

**A Mirror of Changes and Continuities: The Illustrated Copies of *Ḥamse-i ‘Aṭā’ī*
in the Long Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire and the Islamicate World**

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**Submitted to
Central European University
Department of History**

**In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Comparative History**

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**Central European University
Vienna, Austria
June 2025**

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Acknowledgement

Writing this thesis for me was a rather long and rocky journey, during which I am grateful for the support and help I received from many people. First of all, I would like to express my endless gratitude to my supervisors, Prof. Robyn D. Radway and Prof. Tijana Krstić, who always enlightened and encouraged me with their erudition and patience. Without their tolerance and guidance, this thesis would never have been completed. During the early stage of thesis planning, I was fortunate enough to get valuable advice from Prof. Christiane Gruber and Dr. Irvin Cemil Shick, even though I was just a clueless graduate student unbeknownst to them. During my summer stay in Istanbul, I received instruction and warm encouragement from Prof. İpek Hüner and Prof. Ferenc Csirkes, to whom I am thankful. I also wish to thank Dr. Ercan Akyol for generously sharing his insights.

While collecting the primary source for this study, I received much help and timely assistance from the librarians and curators, especially Dr. Michael Erdman from the British Library; Dr. Orsolya Mednyánszky from the Walters Art Museum; Ms. Allison Freyermuth from the Free Library of Philadelphia; and the staff of the Directorate of the National Palaces of Türkiye (T.C. Milli Saraylar Başkanlığı). I am also deeply grateful to Aniko Molnar for her help with stressful administrative procedures; and to my professors from the Department of Turkish Language and Culture of my alma mater, National Chengchi University, who sponsored the writing of this thesis.

I am thankful to my friends for their help and company, especially Ayushman Baruah, Mansur Eliçin, Fatma Nur Özdemir, Numan Deniz, Razieh Araghi, Sandro Silva, Amina Ndiaye, Lukas Pötzl, Petar Petrovic, Laura Öri, and Carmine Argentiero, Rıza Özdemir, Yi-Ying Kuo, and my dear co-workers at JO&JOE Vienna Hostel, who constantly encouraged me to move forward. Last but never the least, I am always deeply grateful for the support from my family, my sisters Hsin-Yi and Hsin-Li Peng, my cousin Pi-Han Tsai, and especially my dear mother Chin-Yeh Chen. Without them, none of what I have accomplished would ever be possible.

November 2025

Vienna, Austria

Abstract

This thesis revolves around the five eighteenth-century copies of *Hamse-i ‘Aṭā’ī* (henceforth the *Hamse*), a seventeenth-century Ottoman poetry anthology that consists of five meṣnevī poems written by Nev‘īzāde ‘Aṭā’ī. After the author’s death in 1635, the *Hamse* was repeatedly copied and widely circled. However, the illustrated copies did not appear until almost one century later. Besides this, they contain many sexually explicit paintings, which caused researchers to shy away from commenting on them in avoidance of controversy. However, ‘Aṭā’ī’s text is one that aims to offer moral teachings. How should one comprehend this discrepancy or even contradiction between the text and the illustrations?

In order to provide a feasible answer to these questions, this thesis contextualizes the *Hamse* in the framework of the long seventeenth century, an age of transformation. This framework bridges the century-long gap between the *Hamse* as a literary work and as an illustrated book. The thesis also aims to reveal how certain elements of these two intertwined faces of the *Hamse* together reflect the continuities and changes that occurred in the Ottoman Empire throughout the period in question.

The first chapter introduced the basic facts about the *Hamse*, its illustrated copies, and its author ‘Aṭā’ī, and reviews the current literature on the subject. The second chapter offers a summary of the long seventeenth century, and delves deeper into the historical context in which ‘Aṭā’ī composed this work. By analyzing the text from the perspectives of the early seventeenth-century interstate entanglement and the social, political, as well as religious currents, it sheds light on what made the *Hamse* retain popularity in the following century and eventually become the object of early eighteenth-century Ottoman elite’s art commission. The third chapter turns the focus to the course of events that happened after ‘Aṭā’ī’s death and culminated in the early eighteenth century, when the illustrated *Hamse* copies first appeared. It also evaluates certain important characteristics of the paintings that help us grasp the connection and reveal how the paintings gave the text a new life in the new social, political, and religious landscape of the early eighteenth century.

Note on Transliteration

For the transliteration throughout this thesis, I follow the system of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. The terms that have entered English dictionaries, such as hijri, sultan, Qur'an, or Hadith, will stay as in English spelling without diacritical marks. The terms common in Ottoman Turkish literature will remain in Turkish spelling, therefore “*meşnevî*” instead of “*mathnawî*.” Following the convention of Ottoman Studies, the titles of primary sources phrased in Arabic will be transliterated according to Ottoman Turkish pronunciation, hence “*Ḥadā'ıku'l-ḥaḳā'ıķ fī tekmīleti 'ş-şakā'ıķ*” instead of “*Ḥadā'ıq al-ḥaḳā'ıq fī takmīlat al-shaḳā'ıq*.” However, for them to be more understandable by readers who are not familiar with Turkish, the names of Persian and Arab historical figures will be transliterated according to the rule of the respective language, e.g., Nizāmī-i Ganjavī, instead of Nizāmī-i Gencevī. In the case of inter-syllabic *hamza*, for the sake of simplicity and consistency, the Ottomanized spelling using *yā'* instead of *hamza* will not be reflected, hence “*şekā'ıķ*” instead of “*şakāyık*,” and “*Aṭā'ı*” instead of “*Aṭāyır*”; however, when the author of a quoted secondary literature uses any other transliteration form, the author's choice is respected and the spelling will remain as in the original text.

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Introduction

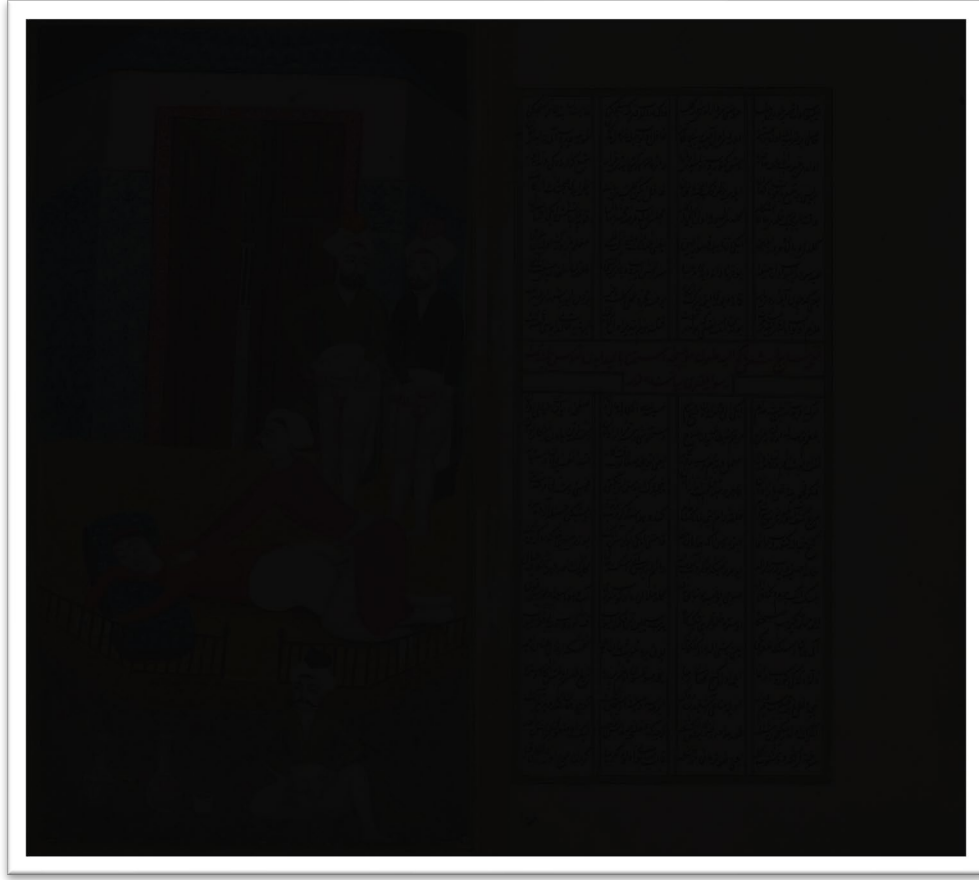


Figure 1. TIEM, 1969, fols. 56b–57a.

This image belongs to one of the five illustrated manuscript copies¹ of *Ḥamse-i ‘Aṭā’ī* (“Quintet of ‘Aṭā’ī”; henceforth “the *Ḥamse*”) produced in the early eighteenth century.² The *Ḥamse* itself, in turn, is a poetry anthology that consists of five *meşnevī*

¹ The five copies are respectively preserved in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD (WAM); the Free Library of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA (FLP); the British Library, London (BL); the Library of the Topkapı Palace Museum (Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, TSMK), and the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum (Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi, TIEM), Istanbul. Except for the WAM, FLP, and TSMK copies, this author was not able to obtain the copyright permission from the BL and TIEM, despite having full access to them during the research process. Therefore, the paintings from these two copies in this thesis will be censored in the final version for public view.

² *Ḥamse*, or *khamṣa*, derived from *khams* (“five”) in Arabic, is a type of anthology in the Islamicate literary tradition which typically consists of five long poems of an author. Composing a *ḥamse* was considered a great literary achievement, and would earn the author such honorary titles as *ḥamsedār* or *ṣāhib-i ḥamse* (“Quintet holder”). The first writer who created this genre is the great Persian poet Nizāmī-

poems³ written by the renowned Ottoman poet and provincial judge, Nev‘īzāde ‘Aṭā’ī (d. 1635), in the early seventeenth century, almost a century before the illustrated copies emerged. In this painting, we see mustached man wearing a pink robe penetrate a beardless young man, whose half-closed eyes suggest his unconsciousness; the other three men, one sitting in the front and the others standing behind, in the meantime, are watching them and masturbating. The wine bottles and cup lead the viewer to the realization that they must have inebriated the boy so that they could take advantage of him. The door of the house is curiously left ajar, which seems a metaphor for the viewers’ intrusion into the very private sphere.

Without reading the text, the viewer might assume this visually “indecent” (*edep dışı*) scene—as the Turkish art historian and former director of Topkapı Palace Museum, Kemal Çiğ, described it in a catalogue⁴—might be accompanying a similarly erotic text for entertainment or a medical one discussing sexual health and potency. However, the text written beside the image contradicts this assumption. On the folio next to the painting, the subsection title written in red ink states: “as one who weds his hand [i.e. masturbates] is cursed, in the account is the infamous disgrace of those vile men who masturbate with their hand.”⁵ Thus, the text has a didactic nature. Furthermore, the phrase “one who weds his hand is cursed” was commonly believed to be a Hadith.⁶

e Ganjavī.

³ *Meşnevī*, *mathnawī* in Arabic pronunciation, or *masnavī* in Persian, is a form of poetry that consists of rhyming couplets. While a *ḥamse* is usually but not exclusively composed of *meşnevīs*, *Ḥamse-i Nergīsī* by ‘Aṭā’ī’s close friend Nergīsī (d. 1635), for example, is written in prose.

⁴ Kemal Çiğ, “Türk ve İslâm Eserleri Müzesi’ndeki Minyatürlü Kitapların Kataloğu,” *Şarkıya Mecmuası*, no. 3 (1959), 59.

⁵ “*Nākihū ‘l-yed mel ‘ūn mūcībince istimnā bi ‘l-yed eden nüfūs-ı ḥabīşeniñ rüsvāyılıkları beyānındadır.*”

⁶ This phrase supposedly taken from Hadith has been debunked by several early modern scholars, most of whom followed the tenth-century Egyptian Hanafī jurist Sharaf al-Dīn Yaḥyā b. Qarājā al-Rahāwī’s opinion, who deemed it a “baseless” (*lā aṣl lahu*) forgery. However, the fact that ‘Aṭā’ī incorporated this verse into his text, and that it had to be debunked over and over again indicates its widespread reception

Resorting to the holy scriptures, the author thereby attaches a sense of religious authority to the text. Furthermore, upon reading the text, the reader would realize that this painting does not belong to the story it tells, as the story takes place in a public square in Istanbul.

The contradiction and discrepancy are but a few among the understudied aspects of the *Hamse*. This thesis aims to offer a new perspective and alternative framework for interpreting these curious aspects of the *Hamse* by connecting the text, its author ‘Aṭā’ī, and the illustrated copies with a more contextualized historical analysis.

Hamse-i ‘Aṭā’ī: A Brief Introduction

The *Hamse* consists of five poems that are respectively titled ‘*Ālemnümā/Sākīnāme*’ (‘World Displayer/The Book of Cup-Bearer’), *Nefḥatü’l-Ezhār* (‘The Fragrance of Flowers’), *Şoḥbetü’l-Ebkār* (‘The Converse of Virgins’), *Heft Ḥ’ān* (‘Seven Feasts’), and *Hilyetü’l-Efkār* (‘The Ornament of Thoughts’).⁷ While *Sākīnāme* is panegyric in nature, and *Hilyetü’l-Efkār* is incomplete, the other three *meşnevîs* *Nefḥatü’l-Ezhār*, *Şoḥbetü’l-Ebkār*, and *Heft-Ḥ’ān* consist of many short anecdotes, personal experiences, and mythological stories, with which ‘Aṭā’ī aims to convey his personal view and opinion on various topics. ‘Aṭā’ī’s *Dīvān* used to be considered part

as an authentic Hadith. For the debunking of this specific forged Hadith, see Ismā‘īl b. Muḥammad al-‘Ajlūnī, *Kashf al-khafā’ wa-muzīl al-ilbās ‘an mā-shtahara min al-aḥādīth ‘alā alsinat al-nās* [Unveiling the Hidden Truth and Removing the Confusion about the Hadith Widespread Among the Tongues of the People], ed. al-Shaykh Yūsuf b. Maḥmūd al-Ḥājj Aḥmad (Damascus: Maktabat al-‘Ilm al-Ḥadīth, 2000): vol. 2/388; and for English translation, see Mūlla ‘Alī al-Qārī, *Encyclopedia of Hadith Forgeries: al-Asrār al-Marfū‘a fīl-Akhbār al-Mawḍū‘a, Sayings Misattributed to the Prophet Muhammad*, ed./tr. Gibril Fouad Haddad (Rochdale: Beacon Books, 2013): 397.

