Müberra Kapusuz

A STUDY ON GELİBOLULU MUSTAFA ÂLİ'S *MIRROR OF THE WORLDS* (*MİR'ÂTÜ'L-AVÂLİM*): PATRONAGE, POLITICS, AND MILLENNIAL ANXIETIES AT THE COURT OF SULTAN MURAD III (r. 1574-1595)

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with a specialization
in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies.

Central European University Private University

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by

Müberra Kapusuz

(Turkey)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

Central European University Private University, Vienna, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Chair, Examination Committee

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Thesis Supervisor

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Examiner

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External Reader

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External Supervisor

Author's declaration

I, the undersigned, **Müberra Kapusuz**, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies, with a specialization in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

This thesis is a historical study on *Mir'âtü'l-Avâlim* (Mirror of the Worlds), an often-overlooked treatise written in 1587 by the famous Ottoman historian and bureaucrat, Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli. The *Mirror* was commissioned during the reign of Sultan Murad III (r. 1574-95) by Governor-General Doğancı Mehmed Pasha, who was the sultan's chief royal favorite and power-broker between 1584-1589. It is my contention that the *Mirror* sheds light on the patterns of royal patronage as well as new dynamics in court politics during the sultanate of Murad III. I further argue that the content of the *Mirror* explicates the late sixteenth-century apocalyptic expectations at the Ottoman imperial court and capital in relation to the impending first Islamic Millennium in the year 1000 AH (1591-1592 CE). Accordingly, through a historical contextual and context analysis of the *Mirror*, I aim to demonstrate how some literary works produced under royal patronage at this particular moment in Ottoman/Islamic history served as instruments of political fashioning for the Ottoman sultan's messianic/millennial image, which had been a salient feature of premodern Ottoman kingship since the late fifteenth century.

In his *Mirror*, Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli raised his suspicions against the End of Times, as Muslims had expected to happen in the year 1000 AH. Moreover, as I aim to demonstrate, Âli's critical stance vis-à-vis the contemporary political and social developments play a significant role in his composition of this work, which runs against the current millennialist atmosphere. In short, the thesis aims to bring a short treatise by a famous sixteenth-century Ottoman intellectual to the fore, and explore how and why the *Mirror* was written in the late 1580s.

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The writing process of this thesis coincided with a strange period of time that I, and the whole world was in. I would like to express my gratitude to a group of people who supported me in different ways during these times.

Firstly, I thank my supervisor Günhan Börekçi for his guidance and supports over the course of two years. I also thank Tijana Krstić for accepting to be my second reader, and Kaya Şahin as the external reader of this thesis. I would like to thank Zsófi Gode, our MA program coordinator, for her efforts to keep us on track during a period of world-wide administrative chaos.

I owe a dept of gratitude to my *alma mater*, İstanbul Şehir University, which was shut down a year ago, and the whole faculty of the Department of History for inspiring us in a certain perspective to look at the world, even if we failed to appreciate it enough back then.

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Lastly, I thank each of my family members for bearing with me. My two sisters and brother-in-law did not spare their support. My parents' efforts to see us in better places have never been grown less. They deserve the biggest thanks for anything I achieved, if ever.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandmother, who has left this world three years ago around this time of the year, for she always advised me to complete "at least" a master's degree. She will always be remembered with the warmest feelings.

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List of Abbreviations

DİA: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi (online)

Notes on Translation

1) Concerning the proper nouns, i.e., names, a simple transliteration is used of the relevant language.

   1.1 Turkish proper nouns are written in their Modern Turkish usage, such as Süleyman, Selim. Similarly, the historical terms also used in their Modern Turkish forms in italic, such as ***musâhib, reisülküttâb***.
   1.2 The long vowels in pseudonyms or in words that may cause confusion are indicated. **Murâdî , Âli**.
   1.3 For the Arabic proper nouns, simple English transliteration rules are followed, e.g, **Al-Bistami, Ibn Arabi.**

2) If a Turkish, Persian or Arabic word, has an established Anglicized form it is preferred over others, such as **sheikh, pasha, agha**. It also applies to place names, such as **Aleppo, Istanbul**.

3) The Persian and Arabic book titles are given in the simplest Turkish usages, with an English translation in brackets.

4) Plurals of non-English terms use the English plural suffix ‘s’, e.g., ***telhise*s.**

5) Translations from the Qur’an belongs to ‘Abd Allah Yusuf Ali (d.1953) cited from http://islam101.com/quran/yusufAli

6) All dates are given according to Common Era unless otherwise specified, e.g., **AH.**

Introduction

This study is an attempt to reveal the world around an undervalued treatise, namely *Mir'âtü'l-Avâlim* (*Mirror of the Worlds*) written by Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli (d.1600) in 1587. Despite this treatise was written by one of the most celebrated authors in Ottoman history, it has not so far received much attention from scholars as Âli's many other works. Accordingly, the *Mirror* occupies the main focus of this thesis, and I treat it as a 'mirror' itself which reflects the dynamics and concerns of its milieu.

The central question of my thesis is how and why Mustafa Âli composed the *Mirror of the Worlds*. This question actually brings to the fore three interrelated phenomena in late sixteenth-century Ottoman imperial context: 1) patronage networks; 2) millennial expectations; and 3) the question of 'decline'. In his several works, Mustafa Âli describes the court of Sultan Murad III (r. 1574-1595) as being supported by four political figures, namely, the royal favourites Şemsi Ahmed Pasha (d. 1580) and Doğancı Mehmed Pasha (d. 1589), the royal tutor Hoca Sadeddin Efendi (d. 1599), and the chief white eunuch Gazanfer Agha (d. 1603).[1] The *Mirror* was written upon the request of Doğancı Mehmed Pasha, who was Murad III's beloved royal favourite (*musâhib*) and chief power and patronage broker in the 1580s. Mehmed Pasha signifies the emergence of a new and more powerful type of royal favourite at the Ottoman imperial court under Murad III, whose assertive style of sultanic rule aimed at counter-balancing the power of his ruling viziers in the government. I would thus argue that the *Mirror* can and should be analysed in relation to the changing dynamics of politics and patronage during the 21-year-long reign of Murad III.

[1] Jan Schmidt, *Pure Water for Thirsty Muslims: A Study of Mustafa Âli of Gallipoli's Künhü'l Ahbar* (Leiden: Het Oosters Instituut, 1991), 123.

Although the commissioning of the *Mirror* took place between Mehmed Pasha and Mustafa Âli, the sultan was the ultimate addressee of this work, and in this regard, it had three main functions. Firstly, it served its author to gain the royal favour of the sultan via his favourite with the hope of advancing Âli's political career. In other words, the *Mirror* was a means of self-fashioning for its author within the existing patronage system of the Ottoman court. Secondly, as a commissioned work, the text served as a way of the sultan's self-fashioning before the eyes of its readers via a certain image of the sultan created by the author. Finally, the *Mirror* addressed the general concerns of many people in the Ottoman world concerning the timing of the Apocalypse in accordance with the lifespan of the world determined by the time of the creation, which in turn sparked millennial expectations in the 1570s and 1580s.

Approaching the year 1000 AH (1591-1592), Sultan Murad seems to have taken the advantage of fashioning himself as a messianic/millennial ruler. The exigency of the volatile socio-political atmosphere of the time may well explain the need of creating such an image. Murad III ruled an empire which was surrounded by all sorts of socio-economic and political troubles that shook the foundations of the state. Due to the costly Ottoman-Safavid Wars of 1578-1590, the 1580s witnessed a severe monetary crisis, which was coupled with student (*suhte*) revolts and migrations towards urban centres. In the meantime, the occurrence of a comet in 1577 further deepened anxieties of people that the End of Times was near. In this context, I would argue that Âli's *Mirror* was written to provide an answer to these eschatological concerns while presenting Murad III in the image of the millennial ruler.

In current literature, the references to the *Mirror* can be divided into two categories. On the one hand, in few studies, the *Mirror* is briefly mentioned in relation to the discussion of the above-noted millennial expectations. In the majority of scholarly works, on the other hand, the *Mirror* is typically noted among the works of Mustafa Âli and depicted as a short treatise on history before the creation of Adam that includes much superstition. However, I argue that a

close study of this treatise reveals that the question of determining the lifespan of the world was the ultimate issue that Mustafa Âli tackled with in the *Mirror*, while the accounts on the pre-Adamic worlds had functioned to enrich his discussion as well as to add a narrational element. Hence, in this thesis, I have mainly focused on the millennial expectations and anxieties that were present at the Ottoman court during the reign of Murad III, and far rooted in the Ottoman intellectual and political spheres.

By definition, millennialist thought is a form of social mysticism that is deeply subversive in the political sense. The concept connotes a radical change to take place in the existing conditions of the entire world.[2] Accordingly, it also provides a premodern dynastic ruler such as Murad III, the perfect ground on which he could fashion his divine persona. Besides, the millennial ideas not only underline a cosmic-divine phenomenon, but also suggest social perfectionism which requires human agency besides divine powers.[3]

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries witnessed repeated millennial/apocalyptic expectations and related socio-political and religious movements in the larger Mediterranean world, especially from the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 onwards. For instance, according to Gennadius Scholarius (d. 1473), the first patriarch of the Orthodox Church in Ottoman Istanbul, the end of the world was to occur in 1492, when seven thousand years from the creation was complete. The millennial apocalypse is typically expected when a universal regime is established under a single religious-political authority following wars of domination among different contestants.[4] Thus, the apocalyptic expectations in the early modern Ottoman world were especially rampant in times of long wars and political strife. Yet, it should be noted

[2] Richard Landes, "The Varieties of Millennial Experience," in *The Apocalyptic Complex: Perspectives, Histories, Persistence*, eds. Nadia al-Bagdadi, David Marno and Matthias Riedl (Budapest: CEU Press, 2018), 5.
[3] Ibid., 6.
[4] Cornell Fleischer, "A Mediterranean Apocalypse: Prophecies of Empire in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 61 (2018), 20.

that towards the end of the sixteenth century the combination of rare astronomical events like the Grand Conjunction and the first Muslim millennium created an apocalyptic atmosphere which gave birth to a unique combination of prophets, movements, and ideologies.[5]

The integration of the millenarian discourse into political sphere has revealed itself especially through scholarly/intellectual production. In this regard, Hüseyin Yılmaz points to a critical triangular relation between the ideas of millennialism, occultism and the Ottoman sultan's court. According to Yılmaz, the long-discredited sciences of astrology, geomancy, and occult sciences became respectable and integrated into political discourse that even the mainstream Sunni scholar-jurists and Sufis engaged in prognostication.[6] Thanks to recent studies, this so-called "the mystical turn" within the Ottoman political thought was brought into discussion, and studies on the reception of apocalyptic literature at the Ottoman court is on the march.

However, the related academic literature and discussions focus mainly on the era of Sultan Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566). Concerning the reign of Murad III, Cornell Fleischer's pioneering work on Mustafa Âli, and Özgen Felek's studies on Sultan Murad's dream accounts and the ways of self-fashioning embedded in it, are the two of very few studies leading the way to understand the impact of the Islamic Millennium on Ottoman intelligentsia vis-à-vis the political discourse.[7] Meanwhile, the studies of Günhan Börekçi and Emine Fetvacı provide

[5] Stephan P Blake, *Time in Early Modern Islam: Calendar, Ceremony, and Chronology in the Safavid, Mughal, and Ottoman Empires* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 141.
[6] Hüseyin Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 19.
[7] Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541-1600)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1896); Özgen Felek, *Kitâbü'l-Menâmât: Sultan III. Murad'ın Rüya Defterleri* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2012); eadem, "(Re)creating Image and Identity: Dreams and Visions as a Means of Murad III's Self Fashioning," in *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies*, eds. Özgen Felek and Alexander D. Knysh (New Yok: Sunny Press, 2012), 250-256; and eadem, "Fears, Hopes, and Dreams: The Talismanic Shirts of Murad III," *Arabica* 64/3-4 (2017): 647-672.

some new perspectives especially regarding the politics of power and the patterns of patronage at the Ottoman imperial court in the late sixteenth century.

Mustafa Âli's Career Path

Being one of the most prolific writes of the sixteenth century, Âli was the author of nearly fifty works from poetry to history. His life is thus well-studied while his biography is constructed in Cornell Fleischer's pioneering work, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire*. For the purpose of this thesis, let me briefly mention Mustafa Âli's career path based on these studies.

Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli, also known as Âli Mustafa Efendi, was born in the western Anatolian town of Gelibolu in 1541. In his collection of poems that was compiled under the title of *Lustre of a Hundred Jewels* (*Sadef-i Sâd Güher*), Âli provides his curriculum vitae for the readers by starting with a description of the city he was born in: "My hometown is the town of Gallipoli /On the way to the Arab and Persian lands /An inshore land of beauty."[8] He then continues with his family and education: He was born as the first son of Ahmed ibn Abdullah who was from a family of scholars. Âli had two brothers, one became pursuivant and the other secretary. By the time he finished his initial studies in Gelibolu, Âli was already famous as a talented poet. In the meantime, he decided to become a scribe at the Porte (*kâtib-i divan*) in Istanbul.[9] Overall, during this earlier period, his two works, *The Moon and the Sun* (*Mihr ü Mâh*) and *Curios of the Lovers* (*Tuhfetü'l- Uşşâk*) became famous.

While he was continuing his madrasa education in Istanbul, Mustafa Âli held his first official job as a scribe. After graduating, he appealed for a post of madrasa teacher (*müderris*)

[8] See İsmail Hakkı Aksoyak, "Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli'nin Sadef-i Sad Güher Adlı Antolojisinin Ön Sözü," *Türklük Bilimi Araştırmaları* 5 (1997), 293.
[9] Ibid., 305.

or a judge (*kadı*) but his request was rejected by Süleyman I. Nevertheless, Âli was appointed as a scribe to Lala Mustafa Pasha, a prominent vizier of the time who would become a patron of Âli for many years. With Lala Mustafa Pasha, Âli travelled to Aleppo, Damascus and Egypt. After the dismissal of Mustafa Pasha in 1568, he appealed to Prince Murad (the future's Murad III) and attended in his princely court in Manisa. After presenting a number of poetic works to Prince Murad, Âli left for Istanbul with the hope of a career at the imperial court. He presented his *Heft Meclis* (*Seven Gatherings*) to Grand Vizier Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, but only to get a scribe position again, this time under Ferhad Pasha, the governor of Bosnia. Upon Murad's accession to throne, he once again travelled to the capital to present the new sultan his book on history of the prophets, entitled *The Cream of Histories* (*Zübdetü't-Tevârih*); but to his disappointment, he could not secure a position at Murad III's court, thus he had to travel back to Bosnia. Fleischer depicts Âli's experiences in Bosnia as follows:

> "(…) he was thrust into an environment in which leaming counted for less than bravery in battle, in which success was measured not in numbers of works authored or distinguished teachers but in service and *timar* grants. In short, in Bosnia Âli entered a new cultural milieu and new professional system (…)."[10]

When Lala Mustafa Pasha was appointed as a viceroy for Georgia and the commander of the Shirvan Campaign, he had Mustafa Âli appointed as a council clerk in 1578, with the help of the royal tutor of the sultan, Hoca Sadeddin Efendi. In the meantime, Âli made an appeal directly to the sultan for a chancellor (*nişancı*) position and again got rejected. In the end, he was appointed to Aleppo as a finance director in 1578.

During these years, Âli was constantly complaining about his condition as he wanted but failed to secure a chancellorship or a sanjak principality in Egypt. He was then dismissed from his position in Aleppo (1583) and ended up unemployed for two years therein. While he was waiting for a new appointment, he planned to come to Istanbul and reach his master

[10] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 64.

Mustafa Pasha by presenting his new works, *The Book of Victory* (*Nusretnâme*) and *The Gathering of the Seas* (*Câmiu'l-Buhûr*). In 1585, he reached Erzurum as the finance director, after a short time travelled to Baghdad where he was promised the post of treasurer only to learn that the post was given to another. Returning to Istanbul empty-handed, Âli sought the favour and help of Gazanfer Agha, Hoca Sadeddin Efendi, and Doğancı Mehmed Pasha, who were the dominant political figures of the court in the 1580s following the death of the all-powerful Sokollu Mehmed Pasha.

It was during this period that Âli wrote his *Mirror of the Worlds* along with several other works, notably *Unique Peals on the Birth* (*Ferâ'idü'l-Vilâde*), *Artists' Exploits* (*Menâkıb-ı Hünerverân*), *Etiquette of Salons* (*Kavâ'idü'l-Mecâlis*) and *Counsel for Sultans* (*Nushatü's-Selâtîn*). After a short tenure in Sivas as a finance director between 1588-9, his repeated appeals for a better post were finally answered in 1592 when Siyavuş Pasha assumed the grand vizierate. However, soon, the appointment of Sinan Pasha to grand vizierate for the third time in 1593 resulted in Âli's dismissal, while working on his magnum opus, *The Essence of History* (*Künhü'l-Ahbâr*). Ultimately, in 1598, Âli asked for retirement from government duties and went to perform his pilgrimage. After spending some time in Cairo and Mecca, and composing more works and finishing the *Essence,* Âli died in Jidda in 1600.

As can be seen from the above summary, Mustafa Âli's career was replete with dismissals, reappointments, disappointments and hopes, all in relation to his tireless ambition to become a higher bureaucrat in the Ottoman administration, if not a royal favourite of the sultan. Throughout Murad III's reign, which Âli spent most of his adult life, the tenures of the higher officers were purposefully shortened as the consequence of Murad's policies against powerful viziers of the time such as Sokollu, which in turn deepened factionalism in and around the court. When a poet's or an intellectual's patron was dismissed from office, he ought to either

find a new patron or integrate himself to the circle of newly appointed officer. Otherwise, it resulted in unemployment as happened several times to Mustafa Âli.

Besides, as an ambitious and young officer, Âli always believed that he deserved a better and more prestigious position at the court. To this end, he wrote many works and tirelessly tried to extend his patronage network as much as possible. As a prominent poet and intellectual of the time, his literary works were his main instruments towards this goal. In other words, he was aware of the potential power of his books to secure a position. Indeed, he authored more than fifty works, some of which survived and some still waiting to be discovered. This pragmatic strategy of Âli is clearly seen when one compares his opinions on the same person in his various works. Besides, by producing works on a wide range of topics, not only literature and history but from numerology to fine arts, he proved to be a real learned man. Nonetheless, he was also an outspoken person, and for he was often disappointed and frustrated because of not getting a better position as he desired, his style became sharper and his criticism of the sultan and his ruling elite as well as the deficiencies of the Ottoman imperial system became a repeated theme in his writings.

