

An Early Modern Horror Story: The Folk Beliefs in Vampire-like
Supernatural Beings in the Ottoman Empire and the Consequent
Responses in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

by

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Abstract

The thesis explores the emergence and development of vampire awareness in the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by focusing on the interactions between religious communities, regional dynamics, and dominant discourses in the period. It re-evaluates the scattered sources on Ottoman approaches to the ‘folkloric vampire’ by taking the phenomenon as an early modern regional belief widespread in the Balkans, Central Europe and the Black Sea regions. In doing so, it aims to illuminate fundamental points, such as the definition of the folkloric revenant in the eyes of the Ottoman authorities in relation to their probable inspiration—Orthodox Christian beliefs and practices—as well as some reference points in the Islamic tradition. In addition, it takes the western discourse into consideration, which regarded the folkloric revenant as an eastern superstition, since the first methodological works concerning the perceptions of Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire were written by Catholic scholars and missionaries during the Counter-Reformation Papacy’s war against superstition. In the nineteenth century, there were more precise definitions due to the emergence of the first Turkish dictionaries that retrospectively shed light on the early modern recognitions of the phenomenon, while the nineteenth-century Ottoman intelligentsia had closer relations with the west and was relatively more influenced by the contemporary western approaches to vampires.

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Introduction

3 May. Bistritz.

Left Munich at 8.35 p.m. on 1st May, arriving at Vienna early next morning; should have arrived at 6.46, but train was an hour late. Buda-Pesth seems a wonderful place, from the glimpse, which I got of it from the train and the little I could walk through the streets. I feared to go very far from the station, as we had arrived late and would start as near the correct time as possible. The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering the East; the most Western splendid bridges over the Danube, which is here of noble width and depth, took us among the traditions of Turkish rule.

Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

Undoubtedly, the epitome of the fictional vampire from the east was Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) with all its orientalist subtexts, rivalries between reason-superstition and science-magic that were sugarcoated with suppressed Victorian lust. The journey of the damned count symbolizes how a literary figure can shape a historical phenomenon. The novel, its literary adaptations, and portrayals in the cinema almost entirely rewrote the history of vampires. Now, it is common knowledge that the original vampire was a medieval nobleman from Transylvania who ended up as a bloodsucker and was condemned to eternal life.

Most importantly, he fought against the Ottoman Turks to protect Christian Europe, thus his cruelty is fairly understandable considering his enemy.¹ The aristocratic vampire of the nineteenth century was oriental, yet appealing and exotic as well, unlike the peasant revenant that tore his/her shroud and spread terror in the Balkans, Central Europe, Thrace, the Aegean and the Black Sea regions in previous centuries.

Contrary to the dominant theories, the early modern belief in vampire-like supernatural creatures was a widespread cultural phenomenon that was shared by different ethno-religious communities in the northeastern Mediterranean region and around the Black Sea Basin. By the seventeenth century, an agreement emerged among the Ottoman *ulema* (religious scholars) about implementing specific extermination methods on infidel vampires, which were inspired by Orthodox practices. However, vampirism gradually became a problem for the Muslim community and *ulema* began to sanction the use of the same methods of extermination for Muslims' corpses as well.

This thesis scrutinizes the interactions between Christian and Muslim communities in the empire based on their conceptualizations and responses to the popular belief in folkloric vampires. However, the discussion on vampire-like revenants was not limited to Orthodox Christians and Muslims in the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, Christians in the west also took part in the discussions of the phenomenon, since Catholic missionaries and travelers to the Ottoman lands produced most of the writings on early modern Orthodox folk beliefs. Moreover, later notions of vampirism among Ottoman Muslims were influenced by the vampire craze in

¹ According to a cinema rendition of the story, after losing a battle, the vengeful Turks send a false message to Count's beloved wife about his death. Then, she kills herself and her soul loses her chance for going to heaven. Eventually, Count Dracula protests the Church's interpretation and renounces god. *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. 1992; California, USA: Columbia Pictures, 1992. Film.

eighteenth-century Europe and the phenomenon's unprecedented popularity retrospectively altered the definitions of the revenant.

The academic literature about the belief in vampire-like supernatural creatures in the Ottoman Empire has attracted limited interest and the phenomenon remains noticeably unpopular. The conventional approach is that although the early modern Muslim authorities seemingly acknowledged the existence of revenants and took measures, such as issuing legal opinions and hiring vampire slayers, their main motivation was easing the laity's fears. I argue that the authorities' reluctant recognitions were significant, yet, evaluating their responses as isolated cases without consideration of other religious institutions' approaches, religious trends, and of course, the participation of commoners in shaping the phenomenon would be misleading and insufficient to decipher its reception and prevalence in the empire.

This thesis aims to contribute to the field by placing the emergence and the development of the folkloric vampire in Ottoman culture into a historical context, with an emphasis on the Muslim Ottoman perspectives. The key aspects of the inquiry are exploring the interactions among neighboring communities and deciphering the centrality of regional dynamics concerning the formation and alteration of the phenomenon, while proposing alternative connections between Islamic concepts and folkloric vampires in order to grasp the early modern Muslim conceptualization.

Primarily, the religious movements and historical events in the wider region impacted the perceptions, but most importantly, it was the altering mentalities that directed the evolution of the phenomenon. Robert Darnton points out in *The Great Cat Massacre* (2009) that for modern minds the motivations of early modern print shop workers who tortured unprotected pets with great joy and made fun of it then for

months seem profoundly strange.² Similarly, a student of vampire lore must start with the basic question: "What made people open up graves and drive stakes to the corpses then burn them?" Taking the distinctive features of pre-modern mentalities into account is key to grasping the laity's and the learned elite's lines of thought that generated specific behavioral patterns and interpretations.

Furthermore, in order to contextualize my material, I aim to show the intermediary links that manifest the probable connections by finding the resemblances between seemingly distinct concepts and try to create a relevant narrative from scattered evidence collected from a wide region and consisting of events that occurred in a non-chronological order, like Ginzburg did in *Ecstasies*.³ However my topic is on a much smaller scale than *Ecstasies* in terms of geography, definition, and time scale.

Since the vampire-like supernatural beings were components of popular religion, mostly the laity followed the relevant practices. However, it was the learned elite who produced the written sources. As Kieckhefer states, while talking about the learned elite, we need to remind that it was a very small part of the population and every single case needs to be evaluated on its own in terms of the representativeness of commoners' stance.⁴ Likewise, Hartnup opposes the strict two-tiered model of popular religion that consists of the laity on one side and the institutional religion on the other. One of her arguments is that the members of the church hierarchy were not equally learned. After all, some of them were involved in corpse-burning activities

² Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 77.

³ Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991), 14-15.

⁴ Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300-1500* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 16.

along with the laity, though the church strictly forbade it.⁵ Besides, taking the popular versus institutional religion dichotomy for granted is a problematic approach considering that ‘being a clergyman’ in the Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant churches were different experiences.⁶ Not to mention the distinct features of the Ottoman Muslim religious hierarchy in comparison with its Christian counterparts.

The thesis comprises three chapters. The first chapter is about the early modern folkloric vampire beliefs that were popular among the Eastern Christian communities in the Ottoman Empire and the interactions between Muslim and Christian communities in folkloric vampire narratives. However, the main sources of the period were written by the Catholic missionaries and travelers in the Ottoman lands, and they were decisively informed by the discourse of the Counter-Reformation Catholic Church and its war on superstition. The Greek Catholic scholar Leo Allatios (d. 1669) and his pioneering methodological study on early modern Greek popular beliefs was crucial for shedding light on the *vrykolakas* belief in Ottoman Greece beginning from the mid-fifteenth century and useful to understand the initial impressions of Ottomans on folkloric vampires, because Allatios’ main sources were earlier Byzantine legal canons. The second part of the chapter is about evaluating the narratives of early modern Orthodox cases as evidence of entanglements, since they featured “Turkish” involvement in form of both vampires and vampire-slayers.

The second chapter is about the reception of vampire-like supernatural beings in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries in Ottoman Muslim culture based on legal opinions, court decisions, a travel book, and a religious manual. My aim is to

⁵ Karen Hartnup, *On the Beliefs of the Greeks: Leo Allatios and Popular Orthodoxy* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004), 5-6. In the first place, it was forbidden by church because it was a prevalent practice.

⁶ Ibid, 20-21.

trace the emergence and evolution of the phenomenon in the early modern Ottoman Muslim sources and demonstrate their interactions, borrowings, and similarities to the sources produced by different ethno-religious groups in the empire.

The third chapter begins with a brief description of the eighteenth-century vampire craze in Europe, which was consequent to the territorial changes in the Balkans and Central Europe after the Treaty of Passarowitz (1718) and continues with the designation of the ‘vampire’ first as a symbol of supposed eastern ignorance and superstition, then the aristocratic tempter in the nineteenth-century gothic novels. On the Ottoman side, the post-vampire craze period witnessed the first usage of the phenomenon in a political defamation campaign that generated western travelers’ accusations for being superstitious. The chapter ends with the exploration of the smooth path, by which the term ‘vampire’ entered the first Turkish-to-Turkish dictionaries in the nineteenth century along with its local equivalents that have long been in use in the region.

Concerning my terminology and concepts, I have to narrow down my scope by accepting ‘the practice of ritual extermination methods’ and ‘the condition of the corpse’ as the main distinguishing factors that indicate a folkloric vampire incident. The extermination methods and the condition of the corpse were the particular reasons that turned the folk belief into a problem in the first place. Namely, dismantling body parts and corpse burning were not standard funeral rites either in Christianity or Islam. In fact, the Ottoman jurists’ initial exposure to the revenant discussions was permitting or prohibiting the corpse burning practice, while the Greek Orthodox hierarchy exerted considerable effort trying to stop the body-burning practices. Moreover, bodies that do not decay after death were generally associated with sainthood and they highlighted the blasphemous character of the folk belief.

I mainly adopt Paul Barber's theory⁷ that explains the emergence and spread of the phenomenon based on the villagers' reactions to plagues, poor harvest, and/or diseases that kill livestock. The climate conditions, the postmortem processes of the human body, funeral traditions, and soil type were also crucial factors that caused the peculiar display of the corpses that the folks met when they dug the graves. In other words, the vampire-like revenants were scapegoats in that specific part of the world in the early modern era⁸ and emerged as a result of specific natural and geographical causes. In the following chapters, a 'vampire epidemic' or 'vampirism incident' is meant to refer to mysterious deaths and related fears, while 'vampirism symptoms' means the 'vision' of the deceased person among the folk that was accompanied by a discovery of the intact corpse in the grave.

A key aspect of the phenomenon is the problem of naming, since the vampire-like supernatural beings were not necessarily called 'vampire;' it was one of the terms in use in the region, which became the standard after the eighteenth century. Other popular names used by Orthodox Christians were *vrykolakas*, *vourdalak*, *upir*, and *strigoi*. For instance, the Greek-speaking community frequently used *vrykolakas*, though it was not a standard term since "both modern anthropology and early modern travelers' tales indicate that in each locality the revenant was known by different names and displayed different characteristics."⁹ In Turkish sources, the vampire-like revenants were referred to as *cadu* or *cadī*, *hortlak*, *kara koncolos*, and *obur*, with the last being particularly widespread in the Northern Black Sea Region. I use 'vampire-like,' 'folkloric vampire' or 'revenant' unless the object was specifically called 'vampire'.

⁷ Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 1-4.

⁸ Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 200), 215.

⁹ Hartnup, *On the Beliefs of the Greeks*, 179.

Another primary feature of the phenomenon was the blurring of categories of various supernatural beings, because the same names would indicate different beliefs and beings. For instance, early modern equivalents of the modern terms ‘witch’ and ‘vampire’ were entangled. In addition, werewolves in modern sense would be associated with vampire-like beings in the sources. Even when they were distinguished precisely, a witch would become a vampire after death, or a vampire-like revenant could come back to life in the shape of a wolf.

The last major feature was that the early modern vampire-like revenants could cause village-wide evacuations and it was a common problem for all communities in the Ottoman Empire that were dealing with folkloric vampires. In the *vrykolakas*, *vampire*, and *cadī* cases migration of the entire village was always a threat. In the Ottoman land registration system regulations strictly controlled the migration procedure and gaining permission for moving was a challenge for the peasants. However, from the authorities’ perspective, keeping people in their villages while they had fears for their lives under the vampirism threat was also challenging, as can be seen in following discussion.

Contrary to the general opinion shaped by the fictional vampire myth, blood sucking was not a fundamental feature of folkloric vampires; in some cases they do not even kill or physically harm people. The well-known vampires of modern genealogies, Elizabeth Bathory a.k.a. the Blood Countess (1560-1617) and Vlad the Impaler a.k.a. Dracula (1428/31-1476/77) were not vampires and their psychotic behavior was not associated with vampirism during their lifetimes.¹⁰ And finally, while the discussions about the etymologic roots of the terms that denote folkloric vampires and theories about the alleged ancestor beliefs of the folkloric vampire may

¹⁰ Harry A. Senn, *Were-Wolf and Vampire in Romania* (Boulder; New York: East European Monographs; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1982), 38.

be meaningful and intriguing, the ‘origin’ of the belief itself is a topic that remains outside this dissertation’s scope.

Chapter One

The Entangled Perspectives on the Emergence of the “Folkloric Vampire” in the Early Modern Era

This chapter examines how the notion of the “folkloric vampire” came into existence during the early modern era, and argues that it was the outcome of cross-confessional encounters in the Ottoman Balkans. The chapter will first reconstruct the specific historical developments in early modern Christianity that gave rise to the concept, and introduce the key texts that were influential in the process. It will then examine some of the earliest recorded mentions of the vampirism in Western sources to highlight the cross-confessional nature of the phenomenon, in contrast to the way it is merely portrayed as a Christian Orthodox belief in the existing secondary literature, especially in Turkish.

1.1: Counter-Reformation and the War on Superstition in Early Modern Europe

The notion of ‘folkloric vampires’ was introduced into religious debates during the Reformation era in Europe. The initial contours of the concept were outlined through the writings of the Catholic missionaries and travelers who spent time among the Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire. Their narratives reflected the Counter-Reformation Catholicism’s war against superstition, while the Slav and Greek laity were depicted as ignorant and poisoned by pagan rituals, and the Orthodox ecclesiastical hierarchy was harshly criticized for corruption under the Turkish yoke.