⁷ The translation of titles throughout the thesis follows that made by Elias John Wilkinson Gibb’s in his *A History of Ottoman Poetry* with some moderate modification of mine. See E. J. W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry* (London: Luzac, 1900-09): 234.

of the *Hamse* until the discovery of *Hilyetü'l-Efkār* in the 1940s by Agah Sırrı Levend.⁸ In these poems, he reprimands certain “immoral” practices and reminds people of religious duties and good conduct, and tells stories extracted from streets with a sensational and even vulgar language to prove the point.



Figure 2. *Hamse-i 'Atā'ī*, TIEM 1969, fol. 152a.⁹

However, this folksy, sometimes even vulgar, writing style is distinctive from most of the Ottoman poets of the time, who tend to integrate lavish Arabic and Persian vocabulary, complex metaphors and expression into their writings. Contrary to the prevalent Turkish nationalist interpretation that sees it as a gesture of appreciation of the Turkish language, I argue that this choice was rather a contingent one made to reach a wider, lay audience in light of the religio-political environment of the time. This will be elaborated in further details in the following chapters.

These stories are especially concentrated in *Nefhatü'l-Ezhār* and *Şoḥbetü'l-Ebkār*, which are organized respectively into twenty *nefhas* (‘fragrance’) and forty *şoḥbets* (‘converse’); and after each ‘fragrance’ and ‘converse’ follows a *dāsitān* (‘story’) relevant to the topic. These ‘fragrances’ and ‘converses’ can be categorized into

⁸ See Agah Sırrı Levend, *Atâyî'nin Hilyetü'l-Efkâr'ı* (Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1948).

⁹ The title on top is written in red ink as “*cüz'-i Husrev ü Şîrîn li-Hamse-i 'Atā'ī*” (“part of Khusraw and Shirin from the *Hamse* of ‘Atā’ī”). A note that says “*Hilyetü'l-Efkār*” was written with pencil beside the framing line, probably by a librarian or archivist who examined this manuscript. The scribe was obviously aware that the fifth poem of the *Hamse* was titled *Husrev ü Şîrîn*, but the reason why it was copied only in part in all the existent copies remains a mystery.

arguments of several themes, which sometimes overlap with each other—individual virtue and morality, sexual desire, religious faith, poetry, love, ruler’s prerequisite virtue, social criticism, and only one of panegyric nature.¹⁰ Among these arguments, those that specifically advise individual virtue and offer social criticism occupy most space; and while *Nefhatü’l-Ezhâr* expresses more of the author ‘Aṭā’î’s view on faith and sexual desire, *Şoḥbetü’l-Ebkâr* exhibits a stronger inclination toward social criticism and moral didacticism.

For example, in the fifteenth *nefha*, “the musky letters of ambergris-scattering pen on an account of the deeds of miserable womanizers (*zen-pāre*),”¹¹ ‘Aṭā’î warns against sexual desire and reminds people of the moral boundary confined by God:

Ey seg nefsine hevā-dār olan
Ḳurbet-i iblīsî ṭāleb-kār olan
Dağdağa-ı hırş ile bî-iḥtiyār
Cismini teb-lerze tutan her zikār
 ...
“Tilke ḥudūdullah” olub pās-bān,
Ḥaddini bildi götürüb ins ü cān.
 ...
Bildiler aḥkām-ı Hudā seddini,
Kimse tecāvüz edemez ḥaddini.

(O those obsessed with their canine self,
 Those who seek affinity to the Devil.
 They fell involuntarily to the clamor of lust,
 Every man whose body seized by feverish tremor.
 ...)

¹⁰ For detailed summary plots of the stories, see Kortantamer, *Nev’î-zâde Atayî ve Hamse’si*, 184-196; 202-229.

¹¹ “Zen-pāre-i bî-nevālaruñ ḥidmeti beyanında ‘anber-eḫşān-ı kıl k müşkīn-i erḳāmıdır.”

[The Qur'an verse] "This is the limit of God" is the night warden,¹²
Brought the boundary upon humankind and jinn, and they knew.

...

They recognized the boundary of God's commands,
No one shall transgress the line.)

Citing a verse from the Qur'an, he strongly condemns those who succumb to their sexual desire and reminds the readers of religious creeds. After this *nefha*, he goes on to tell a story of a lustful womanizer in Istanbul, who gets pushed by a goat into a gathering while attempting to rape a maid of his wife, and is thus exposed and ashamed. In a similar tone, he censures corruption in the eleventh *şoḥbet*, which is directly titled "The Eloquent Pen on Condemnation of Briber and Bribe-Taker":¹³

*Mürteşîye vère Hâk derd ü belâ,
Eyleye iki cihānda rüsvā.
Oldı 'ālemde ğaraẓla rüşvet,
Kelef-i çehre-i dīn ü devlet.*

(May God inflict upon the bribe-taker woe and grievance,
May He brand him in the Two Worlds with shame and vengeance.
In the world there is corruption with malignance,
For the Faith and the Realm a blemish upon the countenance.)

Following this *şoḥbet* is his personal story, in which he recalls a time when corruption was rampant, an evil-minded ignorant person was appointed as the head of scholars (*şadrü'l-'ulemā*). One night, he fell asleep with deep worry (*hüsran*) and dreamed of two verses that heralded this evil man's power would be passing away as the joy of wine (*neşve-i mey gibi revān*). And that evil man indeed was removed from position after several days.

¹² "Tilka ḥudūd Allah" comes from Surah al-Baqara; Qur'an 2:229.

¹³ "Zemm-i rāşī ve mürteşīde meclis-ārā-yı kalemdür."

These arguments and stories, despite adopting a similar didactic tone in general, are quite loosely interrelated to each other, and there does not seem to be a discernible logic governing the arrangement of these diverse topics and stories. This modular format renders the *Hamse* a discretionary tool for remodulation of messages in different contexts.

The *Hamse* was widely acclaimed throughout the century after its completion. Meḥmed Şeyḥī Efendi (d. 1731), for example, in his *Veḳāyi ‘u’l-Fuḫālā* (“Occurrences of the Virtuous”) praised ‘Aṭā’ī’s poetry as “acclaimed and incontestable (*maḳbūl ü müselleṃ*), adored [even] by the picky readers (*müṣkil-pesendān*) of the world.”¹⁴ It was repeatedly copied, circulated, and praised by both the contemporary and subsequent generations of Ottoman literati, insofar as there are around seventy extant copies around the world, a majority of which are preserved in Europe and Turkey.

There is no contemporaneous account that directly informs us of how popular it was, except for the sporadic praise regarding ‘Aṭā’ī’s literary flair and accomplishment in the biographical encyclopedia entries written by the following generations. The sheer number of extant copies produced throughout the centuries, however, indirectly attests to its popularity. The intriguing part of the story, however, is that despite its popularity, the illustrations of ‘Aṭā’ī’s humorous and vivid stories did not appear until almost a century after his death, namely in the early eighteenth century.

¹⁴ “*Her biri maḳbūl ü müselleṃ, pesendāde-i müṣkil-pesendān-ı ‘ālemdür.*” See Meḥmed Şeyḥī Efendi, Ramazan Ekinci, and Derya Örs, *Veḳāyi ‘u’l-Fuḫālā: Şeyḥi’nin Şaka’ik Zeyli*, Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları ; Bilim ve Felsefe Serisi, 93. 12 (Fatih, İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Yayınları, 2018), 195.

The Illustrated Copies of *Hamse-i 'Atā'ī*

The illustrated copies of *Hamse-i 'Atā'ī* are full of undiscovered aspects. While the TIEM copy was made in 1691, the other four were illustrated in the 1720s and 1730s; the WAM copy was made in 1721, TSMK in 1728, BL in 1738 or 39. As for the FLP copy, because there is no written record regarding the production date, we do not know when exactly it was produced, but some scholars estimated it to have been made after 1730.¹⁵ When it comes to the paintings, while some of them in the TIEM and FLP copies were added later after the completion of the manuscripts, those in the WAM, TSMK, and BL copies were designed and painted together with the calligraphy. Except for the WAM copy, other four copies share certain similarities, insofar as Tülay Artan speculates that they may have been made by a close group of artists that “were members of the same network” and close to courtly circles.¹⁶ These copies record neither the patron who commissioned the production, nor the artists who produced the paintings.

This time gap raises some curious questions. Why was the *Hamse* chosen to be illustrated in this specific moment in Ottoman history? How should we interpret the images in relation to the text? The current scholarly literature has not yet offered satisfying answers to these questions and often studies the text and paintings separately. Bearing these questions in mind, I examine the paintings of the illustrated *Hamse* copies together with the text and its author ‘Atā’ī by situating them in one coherent historical context. With this contextualization, I aim to offer an alternative framework for

¹⁵ Aslihan Erkmen, “Incomplete, yet Intriguing: Nevizade Atâyî’s Illustrated Khamisa at the Free Library of Philadelphia” (paper presented at the 15th International Congress of Turkish Art, Napoli, Italy, 2015), 301.

¹⁶ Tülay Artan, “Patrons, Painters, Women in Distress: The Changing Fortunes of Nev’izade Atayî and Üskübi Mehmed Efendi in Early Eighteenth-Century Istanbul,” *Muqarnas Online* 39, 1 (2022): 136.

evaluating the *Hamse* and its curious paintings—a framework that bridges the gap between subdisciplines of historical studies and sheds light on the heuristic value of the illustrated *Hamse* copies for further inquiries into the early modern Ottoman Empire.

A Historiographical Overview

The scholarly literature about the *Hamse* falls roughly within two fields: literary history and art history. The literary studies on the *Hamse* as a work of poetry so far have been mostly confined to the field of Turkish literature, a majority of which are concerned with its use of vocabulary, literary style, and techniques. On the other hand, the illustrated *Hamse* copies are well known among historians and art historians alike, but most of them shun the sexually explicit paintings and use one or two paintings to showcase the eclecticism, integration of European techniques, and new themes that emerged in the eighteenth-century Ottoman art. This further leads to the discussion of these miniatures to seem sporadic and lack consistency. This fragmentation in turn hinders us from grasping the meaning of them in their entirety.

As shown in the very beginning, a casual reading of the text could reveal that the poems are meant to convey religious moral lessons. How should we interpret this contradiction between the text and the paintings? Why is it that the patrons and artists who commissioned and produced these copies of this didactic literary work chose to illustrate it with seemingly erotic images? The current studies on the *Hamse* have not offered a satisfying answer to these questions.

The reason for the neglect and fragmentation is that scholars often single out the miniatures and treat the text and the paintings separately, and the sexually explicit images are often further separated from other non-sexual ones. Based on their

respective focus, I divide the related literature into two sections: one analyzes the *Hamse* solely as a literary work, and the other lays focus on the paintings.

Literature on the *Hamse* as a Literary Work

The *Hamse* as a literary work has been a subject for literary historians in the modern Western and Turkish academia, for more than a century. In 1836, Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall dedicated a lengthy entry to ‘Aṭā’ī and the *Hamse* in his *Geschichte der osmanischen Gedichtkunst* (“History of the Ottoman Art of Poetry”).¹⁷ In this four-volume book, von Hammer-Purgstall offered a brief introduction to ‘Aṭā’ī and his works, and translated parts from the *Hamse* and ‘Aṭā’ī’s *Dīvān* into German. However, this book is at most an introduction and lacks analysis or critique.

The earliest critical study on the *Hamse* in a Western language was done by the Scottish Orientalist Elias John Wilkinson Gibb. In the third volume of his *A History of Ottoman Poetry* published in 1904, he mentions the *Hamse* when assessing ‘Aṭā’ī’s literary contribution.¹⁸ Although he considers “the poetical value of [‘Aṭā’ī’s] verse...not high,”¹⁹ quoting the literary comment from later authors such as Şeyḫ Ḡālīb and Ziyā Paşa, he notices ‘Aṭā’ī’s “extraordinary fondness...for quoting proverbs.”²⁰

This specific characteristic of ‘Aṭā’ī’s poems has been read through a nationalistic lens by later Turkish scholars. Among them is the influential Turkish literary scholar Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, who includes ‘Aṭā’ī in his treatise titled *Millî Edebiyât*

¹⁷ See von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte der osmanischen Dichtkunst*.

¹⁸ See E. J. W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, vol. 3 (London: Luzac, 1906), 232-241.

¹⁹ Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, 236.

²⁰ Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, 238.

Cereyânının İlk Mübeşşirleri ('The First Heralds of the National Literature Movement') published in Arabic script in 1928. He sees 'Aṭā'ī as "one of the most important poets of ours in the beginning of the seventeenth century,"²¹ for he "placed great emphasis on the local topics," and "demonstrated the prevalent opinion that recognizes the superiority (*fā'ikīyet*) of Turkish language over Persian."²² This reading comes as no surprise as the treatise was dedicated to the father of (Pan-)Turkism Ziya Gökalp, who was one of the most influential late imperial and early republican Turkish nationalists.²³

With this ideology of Turkish supremacy in mind, he portrays 'Aṭā'ī as a writer who rejects the lavish style of Ottoman literary writing that integrates Perso-Arabic lexica, and deemed the heretofore underappreciated Turkish as a superior (*fā'ik*) language. This is, however, a wishful reading of the early modern trend, and more of a reflection of the nationalistic sentiment in the early Turkish Republican period than a historically grounded assessment. The traces of this teleology can also be seen in later academic literature. For instance, Turgut Karacan, who transliterated *Heft-Hvān*, claims that 'Aṭā'ī's usage of vernacular Turkish is an "explicit proof that there is a strong appreciation of Turks and Turkish (*Türk ve Türkçe zevki*) in his language and spirit."²⁴

This interpretation—if not ideological imposition—neglects the fact that 'Aṭā'ī in his other works, especially his prose and personal correspondence, does not particularly

²¹ Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, *Millî Edebiyât Cereyânının İlk Mübeşşirleri* (İstanbul: Devlet Matba'ası, 1928), 20.

²² Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, *Millî Edebiyât Cereyânının İlk Mübeşşirleri*, 21.

²³ Ziya Gökalp was also the first to systematically articulate the irredentist ideology of (Pan-)Turkism (*Türkçülük*) and Turanism (*Turancılık*), advocating for a thorough Turkification of the Ottoman Empire and later the Turkish Republic, as well as the unification of Turkic nations. His book *Türkçülüğün Esasları* (Principle of Turkism) was among the most influential intellectual output that laid the foundation of early Turkish Republican nationalism. See Ziya Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, ed. Kemal Bek (İstanbul: Bordo Siyah Klasik Yayınları, 2006).

²⁴ Turgut Karacan, *Nev'î-Zâde Atâyî Heft Hvân Mesnevisi (İnceleme-Metin)* (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1974), 8.

valorize vernacular Turkish, but uses the high Ottoman language as his contemporaries do. Gibb, for example, considers ‘Aṭā’ī’s *Zeyl-i Şekā’ik*, as having “a very pretentious and Persianised character,”²⁵ and being “inflated, ponderous, and most un-Turkish.”²⁶ Besides this, reading ‘Aṭā’ī’s verses in *Hamse*, it is hard to ignore the traces of Persian mythology and the presence of Persian vocabulary aside from the vernacular Turkish expressions. This interpretation is so prevalent that there is so far not yet any alternative framework that could explain ‘Aṭā’ī’s deliberate integration of colloquial language.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that not all Turkish scholars see ‘Aṭā’ī through this nationalistic filter. Except Karacan, other scholars who transliterated the *Hamse*’s poems took a rather neutral approach in their introductions, although not much critical analysis is offered in these publications.²⁷ Among them, Kortantamer’s *Nevî-zâde Atayî ve Hamse’si* remains by far the most critical and comprehensive monograph on ‘Aṭā’ī and the *Hamse*’s entire text.²⁸ In this book, Kortantamer analyzes the five poems in the context of both the seventeenth-century Ottoman history and Turkish literary current, and offers an overview of the then existent academic literature. Kortantamer’s monograph is crucial for understanding not only the *Hamse* but also ‘Aṭā’ī’s life.

All in all, except for Kortantamer, a majority of the literary studies on the *Hamse* obstinately dwelled on the analysis of ‘Aṭā’ī’s literary technique and formal aesthetics,

²⁵ Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, 233. For the analysis on ‘Aṭā’ī’s language use in his prose works, see, for example, Ebru Boztürk, “Gelibolulu Ali (öl.1600) ve Nev’î-zade Ata’î’nin (öl.1636) Münşeatları Üzerine Mukayeseli Sentaks İncelemesi” (Yüksek lisans tezi, Edirne, Trakya Üniversitesi, 2001).

²⁶ Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, 237.

²⁷ For full transliteration of the texts and formal aesthetical analysis, see: Muhammet Kuzubaş, *Sâkinâme (Nev’î-zâde Atâyî)* (İstanbul: Etüt Yayınları, 2009); Muhammet Kuzubaş, *Nev’î-zâde Atâyî’nin Nefhat’ül-Ezhâr Mesnevisi* (Samsun: Deniz Kültür, 2005); Muhammet Yelten, *Nev’î-zade Atayî Sohbetü’l-Ebkar* (T. C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, Kütüphaneler ve Yayımlar Genel Müdürlüğü, 2017); Turgut Karacan, *Nev’î-Zade Atâyî Heft Hvân Mesnevisi (İnceleme-Metin)* (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1974) [arranged according to the sequence of completion date mentioned above].

²⁸ Tunca Kortantamer, *Nev’î-zâde Atayî ve Hamse’si* (İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1997).

neglecting the historical socio-cultural and political background. This is not unrelated to the abundance of Ottoman archives around the world, as the overwhelming number of archival documents eventually results in the overemphasis on archival documents and the neglect of the heuristic value of literary works. As Cemal Kafadar rightly criticizes,

[t]he study of Ottoman literature...turned more and more in on itself, becoming a specialized field dealing with formal aesthetic issues at a descriptive level, producing much-needed critical editions without equally needed contextualization, and mostly avoiding socio-cultural history.²⁹

Only in recent decades there emerged some academic publications that integrate the social-cultural history into their critical analysis of Ottoman literature.³⁰ Although this thesis does not aim to offer a literary critique on the *Hamse*, by contextualizing the text and its paintings, it is an effort to shed more light on the related studies, and offer suggestions for other scholars to deepen the research.

Literature on the Illustrated *Hamse* Copies

Compared to literary studies, academic works specifically addressing the illustrated *Hamses* are more fragmented. Studies on the paintings often shy away from commenting on the sexual content of the miniatures, and thus neglect curious

²⁹ Cemal Kafadar, "Self and Others: The Diary of a Dervish in Seventeenth Century Istanbul and First-Person Narratives in Ottoman Literature," *Studia Islamica*, no. 69 (1989): 121–50.

³⁰ For example, one of the most important volumes of this nature is Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı's co-authored *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). Sooyong Kim's *The Last of an Age: The Making and Unmaking of a Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Poet* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), which is based on his PhD dissertation project, also presents a rigorous study of the sixteenth-century poet Zāfī by bringing in the social-cultural context to his analysis of Zāfī's poetry.

discrepancies or even contradictions between the paintings and the text.³¹ This has barred us from understanding the illustrated manuscripts of the *Hamse* in their entirety.

The early works on the paintings are mostly library or museum catalogues, such as those by Kemal Çiğ and Muhammed Ahmed Simsar on the TIEM and FLP copies.³² As catalogues, they do not offer much analysis but pure description. Günsel Renda discovered the WAM copy and published an article on it in 1981.³³ She argues that the eighteenth-century Ottoman paintings should be evaluated within the historical context of the increasingly frequent cultural exchange between the Ottoman Empire and Europe.³⁴ By associating the eighteenth-century Ottoman paintings with Ottoman-European exchange, she implies that the themes, forms, and style in the Ottoman art of this period carry traits reflecting the adaptation of European aesthetics and techniques; and that they should be deemed as a product of cultural syncretism. However, this article is also more of an introduction than a detailed analysis. Although Renda noticed the sexual or obscene content of the miniatures, she did not comment much on them.

Likewise, in the monograph *Osmanlı Resim Sanatı* (“Ottoman Art of Painting”) co-authored by four renowned Ottoman art historians Serpil Bağcı, Filiz Çağman, Günsel Renda, and Zeren Tanındı, the miniatures of sexual nature are completely left out in their discussion of the illustrated *Hamses*. Rather, they use the landscape painting

³¹ Tülay Artan and İrvin Cemil Schick, “Ottomanizing Pornotopia: Changing Visual Codes in Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Erotic Miniatures,” in *Eros and Sexuality in Islamic Art* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013), 167.

³² See Çiğ, “Türk ve İslâm Eserleri”; Muhammed Ahmed Simsar, *Oriental Manuscripts of the John Frederick Lewis Collection in the Free Library of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Free Library, 1937).

³³ Günsel Renda, “An Illustrated 18th-Century Ottoman Hamse in the Walters Art Gallery,” *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 39 (1981), 15-32.

³⁴ Renda, “An Illustrated 18th-Century Ottoman Hamse,” 15.

of the Bosphorus in the *Hamse* as an example for demonstrating that the Ottoman artists of that time were already knowledgeable in the technique of perspective.³⁵

Other scholars, on the other hand, associate the miniatures with eroticism. Tülay Artan and Irvin Cemil Shick, for example, in their co-authored article “Ottomanizing Pornotopia,” examine these miniatures alongside the illustrations of a well-known *bāhnāme* (“book of sex”), *Rujū‘ al-shaykh ilā şibāḥ fī al-quwwa ‘alā al-bāh* (“The Rejuvenescence of Old Man in the Power of Concupiscence”) as well as other single-leaf paintings of purely sexual content, and categorize them as “erotic,” and even “pornographic,”³⁶ although Artan back in 1993 had already noted some differences between the miniatures in the *Hamse* and other outright erotic images found in *bāhnāmes*.³⁷ Besides them, Aslıhan Erkmen also follows this interpretation and further suggests that “it is necessary to first examine their sexual content in the context of the contemporary erotic imagery used in the Ottoman realm.”³⁸ This interpretation remains unquestioned in Akile Doğu’s Ph.D. dissertation “Nev’î-zâde Atayî ve Hamse’si” (“Nev’îzâde ‘Aṭâ’î and His *Hamse*”), completed and defended in 2022.³⁹

Doğu’s dissertation is the only thorough survey on all the miniatures in the five illustrated copies. She in this dissertation outlines the details of the images and book production. This work is useful for obtaining an understanding of all the images of the five paintings. However, it falls short of critical analysis. The long neglect of the

³⁵ Serpil Bağcı et al., *Osmanlı Resim Sanatı* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2006), 271.

³⁶ Artan and Schick, “Ottomanizing Pornotopia,” 157–207.

³⁷ Artan, “Mahremiyet: Mahrumiyetin Resmi,” *Defter* 29, 115.

³⁸ Erkmen, “Incomplete, yet Intriguing,” 299.

³⁹ See Akile Doğu, “Nevizade Atayî’nin Hamse’si ve Resimleri” (PhD diss., Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 2022).

relationship between the text and the paintings is also present in this study, as her analyses of the paintings and the text are conceptually detached from each other.

Nonetheless, there are a few articles that adopted a more objective and critical approach, although they still tend to eschew discussing the sexually explicit images. Among them, three important ones are by Günsel Renda and Tülay Artan, who made most effort in pushing forward the related discussion. Aside from the article on the WAM copy, Günsel Renda had already written an article on the TSMK copy in an edited book in honor of the late Turkish art historian Bedrettin Cömert.⁴⁰ In this short article, she first points to the rise of “decorating literary and scientific books and albums”⁴¹ in the early eighteenth century. She then proceeds to repeat the proposition that this period marks “the Ottoman court’s first conscious engagement in cultural exchange with Europe,”⁴² and argues that this period is “among the periods of the most active Ottoman art protectionism (*koruyuculuk*).”⁴³ Based on this contextual understanding, she argues that the reason why ‘Aṭā’ī’s *Ḥamse* written in the early seventeenth century was illustrated one century later is “undoubtedly the novelty of the topics ‘Aṭā’ī chose to take on and the [fresh and new] style of his narrative.”⁴⁴ Renda’s interpretation does not pay enough attention to other factors of equal importance in the Islamicate context, which I will address in detail in the later chapters of this thesis.

Compared to Renda, Tülay Artan approaches the illustrated *Ḥamses* from within

⁴⁰ Günsel Renda, “18. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Minyatüründe Yeni Konular: Topkapı Sarayındaki *Hamse-i Atayî*’nin Minyatürleri,” in *Bedrettin Cömert’e Armağan*, eds. Emre Kongar, Günsel Renda, and Talat Tekin (Ankara: Hacettepe Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1980), 481–96.

⁴¹ Renda, “18. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Minyatüründe Yeni Konular,” 482.

⁴² Renda, “18. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Minyatüründe Yeni Konular,” 482.

⁴³ Renda, “18. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Minyatüründe Yeni Konular,” 482.

⁴⁴ Renda, “18. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Minyatüründe Yeni Konular,” 484.

the Ottoman socio-cultural context. Her article published in 1993, “Mahremiyet: Mahrumiyetin Resmi” (“Privacy: The Image of Private Sphere”), raises a crucial dimension of the *Hamse*’s illustrations: the depiction of public and private spaces. In this article, Artan argues that the depiction of private space in the illustrated *Hamses* reflects the formation and emergence of the consciousness of “public” (*kamu*) out of the previous “private/formal” (*özel/resmî*) dichotomy.⁴⁵ She argues that the miniature paintings in their entirety form “the image of the private sphere” (*mahrumiyetin resmi*), the city residents’ private lives. “What remained private until that time was the space that fell outside the realm of formality [i.e., state affairs], remained unexpressed and undiscovered,” argues Artan.⁴⁶ Therefore, “we can find that within these miniature paintings, it was this space that was discovered, illustrated, and expressed.”⁴⁷

This discovery and illustration of private space can be seen as a result of the changing visual modalities in the late sixteenth century described by Çiğdem Kafescioğlu. As Kafescioğlu points out, since the late sixteenth century, the population boom in Istanbul had already altered the visual representation of the capital city. The blending of urban population and Ottoman ruling elite, and the loosening of social and spatial boundaries between them manifested in “new performative engagements” that “transformed the uses and representations of public space” during this period.⁴⁸ What fosters this development is a general shift of power from sultans to court elite that has

⁴⁵ Artan, “Mahremiyet: Mahrumiyetin Resmi,” 109-110. Here, “formal” refers to the affairs that belong to the state and the royal family.

⁴⁶ Artan, “Mahremiyet: Mahrumiyetin Resmi,” 110.

⁴⁷ Artan, “Mahremiyet: Mahrumiyetin Resmi,” 111.

⁴⁸ Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, “Picturing the Square, Streets, and Denizens of Early Modern Istanbul: Practices of Urban Space and Shifts in Visuality,” *Muqarnas Online* 37, no. 1 (2020): 140.

been observed by historians.⁴⁹

Besides this article, as briefly mentioned earlier, Artan recently made another breakthrough with her newly published article “Patrons, Painters, Women in Distress: The Changing Fortunes of Nev‘izade Atayi and Üskübi Mehmed Efendi in Early Eighteenth-Century Istanbul.”⁵⁰ In this article, Artan made several important arguments and speculations regarding the production of the manuscripts and the paintings, and discusses eighteenth-century gender relations, social order, and Islamic legal practice through the paintings.

