

## CHAPTER 9

### THE CHIEF HAREM EUNUCH AND OTTOMAN RELIGIOUS AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE [DRAFT- NOT FOR CITATION]

Thus far, we have seen ample evidence of the Chief Harem Eunuch's political and economic influence, both at the imperial center and in the Ottoman provinces. But intertwined with these elements of his influence was his influence on the Ottoman Empire's intellectual and religious life. To a large degree, he exercised this influence through pious endowments of religious, educational, and charitable institutions, above all Quran schools, *madrasas*, libraries, and Sufi lodges. But these endowments also serve as indicators of the Chief Harem Eunuch's own religious and intellectual proclivities. In brief, these consist mainly of promotion of the Hanafi legal rite of Sunni Islam, adherence to mainstream Sufi orders, opposition to Shi'ism, particularly Twelver Shi'ism as it developed in Safavid (and to a lesser extent Qajar) Iran, and devotion to the Prophet Muhammad.

Though not all Chief Eunuchs shared the same religious and intellectual preferences, there was a general consistency to their leanings. With one significant exception: When the puritanical tendency known as the Kadızadeli movement was at its height in the late seventeenth century, some high-placed harem eunuchs espoused it while others, including at least one Chief Harem Eunuch, persisted in promoting Sufism, which the Kadızadellis regarded as an intolerable innovation to the usages of the Prophet Muhammad. This seeming divergence of opinion did not result in open discord among the harem eunuchs. Still, it probably helps to explain at least a few depositions and exiles. It also comes as no surprise that this kind of ideological rift occurred during the seventeenth century, a period of society-wide crisis when social and ideological categories of all kinds were being contested.

This chapter explores the Chief Harem Eunuchs' religious and intellectual tendencies, above all as they were manifested in the religio-educational institutions founded by key Chief Harem Eunuchs. These were located chiefly in Istanbul, Cairo, and Medina but occasionally in other locales – although we have to concede that we cannot scrutinize every single foundation set up by every single Chief Eunuch. We then move on to a consideration of the ways in which the Chief Eunuch contributed to Ottoman book culture, both by commissioning manuscripts and by founding libraries. Finally, we try to untangle the Chief Eunuchs' responses to the Kadızadeli movement within the broader context of Ottoman confessionalization

### **Quran schools/*sebil-mektebs***

By far the most frequent Chief Eunuch-endowed religious institution was the Quran school (*mekteb* in Turkish, *kuttab* in Arabic), a modest foundation that offered basic religious education, and in the process rudimentary literacy, to young, usually pre-teenage, boys – all at no charge. In the case of schools endowed by Chief Eunuchs, these boys were often orphans. Typically, the goal of such schools was to enable boys to memorize the Quran through repeated recitation; sophisticated exegesis was not part of the agenda. By endowing a Quran school, a Chief Eunuch was performing a pious duty by teaching the sacred scripture to other Muslims; for this he would be rewarded in heaven.

Although Chief Eunuch-endowed Quran schools survive as part of large religious complexes, known as *külliyes*, elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire, by far the largest number of extant free-standing schools are in Cairo. This has a great deal to do with a distinctive type of Quran school that developed in Cairo during the late Mamluk period and carried over into the Ottoman era: the *sebil-mekteb* or *sabil-kuttab*, a Quran school (*mekteb* or *kuttab*) built on top of a public water fountain (*sebil* or *sabil*). The *sebil*, an enclosed chamber in which one to three

employees dip up cups of water from an underground cistern and hand it out through a metal grill, thus serves as the lower story of the structure, the *mekteb*, an open loggia, as the upper story; an enclosed staircase usually occupies one side of the structure.<sup>1</sup> The original rationale for such a combination is unknown, but providing water to Muslims, like teaching them the Quran, is a pious act that earns the provider a heavenly reward. Since the *mekteb* is usually open to the elements, Cairo's mild climate may well have determined the popularity of the architectural form there.

**El-Hajj Mustafa Agha.** The *sebil-mekteb* was a common part of the Mamluk sultans' mosque-*madrassa* complexes by the late fourteenth century, building on the earlier practice of situating a *sebil* (with no *mekteb*) at the corner of a religious building. Sultan Qaytbay (r. 1468-96) commissioned the first known free-standing *sebil-mekteb*, which still stands on Saliba Street, below Cairo's citadel. Completed in 1479, it is a linear stone building decorated with elaborate polychrome stone inlay over the *sebil* grill. As it happens, this structure became the first to be endowed by an Ottoman Chief Harem Eunuch, for in 1620, the powerful el-Hajj Mustafa Agha restored it. The lengthy Arabic *vakifname* that describes the properties he endowed in Egypt notes that the school was to educate ten orphan boys, to be hand-picked by Mustafa Agha himself or, in his absence, the local endowment supervisor (*mutawalli* in Arabic, *mütevelli* in Ottoman Turkish). The boys were to be taught by a "virtuous" (*'arif*) man of religion who had memorized the Quran, along with a student assistant (*'arif*). Students and teachers alike received a daily bread ration and a new set of clothes during the holy month of Ramadan. The endowment deed goes into great detail on how the *sebil* is to be supplied with water: water-carriers, it explains, will fetch the water from an underground cistern, then store it in designated

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<sup>1</sup> *El<sup>2</sup>*, s.v. "Sabīl," Part 2: "As an Architectural Term," by Doris Behrens-Abouseif; eadem, *Islamic Architecture of Cairo*; eadem, *Cairo of the Mamluks*. The following remarks likewise draw heavily on these publications.

cooling jars. These minutiae reflect Mustafa's overall concern for the provision of water in Cairo; his endowment deed also supplies water to Cairo residents embarking on the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The *sebil-mekteb* was located in the Saliba neighborhood, on "Aleppo Street" (Zuqaq Halab), the artery leading south from Bab Zuwayla into the Qusun district, and apparently just across from Mustafa Agha's residence.<sup>2</sup> We can regard this restoration as part of Mustafa Agha's overall urban development project in Cairo, for not only his home but most of his commercial structures were located in the Saliba neighborhood. All these sites were near Birkat al-Fil, future site of the eunuch enclave, as well.

**Yusuf Agha.** Mustafa Agha's restoration of Qaytbay's *sebil-mekteb* seems to have set something of a precedent, although admittedly with a substantial delay. Nearly half a century later, Abbas Agha, before his exile to Cairo, founded a *sebil-mekteb* whose fountain Evliya Çelebi describes as "so ornamented and decorated that it resembles a pagan temple with Chinese drawings;"<sup>3</sup> otherwise, not much is known about this structure, which no longer exists. But it was part of a veritable *sebil-mekteb* explosion in Cairo during the 1660s and 1670s: "In seven years," Evliya marvels, "seventy new *sebils* were built,"<sup>4</sup> by both exiled harem eunuchs (Chief and otherwise) and by local military officers.

One of these military officers was Mehmed, the lieutenant commander (*kethüda*) of Cairo's Janissary regiment, who built a *sebil-mekteb*, along with a *wakala*, or urban caravanserai, on Darb al-Ahmar, a major artery connecting Bab Zuwayla, the southern gate of the original Fatimid city of al-Qahira, to the citadel in the southeast. The site is not far to the east of Mustafa

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<sup>2</sup> Cairo, Wizarat al-Awqaf, No. 302/51, pp. 13, 24-26, 38-39.

<sup>3</sup> Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, vol. 10, 152.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. See also Hamza Abd al-Aziz Badr and Daniel Creelius, "The *Waqfs* of Shahin Ahmad Agha," *Annales Islamologiques* 26 (1992): 79-114.

Agha's *sebil*. In 1677, Yusuf Agha, then acting Chief Harem Eunuch, ordered his agent, the grandee Mustafa Agha (later Bey) Kızlar, to purchase these structures and re-endow the *sebil-mekteb*. The resulting endowment deed has been studied by André Raymond, who points out that Yusuf's *mekteb*, much like el-Hajj Mustafa's, was to teach the Quran to ten orphan boys, who would also receive a monthly stipend and new clothes at Ramadan. Unlike Mustafa's *sebil-mekteb*, which is, after all, a restored Mamluk Sultanate structure, Yusuf's is decorated with blue and white Iznik tiles, a few of which can still be glimpsed inside the *sebil* even though the structure is, to quote Raymond, "in an advanced state of decay."<sup>5</sup> And unlike Mustafa's *sebil-mekteb*, Yusuf's was not located in close proximity to the founder's residence but instead was situated several kilometers east of Yusuf's house at Birkat al-Fil. Revenue for the *mekteb* came from the adjoining *wakala*, from a sort of urban tenement known as a *rab'* above the *wakala*, and from a coffeehouse, complete with roasting and grinding facilities, across the way.<sup>6</sup> These neighboring structures seem to duplicate on a smaller scale the kind of infrastructural development that el-Hajj Mustafa, Osman, and Davud Aghas had undertaken farther west and north, as described in chapter 8.

The endowment deed contains a couple of somewhat unusual, or at least noteworthy, provisions. It stipulates that Mustafa Agha (later Bey) Kızlar is to be superintendent (*nazir*) of the foundation during his lifetime; he presumably looked after it until his death in 1730. At the same time, the deed allocates thirty Egyptian silver coins (singular, *para*) per month for a foundation administrator (Arabic, *shadd*) "from among the founder's manumitted slaves" (plural,

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<sup>5</sup> Raymond, "The *Sabil* of Yusuf Agha Dar al-Sa'ada," 223-28, 230-32. See also Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, vol. 10, 152; Chapter 8, n. 22; and Williams, *Islamic Monuments in Cairo*, 98.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond, "The *Sabil* of Yusuf Agha Dar al-Sa'ada," 228-29; Williams, *Islamic Monuments in Cairo*, 98; André Raymond, "The *Rab'*: A Type of Collective Housing in Cairo during the Ottoman Period," in *Architecture as Symbol and Self-Identity*, ed. Jonathan G. Katz (Philadelphia: Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1980): 55-61.

