancellor, therefore linked to the scribal profession. And for Fenayi, Sehi writes that he was an expert in the rhetorical

²⁸⁴ *Kātibī rahmetullāhi 'aleyh: Monla 'Işkī şākirdidür. Kendüsi laṭīf kitābet ider kātib idi. Kātibī maḥlaş dimege daḥı sebeb oldur.* SEH, 92b/254.

²⁸⁵ Aşki, *Dīvān*, 16.

²⁸⁶ *Ol mu 'anber ḥaṭṭ ki varsan serv-i hoş-refiārda
Şanasın kim sebz-i nev-revestedür gülzārda*

*Çin-i zülfün den benefşe reng ü bû uğruladı
Kim daḳub boynuna ip gezdürdiler bazārda*

*'Işkī yüz yir, Sa 'dī otuz yir, Fenāyī'nin daḥı
Haftada yedi günü var donluḡ ve tımārda* (SEH, 67a-67b/203-204)

sciences of *bedī‘* and *beyān*. Sehi's selection of a distich related with *ḥaṭṭ*—here, the young beloved's newly growing facial hair, but with the primary meaning of “writing” (Ar.)—might also have been meant to obliquely point toward a scribal context. In the quoted couplets Fenayi complains about not receiving any monetary payment for work without break whereas his peers are amply rewarded. Scribal work is likely to be their shared profession and all three probably worked for the royal court. In short, Katibi is very likely to be Monla Işki's *şākird* in the secretarial arts.

Another interesting example along these lines is the case of Mevlana Ulvi and his *şākird* Hayati, both of whom lived in the reign of Mehmed II and are discussed by Sehi in chapter V, on poets of old (*ḳudemā*). Both figures are quite obscure if not for Sehi and they are presented as “poets” only. Yet their entries entail subtle clues about the more complex nature of their services to the court. Ulvi is a *mevlānā*, like Işki and Hamdi above, meaning that he is a madrasa-educated man, and Sehi complements his erudition. Ulvi would regularly come to the royal court to offer his services and present qasidas.²⁸⁷ In fact, extant *mecmū‘as* from the period include a great number of qasidas by Ulvi, attesting to his fame as a qasida composer.

According to Sehi, he would be lavishly remunerated by the sultan. However, when he grew old and weak, he could no longer come to the court but did keep sending qasidas all the time (*her bār*). A few pages later, in the entry on Hayati, we find out that it was with him that the elderly Ulvi sent his qasidas to the palace. It is through these regular visits to the palace that Hayati becomes acquainted with Mahmud Paşa, who takes notice of his talents and decides to keep him for his own services.²⁸⁸ Later

²⁸⁷ *Sulṭān Murād ve Sulṭān Meḥmed zamānında her gāh dergāh-ı ‘ālem-penāh ḥidmetine gelüb ḳaṣīde ‘arz idüb*. . . . SEH, 63b/196.

²⁸⁸ *Ḥayātī erkān-ı devlete varub gelmekden Maḥmūd Paşa ile münāsebet idüb, ol daḥı bunda bir ḳābīliyyet müṣāhede idüb kendü ḥizmetinde alıḳodı*. SEH, 66a/201.

during his service to Mahmud Paşa, because he was particularly good at satire Mahmud Paşa asked him to compose some lampoons in both verse and *inşā* prose.²⁸⁹

As with the cases of the poet-scribes Monla Işki and his *şākird* Katibi, this highly elliptic account of Mevlana Ulvi and Hayati's interaction with the royal court seems to involve more than just poetry. Just as Ulvi's regular visits to the Ottoman court are hardly explicable with reference to his qasida work only, Hayati's relationship to Ulvi was in all likelihood similar to the master-student relationship of the Işki-Katibi type and not just all about the menial task of fetching his poems to the palace (although the word *şākird* is not used for Hayati). Ulvi was a learned mullah and there would certainly be a lot more he could do for the palace than composing qasidas. And what was the nature of the talent (*kābiliyyet*) that Mahmud Paşa recognized in Hayati and what kind of *hizmet* did he have in mind when he took him from Ulvi? The gift for *hezl* (satire) mentioned in the entry should only be a small part of the picture, given that Hayati was also capable of *inşā*.

In short, in this series of dispersed and unfortunately laconic entries we might be glimpsing at the scribal world around the court and the education of the scribes in the reigns of Mehmed II and Bayezid II. These patchy snippets can be complemented with the much better-known members of the administrative councils of Sultan Cem and Bayezid's sons Mahmud and Ahmed, all of whom were scribe poets. These dual master-apprentice relationships show that an education and acculturation outside the madrasa and *'ilmiyye* establishment was taking place, especially for scribes, and that the interface between poetry and the scribal arts was fluid. They also show that in this early period learned mullahs played an important role in the education of scribes

²⁸⁹ *Maḥmūd Paşa ba 'zı kimesnelere leṭā'if kaşd eyleyüb gāh inşā vü gāh nazm üslûbında zemme mensûb ebyât didürdirimiş*. SEH, 66b/202.

and poets of lesser social status, probably including *devşirme* converts and others of non-Muslim slave origin as well.

3.2 Problems with circulation in the early sixteenth century and the rise of the first *tezkires*

3.2.1 An overview of the early-sixteenth century circulation of Turkish poetry

I have argued thus far that the *tezkires*, and the *naẓīre* anthologies, accomplished a representational tour de force by juxtaposing, for the first time in history, local pockets of poetic activity under the totalizing frame of Rum. I have also suggested that this must have helped enhance actual pathways of circulation of texts. This was first and foremost because readers all around Rum now became aware of the existence of poetic milieus, poets and texts they had not known of before. This new awareness must have enhanced the motivation for seeking after or sending away texts, in other words, effected a general increase in the movement of texts owing to increased demand, on the part of readers, and expected new audiences, on the part of authors. At a more abstract level, that a Rumi-wide anonymous space of circulation could now be imagined beyond the local ones in which authors and readers were actually relatively locked in must have impacted compositional practices themselves, with at least some authors beginning to address, deliberately or not, an increasingly anonymized and delocalized audience, a new type of writing for a new type of audience. Although the volume of *tezkiye* literature, which is quite substantial anyway, may not single-handedly suffice to effect such deep-seated changes, one can presume that along with other contemporary genres that constructed an anonymous and homogenous Rumi cultural space, such as chronicles and ulema and Sufi

biographies, *tezkires* must have contributed towards a new circulatory paradigm emerging in the minds of both authors and readers.

The representational and circulatory integration of sixteenth-century Rum did not take place in a vacuum. It built on various underlying patterns of historical continuity and discontinuity, not only resonating with these patterns, but also enhancing them through acts of formalization and reification. By the time the *tezkires* arrived, the integration of Rum as literary space had already been achieved at the level of poetic practice. Both the *naẓīre* anthologies and the poetry corpus evince that there was substantial uniformity in poetic idiom and styles across Rum already by the middle of the fifteenth century; after all, locally active poets from the interval between the reign of Mehmed II and the 1530s, rendered visible for a broader public for the first time by the *tezkire* literature, did not compose in idiosyncratic local styles and idioms, but partook of a “mainstream,” epitomized in the work of canonical figures like Nizami, Şeyhi and Ahmed Paşa. This historical trend of linguistic and stylistic unification without the intervention of overlying agents like the state or other types of canon-making authorities, is yet to be accounted for in scholarship, but one factor must be the continuity between the court cultures in major Rumi centers, which remained the main locus of *dīvān* poetry activity into the sixteenth century. In any event, historically, a substantial unity was spontaneously achieved at one level. The contemporary audiences of the *tezkires* must have found credible the representational gesture, or effect, of a Rumi-scale unity projected by the *tezkires* because this new, more abstract kind of unity relied on a solid historical uniformity in poetic tradition that had already materialized spontaneously. As my discussion of the transmission of poetic material and styles between *naẓīre* anthologies will exemplify (3.3), the linguistic and stylistic unity was not based on a

strong textual circulation but on a continuity in practice. In other words, the transmission was more *meşk* style than directly textual. What was missing in this overall picture of spontaneous unity was a second-tier integration that would create a self-awareness as a (potentially) united space of textual circulation, which the *tezkires* and *naẓīre* anthologies provided.

There are many indications that, as late as the first half of the sixteenth century, Rum was still far from being a homogenous space of vernacular textuality with relatively speedy capillary circulation across a large territory. Ottoman Turkish culture is commonly assumed to be thoroughly, and evenly, textualized from at least Mehmed II's time, but highlighting counterpoints can begin to change the picture, including for Turkish poetry. First, there is the palace library inventory (909/1503-1504) from Bayezid II's reign which reflects a literate culture predominantly in Arabic and Persian, with a trifling 200 titles or so in Turkish, mostly in verse, in a library of approximately 7,200 titles in 5,700 volumes.²⁹⁰ An extant list of more than 2,000 of the books that belonged to the prominent scholar and Bayezid's long-time friend Müeyyedzade Abdurrahman reflects a comparable overall linguistic distribution and fares even worse where Turkish *dīvān* poetry is concerned.²⁹¹ No doubt, these elite collections with predominantly Eastern orientations did not reflect the actual volume and range of Turkish literature of either the past two centuries or the present day. In fact, another document from about the same time and milieu reflects quite another picture: The logbook of gifts and monetary bonuses bestowed by Bayezid to palace personnel, foreign ambassadors, artists, Sufis, religious scholars and men of letters, covering the year 910/1504-05, documents the lavish patronage

²⁹⁰ Pfeiffer, "The Ottoman Muse Fluttered," 241; Csirkés, "Turkish/Turkic Books of Poetry," 674.

²⁹¹ Pfeiffer, "The Ottoman Muse Fluttered," see esp. 247-48.

extended to Turkish *dīvān* poetry and literature in Turkish in general.²⁹² Similarly, Müeyyedzade Abdurrahman was known as one of the greatest patrons, connoisseurs and *meclis* hosts of Turkish poetry in his day. Both patrons, moreover, were prolific *dīvān* poets themselves. While the library inventories, especially Bayezid's, which built on the collection he had received from his father Mehmed II, reflect an archive that developed over time and therefore historical trends as well as contemporary ones, the book of gifts and the two patrons' roles in the poetry scene point to the most recent situation.

The bifurcation between the two types of source marks the truly transitional nature of the decades around the turn of the fifteenth century: a transition from a transregional textual order, in which the highest stratum of the Ottoman elites sought integrate themselves to the prestigious Arabic and Persian literate cosmopolises, to a new order of Ottoman Turkish. Yet, the two library inventories instantiate the status of Turkish and poetry in Turkish as of that moment as very poorly textualized and archived in comparison to the cosmopolitan Islamic languages and literatures. Indeed, in comparison to the sixteenth century, there are very few *dīvāns* and poetry miscellanies or anthologies surviving from the fifteenth century. Chapter 4 in this dissertation will offer a detailed discussion of the role of orality in the poetry culture of the early sixteenth century.

Another indication of poor textualization and poor circulation for Turkish is how routine it was for works of even the most prominent poets and writers to get lost well into the sixteenth century. Aşık Çelebi reports that three lengthy works by Necati Beg (d. 1509), the next canonical icon after Ahmed Paşa, had been lost by the

²⁹² Açıkgöz, "II. Bayezid Devri İn'âmât Defteri;" Erünsal, "Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi'nin Arşiv Kaynakları I."

time he was penning his *tezkiye*: Turkish translations of Ghazali's Persian *Kīmīya-i Sa'ādat* and of a work called *Jāmi' al-Ḥikāyāt* as well as an original new version of *Leylā vü Mecnūn*, all of which the poet executed for Prince Mahmud, son of Bayezid II.²⁹³ Latifi adds two more non-extant *mesnevī* titles on the authority of Necati's students Suni and Sehi, namely *Risāle-i Gül ü Şabā* and *Risāle-i Mihr ü Māh*.²⁹⁴ In the same vein, Aşık Çelebi reports the loss of two translations from Arabic by the eminent Kemalpaşazade, of Tagribardi's chronicle *Nujūm al-Zāhira* and of a work in the *bāhnāme* (sexology) genre, both of which were executed during the return journey after Sultan Selim's Egyptian expedition in 1517. Latifi relates that although Suni, Necati's student and a poet-secretary in the service of Prince Mahmud, had works in a wide range of topics and genres, his oeuvre (*külliyāt*) was lost.²⁹⁵ Even an Ottoman prince's poetry could be sunk into oblivion. No *tezkiye* author mentions Prince Alemşah (d. 1502-1503) as a poet, but Talikizade in the late sixteenth century has singly seen a copy of Alemşah's *dīvān*, or what remained of it, since the author comments that parts of it got lost “during the time of terror” (*ürkülük olduğu zamānda*).²⁹⁶ Though it is not clear what specific unrest Talikizade had in mind, a provincial prince's *dīvān* could well be threatened by physical destruction given the eventful history of Anatolia in this period. If textual loss plagued those in the highest echelons, including princes and the greatest celebrities at the imperial center, one can only imagine the predicament of the oeuvres of the less illustrious local figures in the provinces.

²⁹³ AÇ, 852.

²⁹⁴ LAT, 518-19.

²⁹⁵ LAT, 359.

²⁹⁶ Talikizade, *Şemā'ilnāme*, 69b-70a.

Another index, or symptom, of poor circulatory integration of local poetic milieus might be found in the “economy” of pennames. When two poets with the same penname entered the same literary circle, it was considered a problem. The *tezkires* furnish many examples of the hostility and actual altercations that could arise in these situations. Ahdi, for instance, relates that the two Tabis, distinguished as the Older and the Younger, (*büzürg* and *kûçek*), were always fighting over their shared pennames.²⁹⁷ Accomplished poets feared that their lesser (pen)namesakes would ruin their reputation since the poems could get mixed up. In an anecdote related by Latifi, Veliyyüddinzade Ahmed Paşa is warned by friends that his poems could be attributed to an earlier Ahmed, Ahmed-i Rumi, who wrote in a simple language and unembellished style that later Ottoman poets despised; Ahmed Paşa replies that it would be worse if Ahmed-i Rumi's poem were attributed to himself. Latifi concludes this anecdote with his own admonition to poets, in verse, to pick a unique penname and to pick one that reflects something characteristic about oneself so that it can truly work as an identity marker.²⁹⁸ Similarly, in his entry on an older Hayali, Hayali Abdülvehhab Çelebi son of Abdülkerim, Latifi complains that people often attribute Abdülvehhab's poems to the more famous Hayali Beg and claims that he worked on these poems to weed out the ones that do not belong to Hayali Beg.²⁹⁹

The uniqueness of pennames was important because in the highly conventional art of *dīvān* poetry there was no personal style as in modern literatures; styles were communally cultivated, and only in rare cases a poet could be identified on the basis of his poems alone. This meant that ideally in any particular poetic

²⁹⁷ . . . *dāimā maḥlaşları iştirāk üzre olmağın birbirleriyle hırhır-ı da'vadan ḥālī degüllerdür*. AHD, 243.

²⁹⁸ LAT, 168-69.

²⁹⁹ LAT, 253.

community each penname would be unique, for each generation at least; no doubt poets considered this when they were first picking a penname. But in practice, poets changed places and entered new communities, resulting in unintended clashes. In the case of the two Tabis mentioned by Ahdi one was a young madrasa student from Istanbul, the other an older man from Trabzon. There is actually a third Tabi in Ahdi's *tezkiye*, a Mevlevi dervish from Yenice Vardar who spent a long time in Rumi's shrine in Konya. In other words, at the time these individuals picked their pennames they were probably not in contact. Once two of them incidentally met in Istanbul, the poetic community distinguished them as the Younger and the Older. In fact, throughout the sixteenth-century such clashes frequently happened, probably because the consolidation of imperial territories, on the one hand, and the rise of the administrative practice of frequent rotation of state personnel, on the other, brought together many poets originally from distant places. *Tezkires* of the era are full of instances of these clashes, which are virtually moments of contact between distinct poetic milieus. In fact, it could be argued that the biographical dictionary genre is especially useful in an environment where the original insulation of poetic milieus was being eroded since biography would once and for all distinguish poets and provide them with an identification in an enlarged and more integrated poetic field. The Ottoman sixteenth century was precisely such an environment. Besides the actual contacts between poets with shared pennames, who are quite many in this period,³⁰⁰ the *tezkiye* itself functioned as a new medium where poets were brought together: For many, the *tezkiye* folios were the only place they ever came side by side. The *tezkires* created for the first time in history a medium where

³⁰⁰ See, for example, the *tezkiye* entries on the multiple Sunis, Şevkis and Şemsis.

chronologically and spatially distinct poetic communities could be comprehended at once.³⁰¹

Taking cue from these preliminary observations on the weakness of textual circulation in Turkish as of the early sixteenth century, in the next subsection I explore the manifestations of the same situation in the history of the *tezkires* themselves. I will also do this for *naẓīre* anthologies in section 3.3 below. For both genres, I look at the patterns of contact and lack thereof between individual works, as well as numbers of extant copies, and arrive at a picture of independently conceived isolated texts as late as the middle of the sixteenth century. I argue in the next subsection that the first *tezkires* themselves emerged under conditions of a relatively weakly integrated Ottoman textual space, which they then helped redress. Contrary to the received idea that Ottoman *tezkire* writing started with Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt* and then followed a linear course of development in which each text was influenced by or responded to former ones, I argue for a historical moment of independent simultaneous beginnings. I show that there was, by all indications, no mutual awareness between the Sehi, Latifi and Garibi *tezkires*; Aşık's and Ahdi's works in the 1560s were also composed from scratch without utilizing to any substantial degree the material that had accumulated until then. I then present an overview of the changed situation by the last quarter of the sixteenth century where the new *tezkire* titles appear as expanded digests of previous *tezkire* literature.

³⁰¹ Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *tezkires* also display the phenomenon of shared pennames (within the same place and generation). However, not only do such cases occur, arguably, to a smaller degree but also penname-related skirmishes between poets are not reported. The differences from the sixteenth-century situation require a separate study, but one glaring difference is the routinization of the appearance of previously unattested pennames from the seventeenth century onwards. Poets apparently felt increasingly compelled to strive harder to find a fresh penname, which might be taken as an indication of an increasing integration of the poetic field and the poets' awareness of this situation.

3.2.2 The Beginning or beginnings?

It is customary, especially in Turkish scholarship, to think of the history of the Ottoman *tezkiye* as a linear development, in part owing to the *tezkiye* authors' own testimonies. According to the widely accepted narrative, Sehi Beg created the first *tezkiye* under the direct influence of Ali Shir Navai's *Mecālisü'n-nefā'is*; inspired by Sehi's achievement, Latifi and then Aşık Çelebi composed their own, in turn influencing following generations of biographers. The émigré scholar Qazvini's *Hasht Bihisht*, for one, inserts a wedge in this linear narrative; it had already built a first link between Ali Shir Navai and Ottoman *tezkiye* writing, in Persian, possibly also inspiring the title of Sehi's work (*Heşt Bihişt*), both authors being in the court milieu. For the following phase of the history of the genre, scholars have relied on Aşık Çelebi's account. According to Aşık, in the year 950/1543-44, he and Latifi met in Istanbul and learned about each other's plans to write a *tezkiye*; both were inspired by Sehi's success with patrons and men of letters.³⁰² The two authors made a deal to follow different organizational schemes so as not to step on one another's foot: Latifi would organize his material regnally³⁰³ and Aşık would proceed alphabetically, something to which Aşık seems to attribute a lot of value as an original idea. But Latifi stole his idea and finished his work in 953, which completely dispirited Aşık, leading him to abandon not only his *tezkiye* project but also poetry as a whole. For no less than fifteen years he devoted himself to the quotidian duties of judgeship and did not take up the pen in these areas. Aşık's account establishes Sehi's *Heşt Bihişt* as the

³⁰² AÇ, 737.

³⁰³ In his introduction, Aşık describes Latifi's proposed method as “*tertīb-i selāḫin ile*” (by the sultans' reigns); AÇ, 246. In his discussion of the same topic in the entry on Latifi, he uses the looser phrase “*zamān tertībī*” (organization by time); AÇ, 737.

major influence that instigated the composition of Latifi's and his own titles, which then became a key element in modern histories of the genre.

Nevertheless, there are strong indications that Latifi either did not know about Sehi's *Heşt Bihişt* or pretended not to for reasons discussed below. Strikingly, Latifi's "motivation for composition" (*sebeb-i te'lîf*), a standard introductory passage in Islamic literatures, appears to be written with the assumption that this will be the first Rumi *tezkiye*. Latifi explains his motivation in the exact same terms as Sehi: the influence of Timurid models and the sore need for a *tezkiye* on Rumi poets. Sehi Beg in his own *sebeb-i te'lîf* cites the biographical works of Abd al-Rahman Jami, Davlatshah and Ali Shir Navai on poets of Iran and Transoxania, bemoaning the absence of a similar work on Rumi ones. Although he is not up to the task (the conventional gesture of humility), he had to undertake it so that Rumi poets would not sink into oblivion.³⁰⁴ Writing eight years later, Latifi, too, presents his work as motivated by the need to write a Turkish counterpart to what Jami and Navai accomplished for eastern poets, without implying the existence of an Ottoman precursor. Deploying a common topos of *sebeb-i te'lîf* sections, Latifi says that a friend, knowledgeable in poetic matters, showed him Jami's *Bahāristān* and Navai's *Mecālisü'n-nefā'is* and asked him to compose a similar work on Rumi poets so that they can be remembered and their souls be blessed with the prayers of later generations.³⁰⁵ Like Sehi, Latifi shows humility and complains that he is not capable enough, but is ultimately convinced by his friend.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ SEH, 3b-5a/76-79.

³⁰⁵ LAT, 88-89. (The section "*Sebeb-i te'lîf-i kitāb*").

³⁰⁶ LAT, 89-104 (The sections "*Der beyān-ı ızhār-kerden-i 'acz*," "*Şıfat-ı ehl-i ḥased*," "*Şıfat-ı şe'āmet-i devr-i rûzgār*," "*Der beyān-ı 'özü-i diğer*," "*Der beyān-ı cevāb-dāden ān yār-ı vefādār*," "*Der beyān-ı merātib-i aḫsām-ı şu'arā*").

A comparison of the biographical contents of Sehi's and Latifi's *tezki*res also confirms that Latifi was unaware of Sehi's text, or pretended to be so. In Latifi's entry on Sehi there is no mention of the latter's *tezki*re although Latifi knows about the main contours of Sehi's life and career including his death. This is a glaring oversight, indeed, one which Latifi would not have wanted to commit as a competent biographer, one can argue, had he actually known about it or, alternatively, if *Heşt Bihişt* were not considered negligible for one reason or another by Latifi's audiences.

A detailed comparison of entries on shared poets between the two works also shows no overlaps that definitively attest to Latifi's use of Sehi as source. In other words, Latifi's work is composed from scratch, without borrowing any material from Sehi. The few suspiciously similar entries in Latifi³⁰⁷ all display extra information by Latifi and/or variations from the versions offered by Sehi.³⁰⁸ Therefore, Latifi must have had independent sources, but probably the information provided by the sources of the two biographers, likely oral reports, happened to be very similar in these few cases.

An error in a widely-used late Ottoman edition of Latifi also seems to have played some role in the assumption that Latifi knew about Sehi's *Heşt Bihişt*. In the

³⁰⁷ The most similar entries between *Heşt Bihişt* and LAT1 I could identify are those on Ahdi, Likayi, Kebiri, Hayali Abdülvehhab Çelebi and Leali.

³⁰⁸ One striking example is found in the respective Necati Beg entries. Latifi mentions two works by the poet he describes as non-extant, namely *Risāle-i Gül ü Şabā* and *Risāle-i Mihr ü Māh*, and quotes a short passage from each. He names his sources for the information and the quotations as Necati's students Suni and Sehi. While Latifi's wording makes it impossible to tell which *meşnevî* is reported by which student of Necati, the quoted passages suggest that it is likely the *Risāle-i Gül* that is reported by Sehi; the same passage of five couplets occurs in both *tezki*res. At first sight this looks like an evidence that shows Latifi's awareness of Sehi's *tezki*re, but that might not be the case. Although Latifi and Sehi quote the same passage, there are major variants in both the title (*Münāẓara-i Gül ü Hüsrav* in Sehi) and the text, which do not show in the apparatus of Günay Kut's critical edition of Sehi's *Heşt Bihişt*, prepared on the basis of five different manuscripts selected as representative from among fourteen. More importantly, even if Latifi used a version of Sehi's *tezki*re that is not extant today, the note on Necati's lost *meşnevî*s occurs only in the second recension anyway, so it does not affect my observation that at least that the first recension was written in ignorance of Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt*.

autobiographical entry he added in the latest recension of his *tezkiye* (LAT2, completed sometime between 1568 and 1574),³⁰⁹ looking back upon the years that had elapsed since the completion of the first recension (953/1546-47), Latifi claims that ten or more individuals wrote *tezkiyes* modeled after his own and the unique prose style he developed. These *tezkiyes*, one of which must be Aşık Çelebi's *Meşā'irü's-Şu'arā* (976/1568-69), completed a few years before Latifi wrote these words, turned out to be nothing more than poor imitations and failed to achieve popularity:

Yet this humble and lowly one devised and introduced a manner of prose composition that unveils eloquence: Just as Necati among the poets of Rum drew upon proverbial sayings, so too I, by incorporating the beautiful Turkish proverbs together with subtleties and wise sayings, created and displayed a new style in this field—something that no one in the land of Rum had yet accomplished. That is, none of the *inşā* writers ever took this path. Let those who can distinguish between idle talk and true speech examine my works—*Enīsü'l-Füṣṣehā'*, *Fuṣūl-i Erba'a*, and the *Risāle-i Evṣāf-ı Sitanbul*. Let them see where true invention and originality reside. Beyond all this, this very book of biography suffices to open the eyes of those endowed with insight.

Verse:

In a rose garden, you know, for the discerning, a single rose suffices.

Prose:

Nevertheless, the brethren of envy and spite (*iḥvān-ı ḥıkd ü ḥased*) failed to recognize that such strength and talent are a gift of God, a bestowal of the Absolute Generous. Men of imitation and bigotry (*erbāb-ı taklīd ü ta'aşşub*)—ten of them, perhaps more—acted on their corrupted assumptions and vain imaginings and followed [in my footsteps] (*peyrevlük idüb*) to write *tezkiyes*. Yet the manuscripts of these *tezkiyes* remained confined to the

³⁰⁹ There seem to be only two extant copies, produced by the same scribe, witnessing the latest recension of Latifi's *tezkiye*, abbreviated in this study as LAT2: Nuruosmaniye 3725, copied in 982, middle of Rebi'ü'l-āḥir (early August 1574), and Halet Efendi 342, a copy of Nuruosmaniye 3725 made in 983, latter part of Cemāziye'l-āḥir (late September 1575). Walter Andrews has concluded that this final recension must have been made some time between 970/1562-63 and 982/1574-75. For Andrews's discussion on the possible date of the final recension, see Andrews, "The Tezkere-i Şu'ara of Latifi," 29-34. For his account of the significant additions and changes made in this recension, see Andrews, "The Tezkere-i Şu'ara of Latifi," 30-51. In my view, there is no doubt that much of the changes in the final recension were made in imitation of Aşık Çelebi's *Meşā'irü's-Şu'arā* (comp. 1568), a response clearly instigated by the latter's popularity. Hence my dates for the final recension.

authors' copies; neither the ignorant nor the learned took them up, nor were they bought and sold.³¹⁰

What these ten or more *tezkires* are, it is impossible to say today, but the way Latifi contemptuously refers to his imitators in the field of *tezkiye* writing can be interpreted as yet another a sign of his belief in his status as either the first Rumi *tezkiye* writer or, more likely by the time he penned the second recension, the first one that mattered.

Until the appearance of Rıdvan Canım's critical edition in 2000, most scholars used the Ahmed Cevdet edition of 1314/1896-97, which is an amalgam of different recensions of the text.³¹¹ In this late Ottoman publication, the phrase *peyrevlük idüb* (followed) is misread and printed as *bī-rūluk idüb* (acted without decency).³¹² Agah Sırrı Levend, who used this edition and was unaware of the existence of two radically different recensions (first identified by Walter Andrews),³¹³ liberally paraphrased Latifi as saying that around ten people *before him* wrote *tezkires*.³¹⁴ This has led many scholars to believe that there may have been numerous *tezkires* written before 953/1546-47, the date of Latifi's first recension. Levend was probably misguided by the *bī-rūluk/pevrevlik* error, but such phrases as *iḥvān-ı ḥıkd u ḥased* (brethren of envy and spite) and *erbāb-ı taḳlīd ü ta'aşşub* (men

³¹⁰ LAT, 487.

³¹¹ This, unfortunately, is also true for Rıdvan Canım's more recent edition, but the detailed apparatus often helps distinguish between the first and later recensions.

³¹² Latifi, *Tezkire-i Latîfî*, 301.

³¹³ Andrews, "The Tezkere-i Şu'ara of Latifi."

³¹⁴ Levend, *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi I*, 251.

of imitation and bigotry),³¹⁵ clearly pointing to subsequent writers,³¹⁶ should have prevented such a misunderstanding. Later repetitions of this mistake can be ascribed to an uncritical use of Levend as reference.³¹⁷ For the purposes of our discussion here, then, it is noteworthy that Latifi continues not to recognize Sehi even in his second recension; instead, he boasts about how others imitated him, continuing to hold on to his (self-proclaimed) status as the first Ottoman *tezkiye* writer.

Importantly, Latifi is not alone in not recognizing Sehi. Garibi and Ahdi also appear to be unaware of the existence of Sehi's work, with Garibi also unaware of Latifi's. The *sebeb-i te'lif* formula shared between Sehi and Latifi, mentioned above, also occurs in Garibi, who wrote around 1560. Garibi does not mention any Persian biographer by name, but, like Sehi and Latifi, he writes that while Iranian poets and their verses have been compiled into books, "the sons of Turks" (*ebnā-yı Türk*) have rarely been mentioned in these works. To prevent them from "being erased from the pages of time and slates of the world,"³¹⁸ he has decided to compose a *tezkiye* on Rumi poets who are "devotees of Prophet Muhammad's family" (*muhibb-i ḥānedān*).³¹⁹ A comparative examination of the biographical contents of Garibi's *tezkiye* similarly reveals that he owes none of his material to Sehi or Latifi. Garibi's ignorance of the existence of earlier Ottoman *tezkiyes* is quite possible if he did in fact leave his homeland for the Safavid lands sometime during the 1530s as

³¹⁵ It is not entirely clear to me what Latifi means by *erbāb-ı ta'aşşub*. However, considering the author's use of *taqlīd* in other occasions, it is evident that he uses *erbāb-ı taqlīd* to refer to poets and authors who can only compose by imitating precedents as versus original talents like himself (e.g., . . . *leṭāfet-i suḥan bu faḳīre Ḥudā-dād ve ne taqlīd ü ta'līm-i üstāddur*; LAT, 484). In this context, *ta'aşşub* likely also refers to imitative behavior that arises from strict adherence to established norms.

³¹⁶ Indeed, there are other clues that seem to confirm Latifi. Nevizade Atayi reports that Mehmed Çelebi (d. 995/1586-87), son of Meyli Efendi (El Mevla Mustafa bin Lutfullah), began to write a *tezkiyetü'ş-şu'arā* but died before he could complete it.

³¹⁷ e.g., Safayi, ed. Çapan, *Tezkire*, 2.

³¹⁸ . . . *zamān saḥāyifından ve cihān safāyılıından maḥv olunmayub* . . . Garibi, *Tezkire*, 65.

³¹⁹ Garibi, *Tezkire*, 65.

suggested in Chapter 2, but he is the third author after Sehi and Latifi who appears to believe he is the first biographer of Rumi poets.

An analysis of the contemporary circulation and reception of Sehi's *Heşt Bihişt* makes the work's (actual or pretended) invisibility to other early biographers plausible. Judging by the number and nature of the extant manuscripts, Sehi's *tezkiye* does not seem to have circulated widely. Compared to the one hundred-plus manuscripts of Latifi's work, mostly produced in the sixteenth century, Sehi's 15 is not very impressive.³²⁰ Eight of these are dated, three of which are modern (nineteenth and twentieth centuries); the remaining five are from various decades of the sixteenth century, with only two dated copies from before Latifi's *tezkiye* (comp. 953/1546-47). It is striking that no (dated) copies have survived from the centuries in between, confirming the lack of popularity of *Heşt Bihişt* reported by late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century authors like Mustafa Ali and Riyazi, discussed below. Moreover, the only two copies definitely produced before the coming of Latifi's *tezkiye* are both from the court milieu. Ayasofya 0.3544, a neat, carefully produced copy chosen by Kut for the facsimile edition, is specified on the first unnumbered folio as coming from "the chamber" (*odadan çıkma*), likely referring to the Privy Chamber (*Hâşş Oda*); the seal of Prince Mehmed, son of Süleyman, appears on 1a.³²¹ Günay Kut believes this is likely an author's copy prepared for presentation to Sultan Süleyman through the mediation of Lutfi Paşa.³²² Institut Narodov Azii, B. 271, the other copy from before LAT1, contains a chronogram in Persian for the

³²⁰ Günay Kut's edition identifies 14 extant manuscript copies; SEH, 16-46. Kut has introduced an additional (undated and incomplete) copy in a later article (Süleymaniye Library, Şehit Ali Paşa 2863); Kut, "Heşt Bihişt'in Yeni Bir Nüshası." In her most recent piece on *Heşt Bihişt*, Kut writes that there are 18 extant copies but does not specify what the additional three copies are; Kut, "Heşt Bihişt." I will therefore base my analysis here on the 15 copies with descriptions.

³²¹ SEH, 16.

³²² SEH, 17-19.

completion of *Heşt Bihişt* by a certain Mukabeleci Hüsam Beg, who, judging by his title “Beg” and personal relation to Sehi as established by the celebratory chronogram, is likely to be a courtier serving either as the head of the *Mukābele Kālemi*, a branch of the fiscal bureaucracy or a collator of manuscripts.³²³

Statements on the contemporary reception of *Heşt Bihişt* found in other *tezkires* complement the picture suggested by the extant manuscripts. Aşık Çelebi is the only biographer who reports a positive reception, although he limits it to the sultan and the grandees, emphasizing the financial rewards Sehi received.³²⁴

Otherwise, he criticizes the work's poor prose style and biographical content.³²⁵

Curiously, Aşık Çelebi gives wrong information on *Heşt Bihişt* in spite of having seen and used the work as source: He states that the *tezkiye* is regnally organized (*tertīb-i selāfīn ile*),³²⁶ which is not the case, although there is a *ṭabaḳāt* aspect to the final four chapters where Sehi's own life stages determine who goes into which *bihişt*. This suggests that Aşık may have only cursorily scanned the work for a few pieces of information.³²⁷ As mentioned above, Ahdi of Baghdad, who penned a *tezkiye* on Rumi poets dated 971/1563-64 (first recension, AHD1), i.e., about five year before Aşık, does not mention Sehi's name at all, paralleling Latifi's oversight. In his *Tezkiretü'ş Şu'arā* (994/M.1585-86) Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi merely reports, in neutral terms, that Sehi penned a *tezkiye*. Mustafa Ali, in his *Künhü'l-aḥbār*, completed circa 1600, compares *Heşt Bihişt* to an autumn tree without leaves,

³²³ SEH, 22. The word *mukābeleci* is used several times by Sehi in the sense of someone who helps compare manuscripts by reading them aloud; see for example, SEH, 81a/231 (*Sulṭān Korkud'un mü'ellifâtına mukābeleci olmış...*).

³²⁴ AÇ, 245.

³²⁵ AÇ, 737-38.

³²⁶ AÇ, 246.

³²⁷ Aşık's use of Sehi awaits analysis. I have not delved into such an analysis within the confines of this dissertation.

punning on the word *Sehi* (tall).³²⁸ Ali's figure compares this barren tree to the contemporary "efflorescence" (*bāğ ü rāğ*) in poetry and prose, which might be understood in two ways: either that *Sehi* falls short of state-of-the-art standards in poetry and prose and/or that his book has lost its "leaves", i.e., it is not copied any more and has fallen out of circulation. Riyazi's words in his *tezkiye* of 1610 are a variation on the same theme: "In his day he compiled a biographical dictionary of poets. It is now unheard of and unseen like the past year's calender."³²⁹ Along the same lines, Beyani, writing in 1006/1597-98, does mention the *tezkiye* in his entry on *Sehi* but omits it when talking about the "famous" *tezkiyes* in his introduction.³³⁰

Three scenarios, then, are possible as an explanation for Latifi's ignorance of *Sehi*. He might have started working on his *tezkiye* before 1538, the completion date of *Heşt Bihişt*; some indications in this direction will be shortly discussed.

Alternatively, he might have started after 1538 but might not have by then heard of *Sehi*'s work owing to the latter's poor circulation and his own long working years in Rumelia away from Istanbul (although the exact interval is not known). Finally, he might have simply felt entitled to deliberately ignore *Sehi* owing to the latter's poor circulation and reception. A combination of these scenarios is also possible, especially if we consider Latifi's late recension as well, by which time Latifi would have almost certainly heard about *Sehi* but continued to ignore him.

Just as *Sehi*'s foundational role in Ottoman *tezkiye* writing and influence on Latifi is questionable, Aşık Çelebi's treatment of Latifi's *tezkiye*, too, brings up

³²⁸ *Hālā ki bāğ ü rāğ-ı naẓm ü nesre göre gūyā ki ḥazān-dīde bir serv-i sehīdūr*. MALI, vol. 5, 813.

³²⁹ *Zamānında tezkiyetü 'ş-şu 'arā cem' itmīşdi. Hālā taḳvīm-i pārīne gibi bī-nām ü nişāndır*. Riyazi, *Riyāzū 'ş-şu 'arā*, 87b.

³³⁰ *Fārisī ve Türkī nice tezkiyeler yazılmışdır. Lisān-ı Türkīde şöhet bulan ve beyne'l ḥavāşş ü 'avām mütedāvil olan Laṭīf'niñ tezkiyesi, andan sonra 'Aşık Efendi'niñ tezkiyesi, anlardan sonra ser-cerīde-i erbāb-ı 'irfān ve ser-defter-i efāzıl-ı devrān şāhibü'l-hulkü'l-ḥasen Kınalızāde Ḥasān Çelebi'niñ tezkiyetü 'ş-şu 'arāsıdır*. Beyani, *Tezkiyetü 'ş-suarā*, 5.

complications that disturb the linear line of generic development assumed by conventional literary historiography. Quite strangely, Aşık makes an effort to convince his readers that he could have completed his *tezkiye* before Latifi, although he never puts the claim forward directly. He takes the trouble, twice indeed, to explain that he could have finished his work many years earlier had he not been demoralized by Latifi's foul play.³³¹ As mentioned above, Aşık claims that after their “deal” in the year 950 to follow different organizational patterns in their *tezkiyes*, Latifi stole his idea of an alphabetical organization and published his title in 953, which caused Aşık to abandon not only his own *tezkiye* project but poetry as a whole. Aşık's self-proclaimed demoralization is overly dramatic and not entirely convincing, but clearly, he is trying to push his own work backwards in time and to pull Latifi's forward.

Aşık implies that the *conception* of Latifi's work is in 950, at about the same time as the conception of his own work. But the year 950 as the starting point of their projects leaves Latifi only three years to collect material for and write the text of his *tezkiye*, as it was completed in 953. While it is not impossible to write such a text in three years, Latifi's own words on his research and data collection process suggest it took much longer than that, which sounds credible in view of the difficulties of operating in a manuscript culture:

I have, with effort and diligence, gathered one by one all the works each of [the poets] compiled, as well as the poems and couplets they composed. For a long time (*nice zamān*), I labored and endured hardship, seeking and searching tirelessly. I examined every *dīvān*, treatise, and essay relating to poetry and prose composition in Turkish, pursuing them with utmost seriousness, diligence, and care. Over an extended period (*müddet-i mütemādī*), for guidance and information I consulted venerable masters, seasoned by years and worn by time, connoisseurs of speech and the most eloquent among people, paragons of eloquence and expression. Throughout

³³¹ AÇ, 737 and 245-246; see also p. 268 for Aşık's choice of the *ebced* system.

all these days and occasions, there was not a single moment when I did not have an inkset on my waist and a notebook under my arm.³³²

Latifi himself attributes the initial encouragement for the composition of the *tezkiye* to a friend from Kastamonu called Zaifi. This Zaifi was apparently a local figure as later *tezkiye* writers either do not mention him at all, or simply summarize Latifi's entry on him. This, too, lends weight to the idea that Latifi began to work on his *tezkiye* before he came to Istanbul around the year 950.³³³ Although the *tezkiye* includes many young poets active in Istanbul circa 950, the work as a whole is anything but Istanbul centric. The amount of local detail from the provinces gives one the impression that Latifi was already working on his *tezkiye* during the long years he spent in the provinces, mainly the Kastamonu region in his youth, and later, Rumelia during his scribal career; there is also a lot of Istanbul material from the 1530s when İbrahim and İskender Paşas were leading patrons with whom Latifi appears to have had some connection, and figures like Zati and Hayali were active, both of whom Latifi knew in person.

There is, then, sufficient grounds for questioning the veracity of Aşık's words and surmising that the conception of Latifi's *tezkiye* goes back some time before 950. In fact, there are 22 years between the completion dates of Latifi's *tezkiye* and Aşık's *Meşâ'ir*. Born three decades apart, the two men were from different generations (b. 896/1491-92 and 926/1519-20 respectively). Yet, Aşık Çelebi treats Latifi as a contemporaneous rival that needs to be discredited for the success of his own book. It

³³² LAT, 105-106.

³³³ Modern researchers have tended to take Aşık's words for granted, not taking account of the contradiction with Latifi's own version of the story of his *tezkiye*'s composition. For example, Rıdvan Canım, in his introduction to the modern critical edition of Latifi's *tezkiye*, tries to conflate these two different accounts: *Latîfî'nin İstanbul'a geldiği yıllarda Anadolu sahasında ilk tezkire örneği olarak ortaya çıkan Sehî Bey Tezkiresi henüz tamamlanmış ve bu eser edebiyat çevrelerinde büyük ilgiyle karşılanmıştır. Bu olay Latîfî'de bir tezkire yazma arzusu ve şevki uyandırır. Dostu Zaîfî'nin teşvik ve ısrarı üzerine Aşık Çelebi'nin görüşlerinden de faydalanarak eserini yazmaya başlar.* LAT, 8.

is true that Latifi's *tezkiye* was phenomenally successful, comparable perhaps only to Taşköprülüzade's *al-Shaqā'iq* (1558), written around the same years. There are at least 19 surviving copies of the work produced before the completion of Aşık Çelebi's *Meşā'ir* in 976/1568-69: This means that about a quarter of the dated manuscripts (72 in total) were produced within the first 22 years following the completion of Latifi's *tezkiye*. In the decades following the *Meşā'ir* of Aşık, Latifi's work was at least as popular if not more: Between 1568 and the turn of the century, another 50% of the dated manuscripts were produced, indicating that it continued to be a serious rival. Yet, the question is still why Aşık did not simply choose to treat Latifi's *tezkiye* as an early and inadequate work that needed to be superseded, or write a sequel (*zeyl/tezyīl*) like some of the later *tezkiye* authors did. Why did he invest so much energy in the argument of his stolen precedence?

In harmony with his efforts to push the date of his *tezkiye* backwards in time, Aşık also presents a version of the *sebeb-i te'lif* formula discussed above (the need for a Rumi counterpart of the biographies of Persian poets by Timurid authors), in spite of the fact that there is no way he can objectively be considered as the first Rumi *tezkiye* author at this point in time. He praises the Timurid biographies by Jami, Davlatshah and Navai and adds Qazvini's *tezyīl* to this list of illustrious role models. When he comes to his Ottoman Turkish precursors, however, he is explicitly critical and aims to discredit them. For Sehi's work, he says that its "caliber" is evident in the eyes of the knowledgeable, implying it to be inadequate and substandard, and wonders how such a work managed to receive compliments and financial bonuses from grandees.³³⁴ Elsewhere comparing Sehi's and Latifi's *tezkiyes*, he argues that

³³⁴ AÇ, 245.

Sehi's is by far inferior both in its prose style and as a biographical compilation.³³⁵

Latifi's on the other hand, although praiseworthy in these latter two respects, is marred by its “Kastamonu fanaticism”: Aşık mockingly relates that the work is commonly dubbed *Ğaştamonınāme ve Ālet-i Hengāme* (Book of Kastamonu and Ballyhooer's Instrument), meaning that Latifi ascribed many poets' place of origin to his own home town and created a lot of “noise” to attract attention like a street peddler.³³⁶ Aşık also frequently corrects the factual information presented by Latifi throughout the main body of his *tezķire*.³³⁷ His strange play with chronology is matched by his efforts to make it seem as if the prior Ottoman *tezķires* do not fully meet the need for a Rumi *tezķire*.

So between 1538, the completion date of Sehi's Heşt Bihişt and 976/1568-69, the completion date of Aşık's *Meşā'ir*, we have five *tezķires* (Sehi, Latifi, Garibi, Ahdi and Aşık), four of which—if we include Aşık—claimed precedence and all of which were composed from scratch, with negligible borrowings in the case of Ahdi and Aşık. In the case of the first three titles, there is also no indication of an awareness of other *tezķire* projects, and Ahdi is unaware of Sehi. In the case of the latter two titles, there is either open hostility to preceding *tezķires* or deliberate disregard. We have discussed at length Aşık's negative attitude towards Sehi and Latifi but he also he seems to downplay Ahdi's work as an Acem visitor's laudable exercise in Rumi *tezķire* writing. Ahdi ignores or does not know about Sehi and

³³⁵ Speaking of Latifi's works Aşık comments *tezķiretū'ş-şu 'arāsı maķbūldur, maķbū-ı erbāb-ı ıtab '-ı suķān-gūzārdur, eyü tetebbu' itmişdür. Sehī Beg ile aşlā ne inşāda ve ne tertībde münāsebeti yokdur*; AÇ, 737-38.

³³⁶ AÇ, 738. The phrase *ālet-i hengāme* occurs frequently in sixteenth-century sources and seems to refer to a noisy musical instrument, possibly a pipe or a type of drums, used to attract people especially for street shows and street sales. Whether there is a particular connection between Kastamonu and ballyhooing is not clear.

³³⁷ For example AÇ, 479, 434-435, 801.

downplays Latifi as “narrow-minded.”³³⁸ The same derogatory attitude is also seen in the late recension of Latifi, where the author takes down *tezki*res composed after his first recension. From this overall picture of the first thirty years of Ottoman *tezki*re writing and the intertextual relations or insularities involved, the following two conclusions can be drawn.

First, the current model of a linear genre development needs to be replaced by a model of multiple simultaneous beginnings. In his survey of Ottoman literature 1450-1600, Selim S. Kuru asks “the question of why these works should have appeared in the sixteenth century and why only in this century they would overlap in their coverage rather than establishing supplements.”³³⁹ For the earliest texts, one important factor appears to be their independent conceptions, combined with the pressing cultural demand for “the first Rumi *tezki*re”, which led multiple authors to take up the pen near simultaneously. For the entire sixteenth century, the reason must be the shared fundamental objective of constituting and consolidating a new field of expanded and Ottomanized Rumi poetry.

And secondly, the lack of recognition among the earliest titles suggests a poorly integrated field of textuality, one without the capacity to rapidly disseminate texts. On the other hand, that the same *sebeb-i te’lif* formula crops up in sources that do not recognize one another shows that by the 1530s the need for a Rumi counterpart to the biographies of Jami, Davlatshah and Navai had evolved into a shared topos, a full-fledged cultural ideal talked about among the Ottoman literati for quite a while; each of the three *tezki*re authors clearly picked up the topos from their

³³⁸ *Kastamonıdan ehl-i kalemden üslûb-ı inşâda kendü re’yi ile bî-misl ü bî-hemtâ olduğuçün mukaddemâ tezkire-i şu ‘arâ yazmışdur. Lakin pesend-i zurefâ ve makbûl-i fuzalâ olmamışdur zîrâ ki çok yirde ta’assub itmişdür.* AHD, 501.

³³⁹ Kuru, “The Literature of Rum,” 591.

environments and not from other texts, the topos itself losing its relevance when borrowed from another text. Moreover, that as late a biographer as Aşık was still concerned with the problem of precedence shows that there was a “*tezkiye* rush” during Süleyman's reign which lasted until the late 1560's: Who was going to write the first Ottoman *tezkiye*, or the first one that mattered? That contest must be the broader context behind the shared *sebeb-i te'lifts* and the hostilities between the first generation of *tezkiye* authors.

In other words, we might be witnessing, as late as the 1560s, a cultural situation where there was a great deal of cultural uniformity and interconnectedness in the oral realm, embedded in social relations (see Chapter 4), but not an equally uniform and efficient realm of textuality to match that, especially under conditions of ongoing expansion. It might be asked how a social community that managed to develop shared cultural ideals and topoi fails to disseminate texts or, at least, the news of these texts' appearance. The answer might lie in the difference between the types of information disseminated in each case and the pace with which these different types of information are disseminated. Cultural ideals usually develop over longer periods of time with less specific chronologies and social agents whereas the spread of a particular text or the news of its coming, e.g., the appearance of Sehi's *Heşt Bihişt* in the court milieu in 1538, would be contingent on a series of more specific material and social pathways that could easily fail to conduct the information and/or the text to a Latifi in the provinces around the same years.

The “contest” for the first Ottoman *tezkiye* seems to have been perceived as still open by the late 1560's as the case of Aşık Çelebi shows. This may sound like an absurd anachronism to our modern ears, but the relatively slow rates of dissemination in manuscript cultures must be taken into account in understanding the historical

subjects' perceptions of circulation time. In fact, it is the modern scholars' belief in the existence of a homogenous and consolidated Ottoman space of writing for this period that has precluded the possibility of considering multiple independent beginnings. Such a space of writing, I argue, was only constituted over the course of the sixteenth century and the *tezkires* themselves substantially helped build it. In fact, the *tezkire* as a genre is poised between two worlds; it began with poorly circulating texts by Qazvini, Sehi, Garibi, the last one most expectedly owing to its Safavid provenance; the same situation of highly limited circulation applies to Hacı Kemal's anthology. Around the mid sixteenth century, however, the emergence of a new readers' community that rapidly circulated texts can be observed. The scale of Latifi's contemporary popularity is the first major instance of new circulation dynamics, and several decades later HÇ would achieve even greater instantaneous circulation.³⁴⁰

3.3 *Nazîre* anthologies: Patterns of continuity and discontinuity

I now turn my attention to *nazîre* anthologies of the sixteenth century, which are not only similar to *tezkires* as a genre, but also display comparable historical patterns of intra-genre textual relations. I show in this section how the progression from lack of contact between the earlier *nazîre* anthologies to a state of integration, or snowballing, of *nazîre* literature in the late sixteenth century, parallels the *tezkires*' progression from a series of textual insularities to comprehensive syntheses.

Hopefully, the following analysis of *nazîre* anthologies with the same questions of field formation and textual transmission that I have posed in relation to the *tezkires*

³⁴⁰ See LAT, 39-69 and HÇ, 41-68 for (incomplete) lists of extant manuscripts of these two works and their copy dates where available.

will help pinpoint some salient historical trends in the textual culture of this period. I will only compare the largest three anthologies by Hacı Kemal of Eğirdir (comp. 918/1512-13, with additions into Süleyman's reign),³⁴¹ Nazmi of Edirne (comp. 940?/1533-34?),³⁴² and Pervane Beg (comp. 968/1560-61)³⁴³ and leave out smaller, selective ones because my focus is on broad trends. I will also give a short shrift to the *naẓīre* anthologies compiled after 1560 and content myself with pointing out the overall trend toward field unification they evince; this corpus is too large to study in detail within the confines of this dissertation. To my three main sixteenth-century texts, I add Ömer bin Mezid's *naẓīre* anthology of 840/1436-37,³⁴⁴ for which a chronological counterpart in *tezkiye* literature does not exist. In spite of the similarities on the surface, this unique early poetry collection differs from both the later three anthologies I discuss and the sixteenth-century *tezkiye* literature in that it has no claims to a comprehensive, encyclopedic coverage of Rumi poetry. Not only is it relatively modest in size and in the number of poets mentioned—which must also be related with the limited spread of *dīvān* poetry at the time—it is also arranged by meter and not alphabetically, which shows that its purpose is not to exhaust a field and serve as reference but to offer a wide enough selection for study and other ends.³⁴⁵ That it does not correspond to the beginning of a substantial trend towards

³⁴¹ Ertek Morkoç, “Eğridirli.”

³⁴² Nazmi, *Mecma‘un-‘nezâ‘ir*; Köksal, *Edirneli Nazmi-Mecma‘ü‘n-neza‘ir*. The work itself does not include a date of composition. This date is furnished by LAT2; LAT, 535. Sehi Beg's mention of the anthology in his *tezkiye* (1538) makes LAT2's date plausible; SEH, 118a/305. I will use this date for the sake of convenience.

³⁴³ Gıynaş, “Pervâne Bey Mecmuası.”

³⁴⁴ Ömer bin Mezid, *Mecmū‘atü‘n-nezā‘ir*.

³⁴⁵ The preamble to the work does not mention a pedagogical motivation but the introductory quatrains at the opening of the subsections, each devoted to a different meter, strongly suggest such a context. The structure of the introductory quatrains are the same throughout: Line one mentions the Arabic name of the meter, line two either describes the mood of the meter or gives advice on its application, line three presents the scansion, and line four offers a sample composed in that meter. The first of these quatrains addresses a young person (*dilber*) and bids him to memorize the meter; Ömer bin Mezid, *Mecmū‘atü‘n-nezā‘ir*, 21:

conceptualizing and representing Rumi poetry as a totality is also indicated by the huge chronological gap with the first compilation that unmistakably bears this motivation, namely Hacı Kemal's *Cāmi 'ü'n-nezā'ir* of 1512-13. Nevertheless, it is the only miscellany to survive from the fifteenth century with *naẓīres* of numerous poets and is helpful in putting sixteenth-century *naẓīre* anthologies into perspective.

By examining the textual influences and shared material between *naẓīre* anthologies, or lack thereof, we can infer some patterns of continuity and discontinuity in the development of *dīvān* poetry over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In general, the trend is toward expansion of the poetic field on the one hand and its increasing integration on the other. The latter development manifests itself not only in the transmission patterns of *dīvān* poetry samples, but also in the transmission histories of poetry anthologies as a type of text in its own right. As suggested above, these trends closely parallel those seen in *tezkiye* literature.

The expansion of the field of *dīvān* poetry is already well-known by the great numbers of *dīvāns*, anthologies and miscellanies that have survived from the sixteenth century as compared to the fifteenth century or before. It is especially in the second half of the sixteenth century that poetry texts of any kind become available in unprecedented numbers, a trend that is part and parcel of the growth of Rumi Turkish literate culture in general. Ömer bin Mezdî's anthology of 1436 provides around 400 poems by 85 poets, mostly early fifteenth-century, i.e., contemporary or near

*Hezec çün kim müşemmedür dahı sâlimdür ey dilber
Anuñ veznini göñülde muḳarrer eylegil ezber
Meḳā' ilün meḳā' ilün meḳā' ilün meḳā' ilün
Yüzüñ güldür saçuñ sünbü'l beñüñ müşk ü ḥaṭṭuñ 'anber*

contemporary, figures.³⁴⁶ After a gap of 76 years, the next extant *naẓīre* anthology is incomparably larger:³⁴⁷ Hacı Kemal of Eğirdir's *Cāmi 'ū'n-neẓā'ir* (1512) comprises, in the most expansive extant manuscript version, around 2848 poems by 262 poets, although it must have been slightly larger before the loss of leaves it suffered. Nazmi of Edirne's work from 1533(?) is double the size of Hacı Kemal's, with 5527 poems by 357 poets. Finally, the untitled anthology known today as *Pervāne Beg Mecmū'ası* (1560) includes no less than 8172 poems by around 550 poets.

This steep upward trend in numbers is partly due to an accumulation over time of material from different historical periods, compiled owing to a heightening encyclopedist or archivalist drive to collect and record poetry texts. However, there is no doubt that the actual volume of textual output was enlarged, as modern manuscript collections evince. These increases in numbers are paralleled in *tezkiye* literature. While the earliest *tezkiye*, Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt* from 1538 comprises around 220 poets, Latifi's work that came only eight years later comprises around 300. In spite of its near-exclusive concentration on contemporary poets, Ahdi's *Gülşen-i Şu'arā* (first recension 971/1562-63) is remarkable for its sheer size; the number of poets in the first recension manuscripts varies roughly between 250 and 313; the second recension, produced after Ahdi returned to Baghdad, adds more than 50 poets from Baghdad and environs.³⁴⁸ The number of poets mentioned here for the first time in biographical literature is 175 according to the editor of the text, a figure

³⁴⁶ This and other figures pertaining to poems and poets in particular works presented in this discussion should not be taken as absolute, since there are variations, sometimes quite substantial, between extant manuscripts. However, they give an idea of the relative scale.

³⁴⁷ I exclude from the present discussion a *naẓīre* anthology likely compiled during the lifetime of Ahmed Paşa (d. 1497) because of the fact that it comprises poems by only seven renowned poets and is far from presenting a comprehensive picture of Rumi poetry comparable to the other anthologies discussed here; Mermer, "XV. Yüzyılda Yazılmış."

³⁴⁸ AHD, 30-45.

that must include second recension poets as well.³⁴⁹ Aşık Çelebi's *Meşā'irü's-su'arā* treats 426 poets and Hasan Çelebi's *tezkiye* around 640, the latter partly owing to its large-scale incorporation of material from earlier *tezkiyes*.³⁵⁰

This expansion of the poetic field was accompanied by an increasing integration of the field through, among other media, the encyclopedic compilations of the *naẓīre* anthologies and the *tezkiyes*. Ömer bin Mezid's *Mecmū'atü'n-nezā'ir* and the following two *naẓīre* anthologies in the early sixteenth century, Hacı Kemal's and Nazmi's works, all seem independently conceived, with no evidence of influence or direct transfer of poetic material between them.³⁵¹ However, the *Pervāne Beg Mecmū'ası* of 1560 incorporates Nazmi's anthology wholesale and expands it with contemporary poets; in other words, it is a work of the *zeyl/tezyıl* type, monumentalizing an entire tradition. The shift in numbers of extant copies also bespeak a new situation from Nazmi's work onwards. Ömer bin Mezid and Hacı Kemal's anthologies have survived in two manuscripts each while with Nazmi there is a leap in number of copies.³⁵² In the decades following the *Pervāne Beg*

³⁴⁹ AHD, 69. These 175 poets are not listed in this publication. Elsewhere in the text the editor lists 147 poets who occur only in Ahdi's *tezkiye*; AHD, 50-51.

³⁵⁰ With Riyazi's *Riyāzū's-su'arā* of 1610, this trend of expansion is reversed, with 424 poets in a *tezkiye* that covers the entire history of Ottoman poetry up to the present day. For the shift that Riyazi represents and the following developments along the same lines in seventeenth-century *tezkiye* literature, see Chapter 6 "Conclusion".

³⁵¹ The occasional shared poems cannot, by themselves, be taken to prove direct textual contact. For example, M. Fatih Köksal, in his doctoral dissertation on Nazmi of Edirne's *Mecma'un-nezā'ir*, has identified 31 poems shared between Ömer bin Mezid and Nazmi, and has concluded that Nazmi took these poems from Ömer bin Mezid (Köksal, "Edirneli Nazmi-Mecma'ü'n-neza'ir," 76-77). I do not believe this is a strong indication that Nazmi saw Ömer bin Mezid's work. First, there are variants in the shared poems. Second, if Nazmi had access to Ömer bin Mezid, why did he select so few poems, given his maximalist approach to anthologizing? Third, why would he break the *naẓīre* chains when quoting from Ömer and select only one or two from a chain? Although the last two points can be countered by bringing up Nazmi's relatively weak interest in the poetry of the past, which I argue here, still, the few shared poems and the patterns of their selection do not furnish positive proof that Nazmi used Ömer as source. Köksal himself has removed this section from the electronic publication based on his dissertation. Nazmi, *Mecma'un-nezā'ir*; Köksal, *Edirneli Nazmi-Mecma'ü'n-neza'ir*.

³⁵² Köksal, the editor of Nazmi of Edirne's *Mecma'un-nezā'ir*, cites 10 extant manuscripts (excluding reported manuscripts he could not locate in the said collections); unfortunately, only one among these

Mecmū'ası, there is a veritable explosion of *naẓīre* poetry collections—large anthologies but even more so small, selective personal miscellanies—which likewise evinces a trend towards the integration of circulatory space: This voluminous post-1560 corpus is currently uncatalogued and undescribed, but random dives into it reveal significant overlaps, which suggest that most texts are drawing on the same channels of circulation.³⁵³ This pattern of development is also seen in *tezkiye* literature, which began with independently conceived texts, as I have argued in the previous section, and became integrated in late sixteenth-century summations of the literature such as Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi's work, which incorporates large chunks of Aşık Çelebi's *tezkiye*, and Mustafa Ali's chapters on poets in *Künhü'l-aḥbār*, which critically use all the *tezkiye* literature up to that point. In *naẓīre* anthology literature, the progression towards integration begins with Nazmi's *Mecma'ü'n-nezâ'ir* of 1533(?), with the periods before and after comprising two distinct blocks of continuity in themselves.

The first period is marked at its beginning by Ömer bin Mezid's *Mecmū'atü'n-nezâ'ir* of 1436. As discussed briefly in Chapter 2, *Mecmū'atü'n-nezâ'ir* appears to reflect poetry in the court society under Murad II. Sehi Beg's chapter (fifth *bihişt*) on “poets of old this poor one did not get to meet and serve but learned about by talking to the elderly,”³⁵⁴ and biographical captions in *naẓīre* anthologies³⁵⁵ allow us to identify numerous poets mentioned by Ömer as Murad's

bear a copy date. Smaller miscellanies that draw on Nazmi apparently exist, but have not been researched sufficiently; see for example, Ayan, “Bir Nazire Mecmûası.”

³⁵³ For brief discussions of some post-1560 *naẓīre* anthologies, see Nazmi, *Mecma'un-nezâ'ir*, 7-9; and Altok, “Nazire Mecmualarına.” For edited *naẓīre* anthologies from after 1560, see Atık Gürbüz, ed., *Mecmū'atü'l-leṭâ'if*; Gümüş, “Câmi'un-nezâ'ir”; Gültekin, *Mecmū'a-i Nezâyir* and the same author's article based on this dissertation, Gültekin, “Düzenleyeni Bilinmeyen.”

³⁵⁴ SEH, 49b/168.