She speculates that given the similarity of the scenes and how they are painted, the five copies are made by a close group of artists who are familiar with each other, and probably commissioned by a common patron. Otherwise, she argues that “[a]lternatively, the fact that five illustrated manuscripts of the same work were produced in this period could be [a] sheer coincidence, or at most a by-product of [this] common patronage.”⁵¹ Additionally, she also argues that the reason this specific work was painted but no other outright obscene texts is that “the other stories were written in prose, while only Atayi’s work was in verse. From the fifteenth to the early eighteenth century, Ottoman proto-realist prose literature was regarded as secondary to poetry.”⁵²

⁴⁹ See Rifa‘at ‘Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005); Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Artan also elaborated how powerful early eighteenth-century Ottoman elite such as Damad Ibrahim Pasha showcased their unprecedentedly expanded power through performative rituals on the occasions of his daughters’ weddings and circumcision festivals. See Tülay Artan, “Royal Weddings and the Grand Vezirate: Institutional and Symbolic Change in the Early Eighteenth Century,” in *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires* (Brill, 2011), 339–99.

⁵⁰ Tülay Artan, “Patrons, Painters, Women In Distress: The Changing Fortunes of Nev‘izade Atayi and Üskübi Mehmed Efendi in Early Eighteenth-Century Istanbul,” *Muqarnas Online* 39, 1 (2022): 109-152

⁵¹ Artan, “Patrons, Painters, Women in Distress,” 113.

⁵² Artan, “Patrons, Painters, Women in Distress,” 115.

The fact that ‘Aṭā’ī’s text not only is written in verse but also depicts the private life in the urban space may have made it more desirable for the patrons to make it illustrated.

Furthermore, Artan argues that the manuscripts “circulated within a tight social network of high-ranking bureaucrats—bureaucrats, moreover, who appear to have rubbed shoulders with inner-Asian dervishes, including Bukharis, Balkhis, Ghaznavis, Kashgaris, Samarkandis, Sabzis, and others.”⁵³ She suggests that the inner-Asian connection among the artists that produced these manuscripts can be also gleaned from the fact that many artists who worked with the already identified artists Levnī and Naḳḳāş İbrāhīm in other works and albums were migrants from Central Asia, and the artists likely formed a close group.⁵⁴

Artan’s article still leaves some questions unanswered. For example, she elaborates at length the linkage between ‘Aṭā’ī and a recurring figure of Pīr Meḥmed Efendi in both the poems and the paintings, but does not offer a satisfactory explanation on why this figure, who was important to ‘Aṭā’ī in the early seventeenth century, was chosen to be painted by the artists and patrons who lived one century later. On the other hand, regarding the discrepancies between the text and the images, she argues that “there does not seem to have been any deliberate purpose underlying these departures. Instead, it is probably because the artists did not read the text carefully, or because they chose to illustrate versions of the story retained in popular memory.”⁵⁵ This speculation does not exclude other possibilities, as she does not provide much theoretical framework and reasoning for this argument. Artan indeed offers an impressive and

⁵³ Artan, “Patrons, Painters, Women in Distress,” 129.

⁵⁴ Artan, “Patrons, Painters, Women in Distress,” 131-134.

⁵⁵ Artan, “Patrons, Painters, Women in Distress,” 128.

detailed analysis, as well as educated guesses, which point to some directions for further exploration. However, this study to some extent still conflates ‘Aṭā’ī with the artists and patrons who lived one century after his death and does not satisfactorily articulate the reasoning behind the motivation of the commission and production.

Furthermore, as Günsel Renda points out, the artist of the WAM copy “presents a characteristic emphasis on perspective and on the westernized technique of applying increasingly heavier layers of paint in order to achieve a variety of color gradations.”⁵⁶ If Renda’s suggestion is true that eighteenth-century Ottoman art needs to be evaluated within the context of Ottoman-European exchange, Artan’s article seems to miss out on this aspect. In another article, Renda describes the eighteenth century as a “period of balance,” a period when “[b]oth the Ottomans and the Europeans accepted equal terms and consciously wished to acquaint themselves with the cultures of one another after the 1683 Vienna defeat.”⁵⁷ Studies on the eighteenth-century Ottoman art have demonstrated that the Ottoman painters had adopted some European painting techniques. It is therefore hardly feasible to assume that they in Istanbul did not at the same time acquire a certain degree of European aesthetic taste from the frequent visit of envoys, artists, and merchants coming from the West and the concomitant cultural and material exchange. The question remains as to what extent the paintings are influenced by European art and by Inner-Asian artists. Is it that the European thesis over-exaggerates the European influence, and an “Asian turn” is exactly what needs to be emphasized more?

In summary, most of the literary discussions of the *Hamse* are hyper-focused on

⁵⁶ Renda, “An Illustrated 18th-Century Ottoman Hamse,” 24.

⁵⁷ Günsel Renda, “The Ottoman Empire and Europe: Cultural Encounters,” *Cultural Encounters in Building a Universal Civilisation: Islamic Contributions*, 2006, 11.

its format, whereas the studies on the illustrated copies have not yet offered a reasonable explanation of the connection between the seventeenth-century text and the paintings, and a contextualized historical framework. Therefore, an adjustment in the time frame and focus is necessary. In this thesis, I argue that in order to understand the illustrated *Hamse* copies, we need to extend our focus earlier and integrate into our discussion the historical trends that started prior to the seventeenth century, and prompted ‘Aṭā’ī to compose the text.

The Long Seventeenth Century: A Historical Framework

I propose to situate the illustrated *Hamse* copies along with the text and its author ‘Aṭā’ī in the context of the Ottoman Empire in the long seventeenth century, which spanned from the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth century. The composition of the *Hamse* and the production of its illustrated copies roughly correspond to the first half of what Baki Tezcan called as “the Second Ottoman Empire,” which takes place between 1580 and 1826, with 1703 marking the point dividing the Second Empire into two phases. Tezcan conceptualizes this new era in Ottoman history as

marked administratively by an early modern state, as opposed to a medieval dynastic institution; culturally by an early modern sensibility; economically by a more market-oriented economy; legally by a more unified legal system that came to exert some authority over the dynasty; monetarily by a more unified currency system; politically by the development of a type of limited government that grew out of the interaction between the legal developments of the time and such processes as “civilization” and “proto-democratization;” and socially by a *relatively* less stratified society.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 10.

Tezcan's analysis certainly carries a revisionist agenda, viewing this period as a relative "democratization" vis-à-vis the Orientalist perception of the despotic Orient,⁵⁹ and somewhat exaggerated the patrimonial sultanic power in the previous centuries.⁶⁰ However, it is a scholarly consensus that the Ottoman Empire during this period went through a massive-scale transformation which occurred especially in the realm of political power and authority;⁶¹ and took place partly due to the changing mode of ruling from above, and partly the loosening of social boundaries from below. With this contextualization, I will demonstrate in later chapters how the production of the illustrated copies of the *Hamse* in the early eighteenth century is intertwined with the historical trends that already started shortly prior to 'Aṭā'ī's time and prompted him to write the *Hamse* as we see it.

In the framework of this contextualization, I argue that the *Hamse* was initially written by 'Aṭā'ī for his personal agenda and his duty as an educated elite amid the heightened religious policy and surveillance over individuals' piety and morality. However, because of its eclectic content and modular format, along with the rising

⁵⁹ Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 10

⁶⁰ Some recent studies have suggested that political elites under the Ottoman sultans and their households had been sharing the political power with their masters since early stages of the Empire. See, for example, Mariya Kiprovska, "Agents of Conquest: Frontier Lords' Extended Households as Actors in the Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans," *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 59 (2021), 81.

⁶¹ Throughout the recent decades, Ottomanist historians have been debating the nature of this transformation, as to who exactly struggled for the power and shaped the new balance, and how they did it. They proposed several frameworks based on their respective focus of agents accordingly to explain this transformation. The foci of these scholars, as Jane Hathaway summarizes it, include "the rise of vizier and pasha households noted by Rifaat Abou-El-Haj, the tension between 'Easterners' from the Caucasus and 'Westerners' from the Balkans and Anatolia described by Metin Kunt, and the conflict between *kuls* (palace servants) and *ümera* (provincial officials) outlined by Gabriel Piterberg." See Jane Hathaway, Review of *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, by Baki Tezcan, *Journal of World History* 23, no. 1 (2012): 177–80. For each of these frameworks, see Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*; Metin Ibrahim Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, no. 3 (1974): 233–39; Gabriel Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

popularity of albums, it later became a vehicle for the patrons and artists in the early eighteenth century to convey their own agenda in the new social, cultural, and political environment. In this process, the *Hamse* morphed into a mirror that reflects what changed as well as continued during this long century.

Methodology and Outline

For this thesis, I read and analyzed the *Hamse* and its paintings with regard to what continued and changed between ‘Aṭā’ī’s time and the century that followed. I examine the verses of the *Hamse* and ‘Aṭā’ī’s life through primary sources, especially ‘Aṭā’ī’s writings and contemporary biographies, in light of various scholarly literature on the interstate competition, social changes, religious sentiment, and art production in the seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire. Following this examination, I categorize and analyze the paintings with respect to the text while examining the historical development that took place after ‘Aṭā’ī’s death up to the early eighteenth century. Among the secondary literature, Tunca Kortantamer’s monograph on the *Hamse* and ‘Aṭā’ī especially lays the crucial foundation for further inquiries, while other scholars’ transliteration of the *Hamse* poems greatly eased the process of reading the manuscripts.⁶²

In Chapter I, I examine ‘Aṭā’ī’s life trajectory in the historical context in which he wrote the *Hamse*. During the seventeenth century crises, his stagnant career as a local judge with ties to the central elite in Istanbul and certain controversial Sufi circles

⁶² See Tunca Kortantamer, *Nev’î-Zâde Atâyî ve Hamse’si*, Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları (Bornova, İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1997); Muhammet Kuzubaş, *Sâkinâme (Nev’î-zâde Atâyî)* (İstanbul: Etüt Yayınları, 2009); Muhammet Kuzubaş, *Nev’î-zâde Atâyî’nin Neşat’ül-Ezhâr Mesnevisi* (Samsun: Deniz Kültür, 2005); Muhammet Yelten, *Nev’îzade Atayî Sohbetü’l-Ebkar* (T. C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, Kütüphaneler ve Yayımlar Genel Müdürlüğü, 2017); Turgut Karacan, *Nev’î-Zâde Atâyî Heft Hvân Mesnevisi (İnceleme-Metin)* (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1974).

placed him in between the high and lay societies; the *Ḥamse* is therefore simultaneously his lamentation of the unstable society, his defense of faith, his means to secure better a life, and an outcome of his sense of duty as an educated member of the Ottoman institution. This historical context is what the current scholarly discussions around the *Ḥamse* and its illustrated copies have so far neglected. This chapter attempts to sift through the diverse lessons and stories of ‘Aṭā’ī’s verses, and grasp their possible connection with the early eighteenth century.

Chapter II turns the focus to the illustrated copies produced in the early eighteenth century, exploring how they register the transformative effects of seventeenth-century historical developments and the resultant new reality. In this chapter, I analyze these paintings and the text in light of the growingly frequent inter-imperial conflicts; the changing political structure dominated by the court elite; as well as the ebb and flow of *Ḳāḏīzādelis*, who advocated for a revival of Salafist piety.⁶³ I also demonstrate how these historical developments paved the way for artists and patrons to produce these copies for their own agenda.

Finally, the conclusion briefly summarizes the contextualization of the *Ḥamse* and its paintings in the course of the long seventeenth century, a century of Ottoman transformation. I argue that the *Ḥamse*’s text and paintings are contingent products motivated by the shifting political, religious, and cultural environment, and indirectly by its conflicts with neighboring powers. Evidently, the *Ḥamse*’s eclectic content and modular format render it a versatile vessel that accommodates the different agendas of two moments.

⁶³ Tezioğlu, “Sufi and Dissident in the Ottoman Empire: Niyāzī-i Mişrī (1618-1694)” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1999), 4.

Taking into consideration the large corpus of paintings and the length of the text, the study is an ambitious attempt, which comes naturally with its constraints and difficulties. Part of these challenges are minimized thanks to the crucial contributions of previous scholars. The present study especially benefits from Tunca Kortantamer's book *Nev'î-zâde Atâyî ve Hamse'si*, and Akile Doğu's dissertation *Nevizade Atayî'nin Hamse'si ve Resimleri* published in 2022, both of which will be evaluated later. The enormous corpus of the illustrated *Hamses*' paintings and their lengthy text, however, still prevent the possibility of a comprehensive investigation in the scope of a Master's thesis. Therefore, in this thesis, I confine my focus to the larger historical context of the long seventeenth century that enabled the production of the text and the paintings, and how they in turn reflect the unfolding of historical events during this time period.

Chapter I.

Nev‘izāde ‘Aṭā’ī and the *Ḥamse* in the Long Seventeenth Century

[T]he wounded-hearted ‘Aṭā’ī, son of Nev‘ī, considers [himself] an heir to the treasury of literary flair, and [therefore] his superiority manifest among the sons of Nev‘ī. In the spirit of being ‘poet’s son the poet,’ he for a period of time was a wine-drinker at the tavern of verse, a jewelry-seller at the bazaar of utterance. That is the reason why the radiant jewels of poetry, lying in the corner of the treasury of memory, were strung upon the musk-scented thread of verses; and that it was deemed worthy to bind together into a book, the scattered leaves of paper and the roses in the garden of heart and soul, to be passed down from hand to hand as a bouquet of roses.

*Dībāce-i Dīvān-ı ‘Aṭā’ī*⁶⁴

*Nev‘izāde saña mīrās-ı pederdür yāve,
‘Ömri zīrā pederüñ yāve dèmekle geçmiş.
Var kıyās èt ne kadar herze yemiş kim merhūm,
Yerine sencileyin bir kabā yesteh şıçtı.*

(Nev‘izāde, gibberish is the paternal legacy upon you,
As his life passed with such gibberish, the father of you.
Compare now, your late [father] uttered so much hogwash,
Instead he excreted a boor like you.)