Following the emergence of Protestantism in the early sixteenth century, the Counter-Reformation period began with the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and lasted throughout the seventeenth century. The Council of Trent gathered under the leadership of papacy as a reaction to extraordinary circumstances, mainly to defend the old church against the theological accusations of the Protestants, which had proven successful at gaining political ground in a short time. Another reason was answering the reform demands of clerics and laymen that had long been postponed. The aftermath of the council was relatively successful in fulfilling its declared objectives, such as the education of the clergy, reclaiming the individuals and communities that had been lost to Protestantism, strengthening the faith of the commoners, and eradication of the corruption in Church.¹¹

As Levack argues, the Reformers from both sides had particular common purposes and one of them was the Christianization of Europe by educating the folk on ‘proper forms of worship’ by preaching and catechetical instruction. Specific targets were the correction of perceived liturgical, doctrinal, and moral deviations, as well as

¹¹ Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (London: Longman, 1993), 94.

elimination of pagan remnants, reflected in superstitions and practice of magic.¹² Accordingly, the missionaries in the Ottoman lands frequently reported that the Greek religion was full of pagan practices and the Orthodox folk were typically described as ‘superstitious.’¹³ Nonetheless, a clarification is needed that the frame of ‘superstition’ did not include ‘supernatural’ automatically, such as the witchcraft, magic, and other alliances with the devil were considered realities that needed to be suppressed as adversaries of the true faith, since the period also marked the peak of the early modern European witch-hunts.¹⁴

The establishment of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, or *Propaganda Fide*, in 1622, had a pivotal role in the formation of the Counter-Reformation depictions of folkloric revenants. It intensified the Catholic Church’s missionary activities in Ottoman lands aimed at converting eastern Christians (rather than Muslims, which could create dangerous results) and efforts for unification of the Catholic and Orthodox churches under papal authority.¹⁶ The image of the Eastern Church omnipresent in missionary reports was that of an institution corrupted by simony under the Turkish rule, while the Orthodox flock was portrayed as an ignorant lot that lost its way in the midst of pagan superstitions, thus requiring guidance in order to find the true faith.

¹² Ibid, 101-102.

¹³ Hartnup, *On the Beliefs of the Greeks*, 72.

¹⁴ The European witch-hunt neither began with the Reformation nor ended with it, yet it was obviously intensified between 1520-1650. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 95.

¹⁶ Hartnup, *On the Beliefs of the Greeks*, 69.

1.2: The Foundational Text on the “Folkloric Vampire”—Leo Allatios’ *De*

Graecorum hodie quorundam opinionibus

Besides missionaries’ and travelers’ accounts, the foundational text and the first Catholic study that systematically discusses a vampire-like supernatural being, *vrykolakas* (Greek), was the *De Graecorum hodie quorundam opinionibus* (On certain modern opinions among the Greeks) (1645). The author was Leo Allatios (b.1586, Chios, Ottoman Empire - d.1669, Rome, Papal States), a Catholic antiquarian, theologian, and the custodian of the Vatican Library who had a considerable influence on his contemporaries and subsequent scholars as well. He was born to an Ottoman-Greek Orthodox family,¹⁸ and then converted to Catholicism during his training in Rome. He was trained in a missionary school in Chios that was run by his uncle, who was also trained in Rome. When Leo was nine, he moved to Italy with his uncle.¹⁹ He graduated from the *Pontifical Greek College of Saint Athanasius* in Rome and after graduation he returned back to Chios for a short time, for less than a year, and that was his entire experience of the “homeland.” He was trained to be a physician after his return to Italy, and then became a teacher of Rhetoric in the Greek College. Finally, he found a position as a scriptor in the Vatican Library, in charge of arranging the Greek Codices.²⁰ In his prime, Pope Alexander VII (b.1599-d.1667) appointed him as the custodian of the Vatican Library and he kept this title until his death.

In *De opinionibus* Leo Allatios offers a unique ethnographic view of the early modern Greek culture under Ottoman rule, a traditionally neglected topic, from the perspective of an ethnic Greek from the Chios Island. He derived the contents of

¹⁸ Ibid, 53. It is unclear that whether his mother was Orthodox or Catholic.

¹⁹ Ibid, 54.

²⁰ Ibid, 55-58.

De opiniatibus from different types of sources and periods during his office as scriptor in the Vatican, and most of his discussion deals with the phenomena named *exotica*, or the demonic supernatural beings that live on the margins of the physical world or the earthly experience, such as graves.²¹ The revenant, *vrykolakas*, is one of the exotic creatures in the work. The reputation of Allatios' book is closely related to his Greek ethnicity and acknowledgment as an 'insider.' In fact, his friends encouraged him to elaborate on his knowledge of the Orthodox Church,²² since he was a perfect candidate for this job due to his great command in language, childhood experiences, and archival mastery. Besides, he was trained in a missionary school in Chios and knew the similarities between eastern and western rites by experience and declared this specific knowledge in his other work, *De concessione*.²³ As Hartnup stresses, there was ignorance among the high-ranking Catholic circles about the common features and development of the Catholic and the Orthodox rites, so his contributions were strongly needed.²⁴

However, his role as an ethnic Greek with 'insider' knowledge has to be evaluated carefully since he was obviously not an insider of Greek Orthodox folk culture. His first-hand experience was limited to his childhood memories till the age of nine, and he spent less than one year in Chios. He spent his life inside the highest circles of the Catholic hierarchy and had a specific agenda for the unification of two churches by emphasizing the commonalities between rites; "Allatios did not

²¹ Ibid, 2.

²² Ibid, 61.

²³ For the full text, see Allacci, Leone, and Kalckhoven. *Leonis Allatii De ecclesiae occidentalis atque orientalis perpetua consensione libri tres, ejusdem dissertationes de dominicis et hebdomadibus Graecorum, et de missa praesanctificatorum, cum Bartholdi Nihusii ad hanc annotationibus de communione Orientalium sub specie unica*. apud Jodocum Kalcovium, 1648.

²⁴ Hartnup, *On the Beliefs of the Greeks*, 61-2.

understand ecumenism in terms of a mutual movement of the Orthodox and Catholic churches towards a common goal of unity; rather he tried to show that the Orthodox really were just misguided Catholics.”²⁵ Moreover, he was not just another scholar who writes about ecumenical issues, but personally trained people since he was an advisor in theological issues in several Vatican congregations, most famously the *Propaganda Fide*.²⁶

Even though Allatios seems quite pro-Catholic and anti-superstitious, his contemporaries accused him of being too tolerant towards the Greek superstitions; he was particularly criticized for attempting to show superstitious Greeks sympathetic, even though they retained their wrong beliefs in *vrykolakas*.²⁷ In other words, his relatively contemptuous approach towards Orthodox Christianity was well above the ‘standard’ insulting manner against superstitious Orthodox.

Along with reflecting the Counter Reformation Papacy’s approach, Allatios’ work (written in form of a letter to a friend) was based on *nomocanons* (texts of ecclesiastical law which have been compiled over the centuries) and therefore offered insights into earlier perceptions of the Orthodox Church authorities and their approach to the revenant problem in the late Byzantine and the early Ottoman eras.²⁸ The Orthodox Church’s approaches had considerable impact on the Ottoman Muslim authorities’ understanding of the phenomenon when they encountered the notion of vampire-like revenants in the mid-sixteenth century. Contrary to the widespread opinion among westerners, the Orthodox Church was not eager to acknowledge the

²⁵ Ibid, 69.

²⁶ Ibid, 1.

²⁷ Ibid, 73.

²⁸ Ibid, 178-179. In *De opinionationibus* the sources that Allatios used for exploring the *vrykolakas* belief were mostly from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They coincided with the first written Muslim Ottoman responses to the phenomenon.

reality of revenants in the first place, and actually fought actively against superstitious practices according to *nomokanones*. There were two main approaches in the Orthodox Church, the first and the less popular was the natural interpretation that rejects any supernatural occurrence concerning *vrykolakas* incidents and explores the condition of the corpse by natural causes.²⁹ The second was the spiritual approach that was of two kinds. According to the first one, it was a diabolical illusion, which was created by the devil, that neither has direct relation with the body in the grave nor poses any real threat to the villagers. Thus, nothing needs to be done, as this is what the devil usually does to disturb the peace of the community.³⁰

According to the second view of the spiritual interpretation, it was a demonic corpse-possession and the possessed corpse needed an exorcism, which was the appropriate rite in this kind of occurrences.³¹ The laity's poor faith and their belief in *vrykolakas* were the reasons of the devil gaining so much power and the occurrence of the revenant was a kind of 'communal punishment' under control of God; therefore, the community should strictly follow the Church's orders in order to avoid the vampirism incidents. In this way, the Orthodox Church officially recognized the supernatural phenomenon and attempted to tame and utilize it in consolidating its power over the laity. That specific interpretation of folkloric vampires constituted the basis for assaults by the Catholics and others in the seventeenth century and afterwards. Furthermore, it was the point of reference for the Ottoman Muslim jurists to generate their own legal solutions for the vampirism problem.

From the point of view of the Orthodox Church, it was necessary to propose an alternative and legitimate revenant-expelling method that would terminate the

²⁹ Ibid, 181-182.

³⁰ Ibid, 180.

³¹ Ibid, 185-187.

problematic folk practice of corpse burning, since it undermined the chance of the deceased person for going to heaven by destroying the vessel for the soul (i.e. the body). The proposed “correct rite” to protect people from the revenant and save the revenant’s soul was the exorcism of the corpse that was to be conducted by clergy.³² As Allatios states, according to *nomokanon*, the punishment for corpse burning was an eternal and inextinguishable fire on the Day of Judgment. Moreover, the immediate penalties depended on the hierarchical status of the participant. If the person who was involved in corpse burning was a layman and he repented after this sinful act, his punishment was six years without communion; however, if a priest was involved in that great wickedness, he simply lost his priesthood.³³

The *vrykolakas* incidents in the Orthodox communities were ambiguous in terms of how the physical activity of the corpse was imagined and described. On the one hand, the body in the grave was said to be bloated, reddish/blackish, while its hair and nails continued to grow. On the other hand, this physical reality of the cursed corpse contrasted with the idea that what was seen was an illusion, which was created by the devil. Although the revenant was supposed to leave its grave, the way of leaving was not elaborated on. Therefore, villagers supposedly saw the ‘vision’ in the streets, houses, and most importantly, in lucid dreams, where the *vrykolakas* occasionally tries to strangle them, while the body was being punished in the grave. Since it was never caught physically outside of the grave, the exhumation and the examination of grave conditions was always considered necessary.³⁴

³² Ibid, 187.

³³ Allatios, *De opin. XII*, 145. (As cited in Hartnup, *On the Beliefs of the Greeks*, 184).

³⁴ For further discussion on the mobility of early modern revenants see Paul Barber, “Search and Destroy,” in *Vampires, Burial and Death: Folklore and Reality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 66-82.

While the ecclesiastical hierarchy tried to outline the rules for exorcism of the body, the laity's approach to the revenant problem was another story. The peasants' methods were eclectic and pragmatist, since they were evaluating the incidents with motives that were different from the Church's. Considering the village-destroying qualities of the folkloric vampire, the laity complied with ecclesiastical methods as long as the exorcisms extirpated the revenants, as it was the case in a story of the priest's revenant daughter,³⁵ but they did not hesitate to burn corpses, whether they were taking the last chance of the deceased for heaven or not. As Hartnup states, the church was interested in the individual's afterlife and appropriate rites, while laity was interested in their own survival.³⁶

Concerning the interactions between the laity's beliefs and the Church's theological legitimizations there is an intriguing definition in Politis' *Traditions* (1904) on Greek folk beliefs about *vrykolakas*. He writes: "those who committed plenty of sins in their life do not rest after they die. Instead, they leave their grave and return to the places where they used to spend their time, when they were alive."³⁷ Contrary to the 'communal sin' argument of the Church, individualizing the responsibility and the persecution was more practical, understandable, and compatible with the folk belief and had a reasonable answer to the question 'who will be punished?'

³⁵ Father François Richard, *Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable à Sant-Erini, isle de l'Archipel* (Paris, 1657), 210-211. (As cited in Hartnup, *On the Beliefs of the Greeks*, 186).

³⁶ Hartnup, *On the Beliefs of the Greeks*, 198.

³⁷ N. Politis, *Paradoseis, tomos B* [Traditions, volume B] (Athens: Istoriki Erevna, n.d.) First published in 1904. 165. (As cited in Avdikos, *Vampire Stories in Greece*, 2013, 310).

1.3: Other Early Modern Sources on Folkloric Vampires—Constructing an “Eastern Phenomenon”?

In the seventeenth-century narratives, the folkloric vampires could emerge in a variety of genres besides missionary reports and travelogues, such as, an unpublished biography of Yahya Sultan, who was the alleged son of Mehmed III (r.1595-1603), written by a Croatian Franciscan, Archbishop of Achrida, Rafael Levakovic (c.1597-1649) in the 1640's. Levakovic speaks of the ritual burning of a folkloric revenant that was called ‘*vampir*’ among Serbs, ‘*vrykolakas*’ by Greeks, ‘*Cudlak*’ by Bosnians, and ‘*Tenacz*’ by Bulgarians, while narrating Yahya Sultan and his bandit companion Djordje’s visit to an Orthodox Christian village in the region of Kratovo (today in Macedonia). Levakovic states that these creatures were noticed many times in the past and they were destined to hell. According to his account the reason of the occurrence was that the peasants were burying the corpses in level ground, and when the revenant anxiety begins due to mysterious sounds and suspicious deaths, the rumor was spreading rapidly. The damned corpse was to be found by the help of a black stallion, which could detect the unholy grave and digs it. The peasants were staking and burning the corpse, while they cover their faces with branches in order to protect themselves from the vampirism infection, as, according to the belief, the vampire was turning into a fly during its execution and that peculiar fly could turn someone it touches into a vampire.³⁸

³⁸ The biography of Yahya Sultan by Rafael Levakovic is discussed in detail by Stjepan Antoljak, “ ‘Sultan Jahja’ u Makedoniji,” [Sultan Yahya in Macedonia] *Godisen zbornik na Univerzitet vo Skopje* 13 (1962): 109-166 (relevant pages: 152-153). He gives two additional stories about werewolves that are not directly related with vampire-like revenants. I am grateful to Prof. Tijana Krstic for translating the relevant section of this article for me.