³⁵⁵ Zülfe, “Biyografik bilgiler açısından.”

court poets. Moreover, the anthology includes several *qasidas* for Murad II, including one by Ömer. The rest of the codex that contains the anthology comprises, in the same hand, chronograms, conundrums (*mu‘ammā*) and riddles (*luğaz*) in verse, complementing the predominantly temporal, ghazel-centered courtly poetry culture of the main text with verbal and numerical games in verse. There is also Ömer's rather exceptional mention, in his introduction, of *ümerā* (military-administrative elite) as part of the poets, *şu‘arā*, who people his anthology. In sixteenth-century sources it is always the *‘ulemā* that is coupled with the *şu‘arā* as the rhyming name of the most relevant social group, as seen, for example, in Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi's title for his third chapter which constitutes the bulk of his biographical dictionary (*‘Ulemā ve şu‘arā beyānındadır*); Ömer's distinctive usage here might also be pointing towards a court environment.³⁵⁶

However, the strongest evidence in favor of a court society underlying the anthology is found in the structure of *naẓīre* chains that include Murad's court poets like Hassan, Safi, Şemsi, Işki, Ulvi and Mukimi. Most of the *naẓīre* chains in Ömer's anthology are made up of what I call “intentional *naẓīres*”, i.e., actual responses or imitations as versus poems artificially grouped together by the compiler on the basis of fundamental formal similarities (*redīf*, rhyme and/or meter). I reject, for the Ottoman context specifically, the translation of the term *naẓīre* as “imitatio” or “response poem” since these translations reflect the widespread assumption that the heads of *naẓīre* chains—which the compilers mark with phrases like *Aḥmedī farmāyad* (Ahmedi says), *Aḥmedī-rā* (from Ahmedi), *min kalām-i Aḥmedī-rā* (from

³⁵⁶ . . . *yārān-ı şu‘arānuñ ve dil-dār-ı ümerānuñ ellerinden geldiğince kim söz nakşında ve ḥalāvet başşında şānāyi ‘den ve bedāyi ‘den ne kim buyurmuşlardur ve kıyırmışlardur açdum . . . cem‘ etdüm.* Ömer bin Mezid, *Mecmū‘atü’n-neẓā‘ir*, 19-20.

the words of Ahmedi)—are followed by poems that were composed as deliberate imitations of that single head poem. Placement of a poem in the head position does often point to its (perceived) chronological precedence, and there are many cases where a particular *redîf* or theme is known to have been “invented” by a particular poet and then emulated by others. However, many *naẓîre* groups were simply brought together by the compilers on grounds of incidental similarities of *redîf*, rhyme and meter; this is often the case where short, semantically empty *redîfs* are involved (e.g., *-ân* or *-âdur* as versus *yavuz gözden yavuz dilden* [from the evil eye and evil tongue] or *-âle düşmüşdür* [has fallen into ...]). Intentional *naẓîres* can be easily told from the incidental ones on the basis of similarity of tropes and vocabulary beyond the shared rhymes, *redîfs* and meters. Non-intentional *naẓîres*, on the other hand, are textually unrelated. A degree of similarity that cannot but be intentional often evinces a shared social or socio-textual milieu, which appears to be Murad II's court in Ömer bin Mezid's case, with many obscure names surrounding the ones we do know are associated with Murad. In a chain of intentional *naẓîres*, more often than not it is impossible to tell which poet is responding to which since all are operating with the same set of vocabulary items and tropes. In fact, poets could be responding to the chain as a whole, or certain subgroups in it, and not to a particular poem, since they would have been aware of the communal cultivation of that particular set of formal and thematic features, especially where long chains involving numerous poets are concerned; in other words, *naẓîre* chains are often like a cloud rather than a wooden wheel with spokes that radiate from the hub, i.e, the head of the *naẓîre* chain to which each poet responds separately, as much of the

scholarship on this topic claims.³⁵⁷ In Ömer's case, intentional *naẓīre* chains that include Murad's court poets predominate and therefore the work appears to be rooted in an actual socio-textual community.

Ömer bin Mezid's *Mecmū 'atü'n-neẓā'ir* does not appear to have reached the hands of sixteenth-century *naẓīre* anthologists: Comparisons of the lists of poets included and random probes for shared poems and *redīfs* have yielded no indication that any of the later anthologists used the *Mecmū 'atü'n-neẓā'ir* as source.³⁵⁸ This is in spite of the fact that the text was likely produced in the court milieu, as mentioned above, which would have been expected to foster its chances of survival. Many names in this anthology were totally obscure to sixteenth-century Ottomans and remain so for us, being unattested elsewhere. Nevertheless, considerable poetry content does seem to have carried through into Hacı Kemal's *Cāmi 'ü'n-neẓā'ir* from Ömer's early anthology; the two texts display a degree of shared poets, poems and *redīfs* that distinguish them as group from the later two anthologies.

Some obscure early poets occur commonly in Ömer and Hacı Kemal's anthologies and are occasionally represented by the same poems, although this is not systematic or frequent enough to conclude direct textual quotation by Hacı Kemal. The nature of the relationship between the two anthologies is rather in the form of shared tastes and stylistic trends. The most respected poets of Ömer's time appear to be still valued highly, sometimes even higher, by Hacı Kemal if the number of poems quoted is any indication. The most quoted poet by far in Ömer bin Mezid's *Mecmū 'atü'n-neẓā'ir* (excluding Ömer himself) is Ahmedi. Many of his poems are

³⁵⁷ Köksal claims that 1035 of the poems in the anthology, i.e., one fifth of the total number of *naẓīres*, are written to Ahmed Paşa, based on their placement under Ahmed Paşa head poems; Nazmi, *Mecma 'un'-neẓā'ir*, 27-28.

³⁵⁸ See fn. 351.

placed by Ömer at the head of *naẓīre* chains, signaling perceived importance and/or chronological precedence. In Hacı Kemal's anthology Ahmedi still occupies a very important place, as the tenth most quoted poet among a total of 262 although 76 years had passed. On the other hand, the poet's relative weight declines significantly in Nazmi's anthology, which comes only two decades later, and, expectedly, even further in the *Pervāne Beg* anthology of 1560.

A comparable early figure of prominence to Ahmedi is Şeyhi, whose trajectory of relevance shows a radical decline between Hacı Kemal and Nazmi. In Ömer bin Mezd's *Mecmū 'atū'n-neẓā'ir* Şeyhi is the seventh most quoted poet, i.e., he is equaled or surpassed by several others including some obscure ones, which suggests that the “Ottomanization” and “canonization” of this Germiyanid master might not have been completed yet. In Hacı Kemal's compilation however, Şeyhi is raised to the third position after the more recent celebrities Ahmed Paşa and Hafî, in spite of his age. The exceptional value Hacı Kemal accords to Şeyhi's ghazel poetry appears to reflect trends that developed after Ömer's time, i.e., a belated canonization, but these trends would run their course by the era of the imperial *tezkires*, where Şeyhi is mainly celebrated as a *mesnevî* poet with barely any attention given to his lyrical output.³⁵⁹ Therefore, the radical marginalization of Şeyhi's ghazels in Nazmi's anthology and then in Pervane's is in accord with the *tezkire* literature.

A similar fate also befell Nesimi, whose relative position parallels Şeyhi's in all four *naẓīre* anthologies: Ömer does value Nesimi highly, but in Hacı Kemal' anthology he has become no less than the fourth most quoted poet. Once again,

³⁵⁹ See the discussion in Chapter 4 on Şeyhi's position in sixteenth-century literary canon.

Nazmi gives very little space to Nesimi, with only 11 poems in a miscellany where contemporary Ottoman court poets are represented by hundreds or dozens of poems each. The *Pervāne Beg* has only 5 Nesimis. In general, early fifteenth century poets do continue to appear in Nazmi's *Mecma 'un'-nezā'ir* and the *Pervāne Beg*, but their relative weight is markedly diminished and only a small portion of early poetry and/or poets found in Ömer bin Mezid and Hacı Kemal appear in these later sources.

A deeper, structural level of continuity between Ömer and Hacı Kemal is revealed when shared *redīfs* are traced. Kemal's *Cāmi 'ü'n-nezā'ir* is the anthology that shares the greatest number of *redīfs* with Ömer's work. However, often the poets have changed or been updated, pointing to a continuing popularity of those *redīfs* in the tradition. The example of the *redīf yavuz gözden yavuz dilden* (“from the evil eye and evil tongue”) encapsulates the relationship between the four *mecmū'as* in this regard. This *redīf* was very popular in the early fourteenth century: Ömer's chain comprises eight poets (pp. 63-66), a long chain for this relatively modest-sized anthology. In Hacı Kemal's much bigger tome there are only three poems by this *redīf*, but all the poets are different. It is not clear whether these three poets, all of them obscure, belong to the same period as Ömer's poets or to a later period. Nevertheless, Hacı Kemal's quotation of this *redīf* shows its continuing relevance into the sixteenth century.³⁶⁰ In the anthology of Nazmi and the *Pervāne Beg*, however, this *redīf* has died out. The same pattern across the four anthologies is seen with numerous *redīfs*, e.g., *öldürür* (“kills”), *hoş midur* (“is it pleasant”), *düzer* (“puts together/makes”), *depredür* (shakes).

³⁶⁰ Ömer bin Mezid, *Mecmū'atü'n-nezā'ir*, 63-66 (poems LVI-LXIII); Ertek Morkoç, “Eğridirli,” 1514-16 (poems no. 1714-16).

Ömer and Hacı Kemal are also similar in the surprising numbers of obscure *dīvān* poets they include, which indicates significant discontinuity between the era of the *tezkires* and the court poetry of the entire fifteenth century. In Ömer bin Mezid's work, the second, third and fourth most quoted poets after Ahmedi (Mukimi, Namusi, Zeyni) are almost entirely obscure. Similarly, in Hacı Kemal's anthology there are accomplished poets with numerous poems who are not attested elsewhere. It can be inferred that Hacı Kemal had access to their complete *dīvāns* since sample poems are sprinkled more or less evenly across the sections for most letters of the alphabet. This is, for example, the case with Rabbani and Habibi, but no other trace of these poets' oeuvres or biographies have been identified as of the present. In fact, the phenomenon of obscure poets continues into Nazmi's work, that is, into the 1530s. And not all obscure poets in Nazmi's compilation are from the fifteenth century; judging by their language and style, at least some must be closer in time to the compiler. From the second half of the sixteenth century onwards, obscurity becomes less and less of an issue, indicating a more robust and integrated textual field.

To recapitulate, Hacı Kemal's openness to the language and literature of the former centuries aligns him with Ömer bin Mezid and separates him from the post-1530s *naẓīre* anthologies and imperial *tezkires*, where the focus is not on the historical legacy but on the recent spectacular efflorescence in poetry; the radical presentism of the new literary canon as reflected in *tezkiye* literature is further discussed in Chapter 4. The high value he accords to early poets like Ahmedi and Şeyhi shows that by Hacı Kemal's time not much had changed in poetic taste, at least in the central Anatolian provinces where Hacı Kemal's work must have originated; old poetry still seemed valuable and its language, and Old Anatolian Turkish (OAT)

perfectly acceptable. But the link between Ömer and Hacı Kemal is not one of direct textual transmission; it is due to a continuity in the tradition itself. Hacı Kemal's selections from the oldest and most obscure stratum of Ottoman *dīvān* poetry (from the early fifteenth century) does include many names shared with Ömer but the poems are more often than not different, as suggested above, and when same, there are significant textual variations, which shows that Hacı Kemal and his milieu still found these poets' works worthy of quotation and that he could access them independently.³⁶¹ The occurrence in both anthologies of the same *redif* chains, but with few or no shared poets, likewise evinces a continuity in poetic culture that was not entirely recorded in written media, given the long chronological interval between Ömer and Hacı Kemal without any other extant large-scale poetry anthology in between. This lack of anthologizing activity and poor survival of fifteenth-century *dīvāns* that modern scholarship has had to deal with are in harmony with the picture of a poorly textualized and archived Turkish *dīvān* poetry that emerges from the early-sixteenth century library inventories of Bayezid II and Müeyyedzade. All of this shows that where the courtly tradition in *dīvān* poetry is concerned tastes had changed very little between Ömer and Hacı Kemal, but that the transmission took place not predominantly textually but in the form of what can be described as *meşk*, similar to that found in Ottoman music which is unwritten and transmitted through practice. It was only a very small canonical core (Nesimi, Ahmedi, Şeyhi, etc.)³⁶² that was textually secured beyond any risks and the rest of the tradition relied highly on orality for its transmission, through practices like memorization and recitation,

³⁶¹ For example, Yahyaoğlu, Hüsam, Habil, Muhammed, Kamberoğlu, Alayi and Naimi occur in both anthologies but the poems are all different. Sahibi, Köylüce and Muhsin occur with only partially shared sets of poems or with variants.

³⁶² See for example Mermer, "XV. Yüzyılda Yazılmış" for a late fifteenth-century anthology that records this courtly canonical core, the only extant anthology between Ömer and Hacı Kemal.

spontaneous composition and the *meclis*. As Chapter 4 demonstrates, these practices, as well as ephemeral forms of writing such as isolated sheets of paper prone to getting lost (*evrāk-ı perīṣān*), continued to be widespread into the sixteenth century and to play a key role in the transmission of poetry.

I have thus far grouped Hacı Kemal's *Cāmi 'ü'n-nezā'ir* with the texts of Chapter 2 and with Ömer bin Mezid's anthology on account of its openness to Sufi traditions and archaicism in poetic taste, respectively. These groupings highlight the anthology's backward-looking aspects: It is the monument that marks the end of an era at the same time as it documents its legacy, filling in the missing component in Bayezid and Müeyyedzade's libraries from about the same time, i.e., high register poetry in Turkish that had been running on as a steady undercurrent for at least a century beneath the hefty cosmopolitan order of texts. A truly transitional work, it is the first and last comprehensive anthology of Rumi Turkish poetry covering the period from circa 1400, a swansong of a literary order that was going to be replaced by a new one from the turn of the century onwards. But there is also an aspect to it that makes it a harbinger of the imperial *tezkiye* literature: It is the earliest text in any genre to deliberately and somewhat artificially “create” a total Rumi literary realm, departing from the transregional outlooks of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, with perhaps the exception of Nesimi's essential role. As argued above, Ömer bin Mezid's miscellany was not a totalizing compilation but a relatively limited selection based near exclusively on court literature; the beginning of a trend towards totalizing Rumi poetry would be marked by Hacı Kemal's massive anthology.

In contrast to Ömer bin Mezid, whose *Mecmū 'atü'n-nezā'ir* was predominantly based on “intentional *naẓīres*”, Hacı Kemal often groups poems together on account of incidental formal similarities. His anthology is much larger

than Ömer's with 2848 poems by 262 poets as versus 400 poems by 85 poets in the former, but the coherence of the material is weaker since it does not rest on the activities of a small group of closely connected people as Ömer's anthology did. Many of Hacı Kemal's *naẓīre* chains are very short, made up of two or three poems; there are even a few free-standing poems. He is also the compiler with the most flexible criteria for what counts as a *naẓīre*: Uniquely, he does not mind the difference of form (e.g., ghazel vs. *tercī'-i bend*), or meter as long as the *redīf* fits; even when the *redīf* or rhyme is slightly variant he does not abstain from using the poem if he needs that poem to construct a chain.

All these practices imply a desire to include as many texts as possible in addition to a general text-based method of collection (as versus recording socially embedded poetic activity as Ömer did). His decision to include variegate Sufi traditions in an anthology of *dīvān* poetry might also have been partly motivated by the same desire, as well as a political background possibly pervaded by ideas of sacral kingship and messianism that caused the two traditions to converge for a fleeting historical moment (Chapter 2). In any case, Hacı Kemal seems to have utilized whatever texts he could lay his hands on, and today *Cāmi 'ü'n-neẓā'ir* remains the single manuscript source for much early poetry. Although this maximalism has resulted in a poorly cohering construction, the gesture itself is important because it is the first attempt to construct an “imagined poetic community” for Rum, an abstract totality that goes beyond actual social relations. As suggested in Chapter 2, there are indications that Hacı Kemal's *Cāmi 'ü'n-neẓā'ir*, like Ömer bin Mezid's *Mecmū 'atü'n-neẓā'ir*, is linked with a court, a provincial princely one in all likelihood. However, the social construct that the text assumes extends much beyond a court society. Neither does it portray anything like the social milieu of the new

expanded imperial elites that people Nazmi's *Mecma 'un'-nezā'ir*, the *Pervāne Beg* anthology and the *tezḳire* literature of the following decades; this is probably owing to its provincial character as well as early date. Future studies hopefully can throw light on the interim political context in which such an abstract and inclusive construct of a Rumi community past and present could materialize albeit for a short time.

Nazmi's *Mecma 'un'-nezā'ir* and the *Pervāne Beg* together correspond to a new phase in the history of Ottoman *naẓīre* anthologies and share many features with the imperial *tezḳires*, with which they chronologically coincide. First, all of these texts have a very weak relationship with the poetry of the past beyond Ahmed Paşa or, more broadly, beyond court poetry under Mehmed II; earlier poetry is gradually weeded out. They both focus on the contemporary poetry scene and treat the past in a highly selective manner (an issue taken up in greater detail in the section “A Pseudo-history of Ottoman Poetry” below and then again in Chapter 4 on the formation of the sixteenth-century literary canon). They are all centered around the ghazel and have moved a long way from the heterogeneity of forms and genres found in Hacı Kemal's *Cāmi 'ü'n-nezā'ir*. Last but not least they have more or less parted ways with Sufi poetry. In short, they are texts of the new literary order. The way the *Pervāne Beg* snowballs on Nazmi's work has been noted; many smaller *naẓīre* miscellanies from the last decades of the sixteenth century appear to be related to the corpus of *naẓīres* that *Pervāne Beg*'s enlarged compilation represents, as suggested above. By about the same time *tezḳire* writing too begins to acquire the character of a written corpus of biographies that are from then on frozen into more or less stable textual entities and recycled many times until the end of the Ottoman period.

This overview of *naẓīre* anthologies and complex patterns of continuities and discontinuities between them conjure a far patchier literary world plagued by

vagaries of textual transmission than standard narratives of Ottoman literature have assumed. I believe that the enormous popularity of the *tezkiye* genre in the sixteenth century can be adequately appreciated only against this prior background of poor circulation and the *tezkiyes*' implicit promise of fixing the gaps and breaks in the circuits by making distinct poetic milieus visible to one another.

3.4 A pseudo-history of Ottoman poetry

In this fourth section, I discuss the rise of a literary historiography whose main purpose was to align the history of Ottoman poetry with dynastic history and to Ottomanize early Anatolian poetry under other polities. In other words, I look into the chronological integration of Ottoman poetry that took place concomitantly with its spatial integration. The rise of an Ottoman literary historical consciousness corresponds, somewhat ironically, to a moment of radical break with the poetry of the past whereby older Rumi poetry lost its relevance as a valid paradigm for the new generations. It was, however, precisely this break in linguistic and stylistic preferences that made it possible to speak of the past as past for the first time. Before that moment, it is not possible to find a historicizing discourse on older poetry. This is best instantiated by Hacı Kemal's anthology and Garibi's *tezkiye*, where poetry from fifteenth century and earlier poses models for emulation and old material is treated as if it is co-temporal with the compilers. We saw, for example, in Chapter 2 how Garibi could attribute a poem by Dede Ömer Ruşeni to Rumi, with no sense for linguistic or stylistic historicity. Similarly, Hacı Kemal does not mind placing fourteenth-century poets like Yunus Emre and Aşık Paşa in the same *naẓīre* chains as contemporary courtly poets, clearly seeing no linguistic or stylistic incommensurability as sixteenth-century *tezkiye* writers would.

Albeit important as the birth of a literary history of sorts, the historical material in the *tezkires* does not correspond to a historicism in the modern sense. While there is a clear notion that language and styles have changed and that this is a new period with unprecedented achievements, the interest in the history of poetry is more or less confined to salvaging the little that can be salvaged on the basis of contemporary standards. This attitude is, at bottom, akin to the one found in Hacı Kemal and Garibi, however, with the difference that sixteenth-century Ottomans were very selective when it came to the poetry of the past. Besides a few illustrious names that dot the fifteenth century, not much is embraced. The rest is more or less cast away as worthless, an attitude that becomes increasingly prevalent as the century progresses, i.e., as the linguistic and stylistic gap with the received material grows. As discussed in Chapter 4, the sixteenth-century Ottoman literary canon is deeply presentist and completely keyed to the current practice of poetry, with only older material that is relevant as models or resources for contemporary composers being valued and preserved; an archivalist interest in preserving the historical for its own sake does not exist. Moreover, the creation of a literary history seems to be overdetermined by political concerns; much of the historical material in the *tezkires* pertain to an alignment between dynastic history and literary history as will be discussed below. In short, an interest in history independent of contemporary literary or political use remained unthinkable.

3.4.1 The break with the past

The early sixteenth century's break with the linguistic and literary past is a theme that has emerged again and again in the previous sections. To recapitulate, in Latifi's account of the poets of Kastamonu, Amasya and environs, we saw how in spite of his

unique personal ties to the region Latifi did not have much access to solid biographical information on poets of the late fifteenth century, especially those in the local courts, and relied mostly on surviving manuscripts to construct his entries. Similarly, Sehi Beg's minimalistic but nevertheless invaluable reports on early court poets showed that even the central courts in Istanbul and Edirne were not immune to conditions that marred the transmission of poetry texts and biographical information on poets for biographers at large except the unique channel of Sehi.

In section 3.2.1 "An overview of the early sixteenth-century circulation of Turkish poetry", I brought up several other indicators of poor circulatory pathways such as the widespread phenomena of lost works and of the same penname being adopted by multiple early sixteenth-century poets as an indicator of isolated poetic milieus. In the discussion of the sixteenth-century *naẓīre* anthologies we saw the poor levels direct textual transmission between Ömer bin Mezid and Hacı Kemal, on the one hand, and between these two early anthologists and later *naẓīre* compilers, on the other, with a break around the early decades of the sixteenth century. Moreover, the birth of the *tezkiye* literature itself appears quite sudden and without precedent, given the lack of conversation with similar earlier texts like Qazvini's *Hasht Bihisht* and Hacı Kemal's *Cāmi 'ü'n-nezā'ir*; moreover, the sheer scope of the spread of this new genre was incomparable to the very limited reception of what came before. These discussions have shown that the break with the poetry of the past had multiple aspects, spanning textual circulation, continuity in poetic tradition (language and styles), and biographical memory. A historical discourse on poetry arose under these conditions and therefore it should be approached with great caution regarding its historical value.

To complement these earlier discussions, before moving on to an analysis of the historical discourse itself, I will first dwell a little bit more on the deliberate and openly voiced aspects of the break with the past. Sixteenth-century sources including the *tezkires* teem with remarks on the lack of linguistic finesse and artistic sophistication in earlier poetry. We have seen above that Hacı Kemal's anthology represented the culmination and swan song of an early literary canon that was entirely at peace with the linguistic and literary legacy of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The new canon's relationship to the legacy past, on the other hand, was at best troubled, and at worst openly hostile. The Edirne-Istanbul literati, both poets and prose stylists, considered themselves as an avant-garde with a historic mission, that of creating a literature as sophisticated as the Persian but characteristically Rumi and Ottoman. They rejected the legacy of the Anatolian past and felt like they were beginning anew. Earliest stratum of Anatolian poetry, which comprised mainly Sufi-didactic literature of the fourteenth century, is rejected wholesale as irrelevant to current practice. Mustafa Ali of Gelibolu could casually comment at the end of the sixteenth century that “it's no secret that there were no poets” before the reign of Bayezid I (1389-1402) when Timur's invasion thankfully brought some Persian and Chagatai poets into Anatolia.³⁶³ This is a pregnant comment with multiple aspects; the sixteenth separation between Sufi poetry and worldly, courtly poetry that partly informs Ali's words will be tackled in the next section. Here, I would like to emphasize the fact that Mustafa Ali sees present day poetry as directly issuing from foreign models in other languages and not as genetically linked in any way to Anatolian poetry of the fourteenth century.

³⁶³ MALI, vol. 4, 379-80.

A standard criticism for early poetry up to the mid fifteenth century at least is the archaic and unrefined quality of its language. Speaking of a rare copy of the mid-fourteenth-century *meşnevî Süheyl ü Nevbahār* he had perused as a child, Aşık Çelebi comments that the work is very hard “to see in public” not because it wants to hide the beauty of its face under a veil but because it is embarrassed of its ugliness, being written in a “Turk-like” (*Türkâne*) idiom.³⁶⁴ Along the same lines, Latifi writes that the verses of the poets who flourished in the early and mid-fifteenth century, including the court protected ones, lacked beauty and color and were full of expressions that recalled the speech of the Oghuzes and the mountain folk.³⁶⁵ In his discussion of Şeyhi's language, too, Latifi explains that because of the period in which it was composed, Şeyhi's *Hüsrev ü Şîrîn* inevitably included the bizarre and uncivilized Oghuzid tribal expressions that mountain people use.³⁶⁶ Latifi mentions anonymous critics who attack Şeyhi on these grounds and tries to defend the author by highlighting his *meşnevî*'s mystical value, i.e., its meaning (*ma'nā*) as versus its imperfect wording (*lafz*). From Latifi's tangential references to early literature we can understand that he is aware of some of the kind of early material covered for example in Ömer bin Mezid's anthology, but that he considers these entirely unworthy of inclusion in his *tezkiye*. To describe the style of Ulvi, a poet of Murad II's reign, Latifi says that it is in the style of the “ancients” (*müteḳaddimîn*) like Kanberoğlu, Hasanoğlu and Vezindaroğlu; these are all poets of the early fourteenth century, with Vezindaroğlu occurring in Hacı Kemal, Hasanoğlu in Ömer bin Mezid and Kanberoğlu in both. Latifi, moreover, relishes in describing the unpopularity of

³⁶⁴ AÇ, 184.

³⁶⁵ *Oğuzāne ve kūhiyāne elfāz u edāları çokdur*. LAT, 232.

³⁶⁶ . . . *zamān-ı sābıkda vārid ü vāḳi' olmağın esnā-i terkīb-i nazmında kavm-i ḳadīmūñ Oğuzāne ve kūhiyāne ba'zı ādāt u 'ibārātı düşmişdür ki her biri elfāz-ı ğarībden ve 'ibārāt-ı vahşiyeden 'add olunur*. LAT, 339.

Ulvi's *Risāle-i Gül ü Bülbül*, much deserved in his view. Latifi says that nobody cared to read or copy Ulvi's work and it remained limited to the author's copy, which was sold for the value of the paper; it ultimately became an “abandoned book” (*risāle-i metrūke*).³⁶⁷

In more objective historical terms, the linguistic change that was happening corresponded to a transition from the Old Anatolian Turkish to Ottoman Turkish. Sixteenth-century Ottomans hardly distinguished between language and style³⁶⁸ and they perceived linguistic archaism as stylistic failure.³⁶⁹ Although the rejected *müteḳaddimîn* were courtly and learned in their own day, it was mainly their medieval language that sounded distasteful to sixteenth-century Ottomans, who were rapidly refining and enriching their idiom with Arabic and Persian loan words as well as complex compounds and syntactic structures that similarly drew on Arabic and Persian grammar. What is striking about the critiques quoted above is that the archaism of old poetry was often expressed in terms like *Oğuzāne* (Oghuz-like), *Türkāne* (Turk-like), *kūhiyāne* (like mountain folk's speech) or *rustāyī* (rural), which are not adjectives that denote obsolescence but ones that denote cultural categories that were as valid in the *tezḳire* authors' own day as in the past. In other words, Ottomans' own past, which was Turkoman and nomadic, was conflated with the much-disdained contemporary Turkoman culture, revealing the core desire of growing out of whatever remained of that past.

³⁶⁷ LAT, 398-99.

³⁶⁸ For example, Chagatai Turkic poetry was often referred to as *Nevāyī tarzı*, with reference to the highly popular poetry of Ali Shir Navai.

³⁶⁹ For the comparable negative connotations of *tarz-ı kadīm* in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ottoman authors' descriptions of pre- or early Ottoman architectural artefacts, see Kafescioğlu, “Rûmî KimliğİN Görsel Tanımları,” 59-60.

The rejection of the poetry of the past even stretched to the relatively recent poets. Aşık Çelebi declares all ghazel poetry before Necati (d. 1509) as “virtually non-existent” (*meşābe-i ‘ademdedür*), epitomizing the highly presentist outlook of the sixteenth century; for the *meşnevî* and the qasida Aşık's starting points are just a little older, Şeyhi and Ahmed Paşa respectively, which reflects general consensus.³⁷⁰ However, in a series of turn-of-the-century poetic manifestos lodged within *meşnevîs* written in Istanbul, even Şeyhi and Ahmed Paşa had their share of the radical iconoclasm of the new poets. As discussed in 3.1.1. “The rise of the Rumi frame,” Tacizade Cafer Çelebi and Behiştî Sinan attacked Şeyhi and Ahmed Paşa for their unrefined language and as worthless plagiarizers of Persian poetry; Şeyhi was also thrashed by Mahremî, another Istanbul poet, for exalting a pagan king, Hüsrev/Khusraw or the Qoranic Khisra, who contemptuously tore the Prophet Muhammad's letter of invitation to Islam. These irreverent Istanbul-based “avant-garde” poets wanted to start with a truly clean slate, to inherit nothing from the fifteenth century. However, ultimately their position remained marginal, and the mainstream as represented by *tezkiye* literature proceeded with a selective appropriation of the past and canon-building.

Ottoman literary historiography as represented mainly in the *tezkiye* was born under these conditions. The sense of living in an era of novelty generated a historical outlook. Moreover, at a time when historiographical canons of the Ottoman empire were being (re)written at the hands of highest-ranking bureaucrats like İdris Bidlisi, Kemalpaşazade and Mustafa Celalzade, a corresponding literary history keyed to dynastic history also became a desideratum. Yet, writing or even “thinking” an

³⁷⁰ AÇ, 1575.

Ottoman literary history was not as easy as writing political history for the reasons discussed above. In contrast to the tradition of dynastic chronicles that flourished from Ahmedî's *İskendernâme* (1390, with later additions up to 1410) onwards, there were no precedents at all before the 1490s for literary historiography. In addition to patchy and uneven survival of texts from the past, perhaps most important from the perspective of biographical writing was the fact that historical knowledge on the lives of the early poets including the most important canonical ones—Ahmedî, Nesîmî, Şeyhî, Nizâmî, Ahmed Paşa, etc.—was more or less lost. Even as late and as centrally placed a figure like Ahmed Paşa suffered this fate. Indeed, the *tezkires*' actual historical memory stretches at best to circa 1500. On the other hand, clearly there was an urgent need for a narrative of literary history to match dynastic history, with some semblance of continuity over time and with a particular focus on the Ottomanization of early Anatolian poetry under other polities. I argue that this internally conflicting cultural situation was resolved by inventing biographies for early poets, the “founding fathers,” mainly in anecdote form. This group of “historical” anecdotes is a glaring proof of sixteenth-century Ottomans' lack of authentic knowledge on their literary past and of the invention work done in the early sixteenth century among the Ottoman literati, first in the oral cultural realm, and then in *tezkires*, where this rich oral lore was pruned, harmonized and standardized. Hence this section's title, “A pseudo-history of Ottoman poetry,” by which I refer to a minimalistic history of mythical nature with a symbolic role that far exceeds its function as factual history.³⁷¹

³⁷¹ Although his study pertains to a different kind of literature, a comparable case is offered by Tobias Heinzelmann's monograph on the circulation patterns of five highly popular religious texts from the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. His survey of extant biographical information on authors/poets of these five popular mystico-religious works has revealed that Ottoman sources gave not only wildly varying dates and other types of information but were also often based on local

3.4.2 Historical anecdotes

The material I call “historical anecdotes,” then, are apocryphal narratives of quite late origin about a small number of fifteenth century poets. These are mostly based on imaginative extrapolations from certain cues in the poets’ own verses. The poets that appear in anecdotes begin with Ahmedi (d. 1412?) and Şeyhi (d. after 1429)—poets associated with the Germiyanid and internecine Ottoman courts of the early fifteenth century—culminating with Ahmed Paşa (d. 1496-97). Other poets less frequently or systematically associated with anecdotes and other pseudo-biographical discourses include Hafi and the Karamanid Nizami, both Mehmed II era poets, the Amasya poet Aftabi, Nesimi, and the more recent celebrity Necati Beg.

Historical anecdotes are distinct from other types of anecdotes, especially from humorous or witty anecdotes on contemporary poets, with which sometimes they are conflated in scholarship. The main differences between the two types are the historical anecdotes’ complete spuriousness, as versus the overall grounding of the contemporary anecdotes in actual social relations between mentioned parties, and, secondly, the primarily entertaining quality of the contemporary anecdotes whereas the historical anecdotes encapsulate condensed historical and literary critical thought. Historical anecdotes often incorporate themes of great literary or cultural import, such as the nature of Ottoman-Turkish poetry’s relation to its Persian models and the search of Ottoman poetry for an autonomous identity for itself, clearly constituting a form of implicit and collective critical thought; in variant versions of the same anecdote, we can sometimes trace expressions of different positions in such key cultural questions, revealing a history of debate. This aspect of the anecdotes as

legends and other oral traditions with little basis in historical fact; Tobias Heinzelmänn, *Populäre religiöse Literatur*.

implicit poetics in a culture with little explicit theoretical critical thought will be discussed in the Chapter 4 “A Community Culture.” Here the anecdotes will be analyzed as the narratives that constitute the bulk of the historical accounts of the *tezkires*.

To the best of my knowledge, the earliest full-fledged anecdote on a poet of the past is one about Ahmed Paşa recorded in Behiştî's verse narrative *Leylâ vü Mecnûn* (circa 1510).³⁷² Revolving around a failed attempt by the Paşa to write a *Leylâ vü Mecnûn*, this anecdote displays some of the exact same themes (e.g., plagiarism and translation from Persian models) and narrative motifs (e.g., Ahmed Paşa's alienation from Mehmed II and his efforts to gain the sultan's favors back by composing a literary work) that would forcefully surface in *tezkire* literature from the late 1530s onwards, although the anecdote itself does not occur in any *tezkire*. This shows that the pseudo-biographical lore that is so abundantly recorded in the *tezkires* was already in the process of development around the turn of the century. In fact, the level of variation with which the same anecdotes appear in different *tezkires* evinces decades of oral circulation before being finally committed to writing. Other than Behiştî's *Leylâ vü Mecnûn*, Lamii Çelebi's (d. 1532) undated collection of entertaining and edifying anecdotes (*leṭâ'if*) also records anecdotes on Ahmedî, Şeyhî, Ahmed Paşa and the Karamanid poet Nizami.³⁷³ Some of these anecdotes also

³⁷² Aygün, “Behiştî'nin Leyla vü Mecnun mesnevisi,” 399-401 (verses 1842-1875). Behiştî or Karişdıran Oğlu Ahmed Sinan Çelebi is recognized as the first Ottoman poet to compose a complete *ḥamse*, a quintet of verse narratives. Neither the date of the work nor Behiştî's birth and death dates are known, but the poet is strongly associated with the court of Bayezid II, and tentative dates mentioned in secondary literature regarding his life and works are clustered between 1499-1512. Thus his *Leylâ vü Mecnûn* can be roughly dated to the first decade of the sixteenth century.

³⁷³ Although known by Lamii's name, the work as we know it was later significantly expanded by Lamii's son Abdullah at an unknown date, so it is not possible to know for sure which anecdotes were originally written by Lamii unless a copy of his original recension emerges. In spite of its great importance for Ottoman cultural history, the *Leṭâ'if* has been sadly neglected. There are no studies on the work and no published critical edition. The modern Turkish translation published by Yaşar Çalışkan is missing about one third of the anecdotes. Most of these seem to have been omitted by the

show similarities in structure (e.g., the crafting of an anecdote around particular verses) and narrative motifs (e.g., the poet impressing the sultan with his rhetorical skills), but the collection also includes a whole distinct set of satirical Ahmed Paşa anecdotes that relate to his Bursa governorship and portray him as a miserly and cruel administrator; this lore appears to be of local Bursa origin and is entirely unrelated to the historical poetic anecdotes that would find their way into the *tezkires*. There are other early *leṭā'if* collections by Fakiri and Zati, but these do not include historical anecdotes and are concerned mostly with the actual social relations of the compilers as well as figures from the recent past; predominated by satirical humor and facetiae, the anecdotes in these collections are of a different type than the historical anecdote and do not concern the discussion here.³⁷⁴

Along with Behiştî's *Leylā vü Mecnūn* and Lamii Çelebi's (d. 1532) *leṭā'if*, there is a third source which I believe records early versions of historical anecdotes that were rejected by the *tezkires* or, more likely, were already discarded by the time the *tezkires* were written, since the *tezkires* often reflect various communal consensuses rather than the intellectual or artistic idiosyncrasies of the authors. This source is Garibi's *tezkiye*, the anecdotes of which were discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Although the work was composed circa 1560, the historical anecdotes on figures like Ahmed Paşa, Ahmedi, Süleyman Çelebi and Nizami in this text look similar to

editor because of the obscenities they contain, resulting in a much more austere collection than originally intended; Lamii Çelebi, *Latîfeler*; cf. Lamii Çelebi, *Leṭā'if*, Istanbul University Library, TY 3814. There is also an unpublished dissertation on the work which I could not access for this study: Budak, Aydın, “Lâmi’î Çelebi’nin Letâyif-nâme’si: Karşılaştırmalı Metin ve Dil Özellikleri,” Selçuk University, unpub. doctoral dissertation, Konya, 1990.

³⁷⁴ Ambros, “The Letâ’if of Fakîrî.” From among a total of thirty-four anecdotes Ambros has chosen only seven for publication. The only extant manuscript copy is Staatsbibliothek Berlin or. quart 1988, part 48. Çavuşoğlu, “Zâtî’nin Letâyifi.” The manuscript Çavuşoğlu uses is Süleymaniye Lib., Lala İsmail 443 (folios 352b-362a), which may be a miscellany that belonged to Zati, or a copy thereof, since it contains many minor works by Zati.

Ottoman *tezkiye* anecdotes to a certain degree but diverge from them in strange ways, e.g., in their improbable chronologies and family relations. I believe these, along with Behiştî's and Lamî's anecdotes, represent older layers in the oral culture, before the *tezkiyes*' more streamlined and plausible versions with particular thematic emphases appeared and became established as the unquestioned "biographies" of these poets to this day. This gradual textualization process, with an early stage involving qualitatively different anecdotes from those of the later period, followed by a phase of full-blown, systematic literarization in the *tezkiyes* suggests that the origin of these anecdotes should go back some time but probably not a lot. Given the date of Behiştî's witness, these historical anecdotes probably go back to the latter part of Bayezid's reign and not earlier. This dating would leave enough time for the development of the numerous variants recorded in the *tezkiyes*. More importantly, the literary critical ideas implicitly expressed in these anecdotes, discussed in detail in Chapter 4, show the anecdotes to be fully aligned with the imperial *tezkiyes*' vision of the new literary canon. In other words, the ideas embodied in these anecdotes cannot be taken back much beyond the turn of the century either. One such idea is the sixteenth-century identification of Şeyhî exclusively with the *mesnevî* genre, in spite of the fact that the poet had a complete *dīvān* of ghazels that had once been held in utmost esteem, as we saw above with Hacı Kemal's anthology, a belated and final representative of fifteenth century trends. Finally, the existence of multiple variants with a stable core of main themes and narrative elements suggests a socially interconnected and culturally homogeneous literary elite that was responsible for the creation of this vibrant oral culture of anecdotes. Such an elite becomes more of an objective phenomenon in the decades around the turn of the century.

To demonstrate the spurious nature of the historical anecdotes, I will look closely at the anecdotes that narrate the circumstances in which Şeyhi composed the *Ḥarnāme*, the tale of the donkey, and Ahmed Paşa's love affairs at the court of Mehmed II, which lead to his punishment by the Sultan until the poet wins the sultan's heart back with a qasida. In both cases, it can be easily shown that the anecdotes are nothing but imaginative expansions on certain cues in the poets' verses. These are meant as representative examples and similar procedures can be identified in numerous other instances.

Şeyhi's short *meşnevî* *Ḥarnāme* (The Tale of the Donkey) tells the story of an emaciated and maltreated donkey who thought he could have the comfortable life of the plump oxen he has seen on the grain fields. He ends up being brutally punished by the owner of a grain field after eating there to his heart's content. Şeyhi presents his tale as a parable against attempting to move above one's station ("I desired the wrong and shunned the right / I wanted horns but I lost my ears"³⁷⁵). The poet then identifies himself with the donkey as a meek supplicant of the court who wants an improvement of his dire circumstances,³⁷⁶ and the rather cryptic closing couplets of the *meşnevî* where Şeyhi directly addresses an unidentified sultan and requests to be redressed for some mishap he has suffered gave rise to several different anecdotes.

According to Sehi Beg,³⁷⁷ Şeyhi presents the first thousand lines of his *Hüsrev ü Şîrîn* to Murad II and is amply rewarded. On his way back home to Germiyan, however, he is attacked by robbers (*ḥarāmî*, lit. one who indulges in haram, haram eater), who take everything he was given at the palace. He then tells of

³⁷⁵ *Bâtil isteyü ḥaqqdan ayrıldum / Boynuz umdum kulakdan ayrıldum.* Şeyhi, *Şeyhî'nin Ḥarnâmesi*, 40 (couplet 112).

³⁷⁶ *Benem ol ğamm yükindeki ḥar-ı leng.* Şeyhi, *Şeyhî'nin Ḥarnâmesi*, 40 (couplet 113).

³⁷⁷ SEH, 51b-52a/172-173.

this incident in the *Ḥarnāme* and sends it to Murad: “I wanted a halal livelihood / But robbers/haram eaters took everything I had.”³⁷⁸ Latifi's version, however, interprets the antagonists Şeyhi refers to in vague terms (*ḥarāmīs*) not as robbers but as Murad II's courtiers who prevent Şeyhi's remuneration for *Ḥüsrev ü Şîrîn* by saying that it is plagiarized from the Persian original; the *Ḥarnāme* is then written to satirize these malicious courtiers. In Aşık Çelebi's account, which is closer to Sehi's, Şeyhi, in his capacity as a physician, figures out the cure for Mehmed I's seemingly hopeless ailment and is rewarded with a *timar*, a village called Tokuzlar—the references to *buyruk*, *ḥükm-i sulṭān*, and *tevķī'-i pādşāh* in this section of the *Ḥarnāme*, all referring to sultanic decrees, must have inspired the idea of a *timar*. When Şeyhi goes to claim the village, the former holders of the *timar* attack him, beating him up and stealing everything he had. The wounded Şeyhi comes back to Mehmed's palace and presents the *Ḥarnāme* to complain about his rivals. The source for the name of the village—a suspiciously specific piece of information in a line of anecdotes with no other crumb of historical content—has not been explored so far in Şeyhi scholarship, but it must, in all likelihood, come from the text itself (similar to the name of the beloveds in other anecdotes as will be seen below).³⁷⁹ The following couplet where Şeyhi addresses the unnamed sultan is the likely source: *Ger toñuzlara olmaya buyruk / Āh gitdi kulağ ile kıyruk* (Unless a decree against these pigs comes forth / Then I've lost my ear and tail).³⁸⁰ Though I have not been able to explain how a word spelled with the Arabic *kaf* might have been transformed into one with a *qāf* (all extant manuscripts of the *Ḥarnāme* seem to display the *kaf* spelling *toñuzlar*, and

³⁷⁸ *İster iken ḥelâlden rûzî / Varın itdüm ḥarāmîler rûzî. Şeyhi, Şeyhî'nin Harnâmesi*, 40 (couplet 116).

³⁷⁹ The name of the village does not occur in Sezen, *Osmanlı Yer Adları*, published by Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Yayınları.

³⁸⁰ Şeyhi, *Şeyhî'nin Harnâmesi*, 40 (couplet 117).

all Aşık Çelebi manuscripts the *qāf* spelling *Ṭokuzlar*),³⁸¹ I would still like suggest this as a working hypothesis.

In any case, all three anecdotes seek to explain who the *ḥarāmīs* in couplet no. 116 are and what wrongdoing Şeyhi suffered at their hands, and all three attempt to link this episode which led to the composition of the *Harnāme* with another major event in Şeyhi's life so as to create a fuller biographical narrative for the poet. In Sehi and Latifi's versions the *ḥarāmī* episode is linked as sequel to the composition of *Hüsrev ü Şîrîn* for Murad II, whereas in reality there is no time marker in the text or in extant MSS that show that it was composed after *Hüsrev ü Şîrîn*, and it is even uncertain that it was presented to Murad II.³⁸² In Aşık Çelebi's version the *ḥarāmī* episode is linked to Şeyhi's association with medicine, a biographical feature that is of independent provenance from his literary writings and is associated with Mehmed I instead. In all three versions, the effort to show *Harnāme* as a text composed for the Ottoman court is clear although the generic eulogy for the sultan in the final part of the text could in theory apply to the Germiyanid ruler as well.

The triangulation between Ahmed Paşa, Mehmed II and a page of the inner court constitutes the theme of the most developed group of historical anecdotes in the *tezkires*. I argue in Chapter 4 that the reason for the prominence of this group of anecdotes was the central role played by the ghazel and the lyric mode in general in sixteenth-century Ottoman poetry. Here I am focusing on the spurious nature of the anecdotes and their role in a literary historical narrative keyed to the history of the

³⁸¹ Hasan Çelebi changes the name of the village to *Ṭokuzlu* and by the time Mustafa Ali writes the “information” on Şeyhi's timar has evolved into *sekiz biñ aķçe yazar Ṭokuzlu nām kırye* (MALI, vol. 4, 501).

³⁸² For a discussion of the references to Murad II in one manuscript only out of the five extant ones (one couplet and a section title), see Şeyhi, ed. Timurtaş, *Şeyhi'nin Harnâmesi*, 7. Timurtaş suspects these to be later interpolations.

dynasty. In these anecdotes, the pasha is supposed to keep his love for the palace page a secret but fails and expresses himself in spontaneous ghazels. This incurs the wrath of the sultan, which leads to the pasha's punishment. He then manages to attain forgiveness through a qasida.

All of the poems mentioned in these anecdotes are among the most famous and most frequently quoted ones in the Paşa's oeuvre. In one version,³⁸³ when Mehmed II hears about the pasha's love for the boy, he devises a “test” to make sure that the pasha is really guilty before punishing him (sometimes Mehmed is implied to be in love with the boy, too³⁸⁴). Casually assuming that the pasha will respond with poetry that reveals his feelings, Mehmed cuts off the boy's locks and sends him to the pasha to serve drinks. The trap works and these verses come forth: “That idol has cut off his locks but remains a merciless infidel / Like a monk who cut off his girdle without converting to Islam”.³⁸⁵ In the variant where the locks are hidden in a cap (Hasan Çelebi) instead of being cut off, the resulting verse is different: “That lock on which my heart hangs, take it out from the prison of your cap and hang / With its so many ruses, it is guilty of so much wrong-doing/darkness (*zulm*).”³⁸⁶ In Latifi's account, there is no test but an involuntarily composed quatrain reveals the Paşa's love and results in his punishment. Here, the pasha happens to find the boy crying on the ground with iron fetters on his feet having been recently chastised by the sultan: “May the world burn down, for that candle with a sweet smile / Now lies crying with iron fetters on his feet / His lips are Shirazid sweets; were he to sell them / They

³⁸³ AÇ, 287-88.

³⁸⁴ Talikizade, *Şemâ' ilnâme*, 50b.

³⁸⁵ *Zülfîn gidermiş ol şanem kâfirliğin kırmaz henüz / Zünnârını kesmiş velî dağı müslmân olmamış.* AÇ, 288.

³⁸⁶ *As zülf-i dil-âvîzi çıkar habs-i külelden / Kim zulm elin uzatdı kıtâ fitneleri var.* HÇ, 137.

would be worth Egypt, Bukhara and Samarkand.”³⁸⁷ Garibi shows the pasha in the bathhouse (a setting that frequently crops up in Ahmed Paşa anecdotes, obviously due to its convenience for the theme of gazing at boys), sighing and crying out of love for the palace page named Yusuf (the prophet Joseph is the paragon of male beauty in Islamic culture). When asked what is wrong, he answers with a spontaneously composed couplet: “As I sigh, tears gush out of my eyes / It is the wind that moves the waves on the sea.”³⁸⁸ Talikizade's compilation takes many of these anecdotes, adds several new ones likewise based on famous verses by the poet and weaves all of them into a whole saga of a love triangle among Ahmed Paşa, Mehmed II and the boy named Şeker-hand (Sweet-smile)—the boy's name comes from a word used in the quatrain quoted above in Latifi's anecdote. Talikizade also writes that Mehmed would gaze at Şeker-hand whenever he felt like composing poems.³⁸⁹ One common denominator in all of these versions is the key role played by the Ahmed Paşa's famous qasida known by its end-line refrain *kerem* or “magnanimity.” After being punished by Mehmed (incarceration, exile, or pending execution), Ahmed Paşa sends the *kerem* qasida and its perfection leads to his forgiveness. Though the relevance of the tone *kerem* qasida for such a context was already questioned by Ali Nihat Tarlan,³⁹⁰ modern biographies of Ahmed Paşa, like Şeyhi above, continue to be written on the basis of these anecdotes.³⁹¹

³⁸⁷ *Cihān yansun ki ol şem`-i Şeker-hand / Yatur giryān ayağında demir bend / Lebi Şirāzī ḥalvādur satarsa / Değer Mısr ü Buḥārā vü Semerkand.* LAT, 157.

³⁸⁸ *Âh itdiğümce cūşa gelür gözlerim yaşı / Deryā temevvüc itmege lā-būd hevā girek.* Garibi, *Tezkire*, 74.

³⁸⁹ Talikizade, *Şemā`ilnāme*, 50b.

³⁹⁰ See the editorial introductions to Ahmed Paşa, *Ahmed Paşa Divanı*, ed. Tarlan and Alpaslan, *Ahmet Paşa*.

³⁹¹ See, for example, two recent reference entries on Ahmed Paşa: Kut, “Ahmed Paşa, Bursalı”; Karabey, “Ahmed, Veliyyüddîn-zâde Ahmed Paşa.” See also Köprülü, “Ahmed Paşa” for an earlier example along the same lines.

Although not fully developed into anecdotes, there are other types of pseudo-biographical inventions that then got recorded and canonized in *tezkiye* literature. One is the purported meeting between Nesimi and Şeyhi in Bursa, recorded for the first time in Latifi's *tezkiye*. There are no further details or sources about this meeting and its function is clearly symbolic: The two greatest names of the early fifteenth century are brought into contact; moreover, a non-Rumi poet is thus naturalized into the Rumi context. In essence, the idea of a meeting between the two poets is the same thing as an anthology that brings the two poets' works together, especially a *naẓīre* anthology where the two poets appear in the same *naẓīre* chain. One such anthology does exist, Ömer bin Meẓid's *Mecmū'atü'n-neẓā'ir*, where both Şeyhi and Nesimi occupy substantial space as major poets of their day, although they do not appear in a *naẓīre* relation.

Another pseudo-biographical invention is the creation of a persona based on the penname alone, where the only surviving clue about that life is the penname. We have seen above how Latifi created personas based on Bedayi's and Halimi's pennames alone. We have also mentioned the propensity to pick up generic words from poets' verses and interpret these as beloveds' (nick)names. Thus, pennames and (supposed) nicknames, since they are made up of words with generic meanings, lend themselves to narrative contextualization. In my opinion, the confusion—among both the contemporary Ottomans and modern scholars—on the correct reading of Hafī's penname (Ḥafī, Ḥaffī, Ḥufī, or Huffī?) is a related phenomenon. We have seen above that Ḥafī was the second most quoted poet in Hacı Kemal's *Cāmi'ü'n-neẓā'ir* (1512), superseded only by Ahmed Paşa. His *dīvān* was one of the few Rumi Turkish *dīvāns*

listed in Bayezid's library catalogue.³⁹² However, although his *dīvān* and fame as an accomplished poet protected by Mehmed II reached the sixteenth century nothing of his biography had survived. As in other cases where a canonic significance is coupled with lack of biographical information, an effort was made to fix the gap by imaginative expansion of available clues, which in this case was confined to the penname. Today it has been more or less definitively shown that the name should be read Hafī, based on an analysis of the metric requirements in the signature couplets of Hafi's poems. However, this metric constraint did not hinder contemporary Ottomans, among whom metric laxities were not at all uncommon, from imagining a shoemaker (*ḥaffāf*, Ar.) who made and sold shoes and slippers (*ḥuff*, Ar.) in the marketplace, an illiterate/unschooled (‘*ūmmī*, ‘*āmī*) artisan poet with the penname Haffi or Huffi. All modern observants of his *dīvān* note the Arabic quotations and rich allusions to Perso-Islamic history and mythology, questioning the veracity of the idea of the illiterate artisan. In fact, the spectrum of linguistic and cultural equipment he displays in his *dīvān* makes a madrasa-linked profile more plausible. It is, then, very likely that the idea of an illiterate artisan poet lavishly rewarded by the sultan originated in an environment when such illiterate artisans were indeed protected by the grandees, which is precisely the early sixteenth century situation (see Chapter 5).

3.4.3 Alignment with dynastic history: Inner organization of *tezki*res and Ottomanizing anecdotes

There were definitely geographic, cultural and ethno-religious aspects to the notion of “the land of Rum” that developed prior to and/or independent of the idea of an

³⁹² Csirkés, “Turkish/Turkic books of poetry,” 712.

Ottoman state, and, moreover, these varied both over time and in the usage of different observers, as Cemal Kafadar has explored.³⁹³ However, in sixteenth-century *tezkires*' usage it is very hard to find a meaningful distinction between things "Ottoman" (culture, language, order, etc.) and "Rumi," although the term "Osmanlı/Osmani" itself is usually reserved for things directly associated with the dynasty. In other words, *tezkire* authors used "Rumi" in many contexts where we would use "Ottoman" today referring to aspects of the Ottoman world, especially imperial culture. All *tezkires* begin with some discussion of the poetic activities of the Ottoman sultans and princes, as both patrons and poets, and use sultanic reigns as their main time marker, associating poets with particular reigns. I will first look at the diverse ways dynasts and other members of the ruling apparatus are given precedence in the *tezkires*, with the result that the field of poetry is strongly yoked to the political center. After that, I will continue to further explore a theme already hinted at above in the discussion of the spurious nature of the anecdotes on Şeyhi, a former protégé of the Germiyanid court: *tezkire*'s efforts to Ottomanize early poets associated with other Anatolian principalities through spurious anecdotes. All in all, Rumi poetic culture is associated with the empire, primarily because the so called "poets" were nearly all governmental functionaries or ideological servants of the state and remunerated from state resources as argued in Chapter 5.

3.4.3.1 Chapter divisions in Sehi and Ahdi: The weight of Ottoman officialdom

The inner organization of Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt*, the first Ottoman Turkish *tezkire*, is especially telling in terms of the influence of the political center on the shaping of the

³⁹³ Kafadar, "A Rome of One's Own." Kafadar comments "Somewhat anachronistically and tongue in cheek, it can be said that 'Rumi' is a category shaped by the civil society" (p. 12).

tezkires, primarily because it is directly and self-professedly modeled on Ali Shir Navai's *Mecālisü'n-nefā'is*. Although Sehi overall appears to have emulated Navai's chapter divisions, there are also major divergences. Clearly, Sehi felt compelled to tamper with Navai's scheme because of fundamental differences between the socio-political make-up of the two milieus, the Timurid and the Ottoman.

The division of Sehi's book into eight chapters comes from Navai; similarly, his title *Heşt Bihişt*, or Eight Paradises, directly echoes the eight "assemblies" (*meclis*) of Navai's *Mecālisü'n-nefā'is* (Assemblies of the Exquisite). Like Navai, Sehi placed himself at the center of the work as participant-observer and the chronological point of reference according to which some of the chapters are divided: Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 in Navai have approximate counterparts in Sehi's 5, 6, 7 and 8, each set of chapters stretching from poets who died in the decades before the biographer was born to poets who flourished when the biographer was young and finally to poets contemporaneous with the biographer.³⁹⁴ Both spared a chapter for the ruling monarch (Husayn Bayqara and Süleyman). Yet, the three remaining chapters in the two works are shaped by the distinctive political structures of the Timurid and Ottoman milieus. Owing to the decentralized and fragmentary nature of the Timurid Empire, Navai's chapter on other Timurid monarchs and princes (chapter 7) includes far more numerous entries than Sehi's corresponding chapter on poet sultans and princes in the Ottoman dynasty.³⁹⁵ Here, Navai also includes two

³⁹⁴ In this overview, I have glossed over Sehi's allocation of a separate chapter, the eighth, to younger poets and Navai's allocation of a chapter for learned men, mostly his contemporaries, who are not poets as such but do occasionally compose verses (*Meclis* 4).

³⁹⁵ Sehi's chapter comprises Murad II, Mehmed II, Bayezid II, Selim I and the princes Cem and Korkud. This list of earliest royal poets is pretty standard during the sixteenth century although in reality there were many other princes who were poets and patrons of poetry, e.g. Prince Alemşah son of Bayezid II.

non-Timurid rulers, Sultan Yakub of Aqqoyunlu (as “Ya‘kūb Mīrzā”)³⁹⁶ and of Jihanshah Mirza of Qaraqoyunlu, known by the penname Hakiki, which would have been unthinkable for Ottoman *tezkiye* writers, who unequivocally link *dīvān* poetry to the Ottoman polity. Even more strikingly, Navai’s chapter 5 is devoted to the landholding aristocratic class (*mīrzādelar ve sāyir āzādelar*), either in the service of various dynasts (e.g., Davlatshah working for the Safavids) or themselves ruling over smaller dispensations (e.g., Jalayirid princes). The social class of a landed aristocracy controlling sources of revenue and power relatively independent of the ruling dynasties and understood as a transregional phenomenon did not have an Ottoman counterpart and remained irrelevant for Sehi. Yet another organizational feature not adopted by Sehi is Navai’s separate treatment of poets from outside Khorasan, the heartland of Husayn Bayqara’s much shrunken Timurid polity (chapter 6). Here, Navai discusses poets associated with cities like Samarkand, Kirman and Shiraz, which were still within the domain of Timurid claims but were heavily contested, frequently changing hands between rival dynasties. Thus, both in his inclusion of non-Timurid dynasts and feudal aristocrats and his conception of political space as radiating from Khorasan to environs with increasingly fluid zones of power, Navai’s mapping out of poets of his time reflected the weaker territorialization of the Timurid state and a much weaker identification between poetry and polity, by comparison to the Ottoman case.

In place of these three politically significant chapters by Navai, Sehi devised his own. Sehi also reversed Navai’s order of the chapters, carrying over the “political” chapters from the end to the beginning, thus creating a more “official” and

³⁹⁶ *Türkmān selātini arasında anung dik pesendide zātlıg, hamide sıfatlıg yigit bolgandur*. Nevayi, *Mecālisü’-nefāyis*, vol. 1, 195.

hierarchical atmosphere from the start. Following the first two chapters devoted to Süleyman and royal poets, mentioned above, third in order and in political weight comes a chapter which includes viziers, chief justices (*kāzī 'asker*), treasurers (*defterdār*), chancellors (*nişāncı*), and military commanders (*ümerā, beg*), or shortly, those who directly serve the throne. This reflects the fact that in place of Navai's feudal *mīrzādelar ve sā'ir āzādelar*, who could potentially serve different monarchs depending on circumstances, Ottomans had a more bureaucratized and subservient class of military, legal and financial and secretarial administrators. Sehi's next chapter (the fourth *behişt*) comprises the high ulema, who are not present as a corporate group in Navai's text, which again reflects the difference in the status of the ulema in the two contexts.³⁹⁷ Only after treating the dynasty and the highest echelons of the ruling apparatus of the Ottoman Empire does Sehi move on to treat poets as such, with the same generational classification as Navai, which promotes the idea that the entire poetic activity in the Ottoman context is taking place under the auspices of the political center, an emphasis that is missing from Navai's work. Sehi's work, in short, is an early example of the penetration of the political into the poetic, or politics shaping the perception and representation of the poetic field.

A similar privileging of the political in a *tezkiye*'s internal organization is seen in Ahdi's *Gülşen-i Şu'arā*. In its first recension, the work is divided into three chapters (*ravza*). The first chapter combines sultans, including the incumbent one, princes and a mixed group the author describes as *şāhib-i devletān-ı deryā-dil* (the magnanimous holders of power). The latter group comprises viziers, province and

³⁹⁷ Here it is notable that while chief justices (*kāzī 'asker*) went into Sehi's chapter 3 along with other administrators, muftis and the rest of the ulema went into chapter 4, suggesting that Sehi perceived chief justice's post as a political office as versus religious.

district governors (*beylerbegi* and *sancağ begi*), chancellors, and treasurers. The second chapter comprises the higher ulema.³⁹⁸ The third chapter on “poets” as such comprises the bulk of the work. Together, then, the first two chapters correspond to Sehi’s first four, described above. In later recensions, Ahdi has also created a third chapter before the main body on “poets” by treating district governors and treasurers separately. Though it is not clear from what date this additional chapter appears,³⁹⁹ it might be reflecting the increasing prestige and significance of treasurers and the separation of the career tracks of the chancellor and his office personnel on the one hand and the financial branch of the bureaucracy on the other in the later sixteenth century, as discussed by Cornell Fleischer. The new chapter also establishes a stronger connection between the post of district governor and treasurer, which might also be linked with increased crossovers between the two posts.

3.4.3.2 Introductory surveys of the Ottoman dynasty’s contributions to poetry

Other *tezkiye* authors do not present Ottoman officialdom in separate introductory chapters but they similarly begin with the dynasty, except for Latifi. Latifi begins with sheikhs, which will be discussed in the next section, but his ensuing treatment of the Ottoman dynasty’s contributions to poetry closely parallels Sehi. The set of seven sultans and princes he covers is exactly the same as Sehi’s, suggesting some kind of communal consensus in this regard (see fn. 395 above). Here, too, the first Ottoman sultan who is a poet himself and a protector of poets is Murad II. This accords with the chronological range of biographical, pseudo-biographical and poetic

³⁹⁸ Provincial qadis, for example, are in the main body on “poets.”

³⁹⁹ The current critical edition by S. Solmaz does not attempt to clarify when Ahdi separated district governors and treasurers from the rest of the grandees. But of the six manuscripts with this new division that has been examined by the editor, one bears the copy date 991/1583-84.

material that was available to the biographers as evinced by the content of the *tezkires*, but apocryphal verses may have been attributed to Murad, by the poetic community, to enhance his role as the sultan associated with the beginnings of *dīvān* poetry. Attribution of poems to early sultans and *begs* beginning with Ertuğrul Beg was a widespread tradition,⁴⁰⁰ and Mustafa İsen suggests that some of the poems attributed to Murad II in various sources do not display a fifteenth-century philological profile.⁴⁰¹

Ahdi's treatment of the dynasty is not comparable to the other *tezkires*' since the work only covers the contemporary poetic scene and accordingly only treats sultans and princes of Ahdi's own time. Originally written during Süleyman's reign and mentioning Süleyman and his princes, the work's final version came to incorporate Süleyman, Selim II, Murad III and the princes Mustafa, Mehmed, Bayezid and Cihangir, sons of Süleyman.

With Aşık Çelebi, a new modality of describing the dynasty's relation to poetry sets in. In his lengthy introduction (*Faşl-ı evvel*), instead of beginning with Murad II as Sehi and Latifi did, Aşık Çelebi discusses, beginning with 'Osman, all of the Ottoman sultans' contributions to poetry as patrons and champions of learning and letters in addition to their own poetic output. This approach results in a more streamlined narrative that fully corresponds to dynastic history and is later also adopted by Mustafa Ali in a different form in his *Künhü'l-aḥbār*. Aşık begins by taking a world-historical perspective and compares the Ottoman dynasty to dynasties that came before, claiming that Ottomans are superior in all respects. He then treats

⁴⁰⁰ For samples of poems attributed to Murad II and earlier sultans, see İsen et al., *Sultanların Şiirleri Şiirlerin Sultanları*; and Ak, *Şair Padişahlar*. Unfortunately, neither of these compilations cite the historical sources the poems are taken from.

⁴⁰¹ İsen, "Murâdî, II. Murâd."

the dynasty's relationship to poetry from Osman onwards. However, because no poetry by sultans before Murad II had survived and because of the general dearth of poetry texts from that early period, Aşık Çelebi has to resort to some rhetorical maneuvers and manipulation of information to create a linear literary history more or less aligned with dynastic history. He concedes that Mehmed II is the first sultan with a penname and therefore with extant poetry by his name; in fact, different from Sehi and Latifi before him, Aşık cites no poems by Murad II and does not characterize him as a poet, perhaps because he did not believe the isolated pieces of poetry commonly attributed to Murad to be authentic. However, he makes the much bolder assertion that *all* of the sultans before Mehmed were actually poets, but, he explains, since their poems are all too well known among the public, the poems have been wrongly attributed to others.⁴⁰² Aşık's preceding emphasis on the sultans' lack of pennames before Mehmed II ties in with this comment.