*Sihām-ı kazā, Nef‘ī*⁶⁵

⁶⁴ “Preface of ‘Aṭā’ī’s Dīvān”: “... ‘Aṭā’ī-i dil-fiğār-ı Nev‘ī-zāde lakin gencīne-i sūḥana vāriş olmağa bā ‘iş zann edüb benī-i Nev‘ī miyânında rüçhāmı zāhir; şā‘ir oğlu şā‘ir olmak hevāsıyle bir zemān ḥum-ḥāne-i nazmuñ cür‘a-nūşı ve bāzār-ı sūḥanuñ güher-fürüşı olmuş idi. Ol bā‘ışdır ki güşe-i ḥizāne-i ḥāfiẓada bulunan cevāhir-i eş‘ār-ı āb-dārı silk-i müşkīn-i suṭūre çekilmekle ta‘līka-gerden-i rüzigār kılındı ve ol gül-i gül-zār-ı dil ü cān olan evrāk-ı perīşān rişte-i şīrāze ile beste kılınub mānend-i gül-deste elden ele yādigār olmağa sezā görildi.”

⁶⁵ See Emre Vural, “Sühan Meydanında İki Kemânkeş,” 1459. Vural in this paper transliterated the last line as “puşti şıçtı,” but the copies I consulted all write “yesteh.” For the original text in Ottoman Turkish, see Nef‘ī, ‘Ömer b. Meḥmed b. ‘Ali el-Erzürümī, *Sihām-ı Kazā*, manuscript, 1812, bibliographic record no. 353959, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, f17b. <https://portal.yek.gov.tr/works/detail/353959>; and another copy of the same anthology, n.d.,

Nev‘îzâde ‘Aṭā’î is widely accepted as one of the greatest Turkish *meşnevî* poets, and the last great Turkish *hamse* writer.⁶⁶ He served as a provincial judge in the Balkan region, which is the border of Christendom and Islamdom; and lived through the early seventeenth-century upheaval and imperial crises of the Ottoman Empire as someone with close ties to elite circles of the imperial center. His family heritage, especially his father, Nev‘î Yaḥyâ Efendi, the elite social circles, and his career as a judge to a great extent shaped the way ‘Aṭā’î perceived the contemporaneous Ottoman society and the world order, as well as his literary personality. Therefore, ‘Aṭā’î’s view on literature and the Ottoman society is not that unique to his time, but formed within a certain political, social, and religious constellation that emerged in a specific historical context. This chapter outlines the life trajectory of ‘Aṭā’î and the historical background of the long seventeenth century.

Nev‘îzâde ‘Aṭā’î: A Short Biography

Nev‘îzâde ‘Aṭā’î’s full name is ‘Aṭā’ullah b. Yaḥyâ b. Pîr ‘Alî el-İstanbulî. He was born in Istanbul in 1583 to Nev‘î Yaḥyâ Efendi, a renowned Ottoman poet, intellectual, and tutor of princes in the late sixteenth century. According to contemporary accounts, ‘Aṭā’î was an eloquent, humorous, and satirical person.⁶⁷ And he was probably physically heavyset and somewhat overweight, according to his contemporary poet and nemesis Nef‘î, who often engaged in verbal fight through poems with him.⁶⁸

bibliographic record no. 655389, f9a. <https://portal.yek.gov.tr/works/detail/655389>.

⁶⁶ Tunca Kortantamer, *Nev‘î-zâde Atayî ve Hamse’si*, I.

⁶⁷ Halûk İpekten, “Atâî, Nev‘î-zâde,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*; Kortantamer, *Nev‘î-Zâde Atayî ve Hamse’si*, 131.

⁶⁸ Emre Vural, “Sühan Meydanında İki Kemânkeş: Nefî ve Nevîzâde Atâyî,” *Uluslararası Türkçe Edebiyat Kültür Eğitim Dergisi* 9, No. 4 (2020): 1460; Kortantamer, *Nev‘î-Zâde Atayî ve Hamse’si*, 131.

‘Aṭā’ī’s achievement in literature, especially in poetry, was highly praised by not only his contemporaries but those who came after him, including Turkish scholars as well as European Orientalists. The nineteenth-century Austrian diplomat and Orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, for example, described him as “one of the most extraordinary literati and poets...who shared the claim to the throne of poets of his time.”⁶⁹

Besides the *Hamse*, ‘Aṭā’ī’s greatest achievement is the compilation of the biographical encyclopaedia *Ḥadā’iḳu’l-ḥakā’iḳ fī tekmīleti’ş-şakā’iḳ* (‘Gardens of Truths: in Completion to Crimson Peony’), often called *Zeyl-i Şakā’iḳ* or *Şakā’iḳ Zeyli* (‘Appendix to Crimson Peony’). This comprehensive biographical encyclopaedia is an effort to complement a previous similar work, *Şakā’iḳu’l-Nu’māniyye fī ‘Ulemā’i’d-Devleti’l-‘Osmāniyye* (‘Crimson Peony: on Scholars of the Ottoman State’), written in Arabic by Taşköprüzāde Aḥmed Efendi in the early sixteenth century; and hence the name “Appendix to Crimson Peony.” This work helps historians grasp the intricate interpersonal network of the Ottoman society, and is consulted for this thesis in order to gather information about ‘Aṭā’ī’s life.

He owed much of his knowledge and worldview to his father Nev‘ī Efendi, who, according to ‘Aṭā’ī, used to bring him along when meeting prominent scholars, poets, officials, and Sufi shaykhs of the time.⁷⁰ In his *Şakā’iḳ Zeyli*, he describes his father as “the reason for the existence of portrayal on the pages made by this weak servant [‘Aṭā’ī], who is the writer of these letters; the commencement of the end of his creation;

⁶⁹ Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte der osmanischen Dichtkunst bis auf unsere Zeit*, vol. 3 (Pest: Hartleben, 1837), 244.

⁷⁰ Kortantamer, *Nev‘î-Zāde Atayî ve Hamse’si*, 108.

his father, his pillar, and his master.”⁷¹ In the preface of his *Dīvān*, he also attributes his writings to the “treasury of memory,” which projects a sense of nostalgia for the past. Besides the lavish panegyrics to his father scattered in virtually all his works, one could also grasp this from his preferred pen name Nev‘izāde (“son of Nev‘ī”) and his epithet *ṣā‘ir oğlu ṣā‘ir* (“poet’s son poet”), both of which put his father in the center of his own identity. All these reveals how important this paternal heritage is to him as a poet.

His father is often described as a person who had few worldly, material desires and generously helped those in need. Nev‘ī Efendi died in 1598, probably due to grave sorrow, shortly after the new sultan Mehmed III ascended to the throne and followed the Ottoman tradition of fratricide executing his brothers, including those who were Nev‘ī’s pupils. At the time ‘Aṭā’ī was only fifteen years old. Nev‘ī left very little to no material wealth to his family to the extent that the expense of his funeral had to be covered by the sultan.⁷²

Consequently, despite having such a prominent and prestigious figure within courtly circles as his father, ‘Aṭā’ī himself inherited neither much privilege nor wealth, except for the fame and social status. Because of this, in order to secure his living and establish his reputation, he must have tried hard to capitalize his father’s legacy, insofar as people who disliked him, such as the poet Nef‘ī, spilled much ink insulting him with his father.⁷³

⁷¹ “*Rāḳımu’l-ḥurūf olan ‘abd-i ẓa‘īfün naḳṣ-ı ṣaḥīfe-i vüçūd olmasına bādī ve muḳaddeme-i netīce-i icādi, vālidi ve senedi ve üstādi.*” See Nev‘izāde ‘Aṭā’ī, ‘Aṭā’ullah b. Yahyā b. Pīr ‘Alī el-İstanbulī, *Hadā’iku’l-Hakā’ik fī Tekmileti’ş-Şakā’ik: Nev‘izade Atāyī’nin Şakā’ik Zeyli (Inceleme - Tenkitli Metin)*, translit. Suat Donuk, ed. Derya Örs (Fatih, İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2017), 1134.

⁷² Kortantamer, *Nev‘î-Zâde Atayî ve Hamse’si*, 110.

⁷³ It is likely that Nef‘ī’s attack on ‘Aṭā’ī and his father also stemmed from jealousy, as Nef‘ī resented his father, who went to the Khanate of Crimea and lived a comfortable life while leaving his family in misery and poverty. In addition, Nef‘ī was more of an outsider to the growingly closed ‘ulemā circle in the capital. In the very beginning of his *Sihām-ı Kazā* (‘Arrows of Fate’), he wrote a *hicv* (satire) entitled “On the Khan [of Crimea] Mehmed Giray [II]” (*der-ḥaḳḳ-ı Mehmed Girāy Ḥān*), describing his father,

After Nev'î Efendi's death, 'Aṭā'î studied under the supervision of several famous scholars of the time.⁷⁴ All his teachers were prestigious figures in the *'ilmiye* (the judicial and scholarly institution of the Ottoman State) at the time, who served at least once as *kāḍī*-*asker*, or *kāzasker* (chief military judge), which is the highest position in the Ottoman judicial system under the chief jurisprudent, *şeyḥu 'l-islām*. Despite having these powerful men as his teacher, compared to his son Mehmed Efendi, who was able to reach the highest scholarly institutions such as *Şahn-ı Şemāniye* and later *Medāris-i Süleymāniye*,⁷⁵ 'Aṭā'î's own career path was not so smooth and ranked relatively low until his death.

After Süleymān I's chief jurisprudent Ebu's-Su'ūd Efendi systematized the entry to *'ilmiye* in the mid-sixteenth century, students who completed their studies had to obtain a licence called *mülāzemet* and become a *mülāzım*, in order to be eligible for an official position. There were typically two ways to obtain this licence. One of them was to wait for an official occasion called *nevbet*, on which high-ranking *'ilmiye* officials would be granted the right to issue *mülāzemet* to a limited number of students; the other was to serve as assistant to professors or chief judges.⁷⁶ 'Aṭā'î must have waited so long

"pederde mi 'aceb imsāk Ḥānda mı bilmem...Peder değil bu belā-yı siyāhdur başıma." ("Is this parsimony from the father or the Khan know I not...This is not a father but to me a dreadful bother.") See Metin Akkuş, "Nef'i," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi*; for the original text, see above footnote 57, *Sihām-ı Kaḏā*, no. 655389, f 1b.

⁷⁴ These men include Kāfzāde Muṣṭafā Feyzullah Efendi, Kāraca Aḥmed Efendi, 'Azmīzāde Muṣṭafā Ḥāletī Efendi, and Aḥīzāde 'Abdū'l-Ḥalīm Efendi. See Kortantamer, *Nev'î-Zāde Atayî ve Hamse'si*, 110.

⁷⁵ See Mehmed Şeyḥī Efendi, *Vekāyi 'u'l-Fuzalā: Şeyhi'nin Şaka'ik Zeyli*, 797. *Şahn-ı Şemāniye* and *Medāris-i Süleymāniye* are among the highest scholarly institutions of the Ottoman Empire, where the future scholars and judges are trained. For more detailed description of the Ottoman *'ilmiye* system, see İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin İlmiye Teşkilâtı*, Türk Tarih Kurumu yayınları (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1988); and Abdurrahman Atçıl, "The Route to the Top in the Ottoman İlmiye Hierarchy of the Sixteenth Century," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 72, no. 3 (2009): 489–512.

⁷⁶ Atçıl, "The Route to the Top," 496.

for an official appointment as a *mülâzım* at Ahîzâde's office, who was then the *kâdî*-*asker* of Rumelia, that he composed a poem collected in his satirical poetry anthology *Hezliyyât*, in which he complained about how his life felt stagnant compared to his peers:

*Ṭarîḳ-i 'ilme ḳadem başdı bir nîce rācil,
Erişdi pâyeye her birisi ayaḳlandı.
Şaçaḳ ümidi ile ben mülâzemet êderek,
Piyâde vara gele dâmenüm şaçaḳlandı.*

(So many men stepped into the path of knowledge,
Reaching the level, every one of them has stood up.
Doing the internship with the hope for a covering roof,
Coming all along by my foot, my garment is ragged and looks crude.)⁷⁷

In 1605, he finally secured a position as a lecturer (*müderris*) at the *medrese* of Cānbāziye from the judge of Istanbul at the time and later *şeyḫu'l-islām*, Yahyā Efendi.⁷⁸ Not long after, in 1608, he decided to leave the *'ilmiye* system and took a position as a provincial judge (*kâdî*) in Lofça with an increased pay of 10 akçe.⁷⁹ This decision was made probably not only due to his realization that he would not advance much further in *'ilmiye*, but also for a better remuneration.⁸⁰ In the following years, he would serve at the same position in various cities in the Balkans, including Silistre, Mezistre, Babaeski, Tırhala, Tırnova, and Üsküb (now Skopje), until the end of his life.

Throughout these years, he wrote letter after letter to powerful patrons, officials,

⁷⁷ *Hamse-i 'Atâ'î*, TIEM 1969, f143a. See also, Kortantamer, *Nev'î-Zâde Atayî ve Hamse'si*, 110-111.

⁷⁸ Kortantamer, *Nev'î-Zâde Atayî ve Hamse'si*, 111.

⁷⁹ Mehmed Şeyhi Effendi, *Vekâyi'u'l-Fuzâlâ*, 193.

⁸⁰ Atçıl refers to this low-level judge position as "*kasabat kadî*." The graduates from the *'ilmiye* choose this path usually for a better salary, but they simultaneously lose the opportunity to ascend to higher positions. See Atçıl, "The Route to the Top," 490.

and governors in the hope of securing a higher-paid position, but to no avail. Some of these poems and letters are collected in his *Dīvān* and *Münşe'ât*. It was amid his effort in securing financial support and a higher position that he completed his most significant works, including the *Hamse* and his *Dīvān*. Eventually, he died in 1635 in Istanbul while waiting for his next appointment.