Looking at Âli's writings chronologically, one can observe the rising level of his criticisms. As Fleischer illustrates, Âli identified his fortune with that of the Ottoman Empire, thus his failure was the state's failure.[11] If we look at Âli's final imagination of Ottoman history in his *Essence of History*, which has no dedicatee unlike most of his works, Murad III's reign was to bring misfortunes from the very beginning. According to Âli, the monetary crisis of the mid-1580s, the peasants' flight from their lands and their flow towards urban centres, short tenures in bureaucratic positions, wide-spread bribery, the sultan's neglection of men of letters, were all big problems emerged this time, which he thought and presented as imperial decline.

[11] Ibid., 191. At 191-200, Fleischer explain this consciousness of decline by "kanun-consciousness."

Thus, for Âli, it was not only the administration that was cracking, but the whole Ottoman world underwent a cultural and moral decay. His was a holistic perception of decline which, as Fleischer notes, stemmed from a "retrospective and perhaps introspective" motivation, ultimately ushering him to start composing his magnum opus, the *Essence of History* in the year 1000 AH.[12] Mustafa Âli observed that by the end of the first millennium, a new but not very bright chapter of history had begun.

The Editions of the *Mirror*

As noted above, the *Mirror* has long been neglected in the modern scholarship. Indeed, it was only in 1998 that Mehmed Arslan published its full transliteration with a brief introduction.[13] Arslan's edition was based on the copy from the Süleymaniye Library (MS Reşid Efendi 1146) which, according to Arslan, is probably an autograph. In 2018, Süleyman Lokmacı published a new edition based on three manuscripts and a printed version in the 19th century.[14] However, Lokmacı's edition poses problems in several aspects. First of all, Lokmacı identifies the dedicatee of the treatise as Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, whereas it is certainly Doğancı Mehmed Pasha as Fleischer mentions in Âli's bibliography. Secondly, all the copies Lokmacı consulted for his edition, except printed one, are undated, thus the reason why he chose these copies also remains ambiguous. Lastly, Lokmacı's transliteration has faults at times especially regarding of some Arabic and Persian words, as well as the Persian possessive constructions (*izafe*). Considering these shortcomings in Lokmacı's edition, in this study, I use Arslan's transliteration of the *Mirror* as it is more reliable and based on a possible autograph copy.

[12] Ibid., 7.
[13] Mehmet Arslan, "Gelibolulu Âli'nin Hurafelerden İbaret bir Eseri: Mir'âtü'l-Avâlim," *Türklük Bilimi Araştırmaları VII* (1998): 29-59.
[14] Süleyman Lokmacı, "Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli'nin Mir'âtü'l Avâlim İsimli Eseri," *Akademik Tarih ve Düşünce Dergisi* 16 (2018): 64-114.

Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter takes the court of Murad III and his royal patronage at its center. I begin with discussing the new dynamics of court politics under Murad III, and by doing so I aim to demonstrate the multiplicity of the actors involved in patronage networks that informed the writing process of the *Mirror*. It is my contention that literary patronage offered by the courtiers of Murad III ultimately served to contribute to sultan's image-making process. To understand what kind of an intellectual milieu the *Mirror* was part of, I examine Murad III's personal interests and policies on production of knowledge in the form of books. Finally, I seek to analyze the possible audience of the *Mirror*.

In the second chapter, I delve into the question of apocalypticism and trace its development in premodern Ottoman political discourse. To this end, I discuss literary works which I asses as the main indicator of a certain promotion of the apocalyptic thought at the Ottoman court, and how these works contributed to the Ottoman rulers' messianic claims by utilizing a particularly apocalyptic/millennial discourse. In his part, I also search for the reflections of the impending Islamic Millennium and the apocalyptic expectations at the court of Murad III. Within this context, my discussion aims to show that the *Mirror* stands as an evidence of the level of millennial anxiety and how it was turned into a political tool.

The third and final chapter is an analysis of the sources of the *Mirror*. Katip Çelebi, one of the most famous Ottoman intellectuals of the seventeenth century, classified the *Mirror* as a work of mere superstition. I argue that this categorization by Katip Çelebi determined the reception and reputation of the *Mirror* in mainstream scholarship until today. Hence, in this section, I aim to demonstrate that the *Mirror* was not a work of superstitions and that it would be an oversimplification of Âli's reasoning and motivations behind composing it. To this end, I analyze Âli's authorship and selection of sources in details. Overall, this thesis is a study

which re-evaluates and re-contextualizes one of the works of Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli in a new light.

Chapter 1 – The Court of Murad III: Politics, Power-Brokers and Royal Patronage of Books

This chapter illustrates the changing dynamics of the late-sixteenth century Ottoman imperial court in general, and literary production under royal patronage of Murad III in particular. I argue that the royal sponsorship of books on diverse topics functioned as a tool to construct its patron's public persona as well as served as a means for its patron to cultivate their policy. The first part of this chapter deals with some novel developments under Sultan Murad III, whose sultanate modern scholars consider a transition period in that several rapid changes took place in the economic, political and social structures of the Ottoman Empire all at once.[15] I then discuss the literary and intellectual climate of the period, which flourished thanks to royal patronage of Murad III, including Mustafa Âli's experiences. In the final section, I examine the writing process of *Mirror of the Worlds* as a work jointly dedicated to Doğancı Mehmed Pasha and Murad III.

Tensions and Factions during the Late Sixteenth Century

When Murad III came to the throne in 1574, he inherited a great empire as the legacy of his grandfather Sultan Süleyman whose 46-year-long reign overshadowed that of his father Selim II, who remained on the throne for only the eight-years. During and after Süleyman I's reign the Ottoman empire underwent through a much comprehensive political-bureaucratic centralization in accordance with the changing needs of the rapidly expanding empire. As part of this transformation of the Ottoman imperial system, the grand vizier - as the absolute deputy of the Ottoman sultan- became the de facto ruler of the empire, as personified by Sokullu

[15] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 8.

Mehmed Pasha during Selim II's reign.[16] Sokullu Mehmed Pasha held grand vizierate for an uninterrupted 15 years, 5 years of which passed under Murad III until his assassination in October 1579.

Compared to other centuries in premodern Ottoman history, the sixteenth century was no doubt a critical period of transformation in terms of state-formation and the development of its institutions, hence attracted far greater attention from modern Ottoman historians. "The long-sixteenth century" as Kaya Şahin calls it, is indeed a period that,

> "(…) extends from the emergence of new political and cultural notions and administrative capabilities in the mid-fifteenth century, through the empire established by Süleyman I (r. 1520–66), to the critical economic, ecological, and indeed systemic transformations after the second half of the sixteenth century."[17]

In accordance with the rapid territorial expansion that marked the reigns of Selim I (r. 1512-1520) and Süleyman I, the administrative needs of the empire had changed. Especially from the second half of Süleyman's reign onward, there occurred a notable expansion in bureaucracy and an enlargement of courtly elite accordingly.[18] Gülru Necipoğlu shows that the most extensive architectural expansion of the Topkapı Palace took place in this era, as well as most of the existing buildings renovated or rebuilt according to the changing demands of the

[16] Regarding the reign of Selim II, Mustafa Âli calls Sokullu "the virtual sultan" (*pâdişâh-ı mânevî).* See Faris Çerçi, *Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli ve Künh'ül-Ahbâr'ında II. Selim, III. Murat ve III. Mehmet Devirleri*, vol. I (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2000), 125-136.

[17] Kaya Şahin, "The Ottoman Empire in the Long Sixteenth Century," *Renaissance Quarterly* 70 (2017): 220-234, at 220.

[18] See Colin Imber, "Government, Administration and Law," in *Cambridge History of Turkey, Vol. II: 1451-1603*, eds. Suraiya Faroqhi and Kate Fleet (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 205–240; Rifa'at A. Abou-EI-Haj, *Formation of the Ottoman State, The Ottoman Empire Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 1991), 35-40: Géza Dávid, "Administration in Ottoman Europe," in *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age*, eds. Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead (London: Routledge, 1995), 71-90. Also see Tom Papademetriou's comment on the religious transformation of Ottoman administrative culture: "Some historians may argue that it was at the beginning of Süleyman's reign that Ottoman administrative culture began to transform to reflect more of an Islamic and Arab culture. In this period, the Ottoman state was more intent than ever to establish its Islamic orthodox *bona fides* because of their pronounced efforts to consolidate political control over eastern Anatolia and the Arab lands. Tom Papademetriou, *Render Unto the Sultan: Power, Authority and the Greek Orthodox Church in the Early Ottoman Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 109.

imperial order.[19] Just as the imperial buildings, new offices are established in the imperial government, such as *reisülküttab* (the chief clerk) while at the same time the existing offices were reorganized or expanded. For example, as the sixteenth-century progressed the number of clerks working for the Porte (*divan-ı hümayun*) grew from two to fifty by the end of the century.[20] Perhaps more importantly, the grand viziers of this century began to hold their positions for longer terms and commanded a greater authority than their predecessors. Marriages of the princesses with high-ranking viziers (more commonly than in previous periods) gave way to a stronger factional structure to the dynastic state. Both İbrahim Pasha and later Rüstem Pasha are telling examples of this new type of grand-viziers, while Sokollu Mehmed Pasha can be seen as the last grand vizier of this period.[21]

According to a historical account, as Murad III reached the capital in 1574 to assume to throne after his father's death, a story related that when Sokullu Mehmed Pasha went to the Sarayburnu pier to meet the incoming new sultan from the province. The grand-vizier had such prestige and power as Murad came out from his boat, he reached to kiss the hand of Sokullu. Whether accurate or not, the account underlines the great power Sokullu possessed at the time of Murad III's enthronement. However once Murad III felt more secure on the throne, he attempted to reduce the power of Sokollu, if not eliminate him for good, as evinced by different strategies that he employed against his powerful grand vizier between 1574 and 1579. As Mustafa Âli writes in his *Essence*:

> "Previous rulers had not used the Royal Rescript extensively; the written approval of the grand vezir (*buyruldu*) was sufficient for most appointments. Murad required that he see and sign most documents of appointment, except for those dealing with initial and supplementary *timar* grants. This innovation had two negative effects: the grand vezirs lost authority and their customary

[19] Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 22.
[20] Imber, "Government, Administration and Law," 223.
[21] Levent Kaya Ocakaçan, "The Changing Dynamics Of The Ottoman Patronage Networks (Late 16th And Early 17th Centuries)," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 34 (2017), 10.

> independence of action, and the eunuchs and concubines of the harem were able to begin controlling and selling appointments by virtue of their proximity to the sultan." [22]

Similarly, to curtail the grand vizier's decision-making authority, Murad III frequently used the *telhis* reports, the summary petitions written by the grand-vizier, as a means of communication as well as a surveillance mechanism over the vizierate.[23] In the same vein, a significant change was introduced with a decree in 1580 indicating that the grand vizier would not be given the imperial seal, which symbolized the delegation of sultanic authority.[24] Limiting the authorizing power of grand viziers was one of Murad III's policies to this end; another was not letting one man to occupy the grand vizierate position for a long time. On the contrary, Murad III created a competitive atmosphere among his high-ranking courtiers by altering among four men for very brief periods, namely: Koca Sinan Pasha, Ferhad Pasha, Siyavuş Pasha, and Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha. Thus, between 1579 and 1595 the position was passed from one to the other in such a way that, Sinan Pasha and Siyavuş Pasha held the position three times each, Ferhad twice, and Osman Pasha once. "The short tenure of these officials is symptomatic of changes in the political power balances."[25] Moreover, after the death of Semiz Ahmed Pasha (d. 1580), Murad refused to make a new appointment to the empty post for a period of three months but opted to run the government by means of his viziers, which marks a first-time event in Ottoman history.[26]

[22] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 295. For the original text of the relevant paragraph, see Faris Çerçi, *Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli ve Künh'ül-Ahbâr'ında II. Selim, III. Murat ve III. Mehmet Devirleri*, vol. II, 243.
[23] See Pál Fodor, "Sultan, Imperial Council, Grand Vizier: Changes in the Ottoman Ruling Elite and the Formation of the Grand Vizieral Telhis," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 47/1-2 (1994): 67-85.
[24] Ibid., 70.
[25] Emine Fatma Fetvacı, "Viziers to Eunuchs: Transitions in Ottoman Manuscript Patronage 1566-1617," unpublished PhD dissertation (Harvard University, 2005), 143. For a list of grand viziers under Murad III, see Halit Serkan Simen, "The Grand Vizierate(s) Of Koca Sinan Pasha: A Reassessment of The Ottoman Court Politics and Intra-Elite Rivalry in The Late Sixteenth Century" (Unpublished MA Thesis, Central European University, 2020), 102-109.
[26] Günhan Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites at The Courts of Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603-17) And His Immediate Predecessors," unpublished PhD dissertation (The Ohio State University, 2010), 174.

Another aspect of the shifting structure of the court in Murad III's reign, was the status of the eunuchs. While until the late-sixteenth century the chief white eunuch (*babüssaâde ağası* or *kapı ağası*, [the agha of the Gate]) was at the top of the eunuchs' hierarchy, in 1574/75 the black eunuch was assigned as a separate authority under the title of the chief harem eunuch.[27] Thus, a new seat based on (racial) separation emerged as black eunuchs were assigned in the service of female-dominated imperial harem and white eunuchs were designated as supervisors or as guardians of the male-dominated *Babüssaâde*. The black eunuchs' proximity to the imperial family brought a great dominance that in 1586/87 the position of the superintendency of the endowments to support Mecca and Medina (*Haremeyn evkâfı*), was taken from the chief white eunuch and given to the chief harem eunuch.[28] Consequently, under the new regulations, the chief harem eunuch had risen as a prominent palace officer with excessive financial power, to the point that he was given a voice even on the appointment of grand viziers.

As seen in the above-mentioned new arrangements, Murad III differed from his predecessors in terms of ruling practices, yet he was also known for his secluded lifestyle for he did not even leave Istanbul after his accession. Moreover, the fact that he moved his private quarters from the third courtyard (*enderûn)* into the harem, the part of the palace with the most limited accessibility, is quite symbolic with regards to the increasing inaccessibility of the sultan for outsiders. And by doing so, he gathered political power in one place; that is the court.[29] This meant that the courtiers gained a significant position, e.g., the chief black eunuch, as power brokers and which gave way to a cutthroat rivalry among this newly empowered group. Baki Tezcan points out that the changing political structure of the empire which began during the

[27] Ezgi Dikici, "Obscure Roots, Solid Foundations: A Comparative Study on the Architectural Patronage of Ottoman Court Eunuchs," (Unpublished MA thesis, Koç University, 2009), 20-21.
[28] Dikici, "Obscure Roots, Solid Foundations," 21.
[29] Another important change in this era was the abandoning of the tradition of sending princes to provinces. Linked to this change, the queen mothers began to stay in the palace rather than accompanying their prince sons in their assigned province, which contributed to the increasing factionalism within the court. Mehmed III (r. 1595-1603), son of Murad III, was the last Ottoman prince sent to a province. For further details, see Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

reign of Murad III, from 1580s onward created a new period which he calls "the Second Empire", in which the monarch stands at the centre of a spiderweb-like system rather than at the top of it.[30]

On one hand, this new system had been criticized by contemporary intellectuals, the most extensively by Mustafa Âli, on the other, the sultan seems to struggle to find a man whom he can fully trust. Contemporary historian, Selanikî (d. 1600?) cites in his *Târih* (History), a poem Murad III himself composed (under his pseudonym *Murâdî*) which starts with a verse saying: "If there was a man to me whom my heart longs for (*Gönlümün istediği bana bir adem olsa*)" and ends with "O Murâdî (also meaning 'my wish is') if there was such a man to us (*Ey Murâdî bize bir şöylece âdem olsa*)."[31] In search of a trustful man, Murad gathered a significant number of men around him known as "royal favourites" (*musâhib*) who can be defined as courtiers having both administrative duty and personal access to the sultan.[32] Although courtly favourites existed before Murad III in the Ottoman court, during his reign their number and importance greatly increased and for the first time, female favourites (*musâhibe*) appeared, the most famously Râziye and Canfedâ who played critical roles in the sultan's decision-making.[33]

The rising of royal-favourites empowered them as power-brokers within the Ottoman ruling body where they represented "the sultan's alter ego".[34] Given their privileged position and having direct access to the sultan who was more inaccessible and invisible compared to his predecessors, the royal favourites commanded a greater significance than ever before. As

[30] Baki Tezcan, "The Second Empire: The Transformation of the Ottoman Polity in the Early Modern Era," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 29 (2009), 567. Also see idem, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[31] *DİA*, s.v. "Murad III" by Bekir Kütükoğlu.
[32] Unlike musahibs, *nedim*s did not have a bureaucratic post but only served the sultan as his personal company, though occasionally these terms were used interchangeably in Islamic history. See *DİA*, s.v. "Nedim" by Nebi Bozkurt.
[33] *DİA,* s.v. "Musâhib" by Mehmet İpşirli,
[34] Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites," 152.

Caroline Finkel points out that while grand viziers' direct contact with the sultan became less usual, replaced by written correspondences referring to the above-mentioned *telhis* reports, royal-favourites had the privilege to reach out to the Sultan much easily, and more importantly, they also controlled which vizierial *telhise*s the sultan saw.[35] However, the most essential rule of the faction wars was, as Radu Paun aptly puts, "the stronger the relation between the master and the favourite, the weaker became the favourite's position."[36] As in the case of Doğancı Medmed Pasha, who carries a distinct significance for this thesis, being the commissioner of the *Mirror of the Wolds*.