Next, Aşık Çelebi sets out to match the little that was available by way of late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century poetry with the sultans of that era in order to arrive at a picture of as early a start as possible and of an evenly proceeding literary history. In other words, in this introductory survey of the dynasty's contributions to poetry, he takes the rout of compensating for lack of sultans' poems for the period before Mehmed II by focusing on their court poets instead. During 'Osman and Orhan's reigns, we are told, "the teeth of the [letter] *şin* of Turkish *şî 'r* had not yet smiled like the new rose bud and the nightingale of the poets of Rum had not begun to sing on the rose tree of the garden of eloquence."⁴⁰³ The earliest record of poetic

⁴⁰² *Selâṭīn-i āl-i Osmān'dan egerçi cümlesinden şî 'r demek menkûldur, ammâ Sulṭān Murād'a gelince olanlaruñ eş 'ārı şāyî 'olduğundan ekşere maḥmûldur.* AÇ, 192-93.

⁴⁰³ *Ammâ henüz dendān-ı şīn-i şî 'r-i Tüürkî gonce-i ter gibi tebessüm eylememiş ve bülbul-i şu 'arā-yı Rūm gülbūn-i gülşen-i belāğatde terennūm eylememiş idi.* AÇ, 183.

activity, according to Aşık Çelebi, dates from the reign of Murad I. This is a *meşnevî* titled *Süheyl ü Nevbahār*, which Aşık reports he had perused as a child and claims was written by an Ahmed and presented to Murad I; I have already mentioned Aşık's poor opinion of this *meşnevî* in section 3.4.1 above when discussing sixteenth-century authors' unfavorable attitudes to early Turkish language and poetry. However, Aşık not only gets the name of the author wrong (Hoca Mesud bin Ahmed)⁴⁰⁴ but is also probably mistaken about the presentation to Murad I. Cem Dilçin, who has published a critical edition of the *meşnevî* based on the two extant copies, gives the composition date as 751/1350-51 on the basis of explicit date information embedded within the text, which corresponds to Orhan's reign.⁴⁰⁵ Although Aşık Çelebi says that it was written for Murad I,⁴⁰⁶ it is not even certain that the work was intended for an Ottoman sultan; Cem Dilçin is quite clear about the absence of any information in the text regarding presentation, and Babinger had speculated that the work was executed for Umur Beg (d. 1348) of the Aydinids.⁴⁰⁷ Aşık Çelebi thus probably only vaguely remembers the details and may have deliberately inserted Murad I's name as the patron in order to Ottomanize the work.

Next, with Bayezid I he associates Süleyman Fakih, more commonly known as Süleyman Çelebi, and his *Mevlid*, or *Vesiletü'n-necāt*. According to Aşık, Süleyman Çelebi was Bayezid I's personal imam and, after the sultan's death, imam at Bayezid's mosque in Bursa. Tobias Heinzelmann has identified Latifi's *tezkiye* as

⁴⁰⁴ Although the work was jointly authored by Mesud bin Ahmed and his nephew İzzeddin Ahmed, because Mesud composed about four fifths of the work, it is known by his name.

⁴⁰⁵ In my opinion, the phrasing in that part of the text can also be read to mean that Mesud *began* working on the *meşnevî* on that date; see Mes'üd bin Ahmed, *Süheyl ü Nev-bahar*, 48 for the relevant couplets and the editor Dilçin's interpretation. Even if 751 is the date of the beginning of composition there would still be around ten years until the end of Orhan's reign.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ahmed nām bir kimesne nām-ı nāmîlerine . . . Süheyl ü Nev-bahār dāstānın nazm eylemişdür.* AÇ, 184.

⁴⁰⁷ Mes'üd bin Ahmed, *Süheyl ü Nev-bahar*, 49-50.

the first source ever to discuss Süleyman Çelebi's life, with Süleyman Çelebi presented as the son of Murad II's vizier İvaz Paşa and a dervish and deputy (*halife*) of the Sheikh Emir Sultan of Bursa (d. 1429?).⁴⁰⁸ This makes Aşık Çelebi the second source to discuss Süleyman Çelebi and the first to associate Süleyman Çelebi with Bayezid I as his imam, which may have been motivated by the historiographical necessity of associating a poet with Bayezid I after a discussion of Ahmed, author of *Süheyl ü Nevbahār*, under Murad I. In fact, Mustafa Ali would later take up and amplify this idea of personal connection to Bayezid I into a relationship between the sultan and the single court poet of the era, comparing Süleyman Çelebi to Khaqani, the court poet par excellence who worked for a lifetime for the Shirvanids. Ali was thus fully exhausting the underlying literary historical motivation of linking early Anatolian poets with the Ottoman court and placing them on the timeline of Ottoman dynastic history. On the other hand, the absence of a direct connection with a sultan in Latifi's version was probably not a problem for this biographer, and was perhaps even an advantage, since Latifi placed Süleyman Çelebi under his introductory chapter on sheikhs, discussed in the next section (3.5), and not in his survey of Ottoman dynasts or in the main body of the *tezkiye*.

In any case, as the surveys of Süleyman Paşa biographies by Heinzelmann and Ceyhan clearly show,⁴⁰⁹ the biographical notices go back to no earlier than the sixteenth century and they display extreme levels of variation in every detail (lifetime, family, profession, and reasons for the composition of the *Mevlid*), evincing a very weak basis, if at all, in historical fact; by contrast with the variation

⁴⁰⁸ Heinzelmann, *Populäre religiöse Literatur*, 49.

⁴⁰⁹ Ceyhan, "Mevlid Sahibi Süleyman Çelebi'nin Hayatı"; Heinzelmann, *Populäre religiöse Literatur*, chapter 2.

of biographical information, however, the notices revolve around the same few themes, such as the nature of the Çelebi's connection with the court and with Bursa, which also strongly suggest that the narratives are products of interconnected milieus with similar cultural preoccupations.⁴¹⁰

Aşık Çelebi continues with attaching early poets to particular Ottoman rulers. With the internecine ruler Mir Süleyman (d. 1411) Aşık associates Ahmedi, a poet associated with Murad II in most anecdotes, Hamzavi, Ahmed-i Dai and Şeyhoğlu. The last reign before the full bloom of *dīvān* poetry, that of Mehmed I (1413-21), is associated with Şeyhi, Hümami and the Yazıcızade brothers, who authored some of the most popular religious didactic works of the fifteenth century. Of the poets listed from Murad I onwards, only Ahmedi and Şeyhi are treated in the main alphabetical section of the *tezkiye*. The reasons for the exclusion of the rest likely have multiple dimensions, such as lack of information, the unpalatability of their archaic language and style, or the mystico-religious or epic character of their oeuvres, which are kinds of literature by definition excluded from Aşık Çelebi's *tezkiye* (see section 3.5). However, they are enlisted in the introduction to fill in the gaps in the politico-literary timeline.

That this parceling out of early poets by sultans is likely not based on any substantial research is made even more evident by the fact different *tezkiye* authors attach the same poets to different sultans with no apparent reason and place the beginning of poetry among the Ottomans in the reign of different sultans. We have seen above that Mustafa Ali argued that the first poets (read *dīvān* poets) emerged in

⁴¹⁰ The wildly variant nature of the biographical information and anecdotes about Süleyman Çelebi were briefly discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to Garibi's version that differed in intriguing ways from those in mainstream Ottoman sources.

the reign of Bayezid I (1389-1402) when Timur's invasion brought Persian and Chagatai poets into Anatolia. Thus, we now have three different dynastic datings for the beginnings of Ottoman poetry, Murad II (Sehi and Latifi), Murad I (Aşık Çelebi) and Bayezid I (Mustafa Ali). *Tezkires* also attach the same early poets to different sultans. For example, Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi, departing from Aşık and following Sehi, attaches Ahmedi, Şeyhi and Hümami to Murad II and claims they participated in the same poetic assemblies under the auspices of the sultan.⁴¹¹ Both Mustafa Ali and Hasan Çelebi are in general “lazy biographers” when it comes to early poetry: they mostly rely on older *tezkiye*s and pick the versions of biographies they like; Mustafa Ali sometimes critically assesses received information and Hasan Çelebi amplifies older accounts with imaginative rhetorical fodder as in the example cited above, where he puts poets into a poetic *meclis*. Overall, their original contributions to the biographies or poetry samples of early poets are minimal, suggesting a lack of authentic interest in the poetry of period before Mehmed II at least. In the case of Mustafa Ali especially, the lack of motivation for engaging in research on early poets is brought into relief by the author’s treatment of early Sufis in other sections of the *Künhü’l-aḥbār*. His discussions of early Sufis are much more detailed and lengthy and provide significant information not found in other sources.

In brief, the introductory sections of the *tezkiye*s where they discuss the dynasty’s contributions to poetry portray an image of a poetic culture that developed under the auspices of the dynasty. From the mid sixteenth century onwards, the amount of artifice that goes into historical reconstructions of chronology increases. This, I argue, was a procedure essentially geared towards artificially pushing back

⁴¹¹ *Biribiriyle mu ‘arız u menāzir, müdām meclis-i ünslerinde tā dem-i āḥir sāğar-ı muḥāvere vü müşā‘are turmayup dā’ir idi*. HÇ, 1069.

the beginnings of Ottoman court poetry, building a continuous historical narrative, and Ottomanizing early poets that worked either exclusively or also for other Anatolian Turkoman principalities. I would now like to take a closer look at the last of these three themes, the Ottomanization of early poets.

3.4.3.3 The Ottomanization of early poets through anecdotes

Another key function of the discussions of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century poetry was the Ottomanization of poets formerly in the service of other Anatolian Turkoman principalities. This was achieved in the *tezkires* by two methods: by obscuring or downplaying the poets' prior services to these Turkoman begs; and, even more powerfully, through apocryphal anecdotes that show these poets interacting with Ottoman sultans and poets. We have already seen above when discussing the apocryphal nature of the "historical anecdotes" how Şeyhi's *Harnāme*, a text without date or dedication, was presented as composed for the Ottoman court, for either Murad II or Mehmed I, in a series of narratives that depicted Şeyhi in close contact with the sultans but evidently relied on nothing other than an imaginative expansion of a few cues in the text itself (3.4.2). Similar anecdotes that link Şeyhi and other early poets to the Ottoman court and sever their ties to other Anatolian principalities abound.

To continue with Şeyhi examples, a late anecdote, first recorded first by Mustafa Ali, depicts a scene that involves Şeyhi and the Germiyan ruler. Clearly, the anecdote was fabricated to belittle the Germiyanids as uncouth hillbillies. In Mustafa Ali's words, "the rustic ruler called Germiyanoglu, who cannot tell the jewels of poetry from stones and lumps of clay" is deeply bored by Şeyhi's sophisticated *qasidas* because he cannot understand them. One day a minstrel (*ozan*) "who has no

idea of meter” (i.e., ‘*arūž*’) arrives and sings the following verses: “My blessed sultan / May you have a good life ahead / May you always eat honey and cream / And walk on meadows.” Totally pleased that he finally heard some verses he can enjoy, the Germiyanid ruler gifts a beautiful horse to “that donkey on two feet.” Şeyhi is devastated. Mustafa Ali notes the mispronounced words in the minstrel’s lyric by spelling ‘*akībet*’ as ‘*ākībāt*’ and ‘*hayr*’ as ‘*hayīr*’, further emphasizing the lack of learning and sophistication in the Germiyanid court milieu.⁴¹² This portrayal, however, cannot have been true given the rich literature in Arabic, Persian and Turkish sponsored by the Germiyanid court.⁴¹³ While this anecdote places a huge cultural gap between Şeyhi and his Germiyanid patrons, thus implying that the sophisticated Ottomans were a perfect fit for him, there seems to be other types of Şeyhi anecdotes emphasizing his identity as a “Turk” that did not make their way into the *tezkires*. An anecdote that exalts Şeyhi as a Sufi poet, recorded in the mid sixteenth-century hagiographical work *Menākīb-ı Akşemseddin* by Enisi, unembarrassedly refers to the poet as a “Turk”; another one, related by Faruk Timurtaş from an unpublished manuscript, shows a mullah purported to be Şeyhi’s nephew joking about their own yoghurt culture as Turks, with probably some light insult intended.⁴¹⁴

In most other cases, however, the tendency is to simply avoid mentioning Şeyhi’s, and also Ahmedi and Ahmed-i Dai’s, affiliation with the Germiyanid or other non-Ottoman courts. According to Sehi, it was Mir Selman [sic] who discovered Şeyhi’s talent and encouraged him to take up poetry, which is a glaring denial of Şeyhi’s attachment to the Germiyanid court before he was patronized by the

⁴¹² MALI, vol. 4, 499-500 (“Şeyhī”).

⁴¹³ For a helpful survey see, İnalçık, “The origins of classical Ottoman literature.”

⁴¹⁴ See Şeyhi, *Şeyhî’nin Husrev ü Şîrin’i*, XVII, XXIV-XXV.

Ottomans. Throughout *tezkiye* literature it is customary to gloss over these poets' connection to the Germiyanid dynasty with the phrase “*vilāyet-i Germiyāndan*,” which is a depoliticized sixteenth-century usage that denotes both the geographical area that more or less corresponds to the former territories of the extinct principality by that name and the administrative division of Kütahya district (*sancağ*).⁴¹⁵ Sehi's report that Şeyhoğlu was treasurer (*defterdār*) and chancellor (*nişancı*) at the Germiyan court seems to be an exception.

Nearly all of the anecdotes about Şeyhi involve one or another Ottoman sultan. In an anecdote related by Aşık Çelebi, mentioned above, he cures Mehmed I's illness as doctor and is rewarded with a timar. In most others, he is associated with Murad II instead. Sehi writes that Murad II wanted Şeyhi to be his vizier, but envious courtiers urged the sultan to test him first, which he did by assigning Şeyhi the composition of *Hüsrev ü Şîrîn*. After presenting the sultan a sample of his work in progress he went back to Germiyan, experienced the mishaps that led to the composition of *Harnâme* and soon after died without completing *Hüsrev ü Şîrîn*.⁴¹⁶ In one of the earliest anecdote collections, Lamii's (d. 938/1531-32) *Leṭā'if*,⁴¹⁷ a ghazel monostich spontaneously produced by a courtier during a wine part at Murad II's court is sent off to Şeyhi for completion when no one else there can manage it; Şeyhi immediately delivers back a perfectly matching second line. That Şeyhi is not at the court in this relatively early anecdote seems to imply an underlying awareness

⁴¹⁵ E.g., Mustafa Ali introduces Rayi, a poet who flourished during the reign of Selim II, as a *dānişmend-i Germiyānī*. MALI, vol. 5, 802.

⁴¹⁶ SEH, 51b-52a/172-173.

⁴¹⁷ Published on an unknown date by Lamii's son Abdullah, with significant additions on Lamii's original compilation.

that the poet always operated at some distance to Murad's court, a motif we have also seen in the *Hüsrev ü Şîrîn* and *Harname* anecdotes discussed in 3.4.2 above.⁴¹⁸

In Ahmedi's case, Ottoman sources do not mention his attachment to the Germiyanid court at all though his origins in the region of Germiyan is mentioned in some *tezkires* and *al-Shaqā'iq*; others associate him with Sivas or the province of Anadolu (Latifi and Garibi). Of his attachment to the Aydinid court, which is evinced by two Arabic grammar books he composed in the name of Hamza son of the Aydinid İsa Beg, not a single trace has remained in the Ottoman sources. Strikingly, anecdotes that show him at the Ottoman court all involve Murad II and not Mir Süleyman, son of Bayezid I, for whom Ahmedi wrote many qasidas, as recorded in his *dīvān*. Modern scholarship has settled on the death date 815/1412-13 for Ahmedi based on Mecdi's expanded translation of *al-Shaqā'iq*, but it is clear from these anecdotes and corresponding biographical passages that in the sixteenth century many believed Ahmedi to be a protégé of Murad II (r. 1421-1444, 1446-1451). Already in 1538 Sehi Beg had written that he was a poet of Mir Süleyman, but shortly after Latifi places him in the reign of Murad II by showing Ahmedi and Şeyhi to be contemporaries and friends and by representing Mir Süleyman as a tribal leader in the service of Murad II.⁴¹⁹ Apparently, Latifi believed in the association with Murad but was also aware of the Mir Süleyman link, which is all too obvious in Ahmedi's *dīvān*; he attempted to reconcile the facts with the traditions involving Murad II by changing the identity of Mir Süleyman. In the *dīvān*, Mir Süleyman is explicitly identified as son of Bayezid I, but Latifi apparently either did not have

⁴¹⁸ Lamii Çelebi, *Latîfeler*, 113-14.

⁴¹⁹ *Murād Hān Gāzī devrinde boy beglerinden Mîr Süleymān'un mādih ü vāşifi ve ol 'aşruñ şā'ir-i şöhret-dār-i pür-ma'ār'ifi idi*. LAT, 162.

access to the *dīvān* or was not careful reading it. In the last recension of his *tezkiye* Latifi corrects this error but forgets to delete the phrase *Murād Hān Ġāzī devrinde* (during the reign of Sultan Murad), causing another type of confusion.⁴²⁰ The *Pervāne Beg* anthology of similar poems also places Ahmedî in the reign of Murad II.⁴²¹

Nizami is another poet strongly associated with a non-Ottoman Anatolian dynasty. Flourishing in Karaman during Mehmed II's reign, Nizami was on close terms with the Karamanid dynasty as evinced by the numerous qasidas he wrote for its members.⁴²² Moreover, as we saw in Chapter 2, he was a saint-like local figure associated with the eighth Imam Ali al-Rida through his miraculous birth and with the Mevleviyye through his upbringing at Rumi's shrine, which we can learn about only thanks to Garibi's *tezkiye*. Ottoman *tezkiyes* focus exclusively, in addition to his father who was a locally famous preacher, on his interactions with the Ottoman court and a love story that led to his death, clearly one of the apocryphal anecdotes created by creating a context for particular poems, discussed in 3.4.2. Ottoman *tezkiyes* struggle with the fact that this great poet of the mid fifteenth century remained in Karaman for most of his life and was never integrated into the Ottoman milieu, although there is one extant qasida by the poet in the name of Mehmed II.

The solution is found in ignoring the poets' connection to the Karamanid dynasty and focusing on his purported Ottoman connections and circumstances of early death. Two devices are used throughout the *tezkiye* literature to link Nizami as much as possible to the Ottoman milieu. One is deploying the motif of "travel,"

⁴²⁰ LAT2, 39a.

⁴²¹ Zülfe, "Biyografik Bilgiler Açısından," 154.

⁴²² See, for example, Ertek Morkoç, "Eğridirli," 1193-97, 1315-19 (poem nos. 1380 and 1495).

which we had also seen in multiple anecdotes about the Germiyanid Şeyhi. Just as Şeyhi goes back and forth between the Ottoman court and Germiyan or sends poems to the court, Nizami is said to have embarked on a journey to Istanbul after being invited by Mehmed II on the advice of Mahmud Paşa. Unfortunately, he dies on the way, a covert acknowledgment Nizami's lack of direct contact with the Ottoman milieu. The second device is the *naẓīre* as a response poem. *Tezkires* like to think of Nizami as having written many responses to preeminent Ottoman poets like Şeyhi and Ahmed Paşa. Latifi and later *tezkiye* authors that directly rely on him name three famous Ahmed Paşa qasidas to which Nizami wrote response poems. However, as Haluk İpekten notes, only one of these purported responses occur in Nizami's *dīvān* or in *naẓīre* anthologies, and the eulogized ruler in this case is not the Ottoman Mehmed II but the Karamanid ruler Pir Ahmed Beg.⁴²³ Latifi and others also suggest that Nizami wrote *naẓīres* to Ahmed Paşa's ghazels. But as I have argued above (3.3), for contemporary poets, it is often impossible to tell which poet is the model and which the follower based on poetry texts alone. Ottoman *tezkiye*s in general tend to think of Nizami as a slightly younger poet than Ahmed Paşa, hence the *naẓīres*, but given the absence of any information whatsoever on exact dates, even this placement on the timeline can be a secondary effect of the general concept of a Karamanid poet imitating an Ottoman one. Indeed, in an important early source, Hacı Kemal's anthology of similar poems, Nizami's poems are often placed at the heads of *naẓīre* chains that include Ahmed Paşa, suggesting a different timeline and/or a different perceived relation of imitation; in this anthology, moreover, several poems Nizami wrote in the name of the Karamanids have been quoted.

⁴²³ Nizami, *Karamanlı Nizâmî*, 25.

All in all, the set of anecdotes that suppress early Anatolians poets' allegiances to other dynasties and imaginatively reconstruct their ties to the Ottomans appear to have developed in the oral culture of the elites at a very late date. As discussed above (3.4.2), the oral cultural dimension is evident in the variation with which the same anecdotes appear; the spuriousness is evinced by the lack of solid historical information, on the one hand, and a tendency to rely on particular verses of the poets to construct social contexts in which they might have been uttered, on the other. The decades immediately preceding the emergence of the *tezkiye* literature is the probable period when these anecdotes were gradually created. This is also the historical threshold when the Ottomanization of Anatolia was complete after struggles of more than a hundred years. The anecdotes on the early poets closely followed the political developments whereby Anatolia was, finally, fully Ottomanized.

3.5 Sufi poetry vs. *dīvān* as temporal poetry

3.5.1 *Şi'r*

Dīvān poetry developed as one particular tradition among a host of others, and its practitioners were, in this formative age of the field, very keen to distinguish *dīvān* poetry from rival or potentially encroaching traditions. The many derogatory references in the sixteenth-century *tezkiyes* to the world of folk poetry, both rural and urban, that surrounded the *dīvān* culture reflects some sense of threat of engulfment by these older and far more widespread traditions. For example, in a *meşnevî* passage quoted by Latifi, the poet Naimi complains that many people, including the supposedly most learned and refined, prefer *Kar'oglan türküsü* (Karaoğlan's folk

song) over *şā'ir sözi* (the poet's word).⁴²⁴ Similarly, popular epic literature of religious, heroic and tribal brands were frequently belittled.⁴²⁵

A third major line of demarcation that crystallized in the sixteenth century was with Sufi poetry. In this case, the separation was relatively more blurry and certainly not negatively framed since Sufi poetry and the courtly *dīvān* tradition had largely developed from the same Persianate roots. Nevertheless, sixteenth-century Ottomans self-consciously established a greater separation between these two fields by comparison both to what had come before in the Ottoman context (Chapter 2) and, arguably, to much of the rest of the Persianate world. These delineations were most concretely manifested in the sixteenth-century use of the ambivalent term *şī'r*.

Dīvān poetry had no specific contemporary name; the only word that functioned like the name of the field was *şī'r*, or simply “poetry.” Similarly, the closest Ottoman counterpart for the modern phrase “Ottoman literature” was *şī'r ü inşā*, poetry and artistic prose. That a generic word like *şī'r* was used as the name of a specific field might be taken to signal the field's hegemonic claim, especially vis-à-vis the “little tradition”: What is not *dīvān* poetry is not worthy of being called poetry at all. Sufi poetry, however, was considered outside *şī'r* not because it was inferior or worthless, but because it was understood to be an extension of divine logos rather than being a product of formal-aesthetic human craftsmanship. In other words, Sufi poetry was not “art” or “poetry” as such, but another type of speech that had its source in the divine and did not aim aesthetic pleasure. It was associated with ecstatic

⁴²⁴ LAT, 164.

⁴²⁵ E.g. Likayi disdainfully compares a fellow *dīvān* poet's oeuvre to *Geyik Destanı* (The epic of the deer), a highly popular religious epic. LAT, 491-92. Aşık Çelebi and Mustafa Ali too resort to the *Geyik Destanı* comparison for works they deem worthless because of their poor artistic and linguistic quality. Öztelli, “Geyik Destanı.”

mystical experience or, in its more didactic versions, the training of the ego. As such, calling Sufi poetry *şî'r* would have been a form of desacralization.

Mustafa Ali's iconic passage on the beginnings of *şî'r* in Rum, placed at the beginning of his biographies of poets in his *Künhü'l-aḥbār*, should be understood against this background:

It is no secret that in the times of Osman Khan, Orhan Ghazi, and Sultan Murad Khan, no poets are known to have emerged. At most, there were a few who could compose in simple verse, with some talent for singing folk songs (*varsāḡı*), but they gained no fame. For it is known that in those days the inhabitants of the land of Rūm were for the most part Turkish and Tatar *ghazis*, while the rest of the local population consisted of groups descended from the infidels, who were simple-minded folk; thus, even people capable of appreciating poetry were altogether absent among them. Those who had inclination toward verse are not known to have existed. Consequently, there was not a single person deserving the name of poet. It was only in the time of Bayezid Khan, when some Persian poets and the refined men of the language of Navai entered the land of Rūm together with Timur Khan, that there is said to have been anyone bearing a poetic pen-name (*maḥlaṣ*). And indeed, in their time, some people began to emerge as poets.⁴²⁶

This passage, which makes the seemingly preposterous claim that there were no poets in Rum before the time of Bayezid I and that the first poets came from outside Rum, has been taken to be evidence of the exclusion of early Sufi poetry by the likes of Yunus Emre and Aşık Paşa from the Ottoman literary canon of the sixteenth century.⁴²⁷ As argued throughout this chapter, there is certainly a break with the linguistic and stylistic legacy of the period especially before the mid fifteenth century. However, this broad sixteenth-century trend should be distinguished from the problem of the relation between Sufi and *dīvān* traditions, since contemporary Sufi poetry was similarly isolated from the domain of *dīvān* poetry. *Tezkires* and *naẓīre* anthologies of the sixteenth century did not, as a rule,

⁴²⁶ MALI, vol. 4, 379-80.

⁴²⁷ See, for example, Eryılmaz, "The Power of Poetry," 565-66. Cf. Kuru, "Anadolu'da Türkçe Edebiyatın Büyük Dönüşümü," 142.

include Sufi poetry, although there were exceptions as discussed below. Here, Mustafa Ali is clearly referring exclusively to the *dīvān* tradition when he uses the term *şî'r*. His awareness of the oeuvres of Yunus Emre, Aşık Paşa and others and his respect for these early Sufis are evinced by his discussions in *Künhü'l-ahbār*'s regnally organized biographies of Sufis.

That Sufi poetry was considered a distinctive type of speech that differed from *şî'r/dīvān* poetry not only in its subject matter but also in its very divorce from deliberate human artistry is shown especially by Aşık Çelebi's explicit comments in this regard. Under the entry "Hızır", he first explains why he is leaving out Hızır Beg, son of Ahmed Paşa (mufti of Bursa), before moving onto the Hızır he will be discussing. Hızır Beg's penname, Aşık says, is Buhari, but he is not discussed under the letter b "because his poetry is exclusively mystical."⁴²⁸ Similarly, in the entry on Celili, Aşık also briefly mentions the poet's father Hamidi and explains why he did not give a separate entry to Hamidi: For Hamidi, he says, this brief mention was considered sufficient because Hamidi's poetry is revealed poetry; his inclusion among the cohort of poets would have violated the correct order of things. Celili, however, according to Aşık, is a poet as such.⁴²⁹ Aşık's words on Haleti reveals the principle of intentionality that underlies *şî'r*:

He did not work on poetry but the words that came out inadvertently when he was overcome with love and under the influence of intense mystical desire were precious pearls never seen before and exquisite earrings never heard of.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁸ *Şî'ri taşavvufa mütemahhız olmağın bâb-ı bâda irād olunmuş degüldür.* AÇ, 1532.

⁴²⁹ *Hāmidi'nün şî'ri şî'r-i nüzül olduğı cihetden silk-i şu'arāda irādı bâ'is-i izdiḥām ve sebeb-i güsest-i ḥüsn-i nizām olur diyü bu deñlü irādı ile iktifā olındı. Ammā Celilî gerçekden şā'ir ve envā'-i nazma kādirdür.* AÇ, 480.

⁴³⁰ *Eğerçi şî're verzişi yogidi ammā bī-iḥtiyār galebe-i 'ışk ve cezbe-i şevk ile vārid olan kelimātu gözler görmedük dürr-i semîn ve kulaqlar işitmedük gūşvāre-i rengîn idi.* AÇ, 610.

Finally, although Aşık does not normally cover Sufi poets, he devotes the very first entry in his biographical dictionary to Sheikh Abdullah İlahi and feels compelled to explain this exception, reminding that the verses he will shortly quote are “above the rank of poetry” and belong to “a miracle-adorned station”:

In accordance with the tradition and manner of the rest of the saints, his poems, which are clean of the mark of poetry and free of ornament and ostentation, are mostly mystical in style and pertain to the study of the unity of God. To benefit from the blessing of his holy breath, a few of his distiches have been selected for this miscellany by way of an introduction to the poems and narratives to follow.⁴³¹

This limited denotation of the term *şî'r* is linked with an even more specific use of the same term, often in the plural form (*eş'ār*), to refer to the ghazel and especially its basic unit, the mono-rhyme distich. This sense of the term is, more often than not, used in contradistinction to the *meşnevî*, the name given to both the single rhymed couplet and the long narrative form composed of rhymed couplets. Most examples of this usage of *şî'r*/*eş'ār* are found in the works of Latifi and Mustafa Ali, rather than Aşık Çelebi, who tends to use *şî'r* for entire *dīvān* poetry including the ghazel, qasida, *meşnevî*, the verse conundrum and so on. For Celili of Iznik, Latifi writes “his *meşnevî* work is better than his poems.”⁴³² For Şeyhi, he comments “The consensus of the masters of the word is that his *meşnevîs* and didactic qasidas are commendable and a hundred times better than his poems.”⁴³³ For Ziyayi, he writes that he did not spend much effort on the science of *şî'r* (*fenn-i şî'r*), but that he was an expert in the *meşnevî*. Mustafa Ali is even more explicit in

⁴³¹ *Sā'ir evliyāu'llāh de'b ü edebleri üzre şî'rleri—ki şî'ār-ı şā'iriden 'ārīdür ve tekellüf ü taşalluḫdan berīdür—ekser mutaşavvifāne ve fenn-i tevhidde mutaşarrıfānedür. Teyemmünen bi-enfāsihimi'l-kudsiyye birkaç beytleri bu mecmū'ada . . . ihtiyār olındı. AÇ, 286.*

⁴³² . . . *meşneviyyātı eş'ārına gālibdür. LAT, 213.*

⁴³³ *İttifāq-ı sūḫan-verān oldur ki üslūb-ı meşnevīde ve tarz-ı kaşīde-i ma'nevīde semt-i revīşi memdūḫ u maşhūbdur ve üslūb-ı eş'ārından şad-mertebe merḡūbdur. LAT, 339.*

formulating the domain of *şî'r*; he thinks that both the *mesnevî* and the qasida are outside *şî'r* (similar to Latifi above) but that the verse conundrum and the chronogram are closely related to it. For Emri, Ali writes that his work was confined to imaginative *eş'âr* and the conundrum. He states that Emri “had no share in the art of the *mesnevî* and was not given to the path of qasida composition; he had aimed his arrow of hope at the target of *eş'âr*.” Similarly, according to Ali, Emri was interested in the verse conundrum and the chronogram because these genres were formally similar to *eş'âr*.⁴³⁴

Partly comparable to the case of Sufi poetry, the *mesnevî* was considered a different type of discourse from the ghazel, essentially didactic (intellectual, moralizing or mystical) and not primarily artistic; it is the domain of learned and wise men, the encyclopedists before the age of encyclopedism, and not of the lyricist who draws on the experience of love to craft an affectively powerful figurative miniature. Because of its intellectual challenges, only few people could compose *mesnevîs*. Thus, though intellectually superior to *şî'r*, *mesnevî* was not *şî'r* and stood relatively marginal in the tradition compared to the pervasive core of the ghazel and its derivatives. This is at least the situation in the sixteenth century. Today, however, the term *dīvān* poetry is used in a way that totally neutralizes this historical regime of genres.

The use of the same term *şî'r* for both the domain of *dīvān* poetry as a whole and for the ghazel and related short-form genres strongly attests to the centrality of the ghazel in the tradition. The overwhelming prevalence of the ghazel is indeed borne out by the *tezkiye* literature, which mainly covers ghazel poets and only

⁴³⁴ *Meşnevî semtinden behredâr ve kaşâ'id-güylik tarîkından kâmkâr olmayup hadeng-i kemân-ı gümânını zemîn-i eş'âr ser-menziline şalmışdur*. MALI, vol. 5, 477.

secondarily *mesnevī* authors, and the *naẓīre* anthologies, which near exclusively cover ghazel poetry. One notable exception in this regard is Hacı Kemal's anthology of 1512 which includes many different forms including the *mesnevī*; but this unique compilation has other features that distinguish it from the *dīvān* poetry regime of the following decades, as discussed before, and helps historicize the latter.

The Persian ghazel is not by definition a temporal genre. Indeed, its early masters were leading Sufis like Rumi, Attar, and Iraqi in the twelfth century who first introduced the language of love into Sufism. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the likes of Sadi, Hafez, and Kamal Khujandi further merged worldly and mystical poetic discourses and created an abstract and highly ambivalent idiom that circumvented the worldly-mystical divide. From the fourteenth century onwards, Sufis composed manuals that “decoded” the language of love in poetry, drawing into a Sufistic hermeneutic all love poetry. This historical background of intimate connection between the love lyric and Sufism manifested itself in the Ottoman context in the three early texts produced before or outside the domain of the imperial *tezkires*, studied in Chapter 2.

In the age of the imperial *tezkire*, however, Ottoman poetry took a different path of development by near completely separating the domains of Sufi and worldly poetries and their respective interpretive paradigms. The ghazel became predominantly defined as deliberate human artistry and pertained to the profane, human world both in its themes and in its manner of conception. The demarcation between Sufi and *dīvān* poetries manifested itself in practice, i.e., in the imperial *tezkires*' insistent exclusion of Sufi poetry (with some exceptions, as will be shortly seen) and also in theoretical texts on poetry such as introductory sections of *tezkires*,

poetry manuals and *dīvān* prefaces. Perhaps the most eloquent and determined champion of this demarcation was Aşık Çelebi.

3.5.2 Aşık Çelebi's introduction: A humanist poetics

Writing on Hayati, a Nakşbendi-cum-Mevlevi dervish who wrote all his ghazels in the mystical vein for some time but made a spectacular comeback to the world of love, wine and music, Aşık Çelebi explains the shift in the nature of his poetry in the following way:

He used to compose his poems in the mystical style and in the beautiful manner of the people of the gardens. Later he once again took to the path of the bandit of love and saw [his] shameful (*melâmiyye*) image in the mirror of metaphor. He became obsessed with Ramazan the saddler and got crazed with the coqueties of love. He abandoned the sheikh of truth and got his diploma from the master of metaphor.⁴³⁵

This shift involved, in addition to being love-crazed, a new bohemian life-style centered around wine parties and beautiful young boys, as well as a general loss of self-control and social respectability.

The terminology of *mecâz* vs. *hakikat* here clearly refers to signification in poetry as well as the general two-fold ontology in Sufism. Elements of this world, and their expression in poetry, are *mecâz*, or metaphor, because they await interpretation, an act of sublation by going beyond the physical and apparent to access the abstract otherworldly essence. They are temporary stand-ins for the eternal and essential and are meant to be discarded once the true meaning is deciphered. In the most extreme versions of Sufism-based ontology and poetic paradigms, the representations of the worldly can never be allowed to stand alone because then

⁴³⁵ *Gazellerin dahı taşavvuf tarzına ve ehl-i hadâ'ık üslûb-ı nağzına söylerdi. Ba 'dehû yine rehzen-i 'ışk yolın tutdı ve âyine-i mecâzîde sûret-i melâmiyye gördi. Sarrâc Ramazân'a firîfte ve 'işve-i 'ışka rûbûde ve şifte oldu, pîr-i hakikâti kodi, mürşid-i mecâzîden mücâz oldu. AÇ., 637-38.*

mecāz degenerates into mere description of the physical world, losing its ontological and semantic depth. In sixteenth-century usage among the Ottomans the term *mecāz* developed a second meaning precisely along these lines. It came to denote also a representation of the world and the worldly, without the originally intended figurative dimension. *Mecāz* in this sense could be called a euphemism for the profane. Whether this sense of the term, divested of the idea of figure, was used affirmatively or negatively depended on the outlook of the speaker. In the passage quoted above, Aşık Çelebi understands *mecāz* as the worldly, without the mystical dimension—in fact as the antithesis of the mystical. The way he aestheticizes and celebrates the worldly and the turn from the divine suggests that he finds another kind of value in it, a value that derives from the human and civic world. Aşık's attitude is in stark contrast to Garibi's strictly pejorative use of the term with reference to Necati's oeuvre, which he saw as hopelessly stuck in the worldly, a perverse breakdown of metaphor as originally intended by the creator (Chapter 2). Aşık's vision is most eloquently expressed in the lengthy introduction (*faşl-ı evvel*) to his *Meşā'irü'ş-şu'arā*.

Like the Timurid *tezkire* writers and Sehi Beg before him, Aşık Çelebi begins by celebrating the ontological significance of *sūḥan* (Pers.) or *kelām* (Ar.), which he appears to use interchangeably and which can be translated in this context as *logos*, or the word. *Kelām* is the most primordial aspect of God and it is through God's word (“*kün!*”) that the world came into being. The first things God then created are the cosmic slate and pen (*levḥ ü kalem*); without the word there is no existence, no spirits and no physical creation. Then, Aşık Çelebi proceeds by downgrading this divine element, step by step, to earth: It is through *sūḥan* that prophets deliver God's message to humankind; it is through *sūḥan* that sultans rule and their slaves cry out

in supplication; it is through *sühan* that lovers plead and beloveds exhibit their playful coquetry; planets and stars revolve on *sühan*; mankind is distinguished from animals through *sühan*. This cosmic principle is then quickly brought to bear on the social realm: *Sühan* or *kelām* is of two kinds among mankind, who are also of two kinds, the *cins-i ‘ālī*, the refined or the elites, who are the ones capable of refined speech, and the *nev ‘-i sāfil*, the lowly ones, whose words are closer to animal vocalizations. The tiering also begins to acquire ethical and religious dimensions: The people of refined speech also master beautiful meanings and go to heaven while the lowly ones may easily lose their religion and go to hell. Therefore, mastering refined *sühan* is serious business and not just an aesthetic matter. Since refined *sühan* was by definition closed to broad social classes in Ottoman society, Aşık Çelebi's discussion here directly translates into a class elitism. While Garibi made his primary distinction between legitimate and illegitimate poetry on the basis of a pietistic criterion—does it pertain to the search for the divine?—which may leave out great part of the elites but potentially include adepts from below, Aşık Çelebi sets the bar along class lines and translates linguistic refinement into class domination.

After a general discussion of superior *sühan* (notably, without making a distinction between writing and speech), Aşık Çelebi jumps to parts of written *sühan*, prose and verse, which are of two kinds each, just like *sühan* in general: high and low versions.⁴³⁶ High poetry and prose are distinguished from their low versions by

⁴³⁶ *Ve neşr dahı iki kısmdur: bir kısmı a ‘lā ve bir kısmı ednādur. . . . Nazm dahı iki nev ‘dür: bir nev ‘i sāfildür ve bir nev ‘i ‘ālīdür.* AÇ, 120.

beyān or the art of indirect discourse.⁴³⁷ While *sūḥan* or *kelām* is a quality of mankind in general, *beyān* is restricted to the best of men.⁴³⁸

This first section is concluded with the proposition that prose is superior to poetry primarily because the Qur'an is in prose, but also because of its intrinsic qualities such as potentially limitless length and variety of topics.⁴³⁹ At this point the argument is about to turn towards the problematic position of poetry in Islam, with many anti-poetry verses in the Qur'an and the history of accusations against Muhammad that he was just another clever poet passing himself off as a prophet. Here, perhaps a defense of poetry on religious grounds could follow, such as a very limited role being granted to poetry in return for the role it could play in religious and moral edification. However, as will become clearer in the following pages, Aşık Çelebi's main rhetorical feat will be to turn on its head the idea of poetry's incomparable inferiority to the Qur'an, and vis-à-vis prose in general, to argue that poetry is indeed exclusively human and hence has no claim to compete with the divine; in other words, that the Qur'an is in inimitable, miraculously beautiful prose is used as a basis for the argument that poetry is legitimately human. It belongs to this fallible, emotional and social creature with all his weaknesses and internal strife. This line of argument is entirely distinct from the Sufism-based notion of the highest order of poetry being a result of divine inspiration, an extension of divine logos, and not human artistry. In this poetic regime, which we saw in Chapter 2 being championed by Garibi, humans lesser than the divinely inspired sheikh-poets could

⁴³⁷ For *ilm al-bayān*, S.A. Bonebakker suggests the translation "science of figurative expression". Bonebakker and Reinert, "Al-Ma'ānī Wa 'l-Bayān." I have preferred a broader translation in this particular context because Aşık Çelebi specifically mentions as the most eloquent forms of *beyān* the devices of *ihām* (double entendre) and *ibhām* (intentional obfuscation), which are not figures strictly speaking.

⁴³⁸ . . . *kelām ḥadd-i insān-ı nāṭıq ve beyān resm-i ta'rīf-i kemāl-i insāndır*. AÇ, 120.

⁴³⁹ AÇ, 120-21.

search for the eternal meanings through figures (*mecāz*) in a context where worldly existence itself is just a figure and not the meaning; poetry with other ends such as eulogizing profane rulers, celebrating carnal love and lampooning rivals is morally corrupt and must be censured. This approach to poetry—its justification and boundaries— is also displayed by Latifi, albeit in a milder form.

On the following pages Aşık Çelebi presents a dense literature review with references to Arabic scholarly sources, covering different opinions on key questions concerning poetry.⁴⁴⁰ After a scholarly exposition of what counts as poetry, the realist Aşık Çelebi characteristically finishes with reference to “‘*örf-i cumhūr*”, or common practice, where the foregoing complicated scholarly arguments are reduced to “poetry is word with meter and rhyme.”⁴⁴¹

Aşık then delves into the reports on the origin of poetry and dwells at some length on the versions of the story of Adam being the first poet, only to finally reject the story on the grounds that because Adam had access to divine revelation he would never stoop to poetry, a far more inferior form of *sühān*.⁴⁴² Aşık instead offers an account of poetry's invention by ancient philosophers and scholars, who through the study of mathematics and divine energy (*kuvvet-i kudsiyye*) discovered the workings of celestial objects and the realm of ether. These ancient sages figured out that planets and stars revolved by meter and melody. They then created the sciences of prosody and music. From then on, they put their words into meter and rhyme, and their cries into melody and refrains. Poetry developed further and further as centuries passed and became the shared art of all mankind (though Aşık's elitism manifests

⁴⁴⁰ AÇ, 121-78.

⁴⁴¹ AÇ, 122.

⁴⁴² AÇ, 122-24.

itself once again): Both the elites and the common folk utilized poetry for purposes in accordance with their stations. The elites communicated with poetry when searching for knowledge and truth; they also turned to poetry to express their experiences of love. The commonfolk, on the other hand, voiced the rhythms of war, their exaggerated eulogies and their never-ending rants in poetry.⁴⁴³

The following pages are devoted to a chronological survey of poetry compositions by Israeli prophets and under Muhammad's and the four caliphs' aegis.⁴⁴⁴ There is a discussion of Prophet Muhammad's poetry-like words followed by Aşık's explanations as to why these are not true poetry and how Muhammad himself meticulously avoided utterances that might be taken for poetry. However, Aşık Çelebi then goes on to show by numerous examples how Muhammad recited other poets' poems, ordered renowned poets of the day to compose occasional pieces for him, and encouraged not only edifying or religious poetry but also celebratory poems in a wedding and even satires of his enemies. Through these and the following examples from the Prophet's family and companions, the four caliphs, and founders of major schools of law, a complete use of poetry—in all areas of life, including entertainment, and in all genres, including political encomium and satire—is Islamically legitimized with no reference to an overriding religious or moral prerogative.

The leitmotif of the pervasiveness of poetry in daily and political life as well as religious contexts continues in Aşık's survey of poetry in Islamic polities from the Umayyads to the Ottomans.⁴⁴⁵ He cites examples of the uses of poetry in the social

⁴⁴³ AÇ, 125.

⁴⁴⁴ AÇ, 125-58.

⁴⁴⁵ AÇ, 155-68.

realm such as prisoners being saved from execution by impressing rulers with their poems. Finally, he comes to the sultans', ulema's and *evliyās*' relation to poetry as poets.⁴⁴⁶ For sultans, it is a medium where they can parenthetically become equal with ordinary people.⁴⁴⁷ The ulema turn to poetry to get some relief when they are exhausted by the burden of scholarly work. In his entry on one of the greatest scholars of his time, Kemalpaşazade Ahmed Efendi, Aşık also brings up this topic and formulates the idea even more forcefully: After studying on scholarly subjects for a long time and satisfying his higher soul (*rūḥ-ı 'ulvī*), Kemalpaşazade would desire to do "human" things (*bi-ḥasebi't-tīneti'l beşerīyyeti*) and engage in composing prose and poetry.⁴⁴⁸ Even the saints (*evliyā*), who are normally under divine attraction (*cezebāt-ı Hüdāyī*) and therefore above ordinary human concerns of the ego (*ḥaṭarāt-ı nefis*), occasionally "return to the garden of mundane existence and the realm of metaphors through poetry."⁴⁴⁹ When the saints are out of this world and immersed in God (*'ālem-i tecerrüdde bulınsalar*), it is poetry that carries them down from the other worldly prerogative to the concerns of everyday living (*emr-i ma'āddan fıkır-i ma'ā' işe tenezzül*).⁴⁵⁰ When, however, they are already in this in world of appearances (*'ālem-i teḳayyüdde olsalar*) poetry gives them pleasure and comfort the way the distressed Prophet would find peace in Bilal ibn Rabah's beautiful voice singing the call to prayer.⁴⁵¹ Though Aşık does pay lip service to the idea that saints' poems communicate the divine to ordinary people,⁴⁵² it is remarkable

⁴⁴⁶ AÇ, 168-78.

⁴⁴⁷ See the passage that begins *Menkūl olan vechler budur ki bu vaşfda şāh ü gedā bir ve sağır ü kebīr ber-ā-ber olduğı zāhirdür*. AÇ, 171.

⁴⁴⁸ AÇ, 298.

⁴⁴⁹ AÇ, 173.

⁴⁵⁰ AÇ, 173.

⁴⁵¹ AÇ, 173.

⁴⁵² AÇ, 173.

how his emphasis is on poetry as a profanizing and humanizing agent even for the saints.

Aşık's discussion continues with a wonderful passage on poetry as a shared value of mankind, a gem of Ottoman humanism if such a thing exists.⁴⁵³ Poetry is the companion (*nedīm*) of sultans, old friend of slaves, bosom buddy of the lovers, the candle illuminating ulema's long nights of study, the glow of the cloistered dervishes' painful sighs in early morning. For the rich it is adornment, for the poor it is capital (*re'sü'l-māl*). It is the messenger pigeon of the lonely, courier of the supplicants, companion of the walkers of the path of annihilation (*fenā*). Sometimes it is the singer in a wine party, sometimes the wailer in a funeral. Sometimes it is a figure of speech in a company of refined conversationalists, sometimes it is the rhythm of war. It is a story teller who recounts old legends and stories of the prophets. It is a translator of the seventy-two languages of the seventy-two nations.

In all of his catalogues, like the passage summarily paraphrased above or the anecdotes related with poetry from early Islamic history, Aşık Çelebi clearly takes care to represent the variety of the uses, registers and genres of poetry without qualms and endows all of them with unconditional legitimacy, whether temporal or mystical, serious or humorous. His stance stands in contrast to the Sufi poetics which is championed most zealously by Garibi as we have seen in Chapter 2. Here, I will discuss Latifi's position, which is a much-toned down version of Garibi's under the pressure of the predominant trends in the Ottoman context. As Walter Andrews analyzed in his doctoral dissertation on Latifi's *Tezkiretü'ş-şu'arā*, Latifi was reacting against the break with Sufism in poetry; however, his vision, like the “classicizing”

⁴⁵³ AÇ, 174-78.

current he reacted against, to use Andrews's terminology, was just as entrenched in Persianate poetics and not unique to Latifi.

3.5.3 The last remnants of Sufistic poetics in the Ottoman imperial context: The case of Latifi

First of all, Latifi does include in his *tezkiye* Sufi poets, that is, poets exclusively composing explicit Sufi poetry, in contradistinction to Aşık Çelebi and other imperial *tezkiye* authors. As is well-known, he begins his biographies with a chapter on preeminent sheikh-poets from Rumi to Sheikh Vefa and İbrahim Gülşeni. He explains this prioritization by stipulating that poetry is the true vocation of the sheikhs and saints more than anyone else.⁴⁵⁴ Their poetry is superior to the rest because it is a result of divine inspiration and because their beloved is none other than God and their desire the Absolute Being (*vücūd-ı muṭlak*).

By contrast, Sehi Bey's priorities, for example, are dynastic and imperial. As we saw above, he begins with a chapter devoted to Sultan Süleyman, followed by one on other members of the dynasty, sultans and princes. His third chapter depicts the highest military-administrative officials of the empire. Fourth in order and rank for Sehi are the high ulema, another extension of the state apparatus by this time. In stark contrast to Latifi's *tezkiye*, where poet-sheiks are given precedence even over members of the ruling house, Sehi has no section devoted to Sufis and does not normally include them but for a few random exceptions. Latifi, on the other hand, although he mentions the ulema in the sentences quoted above, has no separate

⁴⁵⁴ *Hakikatda şî'r kâr-ı evliyâ'ullah ve pîşe-i ehlu'llâh-ı pür-intibâhuñdur. . . . Lâbüd şî'r şî'âr-ı erbâb-ı hakikat ve tarîk-i aşhâb-ı tarikat olduğı ecilden zîkr-i cemîlleri selâṭîn ü 'ulemâ üzre taḳdîm olundı.* LAT, 108-109.

section for them. Similar to Sehi, Aşık Çelebi, too, spares a section for Ottoman sultans from Osman I to Selim II in his lengthy preamble (“*Faşl-i evvel*”) before moving on to the biographical dictionary itself. Latifi's preference for the sheikhs over the Ottoman dynasty is in harmony with the widespread Sufi view that Sufis and saints, lords of the unseen realm, are superior to temporal political leaders and are relatively free of political authority.

Latifi's coverage of Sufi poetry is not confined to the short chapter on preeminent sheikhs. Throughout the *tezkiye* he includes poets who wrote exclusively in the Sufi idiom and are therefore mostly excluded from the other *tezkiyes*. These are Ahmed Beg Zaim, Kemal-i Ümmi, Kemal-i Halveti, and Sinan Paşa among several others. Moreover, some Sufi poets that Latifi covered were taken up by later *tezkiye* writers, but they draw on Latifi completely, suggesting that while they did not feel motivated to do research on new poets of this brand, they were flexible enough to copy material from an earlier source if they liked the poetry or another aspect of the entry (e.g., entries on Cami-i Rumi, Süruri-i Acem and Huzuri).

Perhaps the most striking of such entries is that on Nesimi. Although Nesimi occurs in most *tezkiyes*, Latifi's is the most elaborate and the source of later derivative entries in Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi's and Mustafa Ali's works. Latifi basically makes a distinction between Hurufism and knowledge of the *'ilmü'l-ḥurūf* (science of letters) and argues that Nesimi is mistaken for a Hurufi because of his deep knowledge of this *'ilm*. Similarly, according to Latifi, he was in an ecstatic state and heedlessly exposed himself to danger when spoke openly about his mystical “discoveries” in a language not suitable for the common folk and not allowed by the sharia. Thus, he is a true Sufi and is to be distinguished from the despicable antinomian groups that follow him in the present day. This apology for Nesimi was

more or less adopted by Mustafa Ali and Hasan Çelebi, although their lazy reliance on Latifi suggests that the topic is no longer of particular interest to them. However, Aşık's entry and other mentions of Nesimi reveal how differently from Latifi he draws the line that separates heresy from mystical ecstasy. In his entry on Usuli, Aşık Çelebi groups together Nesimi, İbrahim Gülşeni and Usuli as the root of all heresy (*ilhād*) in Rum. Usuli was a disciple of Sheikh İbrahim Gülşeni and, according to Aşık, “he is the one who planted in Rum the seed of *ilhād*, which is identified with the followers of Sheikh İbrahim” and “he is the one who planted the tree of perversion he had brought in from Nesimi's nonsense.”⁴⁵⁵ Aşık complains that this evil seed and tree then grew in Rum and wishes that God would destroy them. Similarly, he does not even mention Dede Ömer Ruşeni, Gülşeni's sheikh, in his entire *tezkiye*.

Thus, Latifi grants a lot more freedom to Sufi poetry and its borderline anti-sharia discourses than does Aşık Çelebi, an outright hater of Kalenderi family of dervish groups in general. Although Latifi himself becomes highly critical of some antinomian figures in the second recension compared to the first, his most negatively presented cases are indeed quite extreme in the intellectual and pietistic topography of the day, as in the case of Muammayi, a Hurufi Latifi associates with incest, based on his verses, and Temennayi, a materialist Hurufi who Latifi says is one of those who argue that “man grows like grass and dies like grass.”⁴⁵⁶ His moderate tone in speaking of *abdāls* and *ışıks* in the first recension especially and the ease with which he can discuss these topics in a matter-of-fact manner, contrasts with Aşık Çelebi's double strategy of either viciously attacking *ışıks* or, where they represent some

⁴⁵⁵ AÇ, 344, 346.

⁴⁵⁶ LAT, 200.

value for the ruling class through their works or companionship, to completely erase their antinomian features from the biographies as we have seen in Chapter 2. Instead, the Sufi highlights of his *tezkiye* are the Naqshbandi Abdullah Ilahi, mentioned above, and, rather unexpectedly, Yunus Emre whose inclusion by Aşık Çelebi perhaps signals that he was not particularly popular among the Hurufi *kalenders* he despises.

Because his venture point is the idea that true poetry is that of the saints and true poetic content is the divine, Latifi is preoccupied throughout with the hermeneutic problem of metaphor and truth, or *mecāz* and *ḥaḳīḳat*, a feature that does not appear, for example, in Aşık Çelebi's *tezkiye*. To be clear, the term *mecāz* in this context refers to what are “supposed to be” taken as metaphors, i.e. the material, mundane realities such as human beauty and wine. Thus, rather paradoxically, *mecāz* also refers to a plain literal representation, without the expansion of the described object into a metaphor, as discussed above. Latifi does see *hüsniyyāt*, erotic poetry, as legitimate but only as long as it avails itself to Sufi interpretation (*te'vīl*): Poetry with no attributed meaning (*maḥmil*) than the metaphorical (*mecāzī*) is “the devil's pipe”; it must be “two-sided” (*zū'l-vecheyn*) and pertain to both *mecāz* and *ḥaḳīḳat*, the way the works of poets of old did. The way he formulates this principle implies that “two-sidedness” is ideally an intrinsic quality of poems, and not simply a matter of interpretative decision on the part of the audiences.⁴⁵⁷

However, Latifi is certainly aware of the fact that most Ottoman poets in his time were composing poems anchored to *mecāz* and that there was nothing to be done about that. Latifi accepts that these are not two-sided poems and argues it is

⁴⁵⁷ LAT, 83, 109, 581.

both futile and improper to enforce a double-sided reading on them. Moreover, Latifi concedes that these poets are really very good artists, at least as good as the poets of former eras. All he can do is pray for their souls and ask God to forgive them for the sake of their verses celebrating God and the Prophet (*tevḥīd, na‘t*) and their didactic poetry (*mevā‘iz*). Although the introduction to the *tezḳire* already intimates this compromise, it is in the *ḥātime* (epilogue) section, revised in the second recension, that Latifi presents its most explicit account:

In truth and fairness, it must be said that the Turkish language, too, in the domain of poetry, possesses masters of verse with a distinctive style (*tarz-ı ḥāṣṣa kādir*) and poets capable and skillful in composition and expression. Among this limited and select group there are certainly a number of individuals distinguished and outstanding, who may rightly be counted among the eminent figures of the art of poetry (*fenn-i naẓm*), alongside the great poets of the past (*şu‘arā-yı selef-i kibār*).

However, it must not be thought that the verses of these distinguished poets are of a double aspect (*zū‘l-vecheyn*), bringing together opposites (*müştemilü ‘z-zıddeyn*) like the verses of sheikh-poets of former times. That is to say, they do not fashion verses in which references to taverns, wine, goblets, and cups can simultaneously be read as expressions of intoxication by divine love, or as longing for the wine of mystical rapture. This kind of style should not be expected and such words are not common.

For this, a path of spiritual progress, visions of truth, and divine effusions and inspirations are required. Accordingly, it is not appropriate to interpret their figurative verses (*ebyāt-ı mecāzī*) as if they were the utterances of men of truth (*kelimāt-ı ehl-i ḥaḳīkat*), forcing them into that mode by way of interpretation, or to reconcile them with the Sacred Law through citations of Qur’anic verses and Prophetic traditions. It is evident that their utterances and the poems they produce are not of a double aspect, but single-faced, and their metaphors proceed in a single direction.

It is known that the words of the earlier poets are the foundation, and those of these later ones are but the offshoot; the latter’s poetic banquet is merely the leavings of the earlier feast, a table already eaten from. Indeed, what many of them claim as invention or innovation in style and expression are, in truth, repetitions of what has already been said (*taṣarruf-ı za‘ide*). As the masters say, what need is there for lies and exaggerations? Everyone’s coin is tested at the assay and the quality of one’s yarn is measured in the marketplace. The true money-changers and appraisers of the bazaar of poetry, when they see a man with genuine coins or jewels, at once come running and pay the true worth of his words.

Verse: Do not boast, for those who know, know you better than yourself.

Prose: So, what need is there for a person to speak boastfully beyond his proper measure, or to utter extravagant claims beyond his capacity? Yet, the truth is this: Whether on the path of truth or within the style of metaphor, they have indeed composed graceful books and eloquent writings, in which they have presented fine poems of divine unity (*tevḥīd*), praise of the Prophet (*na‘ī*), and spiritual and moral advice (*mev‘īze ve naṣīhatlar*). In accordance with the saying “whoever resembles a tribe is one of them,” in these matters they have followed that noble company and walked in their footsteps. It is to be hoped that the Generous and Forgiving Lord, the Thankworthy God, will, for the sake of the noble ones they have followed and the praises of the Prophet and didactic poems they have composed, forgive all their faults and erase their sins.⁴⁵⁸

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at aspects of the reconfiguration of field of *dīvān* poetry in the sixteenth century and the *tezkires*’ role in this process of field formation. Overall, the chapter has told a story that proceeds from a situation of multiplicity of views about what constitutes high-register Persianate Rumi poetry to the hegemony of a new poetic regime. Concomitantly, it has explored the procession from an early sixteenth-century situation of a relatively weak and fragmented domain of textuality in Turkish poetry to a far more integrated and enlarged Rumi field of circulation by the end of the century. These twin processes of field definition and circulatory integration took place in the context of political unification of Rum and the establishment of greater cultural and ideological hegemony in these core lands of the empire. *Dīvān* poetry emerged as one of the key intellectual and artistic sites where aspects of imperial ideology manifested itself: in the emergence of a history of literature keyed to dynastic history and in the rise of an unabashedly temporal literary

⁴⁵⁸ LAT, 581-82.

field that opened up a new space for the expression of the political and public lives of a new, expanded cultural and intellectual elite in the service of the empire.



CHAPTER 4

A COMMUNITY CULTURE

This chapter and the next are on the poetic community that achieved the second formation of *dīvān* poetry and produced the *tezkires*. While Chapter 5 explores the role of this community in imperial officialdom, this chapter looks into its everyday culture and functioning, with a focus on its oral culture and informal forums of sociability. The main argument of the chapter is that oral culture and forums of sociability such as the *meclis* (salon) and the *şoḥbet* (refined conversation) deeply shaped both the *tezkire* writing and the poetry culture of the era. I argue that although the *dīvān* tradition was spread across Rum from the beginning of the fifteenth century, especially in provincial courts that dotted the Rumi landscape, the new *dīvān* poetry and its canons were created, from Bayezid II's reign onwards, by a small and close-knit community that was clustered around the political center in Istanbul and that worked mainly in various official capacities in Istanbul, Edirne and environs, including the Rumelia. It was this small community that collectively fashioned the new Ottoman Turkish of the sixteenth century, introduced stylistic innovations, and created the body of literary critical ideas, and anecdotal and biographical lore that allowed the *tezkire* literature to emerge.

Because of its embeddedness in a community and its development under conditions of relatively poor textualization and circulatory integration, discussed in the previous chapter, the new *dīvān* poetry culture of the sixteenth century relied largely on face-to-face personal relations and orality. The *tezkires* of the era not only provide a vivid picture of this community culture, but in their very mechanics of representation and conveying information assume an underlying community, rather

than an anonymous and unpredictable audience. By all indications, this was a culturally and ideologically homogenous, non-contentious group, sufficiently remunerated through their administrative and/or ideological and cultural roles in the imperial system. The major fault lines lay outside community, with political, cultural and ideological “others” standing outside, in the rest of the society that the empire sought to tax and persecute. The members were steeped in imperial culture, the minutiae of its history and the ins and outs of the present-day administrative culture. This community was also highly open to new recruitments from below in an age of imperial expansion. The poetry of the period itself—its language and styles—also reflected this elite make-up, striking a delicate balance between cultural refinement and social inclusiveness and developing new forms of textuality that reflected the imperial centralism of the period, namely the comprehensive Rumi *tezkiye* and the giant *nazîre* anthology.

The chapter comprises two main parts, which respectively explore styles of the biographical writing and poetry in the sixteenth century. Both, I argue, relied more on physical presence and orality than textuality. Texts, both poetic and biographical, made full sense only in social context and presupposed a grasp of this context on the part of the audiences. The first part of the chapter focuses on biographical writing and offers an analysis of the ways it reflected the everyday workings of a community culture. The argument of this first part is that most of the unique features of sixteenth-century *tezkiyes* can be accounted for with reference to their reliance on forums of sociability, the *meclis* and the *şoḥbet*, for their contents. Hence the title of 4.1, “Biographical style: The sixteenth-century *tezkiye* as *meclis* transcript.”

In 4.1, I first discuss the uniquely sixteenth-century focus on the poets' physical appearance and character or temperament and argue that these descriptions create public personas for members of the Ottoman elite although they ultimately draw on unstructured everyday personal encounters; thus they stand on the threshold between the personal and the public, or create a public culture out of the private, with broader implications for the nature of Ottoman officialdom.

Secondly, I identify a tendency in the sixteenth-century *tezkires* to include individuals who were not accomplished poets, but patrons, *meclis* hosts, important men of letters in other disciplines, popular beautiful boys (*maḥbūb*) or “bad poets” who were the butt of jokes. This suggests that *tezkires*' representation extended to the entire community sustaining the culture of poetry, just like the salons which often brought together individuals from different sectors of the elite. Along the same lines, I show how the embeddedness of the genre in a community, one that was at the heart of the political and administrative life of the empire, resulted, despite received genre conventions, in the infusion of the genre with matters tangential to poetry but essential in the everyday workings of this community, such as troubles suffered in ulema or scribal careers.

Thirdly, I look at a main discursive feature and highlight the way the *tezkiye* authors casually omit what would have been considered essential biographical information in more modern encyclopedic forms of biographical writing, often relying on the audience to fill in the blanks. Fourthly, I discuss a series of direct parallelisms between explicit descriptions of *meclises* found in a variety of sources and the *tezkiye* contents. These include manners of transmission of poetry, practices of poetry criticism, and the pervasive culture of anecdotes about members of the Ottoman elite.

In the second main part of the chapter, 4.2 “A Poetics of presence: Orality and communalism in sixteenth-century poetry,” I look at the poetry culture of the period and its embeddedness in orality and face-to-face sociability. In the first subsection of the chapter, I discuss the importance placed on memorizing a large number of poems and composing extemporaneously. I then note the central role of spontaneous *in situ nazîre* compositions in the creation of new poems. Thirdly, I focus on the prevalent notion that lyrical poetry was often autobiographical, with the underlying assumption that poems are not free-floating texts but an extension of the person’s physical presence in the community.