All in all, 'Aṭā'ī had a rather stagnant career and life trajectory. As a son of a prestigious scholar, a frustrated member of the imperial institution, and a judge in the borderland in an age of crises, he stood between the high and lay societies. The *Hamse* therefore is a reflection of this position and the environment he faced.

Between Turkish Superiority and Persian Canons

When it comes to 'Aṭā'ī's literary motives, there are two distinctive features that attract literary historians' attention. The first is that the *Hamse* poems are inspired by and meant to challenge classical Persian poets, in 'Aṭā'ī's case, Nizāmī-i Ganjavī from the twelfth century and 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī from the fifteenth;⁸¹ the second is his deliberate integration of colloquial Turkish vocabulary. While the former is a common practice among Ottoman poets throughout centuries; the latter seems to carry certain political agenda that fits the political environment in 'Aṭā'ī's time, and attracts more attention from scholars. Turkish literary historians who touched upon 'Aṭā'ī often see this from a nationalist perspective, insofar as Mehmed Fuad Köprülü listed him among "the heralds of national literature movement." However, this interpretation neglects the historical background of this phenomenon.

⁸¹ This can be grasped from the titles of the poems in the *Hamse*. For example, *Nefḥatü 'l-Ezhār* is parallel to *Maḥzenü 'l-Esrār* by Nizāmī; *Şoḥbetü 'l-Ebkār* to *Sübḥatü 'l-Ebrār* by 'Abdü'r-raḥmān Cāmī; and *Heft-Ḥ'ān* to *Heft Peyker*, again, by Nizāmī.

The deliberate integration of colloquial Turkish idiom and proverbs at expense of the conventional, heavily Perso-Arabized language of high culture, is reminiscent of two literary currents that appeared in the sixteenth century and lasted in the long seventeenth century. The first one is the “Plain Turkish” (*Türkî-i basîṭ*) movement in the first half of sixteenth century with its initiators Maḥremî and Naẓmî. These poets’ effort to compose poetry in simple Turkish is often seen as a reaction to the classical Ottoman style of poetry that was already established at that time. However, literary historian Sooyong Kim questions the assumption of an established classical style. He argues that at the time the Ottoman poetic idiom was still in development and the poets often closely mirrored or modeled themselves after their Persian counterparts.⁸² Therefore, this pursuit rather suggests that there was a “taste for various styles, including the virtuosic cultivation of the ‘simple’.”⁸³ Moreover, this movement remained rather marginal in the Ottoman literary scene, although it did survive into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with Nābî (d. 1712), who was active in the late seventeenth century, and Nedîm (d. 1730) in the early eighteenth.⁸⁴

The second one is the *sebk-i Hindî*, or “Indian style,” that flourished in the Persian literary scene in the second half of the sixteenth century, initiated by Persian poet ‘Urḩî (d. 1591) in the Safavid court and followed by ‘Aṭā’î’s rival Neḩ’î. This style also promotes the “application of proverbs and the inclusion of observations from life.”⁸⁵ Behind this localization of themes and language is a keen desire for novelty, new form,

⁸² See Sooyong Kim, *The Last of an Age: The Making and Unmaking of a Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Poet* (London New York: Routledge, 2018), 103–107.

⁸³ Kim, *The Last of an Age*, 107.

⁸⁴ See Kemal Silay, *Nedim and the Poetics of the Ottoman Court: Medieval Inheritance and the Need for Change* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University, 1994), 19–21.

⁸⁵ Kim, *The Last of an Age*, 102.

new themes, new elements. As a result of this pursuit of novelty, the poetry that follows this style often eventually becomes filled with obscurant and esoteric metaphors and thus very complicated and heavy to read.⁸⁶ In this regard, ‘Aṭā’ī’s *Hamse* does not seem completely aligned with these two currents.

Therefore, there might be other reasons that propelled ‘Aṭā’ī to write in this certain way. I argue that there are two motivations behind this choice of style. On the surface, it is to justify his claim of Turkish superiority in challenging his Persian counterparts, which represents a long-standing assertion among Turkish-speaking Ottoman poets since the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, especially common during the sixteenth.⁸⁷

In *Sāḳīnāme*/‘*Ālemnümā*, for example, ‘Aṭā’ī wrote:

*Niçün etmək buda bir dāsītān, Zuhūrī-pesendān-ı Rūmī zebān.
 Ėdub müstaḳil ya ‘nī bir meşnevī, unutmaya şīve-i Husrevī.
 Huşušan bu ma ‘nā bulubdur şübūt, eder baḥs eden mülzim olub sūkūt.
 Ki medḥ ü tağazzülde Rūmī ḳalem, olub ḡālib-i sāḥirān-ı ‘Acem.
 Çū şemşīr-i ḥūn-rīz-i ‘oşmāniyān, zuhūr etdi rüçḥān-ı Türkī zebān.
 Ve līkin ḳalub şīve-i meşnevī, sözi anda A ‘cāmuñ oldı ḳavī.*

(“Why should not one tell a story here?

The lovers of Zuhūrī⁸⁸ who speak the tongue of Rūm.⁸⁹

Compose namely a poem in *meşnevī*,

⁸⁶ Cafer Mum, “Sebk-i Hindi,” in *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, ed. Talât Sait Halman (Ankara: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2018), vol. 2: 378.

⁸⁷ Sooyong Kim, “An Ottoman Order of Persian Verse,” in *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)*, ed. Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar, and Cornell H. Fleischer (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 642.

⁸⁸ Zuhūrī can mean an actor in certain sort of Turkish public theater play, but here it might refer to Zuhūrī-i Torshīzī (d. 1616), who composed the longest Persian *Sāḳīnāme* to date. He is a Persian poet of Khorasan origin, who served in the Safavid Shah ‘Abbās I’s court and later the Nizām Shāhī Dynasty (1490-1636) in northwestern India.

⁸⁹ The tongue of Rūm, or “*Rūmī zebān*,” means Turkish. For a more detailed discussion and definition of Rūmīs in the Ottoman period, see Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Eanarratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University press, 2011), 3.

It shall not efface Khusraw's language from memory.
 Especially finds its presence this meaning,
 Makes those talking silent as it is quietening.
 That in the panegyric and ode is the pens of Rūm,
 Who defeated the sorcerers of Persia.
 Like the Ottomans' blood-shedding swords,
 Manifest is the supremeness of the tongue of Turks.
 But left alone is the coquetry of *meşnevî*,
 By which still words of Persians are mighty.”)

Here he repeats his appreciation of the Turkish language and emphasizes its superiority, while explicitly challenging the literary canon upheld by the Persians. Furthermore, he extends the Ottoman military success into the literary field by praising “the Ottomans’ blood-shedding swords” (*şemşîr-i hûn-rîz-i ‘Osmāniyān*) against the “sorcerers of Persia.” In the eighteenth *nefha*, where he warns against homosexual desire, he also portrays Persians as emasculated and links them to passive sexual position:

Kimi anuñ mā'il-i i 'cām olur, derdi hemān şiddet-i iğlām olur.
Bilmez iken 'örf nikātı temām, nükte degül sâdece örfî kelām.
Türkî vü Tātārîden edüb ibā, meyli gılāt-ı 'Acem'e dā'imā.

...

Fehm edemez içmüş iken şerbetin, Rūm ili torlaqlarınun kıymetin.
Tāze iken hîz-geh-i mef'ûl ola, āhîr olur ibneye ol mübtelā.

(Some of them are prone to the Persian habit,
 Their plight is the suffering of pederasty.
 They know not the customary locutions,
 Not locution but purely vulgar utterance.
 They neglect Turkish and Tatar,
 With their constant proclivity to the errors of Persians.

...

They comprehend not, having imbibed potion,
 The value of the lads from the Rūm region.

When their flesh still fresh, they are passive sodomite's source of ecstasy,
Afterwards they become obsessed with pederasty.)

Connecting Persian custom (*i'cām*) to pederasty (*iğlām*) and explicitly calling it “Persian errors” (*ğilāt-ı 'Acem*), he portrays Persians as pederasts who succumb to their sinister sexual desire and grow obsessed with passive homosexual position.

However, the passage from *Sākīnāme* simultaneously demonstrates his conscious attempt to inherit and preserve Persian literary legacy with reference to Zuhūrī Torshīzī (T: *Zuhūrī-i Tūrşīzī*) and Amir Khusraw of Delhi (T: *Husrev-i Dihlevī*; d. 1325), both of whom composed their own *sākīnāme* in Persian. As Sooyong Kim observes, such claims did not stop them from appreciating and consciously imbibing the Persian literary tropes and references, with which they tried to form their own style. This explains why, despite his claim of “Turkish superiority,” ‘Aṭā’ī still used the lavish Perso-Arabized hybrid language that was prevalent of the time in his prose works, which Gibb considers “pretentious and most un-Turkish.”⁹⁰

Furthermore, ‘Aṭā’ī did not avoid adopting the classic Persian mythology in his *Hamse*. For example, in the very first story of *Nefhatü'l-Ezhār*, he adopted the story of the mythological Persian hero, Arash the archer, in order to showcase the importance of wisdom for a ruler; in the sixteenth story of *Şoḥbetü'l-Ebkār*, he also integrated the story of the ancient Persian king Khusraw to demonstrate the importance of virtue and kindness in a ruler.⁹¹ This co-existence of two writing modes and adaptation of classical Persian stories parallel to the new local ones portray an intricate picture of Ottoman poet's worldview. It also suggests that the Turkish superiority against Persian is rather

⁹⁰ Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, 237.

⁹¹ For the summary of these stories, see Kortantamer, *Nev'izâde Atâyî*, 184 and 212.

a repetition of the long-standing trope among Ottoman poets, and deep down there must be another reason why he composes his poems in such vernacular style.

This reason, I argue, is related to the growingly fervent “turn to piety” concurrent in the Empire. A turn that was driven by not only the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry, but also the imperial crises facing the Ottomans.⁹²

Ottoman Islam and the New Regime of Morality

The seventeenth century is usually considered a period of stagnation that heralded the reforms of the Ottoman Empire coming in the following centuries. Bidding farewell to the golden age of Süleymān I, while the dawn of imperial reform was yet to come, the Ottoman state found itself facing a series of external pressure as well as domestic problems. It is marked with social and political upheaval, behind which is the harsh climate condition during the Little Ice Age that severely undermined the crop harvest.⁹³ It was under these conditions that the Ottoman Empire went through a series of challenges.

The frequent en- and dethronement of young sultans resulted in a weakened sultanic authority and control, whereas bureaucrats’ power was unprecedentedly expanded. The art patronage therefore gradually moved away from the sultans’ household to the court elite as well as other agents including European travelers and

⁹² This term was used by Marc Baer to describe the increased conversion to and within Islam, as well as the broader Islamization of the Empire, especially under the *Ḳāḏīzādelis*’ zealotry and their understanding of Islam. It was later adapted by Derin Terzioğlu to “indicate a broader range of religious orientations and attitudes.” Here I follow Terzioğlu’s usage. See Marc David Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6; and Derin Terzioğlu, “Where *‘İlm-i Hāl* Meets Catechism: Islamic Manuals of Religious Instruction in the Ottoman Empire in the Age of Confessionalization,” *Past & Present* 220, no. 1 (2013): 85.

⁹³ See Sam White, “The Little Ice Age Crisis of the Ottoman Empire: A Conjuncture in Middle East Environmental History,” in *Water on Sand: Environmental Histories of the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. Alan Mikhail (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 71-90.

even artists themselves.⁹⁴ The influx of rural population into big cities, especially Istanbul, eventually altered the social structure and loosened the social boundaries. ‘Aṭā’ī’s integration of various urban life stories was in turn a reflection of this phenomenon.

On the interstate level, the Ottoman Empire faced constant challenges from its neighbors, especially the Safavids in the East and the Habsburgs in the West. This interstate rivalry and competitions on both fronts generated different effects on the landscape of the cultural sphere. Within the Islamic world, this Ottoman-Safavid rivalry prompted the Ottomans to adopt various measures to claim and consolidate their hegemony. It accelerated the Ottoman state’s effort of establishing an Ottoman Sunni orthodoxy and orthopraxy, which heralded the advent of “the age of confessionalization.”⁹⁵ Put in other words, in competing against the Shi‘ite Safavid Empire, the Ottoman state intensified their effort in Sunnitiizing the Empire since the early sixteenth century. In this context, Derin Terzioğlu argues that we should conceptualize “the sunnitization of the Ottoman realms and the shiitization of the Safavid realms during the 16th century as processes driven by interstate competition and a desire to achieve a greater ‘politico-religious integration.’”⁹⁶

On the other hand, on the domestic level, the social, political, economic, as well as fiscal crisis facing the Empire triggered the Ottoman intellectuals, state-employed

⁹⁴ See Emine Fetvacı, “Enriched Narratives and Empowered Images in Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Manuscripts,” *Ars Orientalis* 40 (2011).

⁹⁵ See Tijana Krstić, “Can We Speak of ‘Confessionalization’ Beyond the Reformation? Ottoman Communities, Politics of Piety, and Empire-Building in an Early Modern Eurasian Perspective,” in *Entangled Confessionalizations? Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community-Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th–18th Centuries*, eds. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2022), 25-115.

⁹⁶ Derin Terzioğlu, “How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion,” *Turcica* 44 (2013): 305.

‘ulemā, as well as religious clergy to produce a myriad of texts that aim at reviving the morality and indoctrinating the mass with the “correct” religious creeds. While for the sixteenth century this process was commenced as a state project “from above,” it gradually turns into a movement “from below” in the course of the seventeenth, corresponding to the cessation of Ottoman-Safavid warfare and the Ẓāḍīzādeli movement.⁹⁷

In the second *şoḥbet*, for instance, “An Account of Obedience and Worship Being the Prerequisite of Piety, Especially Prayer as the Pillar of Faith,”⁹⁸ ‘Aṭā’ī wrote:

*Ey göñül eyle ‘ibādet dā’im,
Kişi kulluğunu bilmek lāzım.
Kaşr-ı İslām kim oldu vālā,
Oldı beş nesnenüñ üstine binā.
İkisi rükn şehādetle şalāt,
Üçü şavm-ı Ramazān, ḥacc ü zakāt.*

(O conscience, ye shall pray as constant,
One must know his duty as a servant.
The Castle of Islam, so sublime,
is built upon five essences.
Two of the pillars witness and pray,
Three of them fasting, pilgrimage, and donate.)