Doğancı Kara Mehmed Pasha was one of the most favoured man of Murad III, the chief hawker, then the governor-general of Rumelia until his death in 1589 as the consequence of the so-called the Governor-General Incident (*Beylerbeyi Vak'âsı*). Mehmed Pasha was given the duty to stabilize the currency for which he started the preparations in 1588.[37] The intention was to cast around for the monetary crisis which was mainly the result of the heavy economic burden of the long Ottoman-Safavid War between 1578 and 1590. The empire had to spend 180 million *akçe*s for the campaigns between 1578 and 1590, which corresponds roughly to the entire annual income of the state treasury.[38] In 1589, a rebellion broke out backed by the ruling viziers targeting the favourite, Mehmed Pasha, who eventually became the victim of the incident.[39] The rebels asked for the heads of Mehmed Pasha and his client Mahmud Efendi, or else would threaten the throne. In the end, the sultan unwillingly had to hand his favourite over

[35] Ibid., 153-54.
[36] Radu G. Păun, "Well-born of the Polis: The Ottoman Conquest and the Reconstruction of the Greek Orthodox Elites under Ottoman Rule (15th-17th centuries)," in *Türkenkriege und Adelskultur in Ostmitteleuropa vom 16-18. Jahrhundert*, eds. Robert Born and Sabine Jagodzinski (Leipzig: Jan Thorbecke, 2014): 59-85, at 62.
[37] Cemal Kafadar, "Prelude to Ottoman Decline Consciousness: Monetary Turbulence at the end of the Sixteenth Century and the Intellectual Response," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 51 (2018): 265-295, at 275.
[38] Caroline Finkel, *The Administration of Warfare: The Ottoman Military Campaigns in Hungary, 1593–1606* (Vienna: Verband der wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1988), 297–30.
[39] For a detailed analysis of the event, see Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites," 172-195. For Mustafa Âli's account of this event see, Faris Çerçi, *Gelibolulu Mustafa Âlî ve Künhü'l-Ahbar'ında II. Selim, III. Murat ve III. Mehmet Devirleri*, vol. III, 221-223.

to the rebellious crowd. This was the first time in Ottoman history, that someone from the imperial council was beheaded by the force of the military. The tragic event was recorded in a miscellany (*mecmuʿa)* written in Budin (Buda) by an anonymous author:

"Since a great deal of cruelty and duplicity reached,
Unrest fell unto all over the land of Rum

All of a sudden, the divine decision reached
Royal slaves besieged him

With one missing, said, the Governor-General's time
Of disaster today has reached" [40]

According to Günhan Börekçi, the case of Mehmed Pasha is telling for two reasons; "a) it signifies a major turning point in Murad III's style of rule via his favourites; and b) it embodies almost all the major dynamics of a new period in Ottoman political history, to which [he refers] as the first era of favourites (ca. 1580 – ca. 1650)."[41]

One of the consequences of the factionalism in the court and the rise of the royal favourites, as well as eunuchs, that this newly empowered group, holding a significant economic power, rose as artistic and literary patrons. Thus, the new setting reshaped the ways patronage had been perceived where the courtiers in critical positions became a new channel for artists to enter the courtly circles. The following section of this chapter will concern the artistic and literary production under Sultan Murad III's courtly patronage and the ways in which the sultan's men as his "alter-ego" ran a program of building the sultan's image through the literary patronage.

[40] "*Be-ġāyet ẓulm [ü] ḥīle çün èrişdi / Temāmet [?] Rūm Èline fitne düşdi / Èrişdi nāgehān ḥükm-i ilāhī / Ġulām-ı şāhīler başına üşdi / Bir eksikle dèdi begler beginüŋ / Bugün tārīḫine āfet èrişdi"*. Gisela Prochazka-Eisl, "Şiirle Tarih Yazmak: XVI. Yüzyılın Sonlarında Derlenen Bir Mecmua Örneğinde," [Writing History Through Poetry: An example of a sixteenth-century miscellany], *ESTAD: Journal of Old Turkish Literature Researches* 1 (2018): 32-49, at 46.
[41] Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites," 175.

Production of Knowledge at the Court of Murad III

Although the grand architect Sinan was alive during his reign, interestingly Sultan Murad did not commission him for any large-scale imperial architectural project unlike his grandfather Süleyman I and father Selim II, whose imperial mosques built by Sinan became the monumental landmarks of the Ottoman classical age.[42] Rather, Murad's reign marked an era of flourishing book culture with a dense intellectual and artistic production. An external factor of this flourishing was the Ottoman-Safavid War (1578-90). This long war opened the way for a considerable influx of Persian manuscripts into the palace library, by means of both bureaucratic relations and as war booty. Shiraz manuscripts, especially the illustrated ones, became a desirable prestigious object to have among the Ottoman elite.[43] Concerning the internal factors, the sultan himself was a different figure than his predecessors, as he left his palace less frequently than customary, at times not even for Friday prayers. Spending his time almost entirely within the palace, Murad pursued different ways of amusement. First established in the Suleymanic era, the post of official court historian (*şehnâmeci*) had been duplicated under his reign, and the court had two official historians: Seyyid Lokman and Talikizâde. In Seyyid Lokman's *Kıyâfetü'l-insâniye fi şemâ'ili'l-'Osmâniye* (Human Physiognomy Concerning the Personal Dispositions of the Ottomans) Sultan Murad is depicted holding a carnation in his right hand, and a book in the left, instead of the rose and handkerchief of traditional depictions.[44] In

[42] Fetvacı, "Viziers to Eunuchs," 84.
[43] Lale Uluç, *Türkmen Valiler, Şirazlı Ustalar, Osmanlı Okurlar: XVI. Yüzyıl Şiraz Elyazmaları*, [Turkman Governors, Shiraz Artisans and Ottoman Collectors: Arts of the Book in 16th Century Shiraz] (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006), 478-79.
[44] Christine Woodhead, "Murad III And the Historians: Representations of Ottoman Imperial Authority in Late 16th-Century Historiography," in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, eds. by Hakan T. Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Leiden: Brill, 2005): 85-98, at 91-92. For a general overview of the literary patronage of Murad III, see Christine Woodhead, "Poet, Patron and Padişah: The Ottoman Sultan Murad III (1574-95)," in *Ambition and Anxiety: Courts and Courtly Discourse, c.700-1600*, eds. Giles E.M. Gasper and John Mckinnel (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies, 2014).

this manner, the sultan was fashioned as the patron of culture, learning, and magnificence rather than a spiritual and military leader.

However, there was more than the sultan's bibliophilia that led to a flourishing book culture in this era, since it was not only the sultan who commissioned books. The rise of the courtly elite as illustrated above, paved the way to new patronage patterns within which the courtiers became not only mediators but also the patrons themselves, that of artists and literati. And what is more, "within this highly competitive and hierarchized environment, the sultan's new image", which is created by means of courtiers and the sultan together, "became one in which [sultan] received and dispensed objects in a more conspicuous manner."[45]

Considering the plurality of patrons, for example, chief eunuchs, harem members, and royal favourites, the picture gets complicated in terms of determining the agency of the production. And it raises the question for whom the ultimate product served. Were the commissions meant to create an imperial image or were the individual interests the main motivation behind? Emine Fetvacı points out the intersecting relationship and multi-purposed functions of courtly patronage. That is to say, in some cases, books became the weapon of their commissioners against their rivals and sometimes imperial image-making was a collective initiative. In a setting where courtiers acted as the sultan's alter-ego, they replaced the role of patrons while the sultan had a much passive role, that is to approve the projects. Fetvacı provides an example: in the preface of *Miftâh-i Cifrü'l-Câmi* (The Key to Esoteric Knowledge) the translator tells us that the chief white eunuch Gazanfer Agha ordered the translation of the work as he exited the sultan's audience, hence, she asks "does this imply the translation was Gazanfer Agha's idea, or the sultan's?"[46] Adopting her point, if not evidently indicates a

[45] Sinem Arcak Casale, "Gifts in Motion: Ottoman Safavid Cultural Exchange, 1501-1618," (Unpublished PhD dissertation, The University of Minnesota, 2012), 114.
[46] Fetvacı, "Viziers to Eunuchs," 273.

specific purpose, I treat the literary works as the products of a collective initiative which bears the sultan's ways of self-fashioning within.

The growing consciousness and interest toward geography in Süleyman I's era was reflected in grand-viziers' commissions, the most prominently under Sokullu's patronage.[47] During Sultan Murad's reign, the same interest was present as geography and history books were in high demand, and the sultan was particularly known for being "favourably inclined towards history and the accounts of rare and strange events."[48] In fact, a universalistic approach in history-writing emerged during Murad's reign which Mustafa Âli was one of its precursors. One of Âli's sources in his *Essence* was *el-ʿAylemü'z-zâhir fi Ahvâli'l-Evâʾil ve'l-Evâhir* (The Evident Science on the Events of the Earliest and Latest Days) compiled by Cenabî Mustafa Efendi (d. 1590), known in short as the *History of Cenabî*, and presented to the sultan in 1587. Cenabî's *History* is significant for his deliberate use of sources and his critical approach, which also seems to have influenced Mustafa Âli methodologically when compiling his grand history book, the *Essence*. Coming from a well-educated family, Cenabî's brother Mehmed Su'udî Efendi was also an important intellectual. His book about the New World titled *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbî* or *Hadîs-i Nev* (History of the West Indies or The Latest News) is particularly remarkable since it is based on the earliest European accounts, and the first major Ottoman work written on the New World. [49] The book describes the new continent's geography and fauna, and mentions indigenous people, as well as a brief history of the discovery including marvellous and odd stories along with illustrations and a *mappamundi*. Writing in the 1580s, Seyfi Çelebi,

[47] Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). At 120, Casale says that "…one of Sokollu's earliest sources of inspiration was Seydi Ali Reis's *Mir'ātü'l-Memālik* (Mirror of the Countries). This work, as has already been argued, was commissioned by Sokollu's predecessor Rüstem Pasha and reflected, at its core, the parochial and Ottoman-centric worldview that Rüstem strove to promote through his intellectual patronage."

[48] Fetvacı, "Viziers to Eunuchs," 27.

[49] The authorship of this book is controversial. See "Introduction," in *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi veya Hadis-i Nev (A history of the Discovery of America),* (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ankara: Historical Research Foundation, 1987). For an English translation, see Thomas D. Goodrich. *The Ottoman Turks and The New World: a Study of Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi and Sixteenth-Century Ottoman America* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1990).

provided in his *Kitab-ı Tevârih-i Padişahân-i Hindu ve Hitây ve Kişmir* (Book of the Histories of the Emperors of Hind and Cathay and Kashmir) significant details concerning parts of Asia, such as Aceh, which in the early sixteenth century the Ottomans had known little about.[50] Another important geographical work, *Evzâhu'l-Mesâlik ila Maʿrifeti'l-Büldân ve'l-Memâlik* (The Most Open Roads to the Knowledge of Cities and Countries) was presented to the sultan in 1572, compiled by Sipahizâde Mehmed. The book is prepared in alphabetic order and has an encyclopaedic structure and can be classified as a cosmography.[51]

Besides geography and history, Murad was well-known for his interest in astrology and related sciences, such as the science of the stars (*'ilm-i nücûm*) and numerology-lettrism (*'ilm-i hurûf)*. The most important indicator of this interest is the establishment of the first observatory of the empire in 1577 and one of the largest in the Islamicate world with a library and workshop attached to it, under the leadership of Takiyyüddin (d. 1585) came to known as *Dârü'r-raṣadü'l-cedîd* (The New Observatory).[52] It seems that a diligent effort was made to create a significant astronomical centre. A document from 1578, shows geometry and astronomical books (*nücûma ve ilm-i hey'ete ve hendesiye müte'allik*) belongs to the deceased Lutfullah, student of the famous fifteenth-century astronomer Ali Kuşçu, are to be collected and handed over to Takiyyüddin in order to be brought to the observatory.[53] Notwithstanding, the

[50] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "On World Historians in the Sixteenth Century," *Representations* 91/1 (2005): 26-57, at 44.
[51] İlhami Danış, "XVI. Yüzyılda Bir Osmanlı Coğrafyacısı: Sipâhizâde Mehmed ve Eseri *Evzahu'l-mesâlik ilâ ma'rifeti'l-büldân ve'l-memâlik*," *FSM Scholarly Studies Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 9 (2017): 117-143.
[52] Stephan P. Blake, *Time in Early Modern Islam*: *Calendar, Ceremony, and Chronology in the Safavid, Mughal, and Ottoman Empires* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 72. Blake notes that "From the evidence it appears that he and his men began preliminary observations in 1573 and worked for the next seven years – through the completion of the observatory in 1577 and for three very productive years afterward. From this labor two new zijs emerged. The first, the Zij-i Sidrat Muntaha . . . al-Falak al-Dawar, employed a new method for determining the latitude and longitude of the stars using the planet Venus. New values for the sun's orbit were also calculated. Taqi al-Din was the first astron- omer to use decimal points and with his observational clock he measured the right ascension of certain stars. His results were more accurate than those of either Tycho Brahe or Copernicus."
[53] Ahmed Refik, *On Altıncı Asırda Istanbul Hayatı (1553-1591)* (İstanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1935), 36: "Nücum ilmine ait vakıf kitapların rasathaneye gönderilmesine dair, Fi 12 Sefer 986 [On sending the endowed books related to science of stars to the observatory, on 20 April 1578]".

observatory was short lived, it was demolished after three years. An illustrated book called *Şehinşahnâme* (The Book of the Shah of Shahs) prepared by the court historian Seyyid Lokman, contains the depictions of the observatory with astronomers and astronomical devices and notably, a globe. Trying to receive courtly favour, and being aware of Murad's interests, Mustafa Âli offered to compose a work on numerology if he was given access to the palace library, which indicates that the palace library holds a rich collection on such topics. And eventually, submitted a commentary on sultan's mystical verses in 1584.[54] In the same year, Âli presented two more works on numerology; *Câmi'ül-Kemalât* (Gatherer of Perfections) in which he explained the secrets of number twelve, claiming Murad would live for one hundred and twenty years, as well as the another short piece called *Tâli'üs-selâtîn* (The Sultans' Ascendant) where he explicated the numerological principles he utilized for the former claim.[55]

By the second half of the sixteenth century the increased interest in mystical literature among Ottoman courtiers is discernible and the works of prognostication appear to have been prevalent. The fact that an illustrated divination book was prepared in 1582 by the above-mentioned Mehmed Su'udi Efendi for Murad's daughters, entitled *Metâli'ü's-Sa'âde ve Menâbiü's-Siyâde* (The Ascension of Propitious Stars and Sources of Sovereignty). The book is a compilation of dream interpretation, esoteric treatises and charts on astrology, physiognomy, marvels and wonders literature (*'acâ'ib*), and divination methods. It indicates the fact that it was not only the sultan, but women of the harem, too, who commissioned texts and had an interest for the same topics. Two of the sultanas, Ayşe Sultan and Fatma Sultan each owned a copy of the book.[56] In the same vein, only during Murad's reign, three physiognomy (*'ilm-i firâset*) works were penned directly for the use of the court, one being the

[54] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual,* 111. The commentary is titled *Nükat ül-kal fi tazmin il- makal* (Subtleties of Discourse on the Quotation of Speech).
[55] Ibid.
[56] Fetvacı, "Viziers to Eunuchs," 45. Ayşe Sultan's copy is found at the Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 788, and Fatma Sultan's copy is found at the Bibliotheque Nationale de France, MA suppl. turc 242.

aforementioned *Şemâilnâme* by Seyyid Lokman. The first one submitted just upon his accession titled *Firâsetnâme* (The Book of Physiognomy), was written in 1574 by Talikizâde (d. between 1603 and 1611), in 1576 another one composed by Balizâde Muṣṭafa (d. 1618), a high-ranking professor (*müderris*) and judge (*kadı*).[57] According to those treatises, the master of this science was the inheritor of, or in other words, spiritual successor to the Prophet, and it was the Sultan in this case.[58] Concerning Sultan Murad's interest in mystical/occult matters, one more thing can be added to the list, which is his talismanic shirts. There are three talismanic shirts ascribed to Murad III. We do not have the exact motivation behind their preparation, but they might be connected to the rumours about the Sultan regarding the stories of his impotency and epilepsy. However, considering the inscriptions on the shirts, including not only Quranic verses, but also certain individual numbers and letters, they suggest the use of other means of magic, and overall goes hand in hand with "the general interest in the occult, dreams, astrology, astronomy, and other esoteric matters, which had been increasing from the fifteenth century at the Ottoman court."[59]

Precisely, Murad's initiation to an Halveti sheikh named Şüca Dede (and later to another Halveti sheikh named İbrahim-i Kırımî) was significant in terms of understanding Sultan's close interest in mysticism.[60] According to Mustafa Âli, one day Prince Murad had a dream when he was on his provincial duty in Manisa. One of his favourite (*musâhibe*) Raziye

[57] Emin Lelić, "Physiognomy (*ʿilm-i firāsat*) and Ottoman Statecraft," *Arabica* 3/4, (2017): 614.
[58] Lelić, "Physiognomy," 624.
[59] Felek, "Fears, Hopes, and Dreams: The Talismanic Shirts of Murad III," 65.
[60] Derin Terzioğlu's analysis of Kırımi's patrimonial relation with Sultan Murad is significant in order to understand political impacts of mystical leaders. In her "Patron, Patronage, and Confessionalism: Ottoman Politics through the Eyes of a Crimean Sufi, 1580-1593," in *Halcyon Days in Crete, vol. IX: Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Marinos Sariyannis (Rethymnon: Crete University Press, 2019), 182-183, she writes: "Kırımî's letters have shown us that a Sufi sheikh and preacher who held no administrative office and who is not known to have done so at any point of his life could nevertheless be deeply involved in Ottoman imperial politics. I have argued that what enabled Kırımî to become a prominent political player was, on the one hand, his proximity to the Sultan as his sheikh and companion, and on the other, his reputation and track record as a sharia-abiding, Sunnitising Sufi. Both of these facets of his identity appear to have served him well in a time when court and confessional politics together constituted much of what we might regard as Ottoman high politics."

Hatun brought the aforementioned sheikh to interpret Murad's dream. Şüca told that the dream is a sign of accession that the prince would hear about soon. Having received the news within a month, Murad was impressed by this "illiterate and ostentatiously ecstatic dervish" and called him to the capital.[61] For that time, Skeikh Şüca remained as the spiritual guide of the Sultan, until the sheikh's death in 1588. He was a controversial figure for his contemporaries, and some accused him of being a charlatan. Mustafa Âli also disfavouring the sheikh, and claimed that he was accumulating wealth by accepting bribery, and using his personal relationship with the Sultan. As part of Sufi tradition, the sultan wrote down his dreams and sent them to his sheikh on a regular basis. After Şüca's death, in 1590 the sultan's collection of dream letters were brought together by the sultan's stable master, Nuh Agha, in a book entitled *Kitâbü'l-Menâmât* (The Book of Dreams), a 259 folio-bound manuscript.[62] Despite being a rare and valuable source, as an early modern sultan's first-person narrative of his dreams, one should be aware of the book's aims of self-fashioning, and constructive aspects, as the dreams are proceeding in a way that the sultan is certainly advancing the path toward the highest point in the Sufi order and becoming a perfect and exemplary Muslim. Examining through the dreams, it is evident that Şüca was asking (or advising) Sultan about some specific men to be granted specific posts, confirming Mustafa Âli and other historians' accounts, and the sultan himself was asking Şüca about whom he should appoint to the grand-vizierate or if this or that man is appropriate concerning state affairs. Nevertheless, Murad seems cautious and rejects some of his sheikhs' requests.[63] In any case, Sultan Murad was closely affiliated to Şüca and developed a deep interest in Sufism and "particularly in its more popular manifestations."[64] He commissioned Mustafa Âli to translate a Persian digest of hagiographic lore into Turkish and Âli presented the translation to the sultan under the title *Hilyet'ür-ricâl* (The Adornment of Men) in 1577, where

[61] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual,* 72.
[62] See Felek, *Kitâbül-Menâmât.*
[63] Ibid., 33-34.
[64] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual,* 75.

he also explained the Sufi terms such as *kutb'ul-aktâb* (pole of the poles), *ricâlü'l-gayb* (men of the unseen).[65] Differing from the typical Ottoman sovereigns in some major ways in the eyes of Ottoman chronicles, Özgen Felek's analysis of Sultan Murad and his dream collection helps to understand the ways in which sultan fashioned himself:

> "We see him being actively engaged in the shaping of his own image rather than leaving it up to historians or anyone else to do it for him. In this sense, what Murad seeks to achieve by having his dreams and visions recorded is not very different from what Shah Tahmasp and Babur do. Each of these three sultans uses his dreams to construct his image. (…) The text mainly functions to relate Sultan Murad's noble deeds and adventures in the *alem-i misal* [the world of ideas] and establish his image as a true Friend of God (veli; pl. evliya). It starts with Murad's first meeting with his spiritual master through a mysterious dream, revealing Murad as a divinely chosen figure." [66]

Mustafa Âli and (His Patron) Doğancı Mehmed Pasha

Mustafa Âli, as a learned man, who is skilled in poetry, set his sight on the office of imperial chancery (*nişancı*), as well as a royal favourite from his early years on. When he presented his first major work *Mihr ü Mâh* (The Sun and the Moon) to Prince Selim in 1561, as a 20-year-old young talent, he was given favour by Selim that the prince took Âli to Kütahya besides him, where his provincial seat located. Selim's palace in Kütahya was home to many poets and *meclis-i işret*s (social gatherings) where Âli enjoyed both the intellectual environment and the prince's favour at a young age. In order to fulfil his *musâhib* position, during this period Âli composed several didactic-encyclopaedical works following his predecessors.[67] After travelling through Aleppo, Damascus and Cairo, in early 1569 Âli reached Manisa, where the princely seat of Prince Murad was present. There, "Âli once again sought to gain princely favour

[65] See Yusuf T. Günaydi and İbrahim H. Arslantürk, "Gelibolulu Mustafa Âlî'nin Hilyetü'r-Ricâl'inde Melâmiyyûn Ve Muhaddesûn Zümreleri," *Tasavvuf: İlmî ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 18 (2007): 277-296.
[66] Özgen Felek, "(Re)creating Image and Identity," 250-256.
[67] Halil İnalcık, *Has-Bağçede 'Ayş u Tarab: Nedimler, Şairler, Mutribler* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010), 253.

by means of literary display."[68] Later on, as he had to travel through distant parts of the Empire, feeling frustrated since he was not given the expected favour by Murad III, Âli became distanced from the courtly circles (physically) and kept contact with the palace through letters in order to get a position in the capital.