The second subsection of 4.2 focuses on the cycle of Ahmed Paşa anecdotes as apocryphal narratives that encapsulate the poetics of presence discussed in the first subsection. Here, however, I also show that a second brand of Ahmed Paşa anecdotes existed, which encode a more textually-based poetics, one that is at odds with the poetics of presence, indicating the existence of multiple trends in terms of Ottoman poetry’s relation to textuality and community. Then, in section 4.3, I discuss Ottoman notions of canonicity, arguing that rather than adhering to a fixed list of “the greats,” the canon functioned as a radically presentist, community-based system of shared practices and shifting tastes, where literary value emerged through ongoing poetic production and collective judgment rather than abstract principles or stable authorial hierarchies. I conclude the chapter by pointing to seventeenth century shifts in biographical and poetic genres that marked a move away from orality, communality and presence.

The idea that a close-knit, homogenous community running on face-to-face relations produced the *tezkire* is somewhat paradoxical because such a community would not have felt the need to externalize and reify its own life and culture in

textual form. In fact, for a long time it did not. The efflorescence of *dīvān* poetry, its “second formation” as a new field with a new genre regime, a new history and novel social and political roles in the expanding imperial system, dates back to the reign of Bayezid II, as the *tezkires* themselves evince. The decades before the coming of the first *tezkire* saw the appearance of new types of texts that directly reflected the everyday interactions of a close-knit community, such as anecdote collections, verse letters and mock-almanacs, which later got incorporated into the *tezkires*.⁴⁵⁹

However, for at least four decades no one attempted composing a *tezkire* on Rumi poets, although the Timurid models that are commonly cited in both the contemporary literature and modern scholarship as the *raison d’être* of the Ottoman *tezkire* had appeared in the 1490s. For at least four decades, this community and its poetry culture, centered in Istanbul, Edirne and environs, ran on personal relations near exclusively. The poetry corpus and styles developed in this period, on the one hand, and the critical thinking and biographical lore collectively developed by the era’s poetic community, on the other, constitute the core of the *tezkires* that emerged in the middle decades of the sixteenth century. This pre-*tezkire* phase of about four decades also constitutes the limit of actual biographical memory, indicating the beginnings of the community’s life, with what lay beyond being only accessible through largely apocryphal anecdotal constructions (see Chapter 3).

⁴⁵⁹ At least three anecdote (*leṭā’if*) collections that show humorous or witty interactions between members of the contemporary and near-contemporary Ottoman elite were produced roughly between 1525 and 1535. These are Lamii Çelebi’s, Zati’s and Fakiri’s collections. For the verse letter Gazali (Deli Birader) wrote from Mecca to his friends in Rum and the answers to it, see Kut (Alpay), “Gazālī’nin Mekke’den İstanbul’a yolladığı.” Vahyi wrote a mock-almanac of humorous prognostications based on double entendres for various professional, religious or ethnic groups in Ottoman society. This text is dated to 901 and also includes prognostications for a few private individuals who would have been recognizable to Vahyi’s readers (Dellakzade Hatib and Sürmelizade); AÇ, 552.

The *tezkiye* genre emerged, during the reign of Süleyman, which is commonly associated in scholarship with bureaucratic expansion and the formation of an early modern absolutist imperial polity. The appearance of the genre signals a new phase in the history of imperial literary elites. As a written encyclopedic compilation, the *tezkiye* emerged at a moment when it was necessary to sublimate the relatively small community of central elites with strong personal ties and a rich oral culture into an imperial "imagined community," to use Benedict Anderson's influential term.

However, the *tezkiyes* continued to retain their embeddedness in an actual community for a long time and were largely built on the life and activities of a core community based in and around Istanbul and Edirne. Although integrating Rum as cultural and circulatory space was a new concern in line with the ideological and administrative needs of a rising early modern bureaucratic empire, both the *tezkiyes* and poetry culture remained largely anchored in oral culture and a face-to-face community. This chapter addresses this aspect of sixteenth-century Ottoman literary culture, which has not been adequately addressed in extant scholarship.

The *tezkiyes* are highly layered complex texts that cannot be reduced to one single function or discursive style. Most texts bring together radically different types of information and styles of writing and target multiple aims. This chapter as a whole foregrounds the oral culture of the elites and the close-knit community structure that shaped both the poetry and the biographical writing of the period. Another study might foreground the trends that run counter wise, such as an increasing movement towards textualization and divorce of encyclopedic writings from orality and sociability-dependency. In fact, Chapter 3 "Imperial Integration" has already highlighted aspects of the *tezkiyes* that extended beyond the confines of a small community culture by foraging into domains of textuality and local culture that had

previously remained outside the ken of the central poetic community clustered around the imperial center. The most accurate way of characterizing the *tezkiye* of the era, therefore, would be that it is a genre poised between two worlds. The *tezkiyes* grew out of a world of orality and community but also reflected and, by their very existence, contributed to the rise of a more textually-based and less context-bound literary culture. In a nutshell, the sixteenth-century *tezkiye* was a genre that carried the seeds of its own destruction.⁴⁶⁰

4.1 Biographical style: The sixteenth-century *tezkiye* as *meclis* transcript

Aşık Çelebi does not abstain from recording in his *tezkiye* a fellow poet's words that casually reveal the obscene nickname⁴⁶¹ of Tacizade Cafer Çelebi (d.1515), imperial chancellor (*nişāncı*), chief justice (*ḳāzī* 'asker) and one of the founding fathers of the new *inşā* (artistic prose) of the sixteenth-century. Whether one was a top member of the Ottoman officialdom or a small-time scribe, sixteenth-century *tezkiyes* could air a lot of dirty laundry and other personal details that have no place in more modern forms of encyclopedism. They also included a great deal of quotidian or more consequential moments of encounter between poets and between poets and other members of the Ottoman elite as well as detailed descriptions of the poets' physical appearances and personality traits. This the *tezkiyes* did at the same time as they nonchalantly omitted key information on objective facts of the poets' public lives (e.g., career stations and death dates). Moreover, the biographers often placed themselves in the web of relations they described, making the biographies read like

⁴⁶⁰ Cf. Anooshahr, "Writing, Speech, and History."

⁴⁶¹ The poet Sücudi says he does not resent being nicknamed *Sucu iti* (water carrier's dog), a homophone of his penname, since his patron Tacizade Cafer Çelebi was called *Am biti* (vulvar lice). AÇ, 944. Cafer Çelebi's preference for women over boys was an object of sneering remarks as recorded in the *tezkiyes*.

autobiographies of their author. This highly personal and anecdotal style of representation reads more like an insiders' saga of the poetic community than an encyclopedia based on collection of objective facts. The sixteenth-century *tezkires* were unswervingly committed to recording the life of the community, arguably more so than the lives of the individuals that comprised it. They also wrote largely *for* that community, relying on this assumed audience's prior knowledge of the matters and individuals being discussed. This communal aspect thoroughly shaped the style of biographical writing as well as the contents of the *tezkires*.

In fact, all of the biographers were part of the same community and had either direct relations or were connected through shared acquaintances. Aşık Çelebi and Latifi knew each other and, according to Aşık Çelebi, made a deal about organizing their prospective *tezkires* differently in year 950/1543-44, as we have seen in Chapter 3.⁴⁶² Mustafa Ali, born in Muḥarrem 948/1541, was a young boy when he first met Latifi around the year 960/1552-53 and had a chance to converse with him (*mücāleset ü muşāḥabetimüz*).⁴⁶³ The two biographers likely met again in subsequent years since they had a lot of shared acquaintances such as the poets Yahya Beg and Hayali.⁴⁶⁴ Mustafa Ali and Aşık Çelebi also knew one another; Ali even stayed at Aşık's home in Skopje around the year 974/1566-67 when Aşık was the town's qadi. During this stay, Aşık apologized to Ali for not including him in his dictionary and promised to make up for his negligence by including Ali in subsequent recensions.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶² AÇ, 737.

⁴⁶³ MALI, vol. 5, 592. C. Fleischer uses this same entry on Latifi from *Künhü'l-aḥbār* and claims that the meeting took place during Latifi's visit to Gelibolu, Ali's hometown; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 23. The recent critical edition of *Künhü'l-aḥbār* I use (S. Donuk, ed.) does not include this information.

⁴⁶⁴ For Latifi's personal acquaintance with Yahya Beg and Hayali, see MALI, vol. 5, 592 and LAT, 254 respectively. For Mustafa Ali's acquaintance with these two poets, see MALI, vol. 5, 621 and MALI, vol. 5, 506.

⁴⁶⁵ MALI, vol. 5, 811-12.

Ahdi stayed at the biographer Mecdi Mehmed Efendi's home in Edirne for one year and met the leading poets of the city like Emri, who was a friend of Aşık Çelebi.⁴⁶⁶ Both Mustafa Ali and Aşık Çelebi were on very close terms with Kınalızade Ali Çelebi, the father of the biographer Hasan Çelebi.⁴⁶⁷ The examples can be multiplied. That there is no evidence of a direct connection between Sehi and any of the subsequent biographers must be related with Sehi Beg's age (born circa 1470), but there is no doubt that he had many shared acquaintances with them. This was indeed a small world.

There are two main forms or styles of biographical writing on poets in the sixteenth century, both of them more or less confined to this period. Although they look very different at first sight, they are, I argue, manifestations of the same underlying reality of relatively small and close-knit community as both the audience of the *tezkires* and the source of the ideas and biographical information being put to writing. Moreover, both styles partially incorporate features of the other, so there is considerable overlap in between.

The first of these styles is represented by Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt* (1538) and Ahdi of Baghdad's *Gülşen-i Şu'arā* (971/1563-64). These works are notable for their reticence in providing solid biographical information and anecdotal material, combined with a loquacity when it comes to praising the biographees. This means that performative functions of these texts predominate over their informative aspect. While frustrating from the perspective of the modern historian, this type of writing suggests that the biographers relied heavily on their audiences' prior knowledge of the biographees and foregrounded the reinforcement of social bonds, both within the

⁴⁶⁶ AHD, 510; AHD, 194; AÇ, 366-67.

⁴⁶⁷ MALI, vol. 5, 557; AÇ, 1116.

community as a whole and between the biographer and the individuals covered, including patrons. These two biographers also stand out in the larger group of sixteenth-century *tezkiye* writers with their avoidance of making critical or outright negative comments on the poets they cover, overall conjuring an image of a very harmonious society. Both of these biographers explicitly place themselves at the center of their works as the vantage point from which the Rumi poetry scene is viewed. Sehi organizes poets into generations that align with his own youth, adulthood and old age, and emphasizes in the introductions to all except the earliest of his generational *bihişts* that he has benefited from the company of these poets, making a note of the few contemporaries he has not personally met. Similarly, Ahdi of Baghdad mostly covers the poets he had met during his ten-year residency in Rum, noting the few poets he had only heard about from others (*evşâfin işitdigümüz şu 'arādandır* and similar expressions).⁴⁶⁸

The second biographical style, represented mainly by Aşık Çelebi, but also by Latifi and Hasan Çelebi, is far more detailed and complex in terms of the types of information provided. As discussed in Chapter 3 “Imperial Integration”, these texts rely on written sources and research on physically or chronologically distant milieus of poetic activity at least as much as they do on the immediate personal network of the authors. They are, therefore, more layered texts by comparison to Sehi’s and Ahdi’s which are pretty much limited to the authors’ own social circles. Especially where the contemporary poetic scene is concerned, Aşık Çelebi, Latifi and Hasan Çelebi’s writing is highly anecdotal and brings into view rich scenes of social encounters between poets and between poets and patrons. Going far beyond Sehi or

⁴⁶⁸ See, for example, the entries on Enveri, Hayreti and Riyazi-i Üskübi for poets Ahdi heard about from others as these individuals were dead by the time Ahdi arrived in Rum.

Ahdi's laconic remarks that obliquely point to personal knowledge of the biographees,⁴⁶⁹ these authors frequently describe in detail the physical features, bodily ailments and handicaps, outfit, temperaments and behavioral idiosyncrasies of poets. They also spare a lot of space for accounts of debauchery and love affairs, an aspect that especially Aşık Çelebi is known for. In short, this is a biographical writing that similarly largely relies on community and physical presence. Indeed, beyond these differences of outward expression, the two styles share many features that evince their embeddedness in a community culture and their assumption of a close-knit community as their audience.

In 1495, when explaining how he was convinced by friends to compose his romantic *meşnevî Hevesnâme*, Tacizade Cafer Çelebi described the content of their conversation in the following words:

I would converse with a couple of friends
Eat and drink with them with peace of heart

The ones at our party were all masters of the word
They would recite beautiful verses

Whatever heart-refreshing verses were recited
The virtues and characteristics thereof would be assessed

The best of the ancient poets would be discussed
Everyone would voice their opinions

Of the custodians of the word and the men of poetry
Of the experts of speech and adepts of poetry

They would assess the degrees
And declare the ranks

Some they would portray and praise
Others they would attack and denounce⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁹ E.g., *tab 'ı selīm ve zihni müstakīm* (SEH, 115a/299); *hulk-i lutfına nihāyet, tatlu sözine ve insāniyyetine gāyet yogidi* (SEH, 113b/296); *el-ḥaḳḳ ḥoş-şoḥbet ü tiz-fehm* (AHD, 320); *ḥadd-ı zātında dervīş-nihād u pāk-i 'tikād kimesnedür* (AHD, 325); *mütāla 'ası pāk ve müzākeresi selīs* (AHD, 327).

⁴⁷⁰ Sungur, *Tâcî-zâde Cafer Çelebi 'nin Heves-nâme'si*, 239-40 (verses 480-86).

These words describe a poetic *meclis* where poetry is recited and critically assessed, with both former and contemporary poets given a rank according to their achievements. This quotation from *Hevesnāme* offers a unique peek into the decades-long process of communal discussion, literary judgment and textual circulation that would ultimately produce the *tezki*res. Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt* self-professedly relied mostly on oral reports and "famous" fragments of poetry, for which the *meclis* and *şoḥbet* settings would have been the main source. Sehi's abstaining from making negative comments on poets must have also been partly related with a concern for preserving the amicable community relations that underlay his *tezki*re.

About 25 years later, Ahdi would produce a very similar *tezki*re as outlined above. Strikingly, both of these authors place great emphasis on the skills of the biographees as conversationalists at least as much as they do on the quality of their poetry. In entry after entry, they yoke skill in poetry to skill in conversation as complementary assets that make a "poet," suggesting that *meclis* presence was considered an essential aspect of poetic practice. The sheer range of vocabulary they use when referring to various types or aspects of conversation is striking in its own right and cannot be fully reflected in English translation; I, therefore, provide the original quotes in the footnotes. Sehi, for example, describes Sihri as "he is a matchless conversationalist; his conversation is absolutely delicious";⁴⁷¹ Süvari as "his conversation caresses the heart";⁴⁷² and Muhyi as "his conversation is very pleasant" among many other examples of the same kind.⁴⁷³ Ahdi comments with striking regularity on the poets' skills as conversationalists, often mentioning these in

⁴⁷¹ *Bībedel muṣāḥibdür, muṣāḥabeti kemāl derecede lezīzdür.* SEH, 337 ("Appendix XXII").

⁴⁷² *muṣāḥabeti dil-nüvāzdur.* SEH, 108a/285.

⁴⁷³ *ğāyet muṣāḥabeti laṭīf.* SEH, 95a/259.

the same sentence with their poetic skills: “He considers conversation with men of learning and letters a treasure and is always engaged in discussions and exchanges” (Yümni);⁴⁷⁴ “In the realm of conversation, his exchanges are very good and pleasant (Ülfeti);⁴⁷⁵ “truly his conversation is calming and refreshing” (Afitabi);⁴⁷⁶ “a pleasant personality with good conversation skills; his immaculate conversation adorns the salons and his style of exchange is matchless as he is competent in all kinds of pleasantries” (Basiri).⁴⁷⁷ These emphases on the poets’ performances as *meclis* participants recalls Aşık Çelebi’s comment on how Zati would have been an even greater poet, had it not been for his hearing impairment, which prevented him from joining *meclises* and *şoḥbets*. This is because having the necessary exposure to the material exchanged in *meclises*—ideas, poetry and stories—would have carried his poetry to a whole new level.⁴⁷⁸

The *meclis* made the biographer as much as it made the poet. Several biographers make explicit statements on the way they relied on their *meclis* and *şoḥbet* experiences as a main resource for their *tezki*res. Latifi cites three types of resource for the contents of his work: his research in manuscripts,⁴⁷⁹ his interviews with elderly members of poetry circles,⁴⁸⁰ and the poetry salons he participated in.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁴ *Erbāb-ı ma’rifetle şoḥbeti ḡanīmet bilüp hemīşe müzākere ve mübāḥase üzredür.* AHD, 182.

⁴⁷⁵ *vādī-i muşāḥabetde muḥāveresi a’lā ve gökçek.* AHD, 207.

⁴⁷⁶ *el-ḥakḳ şoḥbeti rāḥat-baḥş.* AHD, 212.

⁴⁷⁷ *ḥoş-ṭab ‘u ḥüb-şoḥbet ve muşāḥabet-i pāki meclis-ārā ve üslüb-ı müḥāverede bī-hemtā envā ‘-ı leṭāyife kādır.* AHD, 233.

⁴⁷⁸ *Eger ki ‘arızadan ḥalāş bulaydı ve şā’ir şu ‘arā gibi muşāḥabet-i yārāne karışup bi’l-ḥakḳ telāḥuḳ-ı eḳkāre ve münāvele-i ḥikāyāt u esmāre ve mükāfehe-i ebyāt u eṣ ‘āra kādır olaydı on bu kadar olurdu.* AÇ, 1577.

⁴⁷⁹ *... her birinün tedvīn itdūgi te’līfātı ve tahrīr itdūgi eṣ ‘ār u ebyātı sa’y u taleb ile bir bir buldum . . ve zebān-ı türkīde nazm u inşāya müte’allıḳ ne kadar dīvān u risāle ve maḳāle varsa . . . tettebbu ‘ u tefahḥuş kıldum.* LAT, 105-106.

⁴⁸⁰ *... müddet-i mütemādī sālḥürde ve rüzgār-dīde suḥan-şinās u eṣṣāh-ı nās belīḡu’l-kelām u eblāḡu’l-enām ‘azīzlerden isti’lām u istiḳṣār kıldum.* LAT, 106.

⁴⁸¹ See the lengthy passage that begins “ve bunca eyyām u hengāmda miyānumdan devāt ve beḡalūmden defter gitmedi.” LAT, 106.

In explaining how he drew on salons for his *tezkiye*, he recounts how he would always take his notebook and pen with him so that he could record “the poems recited in accordance with the context of the moment”,⁴⁸² both new poems and ones from the past that are inscribed in the memory of the participants.⁴⁸³ He would also make notes of the occasional banter and obscene jokes passed between the poets.⁴⁸⁴ He then wrote these notes he collected over a long period into his *tezkiye*.⁴⁸⁵

Along similar lines, Ahdi refers to the *şoḥbet* and *meclis* context as the ultimate resource for his *tezkiye*. The very title of the work, as Ahdi explains, derives from its origins in the *meclis*:

I have studied, as much as possible, the life and circumstances of the great sultans, exalted religious scholars, the beautiful-faced holders of office, sweet-tongued poets I have feasted together with, and the eloquent of good temperament whose praise-worthy characteristics I have heard from those who had the chance to serve them and benefit from their conversations. To the best of my ability, I have written these down in this pile of disarrayed leaves in four chapters and called it *Tezkiye of the Men of Loyalty or The Rose Garden of the Poets*.⁴⁸⁶

Like Ahdi, but unlike Latifi, Sehi Beg, too, refers throughout his *tezkiye* to the world of orality and face-to-face sociability as the primary, even exclusive, resource of his work. In the introduction he writes:

Some among this cohort lived before my time, so I did not have the blissful chance to get to know them and enjoy their exalted conversations. Since they passed from this mortal life of the ego to the immortal life of happiness, I learned about their characteristics, poetry and other works from elderly men who have seen and lived through a lot. There are poets whose old age coincided with my childhood, but because I was too young, I could not get to know them and converse with them either; their poetry and other works are well-known by the general public. And some pleasant-natured poets and elegant gentlemen I do possess the honor of having met them and being

⁴⁸² *Maḥall ü münāsebetle okınan eş ‘ār*. LAT, 106.

⁴⁸³ *Şaḥāyif-i ḥavātır-ı ehl-i ‘irfānda yād-dāşt olan nazm*. LAT, 106.

⁴⁸⁴ *Nāzūk mutāyebelerinden “al-hazl fī al-kalām kāl-milh fī al-ṭa‘am”* [Ar. Obscene jokes in speech are like salt in food] *iktizāsınca ve şu ‘arānuñ cā-be-cā birbiriyle vāḳī’ olan laṭīf mülāṭafaları*. LAT, 106.

⁴⁸⁵ . . . *bu tezkiyeye taḥrīr ü taşīr . . . bu mecmū ‘a-i leṭāyife ve seḫīne-i ma ‘ārife derc itdüm*. LAT, 106.

⁴⁸⁶ AHD, 88-89.

blessed with their eloquent conversations. The poetry that came out from them during conventions (*eṣnā-i muṣāḥabetde*) are written down on the pages of time. I have recorded the names and characteristics of these as well as their poems.⁴⁸⁷

Whether they acknowledge it or not, it is evident that all sixteenth-century *tezki*res drew on *meclis* discussions and gentlemanly conversations between two or more individuals, commonly referred as *şoḥbet* or *muṣāḥabet*; vivid *meclis* and *şoḥbet* scenes occur throughout this literature. However, the role of these forms of sociability in shaping the contents of *tezki*res goes far beyond the collection of biographical information and poetry samples. The cultures of anecdotes, humor, satire on the one hand, and literary critical practices and ideas on the other also come largely from the salons and *şoḥbets*. When explicit descriptions of *meclis*es found in *tezki*res, chronicles and books of etiquette are matched with *tezki*re contents, a smooth continuum emerges. In some cases this continuity is even more pronounced, with the biographer taking on the role of a *meclis* participant, a witty and humorous entertainer and story-teller. The quintessential example of such style of writing is Aşık Çelebi with his exceptionally wide linguistic range that traverses and mixes learned and colloquial registers and his penchant for narrative and humor. The same is also true to a large extent for Mustafa Ali, with other biographers displaying this entertaining quality in different degrees. A similar attitude is also famously seen in Evliya Çelebi, who served Murad IV as boon companion (*nedīm*).⁴⁸⁸ In that sense, though nominally a descendent of the Persianate *tezki*re, the sixteenth-century

⁴⁸⁷ SEH, 7-8b/84-85. Also see the introduction to the sixth *bihişt*: *Altıncı behište müte'allık olan 'azîzlerin beyânındadır ki . . . bu fakîr yiğitliği zamânında anların şeref-i musâḥabetleri ile müşerref ve sürûr-ı safâ-yâb mülâzemetleri ile nakd-i 'ömri sarf olduğu fasîh ve belîğ kimesnelerdür*; SEH, 70b/210.

⁴⁸⁸ Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality* addresses, among other themes, Evliya Çelebi's role as boon companion to Sultan Murad IV and several pashas and his entertaining writing style based on humor, anecdotes and stories.

Ottoman *tezkiye* has highly original aspects which derive from its deep roots in local Rumi cultural practices.

The embeddedness of the sixteenth-century *tezkiye* in a community culture deeply shaped its contents. The following analyses offer a catalogue of the features that reflect the rapport between *tezkiye* literature and the everyday social interactions of a community.

4.1.1 Descriptions of physical appearance, character and love affairs

A shared feature across all sixteenth-century *tezkiyes* is the high degree of information the biographical entries provide on the poets' physical appearances, personalities and emotional states, especially those related with the experience of love, although in some *tezkiyes* these aspects are more pronounced as suggested above. In some biographical dictionaries, especially those by Sehi and Ahdi, and in general with respect to certain individuals who have become well-known for their colorful personalities and various quirks, these aspects even overshadow the more standard "public" aspects of a life such as education, career and patronage relations. A large part of this type of personal detail found in the *tezkiyes* comes from the biographers' own acquaintance with the poets in question and is therefore part and parcel of the community-embedded style of biographical writing that characterizes this period.

However, it would be a mistake to characterize these intimate representations of the person as simply a result of social connections between the biographee and the biographers. Biographers, or their informants, could just as well relate such personal details even when there was a chronological or social gap with the biographee, i.e., no actual contact. This shows that this particular style of representing the person is a

more generalized phenomenon that retains its cultural relevance even out of contexts of actual social relations. It can be surmised that the genre of poets' biographies taps into this domain most thoroughly, compared to other biographical and historical genres, because there was no structured "career" in poetry as in the religious hierarchy or the civil bureaucracy. The close association of poetry with emotions, especially love, and temperaments, which were seen in this period as influencing the mode of poetry an individual produced ('āṣīkāne, ṣūfiyāne, ṣūḥāne, levendāne, etc.; see the discussion on the conception of poetry as autobiographical in 4.2) seems to have also favored a representation of the person centered on his private existence. The culture of anecdotes on members of the Ottoman elite, like the biographies of poets, also externalized and reified this aspect and remains a largely unexplored domain of Ottoman public culture.

This private representation of the person, however, is to be distinguished from modern notions of the unique "individual." As post-Burckhardtian studies on Renaissance and early modern European biography have shown, what looked like an anecdotal, life-like representation of the newly emerging "individual" had a strong tendency to conventionalization, especially as moral paradigms modeled after previous examples from classical and medieval biography.⁴⁸⁹ In the Ottoman case such derivation from earlier examples is less prominent, although close analysis is likely to reveal important narrative patterns that trace back to Arabic and Persian biographical traditions. Nevertheless, each seemingly unique individual fitted into some loose typology, especially with the anecdotes following well-set patterns. In the

⁴⁸⁹ Burke, "Individuality and Biography"; Mayer and Woolf, *The Rhetorics of Life-writing*; Anderson, *Biographical Truth*. For conventionalization in medieval biography, see Morse, "Medieval Biography"; Morse, *Truth and Convention*.

Ottoman case, these “private” biographies and anecdotes described a markedly “public” persona for the individual in question. In other words, the *tezkires* described a key dimension of Ottoman public culture even as they talked about love and psychological details of a personality.

The inclination to conventionalization is most evidently seen in certain life-narrative patterns that seem to be repeated across different biographies. One is the “rise-and-fall” pattern. Certain individuals’ biographies are couched in this overall pattern across different sources, suggesting a development in the oral realm before being put to writing. Tacizade Cafer Çelebi (d. 1515) and İbrahim Paşa (d. 1536), both executed by the sultan after a period of glory at the top of Ottoman officialdom, are remembered mainly within the frame of this “rise-and-fall” pattern. Another common life-narrative template is the “libertine-turned-pious.” A quintessential example is İshak Çelebi (d. 1537), the *abdāl*-like mullah of the Semaniye madrasas who takes a vow to quit boy love and wine consumption shortly before his death; later biographies of him emphasize this life-changing event. There are several other commonly attested life templates, like the mullah turned Sufi and the antinomian and anti-social *abdāl* become a respected member of the Ottoman elite, like the renowned court poets Hayali Beg and Celal Beg.⁴⁹⁰

Besides such clichés of dynamic life narratives, there are also certain static typologies in which individuals are placed. These include the antinomian itinerant

⁴⁹⁰ For the life-narrative patterns mentioned above see the entries on Tacizade Cafer Çelebi in AÇ and Taşköprülüzade Ahmed Efendi, *Eş-Şaka’iku’n-nu’māniyye*; İshak Çelebi in HÇ and MALL, vol. 5; Hayali Beg in LAT and AÇ; and Celal Beg in Mustafa Ali, *Nushatü’s-Selâtin* (English translation: Mustafa Ali, *Muṣṭafā ‘Ālī’s Counsel for Sultans*). For İbrahim Paşa’s rise and fall, see, for example, Latifi’s two short treatises on the pasha; Latifi, *Lâtîfi’nin İki Risâlesi*. For a full demonstration of the existence of such life “patterns,” it must be shown that a pattern occurs not only in different biographies of the same individual but also in the biographies of multiple individuals. Such a broad discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

dervish, together with a set of typical behaviors and physical features; the heretic, which often involves stories of persecution; the forlorn lover whose life revolves around his unrequited love affairs or his social scandals; the brave soldier whose *merdāne* (manly, brave) poetry reflects his life of battles; and the madman whose life ends in tragedy. Both dynamic life-narrative templates and static typologies tend to crystallize after a time interval, perhaps of several decades, with contemporary individuals' biographies retaining a greater degree of unstructured immediacy.

One area where the private meets the public is the culture of boy love that is so prevalent in the sixteenth-century. Andrews and Kalpaklı's *Age of Beloveds* describes this culture as a specifically public culture of sexuality deeply intermeshed with the social and political bonds and hierarchies (e.g., relations of patronage) as well as everyday codes of conduct (e.g., expected behavior in *meclises*) on which Ottoman elite culture ran. Ottoman literature was a "public form of literature production" that "reflects and scripts the (adult) masculinity of public space," in a context where women and female sexuality were totally excluded from the public domain.⁴⁹¹ A large portion of the biographical entries in sixteenth-century *tezkires*, and even some entries in ulema and *meşāyih* biographies, make at least a brief reference to this culture, typologically situating the biographee as a "lover." *Meşāirü 'ş-şu 'arā*, by Aşık Çelebi, who had picked the word "lover" (*āşık*) as his own penname, is the source par excellence that describes this culture of boy love. The striking uniformity of the behaviors and psychological states described in the *Meşā'ir* and other sources with respect to the experience of love has led Andrews and Kalpaklı to comprehend this public culture of love as "scripted" by poetry.

⁴⁹¹ Andrews and Kalpaklı, *Age of Beloveds*, 54.

Whether poetry was the actual source of the “script” that was then enacted by individuals or one powerful manifestation of a deeper and more pervasive cultural code, the notion of a “script” places a wedge between authentic individual experience and its external manifestations. There is no way of knowing the possible feelings of alienation and artificiality this wedge might have created in historical individuals, or even whether they even felt such a gap in the first place between social expectations and their subjective experiences. As post-structuralist conceptualizations of the person (e.g. Foucault) have emphasized, individuals embody the identities and discursive positions historically available to them.⁴⁹²

From a historical distance we can relatively easily perceive the prevalence of such personal typologies, or “personae,” in premodern social imagination. One line of scholarship that has implications for the sixteenth-century Ottoman context and its rich biographical literature is recent work in history of early modern science that has applied the concept of “persona” to the history of science. The rise of the “scientist” as a new persona (as distinct from the earlier “natural philosopher” for example), has been identified as a phenomenon that complements and compares to the rise of formal scientific institutions like the academies.⁴⁹³ Appearance of other personae under this broad rubric beyond the walls of scientific academies, such as the “Jesuit scientific martyr,” has been seen as a form of informal institutionalization of certain groups’ scientific activities.⁴⁹⁴ The dynamic between collectively-maintained social types and their enactment by individuals “draws attention to the multiple and

⁴⁹² See, for example, *Archaeology of Knowledge* and “Order of Discourse” by M. Foucault.

⁴⁹³ Daston and Sibum, “Introduction: Scientific Personae.” This special issue of the journal *Science in Context* comprises ten essays that explore the formation of “scientific personae” from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries in Europe and North America.

⁴⁹⁴ Hsia, “Mathematical Martyrs.”

ongoing processes that sustain and transform institutions, however narrowly or broadly construed.”⁴⁹⁵

This line of thinking that associates the appearance of new “personae” with informal institutionalization as well as being a dynamic that sustains the more formal institutions, helps understand the rise of poetic personae and their crystallization in writing in the sixteenth-century Ottoman context as the opening up of a new public space which incorporated new roles and functions. It also encourages approaching sixteenth-century Ottoman imperial culture as a unique amalgam of the public and the private, the formally institutional and the informally structured everyday patterns of social behavior. Sixteenth century’s biographical writing and pervasive culture of anecdotes on members of the Ottoman elite reveal an official culture—of which poetry was an integral part—with weak formal institutionalization and a great deal of cultural and social investment placed in the image of the private person. The institutional roles of individuals would begin to dominate biographical writing more markedly only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as will be discussed in Chapter 6 “Conclusion.” In other words, sixteenth-century forms of biographical representation are, at bottom, linked with the problem Cornell Fleischer has formulated as “the individual or the position?” Though his study concerns only the highest echelons of the *ḳalemiyye*, the scribal bureaucracy, Fleischer’s idea that “through the first half of the sixteenth century . . . career the position was not as important as the individual who filled it” can be generalized as a formula that explains much of the functioning of the imperial culture of the sixteenth century,

⁴⁹⁵ Hsia, “Mathematical Martyrs,” 34.

especially the earlier part.⁴⁹⁶ The biographical dictionaries of poets of the sixteenth century give sufficient evidence for such a generalization through their highly personalized representations of leading public figures and through their accounts of exceptional multi-functionalism among the members of the elite (Chapter 5).

4.1.2 The expanded community: Non-poets in the *tezki*res

One manifestation of the way sixteenth-century *tezki*res are molded by an underlying community culture is the tendency of the contents to extend beyond poets and poetry. Precisely because the underlying community included figures other than the poets as such and there was no clear-cut social boundary between the different sectors of the elite, the *tezki*res included many non-poets. Chief among these were patrons, *meclis* hosts and important intellectuals in other areas, such as religious sciences or *inṣā* prose, for whose inclusion a single poem or distich composed in a lifetime could provide the pretext. The sixteenth-century *tezki*re also covered subject matter other than poetry because poetry infused all areas of the elites' activities and because the texts seem to focus on the life and everyday practices of the community as a whole rather than on poetry as an isolated aesthetic and textual field. As will be argued in 4.1.4 "The *tezki*re and the *meclis*: A smooth continuum," it was mainly the *meclis* and *ṣoḥbet* settings, i.e., the everyday oral culture of the elites, that provided much of the content of the *tezki*res, and this oral cultural context of sociability was often not confined to poets as such but included participants from diverse professions and fields of learning, as a result of which the topics that came up could pertain to any aspect of the elites' lives. This, along with the pervasiveness of poetry itself, led to

⁴⁹⁶ See Chapter 8 "Bureaucracy and Bureaucratic Consciousness" in Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, esp. 215-17.

discussions of poetry being enmeshed with other key themes, such as patronage, military and political matters, and religious controversies, which then got reflected in the *tezkires*. In a parallel vein, it is not only “good” poets that are included in *tezkires* but also not so illustrious ones, even exceptionally “bad” ones, which can also be seen as a result of the community-based biographical writing of this period. In all of these respects, the sixteenth-century *tezkires* markedly differ from the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century samples of the genre, which tend to delimit themselves with “good” poets and poetic matters, i.e., acting primarily in accordance with aesthetic criteria (see Chapter 6 “Conclusion”).

Gazali’s (“Deli Birader”) verse letter from Mecca to his circle of friends in Istanbul (before 940/1533-34)⁴⁹⁷ and the replies by the latter present an early picture of this extended community of poets, with numerous patrons, *meclis* hosts, religious scholars and beautiful young boys (*maḥbūbs*) also mentioned. As such, this series of texts portray a world of poetry embedded in sociability, very similar to the way the *tezkires* would do in the following decades. Before moving on to his poet friends, Gazali begins with inquiring about the highest echelons of Ottoman officialdom, from Sultan Süleyman and his grand vizier İbrahim Paşa to important courtiers and ulema, who were apparently all within Gazali’s social reach. The rest of the mentions include figures from all sectors of the Ottoman elite and address them in a friendly and often humorous tone, placing Gazali’s many poet friends in the social world of officialdom as well. Three names who are not poets but great hosts of poetry salons, Efşancı (The Paper Cutter), Sirkeci Bahşi (Bahşi the Vinegar Maker), and Kara Balizade, are striking because they are also given lengthy treatments in Aşık Çelebi’s

⁴⁹⁷ Kut (Alpay), “Gazâlî’nin Mekke’den İstanbul’a Yolladığı.” The letter and the replies include references to Kemalpaşazade Ahmed Efendi (d. 940/1533-34) as the incumbent Sheikh ul Islam.

Meşā 'irü 'ş-şu 'arā along with all of the poets Gazali sends greetings to (see below for references). Many times, Gazali omits the names and refers to the individuals indirectly,⁴⁹⁸ confident that the allusion will be understood by the recipients of the letter, giving the letter the character of in-group talk; this is a discursive feature that occasionally surfaces in the *tezkires* as well, as will be discussed below. Some of these omitted names can be identified because the reply letters by Zati, Rumi and Cafer Çelebi (the scribe), in the same verse form, sometimes reveal the individual's name when responding to Gazali's relevant couplets.

Sixteenth-century *tezkires* are similar to Gazali's letter because they are not strictly confined to accomplished poets. There is a tendency to include important men of letters and scholars who were only rare versifiers if at all. Sehi Beg's and Aşık Çelebi's inclusion of two chancellors (*nişāncı*) they recognize as preeminent masters of *inşā* is a case in point. Sehi's entry on Mevlana Cezerizade Vefayi⁴⁹⁹ credits the latter with introducing the art of *inşā* to Rum and with serving Mehmed II's for a long time as both chancellor and boon companion. Other than a small number of poems found in sixteenth-century anthologies,⁵⁰⁰ Sehi's *Heşt Bihişt* Beg appears to be the only historical source to give information on this early and obscure *nişāncı*. The entry as a whole is centered upon Vefayi's role as chancellor; in fact, the entry reads like a passage on the significance of the post itself and may have been partly motivated by Sehi's own identity as a scribe. Only one Turkish ghazel distich

⁴⁹⁸ E.g.: *Ḥuṭebā içre enkerü 'l-aşvāt / Āğa ḥācesī ol ḥımar eyü mi?* (The mosque preacher with the worst voice, /That donkey who is the āğa's instructor, is he doing well?) Kut (Alpay), "Gazālî'nin Mekke'den İstanbul'a Yolladığı," 229.

⁴⁹⁹ SEH, 319-21 ("Appendix I").

⁵⁰⁰ Sixteenth-century *naẓîre* anthologies associate six poems in total with an unidentified Vefayi; Kesik, "Vefâyî/Vefâ'î, Cezerî-zâde Mahmûd Paşa." A recently studied poetry miscellany from the sixteenth century has introduced 17 new poems that can be safely attributed to Cezerizade Vefayi; Kadaş, "Sâfî ve Vefâyî'nin Yeni Şiirlerini."

and one Persian couplet Vefayi composed as part of an imperial edict (*hüküm*) are given as samples, with no further comments on the quality of his poetry. Thus, in the profile Sehi presents, the poetry samples seem to serve as a pretext for a lengthy exposition on the high value accorded to the chancellor during Mehmed II's reign. Reading this entry together with Sehi's equally long and laudatory one on Celalzade Mustafa, the incumbent chancellor at the time the biographical dictionary was completed, one is further compelled to think that Sehi might be seeking Mustafa's patronage and marshalling more than one entry to extol the post.

A similar case is Aşık Çelebi's entry on Feridun Ağa (later Beg),⁵⁰¹ the renowned chancellor and prose stylist of Selim II's and Murad III's reigns. At the time Aşık Çelebi wrote the entry, Feridun was a scribe of the Imperial Council and personal secretary of the grand vizier Sokullu Mehmed Paşa. Aşık's entry is highly laudatory and couched in exceptionally ornate and erudite *inşâ* prose, in accordance with both the station and skills of the biographee. Judging by the special stylistic treatment and excessive eulogy, Aşık was most probably trying to curry favor with the influential Feridun. That Feridun did not have much to do with poetry is confirmed by the fact that no other *tezkiye* discusses him although he was such a preeminent figure. In fact, in Aşık's entry, too, there is almost no mention of poetry throughout until the very end where a Persian signature couplet by Feridun is quoted.

In a similar vein, Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi appears to have given entries to some highly placed members of the ulema or their sons with a view to enhancing social relations. Sinan Çelebi (d. 986), deceased at the time Hasan Çelebi completed his *tezkiye* in 994, was a respected scholar who served as chief justice (*kāzî 'asker*) of

⁵⁰¹ AÇ, 1177-83.

Anadolu and was later a candidate for the position of Sheikh ul Islam though he rejected the offer. Hasan Çelebi's entry is a typical ulema biography of the *Şakāyık* style, with a detailed account of his career, and a highly laudatory one, with the topic of poetry only tangentially mentioned. The entry includes only one couplet as a poetry sample, the lines Sinan Efendi wrote upon the death of a son. Hasan Çelebi comments after the quotation that "since the purpose here is to point to his verses and demonstrate his mastery of poetry, this much is enough."⁵⁰² Later sources like Atayi and Müstakimzade do not offer additional information on his poetry.⁵⁰³ Clearly, Sinan Efendi was not particularly involved in poetry, and the reason why he appears in Hasan Çelebi's *tezkiye* seems to be his prestige as a scholar and bureaucrat. An additional factor might be that Hasan Çelebi was a very close friend of Sinan Efendi's grandson, the madrasa professor Ahmed Çelebi. Hasan Çelebi concludes his entry on Ahmed saying that he has to cut his portrayal of Ahmed short since writing more words on this praise-worthy person would come to praising his own self.⁵⁰⁴ Another exuberantly laudatory entry by Hasan Çelebi is on Esad Çelebi, the sixteen-year-old son of Hoca Sadeddin Efendi, the powerful preceptor to Murad III, who was the grandee Hasan Çelebi presented his *tezkiye* to. By way of poetry samples, the entry only includes a verse reply in Arabic by the young Çelebi to some complaints he had received.⁵⁰⁵

Besides such performative entries geared primarily towards building patronage relations or enhancing extant social bonds, there are also individuals included in *tezkiyes* because they were part of the poetry circles as *meclis* hosts,

⁵⁰² HÇ, 490.

⁵⁰³ Atayi, *Hadâ'iku'l-hakâ'ik*, vol.1, 774-780; Müstakimzade, *Tuhfe-i Haṭṭātīn*, 589.

⁵⁰⁴ HÇ, 143-45.

⁵⁰⁵ HÇ, 154-57.

friends, or *maḥbūbs* (beautiful young boys). Sehi Beg feels compelled to explain why he has included Cemili, a Turkoman émigré from the East, in a *tezkiye* on Rumi poets. To account for Cemili's inclusion, Sehi refers to the community of poets that the *tezkiye* represents and Cemili being a part of it, in addition to composing in a dialect of Turkish. It was other members of the community that convinced Sehi to include him in.⁵⁰⁶

In Latifi's *tezkiye*, Cemali is included apparently as a famous *maḥbūb* that was a common presence in *meclises*. All poetry content in the entry is by others who wrote verses about him.⁵⁰⁷ Aşık Çelebi's entry on another *maḥbūb*, Keşfizade Ata, is similar, except for one quoted distich by the biographee.⁵⁰⁸ Aşık Çelebi gives a brief entry to Rahi, presumably because he has a penname, but no poems are quoted because they are not available.⁵⁰⁹

In Aşık Çelebi's *Meşā'irü's-su'arā*, many important figures of the intellectual and cultural scene are not given separate entries—because not a single couplet by them seems to exist and they do not have a penname—but are inserted into the regular poets' entries as lengthy digressions. Efşancı, known by this nickname that refers to his expertise in the art of papercutting (*katı*),⁵¹⁰ is mentioned multiple times in the *Meşā'ir* and is also given a special section (“Vaşf-ı Efşancı”) under “Selmān-ı Aydınī,” following an anecdote that involves a humorous incident between the two men.⁵¹¹ Efşancı, formerly a scribe at the Imperial Council, was clearly a social node,

⁵⁰⁶ *Vilāyet-i Rūma geleli hayli zamān olmuşdur. Ve kendüsi bu cem'iyetde bile bulunub eş'arı dahı küllī Türki olub anı bu cümleden ayru olmak münāsib görmedükleri cihetden bu tezkiye yazılıb zıkr olundu.* SEH, 120a-120b/309-310.

⁵⁰⁷ LAT, 216-17.

⁵⁰⁸ AÇ, 1093-94.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ömrden çok behremend olmaduğı eclden āsār-ı eş'aru şāyi' degüldür ve şī'rine çok kimsenüñ şu'urı olmayıp maṭla'ına muṭṭali' degüldür.* AÇ, 1342.

⁵¹⁰ Çağman, “Katı’.”

⁵¹¹ AÇ, 998-1000.

who knew many members of the literati and the learned elite and a highly refined man of culture himself (*ser-āmed-i zurefā ve server-i 'urefā*). He was also a renowned *meclis* host, famous for the garden of select fruit trees and flowers that he cultivated.⁵¹² He is mentioned in Gazali's verse letter from Mecca and its replies and was a friend of Aşık Çelebi. In fact, Aşık explains his inclusion in the *tezkiye* with reference to their friendship.⁵¹³

Other "hidden" entries in *Meşā'irü's-şu'arā*, some short, some longer, include Hatib Seydizade Derviş Çelebi, a qadi and polymath proficient in medicine, calligraphy, music and arithmetic (*'ilm-i hisāb*), who composed only single distiches and refused to write them down; Sirkeci Bahşi, or Bahşi the Vinegar Maker, who, like Efşancı above, had a fruits orchard in Istanbul and became famous for his pickles and vinegar, in addition to being a *meclis* host; Kara Balizade, another *meclis* host and former imperial scribe like his close friend Efşancı; Piri Çelebi the miniature artist (*naḳḳāş*); Şah Kulu the *kemençe* player, and Mustafa Paşa (not clear which Mustafa Paşa this is), who is lauded as a protector of the literati.⁵¹⁴

Another unique type of content in sixteenth-century *tezkiyes* is the entries given to "bad" poets. All *tezkiyes* other than those by Sehi and Ahdi, who generally avoid negative talk, include a large number such failed poets. The reason why these individuals were included was, by all indications, again related with their role in the community and especially in the *meclis* culture. By all indications, these figures were a major source of humor and amusement, being the butt of jokes and subject of

⁵¹² Cf. Kafadar, "Green Reading." Though Kafadar focuses on reading practices, cases, like this one, of literati *meclises* convened in gardens reinforce the author's emphasis on the outdoors as an early modern space of intellectual activity.

⁵¹³ *Ammā dostlğı ĩcāb itdi ki cüz'ı taḳrīble nāmı bu nāmede meşṭūr ve bahāne ile du 'ā-yı ḥayr ile mezkūr ola.* AÇ, 1000.

⁵¹⁴ AÇ, 1640-42, 1642-44, 1204-1207, 1575-76, 1258-61, 1068-69 respectively.

anecdotes. This phenomenon, unique to sixteenth century *tezkires*, is studied in greater detail in section 4.1.4 “The *tezkiye* and the *meclis*: A smooth continuum.”

In general, then, the *tezkires* of the sixteenth century take a maximalist approach when deciding who to include. Anyone who was considered a part of the poetic community could be included in theory even if they composed only a few couplets in their whole life or were total failures as poets. Patrons, important men of learning and letters in other disciplines, *maḥbūbs*, and laughable poetasters could be included, attesting to the primacy of the community structure underlying sixteenth-century *tezkiye* literature. From around the turn of the century this maximalism would draw increasing criticism from new generations of *tezkiye* writers. Mustafa Ali, for example, criticized Aşık Çelebi for precisely this reason: “One reproachable thing [about Aşık Çelebi] is that he included in his book refined people who are not poets because they were personally connected to him. He simply wanted to pay homage to his acquaintances by writing their biographies.”⁵¹⁵ The need to distinguish true poets from poetasters would become a main theme in the later *tezkires* of Beyani and Riyazi. This new imperative would be accompanied by greater reliance on written sources for both biographies and poetry samples (Chapter 6 “Conclusion”). Both of these developments suggest a new context where the practice of poetry was gradually becoming disconnected from its earlier roots in the community and the *meclis*.

⁵¹⁵ *Hemān ‘aybı ehl-i nazm olmayan zurefādan ba’zı kimesneleri münāsebetle kitābına idḥālīdur. Ḥālā ki andan maḥṣūdī ri ‘āyet-i ḥaḳḳ-ı nān u nemek ile nice āşinālarınun beyān-ı ḥālīdür.* MALI, vol. 5, 814.

4.1.3 Gaps in information

The assumption of an underlying community has also shaped the style of conveying information in the sixteenth-century *tezkires*. LAT1's short entry on Muhyiddin

Çelebi Efendi reads as follows:

His penname is Muhyi. He is strict in abiding by the sharia and is a very God-fearing man. He is by nature inclined to poetry, but because he is not very willing or determined [to compose], his poems are few in number.⁵¹⁶

This brief sketch is followed by a single distich as a poetry sample, and that is the end of the entry. Strikingly, Latifi does not give any information about the man's identity. He does not mention Muhyiddin Çelebi's illustrious career as chief justice of Anatolia and then Rumelia, and ultimately Sheikh ul Islam. Nor does he identify him as a member of the Fenarizade family. The entry does not include any time markers either. Clearly, Latifi did not believe such identification was necessary because Muhyiddin Çelebi was a well-known figure at the time.

This type of omission of basic biographical information is very common in sixteenth-century *tezkires*, even where much less prominent individuals are concerned. Such omissions, I argue, reveal the biographers' assumptions about their audiences' prior knowledge about the individuals in question. There are also many cases where the biographers note that they are not quoting particular poems because they are already well-known by the public. These omissions help reveal the cognitive horizons of the community to which both the biographers and their audiences belonged.

⁵¹⁶ LAT1, 137a-138b. The entry is written in the present tense, but the title caption refers to his death, which suggests that the caption was likely added later on, possibly by the copyist. Muhyiddin Çelebi died the same year Latifi completed his *tezkire* (1548).

Although incomparable in stature to a Sheikh ul Islam, the name of Riyazi, a qadi and poet Aşık Çelebi knew closely,⁵¹⁷ is used several times by Aşık Çelebi as a basic identity marker for other individuals. Zari of Tokat is introduced as Riyazi's friend, Samsunizade Efendi's student and Prince Mustafa's secretary. It is remarkable how Zari's personal relation to Riyazi is meant to work as identity marker on a par with his madrasa professor and the prince he served, even preceding them in the order of Aşık's presentation.⁵¹⁸ A similar defining role is given to Riyazi in the opening sentences of the entries on two other poets.⁵¹⁹ Similar to Latifi's Muhyiddin Çelebi above, Aşık was confident that his readers would immediately know who Riyazi was and thus contextualize the biographies of his friends instantaneously. Another poet, Vecdi, is described as "famous for his jokes like the qadi Şavur," but this latter figure is obscure.⁵²⁰ Similarly, Selman of Aydın is said to be a frequenter of taverns "together with Şirvan, deceased, and other friends"; this unidentified Şirvan is not mentioned elsewhere in the *tezkiye*.⁵²¹

Aşık Çelebi uses this kind of allusive language especially for members of Ottoman officialdom. Celal Çelebi, a beloved boon companion of Selim II, was apparently someone who Aşık Çelebi assumed his readers would recognize without proper identification. Not only does he casually mention his name in different contexts, but in one instance, when relating an imperial soldier's presentation of a ghazel to the sultan through Celal's mediation, he refers to him as "the helper of imperial foot soldiers (i.e. janissaries)" (*dest-gîr-i piyādegān*), but the background

⁵¹⁷ AÇ, 1399-1403.

⁵¹⁸ AÇ, 575.

⁵¹⁹ AÇ, 928 ("Niyāzī-i şānī") and 1195 ("Fazlī-i Kātīb").

⁵²⁰ AÇ, 551.

⁵²¹ AÇ, 997.

that earned him this epithet is not explained.⁵²² In the context of the poet Edayi's search for a patron, a Şerifezade is simply identified as "the ornament of the members of council" (*erbāb-ı dīvānın revnākı*), but that he was a member of the Imperial Council as treasurer (*defterdār*) is not mentioned explicitly. Edayi's next patron is likewise covertly referred to as "the possessor of oceanic territories and the wine glass circled around in the party of happiness and pride (*mālik-i mülk-i deryā-bār, piyāle-gerdān-ı bezm-i ibtihāc u iftiḥār ḥazretleri*).⁵²³ Here, Aşık Çelebi must be referring to Piyale Paşa, chief admiral of the Ottoman navy (*kapudān-ı deryā*) under Süleyman and Selim II. In the entry on Müslim Çelebi, who was Kınalızade Ali Efendi's brother and the *tezkiye* author Hasan Çelebi's paternal uncle, Aşık Çelebi does not mention the name of this important ulema family. He only refers to the family's fame and prestige with the remark "there is no need to explain his brothers' and his own station" (*kendüniñ ve karındaşlarınıñ ḥālleri ḥāric-i ebhāsdur*).⁵²⁴

Aşık Çelebi's *tezkiye* is particularly rich in such references to individuals that assume the audience's prior knowledge of them, but other *tezkiyes* use similar rhetorical approaches in their own ways. Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt* stands out as the *tezkiye* that is the most laconic and the most frugal in conveying solid biographical information. For example, Sehi's brief entry on Nigahi does not contain a crumb of biographical fact:

He is a man of admirable disposition. He has beautiful utterances and all of them are well-crafted and harmonious, and his verses are well-received by all. This opening ghazel distich is cited from among his verses.⁵²⁵

⁵²² AÇ, 550.

⁵²³ AÇ, 325.

⁵²⁴ AÇ, 806.

⁵²⁵ *Hoş-tab* 'kimesnedür. Güzel sözleri var ve olancaları daḥı hem-vār ve birbirine muvāfiḳ ve nazm olan eş 'ārı cümleye muṭābıkdur. Ve bu maṭla 'anuñ eş 'arındandır ki zıkr olunur. SEH, 107a/283.

This type of discourse, which pervades much of Sehi's work, could only have made sense for an audience that had at least heard of Nigahi's name and poetry.

Hasan Çelebi is especially minimalist when mentioning the names of the ulema, even when the name is difficult to identify.⁵²⁶ This suggests that Hasan Çelebi's primary intended audience were members of the ulema.

Tezkire authors often refer to recent historical events, major and minor, assuming an audience that was in full command of the details. Latifi does not normally give dates but marks time with reference to such events.⁵²⁷ The timariot poet Neşati, from Kastamonu is identified by Latifi as "the chief steward, almost like a vizier, to the deceased Sunullah Beg, the pride of the great military commanders," assuming Sunullah Beg to be an easily recognized figure.⁵²⁸ Both Sehi and Latifi refer obliquely to an episode of religious persecution known as the incident of the '*aşere-i muḥabbese* (the nefarious ten),⁵²⁹ in the entries on Mevlana Abdülvasi Çelebi and Mevlana Lutfi respectively.⁵³⁰ Latifi also refers to this incident even more covertly in his entry on Abdülvasi.⁵³¹ This incident took place around 1495 during the reign of Bayezid and concerned allegations of heresy against a group of highly-placed members of the Ottoman ulema; one consequence was the execution of Mevlana Lutfi, but the predicament of the rest of the scholars involved or the nature of the connection between the alleged members of the group are not known.⁵³² Both

⁵²⁶ E.g., . . . merhūm Hasan Çelebi'nün mevtāsından mülāzım olub . . . HÇ, 586.

⁵²⁷ E.g., *Beç seferinden dönüldüğü tārīhlerde fevt oldı*. LAT, 448.

⁵²⁸ LAT, 532.

⁵²⁹ The name given to the group is a pejorative moniker that references the '*aşere-i mübeşşere* (the redeemed ten) in Islamic history, the ten companions of the Prophet blessed with the news of their acceptance into heaven while still alive.

⁵³⁰ . . . '*aşere-i muḥabbesedendür* . . .; SEH, 30a/129. *Ol eşnāda 'aşere-i muḥabbese hādişesi vāķī' olıcak* . . .; LAT, 483-84.

⁵³¹ *Lutfi-i maḳtūlūñ ... cümle-i 'aşeresinden biridir*. LAT, 554.

⁵³² Erünsal, "XV-XVI. Asır Osmanlı Zendeke," 134-36.

tezkiye authors, in spite of the many decades that had passed, assume that their audience will know about the incident. Similarly, Aşık Çelebi explains when and why Rahiki was expelled from the janissary corps as “his salary was cut off in the Mustafa Ağa turmoil” (*Muṣṭafa Ağa fetretinde ulūfesi kesildi*), in reference to a janissary rebellion that took place in 1525.⁵³³ Hasan Çelebi goes as far as placing an obscure Kastamonid poet, Haki, “in the time of İsmail Beg.”⁵³⁴ This should be referring to the last ruler of the Çanderids before the region’s annexation by Mehmed II around 1461. Although there is no other time marker in the entry, Hasan Çelebi expected his readers to recognize İsmail Beg and place Haki on the timeline. The entry is actually entirely derived from Latifi, but Hasan Çelebi eliminated all historical details found therein (e.g., the references to Mehmed II) except for the mention of İsmail Beg. Since the annexation of the Çanderid territories is narrated in well-known chronicles such as that by Aşıkpaşazade, Hasan Çelebi appears to have assumed the historical context this name signals to be common knowledge.⁵³⁵

It was not only events and personages from Ottoman history that were considered as common lore. The private lives, including prominent physical features, of the literati were also considered public knowledge, such as the famous poet Zati’s hearing impairment. This aspect is especially prominent in Aşık Çelebi’s *tezkiye*. For Firaki the author writes:

When he first quitted [worldly affairs], he became a Sufi at the hospice of Sheikh Abdülmümin in Bursa. He divested himself [of robes] and quenched the inflammation caused by the fire of suffering with ascetic practice. The events that then unfolded between him and his sheikh are city-wide famous and are one strange story.⁵³⁶

⁵³³ AÇ, 1351.

⁵³⁴ HÇ, 326.

⁵³⁵ Yavuz, “Candaroğlu İsmail Bey ve Medresesi.”

⁵³⁶ *Evvel ferāğatde Burusa’da Şeyh ‘Abdü’l-mü’min zāviyesinde şūfî olup şoyınup iltihāb-ı āteş-i iztirābı çille-i riṣāzetle söyünüp ba’dehu şeyhiyle kendü beyninde olan ahvāl ki şöhre-i şehre ve u’cūbe-i dehrdür.* AÇ, 1158.

No details are given as to what this “strange story” involved. It is again Aşık Çelebi who records a battle of words between Basiri and the treasurer (*defterdār*) İskender Çelebi, one based on double entendres that only an insider can fully understand. One day in the *meclis* of İskender Çelebi, Basiri talks about his travels and complains about the difficulties he has suffered. İskender Çelebi asks “have you seen the West (*mağrib*) too?” a question meant to tease Basiri through double entendre (*īhām*), which is not explained, but might be related with the skin condition, perhaps vitiligo, Basiri appears to have had, which caused dark and white patches (he is described as “*alaca*” in different sources, a term usually used for animals with patchy hide). Basiri sees the intended insult and replies “I am not Alexander of the double horns (*İskender-i zū ’l-ķarneyn*), how can I travel the whole world?” likely implying that İskender Çelebi was a cuckold, the details of which must have been publicly known.⁵³⁷

When it comes to poetry selections, the *tezķire* authors often do not quote material that they perceived as well-known. At the end of his entry on Emri, Hasan Çelebi writes that Emri’s verse conundrums (*mu ’ammeyāt*) are famous among the populace (*meşhūr-ı cumhūr*) and are widely copied into miscellanies;⁵³⁸ the redundancy of quoting them, therefore, is evident.⁵³⁹ Hasan Çelebi nevertheless quotes a few conundrums “so that our book is not empty.”⁵⁴⁰ For Revani’s poetry Hasan Çelebi similarly writes that he will give only a few sample poems since Revani’s work is widely known among the populace.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁷ AÇ, 423.

⁵³⁸ . . . *ekşer-i mecmū ’alarda mestūrdur*. HÇ, 179.

⁵³⁹ . . . *īrād ü iķşārına ihtiyāc yoğ idügi cāy-ı ’inād ü lecāc degüldür*. HÇ, 179.

⁵⁴⁰ *Lākin kitābımız hālī olmasun diyü bu bir iki mu ’ammāsı taşīr ü taķrīr olındı*. HÇ, 179.

⁵⁴¹ . . . *halk arasında iştihārı olmağın bu miķdārla iħtişār olındı*. HÇ, 421.

If Hasan Çelebi often contents himself in such cases with quoting a few samples, Aşık Çelebi often omits poetry quotes altogether. For Kadri Efendi's famous *muḥammes* (mono-rhyme poetry made up of five-line stanzas) with the refrain *Gördüñ zemāne uymadı sen uy zemāneye*, he simply writes that it is unnecessary to quote the poem because of its popularity.⁵⁴² Aşık Çelebi's entry on Deruni-i salis (the third Deruni) includes no poetry citations because the poet was a highly popular musician who set his own poems to music.⁵⁴³ In one case, Aşık refers to a famous ghazel couplet by Necati but quotes only a couplet by Hürrem Paşa that he presents as the source of inspiration behind Necati's; the readers are expected to recall Necati's couplet by simply looking at Hürrem Paşa's.⁵⁴⁴

Such omission of information and poetry quotations based on a perceived redundancy, so common in sixteenth-century *tezkires*, is not typical in later *tezkiire* literature, which is in general more objectively informative. This implies a change in the make-up of the potential audiences as perceived by the *tezkiire* authors and a trend towards an anonymization of the audiences, which could only have happened in a context of expansion of literacy and literary culture beyond a small elite.

4.1.4 The *tezkiire* and the *meclis*: A smooth continuum

4.1.4.1 *Meclis* and *şoḥbet* as loci of circulation of poetry

Recitation of poetry and other writings, especially most recent ones, and extemporaneous compositions on the spot were an integral part of *meclises* and *şoḥbets*. From the *meclis* descriptions in different types of sources, it is difficult to

⁵⁴² *Meşhūr olmağın irād olunmadı*. AÇ, 1325.

⁵⁴³ *Çün eş 'ārı şāyi' ve ekşer-i ḥalk ekşer-i mecālisde anuñ eş 'ārın sāmi 'dür. Şöhretine binā'en irād olunmadı*. AÇ, 517.

⁵⁴⁴ AÇ, 277.

conclude that there was a special type of *meclis* exclusively centered on poetry. Rather *meclis* topics seem to have spanned all intellectual disciplines, with each particular occasion incorporating a different combination of these, presumably according to the inclinations of the participants. The *meclises* also ranged from the more austere, with scholarly or Sufi themes at the center, to the more frivolous, involving poetry, music, drinking and *maḥbūbs*. However, exchange and discussions of poetry seem to have been widespread in general.

Tezkires furnish many examples of *meclises* functioning as media of circulation for poetry. Mustafa Ali writes how as madrasa students Baki, Ruhi, Rumuzi, Sırri and himself would hold *meclises* and recite their most recent compositions.⁵⁴⁵ In a *meclis* scene narrated by Aşık Çelebi, Yahya Beg, while still a young janissary, presents a qasida to Kemalpaşazade Ahmed Efendi in the presence of other preeminent ulema and men of letters and is asked to read/recite (*okıdı*) the qasida twice for better evaluation.⁵⁴⁶ In particular, much of the satirical (*hecv*) and obscene vituperative poetry (*hezl*) is presented in the *tezkires* as emanating from the *meclis* context. Aşık Çelebi quotes the janissary poet Hüsrev's *hecv* of a *Türk* who stole the *meclis* host's clock and was caught red-handed when the clock chimed the hour. Hüsrev was in that same *meclis* and composed the poem extemporaneously at the moment of the incident.⁵⁴⁷ The poem Aşık quotes occurs in a slightly different version in Mustafa Ali's biography of Hüsrev, which suggests that Ali might have had access to another manuscript that records the same poem although his main source for the biography is Aşık Çelebi.⁵⁴⁸ Thus, these channels of sociability played

⁵⁴⁵ *Oturup bir meclisde şafâlar sürerdük ve nev-güftelerimizi okıyup müşâ'ereye ragbet gösterürdük.* MALI, vol. 5, 805.

⁵⁴⁶ AÇ, 673-76.

⁵⁴⁷ AÇ, 1531.

⁵⁴⁸ MALI, vol. 5, 798.

a key role in the circulation of texts, especially in keeping the literati updated on what is new and spreading occasional poetry embedded in anecdotes.