'*utaqa*'). More surprisingly, the endowment funds a Friday preacher (*khatib*) and a daily prayer leader (*imam*) at the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina. When he endowed the structure in 1677, Yusuf Agha presumably had no idea that he would one day command the corps of eunuchs who guarded the Prophet's mosque and tomb; at the time, no former Chief Harem Eunuch had ever held that position. Yet the acting Chief Harem Eunuch was constantly aware of the Tomb Eunuchs, many of whom were, after all, former harem eunuchs, and more broadly of the "other harem" – that is, the *haram*, or sacred precinct, surrounding the Prophet's mosque and tomb. This helps to explain why Yusuf's predecessor Abbas Agha had a volume of the late fifteenth-century historian al-Samhudi's panegyric history of Medina in his library in Cairo, even though he probably never set foot in Medina.<sup>7</sup>

**El-Hajj Beshir Agha.** El-Hajj Beshir Agha was not part of the wave of *sebil-mekteb* construction remarked by Evliya Çelebi, yet he arguably revived it by building his own *sebil* – or rather, having it built for him, by one of his trusty *vekils*, just as he was leaving Cairo to return to Topkapı. It was located along the shore of Birkat al-Fil, to the north of the *sebils* of Mustafa and Yusuf Aghas, southwest of Bab Zuwayla and southeast of the nineteenth-century 'Abdin Palace.<sup>8</sup> Like Mustafa Agha (but unlike Yusuf), el-Hajj Beshir had his residence near his *sebil-mekteb* – in his case, right next-door to it.

The endowment deed of Beshir Agha's *sebil-mekteb* has been published by Daniel Crecelius and Hamza Abd al-Aziz Badr. It stipulates that the *mekteb* is to educate twenty orphan boys (twice the number of either el-Hajj Mustafa's or Yusuf's *mekteb*) but that, intriguingly, they

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<sup>7</sup> Hathaway, "The Wealth and Influence of an Exiled Ottoman Eunuch in Egypt," 295, 297, 309.

<sup>8</sup> Williams, *Islamic Monuments in Cairo*, 134; personal observation. El-Hajj Beshir also restored a *mu'allimhane* (literally, "teachers' house"), an institution where *mekteb*-teachers were trained, near the Fethiye mosque (the Church of Pammakaristos) in Balat, south of the Golden Horn in Istanbul. He also founded Quran schools in Istanbul's Galata and Ali Faqih neighborhoods and on Chios. See Süleymaniye Library, MS Hacı Beşir Ağa 682, fols. 39v, 43r-v, 45r-v.

are to be taught by a “Hanafi *faqih*.” Ordinarily, *faqih* would refer to an expert in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), but here, as in el-Hajj Mustafa’s endowment deed, it probably means simply a Quran instructor. The insistence on hiring a Hanafi is significant, though. While the Hanafi legal rite (*madhhab* in Arabic) was the official rite of the Ottoman Empire, so that the chief judge and the head of the descendants of the Prophet in Egypt always belonged to that rite, the province counted a large number of adherents of the other Sunni rites, above all the Shafi‘i and the Maliki. Still, the deeds for el-Hajj Mustafa’s and Yusuf’s *sebil-mektebs* make no mention of the instructors’ legal rite, so we might conclude that by the time el-Hajj Beshir built his structure, the other rites were perceived as more of a threat to Hanafi dominance.

This makes sense, for in fact the Shafi‘is and Malikis were more prominent among Egypt’s ulema in the early eighteenth century. Cairo’s famed al-Azhar *madrasa* was now the pre-eminent institution of higher Islamic learning in the city, and it was headed by a new official: the Shaykh al-Azhar, an office that seems to have emerged in the late seventeenth century. To this day, significantly, no Hanafi has ever held this post. The first several Shaykhs were Maliki, but in 1724, a Shafi‘i won the post, setting what appears to be a lasting precedent. When we add to this the growth of al-Azhar’s Shafi‘i and Maliki student population during these years, with many Maliki students arriving from Upper Egypt, West Africa, and Morocco, and Shafi‘i students from Indonesia and Malaysia, we can see why Hanafis in Cairo might have felt a bit beleaguered.<sup>9</sup> In general, too, Shafi‘is and Malikis simply outnumbered Hanafis on the ground

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<sup>9</sup> Daniel Crecelius, “The Emergence of the Shaykh al-Azhar as the Pre-Eminent Religious Leader in Egypt,” in *Colloque international sur l’histoire du Caire, 27 mars-5 avril 1969*, eds. Andrée Assabgui, et al. (Cairo: Ministry of Culture of the Arab Republic of Egypt, General Egyptian Book Organization, 1972), 109-23; Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, “The Ulama of Cairo in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” in *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions, 1500-1900*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 149-65; Michael Winter, *Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule, 1517-1798* (London: Routledge, 1992), 118-23; Jane Hathaway, “The Role of the ‘Ulama’ in Social Protest in Late Eighteenth-Century Egypt,” unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1986, 17-19, 34-37.

in Egypt, and had for centuries, despite the later Mamluk sultans' patronage of Hanafism. Given all these circumstances, it was logical for el-Hajj Beshir to attempt to bolster his *madhhab* by training up orphans – who had no pre-existing ties to any legal rite – as Hanafis.

**Moralı Beshir Agha.** El-Hajj Beshir Agha established something of a Hanafi “beachhead” at Birkat al-Fil before he returned to Istanbul. His successor as Chief Harem Eunuch, Moralı Beshir Agha, went farther. In 1750, two years before his execution, he oversaw, from Istanbul, the construction of the first *madrasa* that an Ottoman sultan had ever commissioned in Cairo, to the immediate north of el-Hajj Beshir's *sebil-mekteb*. The Mahmudiyya *madrasa* – named, naturally, for Sultan Mahmud I – was part of a religious complex that included a lodge for Halveti Sufis and, at the southernmost corner, another *sebil-mekteb*. While the *madrasa* housed forty students, the new *sebil-mekteb* accommodated twenty, the same number as el-Hajj Beshir's structure. This new *mekteb* faces that of el-Hajj Beshir across a narrow lane, today known as Sekat Habbaniyya. The two structures could hardly be more different: el-Hajj Beshir's spare and linear, Moralı Beshir's a curvaceous Baroque edifice, stylistically up to date and, in its way, reminiscent of Baroque confections in the imperial capital, notably the fountain of Ahmed III in front of Topkapı's outer gate. Moralı Beshir himself, a skilled calligrapher, may have designed the calligraphic panels that adorn the *sebil*.<sup>10</sup> Inside, Moralı Beshir's *sebil* is lined with blue and white Iznik tiles. Clearly, no expense was spared for the Mahmudiyya complex, which also featured white marble paving stones imported from Istanbul.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Doris Behrens-Abouseif, “The Complex of Sultan Mahmud I in Cairo,” *Muqarnas* 28 (2011): 195-220; on the calligraphy, pp. 200-01. On Moralı Beshir's calligraphic skills, see also Flach, *Observations*, vol. 2, 129.

<sup>11</sup> Personal observation; Behrens-Abouseif, “Complex of Sultan Mahmud I,” 197, 198-99; Williams, *Islamic Monuments in Cairo*, No. 308, PAGE. BOA, C.MF.648 (end of Şevval 1166/end of August 1753) describes the imported white marble, while BOA Tahvil Defteri 11/93 (13 Receb 1164/7 June 1751) explains that the village of Bahnaya al-Ghanam and its dependencies in Minufiyya subprovince had been endowed to the *vakıf*. These two



In fact, the Mahmudiyya religious complex marked this entire neighborhood next to Birkat al-Fil – where virtually all exiled harem eunuchs had their residences – as a site of Hanafi learning. But in addition to serving as an implicit riposte to the strength in Egypt of the Shafi‘i and Maliki legal rites, the complex, along with el-Hajj Beshir’s *sebil-mekteb*, offered institutional competition to the growing number of *madrasas* and *mektebs* being founded by Egypt’s grandees, above all the ascendant Kazdağlı household. The Kazdağlıs, like virtually all of Egypt’s grandees, were Hanafis themselves, but the religious institutions they founded were neither sanctioned nor supported by the imperial government; instead, they functioned wholly autonomously. In 1744, Abdurrahman Kethüda al-Kazdağlı, one of the greatest architectural patrons in Ottoman Cairo, founded a free-standing *sebil-mekteb* in the heart of the original Fatimid city that today is arguably the best-known example of the genre in the world.<sup>12</sup> Mahmud’s new religious complex showed that the imperial center was still, so to speak, in the game where Hanafi education in Cairo was concerned.

The sultanic interest in the Birkat al-Fil district may be one reason why Osman Kethüda al-Kazdağlı, the powerful Janissary officer who headed the household during the 1720s, established his residence and a religious complex in the northwestern district of Azbakiyya, which had only just begun to challenge Birkat al-Fil as an elite residential neighborhood.<sup>13</sup> A later Chief Eunuch-founded *sebil-mekteb*, that of Ebu’l-Vukuf Ahmed Agha (term 1754-57)

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documents were published in the exhibition catalogue *Mısır fî al-wathā’iq al-‘uthmāniyya / Osmanlı Belgelerinde Mısır / Egypt in the [sic] Ottoman Documents* (Istanbul: Research Centre for Islamic History, Art, and Culture [IRCICA], 2007), 12-13. See also BOA, Mühimme-i Mısır, vol. 7, Nos. 98 (1 Zilkade 1166/ ) and 99 (1 Şevval 1166/ ). On Ahmed III’s fountain, see Hamadeh, *The City’s Pleasures*, 90, 96, 103-04, 114, 137, 175-76, 196-97.