Turning back from Baghdad empty-handed, where he was appointed as the finance director, since his post was given to another by the Porte, Âli remained in Istanbul between 1586-88 hoping to get a new post. Having the advantage of being present at the capital, Âli appealed to high-ranked courtiers who are known to him for a long while, the chief white eunuch Gazanfer Agha, Hoca Sadeddin, and finally Doğancı Mehmed Pasha who recently was made vizier and royal companion.[69] Mehmed Pasha, at those times, was sharing the closest *musâhib* position with the chief white eunuch Gazanfer Agha, yet his acquaintance with Sultan Murad went back decades back to Murad's princely times in Manisa. Since then, Mehmed was favourite hunting companion of Murad that he was nicknamed *Kara* (strong/ fearless).[70] After the elimination of Sokullu, he had successfully advanced in his courtly career. In 1580, Kara Mehmed became the chief falconer (*çakırcıbaşı),* in 1583, he was promoted to agha of the Janissaries, and in 1584 officially appointed royal-favourite "with extraordinary privileges that bypassed all the established court hierarchy and the imperial bureaucracy", such as supervising campaign of 1584-85 and distribution of salaries for the palace soldiers, "the two important tasks which had traditionally been carried out by the grand vizier and his office."[71] Possessing an extraordinary power and having Sultan's trust, Mehmed Pasha had seen the apogee of his career between 1584 until his death in 1589, till the afore-mentioned Governor-General incident. "Besides creating a large network of clients, Mehmed Pasha used his wealth to

[68] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 54.
[69] Ibid., 125.
[70] Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites," 176.
[71] Ibid., 182.

patronize the arts and literature, modelling himself on the sultan, who was a renowned poet and man of letters himself."[72] Thus, this great power he possessed led him rise as patron of arts and literature that he held a considerably rich library including some illustrated, expensive books. There is also a list of books owned by the deceased pasha, confiscated by the palace. Among the thirty-one entry, well-known works of Persian literature occupies one-third of the books and among them eight are illustrated. The list includes one big-sized album, Firdevsi's *Shahname* (The Book of Kings) and al-Kazwini's *Aja'ib'ul-Makhluqat* (Wonders of Creation).[73]

The main space where patrons and authors met were the social gatherings, where prominent intellectual figures were invited and where commissioning negotiations took place. Literary salons often called *meclis* constituted the main space for social and intellectual exchange across the Islamicate world, long before the rise of coffeehouses in the mid-sixteenth century. In general, *meclis* (pl. *mecâlis*) can be defined as "by-invitation-only gatherings attended by well-to-do Muslim men for the purpose of social and intellectual exchange."[74] Performance was, too, an important component of these gatherings; musicians, storytellers, sometimes dancers and other entertainers would also be present. In the same vein, literary works were to be viewed and read out loud, and their visual and poetic virtues would be discussed.[75] Concerning Istanbul, Topkapı Palace was the most prestigious space for *meclis* gatherings, however, elites and important statesmen also hosted such meetings outside of the imperial palace in their private palaces (*kasır, köşk*). For Instance, Şemsi Ahmed Pasha was well-known

[72] Günhan Börekçi, "On the Power, Political Career and Patronage Networks of the Ottoman Royal Favourites (Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries)," in *Social-Networking in South-Eastern Europe, 15th-19th Centuries*, eds. Maria Baramoca, Grigor Boykov and Ivan Parvev, (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2020), 33.
[73] Uluç, *Türkmen Valiler, Şirazlı Ustalar, Osmanlı Okurlar*, 472.
[74] Helen Pfeifer, "Encounter After The Conquest: Scholarly Gatherings in 16th-Century Ottoman Damascus," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47 (2015), 221.
[75] Emine Fetvacı, *The Album of the World Emperor: Cross-cultural Collecting and The Art of Album-making in Seventeenth-century Istanbu*l (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 107.

for his literary salon, which was also frequented by Mustafa Âli.[76] Through these social gatherings not only knowledge but also reputation of works and intellectuals was circulating.

Being part of this intellectual environment for a life-time, Mustafa Âli wrote a book on such gathering and submitted his *Mevâidü'n-Nefâis fi Kavâ'idi'l-Mecâlis* (Tables of Delicacies on the Etiquette of Salons) to Doğancı Mehmed, one of his many patrons, in 1587, which straight away became popular. In the introduction of this book, Âli says that Sultan Murad asked for such a book, in whose court literary gatherings were quite frequent, via his vizier Doğancı Mehmed.[77] It is also important for indicating the close relation between Mustafa Âli and Mehmed Pasha, that in the later edition of the book which was finished by Âli a year before his death, Âli praises the murdered Pasha, although he was unfavoured at the end:

> "ln particular at this time, Mehmed Pasha, who was later murdered had been appointed a vezir and the governor of Rumelia and had led troops to victory. His admission to inner court circles had aroused the jealousy of influential people."[78]

In 1587, Âli presented two other short treatises to Doğancı Mehmed Pasha. One being on the auspicious astrological aspects of the new prince's birth, entitled *Ferâ'id ül-Vilâde* (Unique Pearls on the Birth), other is *Mir'âtül-Avâlim* (Mirror of the Worlds), a forty-paged treatise accounting different stories on the creation of the world, also discussing the End Times. In the introduction, Âli asserts that many philosophers wrote about pre-Adamic events and creatures, however, the majority of people has counted up the time after the creation of Adam concerning the lifetime of the World.[79] Thus, because those previous books do not include creatures before

[76] Fetvacı, "Viziers to Eunuchs," 56.
[77] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 127.
[78] Mustafa Âli, *The Ottoman Gentleman of the Sixteenth Century: Mustafa Âli's Mevā'idü'n-nefā'is fī ḳavā'idi'l-mecālis, 'Tables of Delicacies Concerning the Rules of Social Gatherings'*, annotated English translation by D. S. Brookes (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 3. For the Turkish edition, see *Gelibolulu Mustafa 'Âlî ve Meva'idü'n-Nefais fî Kavâidi'l-Mecâlis*, ed. Mehmet Şeker (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu,1997).
[79] Mehmet Arslan, "Gelibolulu Âli'nin Hurafelerden İbaret bir Eseri," 39: "Velâkin ekser-i ebu'l-beşer Hazret-i Âdem peygamber halk olunduğun zamândan berüsini beyân edip hilkat-i Âdem'den evvel 'âlem ne vechile mevcûd idüğini ve maksûdun-bi'z-zât olan insân yaradılınca envâ'-ı mahlûkâtdan ve eşkâl ü timsâlden ne gûne

the creation of Adam, and because the Pasha (for whom Âli writes "royal companionship fell unto you, from the sky" [80]) is highly interested in historical accounts that during nightly gatherings (*geceler meclis-i şeriflerinde/şeb-i yeldâlarda*), rare works (*nevâdir-i hikayât u asâr*), and stories on wonders and oddities (*acâ'ib ve garâib-i kısâs u ahbâr*) are being read, he decided to pen such a treatise.[81] Here, Âli's mentioning of *meclis* is important to understand that he precisely aimed his work to be read in a certain environment, especially where the texts were orally performed to a group of people.[82] The aimed auditory environment is explanatory also on Âli's choice of composition of his work, that he narrates three different myth-like stories on the events before the creation of human-being, some are being told by the Creator himself , which adds a vivid narrational level to the text. On one hand, accounting various stories suggests that Âli does not mainly purse the goal of providing precise information, but more of telling entertaining and interesting stories. On the other hand, Âli specifically points that he accounts for authentic narrations (*rivâyet-i essahh*) to convince his readers that he is not making them up, but he relies on other sources as his addressee is a group of men of letters. In the same vein, Âli also quotes the great Sufi mystic Ibn Arabi (d. 1240) and benefits from Sufi terms when explaining the stages of creation. Although briefly, he includes -Sunni- scholars (*hadis, tefsir ve ehl-i sünnetin fakihleri, hükemâ,* and *mutasavvıfin*) who explained and named some of the basic terms of the first creation which means that Âli does not exclude the theoretical aspects of the subject.

ümem-i muhtelifetü's-suver gelip gitdiğini, muhassal Hazret-i Âdem'e gelince ömr-i dünyâ ne denlü hisâbla hüveydâ idügini beyân eylemişlerdir."

[80] Ibid: "Musâhiblik sana ey mâh-ı talat gökden inmiştir."

[81] Ibid., 40.

[82] Fetvacı, "Viziers to Eunuchs," 33. Fetvacı writes: "…the same stories could be presented to the sultan, bound between the covers of a book, or performed orally, points to the fluidity between the written and the spoken word in the context of the sixteenth-century Ottoman court and its use of texts. This fluidity comes to the fore in the title of the official historiographer, referred to interchangeably as *Şehnamehan* (the reader of the *Şehname*); *Şehnameguy* (the sayer/performer of the *Şehname*); or *Şehnameci* (a more generic term, the -ci suffix functioning similarly to the -er in English). The *Shahnama*, of course, both in its Persian and Ottoman incarnation, was often an orally performed text."

Concerning his unemployed status, the treatise seems like another strategic piece Mustafa Âli composed in order to find favour and earn reputation. Taking it to one step further, Mehmet Arslan, opts to call the *Mirror* as "another example of grovelling and sycophantic work" that Âli composed, however, concerning the commissioning of the work as well as its afterlife popularity, it seems Âli had a good reasoning to pen the *Mirror of the Worlds.* [83]

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to construct the context in which literary production turned into an apparatus within the art of statecraft. Commissioned by Mehmed Pasha, the *Mirror of the Worlds* addresses to current religiopolitical concerns and from this point of view first and foremost appeals to the sultan himself. Its author, Mustafa Âli, while fashioning sultan in a certain way through his writings, also conducts a self-fashioning program in order to get his desired position in the court. Thus, it should be emphasized that while composing a work the author always has several aims, and accordingly, has to take multiple dynamics into considerations. Before concluding, it is worth mentioning that the notion of "ideological state apparatus", as Louis Althusser coined the term, was not completely an invention of the modern state as Suraiya Faroqhi reminds us:

> "(…) it was important to present a certain image, and viziers and heads of chancery took a hand in producing it or else commissioned artists and writers to do so in their stead. In other words, in spite of its exponential growth in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries 'imperial propaganda' through texts and visual means was not unknown in the early modem period; and the Ottoman sultans engaged in it as did their counterparts in other cultures. (…) [And] historians have shown how chronicles, accounts of individual campaigns and also poetry could serve as vehicles for sultanic legitimization. In this enterprise the key feature was patronage.[84]

[83] Arslan, "Gelibolulu Âli'nin Hurafelerden İbaret bir Eseri," 30.
[84] Suraiya Faroqhi, *Another Mirror for Princes: The Public Image of the Ottoman Sultans and Its Reception* (Istanbul: The Isis Press: 2009), 10.

Chapter 2 – Promoting Apocalypticism

This chapter deals with apocalyptic reflections in the Ottoman world, first by introducing Islamic eschatology and apocalyptic *topoi* in several literary genres. Then, I demonstrate apocalyptic/messianic/millennialist thought in the Ottoman political ideology beginning from the reign of Mehmed II and advancing chronologically, till Süleyman I, when the messianic imperial propaganda reached its peak. The third part focuses on apocalyptic anxieties toward the Islamic millennium in Sultan Murad's court. On the last part, I unpack the millennialist discourse found in the *Mirror of the Worlds*.

Islamic Eschatology in the Ottoman Literature

The Qur'an devotes a chapter on the Day of Judgement (Surah al-Qiyamah) which opens as "I do swear by the Day of Judgement" (The Qur'an, 75:1). Islam is built upon a temporal understanding of the world that is finite; therefore, the apocalyptic teachings have always occupied an essential place in Islam and the Muslim point of view. Moreover, Muhammad himself being the last Prophet, was regarded as the most crucial signifier of the Day of Judgement. Thus, even many of the early Muslims expected that the end would come in their own times, and the idea continued to exist throughout the centuries starting from the very early centuries of Islam and helped shaping an apocalyptic tradition.[85]

The signs of the Doomsday *(yawm al-qiyamah*) are mentioned in the Qur'an and hadith, though not explicitly clear, and the exact timing is indeed obscure. Some of the Qur'anic verses describing the dramatic events leading up to the End Times mention about the state of stars and the sun, a great noise, scattering mountains, while some others introduce apocalyptic characters,

[85] David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2002), 4.

such as Gog and Magog, or the creature who will try to deceive the believers.[86] Thus, while some of these verses are to describe the very moment of the day, some are pointing to the events indicating the coming of the day, which are called the signs of *qiyamah*. Besides the Qur'anic verses, the Prophet's sayings which are compiled in books in the 9th century which became the canonical sources of Sunni Islam after the holy scripture, also provided information about the end of times. Yet, there exists hadith besides *Kutub-u Sittah* (literally "The Six Books") that mostly regarded untrustful within Sunni Islam, but still constituted a significant part in the formation of Islamic eschatology, like the expected messiah or *mahdi* as called in the Islamic tradition.

David Cook in his book on Muslim Apocalyptic, divides the events leading to the end times as historical, and metahistorical apocalypses. While the first group consists of groups/peoples known to each other such as, Christians or Turks and their confrontations, metahistorical ones point to a future personality or group of people e.g., the *Dajjal* or *Yajuj* and *Majuj*. Despite being a more dominant figure in the Shi'ite tradition, the idea of an expected messiah also covers a significant part of the apocalyptic expectations, which also connects with several socio-political contexts that signify the approach of the Last Hour, most prominently moral decay, physical signs in society such as paucity of men or women employing men, etc. and natural disasters.[87] Those signs of decay are most generally referred in Islamic tradition as *fitna*, denominating a crisis point. Such crises mostly were related to political instabilities and covered an important part of the political critique rhetoric. Particularly, from the late-13th century on, due to the instability that the Mongol invasion put the Muslim World into, a new

[86] Some of those verses are: "When the sun is folded up; when the stars fall, losing their luster" (81:1-2), "When the oceans are suffered to burst forth; and when the graves are turned upside down" (82:3-4), "What is the day of noise and clamour? … It is a day whereon men will be like moths scattered about and the mountains like carded wool" (56:4-6), "Until, when Gog and Magog are let loose, and they swarm down from every mound" (21:96), "And when the Word has fallen on them, We will bring out for them from the earth a creature which will say to them that the people are uncertain of Our revelations" (27:82).
[87] Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic,* 13-14.

way of sovereignty emerged as the legacy of Chinggisids. The crisis of ruling brought new apocalyptic/millennialist tradition as part of claiming sovereignty which provided rulers with extra title-features, increasing and empowering them both in the terrestrial and celestial worlds. For instance:

> "The scriptural notions of the messiah (*mahdi*) and the renewer (*mujaddid*), the mystical concepts of the pole or axis mundi (*qutb*) and the perfect individual (*insan-ı kamil*), and the kingly notions of divine effulgence (*farr-i izadi*) and the Lord of Conjunction (*Sahib Qiran*) all referred to human agents who could usher in and maintain the just religiopolitical order of a particular historical era."[88]

This merging of the apocalyptic thought with the state ideology gave way to a flourished apocalyptic literary tradition, that is sponsored by the statesmen, sometimes heavily dependent on the occult methods, astrology, or merely based on conventional Islamic sciences such as hadith and exegesis. To this end, although they often intersect with each other, we can speak of three main literary genres; *Jafr*, *Ahwal-i Qiyamah,* and *Malhama.*

Jafr (*cefr* or *cirf* in Ottoman Turkish) by definition, is a "political-eschatological divinatory discourse originally associated with the Shi'ite Imams that, over time, came to refer to a range of divinatory practices and millennial discourses and became nearly synonymous with the science of letters."[89] Lettrist practices were present for centuries in different traditions from Jewish to Indian, and its transmission to the Islamic tradition occurred from the early stages of Islam. It gained a significantly respected place among Muslim intellectuals especially after the prominent mystic-scholars of the 12th-century such as Suhrawardi (1154–1191), Ibn 'Arabi (1165-1240) and Ahmad Al-Buni (d.1225).[90] Yet, its establishment and popularization as a separate branch of '*ilm,* or science, took place in the 14th century by the Hurufi movement

[88] Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 23.
[89] *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 3rd ed., s.v "Jafr" by Noah Gardiner.
[90] DİA, s.v. "Huruf" by Metin Emin Bozhüyük.

founded by Fazlallah Astarabadi (1339/40– 1394), a Persian mystic. [91] In the Ottoman world, the most popular master of *jafr* was the 15th-century scholar Abd Al-Rahman Al-Bistami (d. 858/1454) who served in the court of Murad II. His book *Cifr ü Cami'* became the authoritative book regarding the science of *jafr* among the Ottoman intellectuals in the later centuries. In a contemporary work *Dürr-i Meknûn* (The Hidden Pearl), which is a cosmography and one of the most widely read religious texts in the Ottoman world, devotes a chapter on "'*ilm-i cefr*" referring Al-Bistami, as the sheikh of the unknown, the scholar and discoverer of the secrets of God, and his *Cifr*.[92]

Malhama (pl. *malaḥim,* in Ottoman Turkish sg. *melhame*) first denoted Prophetic ḥadiths regarding the conflicts that will occur during the end times (for example, the *Kitab al-Malaḥim* in Sunan Abu Dawud).[93] Just as the works of *jafr*, *malhama* literature entered Islamic circles through Judeo-Christian writing traditions mainly through Syriac to Arabic translations. *Malhama* writings are regarded as the legacy of Hermes, Prophet Daniel, and Alexander the Great, but Prophet Daniel comes forward as such texts are mostly known by the generic *Malhama-i Daniyal* (The Forecasts of Daniel) or *Kitab-i Daniyal* (The book of Daniel).[94] As Daniel is referred to as a dream interpreter in the Old Testament, he is associated with the science of divination and prognostication in both Christian and Islamic traditions. While *jafr* literature majorly depends on the lettrist interpretations, *malhama* predominantly is occupied with astrology and science of starts (*'ilm-i nücûm*). A prominent 16th-century Ottoman scholar, Taşköprizade (1495-1561) dedicates a chapter on the science of *malhama* (*'ilm-i melhame)* in

[91] Some well-known works of *jafr* are; *Risala-yi jafr-i jamiʿ* (Treatise on the comprehensive prognostication) of Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Akhlati's (d. 799/1397), *Miftaḥ al-jafr al-jamiʿ wa-misbah al-nur al-lamiʿ* (The key to the comprehensive prognostication and the lamp of brilliant light) of ʿAbd al-Raḥman Al-Bistami's (d. 858/1454) and *Kitab al-jafr al-jamiʿ wa-l-nur al-lamiʿ*, usually attributed to ʿAli b. Abi Talib.