It is difficult to gauge to what degree the poetry samples in the *tezkires*, especially the ghazels, come from contexts of sociability, rather than texts like *dīvāns* and *mecmū'ās*, but there are indications that this was quite frequently the case.⁵⁴⁹ In a rare direct testament to this phenomenon, Mustafa Ali writes that several times he happened to be in the same *meclis* with Mevlana Maşizade Fikri and that he is quoting his favorite ones among the poems Maşizade recited in these cases.⁵⁵⁰ As noted above, Latifi similarly expressed that he had a habit of writing down the poems recited in *meclises*. That the *tezkires* present a high number of poems together with a description of the context in which they were conceived—be it in the form of a full anecdote or a general reference to the social or emotional situation that led to the composition—also suggests that such poems might have been heard in *meclises*. After all, many of the encounters that eventually led to the creation of occasional poems and anecdotes took place in *meclises* and, to boot, it was common in these gatherings to relate anecdotes about members of the Ottoman elite. Especially *naẓīres* and humorous verses were extemporaneously composed as part of the ongoing conversation and the *tezkires* effectively reflect that contextuality; poetry collections like *dīvāns* and *mecmū'as*, on the other hand, do not normally furnish the contexts of poems. Moreover, as will be shown in the second part of this chapter “A poetics of presence: Orality and communalism in sixteenth-century poetry,” most

⁵⁴⁹ Andrews and Kalpaklı have suggested that most Ottoman poems either written for a *meclis* (either an actual or generic one) and/or were about a *meclis* experience, making a call for focusing on the *meclis* to understand the full signification of samples of Ottoman *dīvān* poetry. Andrews and Kalpaklı, “Toward A Meclis-Centered Reading.” For a brief survey of Near Eastern *meclis* traditions by the same authors see, Andrews and Kalpaklı, “Osmanlı Şiirinin Yaşadığı Yer.”

⁵⁵⁰ *Bu fakīr ile ülfeti ve birkaç meclis şohbeti vāķi' olmuştur. Okuduğı vāridātından bu sözleri pesendide tutulmuştur.* MALI, vol. 5, 576.

poets retained a large number of poems, especially individual verses, in memory, and some individuals were capable of committing poems to memory after a single hearing and of recalling them years later. Again, poems, or more commonly, fragments of poems tagged as “famous” by *tezkiye* authors show a very high degree of textual variation, evincing oral circulation. *Meclis* participants also frequently recited poems by others, especially celebrated poets of the past, refreshing at each *meclis* a canonical repertoire. In short, there seems to be a smooth continuity between the poetry citations in *meclises* and in the *tezkiyes*, in terms of both form—penchant for fragments, embeddedness in context and frequency of variation—and actual content.

Citations of poems in the *meclis* led to several forms of responses from the audience, which are reflected in *tezkiye* literature. One common form of response was composing a *nazīre* and the *tezkiyes*, too, frequently present poems along with their *nazīres*; sometimes the *tezkiye* author himself contributes a *nazīre* to the poem he quoted, continuing the conventions of the *meclis*. Another common form of audience response was critiquing the poems recited, commonly referred to as *daḥl etmek* (lit. interfere, intervene). This practice also surfaces as a discursive feature in the *tezkiyes*, as the *tezkiye* authors’ critiques of particular verses they quote.

4.1.4.2 Critiquing poetry

Poetry critiques were almost exclusively done from the perspective of composition (how can the word choice be improved? Does the metaphor work? Does the meter work? etc.); a “readerly” literary criticism simply did not exist. Criticism was the business of poets, who intervened in other poets’ work, either maliciously to play

them down or, rarely, with a view to improvement.⁵⁵¹ Also, distiches built around the same conceit⁵⁵² or poets with the same penname⁵⁵³ could be compared to decide which one is superior.

In the *meclis* scene from the early 1530s where Yahya Beg presents a qasida to the Sheikh ul Islam Kemalpaşade Ahmed Efendi, mentioned above, after Yahya Beg is made to recite the poem twice, the *meclis* participants comment on the various rhetorical devices and figures the poem incorporates. The responses are all favorable, and his wit and conceits are appreciated. However, Hayali Beg, who was also present, is jealous and begins to find fault with Yahya's verses (*dahl*), but is repulsed by members of the audience, who defend the young Yahya's work. The *meclis* ends up a huge success for the great poet of the future.⁵⁵⁴

Authors and poets anticipated such attacks and took caution to the best of their ability. Mustafa Ali's memoirs of his weekly *şoḥbets* with Kınalızade Ali Efendi involved such preemptive editing practices. They would read each other sections from their most recent work and try to identify the problematic sections (*cāy-ı dahl u ta'arruḡ*) in one another's pieces for improvement:

Once every a week he would invite me to his delightful conversation (*şoḥbet*). In particular, he would have a section from the book *Enīsü'l-kulüb*—which I was then occupied with composing—recited aloud. And then he would read a section from his own *Aḥlāk-ı 'Alāyī*, saying: "If you should notice any point for intervention or objection, then by all means speak up." That is, he meant: "By friendship we intend that you look upon this composition with the eye of an enemy and that when, in accordance with human nature, error or mistake appears, you turn your gaze upon it critically and remark upon it." In brief, the pieces of work produced that week would be read out with eloquent delivery by both sides. When there arose a place for

⁵⁵¹ LAT, 563.

⁵⁵² LAT, 520-21.

⁵⁵³ *Bu iki Şānī'nün şā'iriyyetinde ba'zı zurefā "lā farqa baynahumā"* [Ar. there is no difference between them] *dimişlerdür. Ammā cihet-i 'ilmiyyelerinde tefevvukı evlā görmişlerdür*. MALI, vol. 5, 810.

⁵⁵⁴ AÇ, 675-76.

objection or question, we regarded it as our duty to come up with an alternative prose construction or an appropriate answer. Indeed, arrogance and self-conceit were entirely absent from him. In situations of debate and contestation, his willingness to yield and accept correction surpassed that of his peers.⁵⁵⁵

Hasan Çelebi, too, recognizes the importance of critique by members of the community as a tool that improves one's writing. Commenting on the poet Zati's staving off of criticisms leveled at his poetry by using his deafness as an excuse, Hasan Çelebi writes the following:

If anyone objected to his poetry, he would never listen, nor would he ever pay heed to the words of meddlesome critics or reproaches. However, it is clear and as evident as the shining sun that the companionship of friends and the conversations and debates with men of talent have a great share in the creation of poetry, and that the intervention of rivals plays a considerable role in poets' advancement.⁵⁵⁶

However, more often, poets were annoyed by criticism and responded by defensive aggression. Hasan Çelebi rants about ignoramuses who keep finding fault with others' poems despite their poor grasp of the art of poetry:

Those possessed of rancor and malice—who are the embodiment of the Qur'anic phrase '*in their hearts is a disease*'—are at all times given to denial and objection. Their deeds and actions are ever a deviation from the path of fairness and a turning away from what is right and acceptable. However many subtle imaginings you create, however many kinds of elegant and refined similes you invent, they, without comprehension or understanding, reveal and proclaim only interference and disparagement. Since they are devoid of the beauties of virtue and talent, their sole business is obstruction itself; and out of the perfection of their ignorance and the completeness of their deficiencies, their works are—like that of Abu Jahl—the closing of the gate of faith and assent.⁵⁵⁷

What these instances of *dahl* and *ta'arruz* entailed in actual practice we can know because the *tezkiye* authors relate some widely known instances. One is the critique leveled against Baki's famous couplet in a ghazel he composed to

⁵⁵⁵ MALI, vol. 5, 557.

⁵⁵⁶ HÇ, 383-84.

⁵⁵⁷ HÇ, 35-36.

memorialize Süleyman's ban on wine and winehouses around the year 962/1554-55. The couple in question referred to the burning of boats carrying a cargo of wine off the shores of Galata: "Oh Baki, the wind filled the wine party of the horizons with sweet scent / They burned sandalwood (*şandal*) in the incense burner of the sultan's justice."⁵⁵⁸ The couplet is based on the double entendre with the word *şandal*, which means both sandalwood and a small boat in Turkish. The sultan's burning of the wine boats for the sake of law or order (*'adl*) is compared to him burning sandalwood in an incense burner, and in both cases the result is a pleasant smell. According to Mustafa Ali, this couplet was widely praised, but also criticized by the literati because sandalwood was not actually burned in incense burners (*micmer*), but, apparently treated in some other fashion to extract the aroma. The lack of concord between the metaphor and actual practice was commonly seen as a central fault of the couplet.⁵⁵⁹

A similar example is furnished by Aşık. One day in a *meclis* convened in a shop at Istanbul's cloth market (*bezzāzistān*) Hayali Beg recites the following couplet he composed: "Is it a wonder that our night is more luminous than the bright day / Our wineglass is ignited by the sun that illuminates the universe." The sun in question here has mystical connotations, with the couplet building a contrast between physical light and mystical light representing God. Aşık Çelebi, who is also present, objects that the couplet is *terzîk* (non-sensical, illogical) because the wineglass cannot be brighter than the sun if its brightness derives from the sun; the couplet needs the wineglass to be brighter for the conceit to work. Aşık Çelebi "corrects" the

⁵⁵⁸ *Bākiyā kıldı mu 'aṭṭar bezm-i āfākı nesīm / Pādīşāhun micmer-i 'adlinde şandal yaqdılar.* MALI, vol. 5, 274.

⁵⁵⁹ MALI, vol. 5, 274, 805-806.

couplet as “Our wine party makes our night more luminous than the bright day / The sun is but a mere drop beside our universe-illuminating wineglass.” Hayalî Beg is extremely annoyed and protests the intervention.⁵⁶⁰

Tezkire authors also frequently engage in such critical interventions in their biographical dictionaries, showing the faults with the verses they quote from others and “correcting” them. After quoting the following couplet by Neşri, Latîfî claims it is *terzîk*: “My eyebrows are a bridge with two eyes and a column / The soldiers of imagination thus cross the flooding waters of my tears.” Latîfî objects that mental images “cross” the eye and not the eyebrows and therefore the couplet does not work.⁵⁶¹ In intervening to others’ poems Mustafa Ali goes one step further by directly quoting Emani’s poetry sample the way he thinks it should have been crafted in the first place. Only then he explains what the original text read like. He objects to the phrase *libās-ı ‘aşkı tecdîd eylesem* (I wish I would renew the garment of love) because love is absolute and cannot be imagined to be renewed or improved; when quoting from Emani, he replaces this phrase with *libās-ı ‘şevkı (passion) tecdîd eylesem*.⁵⁶²

Tezkires abound in such instances of *dağl* by the biographers. These, however, cannot be interpreted as authoritarian interventions by expert critics who set themselves above the poetic community. Rather, they were simply carrying over a widespread practice from various contexts of sociability to writing. A routine part of poetry discussions, *dağl* was part and parcel of the poet’s practice. It revealed how the poet’s work was perceived as a kind of craft subject to basic norms of

⁵⁶⁰ *Mezbûr haylî infî ‘âl gösterüp bî-huzûr oldı, ‘arbedesiyle meclis pür-fütûr oldı. Birkaç gün istiğnâ itdi ne selâm virdi ne merhabâ didi.* AÇ, 1549-50.

⁵⁶¹ LAT, 528.

⁵⁶² MALİ, vol. 5, 783.

construction, rather than a free space of self-expression. It also revealed its communal character since members of the community saw themselves perfectly entitled to modify others' work. In such a context, *tezkiye* authors, all poets themselves, continued to behave as if in a *meclis* while operating in a new form of writing, the *tezkiye*.

4.1.4.3 Bad poets

The *tezkiye* entries often relish, in ornate prose, on lengthy excoriations of the poor quality of their poetry, which often extend to their personalities as well. On Gubari Mahmud Çelebi, an opium-eater (*berşhār*) who wrote non-sense but claimed to be a masterly poet, Aşık Çelebi indulges in a lengthy diatribe that mock his pretensions.⁵⁶³ Similarly, on Valihi of Belgrade and his brother Ahmed, Latifi takes his time to compose an elaborate lampoon.⁵⁶⁴

Both Aşık Çelebi and Latifi present explicit evidence as to why these “bad poets” were included in the *tezkiyes*: It is their roles in the poetic community as butt of jokes and brutal mockery. Just as learned men, patrons, *meclis* hosts and *maḥbūbs* were included in the *tezkiyes* because they were part of the community as common presences in the *meclises*, the same applied to bad poets and other individuals, e.g., madmen, who were considered insiders albeit lacking respectability. Latifi quotes a couplet jointly composed by the brothers Valihi and Ahmed and explains why he is quoting it in spite of it being “incoherent” (*nā-merbūt*) and “blameworthy” (*medḥūl*):

⁵⁶³ AÇ, 1613-16.

⁵⁶⁴ LAT, 557-59.

“This blameworthy opening verse too is among their incoherent utterances. Their words are mere *mezes*, and they themselves belong to the category of the despicable, which is why it has been recorded.”⁵⁶⁵

Latifi’s dictionary offers several instances of this particular use of *meze*; in fact, *meze* and *medl* (Ar. contemptible, despicable)⁵⁶⁶ occur together in more than one instance. The word *meze* is a Persian loan word that means “taste, flavor.” In Ottoman Turkish it seems to have acquired the additional meaning of “a tasty snack, especially in accompaniment of alcoholic drinks.” A third meaning, which is used to describe bad poets in the context of poetry and not found in dictionaries, is probably likewise confined to Ottoman Turkish and means “a source of amusement, laughing stock.”⁵⁶⁷ In the two cases cited above what makes these poets especially laughable is their arrogance in spite of their lack of poetic ability. In the case of Aşık Çelebi’s Gubari, there is the additional factor of opium addiction, which is another common target of ridicule. Alcoholism was similarly a subject of humor as seen in the cycle of anecdotes associated with the well-known mullah of the Mehmed II’s reign, Melihi.⁵⁶⁸

Aşık Çelebi’s entry on Gubari includes several anecdotes, which Aşık relates with delicious detail, which suggest that stories about the many instances where this man humiliated himself circulated among the poets’ community. Both the

⁵⁶⁵ Bu maṭla ‘-ı medhūl dahi anlaruñ elfāz-ı nā-merbūṭındandur. Sözləri meze ve kendüleri dahi medel [medl] maḳūlesi olduḳları sebebeden tahrīr olundu. LAT, 558.

⁵⁶⁶ A rare word in Ottoman Turkish, most dictionaries of the language do not include it. See Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*.

⁵⁶⁷ For occurrences of this usage see LAT, 387 (“Özrī”), 418 (“Fānī”), 492 (“Likāyī”), 501 (“Mu‘ammāyī-i Selānikī”), 506 (“Melīḥī”). It appears that *meze* can also be used in a positive sense, to mean something (especially words or speech) that amuses in a good way and gives pleasure; LAT, 256 (“Dā‘ī”).

⁵⁶⁸ SEH, 59b-62a/188-93; LAT, 504-509; AÇ, 828-30.

accumulation of these anecdotes and Latifi's choice of the word *meze*, a word directly connected with the *meclis* setting in its primary meanings, strongly suggest that this particular brand of humor was an integral part of *meclis* culture. The *tezkires* are full of such laughing stocks and the stories about them, which point to an intimate connection between the *meclis* practices and the *tezkire* contents.

4.2 A poetics of presence: Orality and communalism in sixteenth-century poetry

The features of communalism and reliance on oral culture that characterized early biographical writing on poets also underpinned the poetry culture of the period. At this formative stage, *dīvān* poetry had not yet become an abstract and anonymous domain of textuality which reproduced itself mainly through the circulation and transmission of texts; it relied very much on physical presence of the participants to exist at all. Probably, it never got fully liberated from being tied to physical presence until the late nineteenth century when print culture became prevalent. But, as the proliferation of poetry miscellanies and anthologies from the seventeenth century onwards suggests, there may have been a movement in this direction already in the early modern period. In fact, the rise of the *tezkires* was the first major step that created the idea of an abstract domain of literature outside the individuals that embodied it. Nevertheless, the early *tezkires* reflect a poetry culture still very much tied to physical presence.

4.2.1 Manifestations of a poetics of presence

Sixteenth-century *tezkires* clearly evince a culture of committing a large number of poems to memory and composing poems extemporaneously. Some individuals who were exceptionally competent in these two regards were noted and lauded, but it is

also evident that the same skills were shared by most members of the poetic community in differing degrees. The high value accorded to these skills was a result of a poetic culture embedded in orality at least as much as in writing. The notion of a complete abstraction or textual detachment from the poet's material presence—a hallmark of modern literary culture—was neither operative nor even fully imaginable. Instead, poetic transmission was anchored in the immediacy of interpersonal relations. This might be one factor in the relative sparsity of *dīvāns* and poetry miscellanies to have survived from the period before the mid sixteenth century. After that threshold, written records of poetry become more and more available.

Memorizing a large number of poems was clearly a routine practice among poets and poetry enthusiasts. *Tezkire* authors mention many individuals who committed to memory a large repertoire of poems. Latifi describes the friend from Kastamonu who encouraged him to compile a *tezkiye* as having a mind “like a poetry miscellany,” being full of verses and other literary pleasantries.⁵⁶⁹ The same comparison of the mnemonic faculty to a poetry miscellany occurs in Aşık Çelebi's description of Nigari.⁵⁷⁰ Latifi introduces Hayali the scribe as someone who knows by heart a large number of widely admired verses.⁵⁷¹ Ahdi notes for two illiterate poets, Bidari and Nusreti, that they possessed a large repertoire of memorized poems, which, the author implies, compensated for their lack of literacy.⁵⁷² The examples can be multiplied.

⁵⁶⁹ *Şafha-i hâtırı vüs 'atde sefine ve cönk gibi ebyât u eş 'âr ve leâyif-i eşmâr-ı bî-hadd ü bî-şumâr idi.* LAT, 88.

⁵⁷⁰ . . . ve hâtırı memlû sefine-i eş 'âr ve nevâdir ü emşâldür. AÇ, 894.

⁵⁷¹ . . . ebyât-ı mu 'tebereden vâfir hâtır-nişânı var idi. LAT, 253.

⁵⁷² *Egerçi aşlında nesne okınamış 'âmî idi. Ammâ hâtırında şu 'arâ-yı selefden ve müte 'ahhîrînden eş 'âr-ı bî-nihâye var idi; AHD, 237. Egerçi sâ'ir şu 'arâ gibi sevâddan behresi yok lâkin hâtırında eş 'âr-i şu 'arâ-yı zamâne çokdur; AHD, 566.*

Sometimes entire oeuvres, of oneself or others, were memorized. According to Latifi, Figani never wrote down his own poems and instead kept them in his memory.⁵⁷³ Necati Beg's poems were completely memorized by Valihi.⁵⁷⁴ Yari knew the poems of Hayyām and İbni Yemin by heart.⁵⁷⁵ According to Latifi, *yārān*, or “friends”—by which the biographer refers to the poetic community—knew most of Beligi Çelebi's poems by heart.⁵⁷⁶

Memorization was certainly not confined to poetry and could extend to other types of texts and bodies of knowledge. One example is furnished by the biographer Ahdi, who relates that he has nicknamed Haveri “the *tezkiye* of men of letters” because the latter knew by heart the poetry and life narratives of poets of the past and the present.⁵⁷⁷ For Haffi, Latifi writes that, in spite of being illiterate, the poet had learned by heart so many erudite words and phrases and subject matter pertaining to both religious and rational sciences that he had virtually become a mufti and professor without the help of books.⁵⁷⁸ Aşık Çelebi relates that as a child he had committed to memory—during *meclises*, judging by his wording—not only a vast repertoire of poetry but also a body of historical knowledge.⁵⁷⁹ According to the same biographer, Sihri, a student to great scholars like Molla İdris, Tacizade and Kadızade-i Acemi, had committed to memory a significant portion of their

⁵⁷³ . . . *didügi eş 'ār u kaşāyid külliyyen hātırında ve hātır-ı rüşen-nihādında idi. Vāridātın tesvīd nedür bilmezdi ve tesvīd için eline kırtās u kalem almazdı.* LAT, 438.

⁵⁷⁴ *Külliyyen Necātī şī 'ri yādında ve hātır-ı pāk-nihādında idi.* LAT, 555.

⁵⁷⁵ *Hayyām ve İbni Yemīn 'üñ muḳaṭṭa 'ātı ve rubā 'iyyātı hātır-ı pāk-nihādında idi.* LAT, 575.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ekşer-i eş 'ārı hātır-nişān-ı yārāndur.* LAT, 191.

⁵⁷⁷ *El-hakk şū 'arā-yı müteḳaddimīn ve müte 'ahhīrīnün sergüzeştleriyle eş 'ārların ezberlemiştir. Eşnā-yi muşāḥabetde muḥillh'ān oldugi ecilden ben anı tezkire-i erbāb-i 'irfān dimişin.* AHD, 293.

⁵⁷⁸ *Efvāh u elsine-i dānādan ol kadar luḡāt u ibārāt ve mesā 'il-i 'akliyyāt u nakliyyāt hātır-nişān u iz 'ān indinmişdi ki kitāb ve deftersüz güyā ki müftī ve müderris olmuş idi.* LAT, 249.

⁵⁷⁹ *Küberā-yı şū 'arā-yı kirāmdan 'ömr-bīn ve umūr-dīdeler şeref-i şoḥbetleri ni 'met bilinüp eş 'ārlarından şahā 'if-i dilde niçe fuşūl u ebvāb yazılmışdı ve ḥavādis-i eyyām ve tevāriḥ-i enāma vāḳıf 'arīf-i ahvāl aşḫāb-ma 'arīf-i cihāan-dīde vü ḥeḥā-keşīdeler ülfetleri ḡanīmet kılınup güftārları . . . yād-dāşt olmaḡla sikke mermerde ḳazılmışdı.* AÇ, 243.

writings.⁵⁸⁰ Sihri also possessed a large repertoire of stories and anecdotes about historical and contemporary figures from among the sultans, military-administrative elites, the ulema and the poets; the source of some of these narratives, Aşık tells us, was the *meclis* environment.⁵⁸¹

One related skill was the ability to commit an entire poem to memory upon a single hearing. Muhyi-i Gülşeni relates that in the year 953/1546-47 he recited in a *meclis* convened in Istanbul an expanded ghazel of eight-line stanzas (*müşemmen*) he had recently composed. Fethullah Arifi Çelebi, the official *şehnâme-güy* of the following years, was also present in this *meclis* that brought together well-known poets and patrons of the time. After a break of about thirteen years, Muhyi and Arifi meet again in Cairo, where Muhyi was now living as the keeper of Sheikh İbrahim Gülşeni's shrine (*türbedâr*). Arifi reminds Muhyi of the last occasion they had seen each other and begins to recite the *müşemmen* he had heard from Muhyi. Muhyi is awe-stricken, and comments that the poem was no longer in his own memory as its composer.⁵⁸² Figani is similarly lauded by the biographer Latifi for the ability to immediately commit orally-recited poems to memory as well as doing the same with the poems he read.⁵⁸³

The skill of spontaneous or extemporaneous oral composition (*bedîthe* [n.], *bedîheten* [adv.] in Ottoman parlance), which was widespread at this time and very

⁵⁸⁰ *Ekşeriniñ müsevvedâtı mazmûnları âyine-i hâtırlarında şüret-güsterdür ve tabakât-ı perde-i 'inebi 'aynı şahhâf dükkânı gibi pür-dîvân u defterdür.* AÇ, 950.

⁵⁸¹ *Ol deñlü yâd-dâşt u leñâ 'if ve nevâdir ü tarâ 'if, mülâtafât-u 'ulema ve muñâyebât-ı şu 'arâ ve tevârih-i selâfîn ü ümerâ ve mecâlis-i e 'âlîde ve meñâfili ahâlîde güzerân iden emsâl ü hikâyâ ki anuñ hâtırında vardır, barmaq hisâbın eylesen benân-ı hâmeye kelâl gelür.* AÇ, 950.

⁵⁸² Muhyi-i Gülşeni, *Menâkıb-i İbrâhim-i Gülşenî*, 413-15. Even if the anecdote involves some exaggeration or is outright spurious, it attests to the high value accorded to a strong memory and the acceptance that such feats of mnemonic performance were not entirely incredible.

⁵⁸³ *'Arabî ve Fârisî nazma müte 'allık her ne ki okınsa şafha zamûrinde nağş olurdu ve kankı şî 'ri ki nazar-ı iz 'ânla gözden geçürse ke 'n-nağş fi 'l-hacer hâtırında kalırdı.* LAT, 531.

highly valued, should have significantly drawn on the memorized repertoire, which would have furnished the poet pre-given building blocks he or she could modify and/or deploy in new combinations. The reliance on conventional sets of words, phrases, conceits and narrative units has been clearly demonstrated for oral folk poetry since at least Milman Parry and Albert Lord's detailed studies on South Slavic epic tradition.⁵⁸⁴ There is every reason to think that similar compositional mechanics were at work, though maybe not exclusively, in Ottoman ghazal poetry, especially during the early sixteenth century when textualization of the ghazal seems to be weaker compared to the situation in the later periods. Sixteenth-century *tezki*res are replete with examples of spontaneous compositions of single couplets, entire ghazels and other short-form poetry like chronograms and conundrums. Accounts of spontaneous compositions often foreground two themes: that the composition was a response to a social situation, i.e., part of an instance of communication and that it came about involuntarily, as a result of the poet's emotional overwhelm. These themes will be discussed further below in the discussion of Ahmed Paşa anecdotes in the section on canon formation. To cite one example here, when Ugurluoglu Ahmad Mirza (d. 1497), Aqqoyunlu prince and grandson of Mehmed II, was killed in an uprising, many Ottomans were devastated and elegiac qasidas were composed. Halil Paşa, son of İbrahim Paşa, however, had deeply disliked the Mirza. In one of those days, Kemalpaşazade Ahmed Efendi, who also loved the Mirza, visits the pasha. The pasha contemptuously asks Kemalpaşazade if he composed an elegy too. At that moment, Kemalpaşazade says he did but recites a spontaneously composed distich to protest the pasha's delight with the Mirza's death:

⁵⁸⁴ See especially Lord, *Singer of Tales*.

Inadvertently and without thinking, this opening distich conjured
spontaneously in my mind and I said ‘yes, I did’ and recited it:
I never thought that I would see the world do you injustice
That your foes would rejoice while your friends were grieving⁵⁸⁵

The sixteenth-century popularity of the *naẓīre* type of composition—
“intentional” *naẓīres*—is another manifestation of the poetics of presence. The
context in which *naẓīres* were composed, their chronological and physical distance to
the composition of the poem responded to, came in a spectrum, from the most
immediate to the most distant. Many *naẓīre* compositions were extemporaneously
created *in situ*, often in the *meclis* setting, as an immediate response to a poem
recited. However, judging by the frequency of the cases in the *tezkires*, even more of
them came about after a recent composition spread among the community of poets
and became something of a sensation, triggering a flurry of *naẓīres*. A third type was
the belated textual contact, as in the case of sixteenth-century *naẓīres* composed in
response to older works, e.g. by Ahmed Paşa or even older ones like Hafez.
“Unintentional” *naẓīres*, which were the result of the anthology compilers’
constructions of *naẓīre* chains out of originally unrelated pieces of poetry, might be
said to be the least context-dependent form. In brief, the *naẓīre* practices were deeply
rooted in community, orality and physical and social contact but extended into a
world of textuality. This variability might also have a historical dimension, i.e., in
time, as Ottoman textual culture developed greater depth and complexity, *naẓīre*
practices may have relied more and more on texts rather than physical presence and
community membership, a hypothesis that needs to be researched in its own right.

Yet another manifestation of the poetics of presence was the notion that most
poetry, especially love poetry, was autobiographical. The underlying assumption was

⁵⁸⁵ AÇ, 165.

that the most powerful love poems could only be composed by the true lovers. That spontaneous compositions were often a result of an outburst of uncontrollable emotions, mentioned above, is a related idea. According to Latifi, İshak Çelebi's poetry mostly chronicled his own love affairs and owed their pleasantly raw expression of romantic emotion to this grounding.⁵⁸⁶ Similarly, Aşık Çelebi describes Amri's poetry as an account of his joys and sufferings in his relationship with his beloved.⁵⁸⁷ In a slightly different example, Talikizade Mehmed makes the striking claim that the entire *dīvān* of Hayali Beg was a stage-by-stage chronicle of the relationship between Sultan Süleyman and İbrahim Paşa and goes on to offer an exegesis of a generic ghazel about the separation of lovers as an account of the breakdown of their relationship. The term Talikizade (d. 1606) uses for Hayali's "mimetic" lyrics is *zebān-ı vukū'* or accounts of what transpired.⁵⁸⁸ This term was more commonly used in the sixteenth century for verse narratives recounting actual love affairs of the poets, the most famous being Tacizade Cafer Çelebi's *Hevesnāme* and Yahya Beg's *Şāh u Gedā*. However, Talikizade uniquely applies the term to the ghazel genre.

It is difficult to gauge whether Talikizade's unparalleled claim about the nature of Hayali's *dīvān* is a unique piece of information by an insider—unlike most of the *tezkiye* authors, Talikizade was a courtier as official *Şehnāmecî*—or a later ascription drawing on the broader habit of reading ghazels as (auto)biographical. Indeed, in many cases, particular poems were used as basis upon which pseudo-biographies were built, as we have seen in Chapter 3 and will see further below in the

⁵⁸⁶ *Ekşer-i eş'ārî hoş-âyende ve sâde ve 'aşıkâne ve küşâde olduğu budur ki eşnâ-i muşâhabetde mehâbîb ile kendünün hasb-i hâlin ve murâd-ı mâfîl'l-bâlin nazm itmişdür.* LAT, 172.

⁵⁸⁷ *... hâlet-i 'ışk ile olan hasb-i hâlin ve sūz-ı derd ü melâlin ve dilberi ile beyrinde cārî olan vaşl u hecr ve lutf u zecr tekâzâsıyla derd-i derünün hikâyet ve gâh lûkr ü geh şikâyet itmişdür.* AÇ, 1125.

⁵⁸⁸ Talikizade, *Şemâ'ilnâme*, 74a.

similar interpretation of Ahmed Paşa's ghazels.⁵⁸⁹ Paul E. Losensky criticizes modern scholars for reading Baba Figani's lyrics as an autobiographical—as an emotional or psychic history of the poet⁵⁹⁰—but this way of reading ghazels clearly had premodern precedents. Some of these readings were no doubt purely imaginative, but caution might be required before describing the ghazel as an entirely conventionalized discourse with no connection to composers' lives, especially given the prevalence of the Sufism-based cult of boy love. Lyrics might have carried mimetic relevance for the contemporary audiences, which again privileges presence as the ultimate interpretive frame for poetry, though as modern readers we may have entirely lost these immediate contexts of signification.

4.2.2 Ahmed Paşa anecdotes: Implicit poetics of the ghazel

The cycle of anecdotes centered on Ahmed Paşa's ghazels encapsulates the fundamental theoretical assumptions that underpinned Ottomans' practice of lyric poetry. In Chapter 3, I summarized some of these anecdotes as part of an argument for the spurious nature of the “historical” or, rather, “pseudo-historical” anecdotes on fifteenth-century poets. These anecdotes, I argued, first developed in the oral realm from around the turn of the fifteenth century and later recorded in the *tezkires* in their multiple variants. Chapter 3's focus was on the politico-ideological significance of these anecdotes, namely the way they Ottomanized pre-Ottoman Anatolian poets and built a literary history keyed to Ottoman dynastic history, which could best be demonstrated via anecdotes on Şeyhi, a poet that worked for multiple courts, Ottoman and non-Ottoman. Most Ahmed Paşa anecdotes involve Mehmed II and

⁵⁸⁹ For some examples from the *tezkires* see LAT, 563-65 (“Vaşfi”) and LAT 571-72 (“Hilālī”).

⁵⁹⁰ Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī*, Chapter 2.

therefore can, too, be considered as part of this “project” of constructing a dynastically inflected literary history. However, here, I would like to discuss their role as the communal expressions of literary thought, in particular an Ottoman poetics of the ghazel genre.

Speaking of Ottoman historical thought, Hagen and Menchinger comment that:

A full-fledged philosophy of history as a distinct field of inquiry has never developed in Ottoman letters. This does not mean that the Ottomans did not ask such questions, but that they answered them in the pragmatics of historiography, rather than in theoretical discussions. The result is not a unified edifice of a philosophy of history, but a fabric of sometimes contradictory threads of ideas. The vast and, as we will see, highly variegated body of historical writing, of the practice of historiography as representation of the past, still overall is remarkably homogenous, meaning that it is virtually impossible to distinguish different “schools” within it.⁵⁹¹

These observations apply to the realm of Ottoman literary-critical thought as well. While explicit theoretical discussions were rare and a conceptual apparatus comparable to modern abstractions about formal and historical aspects of literature hardly existed, a conceptual understanding embedded in literary practice was common. Students of Ottoman “literary criticism” have mostly contented themselves with drawing up catalogues of “terminology” from *tezkires*,⁵⁹² but the more volatile realm of practice reveals a far richer and sophisticated thinking, inaccessible through the study of reified terms mostly borrowed from Arabic and Persian literatures. The historical anecdote itself is one unique form Ottoman literary critical thought takes.

These collectively developed narratives incorporate implicit abstractions about the nature of particular poetic genres, and these ideas can display a great deal

⁵⁹¹ Hagen and Menchinger, “Ottoman Historical Thought,” 93.

⁵⁹² E.g., Tolasa, *16. Yüzyılda Edebiyat Araştırma ve Eleştirisi*. A more recent study of a similar nature is the PhD dissertation Konar, “An Analysis of the Terminology of Textual Production Methods.”

of heterogeneity and inconsistencies, which point to an underlying social world of debate and discussion. Many premodern poetic cultures seem to have spawned spurious anecdotes about poets and poetry which imaginatively reconstruct contexts of composition or circulation for highly canonical works. In modern world scholarship, under the influence of positivism, the predicament of such anecdotal literature has been to be dismissed as being simply false and of no historiographical value. More recent approaches, however, recognize their role in expressing literary ideologies belonging to the times when they were created.⁵⁹³ Most Turkish scholars, on the other hand, seem to still cling to the idea that these anecdotes reflect historical reality.⁵⁹⁴

Ahmed Paşa anecdotes, centered around his lyrics, are the most developed group of historical anecdotes, witnessed in Lamii's book of anecdotes, Talikizade's *Şemâ'ilnâme* and Kefevi's *Rāznâme* as well as the *tezkires*. The extant corpus is wider and comes in greater number of variants than any other cycle of poet's anecdotes, including the cycle on Şeyhi, which is centered on the *meşnevî* genre as we have seen. The prevalence of Ahmed Paşa anecdotes marks the centrality of the ghazel in sixteenth-century Ottoman poetry. The anecdotes, I argue, express genre

⁵⁹³ I am particularly indebted to Alexander Beecroft's comparative study of the "implicit poetics" incorporated in ancient Greek and Chinese anecdotes about foundational poets or works (*Authorship and Cultural Identity*). Beecroft reads these apocryphal anecdotes as indicative of the relation between canon formation and state formation in an era when large states emerged for the first time to rule over numerous local cultures.

⁵⁹⁴ See for example two recent reference entries on Ahmed Paşa: Günay Kut, "Ahmed Paşa, Bursalı": *Böylece pâyelerin en yükseğine ulaşarak vezirlik rütbesini elde etti. . . . günün birinde talihi ters dönen Ahmed Paşa, bazı dedikodular üzerine padişahın gazabına uğradı ve tevkif edildi. . . . Ahmed Paşa bu bâdireyi padişaha yazıp gönderdiği meşhur "kerem" redifli kasidesi ile atlatmış Turgut Karabey, "Ahmed, Veliyyüddin-zâde Ahmed Paşa": Ahmed Paşa'nın Fâtih'e çok yakın olması gerek bilim ve şiir gerekse devlet adamlığı konusundaki üstün yeteneği ile başarısı pek çok kişinin kıskançlığına yol açmıştır. Bu kıskançlığın etkisiyle Ahmed Paşa'nın gençlerle ilgilendiğine dair iftira ve dedikodular yayılmıştır. See also Köprülü, "Ahmed Paşa," 189, for an earlier example along the same lines.*

theory in mythical form. They are less about Ahmed Paşa as a historical individual and poet than about the ghazel genre itself.

Ahmed Paşa anecdotes come in two main groups and are normally found in the Ahmed Paşa entries in the *tezkires*.⁵⁹⁵ Both are preoccupied with the mechanics of composition as versus matters of reception, which reflects a composition-centered canon as versus the reader/consumer-centered canons of the modern times, a point I will discuss further in the next section on sixteenth-century Ottoman notions of canonicity. The first group is a veritable expression of the poetics of presence described in the previous section. This group of anecdotes all explain the composition of some of the most well-known verses of Ahmed Paşa with reference to his purported love affairs. In most of these anecdotes (refer to Chapter 3 for a summary of samples), Ahmed Paşa is in love with a boy, in many cases a page of Mehmed II's court. When he encounters the boy, verses of love spill uncontrollably from his lips. Somehow, these verses swiftly reach the ears of Mehmed II, who decides to punish Ahmed Paşa, either because he, too, is in love with the boy or because he deems this to be a transgression. In some versions, Mehmed II first hears of Ahmed Paşa's love and then devises a "test" to reveal Ahmed Paşa's love by sending off the boy to Ahmed Paşa, assured that the poet will, inadvertently, respond with a poem to the boy's sight. The poems incur the wrath of the sultan, which leads to the poet's punishment. The poet then manages to attain forgiveness through a panegyric, known as the "magnanimity" (*kerem*) qasida. There are other versions

⁵⁹⁵ Two works of different genres also include Ahmed Paşa anecdotes: Behiştî Sinan's *meşnevî Leylā vü Mecnūn* and Lamii Çelebi's book of anecdotes. Aygün, "Behiştî'nin Leyla vü Mecnun mesnevisi"; Lamii Çelebi, *Latîfeler*.

which do not involve Mehmed II and show, for example, the poet in the bathhouse adoring the bathhouse boy (e.g., in Garibi's *tezkiye*).

It is clear that these anecdotes encode the ghazel as a genre grounded in the experience of love, which ties in with notions of the autobiographical nature of the genre expressed in the *tezkiyes*. Secondly, the composition is motivated by strong, uncontrollable emotion and is spontaneous to the degree that the poet seems to display little agency in the formation of the poem. The composition of the ghazel is not at all a coolheaded literary exercise, and at no point is there a reference to pen and paper. This spontaneity is idealized in the anecdotes as the lyric act par excellence. Third, the love in question is boy love, and the moment of gazing at the boy automatically leads to a poem. And fourth, a love lyric is something public by definition. From the moment it is created, it enters circulation in the public realm; the anecdotes represent composition and reception (by the sultan) as one and the same moment; a ghazel that remains locked in the poet's drawer is almost a paradox, an impossibility. These anecdotes, in short, embody a quite complex implicit theory of the love lyric from a specifically compositional perspective.

The second group of Ahmed Paşa anecdotes represents the poet in relation to the Persian or Chagatai masters and display a whole array of ideas about the nature of this relation. This group contradicts the first group in that it represents Eastern textual influence as the main driving force behind Ottoman poetry instead of the local and personal experience of love, though the motif of extemporaneous composition is also seen here. Typical of these anecdotes is the centrality of the *naẓīre*—instead of poems based on raw, instantaneous surge of emotion—and the problem of imitation. In some of these anecdotes, Ahmed Paşa is shown to be of equal caliber with the most renowned Persian poets. For example, one day at the

court of Mehmed II, a random couplet is picked from Hafez's *dīvān* for the purpose of prognostication. Ahmed Paşa spontaneously composes a beautiful response by taking Hafez's first line and adding a new second line, also in Persian, which answers the question formulated in Hafez's original.⁵⁹⁶ Similarly, Talikizade describes a scene in the bathhouse where Mehmed II and Ahmed Paşa gaze at the naked beauties. Ahmed Paşa recites a bathhouse themed poem by Sadi of Shiraz and then composes, on the spot, a short Persian *mesnevi* on the same topic and is generously rewarded by the Sultan.⁵⁹⁷

The two extant versions of the anecdote about the 33 ghazels sent by Ali Shir Navai to Sultan Bayezid and Bayezid's command to Ahmed Paşa to compose *naẓīres* reflect different opinions on the status of Ottoman poetry vis-à-vis its Eastern models. According to Aşık Çelebi, this episode occurs late in Ahmed Paşa's life, i.e., after he emerged as a major Ottoman poet, which implies a relation of equality. Indeed, Aşık Çelebi interprets the *naẓīre* sample he quotes, which includes the phrase "your abode is the garden [for that nightingale]" (*kūyun girek būstān aña*) as a message from Ahmed Paşa to Bayezid II: Navai's achievement as a poet was directly linked to the patronage and vizier's status Husayn Bayqara bestowed upon him; similarly Ahmed Paşa, once a vizier to Mehmed II, now depends on Bayezid II for success as a poet. Ahmed Paşa, in other words, is the Ottoman Navai.⁵⁹⁸ A few decades after Aşık Çelebi, Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi presents a differently framed version of the anecdote, saying that this happened early on in Ahmed Paşa's career (and not late as Aşık Çelebi says), and it was only thanks to this imitative learning

⁵⁹⁶ Riyazi, *Riyâzü'ş-şuara*, 43.

⁵⁹⁷ Talikizade, *Şemā'ilnāme*, 50a-50b.

⁵⁹⁸ AÇ, 290-91.

process that Ahmed Paşa could cast off his uncouth ways and evolve into a good poet. This version shows Ahmed Paşa as far more subservient to his model.⁵⁹⁹ An even more pointed version of this attitude is seen in Behiştî Sinan's early *meşnevî* *Leylā vü Mecnūn* (c. 1510), where the author depicts Ahmed Paşa as an incapable imitator of Persian classics, in the context of a failed attempt by Ahmed Paşa to compose a *Leylā vü Mecnūn* at the behest of Mehmed II, very likely an apocryphal narrative.⁶⁰⁰

In Riyazi and Talikizade, two relatively late texts, we find for the first time, an anecdote that claims Rumi poets' superiority over the Eastern ones. In Herat, Abd al-Rahman Jami (referred to in these sources as Şeyh Mahdumi) is in a *meclis* with Ali Shir Navai. Navai argues that Chagatai poets are better than those of Rum and Jami defends the latter. Right at that moment, a traveling dervish from Rum drops in. They ask him to recite some recent Rumi poetry. The dervish recites Ahmed Paşa's ghazal that begins with the couplet *Çîn-i zülfiñ miske beñzetdüm haqāsın bilmedüm / Key perîşān söyledüm bu yüz karasın bilmedüm*, which was probably the most famous ghazal by the poet at the time, judging by its recurring quotation in different sources. Jami is delighted as the poem clearly proves his point and he dances to celebrate.⁶⁰¹

These two types of anecdote on the compositional mechanics of Ahmed Paşa's lyrics in fact reflect broader discussions among the community of poets, which surface in more explicit form in the *tezkires*. Lyric poets were generally understood to be of two types: Some were "natural-born" poets and did not need

⁵⁹⁹ HÇ, 134-35.

⁶⁰⁰ Aygün, "Behiştî'nin Leyla vü Mecnun mesnevisi," 399-401 (verses 1842-1875).

⁶⁰¹ Talikizade, *Şemā' ilnāme*, 52a; Riyazi, *Riyâzû 'ş-şuara*, 42-43.

learning to excel; others acquired the skill through their studies and effort. Walter Andrews has extensively analyzed this duality as expressed in Latifi's *tezkiye* and argued that Latifi understood natural-born poets to be poets of *ma'nā*, or meaning, and poets with acquired skills, poets of outer form. Ultimately, according to Andrews, Latifi believes in the necessity of some kind of balance between these two sources of poetic composition.⁶⁰² In any case, this was a vibrant and pervasive discussion at the time that went beyond Latifi's text and arguably reflected the ongoing transition from a poetry culture with strong roots in orality and community culture to one becoming increasingly textualized and socially decontextualized.

Both the figure of the natural-born poet and the student of Persianate precedents are embodied in the Ahmed Paşa anecdotes, with, however, no rapport or negotiation established in between, creating a conflictual image of the poet and his oeuvre. This suggests that the anecdotes were not about Ahmed Paşa as an artist but about the lyric tradition itself and all the contemporary discussions around it. In other words, Ahmed Paşa's name and figure is used as a metonymy that represents the Ottoman ghazel and its achievements and problematics as of the early sixteenth century.

Imaginative anonymous anecdotes with him the protagonist open up a space for literary thought in a society with very little explicit poetics, especially before the arrival of the *tezkiyes*, which was when these anecdotes had begun to develop. A similar analysis can be made for Şeyhi anecdotes, which are all preoccupied with the *mesnevī* genre, although Şeyhi was a fully accomplished ghazel poet as well. This approach also explains why no other poet is associated with a cycle of anecdotes on

⁶⁰² Andrews, "The Tezkere-i Şu'ara of Latifi."

these two main genres of *dīvān* poetry. It is remarkable that Ahmed Paşa anecdotes continued to retain their relevance until the end of the century, long after new generations of poets, from Necati and Zati to Hayali and Baki, emerged and overshadowed Ahmed Paşa's actual poetic output. Variants of the anecdotes continue to appear into the early seventeenth century, reflecting an ongoing interest in this lore, possibly with new creations along the way. In other words, there seems to be a gap between the declining trajectory of actual interest in Ahmed Paşa's poetry and the continuing relevance of the anecdotes, which is another sign that the anecdotes' cultural significance is not primarily keyed to the person of Ahmed Paşa. The way poets of the past are iconized and used as concept replacements, I argue, is of great import in making sense of the canon statements found in the *tezkires*. Before the age of the artist as an individual genius, i.e., the modern times, such statements that single out and list poets' names might be only superficially looking like modern canons.

Next, I broach a discussion on notions of canonicity. I argue that sixteenth-century Ottomans did not have a literary canon in the modern sense of the term. A continuously updated, radically “presentist” canon, I argue, was an inevitable consequence of a poetics of presence that required the poet to perform *in situ*, which in turn was predetermined by the community structure and its forums of sociability in which sixteenth-century poetry flourished. Canonical formations more similar to modern ones might have developed after poetry culture was more thoroughly textualized from the seventeenth century onwards, which remains a topic for further research.

4.2.3 Notions of canonicity in the sixteenth century: A presentist and community-based literary canon

For the European context, it is generally agreed that the formation of modern literary canons—grand narratives of national literatures intended primarily for students and readers in the age of the nation-state and mass literacy—date back to the eighteenth century. However, in the last couple of decades, scholars have begun to investigate canon formations before modernity. The key concern that cuts through these studies is the need to understand the different set of values and assumptions that underlie premodern literary canons, which evolved under different definitions of and social arrangements around works that we would call “literary” today.⁶⁰³

The canon statements in the sixteenth century Ottoman biographies of poets and other sources—such as poems that mention major poets, especially *şāʾir nāmes*, which are virtually lists of important poets—seem, at first glance, to be very similar to modern canon statements, which tend to take the form of lists of “the great” from the beginnings of the literary tradition up to the present.⁶⁰⁴ Judging by these statements, it seems during the sixteenth century Ahmedî (d. 1412) was considered the first canonical poet of Ottoman literature. He is followed by Şeyhî, as the most important *mesnevî* author of the fifteenth century, then Ahmed Paşa and finally Necatî Beg. These are also the few poets around whom anecdotes developed. However, not only were the poets in this minimalist list far from being contested and criticized, even slammed, but also a much more complex picture emerges in the

⁶⁰³ See for example Ross, *Making of the English Literary Canon*; Beecroft, *Authorship and Cultural Identity*; Fowler, “Genre and the Literary Canon”; Terry, “Literature, Aesthetics, and Canonicity.” A seminal work in Ottoman studies that explores canon formation in the sixteenth century is Kim, *The Last of an Age*.

⁶⁰⁴ E.g., AÇ, 1575 and LAT, 341-42.

context of contemporary or near-contemporary poets. I argue that in the sixteenth century Ottoman context, there was no fixed and abstract literary canon around particular poets' names, but instead a communal and continually shifting canon of tastes and styles embedded in practice was in operation. The singling out of particular names in certain contexts was related with other discursive functions these iconized figures took on.

Trevor Ross's study on the differences between the modern and premodern literary canon in the context of English literature offers sets of oppositions and concepts that might be helpful in describing the sixteenth-century Ottoman notions of canonicity.⁶⁰⁵ Ross argues that an earlier canon built on an entirely different set of assumptions about the epistemological and social value of literature was displaced by modern notions of canonicity. The fundamental distinction between the two regimes of canonicity is that the modern canon is reception—or reading—oriented whereas the earlier one was invention—or writing—oriented. In other words, a shift from production to consumption as the locus of value occurred with the coming of the age of print capitalism and the rise of anonymous masses of readers in need of cultural guidance. Underpinning this shift was a greater epistemological rupture, a transition from aristocratic to bourgeois concept of art and literature, which corresponded, in Foucauldian terminology, to a rupture “between an earlier *épistémé* of similitude and a later *épistémé* of the rationalist human sciences.”⁶⁰⁶ According to Ross, in the domain of literature this shift manifested itself as a transition from a “rhetorical” culture to a modern “objectivist” one. The two literary cultures are marked by the different ways in which they seek to achieve a sense of community and solidarity:

⁶⁰⁵ Ross, *Making of the English Literary Canon*.

⁶⁰⁶ Ross, *Making of the English Literary Canon*, 5.

A rhetorical culture seeks solidarity through the power of words, a verbal power that is designed to contain or defeat divisions within or among the culture's subjects. An objectivist culture searches for transcendence through the power of knowledge, the acquisition of which is supposed eventually to help its subjects understand and so overcome conflicts within themselves or between themselves and the objects that surround them. Whereas a rhetorical culture seeks transcendence in the Word, in the atemporal, eternal utterance of essence, an objectivist culture moves gradually and progressively towards essence, or at least towards a harmonious understanding of social and cultural differences.⁶⁰⁷

In a rhetorical culture, it is this fundamental belief in the essential and uniting power of the word that renders "interpretation," a modern art, unnecessary. Instead, judgements on "eloquence," a function that can only be active in the present moment, are passed. Works are simply praised without an analytical explanation as to why they are successful works. It is assumed that readers' sensibilities are pretty much the same as the authors'. Of course, standards of eloquence might change and what was once eloquent might no longer be so, losing its value and relevance—such a work would be discarded and forgotten without remorse. Thus, rhetorical cultures are deeply presentist and value a work of the past only as long as it relates to the present-day's standards of production.

In a modern objectivist culture, on the other hand, differences of opinion on the value of works are battled out through recourse to knowledge and method. The changes in values and standards overtime are interpreted and contained in categories like "historical change," "cultural difference" and so on. "In other words, it is the objectivist desire of resolving contradictions in the definition of the English canon that leads to the rise of interpretation, literary history, and other related critical practices in the eighteenth century."⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁷ Ross, *Making of the English Literary Canon*, 6.

⁶⁰⁸ Ross, *Making of the English Literary Canon*, 7.

I believe this description of English literary culture and norms of canonicity before modernity was in many ways paralleled by the Ottoman sixteenth century. *Tezkires* and earlier sources that touch upon literary critical issues, such as meta-literary passages in *mesnevīs*, clearly show that the Ottoman canon was rapidly shifting throughout this period. While earlier comments—though not all—highly valued the ghazels of Ahmed Paşa and several other late fifteenth century poets from Atayi to Safi,⁶⁰⁹ by 1568 Aşık Çelebi could write that in the ghazel anything that came before Necati counted as nothing (*meşābe-i 'ademdedür*) (though he does cite Ahmed Paşa as the first significant qasida poet).⁶¹⁰ This passage of canon statement that lists Aşık Çelebi's "firsts" in the three main genres—*mesnevī* (Şeyhi), qasida (Ahmed Paşa), and ghazel (Necati)—is followed by a lavish praise of Zati as a ghazel poet, emphasizing his superiority over others and therefore implying that after Necati it is Zati who represented the peak of the Ottoman ghazel.⁶¹¹ By 1586, however, Hasan Çelebi, although he repeated Aşık Çelebi's praises in summary fashion, noted that Zati's language had become somewhat obsolete.⁶¹² This type of continuous updating of linguistic and stylistic standards and the canonic names that represent them occurred throughout the century.

In a very telling passage, Latifi describes how the production-oriented canon of the community did not archivalize but replaced received material. The passage is also striking in its emphasis on the community as a whole—and not some external

⁶⁰⁹ See Sehi Beg's and Ata of Skopje's discussions of these poets in SEH, *bihişt* 5, 49a/167 ff., and Ata, *Tuhfetü'l-uşşâk*, 104-105. Also see the early *nazire* anthologies of Hacı Kemal and Nazmi for the weight of Ahmed Paşa's lyric poetry.

⁶¹⁰ *Ammā diyâr-ı Rûm'da ol zemânda ki şî'rde meşnevîde Şeyhî ve kaşâ'idde Ahmed Paşa ve gazeliyyâtı Necatî zühûr idüp bunlardan muqaddem olanlar meşābe-i 'ademdedür. Bu taqdîrce Zâtî şu'arâ-yı Rûm'un şüyûhından ve suhanverân-ı kurûmuñ ehl-i rüsûhından, şî'rde şāhib-i mezhebdir.* AÇ, 1575.

⁶¹¹ *Cihân üstâdı olan şimdi şā'irlerde Zâtîdür.* AÇ, 1575.

⁶¹² *Lâkin ba'z-ı bârid ü Türkâne ol zamāna mahşûş edâlar . . .* HÇ, 383.

authority such as the court or the *tezki*res authors as “literary critics”—as the source of the canon. Although Latifi leaves out Necati Beg from the dynamics of canonicity he is describing, arguing he is like the perennial Hafez and Jami, this is no doubt because Necati is the most recent poet in this list.

In line with the maxim ‘*everything new is pleasurable*,’ whenever something newly created appears, it becomes sought after and desired among people, while the old falls from esteem and favor. Thus, in his own age, the poetry of Şeyhi was at the height of popularity; both the elite and the common folk for many months and years read and copied it. Then, when Ahmed Paşa emerged, with his captivating verses the registers and anthologies were adorned and embellished, and he attained such renown of name and esteem beyond words that for a long time his poetry was on everyone’s tongue and a daily recitation. When Nizami of Karaman appeared, people for a time also read and wrote down his work with a certain relish and refinement. When Necati arose, however, the sweetness of his diction and the proverbial quality of his sayings—which delighted both elite and common temperaments alike and suited everyone’s circumstances—made it so that from then until now his poetry has not fallen from favor and vogue, and like an unfailing commodity people have not abandoned him for another. His *dīvān*, like those of Hafez and Jami, no matter how often it is read, still remains fresh and new.⁶¹³

In a conventionalized literary culture with little manifestation of individual style, it is necessary to approach highlighted figures as emblems that represent collectively practiced trends, rather than as original individual geniuses. In fact, the very form of the biographical dictionary as an account of the community of poets suggests that Ottoman poetry was perceived as a communal achievement, rather than being the work of particularly gifted and innovative individuals. The collective nature of stylistic and linguistic trends, however, did not hinder the poetic community from associating them with particular figures. As in my analysis of Ahmed Paşa anecdotes above, I argue that these figures and their names served like literary critical concepts and should not be automatically taken as a faithful

⁶¹³ LAT, 341-42.

representation of the source of the trend in question. A case in point is the association of Necati Beg with the ghazel style that incorporates proverbs and idioms. In *tezkiye* literature, this style is referred to as *Necātī tarzı*, but the earliest *tezkiye*, Sehi Beg's *Heşt Bihişt*, reveals that before the style became definitively associated with Necati, it was already practiced by other poets, including slightly earlier ones. According to Sehi, none less than the *şākird* of Necati, it was first the poet Atayi who introduced this style; Sehi also names at least ten other poets who practiced this style and does not single out Necati in particular. Clearly, it was at a later stage that the style acquired "a name."

I have proposed above that the same kind of emblemizing occurred with the three or four fifteenth century poets that were made protagonists of anecdotes. These anecdotes, I argued in Chapter 3 and here above, were historical and literary critical thought couched in mythical narrative form. In fact, there is a bifurcation between the privileging of these names in anecdotes and in canon statements on the one hand and their relevance as models for actual practice. In other words, conceptual thought on meta-literary matters and the day-to-day production of poetry did not revolve around the same names. Although the anecdotes and canon statements retained their appeal at least until the end of the sixteenth century, by about the middle of the century Şeyhi and Ahmed Paşa were long supplanted by others as leading models, with the creation of new styles and linguistic norms at the hands of new generations. Some *meşnevī* authors harshly criticized both Şeyhi and Ahmed Paşa as incompetent imitators-cum-translators of Persian literature (e.g., Tacizade Cafer Çelebi). In the case of Şeyhi, linguistic change also prompted attacks on the rusticity and obsolescence of his language. Latifi refers to these widespread negative appraisals of

Şeyhi's language and tries to persuade his readers that his work should nevertheless be valued for its "meaning" (*ma' nā*).⁶¹⁴

The true locus of the Ottoman literary canon was communal practice, which continuously evolved and was never explicitly and abstractly formulated except as the social prestige accorded to a relatively large number of poets more than others as representatives of their generation's collective achievements. After this formative age of Ottoman *dīvān* poetry, whose historical interests I have tried to dissociate from the idea of canon formation, biographical dictionaries written into the nineteenth century covered recent poets only, reflecting the ingrained presentism of the *dīvān* culture that was already fully operative in the sixteenth century but masked by politico-ideological and cultural imperatives of an age of formation. Explicit formulations of the canon as a set of linguistic and stylistic norms were not necessary because these norms were already shared by the community of producers and there was no readership outside the community of producers in need of guidance through such abstractions.

Thus, like other premodern canons studied in world literature, Ottoman literary canon of the sixteenth century operated on different mechanics from the modern canons, and a projection of concepts and assumptions drawn from modern types of canonicity on this historical period will preclude us from arrive at a rigorously historicist description.

⁶¹⁴ LAT, 338-340, 342.

4.3 End-of-century developments: The decline of community culture in biography and poetry

Many of the community-related material found in the sixteenth-century Ottoman *tezki*res vanish in the later early modern specimens of the genre. Descriptions of physical appearance and personality and the focus on love affairs are no longer found. Non-poets and “bad” poets are eliminated. Representations of horizontal relations of friendship and rivalry, the culture of anecdotes on members of the poetic community and Ottoman elites at large, and *meclis* scenes have waned. Omissions of fundamental information rarely occur. Discussions of poetic matters, such as critiques of verses and discussions of language and style have also declined. Instead, biographies have evolved into detailed career narratives with added information on family background and patronage relations, and poetry samples are increasingly selected from formally published *dīvāns* with no references to contexts of composition. Concomitantly, from the end of the sixteenth century, the *naẓīre* anthology disappears.

These changes in genre formations must indicate changes in the make-up of the social group that carried Ottoman *dīvān* poetry culture. The new types of biographical dictionaries and poetry anthologies that emerged in the seventeenth century signal the breakdown of the cultural and ideological centralism of the previous period and of the small but cohesive community that sustained this centralism. At the same time, the disappearance of biographical styles that reflect an in-group talk and the appearance of a more detached and dryly informative voice indicate a new awareness on the part of authors of the emergence of a broader and anonymous space of textuality, more objectively and unpredictably “public” than ever before.

In poetry, too, the emergence of a new style known today as the “Indian style” (*sebk-i Hindi*) marks a departure from the poetic styles that were rooted in orality and physical presence. This highly erudite style with a penchant for complex and unfamiliar conceits and rare vocabulary items, was relatively more text-bound and less suitable for extemporaneous composition and perhaps even for memorization and recitation, since the unconventional tropes characteristic of this style were not as readily intelligible and probably needed to be deciphered through some kind of “readerly” effort.⁶¹⁵

At the same time, *naẓīre* anthologies gave way to a new type of massive anthology, started by Kafzade Faizi’s *Zübdetü’l-eş’ār*, which no longer showed poems in conversation, but rather grouped poems by poets’ names. Like the *naẓīre* anthologies, these compilations, too, were geared towards providing potential composers with a repertoire of building blocks that could be used in new poems. However, the disconnected conceits and tropes found in the selections, would have to be reworked by each individual poet in a state of greater artistic initiative, by comparison to the *redīf*, which stood at the center of the *naẓīre* anthology and constrained composers both formally and semantically.

Overall, it can be argued that Ottoman poetry culture, in both its social organization and production dynamics took a turn towards increasing individualization and textualization at the turn of the seventeenth century. No doubt, older stylistic trends and community practices also continued to exist, albeit in a

⁶¹⁵ Faruqi, “A Stranger in the City.” Although poems in the *sebk-i Hindi* (or *tāze-gūyī*, by this style’s contemporary name) rarely appear in contexts of sociability and oral exchange in the Ottoman world, students of the Mughal *tāze-gūyī* frequently refer to *meclises* and *müṣā’eres* (extemporaneous versification contests) as the milieu par excellence where this kind of poetry flourished; Sharma, “Reading the Acts and Lives of Performers”; Pellò, “Persian Poets on the Streets.” More studies, including comparative ones, are needed before the Ottoman *sebk-i Hindi*’s practical and social articulations can be adequately comprehended.

changed overall context, perhaps until the demise of this culture in the late Ottoman period. Nevertheless, the shifts observed at the turn of the seventeenth century mark a reorientation in the values, audiences, and modes of literary production in a more complex and decentralized cultural world.

The decline of community-centered biographical writing and of interactive poetic practices such as *naẓīre* composition suggests a loosening of the interpersonal ties and shared conventions that had once structured literary production. The more solitary, text-bound poetics of the *sebk-i Hindī*, the shift to anthologies oriented around poets rather than shared themes, and the emergence of an impersonal, documentary voice in *tezkires* all point to a reconfiguration of the literary field. In place of a closely-knit poetic community exchanging verse in intimate *meclis* settings, we see the rise of a dispersed and less knowable readership, and a literary culture that privileges formal accomplishment and originality over social embeddedness and dialogic exchange.

CHAPTER 5

POETS AND OTTOMAN OFFICIALDOM

Dīvān poetry had a complex relationship with officialdom that has yet to be described in any depth. Even a cursory look at the contents of Ottoman *tezkires* from any period quickly reveals that the great majority of Ottoman poets were, at all times, members of Ottoman officialdom, including the religio-judicial hierarchy. What was unique about the sixteenth century was that this was the only period in which poetry functioned as a channel of elite recruitment in its own right, with newcomers from below being integrated to the class of imperial servants mainly through their success in poetry. Not only were lavish patronage opportunities available for these newcomers, but also it was possible to enter state service and attain military or administrative posts through displaying competence in poetry. Clearly, there was a trend of expansion of the service elite, and poetry played a role. For those already part of this elite, poetry similarly served as a means of career advancement, be they qadis, scribes or soldiers. What had rendered *dīvān* poetry so crucial for the empire?

I argue in this chapter that in the sixteenth century, especially in the earlier part, three main dynamics converged to catapult poetry to great significance from the perspective of the political center. The first was the formation of a new service elite from the reign of Bayezid II to sustain the bureaucratization drive of an expanding empire. We have seen in Chapter 3 “Imperial Integration” that, at least as far as literary culture was concerned, there was a mnemonic break with the period before the reign of Bayezid II, i.e., a near-complete loss of biographical memory on former poets, as well as substantial textual loss, which I suggested could have only taken place under conditions of a discontinuity in the make-up of the service elites

clustered around the political center. This new service elite, unlike the smaller courtly elites of the period before Bayezid's reign in which *devşirme* courtiers and transregional men of letters played important roles, was to a great extent recruited from among local Rumi urbanites with no family history of state service. The burgeoning madrasa system, pasha households, Sufi brotherhoods and, I argue, poetry culture were the key channels through which this elite recruitment that created learned cadres for a burgeoning early modern state materialized.

Secondly, this elite recruitment and early modern state-formation began under conditions of weak bureaucratic institutionalization. Scholarly literature on the sixteenth century bureaucratic institutions, including the ulema hierarchy, highlight the middle of the century as the threshold after which bureaucratic institutions became relatively professionalized, specialized and rule-bound in matters of appointments in particular. The absence of such institutions in the early sixteenth-century, meant that the drive toward expansion of cadres would have to be supplemented through informal and non-institutional means. The early-sixteenth century Ottoman state was a complex of formal and informal structures that were financed from state resources in more or less similar ways. Poetry and social arrangements around poetry—from forums of sociability that sustained this culture to relations of patronage—constituted one of these informal structures.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it was the rise of Ottoman Turkish as the new written idiom of the empire, of both imperial officialdom and imperial culture, that led to the rise of *dīvān* poetry to greater significance. I argue that in an environment with no prevalent institutional channel for acquisition of Turkish literacy and a high-cultural formation in Turkish—comparable, for example, to the

madrasa—informal and practice-embedded arrangements played the greater role.