The excerpt points out the pre-modern nature of the folk belief in vampires, namely the ambiguous definitions due to a lack of boundaries beginning from names and fundamental characteristics.³⁹ Same terms had numerous variations that were indicating werewolves and revenants in different languages of the region. According to Levakovic's account, the Italian speakers call the revenant *lupi manari*, meaning "werewolves," given that the term *vrykolakas* literally means "wolf hair" or "pelt" in Slavonic.⁴⁰ Consequently, Joseph Pitton de Tournefort uses *loup-garou* (werewolf in French) to define the revenant in his travel notes.

French botanist Joseph Pitton de Tournefort's (1656-1708) posthumously published travel book *A Voyage into the Levant* (1718)⁴¹ became a text that was frequently recalled in discussion of the folkloric vampires during the vampire craze. In the related passage in his notes, he narrates every horrible detail of a *vrykolakas* extermination ritual in the Mykonos Island in 1701, including the depictions of the removal of the organs, disgusting smells, and the final corpse-burning scene. For sure, Tournefort's storytelling skills accompanied by an intrinsic humor and measured scientific snobbishness helped the popularity of his book. Interestingly, he studied in the Jesuit convent during his childhood, but then his father released him to pursue a

³⁹ For a more detailed discussion on *vrykolakas* belief see Evangelos Avdikos, "Vampire Stories in Greece and the Reinforcement of Socio-Cultural Norms," *Folklore* 124, no. 3 (2013): 307–26.

⁴⁰ J. C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 377.

⁴¹ Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, *A Voyage into the Levant: Perform'd by Command of the Late French King. Containing the Antient and Modern State of the Islands of the Archipelago; ... With Plans of the Principal Towns ... Illustrated with Full Descriptions and Curious Copper-Plates ... By M. Tournefort, ... To Which Is Prefix'd, the Author's Life, ... Adorn'd with an Accurate Map ... In Two Volumes.* (London: printed for D. Browne, A. Bell, J. Darby, A. Bettesworth, J. Pemberton, C. Rivington, J. Hooke, R. Cruttenden and T. Cox, J. Battley, E. Symon, 1718).

career in science,⁴² so he was not a stranger to the Catholic discourse on the Eastern Christians, and was aware of Leo Allatios' book.⁴³

After stating, “as for the Turks, it is certain that at their next visit they made the community of *Mycones* pay their cruelty to this poor Rogue, who became in every respect the abomination and horror of his countrymen.” Tournefort concludes his *vrykolakas* passage with a summary of the western discourse on the subject: “after such an instance of folly, can we refute to own that the present Greeks are no Great Grecians?”⁴⁴

⁴² Hugh Chisholm, *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 11th “Tournefort, Joseph Pitton de” vol. 27, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1911).

⁴³ Hartnup, *On the Beliefs of the Greeks*, 173.

⁴⁴ Tournefort, *A Voyage into the Levant*, 147-148.

1.4: Muslim Involvements in Vampirism Cases—A Balkan Problem?

Since vampire belief was a profoundly entangled, pre-modern, and region-wide phenomenon, people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds were involved both in the production of early modern folkloric narratives about vampires and were featured in them. Before investigating the Muslim Ottoman cases, it is important to provide an overview of the Ottoman, Turkish, or Muslim involvement in supposedly Orthodox Balkan cases. Before this, however, a clarification is needed for the terms ‘Turk’ and ‘Turkish’ in the stories: that are generally used to refer to ‘Muslim Ottomans,’ not ethnic Turks as we think of them today. It does not mean that the individuals in questions were not ethnic Turks, but they equally could have been Muslims from Albania, Bosnia or elsewhere.

Turkish involvement in the vampire folklore from the Balkans, and thus the entangled nature of the vampire accounts, was observable in various early modern incidents. For instance, in the case that literally started the vampire craze in Europe, the vampirism of Arnold Paole, (Arnold Paole was probably a Germanized version of *Arnaut Pavle* or Paul the Albanian) since his terror led the Habsburg authorities to write reports on the case, entitled *Visum et Repertum* (Seen and Discovered).⁴⁶ This case was then described in most European journals of the time and has been present in each vampire manual since.⁴⁷ As it is stated by Augustine Calmet in his popular treatise of the eighteenth century,⁴⁸ Paul told people that, “[he] had often related that

⁴⁶ Barber, *Vampires, Burial and Death*, 15-20.

⁴⁷ Gábor Klaniczay, “Decline of Witches and Rise of Vampires in 18th Century Habsburg Monarchy,” *Ethnologia Europaea* XVII (1987): 173.

⁴⁸ The treatise was like a handbook for the vampire question in Europe during and after the vampire hysteria in the eighteenth century. Augustine Calmet, *The Phantom World: The Philosophy of Spirits, Apparitions* (London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1850).

in the environs of Cassovia and on the frontiers of Turkish Servia, he had often been tormented by a Turkish vampire.”⁴⁹ Then he ate the earth of the vampire grave and smeared its blood on his own body in order to break the curse. He had believed that he was successful until he came back to life after his death in circa 1726. Indeed, contrary to the popular belief, the early modern folkloric Balkan vampires could be Turkish, or Muslim Ottoman in the eighteenth century; his claim was perfectly compatible with Ottoman court decisions from 1701 about the burning of two Muslim corpses in Thrace.⁵⁰

The second dimension of entanglement can be observed in the case of vampire slayers. As McClelland argues, the slayers who were called to exterminate the revenants in Balkan cases were marked individuals with special gifts who belonged either to Christian or to Muslim communities. Since they were believed to be safe from the curse of vampirism as infidels, the Christians considered Muslims as suitable candidates for becoming slayers.⁵¹ Religious differentiation was also observable in Tournefort’s *vrykolakas* case, but in a different manner: here an Albanian traveller warns the villagers that they should use Turkish sabers instead of Christian ones. This is because the crosses on the Christian swords prevent the devil from leaving the body, while a Turkish sabre does not have the same effect.⁵² On the other hand, in one of the famous Ottoman vampire cases, that of the janissary Muslim revenants (1833), the vampire slayer was Nikolai, an Orthodox Christian professional.

Furthermore, there was the strange case of state-funded vampire slayers in Ottoman Balkans, namely *caduci* and *cadu ustadları*, literally meaning someone who

⁴⁹ Calmet, *The Phantom World*, 37-38.

⁵⁰ The source will be explored in the next chapter.

⁵¹ Bruce McClelland, *Slayers and Their Vampires: A Cultural History of Killing the Dead* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 99-100.

⁵² Tournefort, *A Voyage into the Levant*, 146.

deals with *cadu*, or *cadu* masters.⁵³ Pertev Naili Boratav, who is considered to be the founding father of Turkish folkloristics during the Republican era,⁵⁴ referred to the records about *cadīcs* that were mentioned in the memoirs of Turkish immigrants from the Balkans⁵⁵ as specialists in *cadī*-expelling methods.⁵⁶ Moreover, there are records of state-funded slayers from the nineteenth-century Ottoman Macedonia, Bitola (1836,1837,1839)⁵⁷ that generated academic debate about the official response of the state to this folk belief.

Whether the state paid for them or not, ‘vampire hunting’ under different names was a recognized profession in both Muslim and Orthodox communities at least until the nineteenth century. Given the tendencies of the folkloric vampire to haunt villages, people wanted to hire professionals or to take measures to protect themselves. For instance, in the case of Petar Blagojevich (d.1725), the villagers refused to wait for official permission from Belgrade and the Imperial Provisor had to let them to burn the body since they would leave the village if he did not. The villagers told that same incidents occurred in the Turkish times and the entire village was in danger of destruction by the undead.⁵⁸

⁵³ *Cadī* or *cadu* was one of the equivalents of vampire in Turkish.

⁵⁴ Arzu Öztürkmen, “Folklore on Trial: Pertev Naili Boratav and the Denationalization of Turkish Folklore,” *Journal of Folklore Research* 42:2 (2005): 185-216.

⁵⁵ The claim was based on an unspecified document from 1835.

⁵⁶ Pertev Naili Boratav, *Türk Mitolojisi: Oğuzların Anadolu, Azerbaycan ve Türkmenistan Türklerinin Mitolojisi* [The Turkish Mythology: The Mythologies of Oghuz of Anatolia, Azerbaijan, and the Turks of Turkmenistan] (Ankara: Bilgesu Yayıncılık 2012), 47. The article of *cadī* based on three works from the 1950’s and 1960’s.

⁵⁷ Michael Ursinus, "Osmanische Lokalbehörden Der Frühen Tanzimat Im Kampf Gegen Vampire? Amtsrechnungen (maşarif Defterleri) Aus Makedonien Im Lichte Der Aufzeichnungen Marko Cepenkovs (1829—1920)," *Wiener Zeitschrift Für Die Kunde Des Morgenlandes* 82 (1992): 359-74.

⁵⁸ According to the Habsburg Imperial Provisor Frombald’s report, paraphrased by Paul Barber in *Vampires, Folklore and Reality*, 5-6.

In the emerging mythology about vampires in the eighteenth century, Ottoman involvement was a *sine qua non*. The Ottoman dominance in the Balkans was frequently seen as the precondition for the superstitions in the Orthodox community and for the pitiful state of ignorance in the Orthodox Church. It was a popular approach of the period and in his letter to the Secretary of the State, Tournefort repeats those claims, “It [the present state of the Orthodox church] is fallen into such terrible disorder since the taking of Constantinople by Mahomet II in 1453 that no man who has the least zeal for religion can reflect upon it without shedding tears.”⁵⁹ The letter goes on with how the Greek Church, which is governed by nothing but ignorance, gradually lost its connections with both their ancient ancestors and the ancient language, thus with the true sources of Christianity.⁶⁰ Tournefort claims the decadence was the fault of Greeks rather than Turks, since the latter only exacted a sum of money in lieu of the Patriarchate, but the Greeks became the architects of the present corrupted system.⁶¹ The simony debate in the Greek Church is an old subject and Tournefort may not be an authority in these discussions; however, his posthumously published travel book was a foundational text of the Vampire Craze, and thus had a considerable impact on the construction of public opinion in the eighteenth century. The wrongdoings, undisciplined manners, and ignorance of the Greek ecclesiastical hierarchy are strongly emphasized in his account and the image of the backward Orthodox Church was tightly connected with the image of the Turk.

To sum up, the discourse of the ignorant, superstitious Orthodox Church, along with the notion of a folkloric vampire, emerged in the context of particular developments in the west, most importantly the Counter-Reformation period that

⁵⁹ Tournefort, *A Voyage into the Levant*, 103-104.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 104.

⁶¹ Ibid, 105.

launched a sacred war against superstition. The accounts of missionaries and travelers provided the most valuable sources on the early modern perceptions of folkloric vampires of the laity and the clergy; however, they equally served for the consolidation of the early modern prejudices about a superstitious, ignorant Orient that included both Muslims and Orthodox Christians.

Chapter Two

Ottoman Responses to Vampirism in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

The chapter is about the reception of vampire-like revenants in the early modern Ottoman world, based on references to vampires in Ottoman legal and other sources of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, before the break out of the ‘vampire-craze’ in eighteenth-century Europe. I am going to examine Ottoman responses to vampirism and the spread of vampire awareness among the Ottoman *ulema*⁶² by exploring influences and borrowings between texts that shed light on a region-wide supernatural phenomenon. The sources are not ordered chronologically but according to interconnections, which will hopefully ease the way to grasp the continuities and ruptures in the development of the notion. My inquiry begins with Ebussuud Efendi’s legal opinions concerning the ‘vampire epidemics’ in Thrace, and continues with the *Anonymous Ottoman History* (1099-1116/1688-1704), written almost two centuries later, in which a judicial process about the implementation of those legal opinions is narrated. Then, it switches to the Northern Black Sea region, to Crimea and Caucasia, with analysis of Evliya Çelebi’s popular stories about the vampire-witches of Circassian mountains, and finally to the section on vampires in a religious manual, the *Tuhfetü’ş-Şahan*, which explains what a vampire-like revenant does and how to

⁶² The term literally means “those who have knowledge” or “those who know”. See Robert Gleave, s.v. “Ulema,” *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, 1st edition, 703. In the Ottoman context, it is one of the three main occupational groups (scholars, military, and bureaucracy) of state organization, in charge of education, jurisprudence, interpretation of Sharia, and other religious affairs. See Mehmed İpşirli, s.v. “İlmiye,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol.22, 141-145.

destroy it. Chronologically, the written records cover sources from the sixteenth to the early eighteenth century.

2.1: The Vampire Fatwas and the Foundations of a Judicial Stance

The earliest sources and foundational texts that shaped the official Ottoman response to vampirism, including the juridical decision making and implementations, are the ‘vampire *fatwas*’ of Ebussuud Efendi issued in the sixteenth century. According to traditional Ottoman law, a *fatwa* is a written answer to a religious question given by a *mufti*⁶³ and it may or may not have juridical motivation/implementation. Unlike a *qadi*, or judge, who has executive power and makes decisions according to the law, the *mufti* is the ‘interpreter/expounder’ of the Islamic law. The *mufti*’s opinions were of special importance for issues that were not explicitly addressed in earlier legal documents; in addition, eminent *muftis*’ *fatwas* were incorporated into the substantive law.⁶⁴

Subsequent to the unexpectedly rapid territorial expansion (about seventy percent in eight years)⁶⁵ in the eastern direction during the reign of Selim I the Grim (r.1512-1520), the Empire had to face a new kind of challenge. The Ottoman dynasty already had a considerable prestige in the Islamic world as the conquerors of Roman Lands and, most importantly, the promised capital, Constantinople. However, their institutional reputation in terms of scholarship and jurisprudence was inferior to that of the ancient learning centers of Islam, notably Damascus and Cairo, that they came to rule in the 1510s. As a result, the Ottoman legal system fundamentally altered throughout the sixteenth century. Until recently, scholars maintained that the influence of the Arab learning centers and influx of scholars from Arab provinces

⁶³ Fahrettin Asar, s.v. “Fetva”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol: 12, 486-496.