[92] Yazıcıoğlu Ahmed Bican, Dürr-i Meknun (İstanbul: Akademik Kitaplar, 2009), 210: "Şeyhi'l-muhakkıkîn, el-'ilmi bi-keşfi esrârullah ve ebâne Şeyh Abdur-rahmâni'l-Bestâmî kuddise sırrahu'l-aziz, sâhibi'l-huruf hazretleri…"

[93] *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* s.v. "Jafr" by Noah Gardiner.

[94] Remzi Demir, "Melhameler ve Bir Onyedinci Yüzyıl Osmanlı Alim ve Edibi Cevri Çelebi'nin Melhamesi," in *Osmanlı Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 8 (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 1999), 431.

his *Miftâh el-Sa'âde ve Misbah el-Siyâde* (The Key to Happiness and Torch of Sayyidhood) but noting that one should be very careful since such prognostications are still doubtful and not very satisfying, and Prophet's hadiths are enough to know about the events that will occur until the end of times.[95]

Ahwal-i Qiyamet (ahval-i kıyamet in Ottoman Turkish*),* which translates as "signs of the Doomsday" or "the accounts of the day of judgement", is another genre either explaining one's status in the afterlife, describing the stages one will come across after death, or describe the signs of the Doomsday. Thus, unlike *jafr* and *malhama, ahwal* literature is not predicated on lettrist or astrological calculations but more of a compilation of narratives, information on apocalypse, and an analysis of it. Such narratives use mainly Qur'an, hadith and religious traditions, referres to social changes such as women behaving like men and men behaving like women, and also to expected personalities such as the Antichrist *(Dajjal),* the second coming of Jesus or *mahdi*. Although similar themes were included in different types of literary accounts, there is a collection of works specifically using the variations of this title.[96]

Expectations and Anxieties at the Ottoman Court

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were marked with apocalyptic expectations all around the Mediterranean basin. While for Christians and Jews, the Ottomans were one major sign of the impendency of the End Times, for Muslims, advancing towards the year 1000 AH provided the basis for apocalyptic anxieties and gave rise to several messianic and millennialist movements. However, at the end "apocalyptic visions of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim

[95] Ibid., 433. Also see İhsan Fazlıoğlu, "İlk Dönem Osmanlı İlim ve Kültür Hayatında İhvanu's-Safâ ve Abdurrahman Bistâmî," *Dîvân: İlmî Araştırmalar* 1 (1996): 229–240.

[96] The varied titles are generally found as follows; *Kitâb-ı Ahvâl-ı Kıyâmet, Risâle fî Ahvâli'l-Kıyâme, Terceme-i Ahvâl-i Kıyâmet, Der-Beyân-ı Ahvâlü'l-Kiyâmet*. For the illustrated *Ahvâl-i Kıyâmet* texts, see Bahattin Yaman, Osmanlı Resim Sanatında Kıyamet Alametleri: *Tercüme-i Cifru'l Cami* ve Tasvirli Nüshaları [Signs of the Doomsday in Ottoman Paintings: *Tercüme-i Cifru'l Cami* and Its Illustrated Copies], (Inpublished PhD dissertation, Hacettepe University, 2002).

communities were intimately related to one another, and in some measure interactively developed."[97] This was also the consequence of the shared notion of eschatology, as well as shared sources, such as the Book of Daniel.[98] As Stephen J. Shoemaker notes, a common characteristic of this era is that "in Mediterranean late antiquity and the European Middle Ages, apocalypticism was […] regularly joined to ideas of imperial expansion and triumph, which expected the culmination of history to arrive through the universal dominion of a divinely chosen world empire." [99] What Cornell Fleischer demonstrated, however, that such universalistic apocalypticism was inherent in the Ottoman and Safavid political thought, as their European counterparts.[100]

The first major confrontation of apocalyptic anxieties with Ottoman courtly politics corresponds to the times of Mehmed II, more specifically to the conquest of Constantinople. The city has been believed to be as cursed as it is considered sacred and occupied a distinct place in apocalyptic scenarios in Judeo-Christian tradition, as well as in Islamic one.[101] The city's fall was one of the events leading towards the Last Hour, thus "Mehmed inherited with

[97] Fleischer, "A Mediterranean Apocalypse," 21.
[98] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Turning the stones over: Sixteenth-century millenarianism from the Tagus to the Ganges," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 40:2 (2003): 145, says, "It is the science of signs, and astrology, that also helps to establish the connection between the Alexandrine legend and another key piece in the textual fabric of sixteenth-century millenarianism. This is the Book of Daniel (or *Kitab-ı Dâniyâl*), which revolves around the apocalyptic myth concerning the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Much used by court-astrologers in the sixteenth century, the Book of Daniel was often conflated, or read together with talismanic texts, and the *Fal Nâma* texts attributed to Alexander. It also helped give currency to the equivalence between the Universal Kingdom to be established in the millennium, and the Fifth Empire of Daniel's interpretation."
[99] Stephen J. Shoemaker, *The Apocalypse of Empire: Imperial Eschatology in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 3.
[100] Enlarging the geographical scope, it is possible to include the Timurids, in early 15th century, and the Mughals, during the 16th century where the same messianic/apocalyptic tendencies in rulership are present. See İlker Evrim Binbaş, "Timurid Experimentation with Eschatological Absolutism: Mīrzā Iskandar, Shāh Ni'matullāh Walī, and Sayyid Sharīf Jurjānī in 815/1412," in *Unity in Diversity: Patterns of Religious Authority in Islam*, ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (Leiden: Brill, 2014): 277-303; idem, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran: Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī and the Islamicate Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Asfar Moin, The *Millennial Sovereign*, Chapter 4: 107-144; Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "Early Modern Islamicate Empire: New Forms of Religiopolitical Legitimacy," in *The Wiley-Blackwell History of Islam*, ed. Armando Salvatore, Roberto Tottoli, and Babak Rahimi (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 353-375; and Naciye Z. Çavuşoğlu, "The Age of Akbar: Statecraft and Political Ambitions," (Unpublished MA Thesis, Sabancı University, 2016), 26-68.
[101] See Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, 54-66.

his victory a wealth of Muslim and Christian apocalyptic prophecy concerning the history of the City and its fate."[102] Its fame for being a centre of misfortunes is apparent in sixteenth century historian Selanikî's description of the city upon the beginning of a plague; "As the scholars called the city of Istanbul 'the land of plague', its ancient ingenuity came into view again."[103]

Having an undesired, apocalyptic atmosphere on one side, on the other, the Ottoman court was not unified upon the idea of the conquest of Constantinople, as frontier commanders, who held a significant part of the ruling body, were afraid of losing power because the conquest would lessen the importance of frontier fighters. The anti-conquest faction argued that the conquest would transfer the ruling power into the centre and would require for the Sultan himself a settled lifestyle and lose his ghazi identity, moreover, as the city possessed important ports, the martial emphasis would shift to maritime powers.[104] The works of Yazıcıoğlu Brothers shed light on the concerns of Ottoman elite/intellectuals on the relation of conquest and signs of the apocalypse in this era. In his *Muhammediye,* which was penned in 1449, that is before the conquest of Istanbul, Yazıcıoğlu Mehmed includes an account on the events leading to the End Times, which narrates that the Muslims will reach and conquer the city of Constantinople, but upon their arrival, the Dajjal (the Deceiver) will tell them to go back to Damascus, to their home, for it was under occupation, eventually, Muslims will leave the city without completing the conquest. The same *topos* is included in *Envârü'l-Aşıkin*, written by Yazıcıoğlu Ahmed, also known as Ahmed Bican, in the same era and by time became quite popular. The above-mentioned work *Dürr-i Meknûn*, most probably written after the conquest,

[102] Fleischer, "A Mediterranean Apocalypse," 49.
[103] "İstanbul vilayetine hükemâ arz-ı vebâiyye dedikleri üzere kadimi hüneri yine zâhir olup…" Cited in Feridun Emecen, "Lanetli Şehir İstanbul'un Fethi ve Kıyamet Senaryoları," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 22 (2003): 191-205, at 193.
[104] Emecen, "Lanetli Şehir İstanbul'un Fethi ve Kıyamet Senaryoları," 204. Also see idem, *İstanbul'un Fethi Olay ve Meseleleri* (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2003).

and was attributed to Ahmed Bican for a long time, puts emphasis on the cursed aspects of the city, as its fall was itself was a warning of the proximity of the Last Hour, which also denotes that the anti-conquest concern was not only politically and economically motivated, but also religious aspects were part of the discussion.[105] Hence, apocalyptic narrative in *Dürr-i Meknûn* occupies a critical point in understanding a turning point in the Ottoman political thought. Kaya Şahin marks that *Dürr-i Meknûn* "placed the Ottoman enterprise within the final tribulations and hailed the sultan, Mehmed II, as an apocalyptic warrior. This endorsement heralded the emergence of a new imperial ideology in the sixteenth century: Ottoman history became an important component of universal history, while Ottoman sultans were attributed cosmic responsibilities and messianic abilities." [106]

The author of *Dürr-i Meknûn* mentions that signs of apocalypse will start occuring by the year 900 of Islamic calendar, corresponding to 1495 C.E. It was during Bayezid II's reign (r.1481-1512), the turn of the millennial century was witnessed. Feridun Emecen argues that the millennialist expectation shaped Bayezid's policies as it was not only his captive brother Cem's death but also the pessimistic atmosphere which dissolved after the year 900, that lead him to rule more actively and aggressively than the first fifteen years of his rule.[107] In accordance with the idea of the renewer (*müceddid*), that was sent once in every century, the celebrated scholar of the era, İdris-i Bitlisî (d.1520), in his *Heşt Bihişt* (Eight Paradises), a comprehensive account on the first two centuries of the Ottoman dynasty, points out to the sacred duty of the sultan as the protector and renewer of religion ruling during the turn of the

[105] The author devotes a chapter to the sign of apocalypse, see Yazıcıoğlu Ahmed Bican, *Dürr-i Meknûn*, 215-228. For a detailed analysis of Ahmed Bican's eschatology, see Laban Kaptein, and Ahmet Bican, *Apcalypse and the Antichrist Dajjal in Islam: Ahmed Bijan's Eschatology Revisted* (Asch: privately published, 2011). Concerning the question of authorship see Carlos Grenier, "Reassessing the Authorship of the *Dürr-i Meknun*," *Archivum Ottomanicum* (35), 2018.

[106] Kaya Şahin, "Constantinople and the End Time: The Ottoman Conquest as a Portent of the Last Hour," *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 14 (2010): 317-354, at 317.

[107] Emecen, "II. Bayezid Devriyle İlgili Meselelere Dair Yeni Bakışlar," in *Sultan II. Bayezid Dönemi ve Bursa*, ed. Nilüfer Alkan Günay, (Bursa: Gaye Kitabevi, 2017), 19.

century. He says, just as his predecessors who ruled in previous centuries, the sultan settled "disorders of the *eschaton*" (*ahir zaman fitneleri*).[108] He heavily appeals to astrological references when celebrating Bayezid's rule as the greatest of his age and the supremacy of the house of Ottomans within Islamdom.[109] In a similar vein, Firdevs-i Tâvil (d. after 1512) in his *Kutbname*, makes use of apocalyptic imagery with detailed references to contemporary European powers and attempts to cast Bayezid as the prophesied ruler and *kutbu'l-aktâb* (pole of the poles), true and sole ruler of the world in each age.[110] Bayezid's particular interest and investment on astrology, which led to the emergence of a class of *müneccim*s (astronomer-astrologers), should be mentioned for it cultivated the formation of intellectual and scientific culture in Istanbul.[111] As Ahmet Tunç Şen asserts, Bayezid's celestial interests can be interpreted as an attempt to transform Istanbul into the new imperial centre of the new universal empire.

Melvin-Koushki notes that "the 15th century thus witnessed an occultist arms race, as it were, for messianic and sacral forms of political legitimacy."[112] In that sense, Selim I also had his share of apocalyptic role as the conqueror of the Holy Lands, Egypt and Damascus.[113]

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[108] Emecen, "II. Bayezid Devriyle İlgili Meselelere Dair Yeni Bakışlar," 20. For studies on İdris-i Bidlisi see, Vural Genç, *Acem'den Rum'a Bir Bürakrat ve Tarihçi: İdris-i Bidlisi, 1457-1520* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2019); "Rethinking Idris-i Bidlisi: An Iranian Bureaucrat and Historian between the Shah and the Sultan," *Iranian Studies* 52 (2019): 425-447. Christopher Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule in Late Medieval Islam: A Study of Idrīs Bidlīsī (861-926/1457-1520) and Kingship at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century,"(Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 2015).

[109] Tunç Şen, "Reading the Stars at the Ottoman Court: Bāyezīd II (r. 886/1481-918/1512) and His Celestial Interests," *Arabica* 64 (2017): 557-608, at 604.

[110] Şen, "Reading the Stars at the Ottoman Court," 605.

[111] Ibid., 607. Also see Ahmet Tunç Şen, "Astrology in the Service of the Empire: Knowledge, Prognostication, and Politics at the Ottoman Court, 1450s–1550s," (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Chicago), 2016.

[112] Melvin-Koushki, "*Early Modern Islamicate Empire: New Forms of Legitimacy,"* 360.

[113] See Melvin-Koushki's remarks, "The occult sciences, recent research has shown, were central to the construction of Ottoman imperial ideology and political-military strategy from the late ninth/fifteenth century until the mid-tenth/sixteenth, and their prestige persisted long thereafter. Bāyezīd II (r. 886–918/1481–1512) initiated this turn with his devotion to astrology; he institutionalized the science at the Ottoman court to an extent unprecedented and perhaps unparalleled elsewhere in the early modern West. But it is only with the astonishing conquests of his son Yavuz Selīm (r. 918–926/1512–1520)—seemingly magical in their rapidity—that we can begin to speak of an Ottoman Empire, and the beginnings of Ottoman imperial universalism. Like his father Bāyezīd and more glorious son Ḳānūnī Süleymān (r. 926–974/1520–1566), Selīm would seem to have been an important patron of the occult sciences to this end. Yet he has been little studied as such." Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "Toward a Neopythagorean Historiography: Kemālpaşazāde's (d. 1534) Lettrist Call for the Conquest

The expansionist and universalist policies of Selim fostered a new phase on Ottoman political understanding which adopted a "millenarian, apocalyptic, and especially occult-scientific imperialist discourse," already began to sprout under his father Bayezid.[114] Incorporation of the Arab lands into the empire had introduced a new phase on the political-intellectual thought through the emigration of intellectuals/scholars from the newly conquered to *Rumi* lands. Notably, Selim declared Ibn al-Arabi to be the patron saint of the Ottoman Empire upon his conquest of Damascus in 1516.[115] One of Kemalpaşazâde's (d.1534) early texts on lettrist interpretation of the Qur'an, is quite demonstrative in presenting how the contemporary scholars promoted a messianic role for the sultan. The favoured Ottoman scholar, soon-to-be the *şeyhü'l-islam* (chief jurist), penned a short treatise titled *Feth-i Mışır hakkında imâ ve işarât* (Allusions as to the Conquest of Egypt) in 1514, prior to Selim I's campaign agaisnt the Mamluks, arguing a Qur'anic verse (21:105) indicates the signs for Selim to conquer Egypt. What is distinct in the treatise is Kemalpaşazâde's use of lettrism ('*ilm-i hurûf*) as the sole method to support his argument, which received legitimacy in the eyes of the sultan. While observing a shift in interest from the science of the stars to the science of the letters in the Ottoman court, Melvin-Koushki also concludes on Kemalpaşazâde's treatise that:

> "Selīm the Grim too must therefore be read as an early modern Western imperial experimentalist pursuing—wildly successfully, as it turned out—a new brand of millennial, monist-universalist sovereignty predicated on an occult-scientific understanding, a deep reading, of history and the cosmos."[116]

Lastly, regarding Selim I's reign, his 'archenemy' Shah Ismail (d.1524) and his messianic discourse also should be taken into account while assessing Selim's millennialist/universalist policies and his role as the renewer of religion. Lütfi Paşa (d.1563),

of Cairo and the Development of Ottoman Occult-Scientific Imperialism," *Islamicate Occult Sciences in Theory and Practice,* eds. Liana Saif, Francesca Leoni, Matthew Melvin-Koushki, and Farouk Yahya (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2020), 380-81.

[114] Melvin-Koushki, "Toward a Neopythagorean Historiography," 411.

[115] Melvin-Koushki, "*Early Modern Islamicate Empire: New Forms of Legitimacy,"* 360.