<sup>12</sup> Doris Behrens-Abouseif, “The ‘Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda Style in Eighteenth-Century Cairo,” *Annales islamologiques* 26 (1992): 117-26; André Raymond, *Le Caire des Janissaires: L’apogée de la ville ottoman sous Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda* (Paris: CNRS, 1995), 98-114.

<sup>13</sup> Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya and Its Environs*, 55ff.; Raymond, “Essai de géographie,” 66, 73-75, 78, 80-81, 97-103; Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 78, 127.

stayed well to the south of Azbakiyya, at Qanatir al-Siba‘, a district located just south and west of Birkat al-Fil, which at the time was not much of an elite residential hub.<sup>14</sup>

Collectively, these *sebil-mektebs* reflect the Chief Harem Eunuch’s desire to teach the Quran and impart literacy to orphan boys. In this connection, we can hardly overlook the fact that two of the three structures surveyed here are located in close proximity to the sponsoring Chief Eunuchs’ local residences. To some degree, this echoes the arrangement that prevailed in Medina, where the subordinate members of the eunuch corps who guarded the Prophet Muhammad’s tomb lived in the Chief Tomb Eunuch’s house while they completed their training. The orphans who attended the *mektebs* in Cairo may not have belonged to the Chief Harem Eunuch’s household, but they were nonetheless, in a sense, his clients. We might even say they were his surrogate children, rather like the young Tomb Eunuchs in Medina, for by means of the *sebil-mekteb*, he raised a new generation of literate Sunni Muslims – and, in el-Hajj Beshir Agha’s case, at least, Hanafis, as well.

## Madrasas

Founding a Quran school was one thing. It was quite another for a Chief Harem Eunuch to found a *madrasa*, the Muslim equivalent of a theological seminary, although with a heavy emphasis on jurisprudence (*fiqh*) as well as on Quranic exegesis (*tafsir*) and study of *hadith*, or sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. In general, a *madrasa* required more of

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<sup>14</sup> BOA, Mühimme-i Mısır, vol. 7, No. 411 (1 Rebiü’l-evvel 1171/12 November 1757), 431 (mid-Receb 1171/late March 1758), 442 (1 Şa’ban 1171/9 April 1758), 450 (same date), 451 (same date), 454 (mid-Şa’ban 1171/late April 1758), 455 (same date), 503 (1 Rebiü’l-evvel 1172/1 November 1758), 504 (30 Receb 1172/28 March 1759), 563 (1 Şa’ban 1172/29 March 1759), 566 (mid-Şa’ban 1172/mid-April 1759), 607 (1 Cemazeü’l-evvel 1173/20 December 1759), 678 (mid-Zilhicce 1173/28 July 1760), 680 (same date). It was connected to or close to his former residence (he had lived in Cairo immediately before becoming Chief Eunuch) and was associated with an oven (*furûn*), a mill (*değirmen*), and a caravanserai (here called *han*). Most of the *mülk* property that Ebu’l-Vukuf Ahmed endowed was, however, purchased from the Kazdağlı leadership. On elite residences near Qanatir al-Siba‘ in the eighteenth century, see Raymond, “Essai de géographie,” 80-81, 98, 100-02. From the 1770s through the 1790s, several prominent beys of the Kazdağlı household had houses in the vicinity.

everything: space, food, fuel, personnel, cash. Students – whose numbers could range from ten or twenty to multiple hundreds, in the case of al-Azhar -- generally lived on the grounds of the *madrasa*, often relocating from great distances. In addition to lodgings, they required a mosque for daily worship, a library to house the books they studied, a kitchen, a bath, and toilets. For all these reasons, a *madrasa* required a much larger physical space than a Quran school. And instead of a single teacher, multiple instructors were necessary, as well as librarians, mosque preachers, and various maintenance people to light the lamps, sweep the floors, and so on (although the endowment deeds for many *madrasas* stipulate that the students themselves will perform these duties). All employees received cash salaries and often food and clothing allotments, as well. To found a *madrasa*, then, was a huge undertaking requiring vast resources. Not surprisingly, there are relatively few *madrasas* founded by Chief Harem Eunuchs. And whereas Chief Eunuchs were particularly active in founding *mektebs* in Cairo, none of them founded a *madrasa* in that city, although el-Hajj Beshir Agha did endow a collection of Hanafi works to the residential college of the Turks (Riwaq al-Atrak) at al-Azhar, to be discussed below.<sup>15</sup> Instead, Chief Eunuch-founded *madrasas* exist in the Holy Cities, in the imperial capital, and in the Ottoman Balkans.

**El-Hajj Mustafa Agha.** While the first Darüssaade Ağası, Habeshi Mehmed Agha, founded a *madrasa* near the “burnt column,” Çemberlitaş, in the middle of old Byzantine Constantinople, he did not found one anywhere else, and certainly not in the Ottoman provinces. El-Hajj Mustafa Agha, in contrast, founded a *madrasa* in Mecca during his pilgrimage to that city in 1602 – that is, three years before he became Chief Harem Eunuch. [WHERE IN MECCA?] His *madrasa* was unusual in providing for instruction in *both* the Hanafi and Shafi‘i

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<sup>15</sup> Badr and Crecelius, “*Awqaf* of al-Hajj Bashir Agha in Cairo,” 301.

legal rites. This was almost unheard of among Ottoman imperial foundations of any kind since Hanafism was the empire's official legal rite. Yet Shafi'ism was well-represented among the resident population of Mecca, as well as among pilgrims to the city. Lower Egypt and coastal Yemen were majority Shafi'i. El-Hajj Mustafa may have wished to accommodate this not insignificant element of Mecca's population, perhaps seeking at the same time to counteract the ideological appeal of the Zaydi imams of Yemen, who in the early seventeenth century were in the process of ousting the Ottomans from that province.<sup>16</sup>

But even in Cairo, el-Hajj Mustafa accommodated both the Hanafi and Shafi'i rites when he endowed thirty Quran readers to recite verses before and after the dawn and evening prayers; the endowment deed stipulates that a shaykh from each rite will preside over his own circle (*majlis*) of readers. The same provision is made for nine people whom he funded to pray at al-Azhar.<sup>17</sup> As if to underline his respect for the Shafi'i rite, he also endowed three people to recite the Fātiha (the opening verse of the Quran) at the tomb of al-Shafi'i himself, located in Cairo's enormous Qarafa cemetery.<sup>18</sup> Abbas Agha, who died in Cairo during the 1690s, is buried near al-Shafi'i's tomb, a choice of location that seems more than coincidental; an order for repairs to the tomb nearly eighty years later reveals that the superintendent of the tomb's endowment was the once and future Chief Eunuch Cevher Agha (terms 1772-74, 1779-83).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Roughly a century later, Uzun Nezir Agha, planning official celebrations of the Prophet's birthday in Mecca and Medina, provided for both Hanafi and Shafi'i *tarāwih*, or supplementary prayers: BOA, MD 112, no. 1000 (1 Safar 1114).

<sup>17</sup> Cairo, Wizarat al-Awqaf No. 302/51, pp. 39-41. Morning and evening prayers fall at the same time for adherents of all four Sunni rites. Only in the case of the afternoon (*ʿasr*) prayer is there a difference: the Hanafi *ʿasr* is roughly an hour earlier than that of the other three rites.

<sup>18</sup> Topkapı Palace Archive, D 7911 (undated). In addition, three other people were to recite the Fatiha at the tomb of Shaykh Abu Su'ud al-Khariji and three more at al-Azhar.

<sup>19</sup> Topkapı Palace Archive E 4787 (1194/1780). The document is an account for the Haseki *vakıf*, probably Gülnuş Emetullah's foundation rather than Hürrem's.

One possible explanation for this devotion to al-Shafi‘i comes from the eunuchs’ Ethiopian homeland. Most Ethiopian Muslims have historically adhered to the Shafi‘i rite.<sup>20</sup> If Mustafa, Abbas, and perhaps other harem eunuchs were, in fact, Muslims by birth – as African eunuchs very occasionally were<sup>21</sup> – then their families may have belonged to the Shafi‘i rite, in which case they may have retained a certain loyalty to the rite and its eponymous founder.

**El-Hajj Beshir Agha.** No Chief Harem Eunuch founded more educational institutions than the long-serving el-Hajj Beshir Agha. In Medina alone, he founded a *madrasa* and a *dar al-hadith*, or school for the study of sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. Both institutions are described in the massive endowment deed preserved in Istanbul’s Süleymaniye Library. Founded in 1738, the modest, eight-room *madrasa* was a restoration of an earlier structure, with an attached library (*kitabhane*) and a *mu‘allimhane* (literally, “teacher house”), which trained Quran-school teachers. This complex offered “hands-on learning” at its finest: *madrasa* students staffed the library, led daily prayers, and kept the grounds and the washroom clean. Meanwhile, students from the *madrasa* and the *mu‘allimhane* teamed up to teach the Quran to children. In effect, then, this institution functioned as three schools in one. The endowment deed mentions no restrictions on the provenances of students who could enroll in the *madrasa* or *mu‘allimhane*, so presumably, it was open to anyone capable of mastering the curriculum.

Beshir’s *dar al-hadith*, apparently purpose-built and funded by revenues from lands around Damascus, had a somewhat different agenda. It was for “the useful knowledge of people originally from Rum” (*fi-ül-asıl diyar-i Rum ahalisinin ‘ulum-u nafi‘e*) – that is, the Ottoman central lands, more particularly Anatolia and the western Balkans. Specifically, the resident

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<sup>20</sup> Hussein Ahmed, *Islam in Nineteenth-Century Wallo, Ethiopia: Revival, Reform, and Reaction* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 65-66.