⁶⁴ Guy Burak, *Second Formation of Islamic Law* (S.L.: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 25.

⁶⁵ Gabor Agoston, s.v. “Selim I”, *Encyclopedia of Ottoman Empire*, (1st edition), 2009. 511-3.

caused Islamization of the empire and ended its so-called syncretic character.⁶⁶ According to new studies, however, the legal reform and adoption of the Hanafi school of law as the official Ottoman *madhab*⁶⁷ was a reaction to the challenge of legitimacy that the inclusion of the Arab provinces posed. Its most crucial aspects were the rise of the imperial learned hierarchy, state intervention in *mufti* appointments, as well as the structure and doctrines of the Hanafi legal school, and the advance of dynastic law.⁶⁸ As the Ottoman imperial administration ambitiously institutionalized, centralized, and standardized the imperial legal system, the honorific title of *Sheikh al-Islam*, or the Grand Mufti, came to signify the highest power in the religious hierarchy, and thus in the religious and legal affairs of the state.⁶⁹

Mehmed Ebussuud Efendi (1490-1574) was known as the Grand Mufti of Suleiman I the Magnificent, or the Lawgiver (r.1520-1566).⁷⁰ He was one of the key reasons why Suleiman's reign has been labeled "the classical age," and arguably the single most influential jurist in Ottoman history, who is credited with the reconciliation of the dynastic (*kanun*) and religious laws (*sharia*).⁷¹ He served as judge in Bursa and Constantinople, and military judge of Rumelia before becoming *Sheikh al-Islam* in 1545 and held the post until his death in 1574. One of his acknowledged contributions to the Ottoman legal tradition was producing the most elegant but strongly worded rulings against the beliefs and practices of the *kizilbash*,

⁶⁶ Heath W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 96.

⁶⁷ An Islamic school of thought in jurisprudence.

⁶⁸ Burak, *Second Formation*, 10-11.

⁶⁹ Colin Imber, *Ebu's-su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2009), 7.

⁷⁰ The Sultan is known in the West with the title of 'the Magnificent' however his main title in Turkish historiography is 'the Lawgiver' refers to the legal reformation during his reign.

⁷¹ Imber, *Ebu's-su'ud*, 24.

Turkmen sympathizers of the Safavid shah who had Shia leanings.⁷² His ‘vampire *fatwas*,’ along with others on a wide variety of subjects, were well known and highly respected by his successors and they continued to be cited throughout centuries.

Fatwas are issued in question and answer format, and many times the question tells more than the answer, which could be a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no,’⁷³ as can be seen in some of the following examples. While the answers reflect the stance of the religious authority in various situations, the questions potentially indicate the concerns of the public; therefore, the regional, cultural, and demographic dynamics were significant in the emergence of specific kinds of questions and answers. The *muftis* represented the institutional religion as respected members of the scholarly organization, which frequently dealt with regional popular beliefs, such as the vampire-like supernatural beings in Thrace.

As Sariyannis stresses, the ‘vampire *fatwas*’ of Ebussuud Efendi consist of three *fatwas* taken from two separate *fatwa* collections.⁷⁴ Therefore, different approaches are observable between the first one and the following two from another collection. The first one takes the phenomenon as a reality, but treats it as a problem of non-Muslims:

Issue: Some deceased people, after being buried, tear their shrouds in the grave, their organs fill with blood, and their bodies turn reddish.

What is the reason for this occurrence?

⁷² Ibid, 5.

⁷³ M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ, “Introduction” to *Şeyhülislâm Ebussuud Efendi’nin Fetvalarına Göre Kanunî Devrinde Osmanlı Hayatı* [The Ottoman Life in the Age of Kanuni According to the Fatwas of Ebussuud Efendi] (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2012), 3-4.

⁷⁴ Marinos Sariyannis, "Of Ottoman Ghosts, Vampires and Sorcerers: An Old Discussion Disinterred," *Archivum Ottomanicum*, (2013): 199. The first case was about a Muslim revenant.

Response: If it happened, it is [because of] the graceful will of the just Lord. Then it shows, ‘the wicked spirits possess dead bodies of people who were partnered with them during their lifetime in terms of deeds and morals.’ It is not beyond the power of the Almighty.

Herewith: When the aforementioned occurrence is seen, what should be done to the related corpse?

Response: You need to cover up the grave if it is Muslim [since] the revenant is harmless.

Herewith: Are people allowed to take out [the corpses] from their graves and burn them according to the Sharia?

Response: No, they are not.⁷⁵

In the first *fatwa*, there is no explanation about the harm inflicted by the revenant, yet there are explanations concerning the condition of the body in the grave as an indicator of vampirism, and the basic extermination method. The issuer explains the occurrence as an act of the wicked spirits, however the overall situation is under control of God. ‘The obvious acknowledgement of the reality of the phenomenon, then prohibiting people to take action’ is an approach that will be abandoned in the following *fatwas*. The second *fatwa* is more enlightening about the actual problem of the peasants who demand an answer from the authority:

Issue: In Rumelia, in a village subjected to Salonika, an infidel among the Christians died, then a few days after his burial he showed up at the door of his relatives, and of other people as well, at midnight and said “let’s go to this and that place together.” On the following day that infidel [who was called by the revenant] died [too]. After a few days he showed up [at the

⁷⁵ Ebussuud Efendi, *Şeyhülislâm Ebussuud Efendi'nin Fetvalarına Göre Kanunî Devrinde Osmanlı Hayatı*, 263-264.

door] of someone else, and on the next day that person died. In short, numerous infidels died according to this pattern and Muslims witnessed that massacre. According to the Sharia, are they allowed to leave [their lands] out of fear?

Response: No, they are not. After staying awake throughout the night because of [the horrors that were caused by] the mentioned town of infidels, they need to leave it to the Master of Affairs [a title of God].⁷⁶

Unlike the first *fatwa*, there is a major threat that kills people by knocking on their doors and calling them outside, which was one of the distinguishing methods of *vrykolakas* as well.⁷⁷ The purpose of the question is to ask for permission to leave his or her village, since every peasant in the state needed a legitimate reason to leave the land. Again, there is no justified action to be taken according to the sharia. The tone of the question in the last *fatwa* almost reflects the villagers' impatience to take measures:

Issue: A clarification and an explanation for the cure and remedy and a way to get rid of the aforementioned kind of thing [is requested to] be granted.

Response: The language is incapable and the mind is inadequate to clarify the divine wisdom and cause [the unknowable intentions of god] behind this occurrence and [our] space [the textual frame of the *fatwa*] is not enough to explain the things that the professional examiners said in length. [However] To get rid of it: In the day of occurrence go there and put a plain stick to where the heart is expected to be, hopefully it will be eradicated with that method. If it does not work, and [the corpse's] color is

⁷⁶ Ibid, 264.

⁷⁷ Hartnup, *On the Beliefs of the Greeks*, 234.

reddish, cut off the head and put it next to the feet. In several places it is explained: if the corpse is found in the same position as it was put into the grave, strangle the corpse and leave it. If it changed its position, cut off the head and put it next to the feet. If none of these things work, take the body out of the grave and burn it. The corpse burning incidents occurred many times and repeatedly during the age of the pious predecessors [the contemporaries of the Prophet].⁷⁸

Alongside with being the first and the most influential text concerning the vampire belief in Ottoman culture, the three *fatwas* of Ebussuud are significant for introducing themes that will dominate the discussions in later periods. While the first two *fatwas* tend to prevent people from taking action, the last one instructs peasants in detail about how to destroy the undead and be relieved of fears. At the same time, the third *fatwa* introduces a method of vampire slaying that is influenced by the Orthodox peasant practices. The staking-beheading-burning formula remained in use with few changes throughout centuries, as can be seen in the following chapters. The major takeaway points from these *fatwas* are, firstly, that there is no information about how to treat the Muslim vampire-like revenants, and secondly, the Muslims are not allowed to leave their villages because of vampires.

Concerning his claim on corpse burning as an activity that existed in the early ages of Islam, there is no way to find out the exact concept in his mind, namely if it was the burnings of revenant corpses or corpse burning as a general punitive concept, however, he had juridical grounds as expected. There are several sources about incidents of corpse burning after executions of heretics and rebels during ‘the age of the pious predecessors’, or reigns of the Rashidun Caliphs (632-661), the Umayyad

⁷⁸ Ebussuud Efendi, *Şeyhülislâm Ebussuud Efendi'nin Fetvalarına Göre Kanunî Devrinde Osmanlı Hayatı*, 264-265.

Caliphate (661-750) and the early Abbasid Caliphate (750-1517). Nevertheless, the incidents that were addressed in these early sources of Islam were fundamentally problematic; for instance, the historians of the Abbasids penned the records of the corpse burnings in the Umayyad period presumably with accusatory subtexts.⁷⁹

There is also another, shorter and less known *fatwa* about a *cadī* that concerns corpse burning, which is from a seventeenth-century *fatwa* collection, but was issued by Hoca Saadeddin Efendi (1536-1599) who was also a Grand Mufti. He wrote it in Arabic and was probably inspired by his predecessor Ebussuud Efendi: “Sadeddin bin Hasan Can is asked if it is allowed to burn the *cadī*, and he answered, may god forgive us, if the signs of possession of wicked spirits become visible, there is no obstacle [to burning it]. The end.”⁸⁰ Unlike Ebussuud Efendi’s *fatwas*, he uses the general term *cadī*; however, he does not give any more information about the context. The existence of Hoca Saadeddin Efendi’s *fatwa* points to two things: first, the corpse-burning ritual was an issue of several *fatwas* in the sixteenth century; second, another scholar considered it necessary to add it to his *fatwa* collection almost a century later.⁸¹ Besides, Hoca Saadeddin Efendi’s *fatwa* is more practical than Ebussuud’s and gives the religious permission needed without clearly defining whether the revenant was a Muslim or infidel. This may be the reason why in the

⁷⁹ See Andrew Marsham, “Attitudes to the Use of Fire in Executions in Late Antiquity and Early Islam: The Burning of Heretics and Rebels in Late Umayyad Iraq,” in *Violence in Islamic Thought from the Qur’an to the Mongols*. Legitimate and Illegitimate Violence in Islamic Thought, vol.1, ed. Robert Gleave, Istvan Kristo-Nagy, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 106–27.

⁸⁰ Edhem Eldem, “Yeniçeri Mezartaşları Kitabı Vesilesiyle Yeniçeri Taşları ve Tarih Üzerine” [On Janissary Tombstones and History on the Occasion of the Book About the Janissary Tombstones] *Toplumsal Tarih*, vol.188, (2009): 7. The excerpt is from a footnote in which the author thanks Prof. Himmet Taşkömür for confirming the *fatwa* in an Arabic *fatwa* collection and translating it into Turkish.

⁸¹ The *fatwa* collection is from the seventeenth century.

1833 newspaper article about the janissary vampires Hoca Saadeddin Efendi's name was mentioned instead of Ebussuud's, since the vampire janissaries who were burned were Muslims.

2.2: The Anonymous Ottoman History and the Muslim Revenants

In the *Anonymous Ottoman History* (1099-1116/1688-1704) there is an exemplary court implementation (1701) that shows how the legal opinion of a *mufti*, in this case Ebussuud Efendi's permission to exterminate the corpses of non-Muslims revenants, would be utilized for legitimization of the destruction of corpses that belong Muslim revenants. Furthermore, the rulings point out how the 'vampire *fatwas*' of Ebussuud Efendi, which were issued in the sixteenth century, integrated into the substantive law in the eighteenth century. The relevant section of the text speaks about a *qadi*'s ruling on two *cadī* cases, in which the legal basis for the decisions were the 'vampire *fatwas*' of Ebussuud Efendi. However, the *qadi* had to re-interpret the *fatwas* because of a peculiar situation: the *cadīs* were Muslim. Although there were probably earlier incidents, the mention in the *Anonymous Ottoman History* is the first written source that narrates the case of a Muslim corpse burning for revenantism.

The author of the *Anonymous Ottoman History* is unknown, as the title suggests, but he definitely belonged to the inner circles of the Ottoman administration. There is just one full-manuscript copy of the chronicle in the Berlin Public Library. The chronicle was used as a source by Austrian orientalist historian Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774-1856), one of the founding fathers of Ottoman historiography in the West, and was mentioned as 'a fine history account.' Somehow, the work remained unpopular afterwards.⁸² The account bears the structure of a standard Ottoman chronicle and main topics are military expeditions, sieges, debates on taxes, promotions, dismisses, and deaths of prominent peoples with a detailed

⁸² Abdülkadir Özcan, "Introduction" to *Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi 1099-1116/1688-1704* [Anonymous Ottoman History 1099-1116/1688-1704] (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2000), xv.

narration of the *Edirne Event* (1703)⁸³, a janissary revolt resulted with killing of the Grand Mufti, and dethronement of Mustafa II (r.1695-1703).

The account shows the judicial process followed by extermination and its stages in the Ottoman legal context. Firstly, the Muslim folk of the village named Maraş in Edirne go to the court with their complaint about a revenant named *Bıyıklı Ali* (Ali the Mustached), who is thought to be displaying symptoms of ‘wicked spirits’ (*ervah-ı habise*) in his grave. Then, the ‘vampire *fatwas*’ of Ebussuud about the ritual destruction, staking, beheading, and burning are recalled by the judge however the local *qadi* of Edirne asks for counseling from the higher authority (probably the chief military-judge) about how to conclude that case because Ebussuud Efendi permitted the use of these methods for infidels, not Muslims. In addition, the note states that they could not find anything about corpse burning in Arabic sources, possibly gesturing towards the last part of Ebussuud’s third *fatwa*, in which corpse burning is defined as an ancient Islamic tradition frequently used since the time of the prophet and his companions.⁸⁴ Then, the judge was advised to send a reliable deputy (*naib*), accompanied by the assigned sergeant, to the grave of the *cadī*. If they agree on the manifestation of the signs of wicked spirits after a second investigation, the court should implement the decision (same destruction methods as infidels).⁸⁵

The consecutive case in the *Anonymous History* is from another neighborhood of Edirne and there is a Muslim female *cadī* named Cennet Hatun, who showed signs of vampirism three months after her burial, and then the villagers were driven to fear, as usual. This time the juridical authority sends a council made up of female examiners who confirm that the corpse remained intact in her grave and it is reddish,

⁸³ Ibid, xix-xx.