Dīvān poetry culture was one of the most influential of such arrangements.

In what follows, I first present an overview of the contents of *tezkiye* literature to show the special capacity this literature has to represent the changing make-up of the learned service elite of the empire over the early modern period. I then engage in a discussion of the decentralized aggregate of institutional and informal channels of acquiring Turkish literacy as a complex “ecosystem,” and argue that poetry culture was a key component. Next, I delve into more specific aspects of the acquisition of poetry skills, namely the role of existing textbooks on grammar and rhetoric (in any language) and master-apprentice (*üstād-şākird*) relationships. My emphasis in this section is on the orality, informality and community- and practice-embeddedness of the channels of acquisition of Turkish literacy and high culture in Turkish, complementing the discussion in Chapter 4 “A Community Culture.” The ensuing two sections of the chapter focus on the nexus between officialdom and poetry. I first present an overview of the contemporary perceptions of *şīʿr* (poetry) as an independent path of learning and entering state service, comparable to *ʿilm*. This is followed by a section on patronage and remuneration of poets, which I argue follow the exact same patterns for the remuneration of the rest of the imperial elites. Finally, I drive my points home with a presentation of the portraits of the artisan poets of the early sixteenth century, with a view to demonstrating that they were not “commoners” outside the domain imperial officialdom, but part and parcel of the elite expansion of the period, with their learning, acculturation, socialization and remuneration patterns.

5.1 The link between *dīvān* poetry and Ottoman officialdom: The evidence of the *tezkire* literature

The intimate connection between *dīvān* poetry and Ottoman officialdom and elite culture appears to have first emerged as a topic when it became a problem, that is, during late Ottoman modernization. Long before *dīvān* poetry became a symbol of the defunct Ottoman order among republican intellectuals, its first critics rose in the middle of the nineteenth century from among bureaucrat-poets who were themselves thoroughly steeped in the *dīvān* tradition. One leading early critic of *dīvān* poetry was the poet, author and political activist Namık Kemal (1840-88), who famously ridiculed what now could be presented as childish hyperbolic clichés about love and the beloved: Kemal deliberately misread *dīvān* poetry's common figures of speech in literal terms—e.g. the beloved being “tall as a cypress”—to conclude that this was a world of giants and monsters.⁶¹⁶ This seemingly out-of-place sarcasm, even hostility, was fueled by an awareness of the age-old overlap in the Ottoman context between high literature and the realm of writing itself, which Kemal and his friends wanted to reform to suit the needs of the modern and democratized society they dreamed of.⁶¹⁷

In an influential manifesto of 1866 titled “Some reflections on the literature of the Ottoman language,” Kemal recorded his perception of the long-standing identity between Ottoman letters (which he now called *edebiyāt*, or literature, under Western influence, but still understood to consist of the good old *şî'r ü inşā*) and the bureaucratic functions, and more generally, between writing (*kitābet*) and the state.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁶ Namık Kemal, “Mukaddime-i Celâl,” 344-45.

⁶¹⁷ For thoughtful analyses of Namık Kemal's views on *dīvān* poetry, see Altuğ, “Nâmık Kemal'in 'Divan Edebiyatı'”; Armağan, *İmkansız Özerklik*, 45-60.

⁶¹⁸ Namık Kemal, “Lisan-ı Osmanînin Edebiyatı Hakkında.” Cf. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 38 and Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom*, 12-13, 176-77.

Here, Kemal complains that in Ottoman society *kitābet* (writing, penmanship, composition skills, but also secretarial work: the polysemy is significant in and of itself) is commonly, but wrongly, identified with state service, apparently hoping for the kind of widened use for writing he saw in Western societies with mass literacy and vibrant print cultures.⁶¹⁹ Nevertheless, this is the present state of affairs, he continues, and because there are no direct pedagogical resources for learning to write in Ottoman Turkish—such as grammars, dictionaries and style manuals as found in European countries—anyone who wants to learn how to write a proper text, has to study not only Arabic and Persian but also the “language of the people of the pen” (*ehl-i kalem lisānı*; apparently Kemal is referring to the Ottoman Turkish written idiom; more specifically, the phrase *ehl-i kalem* commonly denotes scribes and secretaries, so the polysemy in *kitābet* above is paralleled here). Here, Kemal seems to conflate the ability to write in general with the ability to compose high quality texts, a result of his acculturation in a society with a long history of elite literacy. In fact, his uses of *kitābet* (the ability to compose texts of any kind in the literary language of the empire) and *edebiyyāt* (literature) also blend into each other, symptomatic of a context in which literary practice and acquisition of advanced writing skills were intimately connected. Accordingly, Kemal asserts that for government functionaries the study of *edebiyyāt* is unavoidable since its *inşā* part is the only available vehicle for official procedures. Because of this current identity between literature (*edebiyyāt, şî‘r ü inşā*), the language of officialdom and the realm of writing itself, it is the state that should take the initiative and give an order to literature, starting with its own documentary production. This reform needs to cover

⁶¹⁹ *Fakat bizde kitabetten maksat hizmet-i devlet olmak itikadı galib ve belki umumî hükmüne girmiş bir zann-kâzib olmasına göre . . .* Namık Kemal, “Lisan-ı Osmanînin Edebiyatı Hakkında,” 190.

both poetry and prose, which suffer from similar shortcomings such as a predilection for verbal craftsmanship at the cost of natural diction, clarity and soundness of ideas.

Namık Kemal's reduction of the Ottoman space of writing to officialdom could be challenged, e.g., by reference to the entire Sufi textual tradition, or to new, “civilian” reader and author profiles that emerged in the seventeenth century.⁶²⁰ Probably, Kemal assumed a significant part of Sufi culture, especially the erudite layers, to be self-evidently integral components of the political order, in terms of ideology, economic basis and cultural identity. And it is clear that he did not consider the various decentralized, unlearned or substandard Ottoman literacies viable alternatives to the present situation—after all, for reforming Ottoman letters, he conservatively suggested turning to classical Ottoman poets and prose writers whose diction he admired for its “naturalness” (Naima) or beauty (Nefi, Veysi). Nevertheless, his retrospective snapshot of classical Ottoman letters on the brink of its extinction captures the contours of a textual culture more or less the prerogative of a small ruling elite in an agrarian society of illiterate masses. Moreover, it highlights how the Ottomans relegated the transmission of literacy and learning in (cultivated) Turkish entirely to the informal field of literary practice including *dīvān* poetry. With no institutional infrastructure comparable to the Arabic-based madrasa system, Turkish literary practice and its associated forums of sociability played the role of schooling in the vernacular through the entire Ottoman era and remained a path that ambitious bureaucrats felt compelled to follow. The historical moment when literary practice began to take on such a formally independent but functionally symbiotic role

⁶²⁰ See, for example, Terzioğlu, “Where ‘İlm-i Hāl Meets Catechism”; and Kafadar, “Müteredditt bir Mutasavvıf.” For an English translation of the letters (written by a Sufi woman) studied in the latter publication, see “Dream Letters.”

with the concomitantly developing state institutions and cadres can be located in the early sixteenth century, although we are yet far from describing the exact nature of this symbiosis.

Given Kemal's and other contemporary critics'⁶²¹ appraisals of the traditional Ottoman textual culture as identified with state service, and the *tezkires*' evidence that will be discussed shortly, the proposals in scholarship to identify *dīvān* poetry with particular social or professional groups need to reassessed.

One perspective, though not very prevalent, associates *dīvān* poetry with the scribal class and, later, the civil bureaucracy. Scholars that defend this view have deployed the concept of *adab*, or more specifically, one particular sense of this highly ambivalent term with changing meanings over time. In older Islamic scholarship, *adab* was accepted to signify the worldly, humanistic literature in premodern Islamicate polities as distinct from religious sciences.⁶²² It was understood to comprise mainly poetry, language sciences, edifying or entertaining narratives as well as political, ethical and historical prose literature. As such, it was associated primarily with secretaries and scribes, as the linguistic, cultural, and political know-how these professionals would need to master. Later scholars of Islamic studies recognized the complexity and contextual variability of the term *adab* and warned against understanding it in a schematic dualism whereby a secular culture, associated primarily with secretaries and scribes, is placed against the religious sciences and mindset of the ulema.⁶²³ However, some earlier Ottomanists,

⁶²¹ E.g., Ziya Paşa, "Şiir ve İnşa."

⁶²² Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, 251-52; Hodgson, *Venture of Islam II*, 154-55.

⁶²³ For more developed recent critiques against this purported dualism see Alshaar, "The Relation of *Adab* to the Qur'an"; Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 223-38. For a similar argument against such compartmentalization in the Ottoman context, see Tusalp Atiyas, "Political Literacy," 26-27. Also see, the references in fn. 66, in Chapter 1 "Introduction."

too, found it worthwhile to apply the dualistic sense of *adab* to *dīvān* poetry. Halil İnalçık and, following him, Carter Findley associate *dīvān* poetry with the more temporally and politically oriented sectors of the Ottoman elite, mainly the scribal cadres; the Ottoman ulema, on the other hand, were often critical of this worldly literature.⁶²⁴ Findley makes the additional claim that it was initially the palace school (Enderun) that “served specifically for the propagation of the *adab* tradition,” and it was only after its decline that the scribal service became the main locus of *adab*.⁶²⁵ According to Findley, the Ottoman political center was composed of conflicting “elements” or elite sectors, each with its own world view. Findley’s approach, makes it seem like *dīvān* poetry, with its worldly and belle-lettristic concerns, was quite foreign to the ulema. To drive his point home, Findley highlights the fact that most of the individuals covered in İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal’s late Ottoman biographical dictionary of poets were bureaucrats. This prosopographical pattern, Findley argues, evinced “[t]he continued association of the kind of literary skills required for official service with the kind required for writing verse.”⁶²⁶

On a completely different note, Sooyong Kim has argued that the *dīvān* poetry scene came to be dominated by the ulema in the late sixteenth century. The Ottoman *dīvān* poetry canon, as it was passed down to future generations, was first shaped and formulated by members of the ulema during this period. In Kim’s view, it was the ulema’s superior command of the most sophisticated registers of Ottoman Turkish, owing to their madrasa education, that gave them extra authority over poetic matters. Once they stepped in in the second half of the sixteenth century to organize

⁶²⁴ İnalçık, “Reis-ül-küttâb,” 678-79; Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 10-11.

⁶²⁵ Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 11.

⁶²⁶ Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 38.

the poetic field according to higher linguistic and stylistic standards, unlearned poets that had ascended to fame in the earlier part of the century were pushed out of the canon. The bureaucratized ulema of this latter period also managed to monopolize the field of *dīvān* poetry as part of their careers, instrumentalizing poetry as a proof of their linguistic competence. This brought the end of unlearned professional poets who did not associate poetry with a particular career but aimed to extract monetary rewards from their patrons. The new era's poetry and poetic persona found its embodiment in Baki, a religious scholar who had reached as high as the post of chief justice (*kāzī* 'asker).⁶²⁷

A third group of scholars have focused on demonstrating the participation of "commoners" in *dīvān* poetry. Though they do not deny the greater role of the imperial elites in this tradition, they have aimed to show that *dīvān* poetry could be appreciated, if not always produced, by a substantial portion of the urban populace, owing either to pre-existing commonalities between the culture of the populace and the elites or to the historical spread of *dīvān* culture thanks to early modern urbanization. The latter point was first raised by Fuad Köprülü who argued that imperial culture was partly assimilated by urban society from the beginning of the sixteenth century because of the increased interaction between social strata in the burgeoning urban centers.⁶²⁸ A recent study that in part revives and expands upon Köprülü's idea is Sooyong Kim's *Last of an Age*, mentioned above. However, different from Köprülü, who emphasized social interaction and trickling down of elite culture into the middling ranks of society, Kim rather saw this phenomenon as a consequence of lavish patronage opportunities available in the sixteenth century and

⁶²⁷ Kim, *The Last of an Age*.

⁶²⁸ Köprülü, *Türk Sazâirleri*, vol. I, 23-26; Köprülü, *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, 381.

their attraction to talented climbers from below. Unfortunately, this line of historical analysis focusing on the early sixteenth century has not been pursued beyond the work of these two scholars, a gap this dissertation seeks to partly redress.

The “pregiven commonalities” argument, on the other hand, comes in two main brands and has been quite influential in both of its variants. Literary scholars who have subscribed to a conservative political ideology with an equal emphasis on both Turkishness and Islam as the hallmarks of Turkish society have tended to idealize the Ottoman past as a situation where the ruling elite and the populace were culturally and ideologically united over these two identity markers. This was clearly a reaction to more than a hundred years of Ottoman and Republican modernism that had seen the ancien régime and its imperial culture as alienated from “the people” and rejected its legacy. These scholars’ rehabilitation of *dīvān* poetry as the shared literary tradition of an ageless Turkish-Muslim “nation” was mainly carried out via an argument on essential commonalities between folk poetry and *dīvān* poetry. The argument was advanced with demonstrations of the existence of shared poetic forms, vocabulary, imagery and themes between high cultural and popular literature in Ottoman society. The existence of illiterate individuals and artisans among *dīvān* poets was also brought up as evidence of the relevance of *dīvān* poetry for broader sectors of society.⁶²⁹

Sharing no part of this ideological agenda but similarly arguing in ahistorical terms that the Ottoman ghazal is “society’s song” is the late Walter G. Andrews (d. 2020), eminent scholar of Ottoman poetry. His important theoretical study on the

⁶²⁹ Kurnaz, *Türküden Gazele*; Kurnaz, “Bütün Şairler”; also see the introduction to Kurnaz and Tatcı, eds., *Ümmî Divan Şairleri*; Çelebioğlu, “Karacaoğlan’da Divan Şiiri Hususiyetleri”; Gökyay, “Divan Edebiyatı Kimin?”.

Ottoman ghazal seems to be a reaction to both the modernist Republican rejectionism and the Islamist-nationalist conservatism; instead, he proposed a liberal democratic rehabilitation of the ghazal as an equalizing social agent, very much in the spirit of the 1980s when he wrote his seminal monograph.⁶³⁰ While the conservative scholars' views outlined above seem to be motivated by an ideological aversion to social differentiation and conflict, Walter Andrews arrived at a similar picture of social harmony without any of the Islamically colored nationalism of the former group. Andrews sees the ghazal as an expression of social codes and forms of relationship that are valid for the society as a whole, such as dual power relations. Andrews challenges the idea that *dīvān* poetry is inherently "difficult," arguing that this belief is a modernist misconception. He demonstrates that its vocabulary is fairly limited and relies on a set of conventional tropes that can be readily mastered, even through oral transmission. As noted in Chapter 4, he further shows that the syntax of the ghazal, with its grammatical irregularities, is actually closer to spoken language—features that enhance both its polyvalence and its capacity for expressing intense emotion, hallmarks of lyric poetry. He also illustrates that the many seemingly complex 'arūz metrical patterns reduce to just a handful of recurring rhythmic structures, which are easily absorbed by the ear.⁶³¹ In short, he argues that the ghazal can be appreciated, and sometimes produced, by any enthusiast regardless of class and learning.

It seems that all of these views that focus on particular social groups' roles or particular periods disregard longer durée evidence of the *tezki*res, which, collectively, not only present a holistic picture of the social basis of *dīvān* poetry

⁶³⁰ Andrews, *Poetry's Voice*.

⁶³¹ Andrews, *An Introduction to Ottoman Poetry*, 30-45.

over the centuries, but also disclose patterns of relations between different social sectors engaged in *dīvān* poetry culture, such as the ulema, the scribal cadres and the so-called “commoners.” As in the parable of the blind men and the elephant, each scholar touches a different fragment—what feels like a tree trunk, a rope, a fan—offering interpretations that are internally coherent but collectively disjointed. First of all, although the ulema was always the more crowded professional group in early modern *tezki*res, the works of this period evince no meaningful difference in stylistic preferences, and linguistic or artistic competence between the ulema and the scribal cadres, the two main learned professions that together carried *dīvān* poetry during this time. Moreover, it is also virtually impossible to show separate socialization patterns for these two groups. They seem to have perceived themselves as part of the same bureaucratic class, with shared networks and similar cultural tastes and levels of education,⁶³² including many transitions in between either during an individual’s lifetime or between generations. Two massive *tezki*res composed near simultaneously around 1820, one by a religious scholar (Salim) and the other by a secretary (Safayi), include roughly equal proportions of poets from the two professions, with the ulema outnumbering the secretaries in both, as had always been the case in *tezki*re literature.⁶³³ Early modern *tezki*re texts, authors of which were either from the ulema or the scribal corps, do not display a bias along professional lines, as far as a distinction between the ulema and the scribal cadres is concerned.⁶³⁴

The idea of a secular humanistic *adab* culture in conflict with the religious world

⁶³² Mustafa Ali’s contempt for scribes trained in the offices is well-known. But he did not discriminate between the eruditions of *münşis* and ulema. See MALI, vol. 4, 1080-81; Mustafa Ali, *Nushatü’s-Selâtin*, 323-24.

⁶³³ Tusalp Atiyas, “Political Literacy,” 198.

⁶³⁴ Cf. Shafir, *The Order and Disorder of Communication*, Chapter 3 “Education,” esp. 92-97. *Tezki*res appear to contradict Shafir’s idea of the separation of the cultural milieus of the ulema and the civil bureaucrats from the seventeenth century onwards.

view of the ulema is also untenable for this period, as best demonstrated by Aşık Çelebi's defense of temporal poetry discussed in Chapter 3. Therefore, İnalçık and Findley's observations of separate social and ideological worlds for these two groups may have only crystallized during the late Ottoman period, the age of the civil bureaucracy.⁶³⁵

On the other hand, the main problem with most arguments for a *dīvān* poetry culture shared by the urban populace is that the examples of individuals (illiterate poets, artisans) and poems (easy-flowing ghazel styles that approximate everyday speech) brought up to support the thesis are almost entirely drawn from the early sixteenth century, but without an explanation of this chronological concentration. So far, Sooyong Kim has been the only scholar to propose an explanation for the disappearance of commoners from the *dīvān* poetry scene after the middle of the sixteenth century. As outlined above, he has emphasized the monopolization of the field of poetry by scholar-bureaucrats, which led to the end of direct poetic patronage. This in turn brought about the disappearance of mercenary commoners who were attracted to poetry for the monetary rewards only. While I agree with Kim's perception of a fundamental link between bureaucratization and the disappearance of "commoners" from the *dīvān* poetry scene, I disagree with his description of the nature of the relationship between these more humble profiles and Ottoman officialdom, as I shall discuss below. Moreover, the views that associate *dīvān* poetry with either the ulema or the scribal corps seem to assume that these learned professionals carried over to poetry the erudition they owed to their

⁶³⁵ For a study on the preliminary stage of the civil bureaucracy's rise to political power in the late seventeenth century, see Tusalp Atiyas, "Political Literacy." Notably, Tusalp Atiyas's study, which argues that the scribal community of this period tried to claim to political power through defining themselves as a community with linguistic and rhetorical power, does not mention any effort to dominate the field of poetry, vis-à-vis the ulema for example, as part of these novel claims.

professions and the related educational processes. I argue that poetry was an independent track with its own mechanisms of acquisitions of skills, culture and learning, which made it possible for formally unlearned “commoners” to emerge on the *dīvān* poetry scene in the early sixteenth century.

These partial observations on the social basis of *dīvān* poetry either generalize on period-specific prosopographical features or reify particular professions (“artisan poets,” “ulema”) as fixed social entities and ignore their similarities to and relations with other actors on the *dīvān* poetry scene. An alternative holistic approach that reconciles these partial images, I argue, can be developed by reading the entire history of *tezkiye* literature as reflection of the changing make-up of the cultural and bureaucratic elites of the Ottoman Empire.

First, a definition of “elite” is in order, especially one that can subsume the literate and learned servants of the empire that the *tezkiyes* cover. The Ottomans’ own division of society into tax-paying subjects (*re‘āyā*) and tax-exempt groups serving the state (‘*askerī*’) appears to provide the clearest distinction between commoners and elites.⁶³⁶ Yet the ‘*askerī*’ category was extremely diverse and cannot be understood as a single economic class or a cohesive cultural community. It encompassed figures as different as the wealthiest viziers and mosque staff earning as little as three *aķças* a day—at a time when even a novice madrasa professor received 20 or 25. Not only the learned *ulema* but also artisans, merchants, peasants, and nomadic groups carrying out state functions and some Sufis were classified as ‘*askerī*. For this reason, the category is of limited use in defining the empire’s

⁶³⁶ Bosworth and Faroqi, “Ra‘iyya”; Barkan, “Edirne Askerî Kassamına Âit.” For a sample law code from the reign of Selim I on who are to be counted as ‘*askerī*, see Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri*, vol. 3, 144-45.

cultural, intellectual, and religious elites. Although most poets were indeed *‘askerīs* as madrasa professors, jurists or secretaries, there seems to be a large group of poets whose *‘askerī* status is not clear: It is known that the state conferred *‘askerī* status to prominent ‘state-friendly’ Sufi sheikhs but were ordinary dervishes *‘askerīs*? There is also a substantial number of poets who do not seem to be involved in any other economic activity outside poetry for which they received patronage; were they *‘askerīs*? Were people who lived off of extra waqf revenues (*zevā’id-ḥōrān*) *‘askerīs*? How big was the tax-exempt population without the *‘askerī* status, which also included other parameters, such as the type of court an individual would be subject to the jurisdiction of? These questions have been hardly answered in scholarship and the *‘askerī* status was especially blurry and fluid on its fringes.

A common way of distinguishing between elites and commoners is by looking at family background. However, biographical dictionaries—whether of the ulema, Sufis, or poets—show that, throughout the early modern period, the imperial service elite remained open to newcomers from outside established service families, even if the proportions and influence of entrenched dynasties might have shifted over time. Madrasa education and careers in the religious hierarchy are especially emphasized in the scholarly literature as avenues of upward mobility for Muslims of humble origins.⁶³⁷ Biographical entries often provide valuable information about family background. Fathers’ names or family names containing *zāde*, *ibn*, or *oğlu* (all meaning “son of” in Persian, Arabic, and Turkish, respectively) sometimes appear, marking either established service families connected to the political center for generations, or prominent dynasties of sheikhs, local notables, and the like (e.g.,

⁶³⁷ E.g., Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 19.

Fenarizade, Mihaloğlu, Ebusuudzade). At the same time, however, many biographies trace family lines back only a single generation, with the son's success creating a new family name based on a relatively obscure father, such as a local qadi or a low-ranking palace servant. Others, including some renowned ulema and poets, were the children of artisans, with surnames formed from the father's trade rather than his name or title (e.g., Kireçizade, "son of the lime vendor"; Derzizade, "son of the tailor"). Still others among the religious scholars, poets, and Sufis came from completely unknown backgrounds and rose to prominence solely through their careers. These figures are typically introduced with an association to a particular city, after which the narrative moves directly to their professional trajectory and patrons—strongly suggesting that they were entirely new entrants into the ranks of the elite.

Another common way to define "elite" is by identifying those with economic or political power. Yet this approach would exclude a large segment of men of letters, many of whom secured only middling positions and modest incomes throughout their lives. Poverty, along with long intervals between employment or periods of poetic patronage, was a frequent experience for them. Even members of the ulema, particularly at the start of their careers, often endured lengthy waits for appointments and later faced significant gaps between posts. Numerous scribes complained of financial hardship, and a late sixteenth-century writer of "mirrors for princes" even identified it as a serious problem, warning that impoverished scribes were more prone to bribery and other forms of corruption.⁶³⁸

Focusing solely on the possession of high culture, however, would prevent us from examining the economic, social, and political conditions that supported cultural

⁶³⁸ Mustafa Ali, *Nushatü's-selâtin*, 99-101, 322-24.

life. I therefore propose that assessing the elite status of *dīvān* poets requires considering three dimensions at once: politico-economic, cultural, and social. The economic dimension should be understood not in terms of tax category or income level, but rather by the *sources* of income—whether an individual relied on state resources or on independent work and private means. The cultural dimension should be measured by one’s degree of engagement with Persianate high culture. Finally, the social dimension should be evaluated through patterns of socialization, encompassing both horizontal ties and vertical connections with the wider imperial elite.

By this definition, *tezki*res of the entire early modern period reflect a literate and learned imperial service elite. The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *tezki*res represent this most unambiguously, with the “poets” recorded comprising almost exclusively members of the ulema and the secretarial-administrative corps, with a much smaller number of courtiers and Sufis (“specialized” *tezki*res like Esrar Dede’s on Mevlevi poets being an exception). The only period that displays a striking exception to this long-term pattern is the sixteenth century, during which the *tezki*res depict substantial numbers of individuals that can be characterized as “commoners.” When the lifetimes of these individuals are considered, it becomes clear that it is only in the early sixteenth century that such figures flourished on the *dīvān* poetry scene as a distinct cluster. However, upon closer look, their politico-economic, cultural, and social positions turn out to be not much different from those of their peers in more established imperial careers. I argue that their fleeting presence was related with the earliest stage of the formation of a new imperial service elite under conditions of weak bureaucratic institutionalization and a dearth of men literate in

“Ottoman Turkish”, the new written idiom of the era’s imperial literate culture (see Chapter 1 “Introduction”).

There is a wide prosopographical spectrum in sixteenth-century *tezkires* that gives the impression, at first sight, that during this time *dīvān* poetry scene was not confined to members of officialdom and extended into the middling ranks of urban society. This includes janissaries and imperial cavalry, mosque personnel known as *ehl-i cihet*—imams, sermoners (*ḥaṭīb*), and reciters of the call to prayer (*mü’ezzin*)—physicians, musicians, astrologists, artisans and shopkeepers, madrasa students, professional poets, and Sufis, including heterodox mendicant dervishes and groups considered as heretic, in addition to individuals from the lowest tiers of the religious and scribal careers. However, as it will become clearer through the examples discussed in the chapter, especially in the final section on portraits of “artisan poets,” it is entirely impossible to assign the activities of these individuals to a middling sort of *modus vivendi* and a grassroots vibrancy of *dīvān* poetry. To the contrary, I will try to show that they were part of a burgeoning “officialdom”, understood as comprising informal as well as formal and institutional aspects.

First of all, for this early period, essentializing tags like “artisan”, “astrologist,” “poet,” or “Sufi” —even “qadi” or “scribe”—which modern scholars tend to rely on when describing the individuals featured in the *tezkires*, appear to be a misleading reduction of the multi-tasking, both simultaneous and over time, that these individuals’ lives involved. Poets became scribes, through their success in poetry, and shopkeepers could take-up governmental posts at different stages of their lives. A qadi could become a waqf administrator or overseer of the court’s hajj caravan. Especially describing an individual as a “Sufi” requires some caution because taking-up the convent life seems to be a widespread interim solution

preferred by many who could not find employment or were temporarily dismissed. This was a newly forming service elite under conditions of relatively weak institutionalization, which gave rise to a great deal of irregular appointments, task switches and multi-tasking in all branches including the religious hierarchy, a relatively earlier branch to institutionalize. The “career” profiles that emerge from *tezkires*’ depiction of early sixteenth century poets accord very well with Cornell Fleischer’s fundamental observation that career paths had not yet crystallized at this time. In fact, beyond the solid snippets of information they provide on the career stations of individuals, *tezkiye* entries reflect the lack of definition in career lines through the very vagueness or thinness of their career narratives. In some cases, it was the actual trajectory of an individual’s working life that was fluid, in others, it was the biographer who glossed over this aspect of his subject’s life.

In the early *tezkires*, the relative lack of attention to careers (by comparison to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *tezkires*) was counterbalanced by intensive attention to informal social relations. The relations between poets are described in vivid detail in a modality that allows us peek into their “private” lives in addition to their public activities. The relations in question are both between peers, i.e. horizontal, but also between individuals of different social stature, i.e. vertical. Both horizontal and vertical relations entail a variety of forms, from patronage to friendship and erotic love and from master-apprentice relations to rivalry. The *tezkires* of the era give the impression that the main scaffolding that kept this newly forming service elite together was, rather than bureaucratic institutions, the web of social relations they were situated in and their shared poetry culture embedded in forms of sociability.

Arguably, this dense web of social bonds and all the occasions of sociability in which these bonds were cultivated functioned as a complement to institutional forms of governance current in Rum in the early sixteenth century in particular. Helen Pfeifer advances a similar argument for the salons and other types of social bonds that flourished between the Rumi and Arab ulema in the wake of conquest of Mamluk lands. In her view, the administrative and cultural integration of the Arab lands and the professional integration of Arab ulema into the Ottoman religious hierarchy depended on informal networks of friendship, patronage and obligation, built mainly through the salons, as much as they did on the military and bureaucratic actions that the Ottoman political center took.⁶³⁹

Not surprisingly, this burgeoning multi-tasking elite held together by social relations and similar cultural tastes were also remunerated in the same way, through a complex system of elite remuneration the Ottomans had developed in an economy with low levels of monetization. This system stretched from regular institutional means (appointments to official posts) to irregular assignments of salaries and revenue sources like *timars*, bestowals of one-time monetary gifts—which, however, tended to follow certain patterns displaying an inclination to regularization (e.g, gifts on every eid)—and waqf economy, partly controlled by the imperial center. This created a situation where officially employed cadres, from qadis and madrasa professors to the scribal corps, extended smoothly into a large number cultural and ideological servants of the empire, including some Sufis, who were remunerated through less formal means. In other words, the early sixteenth-century Ottoman state kept financially covered a whole class of people who provided military,

⁶³⁹ Pfeifer, *Empire of Salons*.

administrative, cultural and ideological services to it and made use of their services wherever there was a need within the frame of a relatively flexible mode of employment and remuneration. The so-called “commoner” poets, I argue, were part of this system and their integration into the service elite was complete, comprising multiple dimensions, social, cultural, ideological and financial.

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *tezkires* display a changed picture. As Sooyong Kim has observed, the consequences of bureaucratization for the domain of poetry are evident. This period’s titles saw the elimination of the professional variety and career switches recorded in the early *tezkires*. They are by and large built around secretaries and ulema and portray a learned elite subsumed in stable careers. The cultural and social integration and harmony of the two groups continues, with no *tezkire* text, irrespective of the profession of its author, displaying a bias along professional lines. However, the variety in social statuses seen in the sixteenth century is no longer seen, and an image of a more strictly stratified elite is projected through focus on relatively higher echelons of these two career lines. Poetic activity now seems to be concentrated in the upper echelons, which have expanded significantly. Information on the biographees’ fathers or families have become routinized, suggesting that the upper tiers of officialdom have become relatively capable of reproducing themselves as a kind of service aristocracy.⁶⁴⁰ *Tezkire* literature’s interest in literary-critical matters and descriptions of the poetic community and its everyday interactions around poetry have significantly decreased, with the poetry of the biographees having become appendages to their career

⁶⁴⁰ For development of an “ulema aristocracy,” see Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*. For indications of a similar trend in civil bureaucracy, see the biographies in the *tezkires* of Salim and Safayi. For institutionalization of religious and bureaucratic careers see, Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans*; Fleischer, *Bureocrat and Intellectual*; and Darling, *Revenue-raising and Legitimacy*. On the crystallization of scribal identity in the seventeenth century, see Tusalp Atiyas, “Political Literacy.”

narratives. The “relational” mode of poets’ biographies of the earlier period have disappeared—with the exception of professional patronage relations. All of these suggest that by this time the Ottoman state apparatus had achieved a greater degree of institutionalization compared to the sixteenth century and that chances for talented climbers to enter state service through poetry had greatly decreased.

In this chapter, I try to show that the main reason why poetry was sponsored by the early sixteenth-century Ottoman regime, in effect turning poetry into a new channel of elite recruitment, was the urgency of bolstering Ottoman Turkish letters, the new language of an expanding and bureaucratizing empire in search of an authentic imperial identity. This was an urgent need mainly because Ottomans lacked institutional means of cultivating Turkish literacy and letters, such as schools and textbooks. However, thanks to imperial efforts, poetry did develop into a quasi-institutional and quasi-official field that functioned as a new, independent channel of literacy and learning, becoming the primary path to high culture for many young urbanites and a “second education” for madrasa graduates who were interested in partaking in this new and fruitful path. In the next section, I aim to develop a sense of the complex ecosystem of Turkish literacy in the Ottoman Empire and poetry’s central role in it. I propose a model that begins to address the complexity of this ecosystem by highlighting its decentralized, informal and practice-embedded components as much as those recognized as formal and institutional. At the same time, I point out some indications that the rift between these two types of channels for acquiring literacy in Turkish was much smaller than has been assumed.

5.2 The ecosystem of Turkish literacy

As late as 1868, Namık Kemal, a leading proponent of reform in Turkish language and letters, was complaining that Turkish letters lacked the pedagogical tools that Western cultures possessed. There were no dictionaries of Turkish, no grammars and rhetorics of the language and no textbooks with model poetry and prose texts. Kemal pointed out that in all of these areas, Turkish relied on Arabic and Persian resources: Arabic-Turkish and Persian-Turkish dictionaries, Arabic and Persian grammars and textbooks of rhetoric. Moreover, to become capable of composing texts in Ottoman Turkish, a person had to spend six or seven years studying Arabic and Persian classics (‘*Arabī ve Fārisī muḳaddemātı*). This approach to Turkish literacy through a detour of Arabic and Persian was no longer acceptable. Namık Kemal wrote a manifesto to call for the immediate realization of these desiderata, at a time when the first Western-style schools with Turkish lessons in their curriculum were being instituted.⁶⁴¹

Long before Kemal, foreign visitors to the Ottoman empire in the early modern era had remarked on the same point. Giambattista Toderini, a Venetian Jesuit man of letters who was in Istanbul between 1781 and 1786, wrote that these types of pedagogical resources on the Turkish language “were entirely lacking among the Turks. They say that they have no need of them and that they learn enough by usage and habit of speaking. . . . There are some Turkish grammars, but all are made by the French and are used only by them.”⁶⁴² But for centuries no one among the Ottomans seemed to notice these absences.

⁶⁴¹ Namık Kemal, “Lisan-ı Osmanînin Edebiyatı Hakkında,” 186, 188.

⁶⁴² Translated from Italian and quoted in Miller, *The Palace School*, 106.

The greatest of these absences was perhaps lessons in Turkish language and literature. Modern scholarship has remarkably paid little attention to the fact that curricula of various types of schools, to the extent that we know about them, included no courses on Turkish until the nineteenth century. Given the presence of an ever-growing domain of Turkish letters from the sixteenth century, the acquisition of advanced literacy in this language has either been simply taken for granted or attributed to the educational institutions that existed, like the madrasa and the palace school. However, a vernacularizing and secularizing reform in madrasas comparable, for example, to the Mughal emperor Akbar's integration of the study of the Persian language, the lingua franca of the empire, and Persian literature into the madrasa curriculum never happened in the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁴³ Nor did ever develop a curriculum or canon of core texts in Turkish that needed to be mastered to be considered learned, comparable to the ulema's curriculum of religious sciences or the small set of Persian classics (e.g., *Meşnevî* by Rumi and *Gulistân* and *Bûstân* by Sadi) that most learners of the language studied.

I will first survey the place of Turkish in the main educational institutions of the Ottoman Empire and then argue that Turkish literacy was mostly acquired or, for those already versed in Arabic and Persian, smoothly transitioned into, in a host of informal settings.⁶⁴⁴ I will also argue that from the sixteenth century onwards, the practice of Turkish poetry, and all the social arrangements around it, became one of the most pervasive and influential of such informal settings of transmission of

⁶⁴³ Alam and Subrahmanyam, "The Making of a Munshi," 62.

⁶⁴⁴ The ensuing survey of Ottoman educational institutions is similar to the one offered by Nir Shafir in the third chapter ("Education") of his recent book *The Order and Disorder of Communication*, which came to my attention after I completed writing this section. Shafir's more detailed and very helpful survey is meant to serve an entirely different argument from the one advanced here. The author aims to demonstrate the "development of multiple, competing intellectual formations in the seventeenth-century Ottoman empire" (p. 92).

literacy and culture in Turkish. I will observe that the acquisition of Turkish literacy, in contradistinction to the way Arabic language sciences were approached in the madrasa, was always tied to some type of practice, be it professional, religious or literary. In other words, Turkish was never approached as a theoretical subject that could be meaningfully studied in isolation from practical contexts as a classroom topic. Hence the absence of grammars, dictionaries and a rhetorical tradition. The diverse practices to which Turkish literacy was attached, together with the contributions of the formal learning offered in extant schools, created a complex ecosystem that continued to function until the advent of Western-style schools in the nineteenth century. Each literate individual, too, including those with formal madrasa education, probably drew on multiple channels of practice and did not rely on a single exhaustive program for their Turkish literacy skills.

There is not adequate research on the literacy results of primary schools known as *şibyān mektepleri*. These schools—often small, single-room structure, the teacher’s home or a corner in the local mosque—had no fixed curriculum⁶⁴⁵ but their shared purpose was to teach young children to read the Qur’an as well as basic religious observances.⁶⁴⁶ The students were taught the Arabic script, but not the Arabic language, so they could typically only recite the Qur’an by looking at the text, without understanding the contents. A few pious foundation charters (*vakfiyye*) from the sixteenth century onwards also stipulate the employment of writing (*hatt, fenn-i kitābet*) teachers, but these courses must have been confined to physically copying

⁶⁴⁵ For a glimpse into the variety of courses stipulated in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century *vakfiyyes*, see Hızlı, *Bursa Mahkeme Sicillerine Göre*, 83-84.

⁶⁴⁶ The scholarly literature on pre-nineteenth-century Ottoman *mektebs* is underdeveloped and highly repetitive. For useful surveys see, Baltacı, “Mektep”; Ergin, *Türk Maarif Tarihi*, 82-91; Akyüz, *Türk Eğitim Tarihi*, 72-78. Also see Landau, “Kuttāb.” For studies on Bosnia and Bursa *mektebs* based on court records and pious foundation charters see Korić, “Childhood and Education” and Hızlı, *Bursa Mahkeme Sicillerine Göre*.

texts rather than composition, given the absence of other lessons that would build composition skills.⁶⁴⁷ Teaching of Arabic and Persian appears, for the first time, in the *vakfiyye* of a *mekteb* founded by Sultan Abdülhamid I (1774-89).⁶⁴⁸ Courses in Turkish literacy and literature, on the other hand, began to be offered only in the nineteenth century, with the first interventions of the state in primary education during the Tanzimat era (1839-78). For the early modern era, there are not even estimates on the rates of (particular types of) literacy, but it is almost certain that these neighborhood schools did not lead to composition skills in Turkish. As for reading skills in Turkish, they may have provided a basis for those who wanted to move on through further efforts, perhaps contributing indirectly to the spread of some form of literacy among urban commoners.

The madrasa seems to have been the greatest institutional source of Turkish literacy. It is entirely impossible to imagine a person in the religious hierarchy—a qadi or madrasa professor of any degree—being unable to read and write in Turkish. Although the studies in the madrasa were based near-exclusively on Arabic texts (see below), wherever there was an interface between the ulema and the populace, and between the ulema and the Ottoman administration, the ulema turned to Turkish. In the Rumi part of the empire, court records were more often than not kept in Turkish. Similarly fatwas were often given in Turkish. In the sixteenth century, older Arabic-language *vakfiyyes* of imperial waqfs were translated into Turkish,⁶⁴⁹ and from the late sixteenth century onwards, not only *vakfiyyes*, but also certificates or deeds prepared by the jurists concerning property, transactions and marriages were all in

⁶⁴⁷ Baltacı, “Mektep”; Hızlı, *Bursa Mahkeme Sicilllerine Göre*, 84.

⁶⁴⁸ Baltacı, “Mektep.”

⁶⁴⁹ Yüksel, “Vakfiye.”

Turkish.⁶⁵⁰ The jurists and the Ottoman administration also corresponded in Turkish, as in the case of responses by jurists to incoming orders from the imperial center.

However, no explanation has been offered thus far on how exactly the teachings and textual studies in the madrasa translated into Turkish literacy. It is not even clear whether it is the learning offered in the madrasa itself that automatically resulted in Turkish literacy or the madrasa offered a gateway into textual culture in general, facilitating further independent studies in Turkish and Persian for those interested. In any case, the madrasa curricula, at least in the sixteenth century, did not include any texts in Turkish, although the language of instruction was probably Turkish in the Rumi part of the empire. Not only were all of the primary titles studied in the madrasas—original works composed between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries anywhere in the Islamic world—in Arabic, but also the vast secondary literature based on these primary works—summaries (*muhtaşar*, *telhîs*), commentaries (*şerh*) and super-commentaries (*hāşiye*)—were near exclusively in Arabic.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁵⁰ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin İlmîye Teşkilâtı*, 109.

⁶⁵¹ While the idea of a strictly fixed “curriculum” or “syllabus” imposed either by the state or the top tier of the ulema hierarchy was foreign to the Ottoman madrasa as it was to premodern madrasas across the Islamic world, there had nonetheless developed widely shared canons. The different levels of Ottoman madrasas, for one, were known by the names of particular works associated with that level of studies; for example, beginner-level madrasas with a daily payment of 20-25 aspers for the professor were known as “*Tecrîd* madrasas,” after the theology classic *Hāshiyya al-Tajrîd* by al Sayyid al-Jurjani (d. 1413). The next level of madrasas (with a payment of 30-35 aspers per day) bore the moniker “*Miftāh* madrasas,” after the textbook of rhetorics titled *Miftāh al-‘ulūm* by al-Sakkaki (d. 1229) and its more popular shortened version *Talkhîs al-Miftāh* by Khatib al Qazwini (d. 1338); İpşirli, “Medrese.” Any kind of document that reflects the flexible canons of the sixteenth-century Ottoman madrasa does not include a single Turkish text. The sources surveyed for the purposes of this analysis are an edict by Sultan Süleyman from 973/1565-66, which lists books to be sent from the palace to imperial madrasas (Ahmed and Filipovic, “The Sultan’s Syllabus”); the list of books cited in Taşköprülüzade’s autobiography (see the appendix to Şen, “The Sultan’s Syllabus Revisited”); the list of madrasa books compiled by İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı from Mustafa Ali’s *Künhü’l-ahbār* and other sources (Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin İlmîye Teşkilâtı*, 19-23); and an undated sixteenth-century firman known as *Kānūnnāme-i ehl-i ‘ilm* (for the text see Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanūnnameleri*, vol. 4, 661-64; for a discussion of the date of the firman, see Beyazıt, “XVI. Yüzyıl Osmanlı İlmîye Kanūnnameleri”, 958-60).

Other types of book lists pertaining to the world of the ulema are similarly centered on Arabic. Extant inventories of sixteenth-century mosque and madrasa libraries evince collections based near-exclusively on Arabic-language religious studies. Although this had a practical rationale—supplying madrasa professors and students with the necessary textbooks—it also evinces the importance of this literature as the main, even only, component of most scholars’ intellectual horizons. It might, at this point, be appropriate to recall that the greater part of the manuscript legacy of the Ottoman Empire is in Arabic: According to one estimate, of the roughly 70,000 manuscripts lodged at the Süleymaniye Library, around 50,000 are in Arabic and only 12,000 in Turkish, with Persian and other languages accounting for the remainder.⁶⁵² The sixteenth-century collection of the Fatih mosque library had developed by the gradual expansion of the original collection donated by Mehmed II to his Sahn madrasas. İsmail Erünsal’s account of the different historical layers of this collection as reflected in the two extant sixteenth-century inventories (one by Fenarizade Şah Çelebi sometime between 1501 and 1512, the other by Hacı Hasanzade Mehmed Efendi in 968/1560-61) suggests that the original collection donated by Mehmed II included very books in Turkish if at all. Turkish works became a small but recognizable chunk with the donations of Halebizade Derviş Mehmed Çelebi (d. 1531) sometime after Şah Çelebi’s catalogue, but a major increase in Turkish titles, and especially in Turkish literature, would take place only in the eighteenth century.⁶⁵³ Similarly, Selim II’s daughter İsmihan Sultan’s donation of 68 titles in 118 volumes to the madrasa that bears her name in 976/1568-69

⁶⁵² <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/suleymaniye-library-holds-turkeys-treasure-21441>

⁶⁵³ Erünsal, *Osmanlılarda Kütüphaneler ve Kütüphanecilik*, 417-427; Takamatsu, “Türk ve İslam Eserleri.”

includes no books in Turkish.⁶⁵⁴ A third example of a madrasa library collection with no works in Turkish is the chief eunuch (*dārū's-sa 'āde ağası*) Habeşi Mehmed Ağa's (d. 1590) donation of around 85 titles to the mosque he built in Istanbul, Fatih; this collection comprises works in Arabic other than one or two titles in Persian.⁶⁵⁵

The composition of these mosque library collections suggests that the ulema were not necessarily expected to be generally learned or involved in Turkish literature. This is also borne out by other types of sources. Among the 165 or so religious scholars discussed under the reigns of Süleyman and Selim II in Nevzade Atayi's *Hadā'ikü'l-hakā'ik fī Tekmīleti's-şakā'ik*, around 40 are associated with Turkish poetry or prose, which is approximately 25%.⁶⁵⁶ Along the same lines, a study conducted on the estate inventories (*tereke*) of 64 madrasa students between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries have found that the great majority of the books listed were part of madrasa literature. The rest comprises works in Persian or Persian and Turkish combined (*Gulistān*, *Būstān*, *Tuḥfe-i Şāhidī*, İsmail Ankaravi's Turkish commentary on Rumi's *Meşnevī*, Persian *dīvāns*), but these account for a very small fraction of the total number of books mentioned, both in terms of titles and of the number of occasions these titles are mentioned. Not a single work in Turkish is recorded in these inventories. This must have had to do with at least partly the lower commercial value of books in Turkish and partly the informal channels of sociability that accounted for a substantial portion of the circulation of poetry in particular. Nevertheless, when considered together with other types of information mentioned above, these estate inventories give the impression that being part of the

⁶⁵⁴ Aynur, "Vakfiyesine Göre İsmihan Sultan'ın."

⁶⁵⁵ Açıl, "Habeşi Mehmed Ağa'nın."

⁶⁵⁶ Atayi, *Hadā'iku'l-hakā'ik*, 264-371, 478-622.

ulema and the madrasa environment did not automatically lead to an interest in Turkish letters and that this was a matter of personal inclination which required special effort.⁶⁵⁷ However, for more basic reading and writing skills, such as those required for keeping records and writing legal deeds in a standardized and repetitive bureaucratic language, practice on the job might have been enough.

Enderun, the palace school—rather, schools, since Edirne, Galata and İbrahim Paşa palaces also trained pages in addition to the Topkapı—appears to be the only educational institution for which extant scholarship mentions lessons or studies in Turkish literacy and literature. These notes, however, often lack references are very brief and vague, with no specific information on how and by whom the lessons were conducted and what texts were used.⁶⁵⁸ Moreover, a distinction is rarely made between “Turkish lessons” meant for teaching the language to non-native speakers, which the levied boys were, and advanced studies in literature.⁶⁵⁹ These sparse and vague references to studies in Turkish letters, and to learning in general, stand in contradistinction to the huge amount of detailed information on the hierarchical organization of the palace pages’ spaces within the palace, the rules, regulations and punishments through which the pages’ behavior was controlled, and the stations they passed through from their initial collection as child levies to their assumption of offices inside and then outside the court. For their training period, by far the most detailed information is given on the pages’ physical education and secondarily perhaps on their training in music.⁶⁶⁰ This thematic distribution in the scholarly

⁶⁵⁷ Aydın and Erünsal, “Tereke Kayıtlarına Göre.”

⁶⁵⁸ Miller, *The Palace School*, 1941, 94, 99, 105-106; Akkutay, *Enderun Mektebi*, 124.

⁶⁵⁹ Uzunçarşılı is among the more careful historians in this regard; in his study of the court’s organization, he refers to lessons in Turkish only once and in the context of language teaching. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilâtı*, 309.

⁶⁶⁰ Miller, *The Palace School*; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilâtı*; Akkutay, *Enderun Mektebi*.

portrayal of the pages' training no doubt derives from the nature of the information available in historical sources, chief among them the reports of European visitors.⁶⁶¹ The period before the seventeenth century remains largely in the dark.

The scant references in sources from the seventeenth century and later give the impression that the pages' education in letters and learning followed the same principles and patterns as the rest of the literate sectors of the society. Ability to read and recite the Qur'an, basic catechism and some calligraphy skills formed the basis of this education.⁶⁶² After that point, most were channeled into more physical pursuits, acquiring athletic and warrior's skills, and learning various arts and crafts such as saddle making, cooking and keeping dogs and falcons, as preparation for specific service units in the palace. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (d. 1689), for example, summarizes the main areas the pages were trained in as the religion of Islam, physical training, and court etiquette and duties.⁶⁶³ It appears that it was only the more intelligent that were channeled into further studies in letters and sciences. These select pages were taught the Arabic and Persian languages and given a set of readings that looks very much like the beginner-level madrasa curriculum.⁶⁶⁴ Persian was studied, as elsewhere by directly reading Persian classics like *Gulistān* and *Būstān*, in addition to memorizing Şahidi's well-known verse dictionary. According to Wojciech Bobowski (Ali Ufki), those few who studied advanced Persian were motivated by the goal of reading and writing Turkish well, the prerequisite for rising

⁶⁶¹ See for example, Tavernier, *17. Yüzyılda Topkapı Sarayı*; Ali Ufki, *Saray-ı Enderun*; Paul Rychaut, *The Present State*.

⁶⁶² Ali Ufki, *Saray-ı Enderun*, 69-70.

⁶⁶³ Tavernier, *17. Yüzyılda Topkapı Sarayı*, 71.

⁶⁶⁴ Ali Ufki, *Saray-ı Enderun*, 70-71. Rychaut, *The Present State*, Chapter VI "Of the method of the Turkish Studies and Learning in the Seraglio." The list of books Evliya Çelebi was given by Murad IV for his studies upon his entry into Enderun service largely overlaps with Ali Ufki and Rychaut's lists of the books that palace pages studied. But Evliya Çelebi's books also include a few higher-level madrasa books. Evliya Çelebi, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol.1, 118.

in the scribal service. Bobowski, a long-time resident and functionary in the Enderun as a war captive, has no other information to give on the transmission of advanced literacy and literary culture in Turkish. Earlier travelogues, such as *The Turkish Letters* of Busbecq, do not provide any information at all.⁶⁶⁵ The only specific reference to titles of Turkish literary works read in the Enderun is found again in Bobowski's book on palace service, although the context is not specified as educational. Bobowski—and Paul Rycaut whose informant was Bobowski—relate that the pages would read story cycles like *Kırk Vezir*, *Hümâyunnâme*, *Seyyid Battāl* and *Thousand and One Nights*.⁶⁶⁶ From eighteenth- and nineteenth-century evidence, we know these type of narratives were commonly objects of communal reading sessions where many were in the position of auditors. As such, Bobowski and Rycaut's notes may not be necessarily implying widespread high literacy among the pages and may be referring to free-time activities of the pages.

However, despite the absence of records on the teaching of high-register Turkish and its literature, many palace pages emerged as important poets and men of letters. It is very likely that their literary acculturation took place along the same path the rest of the literati acquired their formation: through salons (*meclis*), polite conversation (*şoḥbet*), practices like working with a “master” (*üstād*, see the section on *üstād-şākird* relations below), all of which provided frames within which poetry and other works were transmitted, produced and critiqued. Though the movement of the pages outside the palace was restricted, salon-like assemblies and *üstād-şākird* relations must have also existed within the palace. In fact, though a late source, the following passage from Tayyarzade Ata's *Tārīḫ-i Enderūn* captures the bifurcation

⁶⁶⁵ de Busbecq, *The Turkish Letters*.

⁶⁶⁶ Ali Ufki, *Saray-ı Enderun*, 71-72; Rycaut, *The Present State*, Chapter VI.

between the more structured courses under preceptors and the informal *şohbet* gatherings, held in the pages' free time, where literary matters were discussed among other topics:

On Sundays, instruction in the science of Qur'anic recitation was received from the Chief Reciter. On Saturdays and Wednesdays, when the calligraphy masters came and the *sülüs* script was practiced. In addition to these, everyone would study their lessons, engage in discussions of the sciences with one another, and read together. After occupying themselves day and night for several hours with the sciences and learning, they would, for the sake of recreation and rest, gather in the circle of sociability known as the "Fountain Courtyard." Here, too, they would pass the time with scholarly debates, literary conversations, and discussions of military skills. Those inclined toward soldiery would debate about the arts of horsemanship, polo-playing, marksmanship, and training for mastering the bow and the arrow and the sword and the spear. The scribal class under the treasury stewards trained themselves in book-keeping, drafting reports, and other refinements of writing. Among the senior members of the Palace Larder department, there would be discussions about what beverages, confections, and dishes to prepare for the sultan, in addition to matters pertaining to the sciences and learning and personal life.⁶⁶⁷

Along the same lines, Tayyarzade Ata emphasizes the role the palace libraries, donated by the sultans, played in the broader cultural formation of the pages and led to the emergence of accomplished literati and historians from among the graduates of the Enderun.⁶⁶⁸ In sum, our present knowledge of the workings of the palace school precludes us from maintaining that the palace pages' channels of acquiring advanced Turkish literacy and literary culture were different and more formally structured than the rest of the literati in the urban milieu.

When we move beyond the world of schools, two other institutional settings played a direct role in teaching Turkish literacy. The first is the Sufi convents where Sufi literature was studied, copied and produced. Both Arabic and Persian loomed large in Ottoman Sufism, but especially where poetry is concerned there was a

⁶⁶⁷ Ata, *Osmanlı Sarayı Tarihi*, vol. 1, 238-39.

⁶⁶⁸ Ata, *Osmanlı Sarayı Tarihi*, vol. 1, 255-56, 258.

vibrant Sufi tradition in Turkish that dated back at least one century before the rise of *dīvān* literature in the early fifteenth century. Biographical dictionaries clearly show that many of the poets, including ones with little or no madrasa education, and many members of the ulema were affiliates of Sufi brotherhoods; some are associated with particular convents. Like many other contexts of learning and letters, the Sufi convents, too, reflect a literacy environment where it is very difficult to think of literacy in Turkish as entirely distinct from literacy in Arabic and Persian.⁶⁶⁹

The second institutional setting outside schools was the bureaucratic offices where young apprentices (*şākird*, *çırak*) were trained under master scribes (*üstād*, *hāce*). The kind of literacy skills these *şākirds* acquired were, if Mustafa Ali is to be believed, quite limited. Mustafa Ali distinguishes between *münşīs*, composers of *inşā* prose, and petty scribes, whom he disdainfully calls *ehl-i hıref* (tradesmen). *Münşīs*, of madrasa background or not, were those who are capable of original *inşā* composition. They possessed some command of Arabic and Persian and a broader cultural background that allowed them to ornament their texts with elaborate metaphors, allusions, quotations and stock phrases. As such, the best among them were fit for positions like the *re'isü'l-küttāb* or the *nişāncı*. Petty scribes trained within the offices, on the other hand, were ignorant menial workers who toiled in poverty as virtual human typing and xerox machines, writing down the common folk's petitions and copying texts that others composed; their only skill was the physical act of writing, not composing. By Mustafa Ali's time these scribes were

⁶⁶⁹ For preliminary observations on the teaching activities in the Sufi convents, see Gündüz, *Osmanlılarda Devlet-Tekke Münasebetleri*, 70-85. For bibliographies of historical and modern works that provide information on education in the convents see Kara, "Tekke Eğitimi ve Literatürü"; Aşkar, *Tasavvuf Tarihi Literatürü*.

generally trained within the bureaucracy as *şākirds* under *hāces*, who were likewise ignorant according to the author.⁶⁷⁰

This brief survey of the place of Turkish literacy in schools and other institutional settings suggests that the status of Turkish literacy as an object of teaching was in some ways different from that of Arabic and Persian. The latter two languages were “taught,” at least at the beginning stages, and had accordingly developed pedagogical tools like dictionaries and grammar books. *Tezkires* also mention several professional teachers of Persian with diverse student profiles including members of the ulema. Turkish literacy, on the other hand, was often parasitic on the literacy in these other languages for those who studied them. The inevitable knowledge gap in between was, apparently, compensated for through practice—practices of reading, memorization and imitation of pre-given examples, whether in a judge’s seat, in a scribal office or in a Sufi convent. The oft-repeated formula that Ottoman Turkish was “an admixture of three languages” may also be obliquely referring to this pedagogical aspect of Turkish literacy. For those who possessed little or no knowledge of Arabic and Persian, of whom there were many, acquisition of Turkish literacy must have been even more strictly attached to some kind of professional, artistic or religious practice through which encounters with texts took place. For example, sciences-cum-trades like astrology, medicine and music, also had written traditions of their own and entailed master-apprentice relations similar to those in the scribal service. It can be surmised that these professions, along with Sufi milieus, scribal service and poetry circles, also provided

⁶⁷⁰ MALI, vol. 4, 1080-81; Mustafa Ali, *Nushatü’s-selâtîn*, 323-24.

channels of acquiring literacy in Turkish, again in close proximity to Arabic and Persian.

As the *tezkires* strongly suggest, most individuals, even those who were formally schooled, did not rely on a single pathway into Turkish literacy, but rather benefited from a combination of several throughout their lifetimes. Hence my idea of Turkish literacy as an ecosystem. In the case of Zati, originally a bootmaker from Balıkesir, the *tezkiye* authors' various scattered references to his early life combine to form just such an ecology of pathways. According to Latifi, he had studied some Arabic grammar;⁶⁷¹ this might have taken place in a local madrasa, in a convent or under an expert he personally contacted. Aşık Çelebi contradicts this piece of information when he says that Zati was completely ignorant of the preparatory language sciences taught in the madrasas, of which *naḥiv*, or grammar, was one.⁶⁷² However, given that Latifi has much more to say on the early life of Zati, his specific note on Zati's *naḥiv* studies is probably correct. Even if Zati stepped foot in a madrasa, he certainly did not continue on that path of education. According to Aşık Çelebi he knew a little bit of Persian.⁶⁷³ Latifi uniquely reports that early in his life Zati was an apprentice to a Müneccimzade ("son of the astrologist") from whom he learned the science of astrology and geomancy.⁶⁷⁴ Zati also spent some time in the Sheikh Vefa convent in Fatih.⁶⁷⁵ From the time he arrived in Istanbul he joined poetry circles, frequented *meclises* and spent most of his time working on poetry. By far the most predominant aspect of Zati's formation is Turkish poetry, but he had

⁶⁷¹ . . . 'ömrinüñ bir miqdārın naḥve şarf itdi. LAT, 263.

⁶⁷² Merḥūm 'ulūm-i āliyye ve sâ'ir fūnūn-i bedi'iyeden nesne bilmezdi. AÇ, 1574.

⁶⁷³ . . . cüz'î Fārsī bilürdi. AÇ, 1574.

⁶⁷⁴ LAT, 263.

⁶⁷⁵ AÇ, 1582.

clearly benefited from a little bit of several different branches of knowledge which together formed his pathway into Turkish literacy and high culture.

The strong attachment of literacy acquisition in all three languages to particular subject matter and professions, i.e., the fact that there was no language study in total abstraction from particular branches of knowledge, unlike the situation in the modern world, meant that there were probably very few literate but unlearned individuals, if at all.⁶⁷⁶ The *tezkires* of this period do indeed only refer to a nether world of oral folk literature beyond the cultural cluster around the imperial center, with no indication of the existence of unlearned urban readers and writers. A striking symptom of such a bifurcated world is furnished by the peculiar way the *tezkires* use the word *‘avāmm*, the populace, the opposite of *ḥavāṣṣ*, elites. The *ḥavāṣṣ*-*‘avāmm* distinction that keeps cropping up in these sources refers to a distinction in degrees of literacy and learning *within* the imperial elites and has nothing to do with the illiterate common folk, who are entirely out of the discussion. The references to *‘avāmm*, in other words, evoke a layer of literacy within the milieu of imperial functionaries and imperial culture, one considered inadequate from the perspective of those who authored the key biographical and historical prose works of the era. To give a few examples, Latifi criticizes the *‘avamm*’s attribution of several well-known Turkish ghazels to Sultan Selim I and assigns these poems to their correct authors.⁶⁷⁷ Similarly, Hasan Çelebi makes the striking claim that of the two great prose stylists

⁶⁷⁶ As suggested above, the study of Persian and Arabic did involve such “abstract” language studies at the beginner level: For example, the Persian-Turkish verse vocabulary primer *Tuḥfe-i Şāhidī*, written for children, is without a theme, although it does teach poetic meter simultaneously and thus functions as a primer in poetry as well. Next, however, students moved on directly to reading Persian literary-cum-Sufi classics like Sadi’s *Gulistān*, Rumi’s *Meṣnevī*, and Hafez’s *dīvān*. Similarly, beginner-level madrasa students first studied Arabic *ṣarf* (morphology) and *naḥiv* (syntax), but soon they began to work with actual textbooks in religious sciences.

⁶⁷⁷ LAT, 151, 528, 542.

of the early sixteenth century, the brothers Tacizade Cafer and Sadi Çelebis, the chancellor Cafer Çelebi's style appeals to the 'avāmm and Sadi's to the more refined and learned.⁶⁷⁸ A similarly striking claim by Hasan Çelebi is that the works of Süruri Çelebi, Prince Mustafa's tutor and author of the influential poetry manual *Baḥrū 'l-ma 'ārif*, were very popular among the 'avāmm but that he was criticized by the knowledgeable especially for his poor command of the Persian language.⁶⁷⁹ It is clear that Latifi, Hasan Çelebi and other authors who use 'avāmm this way are referring to people within the culture of *dīvān* poetry and *inşā*.

Of course, in this entire picture of knowledge-embedded literacy, a key role was played for Turkish by the practice of poetry from the early sixteenth century onwards. In fact, I argue, in the early sixteenth century, several distinct types of social arrangements around poetry became pervasive and regularized enough to function as a quasi-institutional environment in which Turkish literacy and the whole cultural *bildung* that underlay poetry was transmitted to novices. That these arrangements entailed a high degree of orality and were not entirely dependent on textuality must have rendered poetry the main pathway to literacy in Turkish, as well as into the imperial social and cultural milieu, for many young urbanites who lacked or did not incline towards other channels. The early sixteenth century is indeed full of poets with humble or obscure origins who attained fame, prestige and financial protection of the patrons. In the following sections, I try to show that poetry evolved in the sixteenth century into an independent path of learning and entry into the class of imperial servants who were remunerated by state resources, posing an alternative to careers in the religious hierarchy and scribal service.

⁶⁷⁸ HÇ, 462-63.

⁶⁷⁹ HÇ, 460.

5.3 Acquisition of poetry skills: An informal and independent path of education

As discussed in Chapter 4 “A Community Culture,” the practice of *dīvān* poetry was deeply rooted in orality. The *meclis* and *şoḥbet* cultures played a major role in the transmission of poetry and the formation of the poets. This meant that acquisition of poetry generally did not take place in the form of theoretical textual studies with or without an instructor, but was deeply embedded in social relations and orality on the one hand, and in *meşk*-style actual practice on the other. The stylistic and linguistic characteristics of sixteenth-century poetry also (Chapter 4) made it possible to assimilate orally the various components of poetry—such as meter, vocabulary and the entire cultural background made up of an admixture of Sufism, Islamic history and the Persian epic-mythic tradition—leading to the emergence of “illiterate poets,” uniquely in this period. In this section, I will examine Turkish poetry and rhetoric textbooks or manuals that appeared in this period as possible indications of the emergence of poetry as an independent path of learning. I also ask if this literature significantly changes the picture that emerged from my focus on orality and sociability as key components of sixteenth-century *dīvān* poetry culture. Secondly, I focus on the *üstād-şākird* (master-apprentice) relations in the domain of poetry as yet another informal but nevertheless structured form of face-to-face social relations that mediated the pedagogy of poetry and allowed it to develop as an independent path of study. This section will thus cover two of the key channels of acquiring poetry skills, complementing the account of *meclis* and *şoḥbet* culture offered in Chapter 4.