[116] Melvin-Koushki, "Toward a Neopythagorean Historiography," 413.

who was in the palace service in the reigns of Bayezid, Selim and Süleyman, records Selim as the *müceddid* of the ninth century, celebrating his victory over the Shi'ite Safavids at the Battle of Çaldıran (1514). Also, incorporating popular apocalyptic themes, he declares Selim to be *Zülkarneyn* (The two-horned World Conqueror) whose arrival was prophesized in apocalypses (*mehalim*) dating Prophet's times. [117]

Brought into discussion by Cornell Fleischer, the messianic image of Süleyman I is the one that is studied the most among other Ottoman sultans, paralleling his well-celebrated reign in the scholarship. Yet, it was also during his times, such rhetoric reached the climax and was utilized most extensively as a political instrument. Fleisher depicts Süleyman's reign, which covers almost half a century, in a dichotomous way by dividing it in accordance with the dominating political discourse. The first period of Süleyman's rule, according to Fleischer, is defined by the rise of Messianism and apocalyptic expectations, as a continuity of his father Selim's ideology. Thus, in the same way, Süleyman is identified as the "renewer of religion" (*müceddid*), "succoured by God" (*mu'eyyed min Allah*), "Master of Conjunction" (*sahib-kıran*), or "shadow of God" (*zill Allah*) in contemporary works,[118] similar to his predecessor yet more assertively. The deliberate use of messianic rhetoric in contemporary works suggests "there existed a court-based Suleymanic 'cult'."[119] Mevlana İsa, a judge (*kadı*), who lived during Süleyman's reign, in his book titled *Cami'ü'l-Mekunât* (The Compendium of Hidden Things) depicts the sultan as a divinely guided universal ruler of the Last Hour, who is to be the Mahdi, or messiah, *sahib-kıran, axis mundi,* and the thirtieth *kutb* with an emphasis on the coming

[117] Cornell Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymân," in *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps: Actes du colloque de Paris, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, 7-10 mars 1990,* ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1992), 163-164.
[118] Fleischer, "The Lawgiver As Messiah," 166-67. For instance, to establish a far-reaching messianic propoganda, Süleyman I commissioned the Persian emigrant Shah Qasim (d. 1539-1540) to legitimize the Ottoman rule in the eyes of Persian speaking elites of Iraq and Iran. See Furkan Işın, "The Politics Of Persian Historiography At The Court Of Süleyman: Shah Qasim And His Kanz Al-Javahir," (Unpublished MA Thesis, (Sabancı University, 2020).
[119] Fleischer, "Seer to Sultan," 296.

Islamic millennium, in the year 1591/92. Moreover, İsa refers to Charles V (r. 1519-1556), who also had claimed the status of *sahib-kıran* and argues for Süleyman's legitimacy as opposed to Charles'. A more curious character is Süleyman's geomancer (*remmâl*), named Haydar, who seems to be present at court from the mid 1530s' onward and deeply engaged in sultan's image-making, more specifically his messianic persona. As the master of prognosticative art of prophet Daniel (*reml-i Danyal-i nebi*), Haydar-ı Remmal assures sultan to live until the age of ninety, almost until the year 1000 AH. In one of his prognostications, he presented them to the sultan annually, Haydar not only fashions Süleyman as *sahib-kıran,* which designates temporal sovereignty but also *sahib-i zaman* (the Lord of Time), the spiritual one, and since, the sultan is supported by the army of invisible saints (*ricâlü'I-gayb*).[120] And he makes explicit his loyalty to the sultan saying: "And I would wish readers to know that I was your true and loyal servitor and that I, before all other, recognized you as the *sahib-kıran* and *sahib-zaman* of the Last Age."[121] Among the most frequent references of Haydar in his geomancy works, Ibn Arabi, prophet Daniel, and Al-Bistami and *cefr* of Ali Ibn Talip take place. Having mentioned his long-lasting fame in the Ottoman intellectual circles, Fleischer puts emphasis on Al-Bistami's *Key* that it was "circulated widely in court circles, especially in small, pocket-sized versions, in the first half of the sixteenth century. The [book] enjoyed such prestige as a text that foretold the events of the Last Days and predicted that the last universal ruler would come in the tenth century from the Ottoman house that it ultimately became a kind of secret family history that was repeatedly selected for illumination."[122]

The two examples, as Fleischer notes, provides "a precious view of how ideological reformulation took place in a context in which popular expectation and learned apocalyptic

[120] Fleischer, "Seer to Sultan," 296 and idem, "Mediterranean Apocalypse," 69-70.
[121] Fleischer, "Mediterranean Apocalypse," 72.
[122] Ibid., 24.

were being marshalled to create a new imperial identity."[123] However, towards the end of his reign, a decline in Süleyman's messianic propaganda becomes visible, due to unfulfilled expectations, and in connection to that, possibly the loss of belief on Süleyman's messianic role itself. Depicting the political environment of the Ottoman court and ways of the sultans' self-fashioning, I proceed to the reign of Murad III and analyse the impacts of the Islamic millennium which occurred in the eighteenth year of his ascension to the throne.

The Millennium is at the Door

Upon his accession to the throne, the first statement Sultan Murad made was that he was hungry, which was interpreted as a sign of famine and that year people actually suffered from scarcity of food. According to Mustafa Âli, in the following years monetary crisis, peasants' abandoning their lands and their flow towards urban centres, short tenures of the posts in bureaucracy, wide-spread bribery, the sultan's neglection of men of letters, and all sorts of problems emerged which he framed in a more general understanding of decline. Ruling during turbulent years the messianic/apocalyptic image of Sultan Murad III is closely related to the disorder that was spread around the capital and Anatolia. There are several reasons that mark the reign of Murad III as an era of decay, starting with contemporary intellectuals' criticism towards the state and its most prominent representative being Mustafa Âli himself. The mirror for princes, *nasihatnâme* literature was a long existing genre in Islamic literature yet, took another level which based the Ottoman decline discourse after Âli's pioneering *Nushatü's-Selâtin* (Counsel for Sultans) written in 1581. Cemal Kafadar interprets these intellectual reflections of "the articulation of the political elite's response to the structural transformation of the Ottoman social order in the early modern epoch."[124] Much earlier, Rifaat Ali Abou-el-Haj pointed out the inter-elite struggle and from that perspective defined the *nasihatnâme* genre

[123] Ibid., 74.
[124] Kafadar, Prelude to Ottoman Decline Consciousness," 267.

as "one of several instruments, used to express political struggle for power within Ottoman society in general, among the ruling elite in particular."[125] Moreover, the impending Islamic millennium, in year 1591/92, was quite fitting to the scenario of a disordered world towards the Last Hour which may prompted the intellectuals to take action to buckle up the state against a possible state of chaos. All these elements conjoined with the decline rhetoric created an anxious apocalyptic atmosphere in the Ottoman court during the reign of Murad III.

Yet, the sultan's own character also crucial in understanding his relationship with the idea of apocalypse, which was intensely cultivated through a messianic discourse. Having allegedly psychological and physical discomfort, Murad opted for a withdrawn lifestyle after his accession and was highly engaged in his spiritual advancement. In his *Kitâbü'l-Menâmât,* Murad says that he started having inspirations when he was 9-10, and since then he was concerned with these divine messages but could not figure them out before his sheikh's guidance.[126] The unrest Murad presents through the letters also confirms the contemporary accounts on Sultan's melancholia. Moreover, it was not only Şüca and Halveti order that Murad had connections, yet it is known that he was in communication with other religious/spiritual leaders such as Nakşi sheikhs Şaban Efendi and Aziz Mahmud Hüdaî (d. 1628). Finding the cure through mystical initiation, during Murad's reign religious orders are multiplied and gained an upper hand thanks to sultan's favour. For instance, the sultan asked Pir Hüsamettin Uşşakî (d.1597) whom he met in his princely court in Manisa, to settle in Istanbul and ordered establishing a lodge for him.[127] Given that new orders such as Celveti, Uşşaki, and Şemsi

[125] Rifaat Ali Abou-el-Haj, "Fitnah, huruc ala al-Sultan and Nasihat: Political Struggle and Social Conflict in Ottoman Society, 1560s–1770s," *VIe Symposium du comité international d'études pré-ottomanes et ottomanes* [CIEPO], Cambridge, 1st–4th July 1984, eds. J.-L. Bacque-Grammont and Emeri van Donzel (İstanbul-Paris-Leiden: CIEPO, 1987), 187.
[126] Felek, *Kitâbü'l-Menamat*, 230.
[127] Tülay Alvan, "Devrinden Seyrine Sultan III. Murad'ın Kitâbü'l-Menâmât'taki Mektuplarına Dair Bazı Tespitler," F*SM İlmî Araştırmalar İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Dergisi*, 3 (Spring 2014): 27-60, at 33-34.

emerged during his times indicates a lively religious life.[128] All these considered, the sultanic piety in Ottoman political thought, with a Sufi emphasis saw a significant increase under Murad III.[129]

Looking through Murad's own words, it is possible to reveal how did the sultan himself perceived and assessed his role while ruling over the empire on the eve of the millennium. In some instances, Murad records God's speaking to him under the title of exclamation (*hitâb, nidâ*), mostly in an exalted manner which shows that Murad is not an ordinary disciple (*mürid*) but a true friend of God (*veliullâh*). In another instance, the sultan receives an inspiration in a state of half-awakeness (*yakaza*) declaring he was given *kutb* and *kutbu'l-aktâb*. In a similar occasion, Murad has a dream where he meets the *Kutbu'l-Aktâb* who gives Murad the good news: "You, both possess the kingship on earth, and be the *aktâb.*"[130] And sometimes it is to the extent that, in some inspirations Murad is compared with the prophets and exalted upon Prophet Muhammad. In one of the letters, Murad records that the voice of God inspired him that if Muhammad would not be the last prophet, he would be given prophethood, however, he should know that he is above prophets in the sight of God.[131] We also see a consciousness of the number twelve which according to the Shi'te faith, the twelfth imam will be the Mahdi. In one of his dreams, Murad was given a document saying the Ottoman caliphs are twelve, and the twelfth, also indicating the last one, is Murad himself (*Onikinci hâze'l-murâdu el-muâad.*

[128] Ahmet Kırkkılıç, "Sultan Üçüncü Murad (Muradi) Hayatı, Edebi Şahsiyeti, Divanı'nın İncelenmesi ve Eserleri," in *Sultan III. Murad ve Bursa*, ed. Ersin Gülsoy (Bursa: Osmangazi Belediyesi Yayınları, 2021), 280.
[129] Emine Fetvacı interprets Murad's pious acts in relation with his millennial image: "Among the works created for Murad III, the *Siyer-i Nebī*, a six-volume illustrated biography of the Prophet Muhammad, was a concerted effort on Murad's part to engage in pious acts that would help identify him as the "renewer" (*müceddid*) of the faith for the new millennium." Fetvacı, *The Album of the World Emperor*, 20.
[130] **851 VÂKI'A** Sa'âdetlü pederüm, bir 'aceb vâkı'a müşâhede olundı bir kubbenün içinde dünyâda ne kadar evliyâ'ullâh var ise cem'olmışlar. Kutbu'l-aktâb dahi anda oturur. Ba'dehu biz de varuruz. Kutbu'l-aktâbun yanına vardıgumuz gibi bizi kucağma alub muhkem (5) sıkar. Sıkduğı demde şağ yanağından der çıkar ol deri cümle içerüz. Yine şikar şol yanağından ter çıkar, anı dahi içerüz. Andan aktâb eydür, "Var imdi benden ve cemi-i) evliyadan ziyâde oldun, in-şâ'a'llâhu" didi. Andan aktâb eytdi, "Dünyâda hem pâdişâhlık sür, hem aktâb ol!" deyüb, neşâyıh eyledi. Felek, *Kitâb-ı Menâmât*, 200.
[131] **544 Nidâ** Benüm sacâdetüm, beyne'l-yakazada nidâ geldi kim, "'İzzetüm hakkı'çün eğer habibüm Muhammed hâtemü'l-enbiyâ olmayaydı, seni nebi iderdüm. Ammâ bilmiş ol kim sen hazretümde enbiyâdan a'lâsın. Merhabân, merhabân, merhabân, yâ habibüm!", Felek, *Kitâb-ı Menâmât* 148.

Yâni, sensin, sensin, sensin!).[132] Pursuing sultan's favour and having strong connections with the court, Mustafa Âli's short treatise on number twelve also shows that such phenomenon was circling around, at least, the court. In his *Câmi'ül-Kemalât* (Gatherer of Perfections), written in 1584, Âli explains the secrets of number twelve, claiming Murad would live for one hundred and twenty years. In the introduction to the *Cami'*, Âli explains that twelve was the number "by which most things created were ruled: the year consists of twelve months, there are twelve signs of the zodiac, twelve modi (*makam*s) in music, day and night count twelve hours, there were twelve Imams, the great shaykhs used to wear their caps with twelve sashes, each of which represented the twelve sciences (*fenn*), the human body counts twelve limbs, twelve angels carry the heavenly throne (*'arş*), etc".[133] Âli concludes, multiplied by ten, 120 is "the ideal age for God's shadow on earth, the sultan."[134] To provide more proofs, Âli wrote another short piece titled *Tâli'üs-selâtin* (The Sultans' Ascendant), where he explicated the numerological principles (*ilm-i cefr*) he utilized for the former claim.[135] It is apparent that Mustafa Âli was aware of apocalyptic/millennial expectations Sultan Murad was concerned about. His petition also shows how he wanted to make use of the apocalyptic atmosphere of the time. The same year, in 1584 Âli appealed to the sultan asking to be sent back to Aleppo, as a finance director where, Âli claims, anarchy and corruption rose high. To back up his argument, Âli reminds Murad that one of the apocalyptic signs is destruction of Aleppo, and according to the same prophecy a year prior to the millennium there will be no Arab left on earth. Therefore, he is willing to go there and put things in order to prevent things to happen before their time.[136]

Moreover, it was not only due Murad's esoteric interests, but the current celestial occurrences also supported the millennial expectation of the time. In year 1577, the appearance

[132] Felek, *Kitâb-ı Menâmât*, 27.
[133] Schmidt, *Pure water For Thirsty Muslims*, 122.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Felek, *Kitâb-ı Menâmât*, 27.
[136] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Historian*, 112.

of the great comet was observed which was traveling from west to east. It was interpreted as a sign of victory for the Ottomans against Safavids and prosperity back then. However, as Âli wrote, it brought nothing but "years of war, poverty, and destruction for the Ottomans."[137] In 1583, the Grand conjunctions of the planets Jupiter and Saturn was observed which created a rare combination as the end of first millennium of Islamic calendar was in 1591/92. Although Jupiter-Saturn conjunction was to occur in every twenty years, according to Abu Mashar (d. 886), who wrote *Zij-i Hazarat* (Treatise of Millenia), a quite famous work of medieval astrology, every conjunction was not equal. And the most significant of all, the Great Conjunction, where both planets complete the full circle of all twelve zodiacs and meet at the first of Aries, and it was only once in every 960 years.[138] Since the epithet *sahib-kıran* "refers to the universal ruler who will inaugurate the domination of a single religion to coincide with the Grand Conjunction" and by the coming of millennium, the eschatological personae such as the renewer, or the Mahdi, who will protect the religion and lead the Muslim community during the End Times, were awaited, Murad was a possible candidate to conduct a millenarian program. Besides, the echoes of the Great Conjunction were not heard only in the Ottoman court but as mentioned before, the major astronomical occurrences was shaking the whole Mediterranean basin. In England too, for instance, the impending Great Conjunction of 1583 aroused a great deal of anxiety.[139] The astrologers of the Elizabethan court recorded that this conjunction occurred last by the birth of Christ, and only six times in total since the creation. During a period when diplomatic correspondences between Murad III and Elizabeth I have

[137] Subrahmanyam, "On World historians in the Sixteenth Century," 32.
[138] Stephan b. Blake, *Time in Early Modern Islam*, 143-144. The conjunction astrology theory of Abu Mashar was also included and therefore transmitted by *Rasail-i Ikhwan al-Safa*. Also, see Blake, 145 "The fifty-two chapters of the Rasail were divided into four sections: mathematics, natural sciences, psychology, and theology. In the chapter on astronomy Abu Mashar was mentioned by name, and his system was briefly outlined. His determination that the conjunction of 571 had marked the prophet's birth was included as well as his explanation of the Sassanid world year: a 360,000-year epoch bookmarked by two Grand Conjunctions – the first in 183,101 bce and the second in 176,899 CE."
[139] Blake, *Time in Early Modern Islam*, 182.

increased significantly, it is highly plausible to assume such millennial anxieties were also in circulation between the two courts.

Even though the existing scholarship puts emphasis on Süleyman's messianic image the most, and some explicitly disregards Murad III as a messianic figure arguing "there does not appear to have been any widespread effort to transform him into an eschatological messiah,"[140] the same epithets used for Süleyman and his priors, also addressed to Murad III. Similarly, a royal edition of Al-Bistami's *Cifr*, "the urtext from which the image of Sultan Süleyman as the Mahdi" would be hewn, was prepared for Murad III, around the midst of his reign.[141]

Having to be known as "one of the greatest Ottoman bibliophiles", as discussed in previous chapter, "an extraordinary album of paintings, poetry, and drawings" was prepared for Sultan Murad, prior to his accession to throne.[142] What is important for the discussion here, however, is the dedication part, which should have been added after Murad accession, goes as follows: "This marvellous copy, adorned like a rose, is called an album by connoisseurs in accordance with the custom of the repository (*hizâne*, 'treasury') of the ruler of the times... Sultan Murad Han, son of Sultan Selim Han, sultan until the end of the world..."[143] Although we do not know the exact date of the dedication part, we can assume that as no Ottoman Sultan claimed to be immortal, here the phrase "sultan until the end of the world" should carry an apocalyptic implication due to oncoming millennium. A more direct example is found in Nev'i Efendi's (d.1599) encyclopaedic work, *Netâyicü'l-Fünûn ve Mehâsinü'l-Mütûn* (Findings of Sciences and Graces of Texts). Citing Abdurrahman Al-Bistami among his sources, the book introduces twelve branches of *'ilm*, among them five are: science of sufism (*'ilm-i tasavvuf)*,

[140] Blake, 169.
[141] Fleischer, "Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences: Prophecies at the Ottoman Court in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in *Falnama: The Book of Omens*, ed. M. Farhad and Serpil Bağcı (Washington: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 2009), 238.
[142] Aimee Fromm, "Adorned like a Rose: The Sultan Murad III Album (Austrian National Library, Cod. Mixt. 313) and the Persian Connection," *Artibus Asiae* 66, No. 2, (2006): 137-154, at 137.
[143] For the full translation of the dedication part, see Fromm, "Adorned like a Rose," Appendix 1, at 52.

science of dream interpretation (*'ilm-i ta'bir-i rüya),* science of medical spell *('ilm-i rukye-efsun-i tıb),* science of stars and, prognostication *('ilm-i nücûm, fal ve zecr*). The book obviously appeals to Murad's particular interest in popular esotericism. In the dedication part, we see that Murad is addressed as "the Messiah of the end times" (*mehdi-i âhir zaman*). Moreover, on the chapter of the creation, after mentioning that the lifetime of the world is seven thousand years by referencing the fourteenth century cosmography/history book, *Behçetü't-Tevârih* of Şükrullah, the author gives different speculations on the time gap between Adam and Muhammad. Accounting the Zoroastrian, Jewish and Christian calendars' the beginning of the time, Nev'i concludes that the accurate one is told by the Prophet's companion Abdullah ibn Abbas, that it is 6075, meaning that from the times of Prophet Muhammad it should be 925 years up to the time of Apocalypse.[144]

These examples show us the double nature of the image-building process; on one hand, the literati fashions sultan in a distinct way by producing complimentary works using popular or relevant epithets of the time and, on the other it is the sultan himself who creates a certain image through his patronage and policies. Turning back to Sultan Murad's dream accounts at this point, Tülay Alvan's take on Murad's dreams should be discussed since she reminds that those were the letters between a Sheikh and a disciple, thus, they need to be analysed within the context of *tasavvuf*, the sufi path. On one side, because the dreams reveal one's spiritual advancement through certain symbols, they need to be interpreted by following certain rules, on the other, some dreams can be deceptive; therefore, they may function to test the disciple (*mürşid)*.[145] In that sense, Murad's inspirations can be interpreted of this sort, as he does not openly ascribe a state of sainthood for himself. Having those nuances in mind, we can turn to

[144] Nadir İlhan, "Nev'i Efendi: Netayicü'l-Fünun ve Mehasinü'l-Mütun (Giriş-Metin-Dizinler)," (Unpublished MA Thesis, Elazığ Üniversitesi, 1992).
[145] Tülay Alvan, "Devrinden Seyrine Sultan III. Murad'ın Kitâbü'l-Menâmât'taki Mektuplarına Dair Bazı Tespitler," F*SM İlmî Araştırmalar İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Dergisi* 3 (Spring, 2014), 33-34.