⁸⁴ *Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi 1099-1116/1688-1704*, 148-9.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 149.

which means it is an officially confirmed *cadī*. According to the source, the chief-judge gives permission to do whatever is needed to make folks' fears vanish.⁸⁶

That account based on two consecutive cases in different districts of Edirne constitutes the first known written sources concerning an official permission to destroy Muslim corpses, after several attempts in earlier legal opinions to leave Muslim bodies out of the body burning practice. The cases demonstrate how the vampire-like supernatural beings, with their extermination methods, were introduced to the Ottoman legal corpse and successfully integrated to the decision-making mechanism. Although the legal authorities defined the occurrence with *vehm*, *havf*, and *def-i vahşet*, which indicate easing the 'groundless fears' and 'illusions' of Muslim villagers, at some point, the *cadī*-hunts were not just about allaying the laity's fears but implementing the 'law of the state' properly based on legal precedents.

⁸⁶ *Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi 1099-1116/1688-1704*, 149.

2.3: The Seyahatname and the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Mindset

The *Seyahatname* is a seventeenth-century travelogue written by Evliya Çelebi that gives curious information about *oburs*, the vampire-like witches of the Circassian highlands. The tales of *oburs* are of special interest since they are not related with the Orthodox Christianity or Islam unlike former accounts; the stories belong to the popular beliefs of the mountainous Circassian tribes, which were arguably in the transition period from animism to Islam.⁸⁷ The tripartite account of *oburs* comprises the earliest and the most detailed narrative about the Caucasian/Turkic folk belief of vampire-witches that was related to the etymology of the term ‘vampire’ itself.⁸⁸ Whether it is the etymologic root of the vampire or not, with its unique features, the *obur* looks like the closest thing to the modern fictional vampire alongside with its witch characteristics. Caucasian *oburs* made nocturnal battles over the mountains, had a non-human lineage, and drank blood for eternal life. Besides, they died by staking and ritual burning like their vampire-like cousins in the region. Evliya Çelebi claims that they constituted “a bigger threat than plague” in Circassia.⁸⁹ In order to comprehend the *obur* figure, the author, the book, and the mentality need to be explored.

In fact, ‘seyahatname’ is the name of a literary genre in Islamic literatures, which literally means ‘a travel book,’ but Evliya Çelebi’s *Seyahatname* became the

⁸⁷ The extent to which the Khatukay tribe adopted Muslim beliefs and practices is not clear and the issue of Islamization of the region is a highly contested one. See Murat Yaşar, “Evliya Çelebi in the Circassian Lands: Vampires, Tree Worshipers, and Pseudo-Muslims,” *Acta Orientalia*, 67, no. 1 (2014): 75-96.

⁸⁸ For further reading see Peter Mario Kreuter, “The Name of the Vampire: Some Reflections on Current Linguistic Theories on the Etymology of the Word Vampire,” in *Vampires: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil* ed. Peter Day (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2006), 57-65.

⁸⁹ Evliya Çelebi et al., *Seyahatname*, vol.7, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003), 280.

most popular travel book in Turkish literature, so the concept generally refers to that specific book. The *Seyahatname* consists of ten volumes that narrate the author's journey through the empire and beyond in fifty years. Faroqhi claims the *Seyahatname* is the most cited book by present-day Ottoman historians.⁹⁰

In addition to its conventional uses, the book is a rare source on the seventeenth-century Ottoman mentality due to its autobiographical aspects, wide variety of topics, and the author's vivid social life. As Dankoff explains, "...the Ottomans had a special way of looking at the world. This worldview was no doubt shaped by factors such as Islam, Persianate culture, Turkish language and traditions, Ottoman dynastic interests, and the imperial outlook of Constantinople, with its Roman- Byzantine and Rumelian-Anatolian aspects."⁹¹

Evliya Çelebi (1611-1682) was born as Mehmed Zilli to a Turkish father, the chief goldsmith of the palace, and a Circassian mother who was presented as a gift to the palace. Evliya's uncle from the mother's side was the grand vizier Melek Ahmed Paşa (r.1650-1651), who was the main sponsor of his travels. Evliya had a chance to be a member of the innermost circles of the Ottoman court due to his family's powerful connections. He was trained in the palace school, where he studied Islamic sciences, Koran recitation, and music. At a young age, Mehmed got the attention of Murad IV (r.1612-1640) by his fine voice and entertaining manner.⁹²

Evliya Çelebi was a professional explorer and he paid for his travels by working as a *muezzin*, *imam*, private secretary, and courier in various periods of his life. However, he was famous for being an entertaining companion, bonvivant, and

⁹⁰ Suraiya Faroqhi, "Foreword" to *An Ottoman Mentality: The World of Evliya Çelebi* by Robert Dankoff (Leiden [etc.: Brill, 2006), vii-xviii.

⁹¹ Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality*, 7.

⁹² Ibid, 9.

raconteur. He was a keen observer and an ambitious storyteller who was obsessed with narrating every single detail about the places he had been in and travelled through.⁹³ The *Seyahatname* is his only book, which is basically a compilation of notes from his travels.

The *Seyahatname* is a linguistic source as well, as the author likes to give spellings of foreign words and explain foreign concepts. Because of his interest in languages, the *obur* narrative starts in the sixth volume, before the tripartite narrative in the seventh, with an explanation concerning a village he passed through on his way to Crimea. The village is called *Oburça*, which means ‘*obur* language,’ and Evliya introduces the Tatar notion of *obur* with familiar terms to his audience: “*obur* means a *cadī*, a sorcerer, and a revenant from grave in the Tatar language.”⁹⁴ The stories in the seventh book truly live up to every sense of the term.

In the first part of the related narrative in the seventh book, Evliya recounts the nocturnal battle of *oburs* that he witnessed in a crowded audience. That part focuses on *oburs*’ witch-like features yet they have vampire-like characteristic as well, such as drinking blood from enemy’s neck and the corpse burning of the rival *oburs* as the method of destruction.⁹⁶ That part of the narrative is particularly famous since Carlo Ginzburg mentioned that specific nocturnal battle in *Ecstasies*, as a related belief system to that of the Friulian *benandanti* or the cult of benevolent witches that participate in night battles to protect fertility and harvest.⁹⁷ Ginzburg argues that the cult of *benandanti* was connected to other Eurasian agrarian/death cults.

⁹³ Ibid, 148.

⁹⁴ Evliya Çelebi et al., *Seyahatname*, vol.6 (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002), 91.

⁹⁶ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname* vol.7, 279-280.

⁹⁷ Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches’ Sabbath* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991).

The consecutive second part is about explicitly vampire-like revenant *oburs* that can be destroyed by driving a stake into their bodies and burning them. Evliya states that elders of the Circassian tribe who have special *obur* tracking and destroying methods can kill the blood-sucking, undead *oburs*; this is the first Ottoman account that mentions the theme of professional vampire-slayer. According to the *Seyahatname*, relatives of the infected people pay the hunters to save their beloved ones to break the spell of the *obur* otherwise the death is inevitable. The part contains the recurring themes in the sources about the condition of the corpse in the grave as an indicator of vampirism, extermination methods that include staking and corpse burning, and refer in a way similar to that of the jurists to ‘the divine mystery’ that cannot be understood by simple human minds. Evliya claims that the plague never hits the region because of the constant blood-sucking activity.⁹⁸

Unlike the Orthodox-inspired cases of Rumelia, in which the revenant’s mobility is obscure and it calls the host outside before killing them, the *obur* leaves its grave physically and feeds on human blood. The second part about the *obur* as a revenant would be influenced by a variety of folk beliefs in the region; nevertheless, it is the best-documented example of a full-fledged, blood-sucking vampire figure from the seventeenth century. As Bacque-Gramont states, the *obur* narrative in the *Seyahatname* is coherent with every element in the traditional myth of Dracula.⁹⁹

The third part of the *obur* story is about the living *oburs*, who seem and act as commoners but are actually coming from another species. The living *obur* sucks blood and attacks its naked victims, including infants, while having a bath in a river or

⁹⁸ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname* vol.7, 280.

⁹⁹ Jean Louise Bacqué-Gramont, “Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesinde Büyü” [Magic in Evliya Çelebi’s *Seyahatname*] in *Çağının Sıradışı Yazarı Evliya Çelebi*, ed. Nuran Tezcan, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2009), 87-90.

on lakeshore.¹⁰⁰ The *obur*-trackers recognize their targets from the *obur*-eyes in order to follow them to their houses. And then comes the torture and the-torture-motivated confessions. In the grey zone between vampirism and witchcraft, *obur* confesses that he drinks human blood; also he smears it on his body. His motivation for blood sucking and blood-spells is being able to live longer and participate in more night battles along with his ancestors. Considering that *obur* continues to drink blood after death, as it is told in the second part, ‘blood’ emerges as the key for eternal life. Although it sounds perfectly natural from a modern perspective, it is a surprisingly early record of ‘blood is life, life is blood’ motto of the literary vampire.

The ending of the last part of the *obur* narrative speaks for itself and clearly explains the main motivation of this dissertation: “it [the belief in *oburs*] is frequent in the lands of Muscovy, the Cossacks, the Poles, and the Czechs.” Then, he acknowledges similar beliefs in the Ottoman Lands with a different name “...it may be the case that there are *kara koncolos* in Rumelia.”¹⁰¹

The *Seyahatname* has no legal weight unlike an issued *fatwa* or execution of a judicial decision; however Evliya’s stories are an invaluable source for the research on the phenomenon of vampirism, its origins, features, and development in Eurasia. The *Seyahatname* cases show the entanglements between the west and the east in terms of vampirism and witchcraft from several aspects beside the night battles. The themes of flying witches in mountainous regions and the pagan-animist symbols indicate common pre-Abrahamic beliefs and practices that remained alive at least until the seventeenth century. The vampire-witches could be both dead and alive, which is a striking resemblance with the Romanian *strigoi* belief, the *strigoi vii* (the living *strigoi*) and the *strigoi mort* (the dead *strigoi*), from the western shore of the

¹⁰⁰ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname* vol.7, 280-283.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 283.

Black Sea.¹⁰²

According to Senn a *strigoi vii* is a modern day witch-like figure, who is not associated with blood sucking, witch-hunt or scapegoating. Actually, villagers find ways to cope with the *strigoi vii* in order to live together. The *strigoi vii* is a witch who is dangerous for the villagers only in times of quarrels and resentment and its threat is limited to harming cattle, cultivated fields or attacking the reproductive force of men or nursing mothers. However, the *strigoi mort* is a non-blood sucking early modern vampire-like revenant against whom one can be protected from by preventive pre-burial measures or staking after burial.¹⁰³

Unlike the peaceful *strigoi vii*, the living *oburs* were settled down among humans as perfect examples of the enemy within, as it was the case in various European witch-hunt cases. The existence of torture and forced confession is the most striking similarity, despite a lack of institutional witch-hunts in the region. There were *obur*-seers (witch hunter/vampire slayer) chosen from the old, wise members of the community who could locate the *obur* graves/houses in order to destroy them with ritual methods like in the Balkans and Central Europe. The vampire-like, infanticidal behavior of the *obur* is similar to other blood-sucking witches in the west; e.g. *strega* in the Italian-speaking Alpine regions that drinks infants' blood.¹⁰⁴

The vampire-witches of Circassia are part of a wider literary discussion on the evaluation of supernatural elements in Evliya Çelebi's narrative, which is about the literature of marvels and wonders (*Acaib ve Garaib Edebiyatı*). The marvels and

¹⁰² Many thanks to Prof. Klaniczay for pointing out the resemblance.

¹⁰³ Senn, *Were-Wolf and Vampire in Romania*, 11-12.

¹⁰⁴ Richard Kieckhefer, "The First Wave of Diabolical Witchcraft," in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, ed. Brian P. Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 171.

wonders stories essentially belong to foreign peoples in *Seyahatname*¹⁰⁵ since, like other prominent travelers Ibn-i Batuta and Marco Polo did before him, Evliya uses supernatural elements to describe exotic lands and cultures.¹⁰⁶ In a more related review, Louis Bacqué-Grammont points to the parallels between *oburs* in the *Seyahatname* and the myth of Count Dracula.¹⁰⁷

In “An Analysis of Evliya Çelebi’s *Seyahatname* from the Perspective of the Literature of Strange” (2012), Özay states that the *obur* and *kara koncolos* figures in the *Seyahatname* are beyond being mysterious story characters since they were also the folk beliefs of the epoch, thus, in the *Seyahatname* case, the author enriches a supernatural rumor, which was circulating in the oral tradition, with dramatization effects and attempts to make it believable for the reader by incorporating his testimony.¹⁰⁸

Evliya Çelebi truly regards the vampire-witch concept as common knowledge since the notion of *obur* was explained as the Tatar-Circassian counterpart of the better-known supernatural phenomena, namely *cadī* and *kara koncolos*. It is a difficult task to predict various usages and receptions of supernatural motives in a pre-modern narrative because supernatural did not automatically mean fictional in the early modern mindset. Therefore, some supernatural beings may not be particularly unbelievable according to Evliya Çelebi and his audience. However, it is certain that,

¹⁰⁵ Gottfried Hagen, “Afterwords” to *An Ottoman Mentality* by Dankoff, 221-222.