5.3.1 Textbooks and guides on rhetoric and poetry

A comprehensive study of guide books on rhetoric and poetry written and/or utilized in the Ottoman context is still lacking. As this vast inquiry is beyond the scope of this

dissertation, I will content myself with presenting a brief overview of the two most salient traditions, one in Arabic and the other in Persian, and their Turkish translations, summaries and commentaries produced between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁶⁸⁰ The Arabic tradition in question comprised madrasa textbooks on the *‘ilm al-balāḡa* (*belāḡat* in Ottoman Turkish), which was seen as an ancillary science necessary for the correct understanding of the Qur’an and the hadith. In Ottoman madrasas *‘ilm al-balāḡa* was mostly studied through an interlinked series of textbooks: Muhammad al-Sakkaki’s (d. 1229) *Miftāḥ al-‘ulūm* (The Key to the Disciplines), its partial summary by Khatib al-Qazwini (d. 1338), titled *Talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ* (Summary of the *Miftāḥ*), Sa’d al-Din Taftazani’s (d. 1390) commentary on the *Talkhīṣ* called *al-Muṭawwal*, and Sayyid al-Sharif al-Jurjani’s (d. 1413) super-commentary on the *Muṭawwal*.⁶⁸¹ These madrasa textbooks approached rhetoric mainly as a preparation for advanced religious studies and not as a guide for poetry or other literary arts; the examples cited to demonstrate the rhetorical concepts were exclusively in Arabic and mostly drawn from the Qur’an, the hadith and to a certain extent from Arabic poetry. Moreover, their descriptions of rhetorical concepts were largely abstract and hard to understand, which is why the tradition spawned a vast corpus of commentaries and supercommentaries, mostly in Arabic. As such this Arabic-language corpus appears to have had little direct influence on the practice of Turkish poetry.

However, from the late fifteenth century onwards down to the late nineteenth, Turkish syntheses, summaries, translations and commentaries based on the Sakkaki-

⁶⁸⁰ For a definition and overview of these two distinct traditions and their Turkish adaptations, see Ferrard, “The Development of an Ottoman Rhetoric”; Ferrard, “The Development of an Ottoman Rhetoric Part II”; Saraç, “Osmanlı Döneminde Belâgat Çalışmaları.”

⁶⁸¹ For an overview of these interlinked Arabic *belâḡāt* books, see Smyth, “Controversy in a Tradition of Commentary.”

Qazwini-Taftazani-Jurjani line of rhetoric textbooks appeared. The earliest of these is Molla Lutfi's (d. 1495) short treatise known as *Risāle-i Mevlānā Lutfi*.⁶⁸² The sources of this work have not been explored, but the fact that the author refers readers who want more detail to *Muṭavvelāt* shows that it is part of this tradition. It is the only Turkish work in this tradition that is written in plain Turkish, with very few Arabic and Persian quotations, and was intended for people with no knowledge of Arabic, as explained in the introduction. By comparison to the Turkish works in this tradition to follow, Molla Lutfi's treatise—including his son's introduction—is uniquely in touch with the world of Turkish poetry. Molla Lutfi's son explains, somewhat paradoxically, that he let the book sit in a corner for many years because of the general decline in people's *belāḡat*, especially in poetry. However, during the age of Prince Süleyman (later sultan, r. 1520-1566), *belāḡat* began to reign again, and he knew that it was time to bring the book out into daylight. The examples in the book include everyday Turkish expressions and a few pieces of Turkish poetry. The editor of the work mentions a single copy, so it does not appear to have reached a broad audience.

According to our current knowledge, four other Turkish works in this tradition were produced until the end of the seventeenth century, mostly deriving from Qazwini's *Talkhīṣ*, and a few from Taftazani's *Muṭawwal*. These works are different from Molla Lutfi's in that they seem to target either madrasa students or other types of pupils, such as pashas' sons educated at home. They contain long Arabic quotations and some are in the form of an interlinear translation and/or commentary, with Arabic phrases and sentences from the original source quoted and

⁶⁸² Aksoy, "Molla Lutfi'nin Risāle-i Mevlānā Lutfi'si."

then explained in a Turkish that incorporates the key Arabic words in the original text. After Lutfi's early treatise, the next work with any kind of date information is an anonymous work, an untitled interlinear translation of the *Talkhîs*, in which the author mentions the year 1004/1595-96 as time when he was working on the text. The editor of the text conjectures that the author might be Sudi Bosnevi (d. 1599?) after a careful assessment of clues in this direction, but concedes that there is no conclusive evidence for such an attribution.⁶⁸³ Another work that can be roughly dated, by the author's death date, is Üskübi Altıparmak Mehmed Efendi's (d. 1623-24) *Şerh-i Telhîs-i Miftâh*. The work is similar to the anonymous translation mentioned above in that it incorporates interlinear quotations from the original work. However, this is a commentary with extended explanations. Judging by the first twenty folios of this lengthy work that have been transliterated and published and by an article that describes the contents of the work, its approach is largely theoretical and abstract, with *belâgat* concepts explained in an Arabic-infused Turkish and few examples given.⁶⁸⁴ Neither of these works makes an attempt to connect the contents to the context of Turkish letters. With their erudite language, both works appear to address an exclusively scholarly audience, likely madrasa students who might be having difficulty in understanding Qazwini. The anonymous translation survives in three copies and Altıparmak's commentary in two.

There are also at least three short undated works that might belong to the sixteenth century, judging by their language and style. One is an untitled and undated work with no author's name, extant in three copies. Tentatively titled as *Mefhûmü 't-telhîs* by its editor, based on a tag added on one of the manuscripts, this is a very

⁶⁸³ Akdağ, "Telhîsü'l-Miftâh'ın Türkçe Tercümeleri," 126-31.

⁶⁸⁴ Kılıç, "Üskübî'nin 'Şerh-i Telhîs'i"; Kılıç, "Altıparmak Mehmed Efendi."

short Turkish summary of Qazwini's *Talkhîş* that omits examples and explains concepts in relatively clear, intelligible Turkish.⁶⁸⁵ It is actually the third chapter of a work that explains fundamental madrasa topics (*şarf*, *naḥiv*, *belāġat*, *mantık* and *ādāb*) in plain language and in summary form for the benefit of the son of a Mehmed Paşa. Compared to Altıparmak Mehmed Efendi's erudite commentary on the same original source, Qazwini's *Talkhîş*, this one reads like a toned-down and approachable version of the madrasa course on this topic. *Tercüme-i Dibāce-i Telhîs-i Miftāh* by an otherwise unknown Abdülġani ġürani, only translates the introduction to the *Miftāh* in relatively simple Turkish and with some Turkish examples interspersed.⁶⁸⁶ Although the extant two copies were produced in the late seventeenth century, the language suggests an earlier composition date. Similarly, there is a Turkish summary of the *beyān* (figurative language) section of the *Talkhîş* that might belong to the sixteenth century.⁶⁸⁷

Although other works might emerge beyond what has been discovered so far, this overview of the most dominant streak of madrasa books on rhetoric and their vernacularizations does not suggest a significant influence on the world of Turkish poetry in spite of the direct relevance of the topic. The tradition remained largely in Arabic and the few Turkish adaptations that emerged did not gain widespread readership. The Turkish works remained fixated in the domain of Arabic rhetoric, aiming mainly to help madrasa and other students understand difficult Arabic textbooks, rather than helping them extend their theoretical knowledge into Turkish rhetoric. Samples from everyday Turkish speech and Turkish poetry remained

⁶⁸⁵ Kaçar, "Muhtasar Bir Belâgat Metni."

⁶⁸⁶ Akdağ, "Abdülġani ġürânî."

⁶⁸⁷ Akdağ, "Telhîsü'l-Miftāh'ın Beyân Bölümünün."

marginal. That this Arabic madrasa corpus and its Turkish extensions did not have any direct influence on the culture of sixteenth-century *dīvān* poetry is also suggested by the absence of references to these works in the *tezkires* of the era. It is remarkable, for example, that although Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi, as a member of the ulema, wrote an Arabic supercommentary to *al-Muṭawwal*, he did not reference this literature in his entire *tezkire*. A second important indicator in the same direction is the language poets used when critiquing verses by other poets. As discussed in Chapter 4 with examples, there was the widespread practice of assessing the quality of particular verses, commonly called *daḥl*, or intervening. These critiques were usually centered on whether the figure in a particular verse worked or not. Vocabulary choice and syntax were also under close scrutiny. The examples of such instances recorded in the *tezkires* show that when poets commented on other poets' verses, they did not normally use the terminology of the madrasa textbooks, even if they were members of the ulema. These critiques are couched in a practical and non-technical quotidian vocabulary.

The Arabic rhetorical tradition represented by the Sakkaki-Qazwini-Taftazani-Jurjani line and its vernacularizations was not the only rhetorical literature among the Ottomans. Persian rhetorical classics *Ḥadā'iq al-siḥr fī daḳā'iq al-shi'r* by Rashid al-Din Vatvat (d. 1182?) and *Anīs al-'ushshāq* by Sharaf al-din Rami (d. 1393?) appear to have exerted considerable influence. Research on the spread of these Persian works in the Ottoman context and the full range of their local Persian or Turkish versions is inadequate. So far four works produced in the Rumi context have been identified. Ahmedi's (d. 1512) *Badāyi al-siḥr fī ṣanāyī al-shi'r*, a Persian work that expands on Vatvat's treatise is the earliest known work in this line; it

includes only one short Turkish verse quotation.⁶⁸⁸ The second extant work in the same tradition is Ahmed el-Bardahi's *Cāmi 'ū'l-fürs* or *fāris*, a Persian-Turkish dictionary written in the Aqqoyunlu milieu in 907/1501-2. The dictionary includes a short appendix on poetic arts including prosody and figures of speech, with ample Turkish verse samples, in addition to Persian and Arabic.⁶⁸⁹ The third is *Miftāḥü't-teşbīh*, a Turkish adaptation of Rami's *Anīs al-'ushshāq* by a Muidi, who İsmail Erünsal believes is Muidi of Kalkandelen (fl. mid sixteenth century).⁶⁹⁰ The fourth work, Gelibolulu Süruri's (d. 1562) Turkish *Baḥrū'l-ma'ārif* (1549) is based on both Vatvat and Rami, but also seems to draw on Bardahi as there are shared passages, almost verbatim.⁶⁹¹ The three works except Süruri's have each survived in a single copy. Süruri's *Baḥrū'l-ma'ārif*, however, was highly popular in its own time and has accordingly survived in at least forty-five copies, with a substantial portion from the sixteenth century.

Thematically, these works correspond to the *beyān* (figures of speech) and *bedī'* (rhetorical devices) sections of the Arabic works in the madrasa tradition, with added information on prosody,⁶⁹² but they differ in their strictly practical orientation and exclusive focus on poetic composition. Whereas the theoretical abstractions of the Arabic tradition are meant to apply to any kind of discourse, the Persian tradition and its Turkish adaptations discuss the uses of the rhetorical concepts in poetry exclusively. Another difference is that Turkish poetry samples play a central role in

⁶⁸⁸ Temizel, "Ahmedi'nin Bedāyi'u's-Sihr Fî Sanāyi'i'ş-Şi'r," 102.

⁶⁸⁹ Bardahi, *Cāmi 'ū'l-Fürs*.

⁶⁹⁰ Erünsal, "Mu'idi'nin Miftāḥü't-teşbīh'i."

⁶⁹¹ Şafak, "Sürürî'nin Baḥrū'l-ma'ārif'i."

⁶⁹² For Ottoman treatises focused on prosody (*'arūz* and *kāfiyye*) alone, see Turan, "Lâmi'î Çelebi'nin Aruz Risalesi."

the vernacularizations of the Persian tradition whereas any kind of Turkish samples remains marginal in the Turkish adaptations of Sakkaki, Qazwini and Taftazani.

The practical orientation of these works as guides for poets, including relatively unlearned ones, is signaled by their explanations in very simple Turkish, the ease of reference that clearly marked subsections provide, and their tendency to avoid complex theoretical matters. They also occasionally reference the actual world of poetic practice. For example, Süruri, and Bardahi before him, write that many poets whose poetic skill comes from natural talent do not learn the science of *‘arūz* and do not need to.⁶⁹³ After conceding this actual state of affairs in the poetic scene, they proceed to justify the study of this science, with reference to the ability to name the metric patterns one uses in one’s poems or in what one hears, and the ability to recognize the difficult metric patterns that cannot be understood by the ear. Also, after presenting a complete survey of standard (*sālīm*) meters, Süruri writes that he will only cover the modified or irregular (*ğayr-i sālīm*) meters commonly used in Turkish poetry.⁶⁹⁴ Similarly, Muidi notes that his lists of figures will be confined to those commonly used by the Rumi poets.⁶⁹⁵ Muidi also explains the necessity of his long lists of figures for particular physical features of the beloved with reference to poetic practice. The items on the lists might refer to the same thing —e.g., lips—but a poet has to learn them all since different metric requirements will have to be met.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹³ For the similarity and textual overlaps between Bardahi and Süruri, see Saraç, “Türk Edebiyatında Belagat.”

⁶⁹⁴ *Şimden gerü Türkî dilde şāyi ‘ ve müsta ‘mel olan baħr-i ğayr-i sālimleri beyān kılalum.* Şafak, “Sürürî’nin Baħrû’l-ma ‘arîf’i,” 27.

⁶⁹⁵ *Pes bu risālede mektûb olan elfāz şol ‘ibāretlerdür ki Rûm şā ‘irlerinün fāzılları qabûl eyleyûb eş ‘ârında yazmışlardır.* Erünsal, “Mu ‘idî’nin Miftâhu’t-teşbih’i,” 224.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ve bu risālede çok teşbih ve evşâf vardır ki ma ‘nā cihetinden zāyiddür. . . . Cümlesi bir ma ‘nâyadır. . . . Amma buncılayın elfāzı yazmakda fāyide oldur ki eger bir vezne gelmezse ümîddür ki biri bâri gele.* Erünsal, “Mu ‘idî’nin Miftâhu’t-teşbih’i,” 223.

I want to emphasize that neither the Arabic nor Persian tradition was very robust, both being made up of a small number of titles, each of which has very few manuscript copies, with the exception of Süruri's popular work *Bahrü'l-ma'ārif*. Given the popularity of this work, it can be said that the Persianate tradition did have some influence in the sixteenth century, but only after a thorough vernacularization that extended to the poetry samples. Overall, however, it appears that textual pedagogical resources did not play a key role in the poetry scene. Together with the absence of a focus on Turkish literacy and literature in the curricula of various types of formal schooling, the weakness of the rhetorical traditions in touch with Turkish poetry strongly suggests that poetry developed its own channels of transmitting literacy, learning and poetic skills, mainly in the oral domain.

Bardahi and Süruri's point that prosody can be and commonly is assimilated by the ear is also made by Fani, the old poetry teacher that Latifi uses as a mouthpiece to express the key principles a poet should follow (see below for more on Fani). In the distinction between "natural" poets and poets with "acquired" skills, the preference of the *tezkiye* authors is often placed on the natural, which also suggests that it was not book-learning but oral resources that made many a poet.⁶⁹⁷ When Ahdi makes the seemingly paradoxical comment that Bidari was a "totally unlearned/unlettered man"⁶⁹⁸ but had "thoroughly studied the science of poetry,"⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁷ Andrews, "The Tezkere-i Şu'ara of Latifi." A quote from Latifi that demonstrates this point is found in the entry on Süruri: *Zīrā 'ulūm-ı müktesebeden bī-behre 'āmī şā'irlerinden sihr ü i'cāza karīb ġarīb şī'rler şādır u zāhir olmışdur ki e'ālī-i 'ulemā bir beytinde 'ācizdür. . . . Pes fenn-i şī'rde evleviyyet mevleviyyet ile degül idügi zāhir oldu.* LAT2, 92a.

⁶⁹⁸ . . . *aslında nesne okımamış 'āmī idi.* AHD, 237.

⁶⁹⁹ . . . *fenn-i şī'ri tamām tahşīl ü tekml itmiş.* AHD, 237.

he gives exclusive reference to non-textual resources in explanation of the contents of the “studies” in question.⁷⁰⁰

The sixteenth century did indeed see the spread of social arrangements in which poetry skills could be acquired. The primary one among these was no doubt the *meclis*, as discussed in the previous chapter. Another major social arrangement for transmission of poetry skills, again had nothing to do with the madrasa or other known institutions of education such as the Enderun. This was the “institution” of master-apprentice (*üstād-şākird*) relations.

5.3.2 Master-apprentice (*üstād-şākird*) relations in poetry

Tezkires mention *üstāds* and *şākirds* in poetry sporadically, which means that probably not all poets or poets-to-be worked with *üstāds*. It seems that most of the *şākirds* came from outside the madrasa milieu: Scholars or scholars-to-be rarely attached themselves to *üstāds* in poetry. This, I argue, is one of the indications that poetry was emerging in this period as path of literacy and learning that posed an alternative to the madrasa.

The poet Zati, himself a self-made poet with little formal education, had multiple *şākirds*. Speaking of Kudsi, an *emīn* (safekeeper, steward) from Galata, Latifi writes that he is one of the *şākirds* of Zati (*Zātī şākirdlerinden*).⁷⁰¹ Kara Fazli, whose educational background is rather obscure, was another; Zati would call him “my exclusive apprentice” (*maḥşūş şākirdümdür*), by which he probably meant that

⁷⁰⁰ *Dergüzīn’den Rūm’a gelüp zuraḫāyla iḥtilāṭ idüp güftār-ı Türķī’ye meyl kılup bir mīkdār edāsına irtibāt virüp . . . ḫātırında şu’arā-yı selefden ve müte’ahḫirīnden eş’ār-ı bī-nihāye var idi. Muşāḫabetinden bi’l-küllīye hazz-ı tām olınurdu.* AHD, 237.

⁷⁰¹ LAT, 448.

he paid special attention to him among others he mentored.⁷⁰² Aşık Çelebi sums up Fazlî's "education" with Zâtî in words that highlight the practice-embedded nature of the process: "He would incessantly work on poetry, compose (literally 'say') poetry and listen to poetry."⁷⁰³ Necatî Beg had multiple *şâkirds* including the biographer Sehi Beg and Sunî.⁷⁰⁴ "Hâce" Fânî from Plovdiv (Filibe) apparently made a career as a teacher (*hâce*) in different disciplines such as Persian and poetry and Sufism. He had many *şâkirds* in poetry⁷⁰⁵ and taught Latîfî two key Sufî texts.⁷⁰⁶ A summary of his teachings in poetry to his *şâkirds* forms the bulk of Latîfî's expanded entry in the final recension of his biographical dictionary. Notably, these teachings all pertained to the general principles of conduct around the practice of poetry (*suhanverlik âdâbı*), and included, for example, injunctions on the inappropriateness of boasting about one's own poetry and picking a penname with negative connotations, or succumbing to laxity in religious matters by getting hooked up in a bohemian lifestyle. The actual mechanics of constructing verses were never theorized and rarely written down in this way, implying that this type of skill was by and large transmitted through practice and in social situations. It can be surmised that the "education" of a *şâkird* relied on the *üstâd*'s critique of the individual distiches he composed, in the same style poets critiqued one another's verses in the *meclis* and *şoḡbet* context, the examples of which we have seen in Chapter 4. Mustafa Ali, too helped a youth from Gelibolu, Tiraşî, learn to read and understand poetry, but

⁷⁰² AÇ, 1195.

⁷⁰³ *Muḡtaşıl şî're çalıṣur ve dürişürdi ve şî'r dir işidürdi*. AÇ, 1195.

⁷⁰⁴ LAT, 359, 518.

⁷⁰⁵ *Merḡūmuñ naẓma kâdir ve üslûb-ı şî'rde mâhir şâkirdleri var idi*. LAT, 417.

⁷⁰⁶ *Bu kemîne-i kem-bidâ'a anlardan taşavvufa müte'allık Leme'ât-ı Irâkî ve Lemeḡât-ı Câmî okumuş idim*. LAT, 416.

probably because his mentoring was limited with that, he does not use the terminology of *üstād-şākird* in describing their studies:

As a young man he desired to read ghazel poetry. He kept visiting the author of these lines and the love-crazed man with the penname İbadi, discussed below. Eventually, his mental faculty began to display the virtue of poetry. He became capable of occasionally versifying heart-refreshing poems.⁷⁰⁷

Some younger poets had different *üstāds* at different stages of their lives. This was probably less common than having a single *üstād* to whom one was loyally and affectionately attached. Şani from Istanbul is simply described as a dervish from Istanbul. No piece of information on his learning or work life is given. This man owed his skills in poetry—and possibly also other kinds of learning, given Aşık Çelebi's wording—to Şemi, a Zeyni dervish protected by Piri Paşa, and, later, to Remzi Çelebi, a religious scholar and qadi. His relation to these two mentors are the defining features of his biography.⁷⁰⁸

The terminology for expressing master-apprentice and similar relations was not confined to *üstād* and *şākird*. *Tilmīz* and *sūhte* were also used in place of *şākird*, and *terbiyyet* and *mürebbī* were sometimes used to refer to mentors in a looser sense; the latter two terms are relatively more ambiguous, as they can also refer to other types of relationship, such as patronage and the raising and/or training of a youth in a pasha household as well as mentoring in a general sense, but usually the context allows for making the distinction. Latifi refers to Necati's *şākirds* Sehi and Suni, mentioned above, as *tilmīzleri*. For Nihani of Edirne, a *sipāhī* and later dervish of non-Muslim origin, Ahdi writes that he was a *tilmīz* of Ubeydi Efendi, a mid-level

⁷⁰⁷ . . . bir cüvān iken gāzeliyyāt okumağa heves itdi. Gāh rākım-ı hurūfa, gāh āti 'z-zikr 'İbādī muħalleş olan 'āşık-ı meşğūfa geldi, gitdi. 'Ākabet meleke-i zihniyyesi meziyyet-i nazmıla zāhir oldı. Ahyānen ba 'zı eş 'ār-ı dil-güşā nazmına kādır oldı. MALI, vol. 5, 784.

⁷⁰⁸ AÇ, 1408.

qadi, and that Nihani owed the quality, quantity and fame of his poetry to Ubeydi Çelebi's mentoring.⁷⁰⁹ Similarly, Aşık Çelebi writes for Mecdi Efendi and several unnamed others from Edirne, that the excellence of their poetry was a result of Emri Çelebi's mentoring. Aşık Çelebi's phrasing here also links *terbiyyet* to *şoḥbet* (polite conversation), suggesting a continuum.⁷¹⁰

It appears that most of the *şākirds* in poetry mentioned in the *tezkires* came from outside the world of the madrasa and the religious hierarchy, suggesting that this social arrangement emerged to fill in a gap in the available educational institutions. Members of the ulema and advanced madrasa students tended to take-up *üstāds* in other, more erudite and text-based subjects. Study of Persian language and literature was one. Aşık Çelebi mentions two *üstāds* of Persian whose students mostly came from among the madrasa and ulema circles specifically. He writes that most of the ulema who knew Persian were taught by Helaki.⁷¹¹ He makes a very similar comment for Riyazi.⁷¹²

İnşā, especially in Arabic and Persian, was another subject in which members of the ulema took up *üstāds*. Aşık Çelebi himself names at least five *üstāds* of his without specifying subject matter for most. Of these Şah Kasım mentored him in *inşā*.⁷¹³ Emīr Gīsū Efendi is also likely to have taught him in *inşā*.⁷¹⁴

⁷⁰⁹ 'Ubeydī Efendi'nün tilmīz-i dil-pesendidür . . . ve nazm-ı dürrer-bārı ve güftār-ı ābdārı 'Ubeydī Çelebi himmetiyle selīs ü hemvār ve bī-hadd ü bī-şümār olmağın vird-i zebān-ı 'aşıqān-ı zār ve zikr-i gül- 'izārān-ı rüzgār olmuştur. AHD, 559-60.

⁷¹⁰ Hākīr bildüğüüm budur ki bunlardan Edirne'de peydā olmuş birkaç şā'irdür ki eylükleri Emrī Çelebi'nün eṣer-i terbiyeti ve te'şīr-i şeref-i şoḥbetüdür. AÇ, 783.

⁷¹¹ Ehl-i 'ilm kısmından Fārsī bilenlerüñ ekşerinüñ üstādı idi. AÇ, 539.

⁷¹² 'Asrında ehl-i 'ilm olan şu 'arā zümresine metbū' idi. Kavābil-i talebe Fūrī andan oḡırlardı ve kaşā'id ü Şebistān'da ve ebyāt-ı müşkilede mezbūra mürāca'at idüb mümeyyiz yirine korlardı. Bu takrīble hüccresi mecma '-ı periyān ve kūşe-i cennet gibi memlū-yı ḡılmāndı. AÇ, 1399.

⁷¹³ . . . üstādum Şāh Kāşım . . . ; AÇ, 1034. Monlā-yı mezbūrdan hākīr ba'z-ı münşe'āt oḡıyub üstādum . . . oldūkları takrīble . . . ; AÇ, 1416.

⁷¹⁴ . . . üstādum Emīr Gīsū ki . . . zihni menşe'-i ibdā' u inşādur. AÇ, 1498.

However, there are a few examples of members of ulema, who did take up *üstāds* or mentors in poetry. Mecdi Mehmed Efendi's relationship to Emri, a renowned poetry from outside the ulema, was mentioned above. One well-known example is the scholar poet Baki's early mentoring by Zati, although this encounter does not appear to have taken the full-fledged form of apprenticeship either. A notable case is that of Abdülaziz Çelebi and Necati Beg. Abdülaziz Çelebi was a highly learned scholar, especially in Arabic and Persian language and literature. Necati Beg married his daughter and became his son-in-law. After that, according to Aşık Çelebi, Abdülaziz became Necati's *şākird* in poetry.⁷¹⁵ Of the five names Aşık Çelebi mentions as his own *üstāds*, Süruri of Gelibolu, the author of *Baḥrū'l-ma'ārif*, may have been his mentor in poetry, although this is not specified (*üstādum Sürūrī Çelebi*).

There are also many cases where the relationship between the *üstād* and the *şākird* was not confined to a particular topic, be it poetry or something else. Some of these relations involved life-long companionship and complete attachment, so much so that the *şākirds* involved came to be known by the name of their *üstāds*. Suni for example was distinguished from other Sunis by the sobriquet *Necātī Şun'īsi*, or Necati's Suni. Şeyda was similarly known as *'Aşık Çelebi Şeydāsı*, Aşık Çelebi's Şeyda, and spent a lengthy portion of his life in the close company of Aşık Çelebi, following the Çelebi wherever he went in the provinces to serve as qadi. A similar long-term relationship seems to have developed between the biographer Sehi and Yakini, a youth he "pulled out from the marketplace" and protected. The many scribe-poets mentored by other scribe-poets in Sehi's biographical dictionary,

⁷¹⁵ . . . şî'rde bu añā şākird, ol bunuñ üstādı olur. AÇ, 1041.

discussed in Chapter 3, also project a relationship with less well-defined contours. Strikingly, Sehi only mentions the relationship and never the subject matter: Did his poet-scribes mentor younger poet-scribes in scribal arts, poetry, or both? Did the mentoring also go beyond these areas? This is left in the dark and a strong attachment is noted as the hallmark of the *şākirds*' lives.

The terms *üstād* and *şākird*, and variants of *şākird* like *tilmīz* and *suhte*, seem to have been used in the sixteenth century across diverse branches of practice, pointing towards a shared style of transmission of knowledge. As is well known, *şākird* was a standard term in the scribal service, where *hāce* was used commonly instead of *üstād*. In practical branches of knowledge such as medicine, the same terminology appears; for example, Figani is said to be a *şākird* of Hakim Shah Muhammad Qazvini though no record concerning his medicinal practice seems to exist.⁷¹⁶ This terminology also appears in the domains of Sufism and 'ilm. Latifi writes that Mevlana Kutbuddin was a *şākird* to Sadreddin Konevi in the science of hadith.⁷¹⁷ Aşık Çelebi similarly notes at least two *şākirds* attached to Yusuf Sineçak, a Mevlevi dervish and poet; for one of them, the topic of the apprenticeship is specified as Rumi's *Meşnevī*.⁷¹⁸ Among the ulema, according to Aşık Çelebi, Kemalpaşazade, Kınalızade Ali Çelebi and Çivizade all had multiple *şākirds*.⁷¹⁹ For Zireki, he writes that he received his right for an appointment after completing his madrasa studies "from Kadiri Efendi who was Ammi's *şākird*".⁷²⁰ For Nalisi he writes that he was Haleti Abdullah Çelebi's *sūhte*.⁷²¹ Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi and

⁷¹⁶ LAT, 438.

⁷¹⁷ LAT, 117.

⁷¹⁸ AÇ, 722.

⁷¹⁹ AÇ, 305, 1118 and 1115 respectively.

⁷²⁰ 'Ammī şākirdi olan Kādirī Efendi'den mülāzım olub. . . . AÇ, 591.

⁷²¹ AÇ, 845.

Atayi do occasionally use *şākird* for the ulema, but their preference seems to lie with *tilmīz*. In the context of Enderun, too, the term *şākird* was used. Matrakçı Nasuh, a product of the palace school, would express pride in being the *şākird* of Sayī, a preceptor to the palace pages.⁷²²

This brief survey of the occurrences of terms referring to master-apprentice relations in biographical dictionaries of poets and the ulema, hints at a whole domain of informal social arrangements in Ottoman education, the depth of which has not been adequately appreciated.⁷²³ It has also been shown that even the most formally learned, members of the ulema, resorted to these channels, not only for their *‘ilm* studies but also for any number of “external” studies. Probably, there was no sharp polarity between a thoroughly structured and formalized madrasa education and a fluid world of learning in Turkish (and Persian) embedded in ad hoc personal relations. Given the prevalence of individuals without madrasa education among those with *üstāds* in poetry, we may assert that poetry at this time was asserting itself as an alternative channel of education and acculturation for many young urbanites.

5.4 *‘İlm* versus *şi‘r*: A symptom of the rise of poetry as an alternative channel of learning and elite recruitment

Previous section’s survey of the mechanisms available for mastering the art of Turkish poetry, together with the discussion of *meclis* and *şoḥbet* culture offered in Chapter 4, has revealed the formation of a new space of learning and acculturation, whose implications for potential recruitment into government service will be

⁷²² *Sa ‘yī şākirdiyem diyü iftiḥār iderdi*. AÇ, 917.

⁷²³ For a recent appraisal of the role of *üstād-şākird* relations in the transmission of knowledge in the Ottoman context and its decline from about the eighteenth century, see Kafadar, “Green Reading,” 376-79.

discussed from this point on until the end of the chapter. Albeit fluid on the borders and partly overlapping with other disciplines such as Persian language and literature, prose writing, Sufism and madrasa studies, this space nevertheless sustained a distinct autonomy. One striking symptom of this autonomy was the emergence of a discourse that juxtaposed *‘ilm* and *şî‘r*, and *‘ulema* and *şu‘arā*, as commensurable terms. The similar juxtaposition of *‘ilm* and *inşā’/‘ulemā* and *münşîs* appears to have worked in the same way to signify a new domain of learning and employment with no fixed Ottoman name of its own. The interface between *şî‘r* and *inşā’*, which was both explicitly formulated and manifested in actual practice in the transitions from poetry to scribal service, suggests that both *şî‘r* and *inşā’*, when juxtaposed to *‘ilm*, synechdochically denoted a whole field of Turkish letters and all the related opportunities for employment and patronage.

We have already seen in Chapter 3 that in the sixteenth century the generic term *şî‘r* came to be used for *dīvān* poetry exclusively. The sixteenth century also saw the emergence of a common usage whereby the terms *şî‘r/şā‘ir* and *inşā’/münşî* appear in conjunction with *‘ilm/‘ulemā*, forming a conceptual pair. At the opening of his entry on Celal Çelebi, Selim II’s beloved boon companion, Aşık Çelebi writes that he is from Manastır, a town known as a source of religious scholars and poets;⁷²⁴ any young man from the town, according to Aşık, was either a scholar or a poet.⁷²⁵ In *Künhü’l-ahbār*, Mustafa Ali praises both Süleyman Şah (r. 1402-1411) and Mehmed II (r. 1544-46, 1451-81) as protectors of *‘ulemā vü şu‘arā*. Similarly, in his *Menşe’ü’l-inşā’*, Mustafa Ali argues that the imperial chancellors (*nişāncı*) should be chosen “from among the *‘ulemā* or the *münşîs*” as versus career scribes coming from

⁷²⁴ . . . *menba‘-i ‘ulemā ve maṭla‘-ı şu‘arā*. . . AÇ, 469.

⁷²⁵ . . . *rîşdârları yâ ehl-i ‘ilm veyâ şā‘ir kıpar bir yirdür*. . . AÇ, 469.

the ranks of the scribal service at the palace. A comparable usage is found in the title of the third and largest section of Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi's *tezkiye*, which reads '*Ulemā vü şu 'arā beyānındadır* (An account of the scholars and the poets); Hasan Çelebi clearly wanted to separate members of the ulema who were also poets from those whose main skill in the domain of letters was poetry. Probably Hasan Çelebi considered the '*ālim* status to be higher than that of the poet and did not want to subsume '*ālim* poets in the same category with the rest. Mustafa Ali's formula "'ulemā or münşīs" above entails a similar overlap between the two categories: Since some *münşīs* were from the ranks of the ulema, who, then, were the *münşīs* that Ali was referring to?

The most striking instance of this pair of terms is found in the references to madrasa students or graduates who are presented as having "quit the path of '*ilm* in order to pursue poetry." These are mainly found in Sehi Beg's biographical dictionary (around six names), but examples also occur in Garibi, Ahdi and Aşık Çelebi. According to Sehi, Hevesi "quit '*ilm and freed himself of the burden of madrasa studies to practice poetry."⁷²⁶ For Meyli, the same author writes that he developed a passion for poetry when studying '*ilm and assiduously focused on the "science" (*fenn*) of poetry thereafter."⁷²⁷ An early example from the end of the fifteenth century is Safayî, about whom Aşık Çelebi uses an expression very similar to the words of Sehi (quoted in the previous footnotes).⁷²⁸ The rare word *mütemahhız* (from *maḥẓ*, Ar. pure, unmixed, mere) he uses here signifies exclusive focus. Garibi,**

⁷²⁶ '*İlme meşgûl iken ferâgat ve keşret-i şugliden berâ'at gösterüb şi're heves itmiş*. SEH, 94b/258.

⁷²⁷ '*İlme meşgûl iken şi'r sevdâsına düşüb şi're mübâşeret ve bu fenne muvâzabat gösterdi*. SEH, 107a-107b/283-84.

⁷²⁸ *Bir miqdâr şugl üzre olub ba'dehu şi're mütemahhız olub . . .* AÇ, 1290.

too, records a youth who quits the path of *‘ilm* for *şî‘r* and calligraphy.⁷²⁹ Since it was also perfectly possible, and very common, to practice poetry as a member of the ulema corps, why did these young men take the path of *şî‘r* at the cost of quitting *‘ilm*, and what was the meaning of this choice?

To the extent that we can trace the unfolding of these youths’ careers in the following years, only very few of these aspirants to what the biographers formulated as a career in poetry achieved success as poets. Some were wiped out of biographical literature, attesting to a failed career in poetry, like Sehi’s Hilmi and Şebabi. Others took up the life of a dervish and lived off of their convents; for example, from Aşık Çelebi’s *tezkiye* we learn that Sehi’s Hafız-i Sirozi died as a wretched vagrant (*āvāre*) who spent his days in various convents and social gatherings and made unrecognized claims to sainthood (*velāyet*). However, many developed other kinds of careers in which the kind of literacy, learning, culture and social networks acquired through poetry would have been instrumental. Hevesi was attributed with two popular prose story collections, a translation of *Thousand and One Nights* and *Şubh u Mesā*.⁷³⁰ Helaki of Karaman became a highly respected man of letters, especially as an expert in the Persian language; according to Aşık Çelebi most of the ulema who knew Persian had learned the language from Helaki.⁷³¹ Garibi’s Kandi became a miniature artist. Sadık from Edirne was a student of *‘ilm* when he developed an interest in poetry and quit his studies; at the time Ahdi was penning his *tezkiye* Sadık was employed as a scribe.⁷³² Similarly, Emani quit the madrasa track and took to poetry,

⁷²⁹ *Atası şan ‘atın terk idüb t̄alib-i ‘ilm olmış. ‘İlm talebinde yahşî k̄abiliyyeti var imiş velî terk idüp şā ‘irlik şevkine ve haṭṭātlık ‘ışkına düşmiş.* Garibi, *Tezkire*, 86.

⁷³⁰ LAT, 575. This title probably refers to the cycle of Oriental stories known as *Kırk Vezir Hikāyeleri*. Kızıltan, “Kırk Vezir.”

⁷³¹ *Ehl-i ‘ilm kısmından Fārsī bilenlerüñ ekserinüñ üstādı idi.* AÇ, 539.

⁷³² *Ehl-i kalem kısmından evkātın ‘ilme şarf kılurken şî‘re m̄ayil olub okımadan geçüp rûz u şeb nazm ile kitābete müdāvet gösterüb her birinden sūdmend ü hūşmend olmaḡ üzredür.* AHD, 393.

finally ending up as a scribe of the Imperial Council.⁷³³ Safayi, the earliest poet in this group, became a life-long protégé of İskender Paşa (d. 1506), who built a convent for Safayi in Galata where the poet also took up cartography.

While the discussion here has revolved around poets for whom biographers explicitly use the formula of choosing *şî'r* over *'ilm*, *tezkires* are actually full of individuals who had little or no madrasa education but were active in a spectrum of careers related with letters. The most likely career for these individuals was long-term poetic patronage under a grandee, sometimes combined with boon companionship. The second, and by far the most prevalent, employment opportunity was scribal service. Also, given the numbers of early drop-outs from the path of *'ilm* who went into tutoring at the court or the pasha households, mentioned in the *tezkires*, it is worth exploring if their skill in poetry played a role. Sayi, for example, quit his madrasa studies at some point, and became preceptor to the court pages of Bayezid II after the sultan was impressed by a ghazel of his, which implies some connection between his poetry and his role as teacher.⁷³⁴ However, more research on the content of the private tutors' and court preceptors' lessons is needed before this can be described as a potential employment opportunity for poets with only basic madrasa education.

In the sixteenth century, the poets who lived exclusively on patronage, at least for some time, were not many, but still constituted a substantial group when compared with the situation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The poet Zati himself declared to the biographer Aşık Çelebi that he rejected the offer of waqf

⁷³³ *Evvelâ tahşîl-i 'ulûma meşgûl oldu. . . . Şâm kâzîsı 'Alî Çelebi hîdmetinden ferâğât itdi. Tahvîl-i tarîk idüb . . . semt-i âhara sülûka 'azîmet itdi. Şî're kûşîş itdi. . . . İnşâya âzmâyiş itdi, temâm yirine yitürdi; hüsn-i haţta verzîş itdi. Bi'z-zarûrî kalem ayağına baş indürdi.* AÇ, 357-58. Also see HÇ, 172-73.

⁷³⁴ HÇ, 474.

administrator position (*tevliyyet*) in Bursa with a daily salary of 30 aspers (likely in a sultanic waqf) because the income that flowed in from his patrons—Sultan Bayezid II and numerous pashas and ulema he names—was greater.⁷³⁵ Leaving Istanbul for the *tevliyyet* job would mean losing contact with his patrons and the money offered was not worth it. Though this blissful period did not last forever, Zati did make his living through poetry for many years, by his own testimonial.⁷³⁶ An even more striking example is that of Hayali Beg, who rose from being an itinerant Kalenderi dervish from Rumelia to entering the inner circle of Sultan Süleyman. After a short term of service in the imperial cavalry, Hayali did not accept an appointment ever again. According to Aşık Çelebi, this had to do with his bohemian mindset; Hayali was not interested in the affairs of the world and deeply disliked administrative work.⁷³⁷ However, no doubt it was his lucrative *ze‘āmet* assignment worth a yearly 100,000 aspers, as well as frequent monetary bonuses and gifts from Sultan Süleyman and his other patrons, that allowed him to shun gainful employment.⁷³⁸

There were other patterns of life-long patronage. One important locus of poetic patronage was frontier lords’ households. According to Aşık Çelebi, Suzi of Prizren left the path of ‘ilm at an early point and spent a significant portion of his life under the patronage of the Mihaloğlu frontier family. He composed at least one military expedition narrative (*ğazavātnāme*) for them, which was quite sizeable according to Sehi Beg (extant portions are much shorter).⁷³⁹ However, in the final

⁷³⁵ 30 aspers per day was a modest salary: A beginner-level madrasa professor earned about as much. We cannot estimate how much Zati earned through poetry since he only mentions the yearly 2,000 aspers he received from Bayezid II and glosses over the rest of the benefits he received, monetary or in kind, as *a‘ā* and *cā‘ize*.

⁷³⁶ AÇ, 1581-86.

⁷³⁷ AÇ, 1544-45.

⁷³⁸ AÇ, 1544. However, probably earlier in his attachment to the Ottoman court, Hayali was enrolled in the Imperial Cavalry; AÇ, 1335.

⁷³⁹ AÇ, 1007 and SEH 101b/272.

portion of his life, Suzi must have been on good terms with the imperial court as well, since he was given by Selim I a manor (*çiftlik*) in the environs of Prizren, which he later donated to his own waqf in Prizren comprising a mosque and a small madrasa.⁷⁴⁰ Yet another pattern of a life spent under patronage is Lamii Çelebi. Although he did study in the madrasa and was far more learned in religious sciences than the poets mentioned above, Lamii shunned a career in the religious hierarchy and chose the life of a Sufi. Aside from his modest income from the post of convent sheikh (*meşîhat*) he seems to have sustained himself on poetic patronage. Unlike the figures discussed above, he was located in Bursa and away from his patrons, but contacted them with letters asking for financial support.⁷⁴¹ He was also remunerated for the works he presented to the court in Istanbul.

A case very similar to Hayali Beg's, but which entails full-blown rise to power is that story of Celali Beg, Selim II's beloved boon companion since his days as prince.⁷⁴² Like Hayali's former life as an itinerant Kalenderi, Celali was associated in his youth with Hurufism and antinomian dervish groups known as *ışık*s. He was first protected by İskender Çelebi (d. 1535), who had taken an interest in his poetry, and was educated in the latter's household. Later, he became a boon companion and scribe to the district governor of Hama, who then introduced him to Prince Selim with the words, according to Mustafa Ali, "he has poems in addition to his writing skills; he is fit to be their private conversant."⁷⁴³ For almost 20 years he was very close to the prince who was enthroned in 1566. When he acceded to the throne,

⁷⁴⁰ Levend gives the text of the *vakfiyye* dated Rebiü'l-ahir 919 (1513 AD); Levend, *Ğazavât-nâmeler*.

⁷⁴¹ Lamii Çelebi, *Münşeat-ı Lamii*.

⁷⁴² The following vita of Celal Beg is based on AÇ, 469-79; Mustafa Ali, *Nushatü's-Selâtîn*, 316-17; MALI, vol. 5, 788-93.

⁷⁴³ *Hoş-nüvîsliginden mâ'adâ ebyât u eş'arı dağı vardır. Muşâhib-i hâşları olmağa lâ'ik u sezâvârdur*. MALI, vol. 5, 788.

Selim appointed Celali bookkeeper of the Anadolu province's *timars* (*Anadolu timār defterdārı*), but Celal Beg soon quit, choosing privy service to the Sultan over administrative posts; according to Aşık Çelebi, he was then assigned a *ze'āmet* worth 100,000 aspers, like Hayali Beg above. Celali Beg acquired so much influence with Sultan Selim that he had the confidence to antagonize the grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Paşa and the Sheikh ul Islam Ebussuud Efendi. When, at the end of two decades in close company of Selim II, his antagonists succeeded in estranging him from the Sultan, he could only be sent away by an appointment to the governorship of the Damascus province.

There was a close connection between poetry and the scribal service, owing to the fact that a common way to acquire advanced literacy in Ottoman Turkish, including a capacity to compose verse and prose texts, was the study and practice of Ottoman Turkish literature, at the heart of which stood poetry. This idea is perfectly encapsulated in the words of Rami Mehmed Paşa (d. 1704), the first of the chief scribes (*re'isü'l-küttāb*) to be appointed grand vizier, who writes in his treatise on the scribal profession *Hülāşatü'l-inşā* (n.d.) that “if a secretary [*ehl-i kalem*] is capable of arranging lines of poetry, it is agreed that he is also a *münşī*.”⁷⁴⁴ Along the same lines, Atayi writes for a son of the imperial chancellor Mehmed Beg (d. 1566) that “because he was a *münşī* and poet learned in the literary arts, Ahmed Beg became a scribe of the Imperial Council with the status of court retainer [*müteferrika*].”⁷⁴⁵ Similarly, Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi comments that being the son of a grand vizier's

⁷⁴⁴ . . . *ehl-i kalem* didikleri *envā'-ı ma'rifāt ile mālāmāl olan aşhāb-ı devlet ve erkān-ı şaltanātın umūr-ı tedbīr ve muşālahalarıñ aḥsen vech üzere tahrir ide ol maḳūle ādeme ehl-i kalem denir. Ebyāt ü eşār tarhına kādir ise ziyāde münşī olmak muḳarrerdir.* Tusalp Atiyas, “Political Literacy,” 259.

⁷⁴⁵ *Aḥmed Beg ma'ārif-i cüz'ıyyede māhir, münşī vü şā'ir olmağın dergāh-ı 'ālī müteferriḳalığı ile kātib-i dīvān olmuş idi.* Atayi, *Hadā'iku'l-hakā'ik*, vol. 1, 370-71.

private secretary (*kātib-i sırr*) gave “Katibzade” Zeyni, a madrasa professor, an overconfidence in his writing skills (*tahrīr ü imlā*) and especially in his poetry.⁷⁴⁶

But perhaps the most iconic instance of the understanding of the similarity between *inṣā* prose and poetry is found in a narrative about the birth of versification and meter (*beyān-ı maṭla‘-ı eṣ‘ār ve menba‘-ı evzān-ı biḥar*). According to this narrative, which Aşık Çelebi borrows from al-Zamakhshari’s Qur’an exegesis *al-Kashshāf*, the first “literary work” was the first man Adam’s elegy, in Syriac, for his murdered son Abel. This elegy was in prose because—as per Islam’s careful distinction between poetry and Qur’an’s “inimitable” prose—prophets do not need additional artifice when expressing the miraculous words that God puts in their hearts. The prose elegy was transmitted from generation to generation until it reached Yarub bin Khahtan, a legendary Arab king from Yemen. Yarub realized that the prose had internal rhyme (*müseccā‘*) and that by changing the order of the phrases it could be turned into a poem; this is how the poem known as Adam’s elegy came into being.⁷⁴⁷

There are indications that poets with obscure educational backgrounds could receive scribal posts by presenting poems to the sultan or to dignitaries. Aşık Çelebi reports from an acquaintance of his who knew Necati’s son that the poet acquired his first appointment as scribe in the following manner: Necati writes a ghazel on a piece of paper and inserts it between the folds of the headgear of Mehmed II’s boon companion. While the sultan and his boon companion are playing chess, the sultan notices the paper. Upon reading the ghazel, Mehmed II appoints Necati as scribe of

⁷⁴⁶ *Kātibzādelik tōhmeti ile tahrīr ü imlāsına ‘ale’l-ḥuşūṣ eṣ‘ār-ı dil-güşāsına ḥayli i’tikādı vardır.* HÇ, 437.

⁷⁴⁷ *Muḳaddemin mu’aḥḥar mu’aḥḥarın muḳaddem itmekle şî’r olmak kâbil olduḡın fehmi idüb esbāb u evtādın taḳdīm ü te’ḥīr ve fevāşılın ri’āyet eyledi. Bu uslûb ile nazm eyledi.* AÇ, 123.

the Imperial Council (*dīvān kātibi*) with a daily salary of seventeen aspers.⁷⁴⁸ There is no information at all on whether Necati went through education or training processes that would have prepared him for a scribal career. Whether this anecdote is spurious or not, it must have sounded plausible to Aşık Çelebi, especially given Necati's later service in the provincial administrative councils of several princes. Kara Fazli was a student (*şākird*) of Zati in poetry and had studied Persian with Riyazi of Skopje. Aşık Çelebi also writes that he studied *şarf* (Arabic morphology) and *naḥv* (Arabic syntax), which are entry-level madrasa courses, but it is not clear whether he studied these in the madrasa or in another context.⁷⁴⁹ Although it is also unclear how and when Fazli took the path of the scribe, his first serious *manşib* was related with poetry. In the circumcision festival for Sultan Süleyman's son Mehmed, Fazli found the opportunity to recite his qasida in front of the sultan. Soon after, he ended up in Prince Mehmed's court in Manisa as secretary of his administrative council; service to other princes followed this.⁷⁵⁰

Indeed, sixteenth-century *tezkires* provide ample evidence that success in poetry was expected to lead to appointment to an official post (*manşib*), more often than not a scribal one. Where this expectation did not materialize, it was remarked upon. A case recorded in relative detail is that of the famous poet Zati. Bayezid II was the greatest patron of Zati, and at one point he ordered his officials to find an open *manşib* for Zati, likely a scribal one. But the officials told Zati that because of his hearing impairment he can only be given the administration of a pious foundation (*tevliyyet*) and not a "proper" *manşib*.⁷⁵¹ A deaf scribe would indeed be

⁷⁴⁸ AÇ, 850, 852.

⁷⁴⁹ AÇ, 1195.

⁷⁵⁰ HÇ, 755-56.

⁷⁵¹ *Tevliyyet* was an unpopular position, presumably because of the low salaries and, possibly also lack of prestige. It was often bestowed as a mid- or low-level retirement pension.

dysfunctional, unable to take notes or dictation, collate copies and so on.⁷⁵² Zati turned the offer down because, as explained above, the current financial support he was receiving for his poetry was greater than what he would earn in a provincial *tebliyyet* job. Another well-known case is that of Emri, the master of the verse conundrum (*mu‘ammā*). Although he was a highly reputed poet with many students, he never obtained either direct patronage or official appointments beyond the low-paid jobs of soup kitchen bookkeeper (*imāret kātibi*) and waqf administrator (*mütevelli*). Aşık Çelebi remarks that his only failing was that he never found a patron.⁷⁵³ It can be surmised that Aşık Çelebi had in mind both direct financial support and intercession for a good official post. In the case of Hadidi, who chose to remain an ironsmith although he was an accomplished ghazel poet and author of a verse history of the Ottoman dynasty, Latifi puts the following question into the mouth of a friend of his:

You possess so many virtues and skills (*faẓl u hüner*) as well as natural talent; why don’t you approach dignitaries and get an appointment (*manşıb*) that is compatible with your excellent virtues? Perhaps you have not studied/completed your studies in the madrasa, but you do not have to stay in this trade. Why should you forever subsist on the little that painful artisanal work brings, like common people do?”⁷⁵⁴

Hadidi responds that dignitaries demand servility and “gifts” before they will grant *manşıbs* and that he chooses not to participate in these practices.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵² AÇ, 1583.

⁷⁵³ *Hemān ‘aybı budur ki bir perteve maẓhār olub dest-res bulmadı ve bir şāhib-i vücūduñ ‘ayn-ı ināyetine manẓār olmadı.* AÇ, 359.

⁷⁵⁴ *Niçün bu kadar faẓl ü hüner ve tab ‘-ı pür-güher ile erkāna varub cümle-i menāşıbdan şān-ı faẓilet-nişāna münāsib bir manşıb almayasu[z]? Çünki tarīk-ı taḥsilden kalırsuz, bāri bu tarīkla ile kalmayasuz. Müdām ‘avāmü’n-nāş gibi meşakkat-ı ḥırfet ve me’ūnet-i şān ‘at ile zindegānī idesüz.* LAT2, 62b. I take the final sentence to be a rhetorical question, with possibly a question word like *niçün* having mistakenly dropped out.

⁷⁵⁵ LAT, 223.

No doubt, the making of scribes cannot be ascribed to poetry alone. Not all scribes were poets. In particular, the distinction between higher level scribes, or secretaries, who were capable of composing *inṣā* prose, and petty scribes who undertook more repetitive tasks like copying texts is important in this regard. *Münṣīs* would have to possess at least some command of Arabic and Persian and a broader cultural background that would allow them to ornament their texts with elaborate metaphors, allusions, quotations and stock phrases. Mustafa Ali clearly makes a distinction between *münṣīs*, of madrasa background or not, who are fit for positions like the *re'isü'l-küttāb* or the *niṣāncı*, on the one hand, and petty scribes, whom he disdainfully calls “tradesmen,” *ehl-i hıref*.⁷⁵⁶ The latter are ignorant menial workers who toiled in poverty as virtual human typing and xerox machines, writing down the common folk’s petitions and copying texts that others composed; their only skill is the physical act of writing, not composing. By Mustafa Ali’s time these scribes were generally trained within the bureaucracy as *şākirds* under *hāces*, who were likewise ignorant according to the author. However, between the two ends of the scribal career, there was clearly a spectrum, for which some command of *inṣā* was necessary. For example, Mustafa Ali, refers to scribes of the Imperial Council as composers of *inṣā* (*küttāb-ı dīvān ve inṣā-gerān-ı erkān*);⁷⁵⁷ and princes and viziers and different levels of provincial administrators all kept scribes in administrative councils that mimicked the one in Istanbul in addition to privy scribes (*sırr kātibi*) who were responsible for the personal correspondences of their patrons. Thus, it can be surmised that while the nameless petty scribes would barely need a deep literary

⁷⁵⁶ MALI, vol. 4, 1080-81; Mustafa Ali, *Nushatü's-Selâtin*, 323-24.

⁷⁵⁷ Mustafa Ali, *Nushatü's-Selâtin*, 322.

culture and poetic skill, poets were more often than not employed in scribal positions that would require them to compose documents.

In fact, the *tezkires* of the sixteenth century feature many poets who are also skilled *inşā* writers, but whose educational formation developed outside the madrasa. Mesihî, a scribe of Hadım Ali Paşa, was one of the leading prose stylists of his generation, and was largely trained outside the madrasa, possibly in Ali Paşa's household. Aşık Çelebi's words on the early life of this poet recall the examples above about the young men who quit the path of *'ilm* for *şî'r*: After some madrasa studies, he decided to become a scribe as he had an interest in calligraphy.⁷⁵⁸ There are entire princely administrative councils made-up of poet scribes. The best known of these is the council of Prince Mahmud, son of Bayezid II, comprising the poets Necatî (chancellor), Talîî (treasurer) and Sunî (council secretary).⁷⁵⁹ The council of Selim II as prince and later sultan displays a similar make-up.

The *tezkires*, as biographies of poets, may be skewing the findings in favor of poets who received scribal posts through poetry and of poet-scribes in general. However, when *tezkires* from different periods are compared among themselves, the prevalence in the early sixteenth century of poets who found scribal *manşıbs* through poetry is striking. The interface between *şî'r* and *inşā*, which was both explicitly formulated and manifested in actual practice in the transitions from poetry to scribal service and the prevalence of poet-*münşîs* in the sixteenth century, suggests that both *şî'r* and *inşā*, when juxtaposed to *'ilm*, synechdochically denoted an entire field on the rise: A field of Turkish letters comprising *dīvān* poetry and its prose counterpart

⁷⁵⁸ *Bir miqdār sūhtalıkdan soñra haştan hazz alub kâtib olmağa tâlib olur.* AÇ, 808.

⁷⁵⁹ LAT, 359.

inşā, and all the related opportunities for employment and patronage that were rapidly expanding in the sixteenth centuries.

This survey of the mechanisms available for mastering the art of Turkish poetry, together with the discussion of *meclis* and *şoḥbet* culture offered in Chapter 4, has revealed the formation of a new field of learning and acculturation with implications for potential recruitment into government service. The contents of this field is close to *adab* in the broadest sense of worldly belletristic culture as distinct from the religious textual culture around the madrasa and the mystical culture of the Sufis. Primary strands within this broad domain were temporal poetry—the erotic ghazel and the panegyric qasida; verse romances and epics; and short occasional genres such as the chronogram and satire (*hicv*)—and ornate prose similarly used in temporal writings such as epistolography, official documentation and political and practical ethical genres including historiography, biography and advice literature. However, different from the Arabic world, where there was no linguistic rift between the domain of *adab* and the rest of the letters, in the Ottoman world this temporal domain was strongly keyed to Turkish. Although there was no absolute or normative division of labor between the three main languages of Ottoman letters—Ottoman Turkish, Arabic and Persian—along the lines of topics and disciplines, the bulk of writings in secular topics as versus religious and mystical came in Turkish. Thus, when biographers wrote that a young man chose *şîr* over *‘ilm* or they referred to *münşîs* as a group distinct from the ulema, they were referring to a career related with Turkish letters in this new domain. The next section focuses on the unique levels of patronage extended to poetry in the sixteenth century, as the final and perhaps most important aspect of the field’s emergent independence from other branches of learning and its marshalling for state service.

5.5 Patronage and remuneration of poets

There are several monographs on poetic patronage in the Ottoman Empire in general, but intriguingly, these works cite nearly all of their examples from the sixteenth century, without accounting for this concentration.⁷⁶⁰ This largely stems from the information available in the sources. This is the only period in which *tezkires* teem with cases of patronage and the only period for which there are gift registers (*ināmāt defterleri*) with many entries of bonuses outgoing from the court to the poets, in addition to artists, artisans, Sufis and religious scholars. These monographs have also focused near exclusively on direct monetary gifts or luxury items bestowed on poets. However, as the cases of poets appointed to scribal posts have already suggested, the Ottomans' patronage of poetry was a complex system that utilized almost all of the available means of remuneration that the state could offer to its elites.

The simplest form of a reward for poetry was the *cā'ize*. This was a monetary gift given for the poem presented; therefore, it was a one-time and relatively small payment. For example, Zati reports that for his Nevruz (new year's festival of the vernal equinox) *qasida*, every year Bayezid II would award him 2,000 *aķças*, which is the near equivalent of two months' salary of an early-career madrasa professor.⁷⁶¹ Luxury items like expensive fabric or robes of honor (*hıl'at*) functioned similarly; in fact, these could also be turned into cash in the market. Zati recounts in his memoirs that he would sell the kaftans he was given by Bayezid II on each eid.⁷⁶² There were poets who made a living out of *cā'izes*. For example, the chronogram master Kandi would not miss any opportunity to present a chronogram to a dignitary. This

⁷⁶⁰ İnalçık, *Şair ve Patron*; İnalçık, *Has-Bağçede 'Ayş u Tarab*; Durmuş, *Tutsan Elini Ben Fakirin*; Durmuş, *Şair ve Sultan*.

⁷⁶¹ AÇ, 1581.

⁷⁶² *Bahārda iki biñ aķça, bayramlarda bir yüzi çuķa ķaķtānlar virürlerdi. Geymezdüm, kemhā olduğıün şatardum.* Çavuşoğlu, "Zāti'nin Letâyifi," 41.

prompted Kara Balizade, a leading patron of poetry, to jokingly remark that he was afraid to fix the toilet since the *cā'ize* Kandi would demand would cost more than the repair itself.⁷⁶³

More interesting for understanding how the Ottoman patronage of poetry worked in the sixteenth century are *sālyānes* (yearly payments) and '*ulūfes* (salaries calculated on a daily basis, but likely collected every month, different from the three-month intervals of the janissary salaries) allocated to poets. These were long-term bestowals on the person. In other words, they signaled a wholesale acceptance into the class of people regularly remunerated by the state. Receivers of *sālyānes* mentioned in the *tezkires* include Basiri, Zati and Yakini. Only for Yakini is a figure mentioned, 4,000 aspers per year, likely during the reign of Süleyman.⁷⁶⁴ In one case, that of Lamii, in place of a *sālyāne*, the revenue of a village was granted upon the presentation of a *mesnevī*.⁷⁶⁵

'*Ulūfes* granted to poets appear to be of two kinds at least. Some were given out by the court, from the Imperial Treasury (*hızāne-i 'āmire*). Others were assigned from budget surpluses of imperial waqfs (*zevā'id aqçası*). For example, Müeyyedzade Abdurrahman Çelebi arranged for Necati Beg to receive an '*ulūfe* of thirty aspers per day from the Imperial Treasury after the poet was stripped of his income by hostile viziers.⁷⁶⁶ On the other hand, Basiri, a Persian émigré who had no particular job and was protected by the court as a learned man and poet, was assigned an '*ulūfe* from the surpluses of the Ayasofya waqf (*Ayasofya zevā'idinden 'ulūfesi*),

⁷⁶³ AÇ, 1331.

⁷⁶⁴ AÇ, 682.

⁷⁶⁵ . . . *baħr-i hezcede Ferhād-nāme nazm idüb pādşāh-ı mūmā-ileyhe tuhfē kıldı. Ol dahı şālyāne diyü bir kūy şadaķa kıldı.* AÇ, 745.

⁷⁶⁶ '*Āķibetü'l-emr müşārun-ileyh Mü'eyyedzāde müzāheret ve mu'āvenet idüb mūmā-ileyhe hızāne-i 'āmireden yevmī otuz aqķa itdürdi.* LAT, 383.

in addition to his *sālyāne*, mentioned above.⁷⁶⁷ After Basiri died, this salary was transferred to an ex-janissary poet called Işki.⁷⁶⁸ After his early career as a janissary, Işki's soldier's *'ulūfe* had been cut off because it was believed that he had died during battle. He spent some time as a Bektaşî dervish and then applied to Sultan Süleyman with a poem asking for his largesse. When asked if he would like to go back to the janissary corps, he said he preferred to stay out of work. Upon this he was rewarded both with one-time monetary gifts on multiple occasions and assigned Basiri's *'ulūfe*, likely for his poetry, as suggested by Aşık Çelebi's wording:

They placed the banner of high ambition on the zenith of the blue dome and they bestowed on him monetary gifts multiple times ... Currently, he is in the corner of isolation compiling his *dīvān* and arranging his poems, and in the realm of renunciation versifying day and night about our sultan the guardian of justice.⁷⁶⁹

Another method of rewarding poets was assigning them the revenues of villages or bigger sources of land income. As mentioned above, Lamii Çelebi was assigned the income of a village after he presented a *meşnevî* to the sultan. Zati was also given a land revenue grant (*timar*) by Selim I.⁷⁷⁰ Şükri from Kürdistan, too, received a revenue grant from Selim I, but a larger one (*ze 'āmet*) in Diyarbekir, after he presented poems to the sultan and participated in his *şoḥbet* circle. Hayali Beg was bestowed a lucrative *ze 'āmet* by Sultan Süleyman. The examples can be proliferated.⁷⁷¹

⁷⁶⁷ AÇ, 421.

⁷⁶⁸ AÇ, 1090.

⁷⁶⁹ *Hadd-i zâtında livā-yı himmet-i bülendiniñ yirin evc-i tārem-i fîrûze itdiler ve şılalardan ve cā'izelerden in 'ām u ihsānı niçe kerre itdiler. Hāliyā . . . tedvîn-i dīvān ve tertîb-i eş 'ār idüb küşe-i 'uzletde ve 'ālem-i ferāğatde şeb u rûz vaşf-ı pâdişāh-ı 'adālet-penāha mülâzımdur.* AÇ, 1090.

⁷⁷⁰ Çavuşoğlu, "Zâtî'nin Letâyifi," 11-12; AÇ, 1584.

⁷⁷¹ Tolasa, *Sehi, Latîfi, Aşık Çelebi Tezkirelerine Göre*, 110-112 lists poets with *timars* and *ze 'āmets* but does not make the crucial distinction between poets who were actual timariot cavalry, who are not many, and those who were assigned land revenues in place of a salary.