<sup>21</sup> This was the case with the late Ottoman eunuch Nadir Agha, for example; see Chapter 12.

students must comprise twenty Rumi bachelors. To hammer this point home, the document adds, “the twenty rooms will not be for married people, North Africans (*Maghribi*), Indians (*Hindi*), Persians (*A‘cam*), peasants (*fellah*), Shi‘ites (*revafiz*, implying heretics), or people of other races (*ecnas*).”<sup>22</sup> These provisions guaranteed that the students would be uniformly Hanafi, since virtually all Rumis belonged to this rite. Their teacher (*müderriş*) would likewise be a native of Rum, selected by the Chief Tomb Eunuch, who was the superintendent of the endowment, and the chief judge of Medina. If no Rumi sufficiently knowledgeable in Quranic exegesis, Prophetic traditions, and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) could be found in Medina, these two officials could petition to have one dispatched from Istanbul.

These stipulations imply that there was no shortage of Rumi students in Medina, although they clearly co-existed with would-be students from a wide variety of locales and backgrounds, so that it would have been very easy for them to absorb the doctrinal interpretations and practices of those places. Arguably, then, the core aim of the foundation was to ensure that such students received a uniform legal and religious education according to the Hanafi legal rite, official rite of the Ottoman Empire. In other words, the *dar al-hadith* prevented the localization of Rumi students in the Hijaz while, at the same time, reinforcing the status in the region of the Hanafi rite, which was, after all, the official Ottoman rite.

Like the *madrassa* students, those enrolled in the *dar al-hadith* had to cook, clean, fetch, and carry for themselves. The endowment deed includes a list of books in the *dar al-hadith*’s library; these constitute the canon of Hanafi jurisprudence and exegesis. Taken together, the *dar al-hadith* and the *madrassa* had the effect of shoring up Hanafism in Medina, a city whose population had historically been majority Zaydi and Ismaili Shi‘ite. In addition to training new

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<sup>22</sup> Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, MS Hacı Beşir 682, fol. 25b.

students in this rite, the institutions supplied manuscripts of classic Hanafi works to existing Hanafi ulema in the city and to Hanafi pilgrims visiting the city.

At the opposite end of the empire from Medina, in the Danube River port of Sistova (today Svishtov, Bulgaria), el-Hajj Beshir Agha founded another *madrassa*, apparently in 1745. As we saw in Chapter 7, the *madrassa* was part of a much larger constellation of infrastructural projects in this key Danubian port. Today, no trace of the *madrassa* remains, nor any record of what must have been its sizable library, which must have consisted mainly of critical Hanafi works, much like the library of the Medina *dar al-hadith*. Even Beshir's mammoth endowment deed mentions only the neighboring sheep-trotter shop.<sup>23</sup> In the Ottoman Balkans, in contrast to the Hijaz, the Muslim population was almost entirely Hanafi, so there was no question of competition from Shi'ites or members of other Sunni rites. Still, in a city so far removed from the imperial capital, and even from the provincial capital, Sofia, and with a majority population of Orthodox Christians, manuscripts of the classics of Hanafi exegesis and jurisprudence were probably harder to obtain than they were in Medina. Beshir's *madrassa* would have kept Hanafi education viable in this town, supplying, for example, imams and Quran school teachers for Sistova and the surrounding region.

Less than a year before his paralyzing stroke, el-Hajj Beshir Agha commissioned a *madrassa* as part of his religious complex (*küllüye*) just south of Topkapı Palace in Istanbul. This *küllüye*, much of which still stands in good repair, included, besides the *madrassa*, a mosque, a Quran school, a lodge for Naqshbandi Sufis (discussed below), a public fountain in the corner of the perimeter wall, and a "library" – actually a sort of book depot in a small room to the right of the mosque's prayer hall. Conditions for this *madrassa* were nearly as stringent as those for

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., fol. 105v. Also a *madrassa* in Eyüp, with library and mekteb: *ibid.*, fol. 80v.

Beshir's *dar al-hadith* in Medina: students must not be married and must not leave their places at the *madrassa* to pursue other activities besides the study of Islamic law and theology. If they violated the rules, their places would be given to others. All the same, there was no ethno-regional limitation, as there was for the Medina *dar al-hadith*. Since the *madrassa* was in Istanbul, most of the students would presumably have been Rumi, anyway; still, the absence of dire warnings against interlopers is in striking contrast to the conditions for the *dar al-hadith*.<sup>24</sup> As in other *madrassas*, the students took on various routine jobs -- gate-keeper (*bawwab*), sweeper (*farrash*), lamp-lighter (*siraçı*), library aide (*mustahfizlar*) – all of which were assigned according to the chamber in which the student lived and all of which paid a token salary. As was apparently customary, the complex also included a *mekteb*, so that it offered the possibility of a continuous Muslim education that could equip a boy – even an orphan – for some sort of ulema career – not, of course, the top positions in the imperial ulema hierarchy, which drew from the great sultanic *madrassas* of Istanbul, Edirne, and Bursa, but more modest instructorships and mosque preacher positions.

Yet this was not a run-of-the-mill educational complex. It was clearly a showcase institution, designed to attract elite ulema and high-ranking palace officials, up to and including the sultan. The mosque was clearly not the standard *madrassa* mosque, used by the students for their daily prayers. It employed a small army of salaried preachers, sermonizers, Quran-reciters, and muezzins, several of them specifically assigned to the Friday public noontime prayers. It also featured a gallery (*mahfil*) for the sultan, complete with its own *muezzin*. This suggests that Mahmud I and his successors occasionally visited the mosque, which was, after all, very close to the palace. By the same token, the *mekteb* was more sophisticated than usual, equipped with a

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., fols. 106r-109v. See also Ayvansarayi, *Garden of the Mosques*, 55-56.



calligraphy teacher and even a “higher *mekteb*” (*mekteb-i mu‘alla*) where students studied “useful sciences” (*‘ulum-u nafi‘e*), probably meaning basic exegesis, two days a week. The *mekteb* may not even have been for orphan boys, as Chief Eunuch-endowed *mektebs* usually were. The endowment deed says nothing about orphans, and the clothing that the students received at Ramadan consisted of accessories (cloak, fez, sash, socks) rather than the basics.<sup>25</sup>

As for the library, it housed what had to be one of the largest and most important book collections in Istanbul, if not in the entire empire. (This collection forms the core of the Süleymaniye Library’s Hacı Beşir classification today.) Comprising 690 different works in 1007 volumes, the book collection encompassed the usual classics of Quranic exegesis, *hadith* commentaries, and Hanafi jurisprudence but, in addition, histories and geographies, biographical compilations, works on grammar and morphology, medical works, mystical writings, poetry and *belles lettres* in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, and Persian.<sup>26</sup> This was, in other words, not simply a collection of standard texts for *madrassa* students to consult. Small wonder that the library employed four “professional” librarians, each with the title *hafiz-i kütüb*, or “guardian of the books,” as well as a book-binder (*mücellid*) and someone to sweep the library floor. The books, the endowment deed insists, must not be removed from the library; this prohibition applied even to books that were frequently studied or copied. We sense Beshir Agha’s anxiety about damage to his collection, which must have taken him many years to amass and which undoubtedly included rare manuscripts presented to him as gifts by Ottoman and foreign dignitaries. The location of the book depot *inside* the mosque, to the right of the *mihrab*, is telling: the books are a sacred treasure that potential readers should regard as somewhat taboo.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., fols. 106r-108v, 112v-113v.

<sup>26</sup> A catalogue of the library’s contents was published under Abdülhamid II: *Defter-i Kütübhanesi-i Beşir Ağa* (Istanbul: Matbaa-ı Amire, 1303/1885). For a discussion of the types of books, see Hathaway, *Beshir Agha*, 88-94.

Founding a major Hanafi *madrassa* right next to the palace made a statement: while it was all well and good to train palace pages – and Beshir Agha had reaped the benefits of this education – the training of the ulema, including ulema who might help staff the imperial bureaucracy, was of at least equal importance. We can imagine, too, that Beshir’s *madrassa* and library gave *imams*, *khatibs*, *qadis*, and *Muftis* employed in the palace – perhaps including the chief *Mufti*, or Shaykh al-Islam, to whom the Chief Eunuch tended to be close – a place to consult key books and scope out ulema-in-training.

### **Libraries and book culture**

A library did not have to be part of a *madrassa* or *dar al-hadith*, although it was ordinarily attached to a larger religious or educational complex. Nonetheless, the eighteenth century is known as an age of free-standing libraries. The first of note was actually established before the turn of the century: the Köprülü library, founded in 1678 by the future grand vizier Köprülü Fazıl Mustafa Pasha, on the central Istanbul artery known as Divan Yolu, just east of the religious complex founded by his father Köprülü Mehmed Pasha.<sup>27</sup> In 1719, as we saw in Chapter 7, Ahmed III commissioned a new library in the Third Court of Topkapı Palace, supposedly at the behest of el-Hajj Beshir Agha. Several decades later, the grand vizier and prolific intellectual Raghib Mehmed Pasha founded a 1000-volume library in Istanbul’s Laleli district.<sup>28</sup>

Since libraries are associated with the cultural efflorescence of the early eighteenth century, it comes as no surprise that el-Hajj Beshir Agha is the Chief Eunuch most closely linked

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<sup>27</sup> Though his older brother Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed is often credited with founding the library, the book collection is enumerated in Fazıl Mustafa’s *waqfiyya*: Istanbul, Köprülü Library, MS No. 4, fols. 20v-53v (dated 25 Safar 1089/17 April 1678).

<sup>28</sup> The library sustained significant damage in the 1999 Marmara earthquake and has not been open to researchers since, although restoration began in 2010. The manuscripts have been moved.

to library-building. Whether or not he inspired the library of Ahmed III, he commissioned and endowed manuscripts to the libraries of the various institutions he founded, from his *dar al-hadith* in Medina to his *madrassa* in Sistova to his *külliyeye* near Topkapı. But he also endowed more modest collections of books to existing institutions, notably al-Azhar in Cairo and the tomb of Abu Hanifa in Baghdad. At al-Azhar, as noted above, he endowed a number of books to the residential college of the Turks (Riwaq al-Atrak), one of the ancient madrasa's twenty-five residential colleges, or *riwaqs*, each of which accommodated students from a particular region. The Riwaq al-Atrak was one of the few exclusively Hanafi colleges, and its students would have welcomed this infusion of seminal works of Hanafi jurisprudence and Quranic exegesis. This endowment was folded into the endowment of el-Hajj Beshir's *sebil-mekteb* in Cairo.<sup>29</sup> The endowment deed does not specify the conditions under which the books were to circulate.