¹⁰⁶ Stefanos Yerasimos, “Türklerin Kafkasları: Egzotizmle Jeopolitik Arasında II” [The Caucasia of Turks: In Between Exoticism and Geopolitics II], tr. İrvem Keskinoglu, *Toplumsal Tarih* vol.37 (1997): 9.

¹⁰⁷ Bacqué-Grammont, “Evliyâ Çelebi *Seyahatnâmesi*’nde Büyü,” 90.

¹⁰⁸ Yeliz Özay, “Evliya Çelebi *Seyahatnamesi*’nin Acaib Edebiyatı Açısından Değerlendirilmesi” [An Analysis of Evliya Çelebi’s *Seyahatname* from the Perspective of the Literature of Strange], *Milli Folklor*, 103 (2014): 131-132.

in the early modern context, vampires and witches (and werewolves) were not seen as exceptional, unheard-of supernatural beings the way they are today.

2.4: The *Tuhfetü's-Şahan* and Instructions to Slay Vampires

The *Tuhfetü's-Şahan* is a seventeenth-century *ilm-i hal* —a genre conventionally referred to as the Ottoman equivalent of catechism—authored by Eyyüb bin Musa el-Hüseyni Ebü'l-Beka el-Kefevi (b. 1619, Kefe—d. 1684, Constantinople) a prominent scholar and jurist. The *Tuhfetü's-Şahan* is an instructive text that deals with basic principles of faith and practices in Islam according to the Hanafi School of Law, official *madhab* of Ottomans. In the chapter on ‘various issues’ it addresses the ritual methods for destroying a peculiar kind of revenant that kills people at night and does not decay in its grave. The book is the first specimen, thus far, of its genre that mentions ‘folkloric vampires’ and the notorious extermination methods.

The *Tuhfetü's-Şahan* is an *ilm-i hal* or catechism, and contains information about the principles of religion and proper conduct in everyday life. *Ilm-i hals* were widely used for educational purposes, especially for children and converts, but also by population at large.¹⁰⁹ Although there were similar pre-Ottoman Islamic books about religious education, *ilm-i hal* is considered a genuine Ottoman genre. One of the first Ottoman *ilm-i hals*, and probably the most popular in long term, was Imam Birgivi's (1522-1573) *Vasiyetname* (the Testament) written in 1573. The *Tuhfetü's-Şahan* was also a popular example of the genre that survives in numerous manuscripts and printed editions.¹¹⁰ In the late Ottoman period, the book was a main course book in royal training for princes and princesses; indeed, there was a course titled *Tuhfetü's-*

¹⁰⁹ Hatice Arpaguş, "Bir Telif Türü Olarak İlm-i Hal: Tarihi, Geçmişi ve Fonksiyonu" [*İlm-i Hal as a Literary Genre: Its History, Past, and Functions*], *M.Ü İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, İstanbul (2002): 26.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 31-35.

Şahan in the elementary curriculum of Princess Nazime (1866-1947), one of the daughters of Sultan Abdülaziz I (r. 1861-1876)¹¹¹ in the 1880's.

The *Tuhfetü'ş-Şahan* was written in Turkish with a table of contents in Arabic, in a linguistic level that is quite simple since it was designed for the widest possible audience. As a religious manual it contains practical information and does not discuss challenging theological arguments. The structure of the book was modeled after Birgivi's *Vasiyetname*, but the overall text is much longer. The book is organized in chapters (*fasl*) and explanations (*beyan*). Like *Vasiyetname*, the contents begin with the part on 'principles of faith' (*ahkamü'l-iman*), which introduces the basic features of Islamic belief.¹¹² After the 'principles of faith', the headings are lined up as 'Introduction to prayer (*salat*) and explanations of the concepts of mandatory (*fard*), compulsory (*wacib*), recommended (*mustahab*), allowed (*mubah*), detested (*makruh*), and forbidden (*haram*). The descriptive chapters are followed by a long analysis of ritual ablution (*wuzu*), like obligations of *wuzu*, offensive acts during *wuzu*, full body ablution, and dry ablution.¹¹³ Instructions continue with how to find the right direction (*qiblah*) for *salat* and times of daily prayers.¹¹⁴ The contents include a wide range of topics, namely fasting, marriage, jihad, Islamic toilet etiquette, table manners, prayers for rain and solar eclipse. There is even a chapter for wishing health and happiness to one who has sneezed, and how to kiss the hand of the sovereign and show humble manners against them and others.¹¹⁵ In the end, there is a long chapter, on

¹¹¹ Cevdet Kırpık, *Haremin Son Yüzyılı* [The Last Century of the Imperial Harem] (İstanbul: Timaş, 2012), 24.

¹¹² Eyüb Ebü'l-Beka Kefevi, *Tuhfetü'ş-Şahan* (İstanbul: Matbaa-ı Amire 1843), 3-23.

¹¹³ Ibid, 3.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 4.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 2-6.

‘miscellaneous issues’, which contains passages that do not fit into the main topical categories of the genre.

The author of *Tuhfetü’ş-Şahan*, Eyyüb bin Musa el-Hüseyni Ebü'l-Beka el-Kefevi, was arguably one of the most important scholars of seventeenth-century Crimea who held the offices of *qadi* and *mufti* in different parts of the empire, and was a scholar renowned by his *magnum opus*, *el-Küllîyyat*, a glossary of terms and concepts in Islam. He spent most of his life in his hometown Kefe and served there as a *mufti*, like his father before him.¹¹⁶ Kefevi had close relationships with both the Ottoman and the Crimean administrative circles throughout his career and he wrote the *Tuhfetü’ş-Şahan* at the request of the sultan himself, Mehmed IV (r.1648-1687).¹¹⁷ Kefevi was invited to Constantinople by the grand vizier Dervish Mehmed Pasha (r.1653-1655) and sent to exile to Kefe, by Mehmed IV, due to a complaint to the sultan during his office as the judge of Filibe, (Plovdiv in modern day Bulgaria). Then, Mehmed IV pardoned him after the mediation of the Crimean Khan Selim I Giray (reigned four times between 1671-1704).

The cosmopolitan features of the city of Kefe might be helpful to explain why Kefevi mentions folkloric vampires in his *ilm-i hal*. Kefe was the major port city of the Black Sea with an exceptional history as a trade center with multi-religious, multi-lingual, and multi-ethnic demographics. The city was known for its key role in slave trade from the Western Steppe into Europe since the fourteenth century.¹¹⁸ Under

¹¹⁶ Hulusi Kılıç, s.v. “Ebü'l-Beka el-Kefevi” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol:10 (1988), 298.

¹¹⁷ Arpağuş, “Bir Telif Türü Olarak İlm-i Hal,” 52.

¹¹⁸ Christoph Witzernath, *Eurasian Slavery, Ransom and Abolition in World History, 1200-1860* (Routledge, New York, 2015), 7.

Genoese control, Caffa (Kefe) became the biggest city in the Crimean peninsula¹¹⁹ and remained so until the Ottoman conquest in 1475. During the Ottoman period the city strengthened its place as the main outlet of the slave trade in the Black Sea with vast numbers. Unlike other parts of Crimea that were under the Crimean Khanate's rule, which was a Tatar vassal state of the Ottoman Empire beginning from 1478, Kefe was directly ruled from Constantinople.¹²⁰

As such, Kefe was at the crossroads of beliefs in folkloric vampires, due to slave trade and close relations between the Crimean Tatar and the Circassian communities. The Crimean Peninsula was already a homeland of *obur* belief, in addition, due the Crimean Khanate's slave raids there was a stream of people from neighboring communities, mostly Eastern Slavs and Caucasians both were familiar with the phenomenon. And according to Evliya Çelebi's narrative, Greek and Laz people who constantly sailed across the Black Sea populated some districts of Kefe in which the prominent language was Greek in the seventeenth century.¹²¹ Unfortunately, Kefevi does not give the name of the revenant that he is referring to, yet it is, almost certain that it was the revenant of the Christian Orthodox community.

Kefevi's account on the revenant issue is a compilation from three vampire *fatwas* of Ebussuud Efendi from the sixteenth century. To start, the beginning of the vampire passage in the *Tuhfetü's-Şahan* is excerpted from the first vampire *fatwa*, which was found in a separate *fatwa* collection:

¹¹⁹ Ayşe Pul, "Kefe Sancağı'nın 1. Selim'in Taht Mücadelesinde Oynadığı Role Dair Bazı Değerlendirmeler" [Some Considerations on the Role of Kefe Sanjak in Selim I's Struggle of Enthronement], *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* [The Journal of International Social Research], Volume: 6, Issue: 27, (Summer 2013): 470.

¹²⁰ Allan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), 14.

¹²¹ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname* vol:7, 235, 250.

Some people tear their shrouds, their organs fill with blood and their bodies get reddish after they die and get buried. If the deceased people are Muslims, it means they are harmless thus it is necessary to cover up their graves and there is no need to burn their corpses.¹²²

Then it continues with a sentence that is inspired by a part of the third *fatwa*: “the language is unable and the mind is defective to comprehend the reasons of that occurrence.”¹²³ The consecutive part is taken from the second *fatwa*, “It is well known that some infidels rise up from their graves by night and come to folks’ doors to call the host outside, then the host is found dead the following morning.”¹²⁴

Finally, the last and the most essential part is taken from the third *fatwa*:

In a situation like that, first thing to do is to predict the place of body under the earth, then drive a stake through the navel on the same day the incident happened. If it is not sufficient to get rid of the trouble, you need to open up the grave. If the corpse’s color is reddish, cut the head and throw it to the side of the feet. If the body is in the same position as it was buried, just strangle the corpse. If there is a change in the body’s position, cut the head and throw it to the side of the feet. If all these things do not suffice to expel it [if the revenant continues to kill], burn the body in a fire. During the age of the pious predecessors of the prophet (*al-salaf al-salihīn*) there were numerous examples of this kind of corpse-burning incidents.¹²⁵

¹²² Kefevi, *Tuhfetü’ş-Şahan*, 195.

¹²³ Ibid, 196.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 196.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 196.

The case in the *Tuhfetü'ş-Şahan* is probably *vrykolakas*-inspired, like the one that prompted Ebussuud Efendi's opinions; nevertheless, as one of the leading intellectuals of Crimea, Kefevi must have been aware of the Tatar-Circassian *obur* phenomenon. The compilation of three *fatwas* from different collections indicates they were known as a 'package' in the seventeenth century, even if they were issued in different times and contexts.

The editorial decisions of Kefevi are significant since they probably reflect not only his own stance but capture the Ottoman *ulema*'s response to vampirism as well. The author gives an evasive answer: "the language is unable and the mind is defective to comprehend the reasons of that occurrence," instead of Ebussuud Efendi's other explanation, which emphasizes the punitive character of vampirism; "these were works of wicked souls that attach themselves to the revenants' bodies during their lifetime."¹²⁶ Kefevi wisely averts any possible misinterpretations in his instructional book.

Concerning the descriptive characteristics of the vampire-like supernatural creatures, *Tuhfetü'ş-Şahan* does not answer several basic questions. For instance, the revenant's killing methods are not clear. Also, he does not say whether it sucks blood, eats body parts, or strangles its victims in their sleep. In addition, he does not mention vampire specialists, such as, vampire-seers or vampire-slayers (like they were explained in detail by Evliya Çelebi).¹²⁷ The revenant has no name unlike others; Kefevi's name choice between *cadī*, *obur*, *kara koncolos* and *hortlak* would be enlightening given his geographical location at the crossroads of vampire beliefs.

¹²⁶ Ebussuud Efendi, *Şeyhülislâm Ebussuud Efendi'nin Fetvalarına Göre Kanunî Devrinde Osmanlı Hayatı*, 263-264.

¹²⁷ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname* vol:7, 279-280.

In his religious instructions book, Kefevi adopts a cautious approach as he acknowledges the supernatural threat, but tries to leave the bodies of Muslims out of the corpse-pyre before discussing the extermination methods in detail. He repeats the bold claim of Ebussuud Efendi's about the body burning cases during the age of the first Muslims, companions of the prophet, and the moral guides of the Muslim community for righteous lifestyle.

At this point, in order to grasp the reasoning of *ulema* and laity concerning the adoption of the phenomenon, we need to consider what kind of vampire-like creature did they adopt and any similar notions in Ottoman Muslim culture. Considering the 'vampire *fatwas*', which were inspired Kefevi, and the definition of vampirism as a 'punitive occurrence' that is mainly a problem of non-Muslims, the Orthodox Church's interpretation of vampirism gains importance. As a remainder, the Orthodox Church's definitions of vampire varied and according to the spiritual interpretation; there was a corpse in the grave that was possessed for the sins of the community, or individual sins, and its 'illusion', which is manipulated by the possessor, was disturbing and/or killing people.

From the Ottoman Muslim perspective, it would have been evaluated as a non-Muslim sinner who was getting punished in the grave. Considering the Islamic notion of "punishment in the grave" (*adhab al-qabr*), which was a contested issue in wider Islamic world¹²⁸ yet acknowledged by mainstream Ottoman scholars, including Ebussuud, Birgivi, and Kefevi, entire story makes more sense. The vampire passage in the *Tuhfetü's-Şahan* is in "miscellaneous issues" section along with other matters with secondary importance, however, there is another passage in the first part, the *Principals of Faith (ahkamü'l-îman)*, about the punishment in the grave.

¹²⁸ See Jane Smith and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

The *Principals of Faith* comes before the ritual practices, prayers and everything else, since they declare the concepts and beliefs that make someone a “true Muslim” in the first place. In the *Tuhfetü’ş-Şahan*, the passage about the punishment in the grave is quite detailed:

Punishment in the grave after death is a truth (*hakk*). When a human being dies and is put to the grave, it does not matter if he is a believer, or an infidel, or an elder, or a juvenile, two angels named *Munkar* and *Nakir* come to the grave, and reanimate and raise the corpse. They ask questions about the God, the prophet, the religion, and the *kiblah*, people who believe and obey can answer the questions... Infidels (*kafir*) and sinners (*fasık*) cannot give the right the answers, thus they [the angels] punish [or torture] them [those who cannot answer].¹²⁹

The passage continues with specifics of the interrogation, yet, there is no doubt that non-Muslims and sinners were destined to be tortured in the grave before the Day of Judgment. Furthermore, denying the reality of that preliminary punishment in the grave, like other essentials, could make someone a non-Muslim, thus being subject to the punishment in the grave automatically. Nevertheless, it will not be fair to claim that ‘punishment in the grave’ was seen as the precise equivalent of revenantism since none of the writers openly use them together. However, it would be a wise maneuver to imply, but not relate them together manifestly, since legitimizing a folk belief by linking it to a principal of faith would be risky. Still, most probably, it was a point of reference.