Finally, as already suggested by the cases of poets appointed as scribes, one of the most common ways of rewarding poetry was appointing the poets to official posts. While I have argued above for the direct practical relevance of poetry for scribal service, other types of appointments through this channel evince the inapplicability of a purely functionalist approach to explaining the intensive patronage of poetry in the sixteenth century. Many members of the ulema received their *mülâzım* (candidate for entry into the religio-judicial career) status or their first jobs after *mülâzemet* through presenting poems to the sultans or the dignitaries. Two well-known examples for receiving *mülâzım* status in this manner are Baki and Mustafa Ali. Baki was still not a *mülâzım* by the age of thirty-five when he was finally given *mülâzemet* by none less than Sultan Süleyman, who admired his poetry. And Baki's friend Mustafa Ali received the same favor from Prince Selim, son of Süleyman, again by impressing him with his poetry.⁷⁷² Those who were already *mülâzıms* could similarly obtain their first appointments through their achievements in poetry. When Selim I read a few pages from Ahi's *meşnevî Hüsrev ü Şîrîn*, he was impressed and inquired about the circumstances of Ahi. Upon hearing that he was still an unemployed *mülâzım* at age forty, the sultan, in Aşık Çelebi's presentation, broke into an elaborate praise of Ahi's poetry and ordered him to be appointed to a 20-asper madrasa professorship. The words Aşık Çelebi puts into Selim's mouth are revealing in terms of the logic of this method of remunerating poets: "Give him his due, since allocation of salaries is a motivation for the talented and royal patronage is a lash for the horse of the mind."⁷⁷³ Unfortunately for Ahi, the chief justice of

⁷⁷² Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 33-34.

⁷⁷³ *Ammā ri 'āyet eyleñ ki intizām-ı ahvāl-i ma 'āş cevdet-i tab'a bahāne ve himmet-i pādşāhī hünk-i zihne tāziyānedür.* AÇ, 395.

Rumelia gave the poet bad advice, suggesting that he should refuse the offer and aim higher when the sultan was so impressed with his work. Ahi refused the job and was sent away empty-handed by the angered Selim.⁷⁷⁴

Indeed, appointment to *any* post could take place through poetry. Sehi Beg reports that the poet Sayi was offered the position of the keeper of the sultan's writing set (*divitdār*) after Bayezid came upon a ghazel of his and, being impressed, had him brought into his own presence.⁷⁷⁵ Mustafa Ali reports how Turak Çelebi, Price Selim's treasurer (*defterdār*), arranged a combination of two remuneration methods to reward Matemi (later Hatemi), a poet who was a traveling dervish until then: On the one hand, he allocated Matemi 6 aspers daily from the 50 aspers daily Selim gave him "in accordance with his law" (*kānunları üzere*) to spend on such patronage activities (*tevcīh*, *'aṭıyye*); and, simultaneously, he put him on the list of "sons of cavalry" (*zümre-i ebnā-yı sipāhīyāna ilhākı münāsib görüldü*), by which Mustafa Ali probably means that he was made a timariot cavalry on account of his warrior ancestors who were mentioned earlier in the entry.⁷⁷⁶ Niyazi happened upon an opportunity thanks to the hostility between Ayas Paşa and Hayali Beg, who refused to accept Ayas Paşa's patronage after İbrahim Paşa's death. Out of sheer spite for Hayali, Ayas decided to protect Niyazi, a much inferior poet. He first made him an imperial cavalry with a salary of 15 aspers daily, and later gave him lucrative side duties like tax collection operations.⁷⁷⁷ Yet another example is that of Ubeydi who, as a madrasa student, attracted the attention of Sultan Süleyman with a single ghazel and was appointed to as a prayer reciter at the royal court (*hāşşa du 'ā-gūy*).⁷⁷⁸

⁷⁷⁴ AÇ, 395-96.

⁷⁷⁵ SEH, 78a/225.

⁷⁷⁶ MALI, vol. 5, 796.

⁷⁷⁷ AÇ, 928.

⁷⁷⁸ HÇ, 610.

Importantly, the methods of remuneration discussed so far—*sālyānes*, *‘ulūfes*, land revenue grants, and first-time appointments—were deployed in cases of poets with no other regular income from state resources, i.e., with no official posts. As such, they signified an entry into the state economy and the class of people whose livelihood depended on the state. Yet, the majority of the poets did already have official duties. The primary method for rewarding the poetry of these individuals was, besides giving them one-time *cā’izes* and luxury gifts, was promotions to higher posts and/or salary raises. For example, the qadi Amri obtained the judgeship of Vize after presenting a qasida to İbrahim Paşa.⁷⁷⁹ Celalzade Salih Çelebi and Maşizade Fikri, member of the religious hierarchy, were each given promotions over their current positions after they translated different parts of the Persian prose story cycle *Fīrūz Şāh*; Celalzade was promoted from professorship at the Sahn madrasas to the judgeship of Aleppo⁷⁸⁰ and Fikri to the judgeship of Yanbolu.⁷⁸¹ Seyyid Mahmud Emiri, who was marshal of the descendants of the Prophet (*nāzır-ı sādāt, nakībū’l-eşrāf*) during the reign of Süleyman, was given raises to his salary every time he presented poems in addition to bonuses and gifts.⁷⁸²

It should also be emphasized that the economy of pious foundations was also part and parcel of the system. Especially dynastic and vizierial waqfs, both their incomes and administrative or scribal offices, were a resource tapped to fund learned elites that were not in the more established careers of the religious hierarchy or the scribal service. Latifi reports that Mevlana Saruca Kemal, a long-time protégé of Mahmud Paşa (d. 1474) as poet and preceptor to his pages, turned at his old age to

⁷⁷⁹ AÇ, 1125.

⁷⁸⁰ HÇ, 549.

⁷⁸¹ AÇ, 1215.

⁷⁸² AÇ, 380.

husbandry, “Adam’s trade”, for a living. This was entirely for pietistic reasons: “He avoided waqf bread and the grantees who liked to flaunt their favors, choosing instead to eat halal and sin-free morsels from his own sufficiently-providing hand.”⁷⁸³ An assignment of *zevā’id akçası* from the Paşa’s or sultan’s waqfs would have been the normal form that Saruca Kemal’s retirement pension would take.⁷⁸⁴

A close-up study of the financial lives of three preeminent poets of the era, Zati, Gazali (Deli Birader), and Nihali Cafer Çelebi demonstrates the variety of the means the court and other patrons used to support poetry. Zati had ordinary beginnings as a bootmaker in his native Balıkesir.⁷⁸⁵ After he came to Istanbul early in Bayezid II’s reign, he may first have practiced geomancy to make a living. Soon, however, he became a protégé of both the court and the leading dignitaries in Bayezid’s administration. This brightest phase of Zati’s career as a poet appears to be largely supported by direct monetary and other gifts for individual poems. At some point Bayezid also assigned him a *sālyāne*. Later Bayezid ordered a *manşib* to be given to Zati, but the sultan’s administrators offered him only a waqf administration (*tevliyyet*) because of his hearing impairment. He refused the offer, as mentioned above. Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi relates from his father Ali Çelebi that Zati was also offered a *meşîhat*, the salaried post of sheikh in a convent, simultaneously with the *tevliyyet*, possibly owing to his connection to the Zeyni tarîqa. When Selim I came to power, he gave Zati the income of two villages with a yearly revenue of 11,500

⁷⁸³ *Vakf nânından ve ekâbir ü emâsıl imtinânından îbâ ve ictinâb idüb loğma-i helâl-i bî-vebâli keff-i kifâyet-resânından yerler idi.* LAT, 467.

⁷⁸⁴ For a preceptor in a pasha household remunerated from *zevā’id akçası* while retired, see AÇ, 896-97 (“Nevâlî”). Layihî, another preceptor in the same pasha’s household, was also paid from *zevā’id akçası* while working, but this time Aşık Çelebi specifies that the money comes from a sultanî waqf; AÇ, 756.

⁷⁸⁵ AÇ, 1573-98; HÇ, 382-93; MALİ, vol. 5, 510-14; Çavuşoğlu, “Zâtî’nin Letâyîfi.”

aspers in total. During the early part of the reign of Süleyman, he continued to receive *sālyānes* and *cā'izes*. During İbrahim Paşa's office as grand vizier, he had a second chance for a *manşib* but this prospect did not materialize when he had a fall-out with the Paşa. From then on and especially during the time of the grand vizier Ayas Paşa, the successor to İbrahim Paşa, Zati was left without *sālyānes* and grandee's *cā'izes*, and tried to make a living on geomancy, ghost-writing poems for lovers and the patronage of low-level state officials. Late in his life, he made an effort to procure *dirliks* ("livelihood"; this term could be referring to a *manşib* or the revenue of a *timar*) for his slave and brother-in-law, both of whom were his *şākirds*, but he did not succeed. He died in poverty.

Gazali, also known as Deli Birader, likewise received his income from different sources throughout his life, all related with the state apparatus.⁷⁸⁶ His "main career", if this phrase can be used for a man with so many different hats, was the "path of 'ilm," but his first assignment on record was tutoring Prince Korkud, to whom he became a beloved companion and protégé. After the death of the prince, Gazali shunned the path of 'ilm in favor of a *meşihat* in Bursa, which was also a paid position, albeit modestly. Some time later, he went back to the religious hierarchy and took jobs as qadi and madrasa professor. At one point, he asked to be appointed mufti of Agras but was rejected by the incumbent chief justice, who said "it is not fit for your station" (*bābuñ degüldür*); Gazali managed to reverse the chief justice's decision by presenting him a poem, in which he argued that dignitaries' largesse should not be constrained by the applicants' professional station. Later, he once again left the path of 'ilm, and this time was allocated by the sultan an *'ulūfe* of

⁷⁸⁶ AÇ, 1635-60.

thousand aspers. This gave him a comfortable life in Istanbul, but he also asked for, again with poem, an estate on which he could build a garden, masjid, convent and bathhouse. The poem was presented to İbrahim Paşa, who donated a large sum for the project and enlisted a pursuivant of his to collect the remaining from the rest of the viziers. The necessary amount could not be collected in this first round, but Gazali kept pushing by presenting more poems to grandees. The project was finally realized and the bathhouse became a commercial success. Later, rumors about the obscenities in the bathhouse and Gazali's purported sexual relations with a youth compelled him to leave Istanbul for Mecca. There, he applied for the support of the sultan and received urgent monetary help (*cā'ize-i ācile*). In the meantime, he continued to be paid his *'ulūfe*. Eventually, his *'ulūfe* was "replaced with *şurre*" (*'ulūfesin şurreye tebdīl idüb*), which probably meant that he was appointed *şurre emīni*, the overseer of the caravan sent by the Ottoman court to Mecca.

Nihali Cafer Çelebi's financial life was, in many ways, similar to that of Gazali, though perhaps not as rewarding.⁷⁸⁷ Like Gazali, he was a qadi and madrasa professor by profession and had early in his career obtained the protection and friendship of a dignitary, this time a frontier warlord, Mihaloğlu Ali Beg. After a few madrasa teaching positions, he was appointed the judge of Galata. During Selim I's Mamluk expedition, he was invited as a boon companion to the sultan, along with two other qadis known for their poetry and bohemian personalities, like Nihali himself. Soon, the enemies he had incurred with his satires spread rumors and caused Nihali to be removed from the judgeship of Galata. He remained unemployed for long time and wrote a poem, during the reign of Süleyman, to explain how little he

⁷⁸⁷ AÇ, 906-922.

was expecting. The remuneration alternatives he was willing to accept included waqf administration (*tevliyyet*) and management of the Aya Sofya soup kitchen (*'imāret neẓāreti*). If even these posts with modest incomes could not be given to him, he could at least be consoled with some *şadaqa* (charity), and he would pray for the dynasty as long as he lived. These pleas expressed in verse paid off and Nihali was given by Süleyman an unspecified *manşib*. However, soon he quit this *manşib* and applied for the poet's *'ulūfe* of a thousand aspers per month, which was accepted. He tried to get an increase on his *'ulūfe* with a poem but failed. Later, during the days of İbrahim Paşa, he fared much better, as many other poets also did at this time.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the examples discussed so far. The first one, concerns the identity of the system of remuneration of poets and the rest of the imperial elites. Allocations of salaries (*sālyāne* or *'ulūfe*) and land revenues were made only when the poet or man of letters in question did not have a proper *manşib*. Indeed Aşık Çelebi offers a clear articulation of the economic rationale behind poets' salaries. Aşık claims that the practice of allocating poets monthly salaries of 1,000 aspers, which continued to exist into the reign of Süleyman according to the evidence provided by the *tezkires*, had been instituted by Mehmed II. Whether Mehmed II did actually initiate these salaries or Aşık Çelebi is simply projecting a more recent practice to the past for purposes of legitimization, his explanation on who were eligible for these payments is revealing: “[Sultan Mehmed] arranged the payment of 1,000 aspers for those poets who were not employed in government functions (lit. who did not possess objects of desire, ranks, degrees and official posts) and were

therefore not remunerated from that respect.”⁷⁸⁸ The equivalence between *manşıbs* and poets’ salaries is indeed evinced by the fact that many poets switched between salaries and *manşıbs* over the course of their lives. We have also seen above, in the section on scribe poets, that the *tezkires* revealed a generalized conception that competent poets were automatically eligible for *manşıbs*, most commonly scribal ones.

In other words, the poets’ place in the overall system of sustaining an imperial elite was no different from that of other sectors of the elite. An anecdote recounted by Zati himself perfectly captures the way poets are interlocked into this system.⁷⁸⁹ Two revenue grants—each consisting of income from one or more villages—had recently been taken away from their previous holders. Selim I offers Zati the chance to select one for himself. One grant previously belonged to a sheikh (*aḥī*, in one version of the anecdote), and the other to a local military commander (*emīr*), likely a member of the timariot cavalry. Zati secures the more profitable grant by amusing Selim I with a witty remark about their competing interests. Although the “services” provided by Zati and the sheikh were far less tangible than those of the emir, all three men ended up as competitors for the same financial resource.

A complex system of remunerating poets which comprised *manşıbs*, and where a *manşıb* was not available or preferred by the poet himself, long-term salaries and revenue grants shows that poetic patronage was part and parcel of elite formation. Once a poet, or any individual for that matter, was accepted into the imperial system of elite remuneration, he tended to stay inside. His duties and forms

⁷⁸⁸ . . . şu ‘arādan me’ārib ü merātib ü medāric ü medāric ü menāsıbdan fāriğ olub ol cihetden terbiyeye maḡhar olmayanlara ayda biñer akça tertib itdiler. Bu iḡsān evvel ol şulṡānuñ iḡtirā’ıdur. AÇ, 193.

⁷⁸⁹ The anecdote occurs in both Aşık Çelebi’s entry on Zati and in Zati’s humorous memoirs; Çavuşoğlu, “Zâti’nin Letâyifi,” 11-12.

of remuneration could change but he kept being covered. Similar to the *‘askerī* status, but without a distinct name, this was a form of acceptance into the imperial service elite.

The complexity and the variety of ways remuneration and stemmed from three factors. One was under-institutionalization of government branches. This made possible the frequent intrusions into various careers by the initiatives of sultans or other dignitaries. Secondly, a drive for expansion of the service elite under conditions of a dearth of literate and cultured human resources made irregular recruitment desirable. And third, the absence of a thoroughly monetized economy made switching between different forms of remuneration inevitable.

Understanding sixteenth-century patterns of patronage of poetry and its role in elite formation is important because there is an influential vein in scholarship that argues for the spread of *dīvān* poetry among urban “commoners” in the sixteenth century, as discussed in this chapter’s first subsection. In different versions of this view, *dīvān* poetry, especially the ghazel, was either adopted by commoners in their own middling cultural milieus thanks to its similarities with folk poetry and assimilability through oral means, or attracted talented urbanites because of the availability of monetary patronage. I argue instead that the integration of these poets into the elite was complete and comprised multiple dimensions, the social, cultural and ideological as well as the financial. This integration followed patterns of recruitment and remuneration that can also be seen in other sectors of the elite, such as the ulema and imperial soldiers. In brief, *dīvān* poetry or *şî‘r*, as the core of the entire domain of Turkish letters, was considered a “service” to the empire and treated accordingly.

5.6 Artisan poets of the sixteenth century: Portraits

The artisan poets of the early sixteenth-century need to be understood within this frame as cases of elite recruitment. The brief portraits of artisan and shopkeeping poets below are meant to argue against essentialized notions of (a) artisanal activity and the shop, (b) learning or being learned, and (c) “being a poet” in a political-administrative system where multi-tasking and informality was common.

Enveri (d. 1548)⁷⁹⁰ is a figure cited in all studies of artisan poets, largely because he achieved considerable fame despite being *‘ümmī* (illiterate or unlearned). He earned his livelihood by producing and selling needles and ink in a shop at Uzun Çarşı in today’s Eminönü, Istanbul. A later recension of Latifi’s *tezkiye* notes that he also maintained a shop in the courtyard of Bayezid II’s mosque (in modern Beyazıt), a privilege granted to artisan poets patronized by the royal court or grand viziers, such as Kandi and Zati. Enveri was additionally skilled in fireworks—which was perhaps related to the chemistry of ink-making—and sought appointment to the imperial bombardier corps by offering poems to influential patrons; he was eventually recruited and even gained rank. During peacetime, he performed pyrotechnic shows at imperial festivals and presented poems to Sultan Süleyman. At one stage he left his shop to serve as steward (*kethüdā*) to the sultan’s seer, Remmal Haydar,⁷⁹¹ though he returned to his craft after being financially disappointed in that partnership. The chronology of these activities remains uncertain, and some may have overlapped.

⁷⁹⁰ LAT, 181-82; AÇ, 385-90; HÇ, 189-90; AHD, 220-21; MALI, vol. 5, 482-83; Riyazi, *Riyâzü’ş-şuara*, 76-78.

⁷⁹¹ Fleischer, “Seer to the Sultan.”

Enveri's circle included prominent contemporaries such as Yahya Beg and the biographer Aşık Çelebi. All biographers describe him as *'ümmî*, and in his case the term seems to denote actual illiteracy rather than the broader sense of "unschooled." Yet Aşık Çelebi, after a string of hyperbolic tropes on Enveri's extreme ignorance, relates matter-of-factly that all of Enveri's manuscripts were lost in a fire at his house when an experiment with fireworks went awry. This anecdote illustrates the ambivalence of the term *'ümmî* in Ottoman sources and the need for caution in assigning it a fixed meaning in specific cases.

Zatî⁷⁹² is arguably the best-documented of all shopkeeping poets, both because he was a leading literary figure of his time and the mentor of Baki as a young man. His career as a professional poet has already been touched upon many times above. We saw above how *tezkiye* authors found it necessary to explain why he never got a scribal post in his lifetime, implying that this would have been a normal development for such a highly achieving poet. Sooyong Kim has shown how, in his later years, Zatî sustained himself by commercializing his poetry: He composed encomia for holders of relatively minor offices and produced ghostwritten poems for inarticulate lovers among market tradesmen as well as for would-be poets from the elite.⁷⁹³ Earlier, however, at the height of courtly patronage, he had been granted a long-term provincial revenue holding (*timar*), in addition to the steady flow of cash and luxury gifts he regularly received. I have suggested above that the assignment of a *timar* implied a wholesale acceptance into the ranks of the imperial elite.

⁷⁹² SEH, 97b-98a/264-65; LAT, 262-67; AHD, 304-307; AÇ, 1573-99; HÇ, 382-93; MALI, vol. 5, 510-14; Riyazi, *Riyâzü'ş-şuara*, 151-55; Çavuşoğlu, "Zâtî'nin Letâyîfî."

⁷⁹³ Kim, *Last of an Age*.

Zatî's ties to the Ottoman court may have deeper and older roots than usually acknowledged. Born in Balıkesir, his first profession was shoemaking, a trade he seems to have abandoned quite early. Even during his time in Balıkesir and Bursa, however, his memoirs show that he was already connected with local begs.⁷⁹⁴ His second occupation was divination—especially geomancy and astrology—which, alongside poetry, provided his main livelihood. He studied these occult sciences under a certain Müneccimzade (or Müneccimoğlu), a figure Latîfi casually mentions as if well-known to his audience.⁷⁹⁵ The only person of note with this name in the period was Müneccimzade Yusuf ibn Musa al-Balıkesri, a fellow townsman of Zatî. Yusuf authored a Turkish account of the construction of Hagia Sophia, translated largely from Byzantine Greek sources. As Stephanos Yerasimos notes, this 1479 text was the first in a line of Hagia Sophia narratives that bolstered the Ottoman imperial project, produced under court patronage to counter competing accounts written by critics of the empire, such as disgruntled *ğâzîs* who opposed Mehmed II's harsh centralization policies. This pro-imperial version was later echoed in the dynastic histories of İdris-i Bidlisi and Kemalpaşazade, two of the highest-ranking scholar-bureaucrats of the time.⁷⁹⁶ The fact that Müneccimzade was from Balıkesir and active in the 1470s suggests that Zatî's training in these sciences may have begun before his move to Istanbul, perhaps already in Balıkesir or nearby Bursa, where he spent much time in literary circles as a youth and befriended poets that belonged to the celebrated circle of Ahmed Paşa, the court poet and close companion of Mehmed

⁷⁹⁴ Çavuşoğlu, "Zâtî'nin Letâyîfî." These memoirs clearly show Zatî to be already in polite society and salons of local military men in Balıkesir, Bursa and environs.

⁷⁹⁵ LAT, 263.

⁷⁹⁶ Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, 224-29. For Müneccimzade Yusuf İbn-i Musa el Balıkesri, also see Mehmed Tahir, *Osmanlı Müellîfleri*, vol. 3, 157; Sarı and Turan, *Tarih-i Ayasofya-i Kebir*; Okuyucu and Uluoğlu, *Ayasofya Risaleleri*.

II. In this light, Zati's geomancy shop—often cited by scholars as evidence of his supposed status as an “uneducated commoner”—may actually have provided another pathway, albeit indirect, to the imperial court, no less than his poetry.⁷⁹⁷

Though we do not possess as much biographical detail, many other artisan and shopkeeper poets' lives displayed similar patterns to those of Enveri and Zati. They moved in and out of business or kept shop alongside other activities, pointing to a similar difficulty with associating them exclusively with a commercial milieu, as is mostly done in scholarship. Nasuhi⁷⁹⁸ was originally an herbalist (*'attār*) who kept shop in Edirne. He had “studied the sciences according to established norms” (*'ulūmı tertīb üzre görmış*, a vague phrase that often refers to madrasa studies) and medicine as well; he ended up being appointed chief physician at the Edirne hospital endowed by Bayezid II. Yakini,⁷⁹⁹ also from Edirne, was the son of a wealthy man but turned to making skull-caps (*küleḥ*, *tākye*) after depleting the inheritance he had received from his father. The biographer Sehi Bey recognized Yakini's poetic talent and “lifted him out from among the people of the marketplace” (*ehl-i sūḳ arasından faḳīr aldum çıkardum*). Yakini later became a Zeyni dervish, distinguished for his skill in composing chronograms and invectives and highly sought-after as a *muṣāḥib* (conversationalist or boon companion). Sehi refers to him as “Mevlana Yakini,” which—together with other indicators such as his Edirne origins and the period during which he was active—suggests that he is likely the same Yakini mentioned by Aşık Çelebi: a pious foundation administrator (*mütevelli*) with basic madrasa training and a yearly stipend (*sālyāne*) of 4,000 aspers. According to Aşık Çelebi, the peak of

⁷⁹⁷ A similar master-apprentice relationship was that between the poet and scribe Figani (d. 1532) and Shah Muhammad Qazvini (d. after 1523), the court physician for Bayezid II and Selim I. Figani, however, is not known to have actually practiced medicine.

⁷⁹⁸ SEH, 92a-92b/253-54; AÇ, 876-78; HÇ, 991-92.

⁷⁹⁹ SEH 102b-103a/274-75; AÇ, 682-84; HÇ, 1083-84.

Yakini's life was his appointment as *muşāhib* to Süleyman while the latter was still a prince.⁸⁰⁰

Rahiki⁸⁰¹ was a janissary, admitted to the corps by hereditary right as the son of one. After taking part in a janissary revolt in 1525, he lost his salary (‘ulūfe) and set up an herbalist's shop in the Mahmud Paşa marketplace in Istanbul. This shop became a gathering spot for his circle of wine-drinking friends. Like Nasuhi above, Rahiki pursued medical knowledge—though, according to Aşık Çelebi's wording, he was probably self-taught—and seems to have studied both religious and secular sciences during, or perhaps even before, his janissary service. He may already have been practicing as a herbalist before joining the corps. Keşfi,⁸⁰² by contrast, a renowned poet with *dīvāns* in both Turkish and Persian, is not linked in the *tezkires* with this commercial milieu. Instead, he is consistently described as an incense dispenser in Bayezid II's mosque. Yet, Zati's memoirs reveal that Keşfi had earlier worked as a producer and/or vendor of aromatic or narcotic pastes (*ma‘cūncu*).⁸⁰³

Another poet who was a *ma‘cūncu* at some point in his life was Muammayi.⁸⁰⁴ As an itinerant Hurufi dervish he had travelled the Persian and Arab lands and learned the art of the verse conundrum (*mu‘ammā*) in addition to acquiring native-level Persian and mastery of chess. On his return, he settled in Salonica and opened a shop to sell pastes. He was also known as an enthusiastic copier of books; indeed a contemporary reader of Latifi's *tezkiye* added a note on the text to report that Muammayi was still alive and kept a book shop (*şahhāf*) in the center of

⁸⁰⁰ Çavuşoğlu, ‘Zâtî'nin Letâyifi,’ 12.

⁸⁰¹ SEH, 120a/309; LAT, 271; AÇ, 1351-54; HÇ, 405-407; MALI, vol. 5, 517-18; Riyazi, *Riyâzü’ş-şuara*, 161.

⁸⁰² SEH, 100b-101a/270-71; LAT 464-65; AÇ, 718-19; HÇ, 819-20; MALI, vol. 5, 586-87.

⁸⁰³ Çavuşoğlu, ‘Zâtî'nin Letâyifi,’ 5.

⁸⁰⁴ LAT, 501; AÇ, 818-22; HÇ, 913-15.

Edirne.⁸⁰⁵ But apparently much of Muammayi's time was spent at the salons of Rumelian frontier lords and other grandees. He was rewarded generously by Selim I for conundrums that could match those by Persian émigrés.

Sübuti,⁸⁰⁶ an herbalist, doctor and concocter of aromatic pastes and refreshments, is another name frequently cited in scholarship on artisan poets; yet, he was a *seyyid*, a title of distinction given to the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, and Aşık Çelebi implies that earning a living by practicing a trade was by choice and not a necessity. Sübuti's shop in Karaman Pazarı, Istanbul, was a literary salon and he himself frequented the salons held by the ulema and other literati.

The cases examined so far highlight figures who occupied a liminal space, straddling both the courtly milieu and the marketplace. It is probably not a coincidence that many among them were herbalist-cum-sherbet and paste maker-cum-doctors, since medicine required theoretical textual studies, often in Persian and Arabic, on the one hand, and lent itself well to commercialization, on the other. Disciplines like astrology and the occult sciences, as seen in Zati's example, operated in much the same way. Similar patterns can be observed among poets involved in music, book production, and the book trade. For these individuals, engagement with the Persianate poetic tradition formed only one dimension of a broader intellectual formation. At the same time, because such sciences were usually learned through master-disciple relationships, they also carried a socializing function that facilitated these poets' integration into elite circles.

⁸⁰⁵ LAT, 642-43.

⁸⁰⁶ SEH, 118a/305; AÇ, 1488-89; AHD, 248; HÇ, 240-41.

For artisan poets who were engaged in more material trades, the picture was not very different either. Their intellectual formation, abilities, and networks often placed them well above the level of ordinary urbanites. Kandi (d. 1555),⁸⁰⁷ arguably the most renowned artisan poet of the decades after Zati and Enveri, worked as a confectioner but had earlier belonged to Ahmed Paşa's Bursa circle of poets. According to Latifi, in his youth Kandi traveled across the Persianate East (*vilāyet-i 'Acem*), where he met in person the celebrated Timurid figures Ali Shir Navai and Jami—evidence of his familiarity with Persian language and verse. Throughout his career he enjoyed the patronage of leading literary benefactors, among them Sultan Süleyman's grand vizier İbrahim Paşa. His prestige is further reflected in his burial in the cemetery of the chancellor Celalzade Mustafa's mosque in Eyüp, alongside other distinguished men of letters.

Edayi (d. c. 1548),⁸⁰⁸ a silk throwster, was proficient in Persian and studied under Emri Çelebi, a renowned master of the verse conundrum (*mu'ammā*), in which Edayi also excelled. Hilali (d. 1544),⁸⁰⁹ a cap-maker (*tākye-düz*), compiled a whole *dīvān*. The introduction (*dībāce*) to this work was written by Tablbazzade İbrahim Çelebi, a qadi whom Aşık Çelebi praised for his *ma'rifet*, or mastery of gnostic and literary knowledge. Another prominent silk throwster was Sagari Ali (d. 1520)⁸¹⁰ from Edirne, a musician, reciter of the call to prayer (*mü'ezzin*), and composer of invective poetry. According to Aşık Çelebi, he maintained close friendships with Selim I's boon companions, through whom he learned of the sultan's lingering regret

⁸⁰⁷ SEH, 118b-119a/306-307; LAT, 450-51; AÇ, 1329-34; AHD, 484-85; HÇ, 801-803; MALI, vol. 5, 579-82.

⁸⁰⁸ AÇ, 326-27; HÇ, 149-50; Riyazi, *Riyâzü 'ş-şuara*, 52.

⁸⁰⁹ SEH, 119a/307; LAT 572-73; AÇ, 541-42; AHD, 589; HÇ, 1065-67, MALI, vol. 5, 618; Riyazi, *Riyâzü 'ş-şuara*, 347.

⁸¹⁰ SEH 90a-90b/249-50; LAT 291-95; HÇ, 444-45; MALI, vol. 5, 525-27, Riyazi, *Riyâzü 'ş-şuara*, 174.

over his only military defeat—that against his father Bayezid II during the 1511 succession struggle. In response, Sagari composed a *murabba*’, a four-line poem that was associated with the popular musical form of the same name; Sagari may have set the poem to music as well. The poem featured a refrain intended to console Selim by emphasizing that his father’s reign had ended and it was now his own era. The sultan rewarded him generously with money and gifts.

Hariri (d. after 1537),⁸¹¹ a silk merchant from Kastamonu, was a highly productive poet across multiple genres as well as a prose writer, and he enjoyed the patronage of the treasurer İskender Çelebi. Surviving works include not only some of his poetry but also an excerpt from a book of advice and practical ethics written in elaborate prose (as cited in Latifi’s *tezkiye*) and a prose-and-verse account of the Ottoman naval campaign to Puglia in Italy (1537), in which he appears to have participated, based on internal textual evidence.⁸¹²

Tezkires also include artisan poets who show no obvious ties to the elite. Yet, caution is warranted before assuming such poets led typical commoner lives. In some cases, brief entries simply omit important details, which later sources can reveal. For instance, Rıza’s *tezkiye* (1640) offers only a short note on a dervish named Baki-i Zar (“The Crying Baki”), identifying him as a seal-maker (*mühr-kār*) with a particular interest in copying Persian poetry manuscripts.⁸¹³ A later account in Abdurrahman Hibri’s (d. 1676?) history of Edirne, however, shows that this once seemingly minor dervish eventually became the chief physician at the Edirne royal hospital and

⁸¹¹ LAT, 224-26; HÇ, 283.

⁸¹² Akgün, “Harirî Abdülcelil Efendi’nin Ferahat-nâmesi.”

⁸¹³ Zehrimarzade Seyyid Mehmed Rıza, *Hayati, Eserleri*, 72.

adopted the penname Şifayi (literally, “the one who cures”).⁸¹⁴ Similarly, Zari (d. 1552)⁸¹⁵ is mainly remembered as an alcoholic needle maker and musician, yet the relatively extensive treatment of him in sixteenth-century *tezkires* indicates his perceived significance within the cultural and social milieu; Aşık Çelebi, who appears to have known him personally, provides detailed descriptions of his appearance. More importantly, for Zari and other lesser-known artisan poets, their primary connection to elite society and to the broader poetic community lies in shared poetic styles. For the early sixteenth century, there is no clear evidence of stylistic or linguistic divisions based on profession or educational background.

As these biographical snippets have hopefully shown, the assumption that practicing a craft or keeping shop corresponds to membership in a consolidated professional group with a stable socio-cultural identity and *modus vivendi* of the “middling sort” is untenable for the early sixteenth century. An accompanying assumption, that of artisan poets’ categorical unlearnedness, is also problematic given the great variety of recognized possibilities available for learning outside the madrasa, and which, significantly, even the highest ulema routinely pursued, especially the study of Turkish and Persian languages and associated disciplines. It is impossible to argue for an artisanal or middling sort of literary milieu, a grass-roots vibrancy of *dīvān* poetry with a distinctive stylistic repertoire of its own and an independence from the political center, cultural, ideological, or financial. The shop in this era, which long preceded the rise of what can be called a guild “system” in the seventeenth century, appears to be free of any overarching regulating body or

⁸¹⁴ Hibri, *Abdurrahman Hibri ve Enîsü’l-müsâmirîn*, 236-37. Hibri’s history was first completed in 1636, but the text includes many later additions.

⁸¹⁵ SEH, 107b/284; LAT, 286-87; AÇ, 575-79; HÇ, 429-31; Riyazi, *Riyâzü’ş-şuara*, 171.

legislation delimiting the personal initiative and movement of its keepers. For many of the artisan poets, their trade was one source of income among others, or a temporary alternative when remuneration through direct patronage or official appointments were not forthcoming; for some it was a personal or moral preference. In any case, their shops, located in city centers, allowed them to be close to other poets, learned men, patrons and the court, keeping open the prospect of new patrons and *manşıbs*. Easy movement between courtly circles and the city market suggests that the cultural and social distance between the two was particularly short and easy to traverse in this period, and in both directions.

Artisan poets were not an aberration intruding from below into a poetic culture that otherwise flourished at the hands of highly learned administrators and the ulema. Rather, they displayed very similar patterns in terms of family origins, educational backgrounds, socialization and functional spectrum as many others primarily in professions regarded as essential parts of the ruling apparatus. In most sectors of this ruling apparatus, some men came from families who had been in the service of the dynasty for two or more generations, while others were recently recruited from the city where informal channels of learning were open for talented youth. Poetry seems to have played a major role in this elite expansion, not the least because it pertained to the rising field of Turkish culture and literacy which the Ottoman state relied on for its administrative and ideological hegemony. Sixteenth-century *tezkires* show all tiers of the Ottoman ruling apparatus, from the very top down to the poorest reciter of the call to prayer or the dervish living on meagre waqf payments. They also show the intense horizontal and vertical interconnectedness of members of this community of the servants of the state—comprising both formal offices and informal ideological or cultural functions fulfilled by groups like poets,

Sufis, musicians, occultists—reading in effect like the saga of a new imperial elite in formation. It is true that rigidly dichotomous models of *dīvān* poetry’s social base should be avoided, and the rich interface between elite and popular traditions in Ottoman society remains largely unexplored. Yet, for this particular period, a repatriation of the artisan, shop-keeping and illiterate poets into extant state expansion narratives is necessary, along with further inquiries into the complex roles *dīvān* poetry played in this state formation process.



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has studied a unique case of informal institutionalization and its role in state-making during the sixteenth century. This period, especially the first half, is the zenith of Ottoman institutionalization according to the “classical age” paradigm and its various precursors in Turkish historiography, such as the “history of institutions” of the brand monumentalized by İ. H. Uzunçarşılı’s works. In this state-centric historiography of the Ottoman Empire, the sixteenth-century state is understood as a harmonious complex of fully mature military, administrative and religio-legal institutions, all of which are rule-bound, meritocratic and carefully separated from one another in function. This state of perfection and order was followed by a phase of institutional degeneration, which was a major cause of the decline of the Ottoman Empire starting in the late sixteenth century. While the “decline” part of this paradigm has been rigorously questioned since the 1980s, and several generations of scholars have produced studies on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that operate outside the tight jacket of the notion of decline, it is hard to assert the same for the “classical age” part of the argument. Critiques of the decline paradigm did raise the crucial point that the bygone classical Ottoman “system” referenced by late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century political writers was largely a nostalgic construct and that such a perfect and orderly former age never existed in the first place. However, few studies have directly followed the path that would open up by letting go of the institutional bias for the roughly hundred years between the conquest of Constantinople and the end of Süleyman’s reign. The fact that there was an actual ongoing institutionalizing process and that official

documents, the primary sources of the historians, mostly foregrounded this image of an orderly ruling apparatus, no doubt, continued to enhance the institutional bias in historiography.

Several historians have made important contributions to challenging the idea of a fully institutionalized sixteenth century and bringing into the picture a domain of informal social relations shaping activities that would be subsumed under formal structures in the subsequent periods. While older generations of scholars subscribed to the idea of a mature “guild system” by at least the second half of the sixteenth century, Eunjeong Yi showed that even in the seventeenth century there was considerable “fluidity” in the structure and of guilds and in their relations with the state, with a large domain of artisanal activity remaining entirely outside the purview of the state. From what Yi has written, it becomes clear that the previous literature on the “Ottoman guild system” largely projected what was known about the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the seventeenth, and even to the sixteenth, for which it is impossible to speak of a generalized system that imposes state control on much of artisanal activity.⁸¹⁶ In a different but parallel vein, Helen Pfeifer has shown that the integration of Arab lands in the aftermath of Selim I’s conquests was as much a cultural and social affair as military and administrative. The specific case of the integration between the Arab and Rumi ulema proceeded as much through the informal salon culture as the administrative mechanisms of the Ottoman ulema bureaucracy. The personal interactions of the salon became an institution of “governance” whereby doctrinal ideas were disputed, patronage relations forged and balance of power between the imperial center and the local worlds negotiated.⁸¹⁷

⁸¹⁶ Yi, *Guild Dynamics*; Yi, “Guild Membership.”

⁸¹⁷ Pfeifer, *Empire of Salons*.

Of singular importance are Cornell Fleischer's contributions to the demonstration of the gap between the fully institutionalized image of the early sixteenth century drawn by the classical age paradigm and actual practice in the domain of the bureaucracy. Fleischer sees a contrast between roughly the first half of the sixteenth century and the second in terms of the size and levels of specialization and professionalization of the central bureaucracy. One of the basic arguments of his monograph on Mustafa Ali is that "[b]efore the 1530s the Ottomans appear to have possessed little in the way of a professional bureaucracy; such 'scribal' duties as were required were usually performed by 'ilmiyye recruits, who were the most literate people in Ottoman society."⁸¹⁸ In this early period, there was also no differentiation between the two main functions of the central bureaucracy, financial book-keeping and the chancery. The lack of professionalization was further signaled by the fact that the personal retinues of the treasurer and the chancellor continued to play as much role as the functionaries of these offices. The rise of a professional *kalemiyye*, independent of the 'ilmiyye, the separation between the finance and chancery branches, and regularization of appointments materialized only during the reign of Süleyman.

It is especially in "Between the Lines: Realities of Scribal Life in the Sixteenth Century" that Fleischer delves into the everyday workings of the early sixteenth-century Ottoman bureaucracy and presents eye-opening instances of the role played by informal personal relations and non-institutional practices bordering on corruption such as buying of offices. Analyzing three petitions to the Imperial Council (*dīvān-ı hümayūn*) that involve the appointment or financial affairs of

⁸¹⁸ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 35.

imperial scribes, Fleischer shows that “the paths of recruitment to the ranks of the *küttāb* were at this point . . . still open, varied and irregular”;⁸¹⁹ that factors like belonging to a family who had a history of service to the palace played as much role as skill and attachment to the office at a young age as apprentice; and that personal relations based on “gift exchange” carried weight in appointments, and no complaints about bribery, corruption and breach of “ancient law” (*kānūn-ı kadīm*) were voiced as they would be in later times, indicating that such practices were perceived as a normal part of officialdom. Overall, an image rule-bound meritocracy based on individual talent, which was so prevalent in contemporary European observers of the Ottoman court and then entered mainstream Ottoman historiography is quite hard to find.

This dissertation has followed the path of these scholars among others, who have worked towards a more anthropological approach to Ottoman official culture and state-making. It has argued that *dīvān* poetry developed in the early sixteenth century into an independent field of learning, social practice, and channel of elite recruitment, complementing *‘ilm* and Sufism, although it never developed formal structures like these latter two fields. Although it had its precedents in the fifteenth century, in the sixteenth, it evolved into a new intellectual field with newly defined linguistic, territorial and generic boundaries as well as an unprecedented pervasiveness. Its main role was the cultivation of high culture in literate Turkish, a task it almost single-handedly undertook, given the absence of schooling and pedagogical literature in Turkish (grammars, dictionaries, composition manuals, etc.). The field gained quasi-institutional regularity of practice through its informal

⁸¹⁹ Fleischer, “Between the Lines,” 48.

but repeated patterns of sociability like *şoĥbet*, *meclis* and apprenticeship (*şākirdlik*). It became thoroughly interlocked with government service, with success in poetry leading to diverse forms of remuneration, from direct bonuses to appointments and to official posts, or promotions for those already employed. It also became a major new channel of elite recruitment in an age of imperial expansion. This contemporary significance of the field resulted in the emergence of various generalized discourses on Ottoman *dīvān* poetry that reified the field. For the first time in history, it became possible to speak of *dīvān* poetry as a whole; its history was written, its canons developed and its practitioners monumentalized in biographical dictionaries.

In this context, biographies of poets, the *tezķiretü 'ş-su 'arā*, became one of the central genres of the sixteenth century. The genre further institutionalized the field of *dīvān* poetry, carrying a poetry culture largely developed in the domain of orality and sociability into writing. Its role and influence extended beyond poetry as an aesthetic field, with the texts incorporating a lot of extra-poetic material that pertained to the everyday functioning of the Ottoman elite as a whole, including relations of patronage, friendship and rivalry across different branches and strata of the elite. The genre articulated key aspects of imperial culture and ideology through the lens of poetry, which infused all areas of the elites' lives, from bureaucratic culture to financial matters, from military activities to religious controversies. It is symptomatic that a modern historian working on almost any topic in the sixteenth century is bound to find relevant material in the *tezķires*. The *tezķire* as a representational mode also influenced many other genres and became a more generalized way of speaking of the elite.

Because the “poets” were not a separate professional or artistic group but functionaries in the ruling apparatus, including Sufis, whose services were more

ideological than practical, the *tezkires* offer a random but representative slice of the elites across branches and levels. This dissertation has argued that the genre can be used to analyze the structure of the imperial elites to complement studies that rely on archival documents and analyses based on more formal career lines such as that of the ulema and the bureaucracy. It has arrived at a picture of a small, highly centralized and homogenous elite, with relatively little inner stratification and functional differentiation. The disappearance of the sixteenth-century brands of *tezkire* writing by the end of the century, it has argued, signals changes in this structure, which tallies with the findings of political, economic and social historiography of the late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire. A more elusive aspect of this later period, the oft-reiterated expansion of literacy, the dissertation has argued, can also be indirectly seen in the *tezkire* literature of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: The texts appear to assume a broader and anonymous reading public and reflect an increased inner stratification of the elite, with increased hostility between different levels rather than along professional lines.

The turn-of-the-century titles by Beyani (comp. 1000/1591-92) and Riyazi (comp. 1610) mark the beginnings of a new age in *tezkire* writing. Both texts are largely summaries of former *tezkires*. Beyani's is a shortened version of Hasan Çelebi's *tezkire*;⁸²⁰ the author writes in his introduction that he wanted to make a copy of Hasan Çelebi's work for himself, but since he "did not have the time to copy it from cover to cover," he shortened it. This act of summarizing entailed the elimination of the period before Mehmed II in its entirety;⁸²¹ elimination of later

⁸²⁰ Beyani, *Tezkiretü's-Şuarâ*.

⁸²¹ *Selâṭīn-i āl-i 'Osmān'ın evā'il-i devrlerinde 'ilm ü 'irfānıñ ve şî'r ü inşānın çendān kadr ü i'tibārı olmamağla vāki' olan eş'arları 'āmiyāne ve sāde vü miyāne olmağın ve şā'irleri fenn-i şî'rde fā'ik ve şî'rleri taḥrīre lā'ik olmamağla imlā olunmadı*. Beyani, *Tezkiretü's-Şuarâ*, 5.

poets who are “not famous”; and selection of only a few “famous” poems by the poets ended up being included.⁸²² When shortening Hasan Çelebi’s entries, Beyani appears to have deleted much of Hasan Çelebi’s rhetorical pyrotechnics and descriptions of character, temperament and poetic skills as well as anecdotes, focusing on the basic biographical markers such as place of birth, family and career highlights. The poetry selections are also fewer. The end result is a *tezkiye* that is about one-third the size of Hasan Çelebi’s work.

By all appearances, Riyazi’s *Riyāzū’ş-su’arā* of 1610 is also largely a trimmed down version of Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi’s *tezkiye*, with only about 10% of novel entries from the most recent period. Niki Gamm has found that about 80% of Riyazi’s entries overlap with those in Kınalızade’s *tezkiye*.⁸²³ More importantly, Kınalızade’s work is explicitly mentioned in the introduction as the best *tezkiye* written, but an overly inclusive one, like the ones before it. In Riyazi’s view, the true poet (*şā’ir*) and the poetaster (*müteşā’ir*) must be distinguished, a point in which Kınalızade failed in his view. This is exactly what his *tezkiye* will do by reducing the 600 poets in Kınalızade’s work to 400, which parallels Beyani’s intent to keep “famous” poets only. Riyazi’s approach to constructing his biographies is also

⁸²² Beyani also added around six new poets and made original additions to some of Hasan Çelebi’s entries. This may be suggesting that moderate amounts of additions by copyists were regarded as normal or acceptable for *tezkiye* literature. In fact, a similar phenomenon is witnessed in some copies of Latifi’s *tezkiye*. See, for example, the added material—both new entries and in-text additions—in the MS Süleymaniye Library, Kılıç Ali Paşa 780/1, designated S2 in Rıdvan Canım’s edition (LAT). Rıdvan Canım’s apparatus presents this additional material, e.g., the entries on Küheyli, Kerimi and İskender Çelebi and the lengthy anecdote inserted to the entry on Afıtabi, all of which uniquely occur in S2.

⁸²³ Gamm, “Riyāzī’s Tezkire,” 649. Gamm also observes a high degree of overlap with Latifi and Aşık Çelebi, approximately 50% each; Gamm, “Riyāzī’s Tezkire,” 647-48. But this seems to be largely a secondary effect of the fact that Hasan Çelebi had incorporated a lot of material from these earlier works in the first place. Indeed, after comparing the nature of the information transferred, Niki Gamm observes that it was Hasan Çelebi’s versions of the shared biographies that Riyazi ultimately utilized; Gamm, “Riyāzī’s Tezkire,” 649-50. Given that 10% of Riyazi’s entries are original, the remaining 10% probably came directly from Sehi, Latifi and Aşık Çelebi. Gamm does not mention any transfer of material from Ahdi and Mustafa Ali.

similar to Beyani's summarizing technique. As Gamm notes, both authors largely eliminate anecdotes and detailed descriptions of character and poetic style, shorten poetry selections and foreground proper identification, sticking to basic factual information including town of origin, real name (in addition to the penname), father or other important relative, in the case of ulema, professor who granted *mülāzemet* (the right to start a career in the religious hierarchy), key career stations and date and place of death.⁸²⁴

This new and much more concise and factual style of biographical writing is then followed by Rıza in his *tezkiye* of 1050/1640-41. Mucib's short *tezkiye* from 1710 and Şeyhi's biographies of poets embedded in his *Veķāyi 'ü'l-fużalā* from 1134/1721-22 can also be counted in this group. Rıza's work represents the definitive end of the chronological holism of the imperial *tezkiye*: It is the first title that focuses on the most recent poets exclusively (those who flourished between 1000 and 1050 AH), a trend that was already adumbrated by Beyani and Riyazi's elimination of much of early poetry. From then on, most *tezkiyes* would cover recent poets exclusively, and the few titles that covered early literary history would be derivative texts that did not attempt original research.⁸²⁵

These changes in the genre's conventions from the end of the sixteenth century were accompanied by significant decline in the vitality of the genre, as discussed in the "Introduction." Beyani's and Riyazi's works have three and 21 extant copies respectively, which stands in sharp contrast to Hasan Çelebi's work, their model, which has more than a hundred. Rıza's *tezkiye*, despite containing a

⁸²⁴ For a comparison of these two texts, see Gamm, "Riyāzī's Tezkire," 650.

⁸²⁵ See, for example, Hasib Ahmed Efendi's (d. 1166/1752-53) verse adaptation of a part of Mustafa Ali's *Künhü'l-ahbār*, which also includes poets' biographies up to the end of Mehmed II's reign; Hasib, *Manzum bir Şairler Tezkiresi*.

substantial amount of original information in a century marked by a scarcity of *tezkires*, has only six copies.

Simultaneous with the transition to this new style, was the emergence of a new type of poetry anthology, pioneered by Kafzade Faizi's *Zübdetü'l-eş'ār* (1621) and then followed by a series of sequels (*zeyl*) into the second half of the eighteenth century. These anthologies, large compilations like the sixteenth-century *naẓīre mecmū'as*, brought together selected verses, mainly ghazels or ghazel distiches, organized alphabetically by poet and with occasional identity markers, especially full name and death date, often placed in the margins. As discussed in the "Introduction," the characterization of this group of anthologies as *tezkires* in modern scholarship is not borne out by the texts themselves or their historical reception and is largely motivated by a desire to mask the gap in *tezkiye* writing in the seventeenth century. Similar to a new type of *tezkiye* replacing the highly anecdotal and community-embedded sixteenth-century style around the turn of the sixteenth century, the *Zübde* and its sequels replaced the great *naẓīre* anthology of the sixteenth century. In other words, the turn of the century saw the virtual death of the two major sixteenth-century meta-literary genres and their replacement by new ones.

The evolution from the *naẓīre* anthology to the Faizi-style *mecmū'a* organized by poets' names instead of chains of similar poems, represents a decentralization and decontextualization of poetic practice. Both types of anthology are composition-oriented; they seek to provide the potential poet with a wide repertoire of basic compositional building blocks. Several authors of the *zeyls* of Faizi's *Zübde* note in their introductions that the selected verses incorporate conceits (*maẓmūn*), which are complex metaphors. It is clear that a composition process anchored on the end-line refrain (*redīf*), as the *naẓīre* anthologies assume, is more

constrained than poems that work with similar conceits (*māzmūn*). The former produces highly similar poems because the *redif* imposes both a similar vocabulary and a similar syntax, whereas the latter rests on an abstract idea and allows for greater variation and invention. In any case, the organization by poet that the *Zübde* anthologies follow does not allow for grouping the *māzmūns* either. In this series of anthologies, therefore, poems are no longer represented as instances of a communal poetic conversation across Rum; each poet and each poem is far more divorced from a web of relationality.

The type of *tezkiye* represented by Beyani, Riyazi, Rıza and Mucib, which directly evolved from the sixteenth-century imperial *tezkiye*, is not the only kind of biographical writing on poets the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries produced. Another group of texts focus on particular urban or religio-mystical groups, indicating a shift away from the Rumi-scale holism of the imperial *tezkiye*. Some of the imperial *tezkiyes* did offer special focuses on particular cities, such as Latifi on Kastamonu and environs and Ahdi's second recension on Baghdad, but these local poets were dispersed in alphabetically arranged large volumes, subsumed under the bigger Rumi/Ottoman imperial frame. For independent biographies of poets of a particular city, Mustafa Ali of Gelibolu's introduction to his *Şadef-i Şad-Güher* (1593), an anthology of his own ghazels, might be considered a precursor. Here, Ali presents brief verse descriptions of the ulema and poets associated with the city. Not biographies as such, these catalogues describe the virtues and qualities of the named individuals as scholars and poets and reflect Ali's pride in his local identity.⁸²⁶ City histories as such is a new genre that emerged in the mid-seventeenth century and

⁸²⁶ Aksoyak, "Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli'nin."

sometimes they incorporate poets' biographies. Abdurrahman Hibri, in the introduction to his history of Edirne titled *Enīsü'l-müsâmirîn* (1636), claims that this is the first Ottoman city history and includes a section on the city's poets from the fifteenth century onwards among other preeminent personages that hailed from the city.⁸²⁷ The title, meaning "Friend of Night Conversers" suggests that for the locals of a city, that city's history, legends and anecdotes about eminent personages constituted major topics for *şoḥbets* and *meclises*. İsmail Belig's history of Bursa, *Güldeste-i Riyâz-ı 'İrfân ve Vefeyât-ı Dânişverân-ı Nâdiredân* (1727), includes sections on the city's scholars, sheiks, poets, musicians and even story-tellers (*meddâh*).⁸²⁸ Invaluable sources for the poets of their own periods, the poets' sections in these two works await comparative analysis with *tezkiye* literature to determine whether they include original and locally available material for the early periods as well.⁸²⁹ The nineteenth century saw the appearance of *tezkiyes* focusing on other cities, including Hatibi's *tezkiye* on poets of Baghdad and Ali Emiri Efendi's on those of Amid. Finally, it should be noted that many of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *tezkiyes* are largely confined to Istanbul without acknowledging the fact. Güfti's (d. 1677) undated verse *Teşrîfâtü 'ş-şu 'arâ* (discussed below) and Safayi's *tezkiye* (1720) represent this phenomenon most evidently.

Another way in which the scope of the *tezkiyes* was downscaled was the appearance of texts that discussed poets from particular mystical brotherhoods. Esrar

⁸²⁷ Hibri, *Abdurrahman Hibri ve Enīsü'l-müsâmirîn*, 7-8. For general information on Hibri and his works see Kreiser, "Abdurrahman Hibri."

⁸²⁸ İsmail Belig, *Tārîh-i Burusa*; Abdulkadiroğlu, *Bursalı İsmail Belig*, 86-116. Cf. İsmail Belig's model, Baldırzade Şeyh Selisî Mehmed's *Ravza-i Evliya*, which does not have special section devoted to poets, although it does mention a few poets among the city's ulema and Sufis.

⁸²⁹ Hibri has a late nineteenth-century *zeyl*, Badi Ahmed's *Riyâz-ı Belde-i Edirne*. For the *zeyls* of İsmail Belig's work on Bursa, see Ayvansarayi, *Vefeyât-ı Ayvansarâyî*, 28-31, Abdulkadiroğlu, *Bursalı İsmail Belig*, 113-116, and Atlansoy, *Edebiyat Tarihi Kaynağı Olarak*.

Dede's (1211/1796-97) *tezkiye* compiled around 200 Mevlevi poets who flourished from the sixteenth century onwards.⁸³⁰ Hafız Hüseyn Ayvansarayı's (d. 1787) biographical work commonly referred to as *Vefeyât* appears to be a *tezkiye* of Sufi poets on an examination of contents.⁸³¹ The work, undated, was composed towards the end of Ayvansarayı's life and may therefore be incomplete and/or unrevised, with a proper title and *hâtıme* missing. The brief introduction, too, strangely, misrepresents the contents. Although Ayvansarayı writes that the work records the lives and deaths of '*ulemā-yı bātın*', by which he means Sufi sheikhs (*meşāyih*), in actual fact, all of the entries are on Sufi poets whether sheikhs or not. The work is predominated by Bayrami, Halveti and Mevlevi sheikhs of various subdivisions, but there are other sheikhs, too, as well as many individuals who seem to have been included on account of their religio-mystical poetry. In fact, in some manuscripts and old library catalogues the title of the work is given as *Tezkiye-i Ayvānsarāyī*.⁸³²

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there are also individual cases of poets' biographies couched or included in other genres. Evliya Çelebi's travelogue contains brief notices on poets, some of them organized in regnal clusters, reading like a *tezkiye* summary, others dispersed throughout the text and slightly longer. While Evliya's notices on poets before his time do not seem to offer new information, they do reflect the highlights of their legacy and image in the eyes of seventeenth-century audiences. His descriptions of the tombs (*ziyāretgāh*) of some of these older poets are also important in this regard. For his contemporaries, however, Evliya is an important source.

⁸³⁰ This is an impressionistic description of the contents of *Tezkiye-i Şu'arā-yı Mevleviyye*. No exact description of the time range of the contents was available in secondary literature. Esrar Dede, *Tezkiye-i Şu'arā-yı Mevleviyye*.

⁸³¹ Ayvansarayı, *Vefeyât-ı Ayvansarāyī*.

⁸³² Ayvansarayı, *Vefeyât-ı Ayvansarāyī*, 44.

Güfti Ali of Edirne's (d. 1677) *Teşrifâtü 'ş-şu 'ara* (circa 1660) is in the form of verse satire.⁸³³ Biographical information is minimal, and the entries are mostly devoted to satirizing, in highly ornate and erudite language, the poetry, personality, physical appearance and religious and sexual orientation of the poets. Only few of the entries are complemented with a poetry sample. Most of the hundred or so poets discussed are contemporaries of Güfti and from Istanbul; also given the personal details lodged in each satire, it is very likely that Güfti knew many of them personally. The text was apparently meant for fun rather than information. The intended audience is likely to be circles that knew these poets personally since the satire would fully work only for such a community. The work has four extant copies.

Şeyhi Mehmed Efendi's (d. 1731) monumental *Vekāyi 'ü'l-fuṣalā* (first two vols. comp. 1134/1721-22) is a work in the tradition of *Şakāyık* sequels.⁸³⁴ Beginning with Mecdi Mehmed Efendi's (d. 1591) *Ḥadā'iku 'ş-şakā'ik* (995/1586-87), an expanded Turkish translation of Taşköprülüzade's original work, *Şakāyık* sequels also recorded the ulema's and *meşāyih*'s activities as poets and provided poetry samples. But, for the first time in the history of this line of texts, Şeyhi's work incorporated poets in general in a separate chapter for each dynastic reign so that *tezkiye* and *tabaqāt* traditions were completely merged. That Şeyhi's work, and Salim and Safayi's voluminous *tezkiyes* were completed nearly simultaneously around the year 1720 suggests a major revival of the *tezkiye* genre at this time, probably largely owing to the grand vizier Damat İbrahim Paşa's (d. 1730) generous patronage of poetry and letters as a whole.⁸³⁵ Finally, a unique *tezkiye* from the end of the

⁸³³ Güfti, *Güfti ve Teşrifâtü 'ş-şu 'arâsı*.

⁸³⁴ Şeyhi Mehmed Efendi, *Vekāyi 'u'l-fuṣalā*.

⁸³⁵ Kılıç, "Edebiyat Patronajı Açısından"; Tusalp Atıyas, "Political Literacy," 301.

eighteenth century, by Miralem Mehmed Begzade Mehmed Akif, focuses on recent and contemporary poets who are graduates of the palace school (*Enderûn*) like himself, grouped by the inner divisions of the school.⁸³⁶

Though not exhaustive, this survey of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century biographical literature on poets and one particular line of poetry anthologies suggests the development of several new trends that stand in marked contrast to the characteristic features of the sixteenth-century imperial *tezkiye*.

First and foremost is the growing in interest in factual information and the concomitant privileging of written sources over oral ones. In particular, full names of poets and family information (as versus simply mentioning the penname, a widespread practice in sixteenth-century *tezkiyes*), precise death dates backed up by chronograms or mentions of sites of burial (the tombstones being a major source of information), and important career stations (for which official records became increasingly available, especially for the ulema) were more carefully and systematically recorded than before. In fact, the same era would see the birth of a new biographical genre, known as the *vefeyât* (lit. “deaths”), whose name derives from its preoccupation with recording the death dates of important individuals.⁸³⁷ For poetry selections, the authors turned to “published” *dīvāns* and personal *mecmūʿas* of the poets, which seem to have become more easily and pervasively available; in fact, the *tezkiye* authors and anthologists note, in most entries, that they have taken the samples from the poet’s *dīvān* or *mecmūʿa*, perhaps to point out that the texts are reliable. References to the author’s own memory and personal notes, *meclis* and

⁸³⁶ Akif, *Mirʿat-ı Şiʿr*.

⁸³⁷ Many *vefeyâtnâmes* incorporated biographical and anecdotal material beyond the death dates. See Donuk, *Türk Edebiyatında Vefeyâtnâme*. For *vefeyâtnâme* examples, see Baldirzade Şeyh Selisî Mehmed, *Ravza-i Evliya*; Tek, *Süleyman Hâlis’in vefeyatında*; Ayvansarayî, *Vefeyât-ı Selâtin ve Meşâhîr-i Ricâl*. Many of the city histories, mentioned above, were couched in *vefeyât* form.

şohbet settings, or the poet himself as the provider of the quotations become more or less extinct.

This more “modern” or “early modern” attention to factual information based on reliable written sources, however, came at the expense of a social decontextualization of poetry. Sixteenth-century *tezkires* placed poetry in social context in multiple ways, as studied in the previous chapters. They recorded anecdotes which showed the context of composition of certain poems, especially individual distiches. They related *meclis* and *şohbet* scenes in which poems were composed and exchanged, often as part of the ongoing conversation. They displayed the social use of poems in patronage relations, intra-elite friendship and rivalry and love affairs. They reflected the era’s general autobiographical understanding of poetry as the self-expression of an actual person, rather than an exclusively textual aesthetic artefact. The *nazîre* anthologies, too, represented poetry as a social or communal practice. Each poem in a *nazîre* anthology corresponded to a moment in a larger conversation, whether it be an actual conversation—in the case of what I have called “intentional” *nazîres* produced in face-to-face settings or within a socio-textual community—or a conversation construct contrived by the anthologist—in the case of “non-intentional” *nazîres* that were brought together on the basis of basic formal similarities alone. The new type of *tezkires* and poetry anthologies that emerged from the turn of the sixteenth century largely effaced this social situatedness.

The extent to which this was due to an actual historical shift in the practice of poetry and the elite sociology that sustains it, versus a change in how poetry was represented, remains a subject for further study. Yet it can be surmised that both a change in the structure of the elites and the increasing consolidation of the domain of

textuality played a role. The culturally and politically homogenous, weakly stratified and non-contentious small elite clustered around the political center that produced the sixteenth-century *tezkires* and *naẓīre* anthologies would have been disrupted in the environment of increasing intra-elite rivalry and factionalism that is associated with this later period. The spread of literacy and textual culture would have fostered a reliance on written sources. In the meta-literary texts of this period, poetry appears as a near-exclusively text-bound practice, whether this faithfully reflects actual practice or not.

Overall, during the following two centuries after the imperial *tezkiye*, biographical writing on poets and poetry anthologies became highly decentralized and diversified, putting into relief the great imperial centralism of the sixteenth-century meta-literary texts. This decentralization had multiple dimensions. While the *tezkiye* genre declined, especially between 1610 and 1720, many other genres incorporated poets' biographies, a centrifugal move away from this core genre of the sixteenth century. Secondly, there were no longer definitive, programmatic texts that claimed to comprehend and represent the field of *dīvān* poetry as a whole and that were very widely read. More and more, the authors and anthology compilers began to present the resulting works as reflecting their own "taste" in poetry, conceding the partiality of their outlooks. Third, the trend toward integration and consolidation of the field of Rumi poetry in sixteenth-century *tezkires* and *naẓīre* anthologies, and the consolidation of these meta-literary genres themselves with increasing intra-generic continuity reached a point of saturation in the later sixteenth century and was this century's great achievement. From around the turn of the century, a decentralization of contents along local urban identities and mystical brotherhoods occurred, as

outlined above. Overall, there were more titles and types of work that pertained to poets, but none of them reached the popularity of the sixteenth-century *tezkiye*.

The social decontextualization, decentralization and increased textualization of poetry all point towards a more complex and layered domain of textuality. That no *tezkiye* or *tezkiye*-like biographical writings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries aimed to comprehend the field as whole seems to implicitly concede the perceived impossibility and pointlessness of such a project. That no single biographical compilation on poets reached the popularity of its sixteenth-century predecessors also suggest the rise of smaller reading communities with particularized interests in an expanded textual world that now had much more variety to offer. Between the rise of modern encyclopedism in the late nineteenth century, which completely dissociates hard information from social context, and the community-embedded forms of sixteenth-century imperial *tezkiyes* lies the rich and diverse forms of early modern Ottoman biographical writing that await scholarly attention.

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