Beshir's endowment to the mosque and tomb of Abu Hanifa is a different matter. A four-page endowment deed, housed in the Süleymaniye Library, lists the thirteen endowed books – all canonical works of Hanafi jurisprudence and exegesis – and stipulates that they may be borrowed but not taken out of the “neighborhood” (*mahalle*).<sup>30</sup> This last condition implies that the neighborhood around the mosque and tomb was inhabited by a solidly Hanafi population, including ulema and students in a position to use the books; in fact, the deed insists that the books are to be used by students. This was undoubtedly the case, for Abu Hanifa (d. 767), the namesake of the Hanafi legal rite to which the Ottomans belonged, is regarded by Hanafis as “the greatest imam” (*al-imam al-a'dham*), and the tomb neighborhood is today known as Adhamiyya. The tombs of such luminaries attract pilgrims and the devout who simply wish to

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<sup>29</sup> Badr and Crecelius, “*Awqaf* of al-Hājj Bashīr Agha in Cairo,” 301.

<sup>30</sup> Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, MS Yazma Bağış 2524. The books are enumerated at the bottom of the second and the top of the third page.

live nearby. So it probably seemed safe to allow limited circulation of the books, so that, for example, elderly, shut-in scholars and scholars who taught students in their homes could have access to them.

All these libraries and book endowments were part of a more general Chief Eunuch contribution to Ottoman book culture that, at its greatest extent, took the book from start to finish: choosing the author and illustrator, overseeing production, endowing books to strategically located repositories, lending them to needy readers. There is no question that the Chief Harem Eunuch helped to produce and circulate books, above all books of Hanafi scholarship. But did the Chief Eunuch himself read the books that he helped to produce and that he endowed? In the case of a number of Chief Eunuchs and other high-ranking harem eunuchs, the answer is an unequivocal “Yes.” These books were more than simply luxury gifts or canny investments. The Hanafi texts in Abbas Agha’s and el-Hajj Beshir Agha’s collections were, to a large extent, the works that harem eunuchs would have studied during their educations in Topkapı Palace. At the very least, then, high-ranking harem eunuchs would have read these works as students. For many of them, though, reading went far beyond these student requirements. Hoca Reyhan Agha, as we have seen, was as learned in the Islamic sciences as any member of the ulema. And Moralı Beshir Agha, according to the French merchant Jean-Claude Flachet, spent several hours a day reading in his impressive book collection.<sup>31</sup> In general, the Chief Eunuchs were known as bibliophiles, and to be a bibliophile certainly meant being a reader.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Flachet, *Observations*, vol. 2, 128.

<sup>32</sup> Pierre A. MacKay, “The Manuscripts of the *Seyahatname* of Evliya Çelebi – Part I: The Archetype,” *Der Islam* 52, 2 (1975): 278.

**El-Hajj Beshir Agha and Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname*.** Only a committed reader could have transported the great travel book, or *Seyahatname*, of the seventeenth-century courtier known as Evliya Çelebi (ca. 1611-82), from Cairo to Istanbul and arranged for its reproduction and dissemination. El-Hajj Beshir Agha carried out this task in the last years of his life, and it may be his most important contribution to Ottoman intellectual culture. As we saw in Chapter 7, el-Hajj Beshir spent only a short time, perhaps a year, in Cairo in-between his exile on Cyprus and his appointment as chief of the Tomb Eunuchs in Medina, with a very brief stop on his way from Medina back to Istanbul. Yet somehow, either while in Cairo or while in office as Chief Eunuch, he learned of the existence of Evliya's ten-volume manuscript. Evliya himself had spent the last decade or so of his life in Cairo as the guest of the Qasimi grandee and pilgrimage commander Özbek Bey ibn Abu al-Shawarib Rıdvan Bey, whom he had met on the *hajj* in 1671-72. He completed his opus in Cairo, and there it remained when he died around 1682. Özbek Bey seems to have taken custody of it; on his death in 1719, it passed to his son Ibrahim Çelebi. In 1742, it was sent to Istanbul as a gift for el-Hajj Beshir Agha, who dispatched it, in numerous portions, to Galata Saray, one of the sites outside Topkapı where palace pages were trained. Here, it was copied by some of these very pages. The checkered history of the *Seyahatname* manuscripts has been exhaustively explored by the late Pierre MacKay.<sup>33</sup> Suffice it to say that el-Hajj Beshir endowed a complete copy to his library, but after his death, the volumes were dispersed and reassembled only decades later. Today, only different manuscripts of scattered

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<sup>33</sup> MacKay, "The Manuscripts of the *Seyahatname* of Evliya Çelebi," 278-79, 293-94. On Özbek Bey, see Hathaway, *A Tale of Two Factions*, 152, 163-64; eadem, "The Exalted Lineage of Rıdvan Bey Revisited: A Reinterpretation of the Spurious Genealogy of a Grandee in Ottoman Egypt," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 13, 1-2 (2007): 99, 110.

volumes of the work remain in the Süleymaniye Library's Hacı Beşir Ağa collection, along with the other books from the eunuch's *külliye*.

Beshir Agha almost certainly never met Evliya Çelebi, but he knew very well how important the *Seyahatname* was. In ten volumes, it covers most of the territory of the Ottoman Empire (with the notable exception of North Africa), offering descriptions and appraisals of the entire spectrum of Ottoman society: elites and commoners, urban and rural populations, religious and social institutions, samples of the languages of different populations, descriptions of key battles and important government officials, legends and tall-tales. Nothing quite like it had ever been produced in Ottoman territory (or anywhere else), or would ever be again. Retrieving the original *Seyahatname* manuscript and introducing it to the readership of the Ottoman central lands was one of the greatest contributions to Ottoman literature that any individual ever made.

Yet even this landmark accomplishment was part of a broader tradition of Chief Eunuch contributions to Ottoman book culture. As we have already seen, a number of Chief Eunuchs commissioned manuscripts, illuminated and otherwise, of histories of the Ottoman dynasty, festival books, and the like. Meanwhile, the Chief Eunuch routinely amassed libraries of books on Hanafi law and exegesis, grammar, poetry, mysticism, and medicine. They made these works accessible to circumscribed communities of readers by endowing them as *vakıf*.

### **Sufi lodges (*zawiyas*)**

Quite a number of Chief Harem Eunuchs had Sufi tendencies, although few of them seem to have been attached to a single order (*tariqa*). The books that Abbas Agha left behind in Cairo at the time of his death include several classic works of medieval Muslim mysticism, before Sufi orders had taken shape to any significant degree: the tenth-century mystic Farid al-Din 'Attar's

(d. ca. 1221) *Conference of the Birds (Mantiq al-tayr)*, an allegory of the soul's quest for spiritual fulfillment, the same author's compendium of the lives of mystical saints (*Tabaqat al-awliya'*), and *Kīmiya-i sa'ada (The Alchemy of Happiness)*, a late work by the great theologian al-Ghazali (d. 1111 C.E.) that helps to reconcile Sunni orthopraxy with mystical/spiritual fulfillment. (These, by the way, were in the original Arabic and Persian, which Abbas and other Chief Harem Eunuchs read.) Another work in his collection was called *Qira'at al-awrad*, which can refer to parts of the Quran, known as *awrad*, to be read during private devotions supplemental to the five daily prayers, but also to the vocalized part of a Sufi *dhikr*.

Owning and reading mystical works paled in comparison to founding a lodge (Arabic *zāwiya* or Turkish *tekke*) where members of specific Sufi orders could live and pursue mystical fulfillment was a different order of undertaking. Such a lodge required many of the same things that a *madrassa* required: lodging, a mosque for daily prayers, kitchens, baths, toilets, maintenance workers. (This helps to explain why such lodges were often built as part of larger religious complexes.) Above all else, though, a lodge required a communal space, usually a round hall, where the order's distinctive mystical exercise (Arabic singular, *dhikr*; Turkish, *zikır*) could be performed. And since each Sufi order's *dhikr* was distinctive, lodges were often, though not always, custom-built for specific orders.

The Ottoman court was famously close to the Mevlevi order, founded by the son of Mevlana ("our master") Jelal al-Din Rumi (1207-73) and particularly active in the Ottoman central lands.<sup>34</sup> Yet no Chief Harem Eunuch ever founded a Mevlevi lodge. Apart from this, they seem to have been fairly eclectic in the orders whose lodges they chose to patronize, so that we may speak of a general support for "*tariqa* Sufism" – that is, Sufism that involved adherence

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<sup>34</sup> Inalcik, *Classical Age*, 190-91, 200-02.

to a particular order, rather than, for example, the non-*tariqa erfan* mysticism popular in Safavid and Qajar Iran (and in present-day Iran, for that matter).

Two of the Chief Eunuchs whose endowments we have examined before, el-Hajj Mustafa Agha and Abbas Agha, endowed Sufi lodges in Cairo whose *tariqas* are unspecified. El-Hajj Mustafa's was a restored *zawiya* adjoining a *wakala* on the Nile, en route to Bulaq. His lengthy Egyptian endowment deed describes it as "the *zawiya* of Shakyh Abi 'Asra."<sup>35</sup> A document from the Topkapı archive dealing with Abbas Agha's endowments in Istanbul mentions a *zawiya* that he founded in Istanbul's Beşiktaş neighborhood, part of a small religious complex that also included a mosque (still standing), a *dershane*, seemingly a place for lectures, and a *mu'allimhane*, a training facility for Quran school teachers. He also founded a *zawiya*, along with a mosque, in Üsküdar on the Asian side of the Bosphorus. Remarkably, Abbas' agent (*vekil*), Ja'fer Bey (previously Agha) ibn Mehmed, is described as the former *baba*, or shaykh, of the Beşiktaş *zāviye*.<sup>36</sup> His Egyptian estate inventory likewise mentions a *zawiya*.<sup>37</sup>

Unfortunately, neither document provides any details at all; in the case of the Cairo *zawiya*, this silence extends to where the structure is located. It is mentioned right after two properties outside Bāb al-Futūh, the northern gate of the original Fatimid city of al-Qahira.