¹²⁹ Kefevi, *Tuhfetü’ş-Şahan*, 11.

Chapter Three

The Ottoman Definitions of Vampirism After the Vampire Craze of the Eighteenth Century

The chapter is about the vampire craze of the eighteenth century, its aftermath, and interactions between uses and definitions of the phenomenon in Western Europe and the Ottoman Empire. The eighteenth century marked the folkloric revenants' first encounter with the emerging enlightenment ideas in the West and designation of the term 'vampire' as a symbol of eastern superstition, backwardness, and ignorance that needs to be enlightened by reason. The period was followed by the formation of the aristocratic literary vampire in the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, the undead manifested themselves in curious ways in the rapidly modernizing nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. The first section of the chapter deals with the report of a *cadī*-hunt in 1833 that was organized in order to destroy two janissary revenants in Ottoman Bulgaria, and was published in the recently founded official newspaper of the state. The case provided the nineteenth-century travellers from the west with an opportunity to decry easterners' ignorance in a fashion appealing to their audience. The second section is about the Ottoman definitions of the term 'vampire' and other vampire-like creatures in Turkish language dictionaries and scholarly works in the nineteenth century. The vampire began to be used interchangeably with *cadī*, *hortlak*, and *kara koncolos*. Besides, there was an emerging inclination to define the phenomenon as an ignorant superstition, which raises the question of the possible impact of 'westernization.' The late Ottoman definitions of the phenomenon almost speak for themselves in reflecting the entangled heritage in the region.

3.1: The Vampire Craze and Its Aftermath

The vampire craze of the eighteenth century marked the onset of the mainstream obsession with the outlandish revenants that do not decay in their graves and could be destroyed only with specific rituals. The popularity of the ‘folkloric vampire’ led to the birth of the ‘literary vampire’ that was stylized by the gothic brushes of nineteenth-century romantics, which eventually turned into a global cultural phenomenon. In this period, ‘vampire’ became the prevalent term for the heretofore multi-label folk belief widespread in the Balkans, Central Europe, the Black Sea, and the Aegean regions.

According to established belief, the triggering event of the European vampire craze was the Treaty of Passarowitz (1718) that was signed between the Ottoman Empire on one side and the Habsburgs and the Republic of Venice on the other, concluding the Austro-Turkish War of 1716-1718. The impact of the treaty was Ottoman territorial loss in the Balkans and Central Europe, most importantly Belgrade, following a shift in the regional power balance in favor of the Habsburgs. The territorial change also led to a greater exposure of Western Europeans to the cultural beliefs and folklore of eastern and central Europe.¹³⁰ In particular, during the short-lived Habsburg occupation of Belgrade (1717-1739), the western part of Europe, in this case represented by Vienna, became aware of strange popular practices among the Orthodox Slav peasantry.

The popularity of folkloric vampire as a symbol of eastern backwardness was coherent with the conceptualization of Eastern Europe in the eighteenth century. As Wolff suggests, from the age of the Renaissance to the age of the Enlightenment, Europe’s perceptions of itself as a continent altered in accordance with centers of

¹³⁰ David Keyworth, “The Aetiology of Vampires and Revenants: Theological Debate and Popular Belief,” *Journal of Religious History* 34, no. 2 (2010): 165.

finance and culture, as Paris, London, and Amsterdam stepped forward at the expense of Rome, Florence, and Venice; while the East replaced the North as the center of ‘barbarism and backwardness.’¹³¹

In consideration of the interactions between the West and the Orthodox Church during the Reformation era, the eighteenth-century discourse had a continuous aspect, however, the war against superstition was fiercer than before. Enlightenment-era Western Europe believed to have a *mission civilisatrice* for ‘the ignorant and superstitious Eastern European Savage.’¹³² Based on Adorno’s ‘extirpation of animism’ and White’s ‘warfare of science’ theories, Bräunlein suggests:

The passage from the darkness of superstition into the light of reason has become a well-worn formula, one which requires virtually no explanation. The debate over the reality of bloodthirsty undead illustrates this struggle in the most graphic manner, and without further ado we can add a new episode to the successful series ‘Science Conquers Superstition’.¹³³

The response of the Habsburg monarchy was significant, since it was the age of the enlightened absolutist Queen Maria Theresa (r.1740-1780) and it was the first major encounter of vampirism and rational Enlightenment thought. Her reign marked the end of witch-hunts in Austria-Hungary ‘from above,’ as the queen prohibited them, similar to France and Prussia.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of the Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994), 5.

¹³² Klaniczay, “Decline of Witches and Rise of Vampires,” 177.

¹³³ Peter J. Bräunlein, “The Frightening Borderlands of Enlightenment: The Vampire Problem,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 43, no. 3 (2012): 710.

¹³⁴ Klaniczay, “Decline of Witches and Rise of Vampires,” 166-167.

The Habsburg military doctors' reports became the primary sources for the European vampire craze. The first reported incident was the alleged vampirism of Petar Blagojevich (1725), a peasant in Serbia, in a village named Kisilova, whose reanimation resulted in the death of nine fellow villagers in eight days. However, the documentation of details was not as good as in the second and more famous case of Arnold Paole (Arnavut Pavle). Paole was identified as a Serbian *hayduk* who was infected by a Turkish vampire in Kosovo and caused a 'vampire epidemic' that killed four people in the first wave (1727-1728), and thirteen to seventeen people in the second wave (1732), according to different reports.¹³⁵

The bible of the vampire craze was Catholic scholar Antoine Augustine Calmet's treatise *On Balkan and Central European Hungarian, Slav and German Vampires and Revenants* (1746),¹³⁶ based on a wide variety of legends, newspaper accounts, anecdotes, and letters concerning vampires.¹³⁷ He published an extended edition in 1751 following a major popular response to his treatise that led to a flow of letters from all around Europe about vampirism incidents.

The Catholic accusations of the Orthodox Church about the issue of revenants increased with the support of the Enlightenment ideas, while the ecclesiastical authorities relentlessly condemned the prevalent popular belief in the East. Pope Benedict XIV (r.1740-1758) led an anti-superstition campaign and explained the phenomenon as hallucinations produced by an overactive imagination due to either madness, injury to the brain, too much fasting, or lack of sleep.¹³⁸ In addition, he

¹³⁵ Barber, *Vampires, Burial and Death*, 15-20.

¹³⁶ The original title in French is *Dissertations sur les apparitions des anges, des démons et des esprits, et sur les revenants et vampires de Hongrie, de Bohême, de Moravie et de Silésie*.

¹³⁷ Senn, *Were-Wolf and Vampire in Romania*, 39.

¹³⁸ Keyworth, "The Aetiology of Vampires and Revenants," 166.

relentlessly rebuked the bishops of Eastern Europe for promoting the superstitious belief in the existence of vampires, and accused some priests might actually continue to practices in order “to obtain from gullible peasants the payment of exorcisms and masses.”¹³⁹ Likewise, in his treatise about vampires, Calmet states that the Greek Church made up things in order to strengthen its control over laity.¹⁴⁰

A peculiar aspect of the popularization process of the phenomenon was its successful integration into the political terminology. In the aftermath of the vampire craze, Voltaire’s (1694-1778) quote was considered the notion’s first sensational employment in the political sphere, as he described stock-jobbers, brokers, and men of business as “who sucked the blood of the people in broad daylight.”¹⁴¹ The metaphor has remained in use since then, most famously in Karl Marx’ socio-economic texts.¹⁴²

In the course of the nineteenth century, the notion established its place in everyday use. As Robinson declares in her study on the usage of the vampire metaphor in the pre-Great war period in the western mass media: “everyone in the late nineteenth century was familiar with vampires from their daily newspapers, their

¹³⁹ Ibid, 166.

¹⁴⁰ Augustine Calmet, *The Phantom World: The Philosophy of Spirits, Apparitions* (London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1850), 3-4.

¹⁴¹ Matthew Bunson, s.v. “Voltaire” *The Vampire Encyclopedia* (New York: Gramercy Books, 2000), 275.

¹⁴² For a detailed study on the topic see Mark Neocleous, “The Political Economy of the Dead: Marx’s Vampires” *History of Political Thought*. vol: xxiv. no: 4, Winter (2003): 668-684.

monthly periodicals, and their serialized novels.”¹⁴³ The vampire metaphor in the west was used in anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic, anti-capitalist, and xenophobic subtexts.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Sara Libby Robinson, *Blood Will Tell: Vampires as Political Metaphors Before World War I* (Brighton, Mass.; Lancaster: Academic Studies; Gazelle [distributor, 2012), xv.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, xv.

3.2: The Janissary Revenants or a Proper Vampire Scandal?

The nineteenth century marks the modernization reforms in social life, administration, legal code, and military, including the first Turkish newspaper, the first Turkish novel, the first Constitution, the first modern universities, and the first Turkish-to-Turkish dictionaries. It was an era of reconstructing the Ottoman identity in the midst of emerging nationalist ideas and accompanying rebellions. One of the most debated and bloody military reforms of the nineteenth century was the Abolishment of Janissary Corps (1826), or the Auspicious Event according to official Ottoman historiography.

Janissaries (fourteenth century-1826) were elite infantry units of the Ottoman army and the first modern standing army of Europe. The corps was originally staffed by *devshirme* recruits, the boys that were collected from Christian families as blood tax; however, by the late sixteenth century born Muslims began to infiltrate the system in order to benefit from the advantages of rising in the ranks of military class.¹⁴⁵ By the nineteenth century, the glorious warriors of the heroic past became major powerbrokers with the reputation of being uncontrollable, not receptive to reforms, and strong enough to organize palace coups. In other words, janissaries were first-class troublemakers in the eyes of the reformer Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839).

In the eighteenth century, the history of Ottoman modernization was literally linked with the history of janissaries. The first failed attempt at western-style reforms was the so-called Tulip Period (1718-1730). The era ended with a popular rebellion led by an Albanian Janissary chief, Patrona Halil, and the grand vizier was executed,

¹⁴⁵ In the Ottoman context, it is one of the three main occupational groups (scholars, military, and bureaucracy) of state organization.

while the Sultan, Ahmed III (r.1703-1730) was dethroned. Selim III (r.1789-1807) led the most serious reform movement before Mahmud II, since he was bold enough to form a new elite infantry unit as part of his *nizam-i cedid*, literally the New Order, equipped with modern weapons, uniformed in French style, and staffed by Turkish boys from Anatolia as a clear substitute for corrupted Janissaries. The Sultan was dethroned by a Janissary revolt and killed by a group of assassins afterwards (1808).

Mahmud II openly declared his intentions to recruit a new army (1808) modeled after the previously failed attempt of Selim III. However, he had to disband the units after a robust janissary revolt and several thousand deaths. After long struggle, rebellion, suppression, and mass-massacres, including an artillery assault on Janissary barracks that killed approximately four thousand janissaries at once, the janissary corps was abolished in 1826. The incident is referred to as the Auspicious Event, *vaka-i hayriye*, in the official historiography and was accompanied by defamation campaign against the janissaries. There is little or no doubt concerning the existence of the defamation campaign; yet, how far the political authority went in this matter is a matter of dispute. For sure, one the most intriguing aspects of the post-abolition public discussion of the affair were the ‘vampirism accusations’ against the dead janissaries, and claims about mass vampire-slaying parties in janissary graveyards.

The origin of the debate is an article in the official newspaper¹⁴⁶ about a letter concerning the emergence of *cadīs* in *Tirnova* (*Veliko Tarnovo* in modern day Bulgaria) and their subsequent extermination. The revenants were disturbing peace, changing the places of stuff, and attempting to strangle people without being seen. Then, villagers demanded help and the authority hired a famous vampire-slayer,

¹⁴⁶ The article was published in the first Turkish language newspaper in the Ottoman Empire, *Takvim-i Vakayi*, n° 68, October 6, 1833 (21 Cemaziyü'l-evvel, 1245).

caduclı, named Nikola who found the graves of the revenants. Then the villagers realized that the *cadīs* were two janissary soldiers who were disturbing the community during their lifetime, too. After necessary examinations of hair, nails, and eyes, Nikolai the vampire slayer destroyed the revenants by staking, boiling their hearts in the water, and finally burning their corpses. The ritual was legitimized by Hoca Saadeddin Efendi's *fatwa* from the sixteenth century.

The article was first addressed in Reşad Ekrem Koçu's popular history book *Strange Events in Our History* (1951). Koçu stresses the superstitious and humorous aspects of this unusual and terrifying incident.¹⁴⁷ For sure, the newspaper article also had propaganda purposes given that it was published in the official gazette and had a strong anti-janissary attitude. As Eldem points out, the writer skillfully implies (it was prohibited to use the name 'janissary') that the condemned *cadīs* were janissaries and the account is full of tributes and compliments to the Sultan and curses for the abolished military unit, which allegedly states the community's stance.¹⁴⁸ In fact, there was nothing unusual about the article, since there were similar cases reported in Orthodox and Muslim communities in the nineteenth-century. However, the surprising thing about the case was that by its placement in the official gazette it officially became a kind of political metaphor.

Consequently, the event caught a western traveller's attention for being an obvious vampire case. In the part in which he narrates ignorant Turks' superstitions, the Reverend Robert Walsh (1772-1852) claims that the Sultan uses these beliefs as a tool in political scene:

¹⁴⁷ Reşad Ekrem Koçu, *Tarihimizde Garip Vakalar* [Strange Events in Our History] (İstanbul: Varlık Yayınları, 1951), 9.

¹⁴⁸ Eldem, "Yeniçeri Taşları ve Tarih Üzerine," 7.