This paragraph clearly demonstrates that he wrote the poems to address a lay audience, reminding them of the fundamental religious duties.

This urge to consolidate Ottoman Sunni orthodoxy and orthopraxy, in order to carve out a distinguished Ottoman discursive domain and identity, engendered a century-long campaign of policing on the morality and religious practice of lay

⁹⁷ Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 100. The relations between ‘Aṭā’ī and the Ẓāḍīzādeli movement will be discussed in further detail below.

⁹⁸ “Ṭa’āt u ‘ibādet lāzime-i ‘ubūdiyyet olub ḥuşūşan şalāt ‘imādü’-d-dīn olduğı beyānındadır.”

individuals in the society, as well as their private life. The result of this process is a “heightened shariah consciousness,” as Derin Terzioğlu puts it, “as a response to the social, political, and economic crisis that had struck the empire at the turn of the century.”⁹⁹ Out of this urge, there emerged a plethora of texts that carry advisory and instructive nature. They aimed at either re-establishing the conscience and correct religious understanding among the people with moral advice, known as *naṣīḥat* as well as other generic names; or at promulgating the correct Sunni orthodox religious creeds with concrete instructions, such as *‘ilm-i ḥāls*, although there was by no means a unanimous consensus over of what “the correct” consists.

The process mentioned above is often described as a “pietistic turn,” which denotes the preoccupation with the consolidation of Ottoman Sunni boundaries, as well as religious and moral reform, especially in “the lands of Rum,” i.e., the Balkans and Anatolia. During this time, the pugnacious *Ḳāḍīzādeli* preachers of grassroots background launched a series of attack on the aberrant religious innovation (*bid‘a*), more specifically on certain mode of piety practiced by Sufis, who were based in urban centers.¹⁰⁰ The state-trained and employed religious scholars (*‘ulemā*) were in turn widely criticized for their venality.

In such an environment, many learned men grew anxious and shared their concern over the corruption within the Ottoman religious institution, which included the *Ḳāḍīzādelis* who were appointed preachers at the most prestigious mosques of Istanbul. ‘Aṭā’ī was but one of them. The *Ḥamse* poems, especially *Nefḥatü’l-Ezhār* and *Şoḥbetü’l-Ebkār*, can be seen as his response to these challenges, his—albeit somewhat

⁹⁹ Terzioğlu, “Where *‘İlm-i Ḥāl* Meets Catechism,” 86.

¹⁰⁰ See Madeline C. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age (1600-1800)* (Minneapolis, MN: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988), 135-136.

subtle—defense for Sufism against the *Ḳāḏīzādeli* attack, his view on the Islamic faith, and his advice to tackle the perceived moral decline and social disorder. Therefore, we see forty nine of these advice and stories address individual morality, sexual desire, and religious faith, occupying most of the space in the writing.

To understand the motives behind ‘Aṭā’ī’s choice of topics, it is essential to contextualize it in the burgeoning advisory and religious instructive literature of the time. The writing of political and moral advice in book-length can be traced back to as early as the tenth century.¹⁰¹ In Cornell Fleischer’s words, “by the time the Ottoman Empire attained its classical form in the sixteenth century, advice to rulers had long been an established theme of polite letters in the Islamic world.” Such treatises in the Ottoman time, however, “took on a distinctive character that set them apart from their generic predecessors.”¹⁰²

According to Fleischer, the advice literature can be typically categorized in three types during the Ottoman time: mirrors for princes, *aḥlāk* works, and *naṣīḥatnāme*; while the first two types are typical in the sixteenth century and earlier times with a clear connection to other similar works written in line of a millennium-long tradition, the last one is more of an Ottoman innovation, pioneered by Muṣṭafā ‘Ālī with his *Nuṣḥatu’s-Selāṭīn* (‘Counsel for Sultans’).¹⁰³ As to the content, the Islamic mirrors for princes are often ruler-oriented, focused on “matters of court etiquette and

¹⁰¹ Louise Marlow, ed., *Medieval Muslim Mirrors for Princes: An Anthology of Arabic, Persian and Turkish Political Advice* (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 2023), 10.

¹⁰² Cornell H. Fleischer, “From Şeyhzade Korkud to Mustafa Âlî: Cultural Origins of the Ottoman Nasihatname,” in *IIIrd Congress on the Social and Economic History of Turkey*, ed. Heath W. Lowry and Ralph S. Hattox (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1990), 67.

¹⁰³ See Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âlî (1541-1600)*, Princeton Studies on the Near East (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1986), 99-102.

government...based on Persian models;” *aḥlāk* works are typically on “manners and morals...usually authored by ulema, and were informed both by the religious-legal perspective of the *medrese* and by the philosophical ethics tradition from which they ultimately derived.”¹⁰⁴ The last one, *naṣīḥatnāmes*, are in turn more “practical and contemporary.”¹⁰⁵ The intellectual origins of this new genre, as Fleischer articulates,

“lie partly in classical advice literature, partly in the self-consciousness of a frontier polity turned imperial state, and more importantly, partly in a scholarly religious tradition which demands high standards of public and private morality at the same time that it assumes...that progressive decay is inevitable as the era of Prophet recedes further into the past.”¹⁰⁶

Naṣīḥatnāmes burgeoned since the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century crises and would last into the eighteenth century, throughout the transformation period of the Ottoman history.¹⁰⁷

Regarding this body of literature, especially *naṣīḥatnāme*, Heather Ferguson also provides us with a summary description: “a type of literature intended for the communication of advice,” which is “often, although not invariably, dedicated to specific rulers;” and such text comes usually in the form of “independent books organized topically into chapters or sections, in each of which the author illustrated his points with reference to Qur’anic verses, Prophetic *ḥadīth*, lines of poetry, aphorisms, proverbs, anecdotes, and (sometimes) historical narratives.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire*, 100.

¹⁰⁵ Fleischer, “From Şeyhzade Korkud to Mustafa Âlî,” 67.

¹⁰⁶ Fleischer, “From Şeyhzade Korkud to Mustafa Âlî,” 77.

¹⁰⁷ Rifa‘at Abou-El-Haj, “The Ottoman Nasihatname as a Discourse over ‘Morality’,” in *Mélanges Professeur Robert Mantran*, ed. Abdeljelil Temimi (Zaghouan: Publications du Centre d’Etudes et de Recherches Ottomanes, Morisques, de Documentation et d’Information, 1988), 17.

¹⁰⁸ Heather Ferguson, “Genres of Power: Constructing a Discourse of Decline in Ottoman Nasihatname,”

One might argue that the *Hamse* does not feature every characteristic of *naṣīḥāt* described by scholars. Significantly missing are the story characters of “virtuous cavalier” (*sipāhī*) and “unidentified other” highlighted by Abou-El-Haj, or any socio-political analyses derived from state registry and specific practical proposal for restoration of order outlined in Fleischer’s research.¹⁰⁹ However, it does share certain features as to its format and language. More importantly, as Nir Shafir reminds us, the texts now labelled by scholars as *naṣīḥatnāme* were “only a small and perhaps even marginal part of the field of *naṣīḥat*.”¹¹⁰ In an essay analyzing the Ottoman the discourse of *naṣīḥat* in the seventeenth century, Shafir points out that “the pietistic turn over the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire created a new political regime of morality.”¹¹¹

Under this new regime, the locus of moral exhortation expanded from the ruling circle to every individual within the Empire. By doing so, Shafir argues, it turned “domestic spaces into political battlegrounds and ultimately created new, individualistic political subjectivities.” This also means that the *naṣīḥat* treatises burgeoning in the long seventeenth century went beyond the scope of “mirror for princes.” He thus argues that instead of seeing this corpus of texts as “mirror for princes,” we should see *naṣīḥat* as “morally corrective criticism,” considering the *naṣīḥat* treatises often offer advice that leads to a moral life “with only distant political connection.”¹¹² This is a more

Osmanlı Araştırmaları/The Journal of Ottoman Studies, no. 35 (2010), 90.

¹⁰⁹ See Abou-El-Haj, “The Ottoman Nasihatname as a Discourse over ‘Morality’”; and Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire*, 101-102.

¹¹⁰ Nir Shafir, “Moral Revolutions: The Politics of Piety in the Ottoman Empire Reimagined,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 61, no. 3 (2019): 600.

¹¹¹ Shafir, “Moral Revolutions,” 598.

¹¹² Shafir, “Moral Revolutions,” 600.

proper way to direct our eyes from the functionalist interpretation of the Empire-wide turn of pietism, which implies that such religious discourse is driven purely by political intentions to help its promoter amass public support and advance to higher ranks.

Such interpretation, Shafir argues, derives from a tacit Enlightenment presumption that separates religion and politics as respectively private and public, and therefore “focus[es] too narrowly on the overtly political dimensions” of it.¹¹³ This “blend of moral exhortation and political sanctions” expressed in the framework of Islamic epistemology reveals the inseparable connection between religious creeds, individual morality, and socio-political vision in the Ottoman Empire, as well as the Islamicate world at large. This also corresponds to Dror Ze’evi’s observation that there was no “Islamic religious discourse” in the Ottoman Empire before the nineteenth century, taking into account “the near-absence of any secular worldview.”¹¹⁴ This new perspective reveals that the driving force behind the proliferation of the *naṣīḥat* literature may not always be entirely political.

Another genre of texts germane to our discussion is the *‘ilm-i ḥāl* treatises, which Derin Terzioğlu describes as “the religious counterpart of the political advice literature of the period.”¹¹⁵ According to Terzioğlu, the Turkish *‘ilm-i ḥāls*, which grew out of their forerunner *‘aqā’id* (‘creeds’), distinguished themselves from other similar genres of earlier time in the way that they were written in a simple language since the very beginning. They were meant to address “a lay audience unfamiliar with and unlikely to advance far in the world of religious scholarship;” some of the early *‘ilm-i ḥāls* were

¹¹³ Shafir, “Moral Revolutions,” 623.

¹¹⁴ Dror Ze’evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 77.

¹¹⁵ Terzioğlu, “Where *‘İlm-i Ḥāl* Meets Catechism,” 86.

even specifically targeted at new converts to Islam.¹¹⁶

By the seventeenth century, it became a “favored genre of Sunna-minded scholars, who appealed directly to the lay populace (that is, Sunni Muslims) to purify their beliefs and practices and to adhere strictly to the normative example of the Prophet (Sunna).”¹¹⁷ The increasing number of *‘ilm-i ḥāls* and the simple language their authors adopt are the results of the need to consolidate Ottoman Sunni orthodoxy and orthopraxy among the expanding reading public. Other than the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry, another factor that pushed this policy was the conversions to Islam that peaked by the mid-sixteenth century. After the conversion, the Ottoman government is faced with a large population who converted to Islam yet lacked concrete knowledge of the religion. Now, merely professing the faith is no longer adequate, but a concrete understanding and proper practice are required.¹¹⁸ The second *şoḥbet* quoted above, which outlines the importance of prayer and reiterate the fundamental five pillars of Islam, was most likely written because of this historical context, especially considering ‘Aṭā’ī served as a judge in Rumelia, the frontline of conversion at the time.

The *Ḥamse*, especially *Nefḥatü’l-Ezhār* and *Şoḥbetü’l-Ebkār*, presents to us a mixture of moral advice and religious instruction, reminiscent of certain characteristics of *naṣīḥats* and *‘ilm-i ḥāls*. Firstly, it is meant to address a lay audience in order to instill the religious tenets and morality required of a good and righteous Muslim. This is likely the reason why he chose to write as *meşnevî* poems, as *meşnevî* verse proves to be an effective mnemonic device and often reserved for didactic advice and narrative

¹¹⁶ Terzioğlu, “Where *‘İlm-i Ḥāl* Meets Catechism,” 83.

¹¹⁷ Terzioğlu, “Where *‘İlm-i Ḥāl* Meets Catechism,” 87.

¹¹⁸ See Shafir, “Moral Revolutions,” 604-605; Krstić, “Can We Speak of ‘Confessionalization’ beyond the Reformation,” 77; Terzioğlu, “Where *‘İlm-i Ḥāl* Meets Catechism,” 84.

poetry.¹¹⁹ In fact, except three directly advising the rulers,¹²⁰ the majority of them are targeted not specifically at the ruling elite and high literati circles, but at a general audience. Furthermore, the targeting at lay individual is but a measure of the aforementioned “new political regime of morality,” in order to instill the scripturally grounded morality into individuals’ private sphere. This explains not only why he concentrated his writing advising individual virtue and morality, and regulating sexual impulse and desire, but also why he wrote in a vernacular, and sometimes outright vulgar language.

In order to relate to a larger audience, he draws characters and stories from not only Perso-Arabic mythology from the distant past, but also the street life of Istanbul. For instance, in the story following the eighteenth *nefha*, where he warns against engaging in homosexual intercourse, especially in the passive position (*mef’ūl* and *maḥall-i ‘amel*), he tells a story about a homosexual person in Bursa:

*Bursa’da meşhūr idi bir nā-bekār,
Olmış idi şöhre-i şeh̄r ü diyār.
Hasta-dil-i ‘illet ü me’būn idi,
Şaḥş-ı kavī heykele meftūn idi.*

(There was in Bursa a man good for nothing,
His reputation was made throughout the region.
He was sick in the heart and pansy,
Obsessed with men with strong body.)

This man with insatiable quest for bodily pleasure seduces young boys to his place and have sex with them. One day, several good men (*zarīf*), upon hearing this, decided to

¹¹⁹ See Ferenc Csirkés, *Turkish/Turkic Books of Poetry, Turkish and Persian Lexicography: The Politics of Language under Bayezid II* (Brill, 2019), 684–685.