Since a branch of the Halveti order was popular in this neighborhood,<sup>38</sup> we might speculate that

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<sup>35</sup> Cairo, Wizarat al-Awqaf, No. 302/51, pp. 8-11; the shaykh is mentioned on p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> Topkapı Archive E 3941/2, which is undated but deals with revenues accruing from 1 Şevval 1082/30 January 1672 through the end of Ramazan 1083/19 January 1673. The Üsküdar *zawiya* is called the Ibrahim Efendi *zawiya* in this document. Ja'fer ibn Mehmed, often called Baba Ja'fer, appears in numerous documents dealing with Abbas' endowments, including Topkapı Archive E 7833/2-7, cited in chapter 6, n. 12. Abbas' mosque is located just to the south of today's Barbaros Bulvarı, toward the bottom of the street.

<sup>37</sup> Topkapı Archive D 7657 (undated); Hathaway, "The Wealth and Influence of an Exiled Ottoman Eunuch," 296, 302, 305.

<sup>38</sup> This was the Damirdashiyya suborder, founded by Shams al-Din Damirdash al-Muhammadi (d. ca. 1523). See Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 283-84; eadem, "An Unlisted Monument of the Fifteenth Century: The Dome of Zawayat al-Damirdaš," *Annales islamologiques* 18 (1982): 105-21; eadem, "Four Domes of the Late Mamluk Period," *Annales islamologiques* 17 (1981): 191-201; Doris Behrens-Abouseif and Leonor Fernandes, "Sufi Architecture in Early Ottoman Cairo," *Annales islamologiques* 20 (1984): 103-14.



Abbas' *zawiya* was likewise Halveti, but it is impossible to be sure. Perhaps these structures were used by more than one Sufi order, as occasionally happened.

As for el-Hajj Beshir Agha, he was quite eclectic in his Sufi endowments, to judge from the huge endowment deed that details many of his projects outside of Egypt. He endowed stipends for food for several existing Istanbul lodges, including a lodge for archers near the Okmeydanı, the archery field north of the Golden Horn, and the lodge attached to the tomb of Lalizade Seyyid Abdülbaki Efendi (d. 1738) in Eyüp. Neither lodge's affiliation is mentioned in the deed, and in the case of the archers, we simply don't know. But Lalizade, who served as chief judge (*qadi*) of Jerusalem, Cairo, Mecca, and finally Istanbul, was a "Bayrami-Melami,"<sup>39</sup> referring to the mystical tradition founded by the fourteenth-century Anatolian mystic Hajji Bayram-ı Veli, who was active in and around Ankara, and to the Melami "supra-order," as Victoria Holbrook has called it,<sup>40</sup> a loose collectivity of Sufi shaykhs who had trained in other orders. Lalizade himself wrote an authoritative description and history of the Melamis and the Bayramis. The rather mysterious and controversial Melamis combined devotion to Ibn Arabi's concept of "unity of being" (*wahdat al-wujud*), according to which God is present in all of creation, with extreme humility and abhorrence of any sort of public profile. Melamis were sporadically persecuted during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and went completely underground during the eighteenth, yet the order attracted influential Ottoman intellectuals and powerful government officials<sup>41</sup> – possibly including el-Hajj Beshir Agha.

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<sup>39</sup> Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmani*, III: 298-99.

<sup>40</sup> Victoria Rowe Holbrook, "Ibn 'Arabi and Ottoman Dervish Traditions: The Melami Supra-Order (Part One)," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 9 (1991): 18-35; eadem, "Ibn 'Arabi and Ottoman Dervish Traditions: The Melami Supra-Order (Part Two)," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 12 (1992): 15-33.

<sup>41</sup> Holbrook, "Ibn 'Arabi and Ottoman Dervish Traditions... (Part One)," 25-27. Lalizade's work is *Evsaf-i ta'ife-i Melamiye ve tarik-i Bayramiye*.

On the other hand, Beshir Agha also restored the tomb of one of the greatest Halveti shaykhs buried in Istanbul, Sünbül Sinan Efendi (d. 1529). Taking shape in what is now Azerbaijan in the fifteenth century, the Halveti order spread into Ottoman territory as their shaykhs fled the expanding Safavids. A key reason for their great success was that there was no “mother order” that legitimized the various sub-branches, so that each branch was individualized and could adapt to a particular locality. By the late seventeenth century, the Halveti order was the most influential order in the Ottoman central lands and had taken root in the Balkans and the Arab provinces, as well.<sup>42</sup>

Sünbül Efendi belonged to the Halveti lodge based at the religious complex of the grand vizier Koca Mustafa Pasha (d. 1512), who gave his name to the neighborhood where the complex is located, north of the Sea of Marmara. Sünbül’s shaykh sent him to Egypt to spread this branch of the order, but on the shaykh’s death, he returned to Kocamustafapaşa and never left. He is interred near the lodge, alongside several other leaders of the Halveti suborder, known as the Sünbülüyye, that he founded.<sup>43</sup> Today, his tomb is painted pale blue and mauve, although what el-Hajj Beshir Agha would have thought of this color combination we can’t say. Beshir’s attention to Sünbül’s tomb perhaps reflects his identification with the shaykh’s sojourn in Egypt.

Even with all this, though, el-Hajj Beshir’s most pronounced Sufi preference was for the Naqshbandi order. This order, which originated in Central Asia in the fourteenth century, spread to newly-conquered Istanbul in the late fifteenth century and was present, though not entrenched,

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<sup>42</sup> B.G. Martin, “A Short History of the Khalwati Order of Dervishes,” in *Scholars, Saints and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions since 1500*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 275-305; Natalie Clayer, *Mystiques, état et société: Les Halvetis dans l’aire balkanique de la fin du XVe siècle à nos jours* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 5-270; John J. Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire: The Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350-1650* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 21-86.

<sup>43</sup> Süleymaniye Library, MS Hacı Beşir Ağa 682, fols. 115a-116b; Curry, *Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought*, 70-73.

throughout much of the empire by the late seventeenth century.<sup>44</sup> The Naqshbandi *tariqa* is known for its insistence on Sunni orthodoxy, which made it especially loathsome to the Safavids in Iran. Central to the order is the concept of *khalvat dar anjuman*, or “seclusion in society,” which many branches of the order interpret as discouraging, on the one hand, meditative seclusion of the sort practiced by the Halvetis and, on the other, organized vocal *dhikrs*, often accompanied by ritualized movement, of the sort practiced by the Halvetis, the Mevlevi, and other “mainstream” orders. Instead, many Naqshbandis practice a silent *dhikr*, that is, remembering God at all times, wherever they are, although group *dhikr*, sometimes even with vocalization, does occur.<sup>45</sup> During el-Hajj Beshir Agha’s tenure as Chief Harem Eunuch, the Mujaddidi variant of the Naqshbandi order, an uncompromisingly *shari‘a*-minded interpretation of the Naqshbandi way pioneered by the reformist Indian mystic Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624), was sweeping through the Ottoman Arab lands and beginning to encroach on the imperial center. More pervasive than earlier incarnations of the order, it inspired exactly the kinds of endowments that el-Hajj Beshir made.

El-Hajj Beshir endowed a stipend for a Naqshbandi shaykh to teach al-Ghazali’s *magnum opus*, *Ihya ‘ulum al-din (Revivication of the Religious Sciences)* at the Shaykh ibn Wafa’ Mosque near Abu Ayyub’s tomb in Istanbul, where there had been a Naqshbandi presence since at least the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>46</sup> And the Sufi lodge in his religious complex near Topkapı Palace is

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<sup>44</sup> Dina Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandis in the Ottoman World, 1450-1700* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 17-94; Jürgen Paul, *Doctrine and Organization: The Khwajagan/Naqshbandiya in the First Generation After Baha’uddin* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1998); Itzhak Weissmann, *The Naqshbandiyya: Orthodoxy and Activism in a Worldwide Sufi Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2007); Marc Gaborieau, et al., eds., *Naqshbandis: Cheminements et situation actuelle d’un ordre mystique musulman – Actes de la table ronde de Sèvres, 2-4 mai 1985* (Istanbul: Éditions Isis, 1990); Arthur F. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Meditating Sufi Shaykh* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998); Halil İbrahim Şimşek, *Osmanlı’da Müceddidilik, XII./XVIII. Yüzyıl* (Ankara: Sûf Yayınları, 2004).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 109-20.

<sup>46</sup> Süleymaniye Library, MS Hacı Beşir Ağa 682, fols. 42r-v; Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism*, 18, 22, 43, 54.

a Naqhsbandi lodge. This lodge was a residential compound run in much the same way as the nearby *madrasa*. The shaykh and his disciples lived in nine chambers surrounding the lodge proper, and most routine duties – sweeping, cooking, gate-keeping, the call to prayer – were divided among the residents. Like the complex’s *madrasa*, the Sufi lodge was strictly for bachelors. “Apart from the shaykh,” the endowment deed warns, “the residents are not to be married. If one of the residents marries, moves to another place or dies, his place will be given to a sound student of the [religious] sciences.”<sup>47</sup>

The Sufis and the *madrasa* students apparently ate together; the endowment deed is remarkably specific about their food, which on ordinary days consisted of bread, rice soup, rice pilav, and mutton. On Friday nights, on ‘Id al-Fitr and ‘Id al-Adha, and during the entire month of Ramadan, the Sufis and disciples received additional rice and meat, and on completing a full Quran recitation, they received dates. Dates were also the reward for completing the *khatm al-Khwajagan*, a partially silent, partially vocalized recitation that the endowment deed describes as taking place on Mondays and Fridays “according to the requirements of the Naqshbandi *tariqa*.”<sup>48</sup> The deed also calls for occasional infusions of *zerde*, a festive “special occasion” pilav made with saffron (the other ingredients listed here are honey, salt, pepper, chickpeas, and onions).