In this way the memory of the devoted janissaries is still held up to public execration. It was gravely stated in the government press, a few months after its establishment, that a town in Roumelia was haunted by their phantoms; that their bodies had become vampires, which every night escaped from their graves, and drank the blood of the inhabitants. The graves, therefore, of all that had been buried there were opened, and their remains pinned to the ground, by having stakes driven through them. Here, then, is another of those barbarous superstitions long since driven from Europe, but which a Turk still clings to.¹⁴⁹

Actually, there were fundamental differences between the newspaper article and Walsh's claims. Firstly, there was nothing about blood-sucking of the inhabitants or escaping from the grave; indeed, the revenant spirits of the janissaries were basically moving stuff and babies in villagers' houses. Their corpses were getting their punishments in the grave, in a fashion we are familiar with from *vrykolakas* cases, or that were familiar to the readers of the newspaper from the Islamic concept of "punishment in the grave" (*'adhab al-qabr*). Besides, there was nothing about a mass vampire hunt in the newspaper article, only about the two suspected corpses being exterminated by a professional vampire-slayer or *cadıci*. The author made editorial decisions to show the event like a proper vampire scandal in order to be more appealing to his western audience.

In his collaboration with Thomas Allom (1804-1872), who illustrated the sceneries of Constantinople and the seven churches of Asia Minor, Walsh argues,

¹⁴⁹ Robert Walsh, *A Residence at Constantinople During a Period Including the Commencement, Progress and Termination of the Greek and Turkish Revolutions* (London: Westley & Davis, 1836), 464.

again, that the tombstones of the janissaries were destroyed on the order of the sultan and most of the janissary corpses were exhumed and staked. In the section about the graveyards in Constantinople he states:

When the Janissaries were extirpated, the vengeance of the Sultan pursued them even to their tombs. Many of them reported to be vampires, their graves were opened, and their bodies pinned to the earth by stakes, to prevent their rising to suck the blood of the faithful; while all the emblems that appeared above ground, to designate them, were destroyed.¹⁵⁰

Walsh was obviously influenced by the vampire stories circulating in Western Europe during the period, and his narrations were not in tune with the newspaper article. However, his so-called eyewitness statements were repeated in the *Dublin University Magazine* in an article based on his narratives in 1839.¹⁵¹ Walsh unhesitatingly used the term ‘vampire’ in lieu of the original *cadī* without any remark; indeed, the nineteenth century was the period of integration of the term ‘vampire’ into Turkish language, thus his attitude was reasonable.

¹⁵⁰ Thomas Allom and Robert Walsh, *Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor: Illustrated* (London: Peter Jackson, late Fisher, son, & Company, 1839), 24.

¹⁵¹ “The Turkish Empire,” *Dublin University Magazine* v. xiii (1839): 141.

3.3: New Definitions of an Old Belief

Among all the terms in Turkish language that are glossed or translated as ‘vampire,’ *cadī/cadu* is perhaps the most misunderstood one. While in the Ottoman context it referred to all types of revenants, in modern Turkish it strictly means ‘witch,’ which has led to various misunderstandings. Besides, there are different views on the first meaning and secondary meanings of the term. For instance, Sariyannis claims that the widespread meaning of *cadī* was sorcerer, or witch in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,¹⁵² while Eldem argues that the term gained its ‘modern’ (‘witch’) meaning after the nineteenth century as a result of western influences, while it was used primarily to denote vampire-like supernatural beings in earlier periods.¹⁵³

Lehçe-i Osmani (The Language of the Ottomans) (1876) was the first Turkish-to-Turkish dictionary in the Ottoman Empire compiled by two-times grand vizier Ahmed Vefik Paşa (1823, Constantinople – 1891, Constantinople) and it has an article on *cadī* that defines the term as “a ghou! that comes out of grave, *kara koncolos*, vampire,” and continues with the second meaning of the term as a “sorcerer, witch.”¹⁵⁴ The article indicates that at this point in time the term *cadī* still had the meaning of both the ‘witch’ and the ‘vampire,’ who is identified with a ghou!, a supernatural being from Arab folklore.¹⁵⁵ Interestingly, in the introduction of the first literary vampire novel of the nineteenth century, Polidori claims that the superstition that inspired him was originally an Arab belief that extended to Greek

¹⁵² Sariyannis, “Of Ottoman Ghosts, Vampires and Sorcerers,” 207-208.

¹⁵³ Eldem, “Yeniçeri Taşları ve Tarih Üzerine,” 6.

¹⁵⁴ *Lehçe-i Osmani*, ed. Ahmet Vefik Paşa, 2nd ed., s.v. “*Cadī*”.

¹⁵⁵ See Ahmed al-Rawi, “The Mythical Ghou! in Arabic Culture,” accessible at: http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~caforum/volume8/vol8_article3.html

culture only after the establishment of Christianity,¹⁵⁶ since ancient Greeks could not have believe in this kind of nonsense.

Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909) commissioned Şemseddin Sami's (1850-1904) well-known Turkish-to-Turkish dictionary *Kamus-i Türkî* (The Turkish Dictionary) (1901); it was the first dictionary that was edited according to modern standards as well as the first Ottoman Turkish-to-Turkish dictionary that comprise the word 'Turkish' in the title. There are two separate articles about *cadu* and *cadî* in *Kamus-i Türkî*. The first one is about the original Persian term for sorcerer; the latter is about the term that was derived from the former, but that designated a vampire-like revenant. The wording of the entry on vampire *cadî* is indicative of the writer's attitude: "according to the ignorant beliefs of the commoners, dead people that allegedly leave their graves and wander at night in scary appearances like a jinn, a vision, vampire, *kara koncolos*."¹⁵⁷ The vampire *cadî* is thus treated as a superstition, while the witch *cadu* is described more matter-of-factly.

Boratav defines *cadî* as a borrowing from Persian (*ğadu*), which had some features of the western vampire and is used as an equivalent of *hortlak* and ghost in Turkish. He argues that the phenomenon was a result of bad deeds or being naturally born bad, and states that the notion of *hortlamak* (to reanimate in the grave and snore and grunt) was most probably a pre-Islamic concept. In some cases, *cadî* acts like a ghoull and eats organs of new buried corpses, while a living *cadî* has as an enemy within character. He also mentions the profession of *cadîci* as a Rumelian phenomenon.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ John William Polidori, *The Vampyr; a Tale* (London, 1819), xix.

¹⁵⁷ *Kamus-i Türkî*, ed. Şemseddin Sami, 1st ed., s.v. "Cadu", "Cadî".

¹⁵⁸ Boratav, *The Turkish Mythology*, 46-47.

The term that Evliya Çelebi used as the exact equivalent of *obur* in the *Seyahatname* was *kara koncolos*, or its derivation *koncolos*, a Turkish word for a “goblin, bogey,” according to Redhouse.¹⁵⁹ Ahmet Vefik defines *koncolos* as “like *umacı* and *gulyabanī*, an imaginary horror character invented in order to scare people [a bogey man] or a dead person comes back from the grave, a vampire.”¹⁶⁰ *Koncolos* is still relevant in Anatolian folklore but, of course, without extermination methods, and it was one of the *exotica* creatures mentioned by Leo Allatios as well.¹⁶¹

The term *hortlak* was one of the synonyms for vampire that was coming from a Turkish root and was definitely related to the punishment in the grave. Ahmed Vefik gives the meaning of the verb ‘*hortlamak*’ as “to snort and grunt like wild animals, suffering in the grave as an unhappy person.” Since it is clear that he was aware of the term ‘vampire’ from his *cadī* article, he intentionally prevented to use it, and punishment in the grave was central to his definition.¹⁶² Likewise in his *Lexicon*, Sir Winston Redhouse explains *hortlak* as “a corpse supposed to snort and groan in its grave from supernatural torture; a kind of vampire or ghost.”¹⁶³

A strange explanation for the term is featured in one of the first ethnographic works on Ottoman customs. *Osmanlı Adet, Merasim ve Tabirleri* (The Ottoman Traditions, Rituals, and Expressions) is a late Ottoman ethnography book about everyday life, beliefs, folklore, clothing, houses and gardens, alongside language, economics, art, and education, written by Abdülaziz ibn Cemaleddin in 1910’s. In the long section about beliefs, he refers to the folk-belief in vampire-like creature as *hortlak* and states that the belief is “quite strange and ignorant”. According to his

¹⁵⁹ *Turkish and English Lexicon*, ed. Sir J. W. Redhouse, 3rd ed., s.v. “*koncolos*”.

¹⁶⁰ *Lehçe-i Osmani*, ed. Ahmet Vefik Paşa, 2nd ed., s.v. “*koncolos*”.

¹⁶¹ Harthup, *On the Beliefs of the Greeks*, 29-30.

¹⁶² *Lehçe-i Osmani*, ed. Ahmet Vefik Paşa, 2nd ed., s.v. “*hortlamak*”.

¹⁶³ *Turkish and English Lexicon*, ed. Sir J. W. Redhouse, 3rd ed., s.v. “*hortlak*”.

definition people used to believe in existence of revenants, *hortlak* and *vampir*, which were products of their imagination and fear. Then he claims the followers of the belief relates the process of coming-back-to-life with the type of soil in the region, thus if the soil type is not suitable to leave the grave, the reanimated corpse stays in the grave. He states that *hortlak* and *vampir* are same, since the supernatural being is called *hortlak* in Edirne and *vampir* in Manastır. The belief is prevalent in these two regions because they have the most suitable types of soil. He refers to two methods for fighting the vampire; the first one is to destroy the revenant since the undead can be killed with a rifle that is used by a high-skilled, natural hermaphrodite hunter. And the second method is for protection, covering the grave with non-hydrated lime and staking the corpse through soil can prevent the comeback of the corpse.¹⁶⁴ The author interestingly does not mention *cadī*.

The concept of *obur* was not mentioned in Redhouse Lexicon, *Lehçe-i Osmani*, or *Kamus-i Türkī*, which makes sense since Evliya translated it for his Turkish speaking readers from Tatar language in the first place. However, the term remained relevant in the Black Sea region until the twentieth century, for instance, in Crimean Tatar, Gagavuz, and Karachay folklores.¹⁶⁵ In an ethnographic work from the nineteenth century, *Twelve Years of Study in Bulgaria* (1877), the author states that the pure Bulgar Slavs refer to the vampire *upior* while Turkish speaking mixed

¹⁶⁴ Abdülaziz Bey, *Osmanlı Adet, Merasim ve Tabirleri* [The Ottoman Traditions, Rituals and Expressions] eds. Kazım Arısan, Duygu Arısan Günay, (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995), 374.

¹⁶⁵ For an ethnographic account about the Karachay belief about shape shifting *oburs* in Karachay folklore see Jan L. Perkowski, *The Darkling: A Treatise on Slavic Vampirism* (Ohio: Slavica Publishers, Inc., 1989), 35-36.

Bulgars, or Gageus, call it *obour*.¹⁶⁶ Throughout the passage the author uses two terms interchangeably as Turkish and Slavic speaking communities did in the late nineteenth century Bulgaria.

¹⁶⁶ Stanislas Graham Bower St. Clair and Charles A. Brophy, *Twelve Years study of the Eastern Question in Bulgaria: Being a Revised Edition of "A Residence in Bulgaria"* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1877), 29.

Conclusion

This thesis has contributed to the understanding of the early modern belief in vampire-like supernatural beings as a regional phenomenon widespread in the Balkans, Central Europe, Thrace, and the Aegean and Black Sea regions, by exploring Ottoman Muslim responses to it. In contrast to the previous research, the thesis has shown that the folkloric vampire belief was a shared cultural component among diverse ethno-religious communities of the Ottoman realm and the narratives on folkloric vampires frequently reflected that multicultural setting.

The missionaries of the Counter-Reformation Catholicism, which declared war upon superstition, produced the first, albeit ideologically loaded, sources about the folkloric vampires in the Orthodox community of the Ottoman Empire. In fact, the Orthodox Church was also trying to suppress the belief and related practices with its own methods. However, the official Orthodox acknowledgment of the folkloric vampires as a ‘punitive occurrence’ and attempts to generate legitimate revenant-expelling methods had a role in the spread of the belief, as well as in the formation of the Muslim Ottoman authorities’ responses.

The Ottoman responses to the vampire-like supernatural beings can be traced through legal documents, literature, and educational texts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The crucial approach was that of the sixteenth-century Ottoman Muslim legal scholars, who legitimized the ritual exhumation and destruction of revenant ‘infidel’ corpses that were disturbing the Muslim folk’s peace. It was seemingly a reluctant admittance with obscure legitimization arguments; the reference points were probably the corpse-burning practices in punishment of the heretics in the first years of the Caliphate and the ‘punishment in the grave’ concept of Islam.

However, that first corpse-burning permit for infidels paved the way for the extermination of Muslim revenants, which was documented at the turn of the eighteenth century for the first time. The related correspondence reflected the continuing reluctance in corpse burning practices, however, it also showed that the folk vampire infiltrated the legal system. The *Seyahatname* stories about the Circassian *oburs* and *obur* belief in the northern Black Sea region point out the seventeenth-century Ottoman views on the phenomenon and are early examples of the modern vampire myth. Finally, the revenant passage in the religious manual *Tuhfetü'ş-Şahan* moves the debates on the 'sincerity' of the jurists' reception to another level, since it is an instructional book for the entire Muslim community.

As the European witch-hunts gradually ceased in the Enlightenment era, the severity of western criticism of the allegedly 'superstitious Orthodox' intensified. During the vampire craze and its aftermath the folkloric vampire as a symbol of superstition became a tool to define the east as well as a popular metaphor in political debates and literature. The western approaches had an impact on Ottoman perceptions of the phenomenon as the Ottoman modernization process accelerated in the nineteenth century. In an example of their utilization as a political metaphor, the defamation activities following the abolishment of the Janissary corps included vampirism accusations. Meanwhile, the first definitions of the term 'vampire' in the nineteenth century reflected its similarities to existent vampire-like revenants in Ottoman culture, since the concept was smoothly integrated into Ottoman glossaries as an old 'Ottoman superstition' without any religious or ethnic specification.

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