Özgen Felek's point. Departing from the idea that "every dreamteller is a storyteller," Felek poses the question "if Sultan Murad indeed had these dreams and visions, or if he was deliberately creating this fictive character to further his spiritual and political career?"[146] She discusses, for instance, throughout the text Murad transforms himself into, Hızır, Muhammad and 'Ali which joins *velâyet* (sainthood), *nübüvvet* (prophethood) and *risâlet* (messengership) together, and thus unifies all Muslims under his sovereignty both in a spiritual and political sense.[147]

My conclusion, however, is that those two positions can be merged as both carry valid aspects, yet the sultan's dream account is not sufficient to come up with a conclusion in that sense. Thus, I argue that Murad' dream accounts neither can be analysed without his role as a sovereign, nor the Sufi tradition and Murad's "religious" identity can be disregarded vis-à-vis the secular one. Nevertheless, it is a two-way program that on one side there are statesmen, scholars, and litterateur, writing and discussing with millennial terms, and promote certain religio-political identity for the sultan, which echoes through the sultan's own accounts as well as policies. Just as reflected in his dreams, when he travelled to Jerusalem on a ship which resembles the hadith account, according to which the Mahdi will travel to Jerusalem with his men on a thousand ships. [148] Besides, considering the ways the contemporary Islamic sovereigns were fashioned, for instance:

> "Shah Ismaill's great-grandson Abbas I (r. 995–1038/1587–1629) revived Shah Ismail's self-depiction as the "Shadow of God," and transposed it onto his own persona. About the same time, another Muslim ruler, the sultan of the Moghul Empire, Akbar (963–1014/1543–1605) also was described as both the Spiritual Pole (*kutb*) and the Perfect Man (*insan-ı kamil*) of his time by his courtiers."[149]

[146] Felek, "(Re)creating Image and Identity," 266.
[147] Ibid., 266-67.
[148] Ibid., 263.
[149] Ibid., 266.

It is quite conceivable for Sultan Murad III to pursue a similar policy by ascribing a sacred role to himself to be able to compete, especially, with the Safavid sultan against whom he waged a long war which lasted more than ten years. Without rushing into a conclusion on Sultan Murad's intention behind bringing his dream accounts together, or on his own belief in his sacred personality or messianic duty, we can conclude the apocalyptic atmosphere that is dominant in contemporary imperial courts, and it is certain that it was utilized as part of the political agenda by Ottoman policymakers as well.

Millennial Reflections of the *Mirror of the Worlds*

Just at the beginning, in the dedication part of the *Mirror*, we see that Mustafa Âli makes use of the messianic titles addressing Sultan Murad; *sahib-kıran-ı ruy-ı zemin*, *halifetullâhi fi'l-alemin*, *zıllullâhi fi'l-arzin*, respectively referring to "the Lord of Conjunctions on earth", "the caliph of God of the universe", the shadow of God on earth."[150] Similar to the aforementioned examples, the apocalyptic atmosphere is reflected through those titles ascribed to the sultan. However, it should also be mentioned that those titles are not quite standardized, and not all works presented to the sultan, or another courtier includes them. As the main commissioner of the *Mirror* is Doğancı Mehmed Pasha, also to whom the work is dedicated along with the sultan, we can assume that the choice of those epithets was a joint initiation of the pasha and Âli for creating the sultanic image.

Concerning the main body of the text, the chapter on timing the Last Hour occupies around one third of the text. Âli introduces the second chapter as "thus, the second chapter concerns that; from the times of the father of mankind, prophet Adam, to the honour of the world, [i.e. Muhammad] peace be upon him, in the existing history accounts the lifetime of the

[150] Arslan, "Gelibolulu Âli'nin Hurafelerden İbaret bir Eseri," 39.

world is known to be seven thousand years and some also argue that it is more. Let it not to be concealed; it is accounted on the accurate tradition from the Prophet (*ehâdis-i sahih*) that the lifetime of the world is seven thousand years. Meaning, from the time Adam came down to the Earth, till the Doomsday, seven thousand years will be complete."[151] And afterwards, he accounts for different sources and opinions on the topic. Firstly, Suyuti Mevlana Celaleddin (d. 1505), and secondly Ebussuud (d.1574) wrote treatises on this matter arguing that the lifespan of the world is more than seven thousand years, however no one has the knowledge how many years more exactly, except that it is not more than five hundred years. Moreover, there are also some clues to make an approximate calculation. For instance, the Dajjal will appear at the beginning of the century, plus the second coming of Jesus will be followed after forty years from Dajjal's appearance. Afterwards, for one hundred and twenty years, humanity will enjoy peace and prosperity, until when the angel Raphael (*İsrafil*) will blow the trumpet (*sur*) which will indicate another forty years to pass before the Last Hour arrives. By acknowledging that lifespan of the world is seven thousand years, Âli suggests two ways to solve this problem; first one is to interpret the seven thousand as referring to the years when Muslim community enjoyed peace and order. Thus, from the moment when the signs of the Hour (*eşrât-ı sâat*) appear, it should not be included to those seven thousand years. The second way, by referring to another saying of the Prophet, is to account for the shrinking of the time. Âli concludes that from the time when this treatise is written to the millennium, there are five years left, and no sign has appeared, and explains the ten signs of apocalypse. Those are explained by Âli as "the first is the story of *duhân*[152] (smoke); second, *Dajjal*; third *dabbet'ül-'arz*; forth, sun's rising from the West; fifth, the second coming of Jesus; sixth appearance of Gog and Magog; seventh, *hasf* which will come from the east; eight, *hasf* from the west; ninth, *hafs* in the Arabian Peninsula (*hafs* means the destruction of the flourished cities on the West, East and the Arabian

[151] Ibid., 52-53.
[152] *Duhan* is referred twice in the Qur'an, 41:11; 44:10.

Peninsula). The tenth sign is the fire rising from Yemen which will steer people into Armageddon."[153] We can assume, then, Âli's interpretation suggests that by the year 1000 AH, the signs may start occurring which will last until one by one leading toward the unknown hour.

At this point, again referring to different scholars, Âli accounts the information found in history books on the exact time period between Adam and Muhammad, and at last explains his opinion. Âli writes that to him the most credible account is that of Abdullah ibn Abbas' (d. 687), which in fact at the end conflicts with the notion of seven thousand years because it suggests from the beginning to the time of Prophet Muhammad it is 6045 years. However, Abdullah ibn Abbas is famous for his deep knowledge on the science of history.[154] Here, Mustafa Âli concludes the discussion in a clever manner, by supporting his position strongly but not openly, and direct his readers to question the accuracy of seven-thousand years lifespan tradition.

All in all, his deliberate calculations, and accounts on several different theories of *eschaton* tell us about the level of anxiety that was shared among the elites of the time. To make a comparison, while Nev'i in his abovementioned encyclopaedic work reserves a paragraph on the same matter, Âli writes almost for ten pages and composes a convincing argumentation. It indicates the existing of a certain effort to determine the timing of the Last Hour from the side of the sultan and his close circles, which Mustafa Âli aimed to appeal. And in conclusion while propitiating the fear of a Doomsday at the door, he still manages to promote an apocalyptic/millennial perspective, especially for the sultan as he may be confronting the disorder of the last century and undertaking the role of the guardian of religion. In fact, the composition of the treatise starting from pre-Adamic early creatures/worlds, which according to Mustafa Âli's justification on writing his work, is a field constitutes a gap in the existing

[153] Arslan, "Gelibolulu Âli'nin Hurafelerden İbaret bir Eseri," 54-55.
[154] Ibid. 55.

scholarship, is telling as it hints the main purpose of its production. "As Walter Schmithals argued, cosmology is particularly important for the apocalyptist since it shows to the readers the unchangeable laws set forth by God, and invites them to read the ensuing apocalyptic speculations within the same context."[155] With a similar motivation, Âli provides a whole spectrum of each 'world' from its beginning to end. That is why at the end of the first creation account, Âli says that this source also includes much information on the signs of apocalypse, and informs the reader that the lifespan of creatures of the sphere of the Moon (*felek-i kamer mahkukâtının âmarı*) is seven-thousand years, and that of creatures of the sphere of Venus' (*felek-i zöhre mahlukâtı*) should be eight thousand years. Whereas, the others planets' lifetime decreased, again, to seven thousand.[156] Here, Âli's central concern when accounting the creation stories becomes explicit, that is, to cultivate an answer for the question of timing the apocalypse.

Conclusion

In this chapter, by taking the Islamic understanding of apocalypse and the construction of an Islamic apocalyptic tradition as the starting point, I tried to introduce its reflection on the literature which was inherited by the Ottoman intellectuals. Owing to the relation between the knowledge production and courtly politics, as illustrated in the previous chapter, I demonstrated the apocalyptic/millennial anxieties and expectations in courtly sphere via examples found in literary works. The usages of political epithets for the Sultan, as demonstrated in above-mentioned works draws an example of how courtly discourse was transmitted and utilized in literary works. In this context the *Mirror of the Worlds*, points out to the concerns of the Ottoman courtly milieu and attests Sultan Murad's messianic image-making process. The

[155] Şahin, "Constantinople and the End Time," 337-338.
[156] Arslan, "Gelibolulu Âli'nin Hurafelerden İbaret bir Eseri," 44.

seemingly controversial image of a Sufi, and self-claimed messiah sultan signifies the plurality of personae one has -to have- in the political arena.

Chapter 3 – The Sources of the *Mirror of the Worlds*

In this chapter I look into the sources of *Mir'âtü'l-Avâlim, Mirror of the Worlds,* and analyse Âli's authorship and the selection of sources. Querying the "superstitious" characteristic of the *Mirror,* by looking through his sources I argue that it would be oversimplifying to classify the *Mirror* as a mere mythical piece.

In his work, Mustafa Âlî refers to a number of sources, consisting of hadiths transmitters, Ka'bul Ahbar (d. 652-53), Enes b. Malik (d. 711-12), Abdullah bin Abbas (d. 687-88); medieval Muslim historian and scholars, Ibn Vehbi (d. 813), Al-Tabari (d. 923) and Ibn Arabi (d. 1240), Al-Suyuti (d. 1505); and lastly two Ottoman peers, the fifteenth century historian Şükrullah (d. after 1464) and famous chief jurisprudent (*mufti*) under Sultan Süleyman I, Ebussuud Efendi (d. 1574). As a madrasa-educated intellectual and a member of courtly circles, Mustafa Âli and the sources he utilizes, can be considered both mainstream and well-celebrated ones. Therefore, the analysis of his sources can shed light on the Ottoman intellectual life of the time, and the themes Âli discusses in the *Mirror*, which are mainly cosmogony and eschatology. Few modern scholars who have worked on the text of the *Mirror*, notably Mehmet Arslan and Süleyman Lokmacı, both interpreted this short treatise as being full of superstitions, following mainly the remarks made by the seventeenth-century famous intellectual Katip Çelebi (d.1657).[157] In his voluminous bibliographic work, *Keşfi'z-Zünun* (The Uncovering of Ideas), Katip Çelebi pans Mustafa Âli harshly for his ignorance and describes the *Mirror* as full of errors and simply deliria which according to Katip Çelebi, are also repeated in *Künhü'l-Ahbâr* (The Essence of History).[158] Owing his repetition for representing the age of reasoning

[157] Ibid., 30.

[158] "Mir'âtü'l-Avâlim (Alemlerin Aynası) - Türkçedir, kısadır, yazan Alî Efendi'dir, bu eserde yaratılışın başlangıcını, bu konuda söylenen hataları ve Künhü'l-Ahbâr'daki sayıklama ve artırma gibi bilgisizlikten, akıl

in the Ottoman world, and with his close interest in scientific developments in the Western world, Katip Çelebi's remarks against the *Mirror* can be considered plausible. However, looking at the number of extant manuscript copies of the *Mirror*, which is around forty, one can argue that the content of the *Mirror* as a sixteenth-century cosmography, had not been evaluated by the Ottomans as "nonsense" or superstition by his contemporaries. On the contrary, except one of them, all of the sources cited in Âli's text follow the conventional Sunni-minded tradition. In terms of Âli's approach to the subject, looking through genre-wise, the *Mirror* thus can be fitted within the context of *acâ'ib* literature, which, for Ali, serves the purpose for its readers to draw a lesson (*ahz-ı ibret*).[159] Some modern scholars categorize this genre under cosmography, however, Ottoman *acâ'ib* literature represents the Islamic encyclopaedic tradition, led by Zakariya al-Kazwini (d. 1283) and Ibn Vardi (d.1457).[160] Notwithstanding, as in Âli's case Katip Çelebi makes similar comments on Ibn Vardi's *Hâridetü'-l Acâ'ib,* disgracing his geographical knowledge as well as including superstitious accounts.[161] However, the genre of *acâ'ib* connotates a common ground where fantastic, imaginary meets science and knowledge of physical reality which urges the feeling of curiosity in its readers. As Hagen explains,

> "The first concern of a cosmographer is to establish the structure of the universe. Ottomans were familiar with different cosmologies, especially those from diverse Sufi traditions. Often, we find the two most important ones explicated side by side, although they appear, to the modern mind, as mutually exclusive."[162]

yetersizliğinden ve doğru nakli tam olarak bilmemekten kaynaklanan saçmalıkları anlattı". Kâtip Çelebi, *Keşfü'z-Zünun An Esâmi'l-Kütübi Ve'l-Fünûn* (Translated By Rüştü Balcı, Ankara: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2005), 1316.

[159] Arslan, "Gelibolulu Âli'nin Hurafelerden İbaret bir Eseri," 40.

[160] See Feray Coşkun, "Ottoman Geography Literatture and the '*Ajāib al-Makhlūqāt*' Genre," *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi,* 17:33, (2019): 269-286.

[161] Kâtip Çelebi, *Keşfi'z-Zünun*, 583.

[162] Gottfried Hagen, "The Knowlegde of Order, The Order of Knowlegde: Intellectual Life," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, eds. by Suraiya N. Faroqhi and Kate Fleet, 2:407–56. Cambridge History of Turkey, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 414.

This merging can be found in Âli's cosmogonic account as well. For instance, in the *Mirror* the first story told by Ka'bu'l-Ahbâr gives an account of all the previous nations which came into being before Adam, one by one, on seven planets, which fits the celestial structure within Islamic cosmography. Therefore, we see that the story transmitted by Ka'b actually inherits the Ptolemaic cosmology.

Regarding the Prophet Muhammad's companions (*sahâbe*) and their next generation (*tâbi'in*), Ka'b'ul-Ahbâr actually draws a distinct line. As a Jewish convert to Islam, his name Ahbâr (Ar. singular *habr)* derives from Hebrew rabbi denoting his clerical status. He is regarded as one of the main sources of Judeo-Christian tradition's flowing into Islam. In the *Mirror*, Âli begins by the creation story told by Ka'bu'l-Ahbâr, based on a 160-verse long poem (*kaside*) titled *Silk'ü-Zevâhir fi İlm-I'l-Evâili ve Evâhir* (The Order of Appearances in Science of the Beginning and End) penned by Ibn Talha (d. 760).[163] Although his students, Ebu Hureyre and Abdullah ibn Abbas, were are among the most relied hadith transmitters, Ka'bu'l-Ahbâr has been considered a suspicious source in the Islamic tradition, mainly due to his accounts, and indeed most of the tradition attributed to him are historical accounts which are not written down by himself but spread by word of mouth.[164] The creation story told by Ka'b -through Ibn Talha- is a quite interesting one. According to Ka'bu'l-Ahbâr, once he encountered a mysterious book, which gives an account of the people came into being before Adam and their history directly revealed by God. The book also contained knowledge of the Great Flood, and was written down onto tablets by Adam and kept in a cave inside a chest. Accordingly, it was protected through the ages until found by Prophet Daniel and thus the whole Israelites benefitted it. Then at some

[163] About *Silk'ü-Zevâhir fi İlm-I'l-Evâili ve Evâhir* Katip Çelebi gives information on the length and author of the *kaside*, and makes reference to Mustafa Âli and *Mir'âtü'l-Avâlim*. Thinking that The Mirror is a short, and popular but not a scholarly-praised work, Katip Çelebi's reference to *The Mirror* in respect to *Silk'üz-Zevâhir* suggests that before or after Âli's work, this source has not been used extensively, nor included in other significant books. See Kâtip Çelebi, *Keşfü'z-Zünun*, 801.
[164] Arslan, 43-44.

point a philosopher named Yesrib possessed the book, which was eventually buried along with him in his grave. When Ka'bul-Ahbâr told this story to Caliph Osman, the latter ordered to find the grave of Yesrib, which happened to be near the Prophet's tomb. Hence, the book was rediscovered, and its knowledge was disseminated among people through the ages. This story is quite befitting with Ka'b's role, as Daniel is not mentioned in the Qur'an and integrated into Islamic tradition via Israelite sources.