At his *kuilliye*, then, el-Hajj Beshir Agha was not simply subsidizing an existing Sufi institution but founding a new one in order to train young, unmarried men in the rituals of the Naqshbandi order. The elaborate conditions for this Naqshbandi lodge spelled out in his endowment deed suggest the founder’s genuine attachment to the order. These provisions also allowed for regular contact between the Naqshbandis-in-training and the *madrasa* students.

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<sup>47</sup> Süleymaniye Library, MS Hacı Beşir Ağa 682, fols. 110v-111r.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 111v-112v.

Perhaps some *madrassa* students later joined the lodge. So while Beshir's ministrations to the lodge of Lalizade and the tomb of Sünbül suggest a healthy respect for the Bayrami-Melamis and the Halvetis, the lodge in his *kiilliye* reflects a desire to spread, or at least to reinforce, the Naqshbandi order in the imperial capital.

### **The Kadızadeli movement**

In view of this consistent support, over a long period, for *tarīqa* Sufism on the part of Chief Harem Eunuchs, it may come as a surprise that some influential harem eunuchs supported the most virulent anti-Sufi movement ever to emerge in Ottoman territory. This was the Kadızadeli movement, a puritanical, militantly anti-innovationist strain of Hanafi Sunnism that first came to light in the early decades of the seventeenth century. As Madeline Zilfi has pointed out, the Kadızadelis' base consisted of provincial mosque preachers, mainly in Anatolia, who resented the Halvetis' near-monopoly of high-profile mosque preacher positions in Istanbul, Edirne, and Bursa toward the middle of the seventeenth century. In fact, the movement took its name from Kadızade Mehmed Efendi, a mosque preacher from Balıkesir in western Anatolia who won appointment to Istanbul's great Ayasofya (Hagia Sophia) mosque in 1631. The high point of Kadızade Mehmed's career came two years later, when, on the occasion of the Prophet's birthday, he successfully debated the Halveti shaykh Sivasi Efendi at the Sultan Ahmed Mosque in the presence of Sultan Murad IV. Yet the sultan was not particularly close to Kadızade Mehmed, and his movement's influence inside the palace remained limited.<sup>49</sup>

This situation changed with the next generation of Kadızadelis, led by Üstüvani Mehmed Efendi, a native of Damascus. In an attempt to garner influence inside the palace, Üstüvani

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<sup>49</sup> Katib Çelebi, *The Balance of Truth*, trans. Geoffrey L. Lewis (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957), 132-34; Madeline C. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Post-Classical Age, 1600-1800* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988), 131-38.

appealed to those residents of the Third Court who could read and write, including the harem eunuchs. Among his chief targets was the influential harem eunuch Hoca (“Teacher”) Reyhan Agha, the companion of Mehmed IV’s mother, Turhan Sultan. Reyhan had been one of the harem eunuchs implicated in the murder of Turhan’s hated mother-in-law, Kösem Sultan, in 1651; a few years later, he had helped to save the young Sultan Mehmed IV from assassination by the *hass oda* pages. Well-known for his knowledge of Islamic theology and law, Reyhan tutored Mehmed IV in these and related subjects.

By the 1650s, Hoca Reyhan’s influence was such that he, like the Chief Eunuch Behram Agha, could get virtually anyone he liked appointed to any court position.<sup>50</sup> According to Naima, Reyhan invited Üstüvani into the Enderun, the “inner sanctum” of Topkapı Palace reserved for the sultan and his family, so that he could counsel the young man; as a result, Üstüvani came to be known as the “sultan’s shaykh” (*padişah şeyhi*).<sup>51</sup> The other side of this coin, of course, was that Reyhan Agha could arrange the deposition, ruination, or even death of anyone who ran afoul of him. The Kadızadelis benefited from this negative influence, too. When, in 1653, Üstüvani Mehmed Efendi and his fellow Kadızadelis took offense at a book by the popular mosque preacher Kürd (“Kurdish”) Molla Mehmed, Hoca Reyhan intervened, along with the chief *Mufti*, to have him exiled.<sup>52</sup> Even after Chief Eunuch Behram Agha was killed in the March 1656 Plane Tree Incident, the palace soldiery promoted Üstüvani to his replacement, Dilaver Agha, who was Chief Eunuch from 1656-57.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>For example, he played a critical role in the rise to prominence of the naval captain Süveydanoğlu Mehmed Pasha, who, according to Naima was “like his servant” (*kullarından olmak takribiyle*): Naima, *Tarih-i Naima*, vol. 3, 1515.

<sup>51</sup> Naima, *Tarih-i Naima*, vol. 3, 1290; vol. 4, 1576-77, 1708; Zilfi, *Politics of Piety*, 141-43, 146.

<sup>52</sup> Naima, *Tarih-i Naima*, vol. 3, 1435.

<sup>53</sup> Reyhan outlived Dilaver, to judge from the fact that he is mentioned – with the implication that he is still living – in a petition from the Topkapı archive dealing with Dilaver’s death in Medina, which the document describes as having occurred on 26 Şevval, though it does not give the year: Topkapı Palace Archive, E 3606 (undated). The petition calls for the white eunuch Ali Agha to be appointed head of the Tomb Eunuchs in Dilaver’s stead.

Üstüvani's influence came to an abrupt end just a few months later, with Köprülü Mehmed Pasha's appointment as grand vizier, just as the Kadızadelis were preparing to launch an all-out assault on Istanbul's Sufi lodges. Alarmed at the public disorder that the movement appeared to be fomenting, Köprülü Mehmed exiled three Kadızadeli leaders, including Üstüvani, to Cyprus.<sup>54</sup> Generally speaking, Köprülü Mehmed's insistence on total administrative control meant that he could not tolerate the Kadızadelis as an alternative locus of power. Conversely, the extent of the Kadızadelis' influence at court by 1656 was one reason that he wanted unfettered authority.

For the Kadızadelis, this was unquestionably a setback, but the height of their influence was still to come – ironically, with the help of Köprülü Mehmed's son and successor as grand vizier, Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha. While governor of the northeastern Anatolian province of Erzurum, Fazıl Ahmed befriended the third great Kadızadeli leader, Vani Mehmed Efendi, then a mosque preacher in Erzurum. Recalled to Istanbul in 1661 to assume the grand vizierate, Fazıl Ahmed brought Vani Mehmed back with him. The Kadızadeli leader in short order became twenty-year-old Mehmed IV's personal spiritual counselor.

Yet there is no indication that the Chief Eunuchs of the later part of Mehmed IV's reign shared the Kadızadeli sympathies of the sultan or his grand vizier. As we saw above, Abbas Agha, who died in Cairo in the 1690s, left behind several mystical works and a Sufi lodge, or *zawiya*.<sup>55</sup> It is, of course, possible that Abbas' exile to Cairo in 1671 had something to do with his Sufi tendencies being unpalatable to Vani Mehmed and other Kadızadelis. If that were the case, though, we would expect to see pronounced Kadızadeli tendencies in his successors. But we do not. His immediate successor, Musli Agha, was bedridden during most of his brief term

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<sup>54</sup> Abdurrahman Abdi, *Vekayiname*, 83-84; Silahdar, *Silahdar Tarihi*, vol. 1, 57-59; Zilfi, *Politics of Piety*, 146-47.

<sup>55</sup> Hathaway, "The Wealth and Influence of an Exiled Ottoman Eunuch in Egypt," 295, 296, 299-300, 312-14.

and presumably unable to engage in doctrinal debates. The long-serving Yusuf Agha, meanwhile, showed no particular affinity for Vani Mehmed or for the Kadızadeli agenda in general. Yusuf, as we saw in Chapter 6, was instrumental in the execution of the grand vizier Kara Mustafa Pasha after the failed 1683 Ottoman siege of Vienna, which Vani had encouraged; this could hardly have been the action of someone close to Vani, who was rusticated as a result of the debacle.

On the other hand, both Yusuf and Gülnuş Emetullah, the favorite concubine of Mehmed IV, appear to have had comfortable relations with Vani's son-in-law, Feyzullah Efendi, the future villain of the 1703 Edirne Incident. As we saw in Chapter 7, Feyzullah became Chief Mufti in 1688, after Yusuf had already been deposed. He had previously served as tutor to Gülnuş's sons, and she had saved him from execution just before his promotion to Chief Mufti. Nonetheless, she and Yusuf both seemed to be aware of the ambitious mufti's taste for ostentatious wealth and unbridled influence, as well.<sup>56</sup>

The upshot seems to be that while the Kadızadelis definitely had sympathizers among the highest-ranking harem eunuchs, and counted perhaps the most scholarly harem eunuch in Ottoman history – who was, moreover, the sultan's mother's boon companion -- as an adherent, the harem eunuchs' spiritual preferences and doctrinal sympathies at any given time were mixed. Sympathy for *tariqa* Sufism seems to have been deeply enough ingrained among the harem eunuchs as a whole that it never disappeared, even when the Kadızadelis were at the peak of their influence. The status of Kadızadeli influence among the eunuchs may reflect its status in Ottoman society at large: the Kadızadeli movement was not an all-encompassing ideology but a

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<sup>56</sup> See Chapter 7, n. 16. In 1686, Yusuf scolded Feyzullah for dressing his personal bodyguard in western-style caps (singular, *barata*) so that they resembled a military escort: Naima, *Tarih-i Naima*, vol. 4, 1859.



collection of puritanical attitudes that varied in intensity from place to place and from one sector of society to another, and that changed over time, much like the movement's membership.