With respect to Âli's choice of this partially disfavoured and disregarded account, we should turn back to the Chapter 1 to be reminded about the audience among them the most important being the sultan, and his particular interests. Selim Kuru, draws attention to the trends on prose literature in premodern Ottoman world as "various original story collection" was one of them and it was of high interest of Murad III. His anecdote about Cinanî (d.1595) is quite demonstrative on Sultan Murad's precision on the "originality" of accounts. In the words of Kuru:

> "The writing of one story compilation, on the other hand, is reflective of the high demand for these prose works. Apparently Murad III wanted to hear original stories and commissioned poet Cinani (d. 1595) to compile previously unheard-of tales. Cinani composed the work under the title Bedayiü'l- Asar (Most Ornate Stories) and, after having a scribe transcribe it, he gave it to an artist to illuminate the pages for the presentation copy. One of the storytellers in Murad III's court, Derviş Eğlence, being friends with the illuminator, read the copy and told the stories to the sultan before the book was ready. When Cinani presented his work, not only did he not receive any payment, but he was also shunned by the sultan for merely recording the stories already told by Eğlence instead of telling previously untold ones. This anecdote, recorded by Nevizade Atayi (1583–1635), points to the great popularity of tales in this period and the interest in "original" stories rather than commonly transmitted classical stories found in traditional story collections."[165]

Coming to another important source of the *Mirror*, Şükrullah's *Behçet'ü-Tevarih* (The Beauty of Histories), from which Âli adopts the two particular creation stories, is considered to

[165] Selim S. Kuru, "The literature of Rum: The making of a literary tradition (1450–1600)," In *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, eds. by Suraiya N. Faroqhi and Kate Fleet, 2:548–592. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 577.

be one of the earliest books on world history written by an Ottoman historian. Served at the court of Murad III, Şükrullah was known to be a member of the ambiguous group called "İhvânü's-Safâ" (The Brethren of Purity). Şükrullah makes references to the group in his several works, stating that *Câmi'u'd-Da'vât* (Gatherer of Invitations) was written at the request of the İhvânü's-Safâ, or in his work *Minhâcü'r-Reşâd* (The Path of True Direction), İhvânü's-Safâ was among the dedicatees. "Among the members of the İhvânü's-Safâ were such intellectual luminaries as the first Ottoman grand mufti (*şeyhülislam*), Molla Fenari (d.1431), and Sheikh Bedreddin (d.1416), an eminent jurist and inspirer and leader of a great rebellion in 819/1416, Timurid historian and occultist Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi (d.1454), and Abdurrahman Al-Bistami, who was also present at Murad II's court. This supposedly informal intellectual network nominally refers to the tenth century compilation of letter under the name of *Rasâil-i Ihvânü's-Safâ* (the Letters of the Brethren of Purity).[166]

İhsan Fazlıoğlu describes the fifteenth-century İhvânü's-Safâ as "a hermetic project in its most general sense", and İlker E. Binbaş underlines that "what made it a distinct phenomenon in the fifteenth century was its wide geographical reach and the commitment of its members to occult sciences."[167] They represented the Ibn Arabi school and were an essential disseminator of his teaching. Likewise, in his creation accounts, Şükrullah utilizes Ibn Arabian terms, such as "*nûr-ı Muhammedî*" (the light of Muhammed), referring to the first thing created from which "*şecere-i yakin*" (the tree of life/truth) and the peacock (*tâvus*) came into being. According to this creation story, after sitting on the tree of truth for 70.000 years, God created a mirror on

[166] İlker Evrim Binbaş *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran Sharaf Al-Din Ali Yazdi and the Islamicate Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 107. Binbaş describes the tenth-century *Ihvân'ü-Safâ* as follows: "An enigmatic group, or a person projecting himself as a group, called the Ikhwan al-Safa' wa khillan al-wafa' in tenth-century Basra in Iraq had anonymously authored a set of epistles entitled simply al-Rasa'il, an encyclopedia of all the then-known sciences and a detailed account of the ways in which one needed to study them. Combining Greek philosophy, Islamic theology, occult philosophy, and mysticism, the author(s) of al-Rasa'il turned the activity of learning these sciences and philosophy into a devotional practice, and argued that the activity of learning itself was essential to liberate the soul and prepare it for the coming angelic age when it will be released from the entrapment of the body."

[167] Ibid., 111-112.

which the peacock exposed to itself. Out of astonishment the peacock starts sweating and the whole sorts of creatures emerged from its sweat.

This seemingly mythic story, as Âli explains, carries symbolic aspects. According to him the peacock stands for "the perfect (or full) beauty of the form" (*kemâl-i behçet ü hüsn-ü cemâl*) and the reason the peacock was chosen is that, because unlike other kinds of birds, peacocks reproduce only once a year just as human-beings, and that it takes three years for a peacock to reach the adolescence age and to be able to breed. Just like its adorned appearance, its inner (or hidden) aspect is known for being dignified.[168]

The following account in the *Mirror* also indicates the first thing created as the "light of Muhammad", and God tells Moses about the many thousands of worlds he created. After this account Âli turns to Ibn Arabi's *Fütühatü'l-Mekkiyye* (Meccan Revelations) and cites the part on which Ibn Arabi narrates his mystical experience. Shortly, Ibn Arabi implies the existence of many Adams, who were created before the last one (i.e., *Hazret-i Âdem*). Lastly, before finishing the creation part, Âli discusses the Sufi terms of the hierarchy among the first creations and how scholars before his time classified them. For instance, he writes that the first "*cevher*" (substance, *οὐσία*)[169] was named as "*kalem*" (pen)[170] while others were "*akl-ı mücerred*" (the pure mind), or "*Âdem-i ma'na*".[171] Similarly the second "*cevher*" was called "*levh*",[172] and "*Havva-i ma'na*",[173] while some others called it "*nefs-i kül*".[174] After these remarks, Âli, then, explains the essential cosmological terms; "*felek-i evvel*" (the first heaven),

[168] Arslan, 51-52.
[169] *Cevher* indicates the essence of being, in Ibn Arabian teaching it refers to God.
[170] Pen is considered to be the thing created according to Sufi understanding.
[171] Here, Âdem refers to Adam and ma'na refers to "*mana alemi*", "the World of ideas".
[172] Also called "*levh-i mahfuz*". "Levh"'s literally meaning is plaque, a surface to write. In Sufism refers to knowledge of everyhing.
[173] Lit. "Eve of the World of Ideas".
[174] *Nefs* refers to "self" and therefore can be apply to all beings. Lit. "all-encompassing self".

felek-i atlas,[175] and *kursi* (throne)[176] which according to Âli, previous scholars named it as *felek-i buruc* (the sphere of horoscopes) on which the twelve zodiacs placed upon, and so on.[177] Considering all these remarks of Âli, the *Mirror* does not seem to be merely a compilation of interesting creation myths of creation but rather it employs didactive aspects. Moreover, the content of this work is clearly composed to include some important Sufi terms. However, here I should emphasize that I do not argue that Âli's treatise does involve an exclusive discussion on creation or Ibn Arabian terminology. Generally speaking, Âli bases the content of his book on a solid ground. Turning to the criticisms of superstition, it is notable that Katip Çelebi, while raging on the *Mirror*, does not speak ill of Şükrullah's work which suggests that Katip Çelebi's criticisms target Mustafa Âli himself rather than the *Mirror*'s content.

Clearly Âli utilizes a compilation method, by including various different and seemingly contradictory accounts on the same subject matter. This method is actually a characteristic of pre-modern Islamic historiography.[178] As Jan Schmidt observes "the author intend[s] to let facts speak for themselves, or trie[s] to explain it as a method of esoteric scholarship, presenting the audience with alternative versions of events which had the purpose of 'dissimulation'" and secondly aiming "the scholarly task of passing on as much knowledge in as short a space."[179]

The same attitude is visible in the first part of the *Mirror*, as in the second where Âli conducts the discussion on the lifetime of the world. Along with what the majority of historians (*ekser ehl-i tevârih*) agree upon, Âli includes the other estimations found in different books, such as that of Tabari and Mevlâna Kadı (Kadı Adudü'd-din).[180] His main source on the excess years above 7000 should be Suyuti's *Kitâbü'l-Keşf 'an Mücâvezeti Hâzihi'l-Ümmeti el-Elf* (The

[175] Or "*arş*", refers to the ninth celestial sphere.
[176] Refers to the eighth heaven.
[177] Arslan, "Gelibolulu Âli'nin Hurafelerden İbaret bir Eseri," 52.
[178] Schmidt, *Pure Water for Thirsty Muslims*, 73.
[179] Ibid., 74.
[180] Mustafa Âli also completed a Turkish translation of the book in question in 1575, entitled *Zübdetü't-Târîhi fî Tercemeti Eşrefî (İşrâki)t-Tevârîh*.

Book of Investigation on Secession from the People of Thousand). Written in 1493, a century before Âli's work, the treatise was Suyuti's answer to the millennialists of the time. A hadith connoting, that the Prophet would not to stay in his grave for more than 1000 years, a hadith which also is not found in the six accepted hadith books, became widespread in among the folk of the time, which Suyuti, as a renowned hadith scholar, had the need to compose a short work refuting the aforesaid hadith's authenticity and explaining the 7000-year theory. The existing manuscripts of the Turkish translations of the original Arabic text of Suyuti's *The Book of Investigation* are attributed to Ebussuud Efendi, Kemalpaşazâde, Gelibolulu Mehmed and Gelibolulu Mahmud, thus it is possible that Âli saw one of Suyuti's treatise's Turkish translation under the title of *Ahval-i Kıyamet* translated by Ebussuud. [181]

Finally, I should note that the notion of 7000 years lifespan of the world, was not peculiar to medieval Islamic cosmology but it is also found in Byzantine apocalyptic tradition(s). According to the Byzantine calendar the world had a lifespan of, as Gennadius Scholarius informs (d. 1473), the first patriarch of the Orthodox Church in Ottoman Istanbul, the end of the world was to occur in 1492 coinciding with the year 7000 from the creation. Although it concerned the fifteenth-century apocalyptic expectation e.g., as in *Dürr-i Meknûn,* as it is seen in the case of the *Mirror*, the notion of 7000 years remained as a core element of the Ottoman apocalyptic with slight modifications to fit in the sixteenth century setting.

[181] Şenödeyici suggests that the original Turkish translation belongs to Kemalpaşazâde. See, Özer Şenödeyici "Kemalpaşazade Tarafından Tercüme Edildiği Düşünülen Bir Risale: Ahvâl-i Kıyâmet," *Türklük Bilimi Araştırmaları* 36 (Fall 2014): 291-319.

Conclusion

This thesis is an attempt to function as a mirror reflecting the cosmos of a short treatise. Thanks to its author's fame, it was possible to conduct such an analysis of the *Mirror of the Worlds*, although the work itself has long remained in the periphery of the scholarship. As I have tried to demonstrate, the *Mirror* reflects two major issues concerning the late sixteenth-century Ottoman political world. The first issue is the changing structure and models of ruling which were initiated by Murad III, which helped him creating a new group of ruling elite, notably his royal favourites.

In the first chapter, I have tried to show how Murad III attempted to diminish the power and authority of his grand vizirates. Sultan Murad introduced a different style of sultanate compared to his predecessors in certain aspects. After the elimination of Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, the sultan did not let any grand vizier to occupy this highest office in the Ottoman Empire long enough to gain power and dominate the bureaucratic hierarchy. Instead, by frequently dismissing his grand viziers, thus shortening their tenures in office, he empowered the already existing faction-ridden politics and added new players, i.e., the royal favourites. In this regard, unlike how conventional historiography depicts, Sultan Murad was actually engaged in the business of rule, and he shaped the political atmosphere of the Ottoman court thanks to his power-brokers who represented his sovereign will. His increasingly secluded did indicate his apathy towards political issues. On the contrary, Murad ordered a new system of petitions to be able to hear its subjects' concern, and requested a special type of grand vizierate reports, thus remained the ultimate centre of political authority. Yet, among many members of the Ottoman court, his royal favourites were his most trusted men and accordingly they became the main power-brokers due to their direct accessibility to sultan.

Within the context of such new political setting, I have discussed how literary production also became major issue and tried to show how it was utilized as a policy-making instrument. To this end, I examined the sultan's particular interests. Known with his close relations to Sufi sheikhs to the extent to consult with political matters, Murad III had a specific interest in astrology, esotericism and cosmographic works. All these aspects of his sultanate enlighten the reasons why Mustafa Âli wrote the *Mirror* upon the request of Doğancı Mehmed Pasha. Mehmed was not only one of sultan's closest man, but also, he oversaw the fiscal administration along with military decision-making duties. Appointed as the governor-general of Rumeli in 1584, Mehmed Pasha enjoyed extra-ordinary powers, which brought his end in 1589 for he was held responsible for the first major currency devaluation in Ottoman history. Mustafa Âli wrote and presented his work in 1587 to Mehmed Pasha, while he was unemployed hoping to gain a post at the court. Spending most of his adult life during the reign of Murad III, Mustafa Âli was well-aware and a perfect exemplum of a bureaucrat of his time. Knowing that a strong reference coming from a right person could bring him what he desired, thus he appealed to a multiple of statesman to gain their patronage and eventually that of the sultan's.

Regarding the content of the *Mirror*, the central question of the treatise seems the timing of the Apocalypse. To better understand the role of apocalyptic ideas in the Ottoman court, in the second chapter, I have illustrated how the Ottomans approached apocalyptic sciences. From the conquest of Constantinople onwards, it seems that the apocalyptic anxieties have occupied a considerable place in the Ottoman political thought. Underlying the image of a universal ruler, the saviour of the Islam, an Ottoman sovereign had features to fashion himself as a messianic figure. From the fifteenth century onward, expecting the end of times was a phenomenon from the Spanish kings to the Mughal emperors. In this sense, the Ottoman sultans were not alone, and it can even be said that they utilized a similar messianic discourse in order to compete and eliminate their rivals. It is evident from the contemporary sources that the belief

in a world sovereignty joined with the impending Islamic Millennium, and it occupied a good deal of the intellectual environment, and its engagement into political discourse reached a peak during the time of Süleyman I.

Therefore, contemporary scholarship has mostly concerned in this period in Ottoman history in order to understand the impact of the Islamic Millennium over the Ottoman courtly circles. However, the times of Murad III, who has been seen as an ineffective sultan, have not been discussed in the same context of messianic and millennial claims. Accordingly, as I tried to show in my thesis, a closer look into Murad's own writings as well as the literary works produced for him reveals a certain effort to fashion Sultan Murad as the ruler of the end times just like Sultan Süleyman. In this regard, I have detected two references attesting the millennial tone that was utilized in political discourse.

Moreover, I tried to show that the *Mirror* was the evidence of apocalyptic expectations and anxieties. While locating and analysing the function of the *Mirror* in the context of apocalypticism, I have concluded that when composing his treatise in 1587, Âli tried to balance between millennial "expectations" and "anxieties". While arguing for the improbability of the occurrence of the Doomsday in year 1000 A.H., Âli did not refute the millennial or apocalyptic perspective since, according to his theory, the ten signs leading towards the Apocalypse were not completed, and those apparent signs would bring disorder, not the end of the time itself. Hence, by diminishing the fear of the Apocalypse, Âli still managed to leave the space for the millennial duty of a universal sovereign, who would lead the Muslims and protect the religion. Furthermore, Murad's interest in occult sciences and his construction of the first observatory strengthen the idea that the millennial concerns consisted a crucial part of Murad's image-making process. As to the question of why Murad was engaged in such messianic self-fashioning project, I have also offered a couple of answers.

First of all, the impending Islamic Millennium and recent astronomical evets, such as the Grand Conjunction, was a source of expectation itself based on a long-lasting apocalyptic tradition. In particular, Murad's character as a devoted sufi disciple may have prompted a sacral feature to the sultan. These individual manifestations aside, in order to conduct a millennial policy at that time, a sovereign did not have to ascribe a sacral identity to himself but could have utilized the messianic/apocalyptic rhetoric to empower his rule. In this regard, Murad had two different audience to demonstrate his messianic duty. One was his external rivals, that is, other contemporary rulers. A wider study can illustrate the impact of the long-lasting war against the Safavids by comparing the literature and polities of the two sovereigns who already have a far-rooted messianic tradition. At this point, the Mughal ruler Akbar should also be noted, for he found a unique religion in which he was fashioned as a deity. Thus, it seems that it was not a matter of choice, but the Ottoman sultan had to have similar claims in order to prove he was the superior universal power.

The second audience was sultan's own subjects. Besides the intellectuals of the time, we do not really have enough sources to measure the level of anxiety towards millennium and the commoners' impression of Sultan Murad. However, an anecdote mentioned by Zeynep Aycibin suggests that it is likely that Murad was not the most popular and celebrated sultan in the eyes of his people. According to two European accounts, rumours about Murad's being a Jew but not a Turk descending from the house of Ottomans were talk of the town. This rumour tells that Murad was born to a Jewish woman and was exchanged with a new-born royal baby-girl, therefore, as the European observers record, he was believed to be the last "Ottoman" ruler and the state was destined to dissolve with him.[182] The belief and discourse of decline among Ottoman common people is yet to be discovered, but this slight fragment points out that it was

[182] Zeynep Aycibin, *Çöküş Edebiyatı'nın merkezinde bir Padişah: Manevi Dünyası ile Sultan III. Murad* (İstanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmalar, 2016), 7-8.

not only Mustafa Âli and elite circles who were concerned with idea of an ultimate decline leading towards the end of time. Besides, it brings out the point that as an unpopular sultan, Murad III might have wanted to take the advantage of the fear of the chaos in order to ratify his sovereignty in the eyes of his subject. There is a last point to be taken into consideration, that is, the year 1000 A.H. was believed to bring a great disorder which, quite possibly prompted men of letters of the time to warn, therefore, to prepare the statesmen for the impending chaos (*fitne-i âhir zaman*). While the *Mirror* reflects the anxiousness caused by the millennium, so that Âli was commissioned to compose an argument against it, Selânikî writes that scholars and Sufis prayed in public "not to reach the anarchy of the year 1000" to which was responded with the whole community saying "amen".[183] Another curious example is Mustafa Âli's bringing the end times into discussion and, more specifically, the Mahdi who would set a just rule in his *Counsel*.[184] While the Day of Judgement was a common theme to be involved in any advice work, here Âli's invoking the Mahdi in the first place may be interpreted parallelly to the current socio-political concerns.

All in all, the contribution of the present study is to bring the messianic image of the Ottoman sultan Murad III back into the scholarly discussion, especially from where it was left by Cornell Flesicher focusing on the age of Süleyman I. Secondly, in this study, I tried to free the *Mirror* from Katip Çelebi's harsh accusations, which have been ossified and adopted by modern conventional scholarship.

[183] Kafadar, "Prelude to Ottoman Decline Consciousness," 266.
[184] Howard, "Genre and Myth in the Ottoman Advice for Kings Literature," 149.

“Uşbu resme ḥikāyetler ėderler yā ṭoġrudur

veyā egri. Ḥāliyā biz getürdük.”

Anonymus[185]

[185] Anonymous, *Tercüme-i Acâ'ibü'l-Mahlûkât*, ed. by Günay Kut (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2019), 385.

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