### **Confessionalization and the struggle for orthodoxy**

Perhaps above all else, the Kadızadeli movement reflects a struggle over the nature of Hanafi orthodoxy in the Ottoman realm, more specifically over the question of whether official Ottoman orthodoxy should accommodate Sufism and a range of popular traditions, such as visitation of the tombs of holy men. This struggle was an integral part of the seventeenth-century crisis, tied as it was to class tensions, tensions between the imperial capital and the provinces, and urban-rural tensions. Like these other sources of dissension within Ottoman society, the struggle between the Kadızadeli and the Sufi orders played itself out over the course of the seventeenth century but was largely resolved, in favor of the Sufis, by the eighteenth.

At the same time, though, the Kadızadeli movement taps into the broader question of what historians of early modern Europe call confessionalization, that is, the adoption by a state of an official religious orthodoxy. In Europe, the "age of confessionalization" spanned the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries, the period when each of the major western European kingdoms and empires officially adopted a particular branch of Christianity. The subjects of these polities constructed and publicly performed these various Christian orthodoxies by, for example, participating in state-sanctioned rituals and adopting state-sanctioned symbols.<sup>57</sup> Early modern Spain's *auto da fé*, the infamous ritual in which heretics accused by the Spanish inquisition and condemned by the Roman Catholic Church were publicly burned at the stake, is

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<sup>57</sup> Two of the major exponents of the concept in the 1980s were Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhard. See, for example, Heinz Schilling, "Confessional Europe," in *Handbook of European History, 1400-1600*, eds. T.A. Brady, H.O. Oberman, and J.D. Tracy, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1995), II: 641-70; Wolfgang Reinhard, "Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the Early Modern State: A Reassessment," *Catholic Historical Review* 75/3 (1989): 385-403. There is a helpful blog on the topic by Alexander Gannon.

an extreme example of confessionalization in Europe. In recent years, the notion of “confessionalization” has caught on in the Ottoman field, as well, as a means of framing the Ottomans’ increasing official emphasis, during roughly the same period, on their adherence to the majority Sunni sect of Islam and to the Hanafi legal rite (*madhhab*) of Sunnism.<sup>58</sup> In the Ottoman case, recognition of the sultan as caliph of the world’s Sunni Muslims and public disparagement of the enemy Shi‘ite Safavids were manifestations of confessionalization, as were the increasing numbers of conversions from Christianity to Sunni Islam.

The Kadızadeli movement represented something of a watershed in Ottoman confessionalization since it forced Ottoman society to address the issue of whether Sufism and various popular rituals could be part of Sunni Hanafi orthodoxy. An indicator of the Kadızadeli movement’s divisiveness is the fact that it split the ranks of the harem eunuchs during the seventeenth century, with some championing it while others held fast to Sufism. While stringently *shari‘a*-minded and even puritanical, Kadızadeli-ism was by no means anti-intellectual or anti-rationalist; some of its most famous proponents advocated the sort of rational inquiry that, as Khaled El-Rouayheb has shown, was permeating Ottoman intellectual life in the seventeenth century. This helps to explain its appeal to intellectuals such as Hoca Reyhan Agha.<sup>59</sup> But by the early eighteenth century, Sufism had won out and cemented its status as an

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<sup>58</sup> Derin Terzioğlu, “Where *‘Ilm-i hal* Meets Catechism: Islamic Manuals of Religious Instruction in the Ottoman Empire in the Age of Confessionalization,” *Past and Present* 220 (2013): 79-114; eadem, “How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion,” *Turcica* 44 (2012-13): 301-38; Guy Burak, “Faith, Law, and Empire in the Ottoman ‘Age of Confessionalization’ (15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Century): The Case of ‘Renewal of Faith,’” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 28/1 (2013): 1-23; idem, *The Second Formation of Islamic Law: The Hanafi School in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change and Communal Politics in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011).

<sup>59</sup> Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 14-18, 24-26, 175, 190-93, 294. Somewhat more surprising is the fact that a Naqshbandi shaykh who tutored the palace pages in the early 1650s led one of the Kadızadeli vigilante squads that attacked Sufi lodges: Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism*, 150-56.

integral part of Ottoman orthodoxy, even though pockets of anti-Sufi sentiment remained long after the Vienna debacle.

In opposing Sufism as “unorthodox,” though, the Kadızadelis forced Ottoman society to confront a related element of Sunni orthodoxy, namely, devotion to the Prophet Muhammad. Part of the Kadızadeli agenda was channeling the zeal of believers toward the Prophet and away from Sufi “saints” and other figures of popular piety. One of their chief intellectual inspirations for this stance was the sixteenth-century scholar (and mystic) Birgevi (a.k.a. Birgili) Mehmed Efendi, whose treatise *Tariqat al-muhammadiyya* describes a spiritual path not unlike that of certain Sufi orders (above all the Naqshbandis)<sup>60</sup> but focused exclusively on the Prophet and devoid of mystical adepts who can serve as intermediaries. During the seventeenth century, the Kadızadelis struggled with mainstream Sufi orders over what constituted acceptable devotion to the Prophet Muhammad, sanctioned by orthodox Sunnism. In these circumstances, a harem eunuch could demonstrate his own devotion to the Prophet by either supporting the Kadızadelis or supporting Sufi orders. The fact that both spiritual paths revered the Prophet may help to explain why none of the Chief Harem Eunuchs of these years aggressively favored or opposed the Kadızadelis.

Other components of Ottoman orthodoxy were far less contentious by the time the office of Darüssaade Ağası was created in the late sixteenth century. Chief among these were the Ottomans’ Sunni and Hanafi identities. Our survey of Chief Eunuch pious endowments has demonstrated that the Chief Harem Eunuch used *waqf* to contribute to these elements of Ottoman orthodoxy. In fact, his foundation of religious and educational institutions arguably constituted part of Ottoman confessionalization.

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<sup>60</sup> Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism*, 112, 153; Michael A. Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islam*, 323-30.

Clearly, Chief Eunuch-endowed institutions conveyed the various elements of Ottoman orthodoxy – Sunnism, Hanafism, devotion to the Prophet, and, apart from the Kadızadeli interlude, *tariqa* Sufism -- in different ways and to different degrees. El-Hajj Beshir Agha's *dar al-hadith* in Medina, for example, embodied devotion to the Prophet, but the works of Hanafi exegesis and jurisprudence that dominated its library simultaneously projected the Ottomans' official Hanafi identity. All Chief Eunuch foundations in Mecca and Medina, rather like the corps of eunuchs at the Prophet's tomb and the Ka'ba, likewise underlined the Sunni Ottomans' control of these holy sites in contradistinction to the Safavid Shi'ites and, later, Nadir Shah.

Overall, the Chief Eunuchs' overtly Hanafi endowments conveyed the broadest range of spiritual messages, for their connotations varied depending on where and when the institutions that they funded were established. Beshir Agha's book endowment at Abu Hanifa's tomb in Baghdad carried an implicitly anti-Shi'ite subtext, for Iraq was the historical zone of contention between the Ottomans and the Safavids, and Abu Hanifa's tomb was a prime symbol of the two empires' struggle. Whenever the Safavids conquered Baghdad, they promptly razed the tomb, only to have the Ottomans restore it when they won the city back.<sup>61</sup> Nadir Shah's forces had besieged Baghdad during the first half of 1733, threatening the tomb again, less than a year before Beshir made the endowment. The same eunuch's madrasa in Sistova, on the other hand, served as an island of Hanafi Sunnism in an Orthodox Christian sea. In Cairo, meanwhile, el-Hajj Beshir's and Morali Beshir's Hanafi Quran schools took up the implicit challenge of similar structures erected by powerful local notables.

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<sup>61</sup> The Venetian bailo Alvise Contarini (term 1636-41) claims that when the Ottomans ruled Iraq, they decorated the tomb of "Ömer" and reviled the tomb of Ali; when the Safavids ruled, they did the opposite. *Relazione di baili al senato*, vol. 13, 389.

Generally speaking, the Hanafi emphasis is noticeably heavier in the eighteenth-century endowments, for reasons that are not immediately clear. In Egypt, the growing prominence of Shafi'i and Maliki ulema, above all at al-Azhar, was surely a factor. In Iraq, and perhaps in the Holy Cities as well, the challenge of Nadir Shah's proposed Ja'fari *madhhab* could have something to do with the Hanafi reaction inasmuch as it potentially gave Twelver Shi'ism a new Sunni framework within which to win sympathizers. By the early eighteenth century, the days when the Chief Eunuch could endow a foundation catering to a non-Hanafi rite, as el-Hajj Mustafa Agha had done a century earlier, were clearly over.

Confessionalization, whether in Europe or in the Ottoman Empire, was a social process that manifested itself in public spaces. As such, it was performative inasmuch as the community believers publicly enacted their orthodoxy, whether by burning suspected heretics or by publicly washing with running water, as was the Hanafi custom, before the Friday noontime prayer. Not surprisingly, the Chief Harem Eunuch's endowments provided for public performance of Ottoman orthodoxy. The Quran schools, *madrasas*, and religious complexes that various Chief Eunuch founded were all publicly visible as architectural spaces. Even the endowed books had a certain public presence since part of their purpose was to provide foundational Hanafi texts for publicly visible institutions.

Though they were not, technically, contributions to Ottoman religious or intellectual life, the Chief Eunuchs' graves or tombs were part of their public visibility and could express devotion to the Prophet, to the sultan, or to some other highly charged figure through their placement, inscriptions, and decoration. Pictorial representations of the Chief Eunuch could serve a similar purpose, even though they were seen by far fewer people. Chapter 11 explores these monuments as a means of memorializing the Chief Harem Eunuch.