¹²⁰ See *Nefha* 1, *şoḥbet* 12, and *şoḥbet* 19. For detailed outline of the stories, see Kortantamer, 184, 210, and 214.

public shame his for his behavior. They hence gathered a music band (*mehter*) and played loud music with zurna upon hearing that he had started the intercourse.¹²¹ This section is written full of explicit and vulgar description of sex and body organ, insofar as it describes the man's "anus as cold as a pig's vagina (*göti doñuz ferici gibi serd idi*).” It is reasonable to assume that this sensational way of writing is aimed to attract lay audience's attention. By making it explicitly sexual with negative words, he enhances his warning message and sinks it deep into the readers or listeners' minds. This particular focus on sexual desire and practice also reflects the growing effort in expanding the policing of morality into personal private space.

Moreover, 'Aṭā'ī's repeated mention of Jesus (*ʿĪsā*) instead of the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad as morally corrective examples seems to be a conscious design appealing to converts from Christianity. For example, in the twenty-first *şoḥbet* of *Şoḥbetü'l-Ebkār*, titled “the Love for Women Being a Disgrace for Men” (*muḥabbet-i zen 'ār-i merdān olduğıdur*), 'Aṭā'ī advises celibacy (*tecerrüd*) to be “Messiah of the time” (*Mesīḥā-yı zamān*), which implies Jesus as a moral example:

*Ey olan mā'il-i ruḥsāre-i zen,
Olma 'ıffet evine āteş-zen.
Zene meyl etme ziyānı çokdur;
Karı dünyā gibi rahmı yokdur.
Ol tecerrüdle Mesīḥā-yı zamān,
Har gibi çekme yürü bār-ı girān.*

(O ye penchant for the physiognomy of women,
Ye shall not arson the abode innocent.
Have not proclivity for women, who bring impairment,
A woman, just like this world, is not at all lenient.
Be as the Messiah of the time with celibacy,

¹²¹ For a summary of the story, see Kortantamer, 195.

Walk ahead, carry not the heavy load like a donkey.)

Here he cleverly places a pun with woman (*zen*) and arson (*ateş-zen*), portraying an image of women as dangerous as fire in order to justify his advice. What is especially curious is his usage of “the Messiah,” which often refers to Jesus in Islamic literature, as a moral model. This recurs several times in *Şoḥbetü’l-Ebkār*, whereas the Islamic Prophet Muhammad does not appear in the stories as a perfect moral model. In the eighteenth *şoḥbet*, Jesus and Elijah (*Hızır*) were demonstrated as example to explain the power of spoken words. In the thirty-fourth *şoḥbet*, talking about poetry and the importance role of poets, he again analogizes composing poem to Jesus’s breath (*‘îşā-dem*) that bring the dead alive.

Some stories also feature Christians as main character, who eventually convert to Islam. In the *dāsitān* following the second *neḫḫa*, he tells a story about a Muslim young man falling in love with a Christian girl, which ends with the girl converting to Islam, in order to be able to go to heaven with her lover after death.¹²² In *Heft-H’ān*, which bears even stronger Sufi connotations and articulates love, ‘Aṭā’ī also narrates a story about two Muslim boys and their Christian lovers, who eventually convert to Islam after their adventure. All these—albeit sporadic—render ‘Aṭā’ī’s writing a curious cross-religion character that reflects the sentiment of Christian converts to Islam.

This comes as no surprise, as ‘Aṭā’ī was a judge in the region that is a locus of conversion and contested confessionalization. In his jurisprudential treatise *el-Ḳavlü’l-Ḥasen fî Cevābi’l-Ḳavli li-Menn* written in Arabic, he describes himself as someone “obsessed with the execution of God’s decree/judiciary.”¹²³ This statement and the fact

¹²² For a detailed summary of the story, see Kortantamer, *Nev’î-Zâde Atayî ve Hamse’si*, 184-185.

¹²³ “*Al-mubtalā bi-tanfīdh al-qaḏā*.” Nev’îzāde ‘Aṭā’ī, ‘Aṭā’ullah b. Yahyā b. Pîr ‘Alî el-İstanbulî, *el-*

that he wrote a treatise as a jurisprudential handbook for fellow judges indicate that he took his duty as a judge seriously. It was not a job he was forced into in order to make ends meet and escape from his career of unfulfilled ambition as a *müderris*.

Recent studies on the seventeenth-century Ottoman piety have shown that the “heightened shariah consciousness” as a result of the moral and religious reform rendered the duty of enforcing orthodoxy and orthopraxy to fall onto the shoulder of the ‘ulemā—the religious and judicial officials working closely with the central government. In Tijana Krstić’s words, the high-ranking ‘ulemā became the “standard bearers of this new concern with building a Sunni confessional community.”¹²⁴ In order to ensure the people’s adherence to the state-promoted religious creeds, “a deliberate policy emanates from the empire’s leadership that religious services and places of worship should be available and religious messages legible and comprehensible to the widest possible Muslim audience.”¹²⁵ The execution of such ambitious effort would inevitably require the involvement of local state employees. Therefore, as a member of the judicial system, despite relatively minor in position, he naturally took on the duty.

This means that composing the *Ḥamse* for ‘Aṭā’ī would entail more than fame among the literati. According to Terzioğlu, the expanding vernacular and lay reading public was seen by the learned elite as “both a liability and an opportunity.”¹²⁶ They can easily be led astray, but the scholars have a chance to teach them better. This is even more so for ‘Aṭā’ī, as the *Ḥamse* could serve him in multiple ways at the same time. It

Ḳavlü’l-Ḥasen fî Cevābi’l-Ḳavli li-Menn (1072/1661), Yeni Cami, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, f1b.

¹²⁴ Tijana Krstić, “From Shahada to ‘Aqida: Conversion to Islam, Catechisation and Sunnitisatation in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Rumeli,” in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, ed. A. C. S. Peacock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 300.

¹²⁵ Krstić, “From Shahada to ‘Aqida,” 301.

¹²⁶ Terzioğlu, “Where ‘İlm-i Ḥāl Meets Catechism,” 84.

could firstly be a reminder of morality and spiritual instruction to the lay audience, fulfilling his formal duty. Writing in rhyming poems with enticing sensational stories would render that his work not be limited to literate readers, but potentially be recited by the illiterate. Secondly, it serves as a means to obtain the fame and reputation as a rare “*Hamse*-holder.” And finally, it represents an opportunity to gather courtly favor from the high-ranking and powerful patrons with the panegyric for the sultan, the şeyhu’l-islām, and the extolment of the state’s military achievement reveal this motivation.

‘Atā’ī, His Sufi Lineage, and Kādīzādelis: *Hamse-i ‘Atā’ī* as Sufi Apologetics

Besides the purposes mentioned above, ‘Atā’ī seems to have still one more agenda—defending Sufism. By the time ‘Atā’ī completed these two poems in 1626 and 27, Kādīzāde Mehmed Efendi, the founder of the Kādīzādeli movement, had already begun his career as resident preacher in the most prestigious mosques in Istanbul. After years of preaching, he received the first big promotion—he was appointed as the resident preacher to Sultan Selīm I Mosque (*Sulṭān Selīm-i Kadīm cami’i*). After this promotion, his career gained unstoppable momentum; he was later appointed to the Bayezīd Mosque in 1623, to Süleymāniye in 1631, and eventually to Ayaşofya in the same year. The last one, according to Madeline Zilfi, was “the premier mosque of the Ottoman Empire and the summit of the vaiz career.”¹²⁷

While advocating for a return to the “pure” Islam practiced by the Prophet and his followers, Kādīzāde Mehmed Efendi and his followers castigated some of the

¹²⁷ Zilfi, *Piety of politics*, 132. For a detailed biography of Kādīzāde Mehmed Efendi, see also Mehmed Şeyhī Efendi, *Vekāyi’u’l-Fuzalā*, 321; Nev’izāde ‘Atā’ī, *Hadā’iku’l-Hakā’ik fī Tekmileti’ş-Şakā’ik*, 1868.

fundamental tenets of Sufism as *bid'a*. This movement would swamp the imperial center and have an Empire-wide influence, until the end of the century, when the last powerful Kāḏīzādeli preacher Vanī Mehmed Efendi was sent into exile after the debacle of the second Vienna Siege in 1683, for which he was blamed as one of the initiators.

When viewing this debate over Sufism in the seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire, it should be noted that the relationship between Kāḏīzādelis and Sufis are highly intricate that it cannot be reduced to a clear-cut Kāḏīzādelis-versus-Sufis division. Sufis represent a wide range of understandings of piety, as the Sufi orders do not hold a consensus over religious practice. For example, Terzioğlu in her dissertation has demonstrated that some shaykhs of the Naḡşbendī Order, which was “more devoted to the sharī‘a and the sunna” but still embraced certain *bid'āt* condemned by Kāḏīzādelis, developed close relationships with them regardless.¹²⁸ Therefore, as we shall see below, ‘Aṭā’ī’s opposition to the Kāḏīzādelis was not solely derived from his affinity with Sufis at large, but their attack on certain aspects of it.

To put it more precisely, ‘Aṭā’ī may have even shared certain concerns about the declined morality and piety, but he disagreed with Kāḏīzādelis over practice, and what would constitute the religious righteousness. Towards the end of the section “Complaint of the World” (*şikāyet-i rûzigār*) in *‘Alemlümā*, he lamented:

*Yâ vâ’izde olan tehevür nedür? Mey-i şâf için bu tekeddür nedür?
Kılub zemm-i bâdeyle kesr-i kulüb, eder durma keşf-i gıyâb-ı ‘uyûb
Niçün eylemez mahfile ihtirâm? Mesâvî mahalli midür ol makâm?
Mey içdi dëyü iftirâsın kımaz, bize hefte cengî cefasın kımaz.
Şoğar şâh-ı misvâki başına, şalar gergedân gibi gördüğine.
Riyâyile aña nemeddür şî ‘âr, derûnı mükedderdür âyîne-vâr.*

¹²⁸ See Terzioğlu, “Sufi and Dissident,” 234-235.

‘Abā giymek ile iş olsa heman, her irgād ola Bāyezīd-i zemān!

(“O what’s this headlong anger from the preacher?
What’s this despair for wine that’s pure?
Condemning wine, he makes hearts shattered,
He ceaselessly digs up the grave of shame covered.
Why shan’t he pay some respect to the soirée?
Is it such a vile scene, the gathering place?
One shan’t be defamed ‘cause he drank wine,
One can’t induce us the pain of the fight a week seven days.
He puts twigs of miswak on his head,
Attacks like a rhino those whom he sees.
To him the fabric of hypocrisy is his felt robe,
Of his clear as mirror the inside is full of worries.
If only the work could be done just by wearing a rugged robe,
Every laborer may well be Bayezīd of the time, a hero!”)

This is an explicit protest against “the preacher’s” condemnation against wine and banquet, which constitute an important part of Ottoman literati’s social life. Furthermore, using miswak, a kind of toothbrush made from the wood of *siwāk*, is among the unanimously accepted Sunna, the Prophet’s deeds.¹²⁹ Taking this into consideration, the reference to miswak as a weapon therefore presents a direct accusation that the preachers weaponized Sunna for their Salafist agenda.

Other than this, a number of ‘Aṭā’ī’s religious advice advocate certain Sufi interpretations and practices that challenge the Ḳāḏīzādelis’ criticisms. For example, in the fourth *neḫḫa* ‘Aṭā’ī proclaims,

Lāleyi pür-süzīş-i dāğ eyledüñ,

¹²⁹ See Gerrit Bos, “The Miswak, an Aspect of Dental Care in Islam,” *Medical History* 37, no. 1 (1993): 68-79.

goncaya tarṭīb-i dimāğ eyledüñ.
Cümle nebātāt degül serserī,
her biri tūr-i ḥāṣiyetüñ mazharı.

(“You made the tulips mountain full of flame,
You gave the rosebuds the freshness of mind;
All of these plants are not random and meaningless,
Every one of them a manifestation of the arrow of Goodness.”)

Directly addressing to God, ‘Aṭā’ī proclaims his belief in the Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), one of the fundamental Sufī tenets attributed to the renowned Andalusian Sufī, Muḥiy’l-Dīn ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240). This principle denotes that everything on Earth is a manifestation of God. Ḳāḍīzādelis, who at the time had gathered mass support, harshly denounced Ibn al-‘Arabī’s writings on the Unity of Being, accusing them of pantheism.¹³⁰ In this regard, ‘Aṭā’ī’s position also represents the ‘ulemā circles at large in Istanbul of the time, as it was, in Terzioğlu’s words, “something of a fad” to study Ibn al-‘Arabī’s works.¹³¹ Considering ‘Aṭā’ī’s aversion to “the preachers,” this acclamation can be seen as not only a direct challenge to the Ḳāḍīzādeli criticism, but also his defense for the *status quo* among the ‘ulema members.

Another example is the seventh *neḫḫa*, in which ‘Aṭā’ī narrates the benefits of visiting the tomb of saints for revelation. He writes,

Ey ki olub mu‘teḳid-i evliyā, merḳadı ḥākīne eden ilticā.
Ḥāk degül māye-i ḥikmetdür ol, cevher-i iksīr-i sa‘ādetdür ol.
...
Her varan iksīr-i kerāmet bulur, türbesi şandūka-ı cevher olur.

(“O the believer of saints,

¹³⁰ Zilfi, *Politics of Piety*, 136-137.

¹³¹ Terzioğlu, “Sufi and Dissident,” 243.

Whose tomb seeks refuge in the earth.
Not earth but the essence of wisdom it is,
The treasure of elixir for happiness it is.

...

Everyone who visits shall find the elixir of miracle,
His tomb shall be a chest of jewelry.”)

As the Kāḍīzādelis similarly denounced the pilgrimage to the alleged saints as yet another *bid‘a*, ‘Aṭā’ī is again consciously going against his contemporary Kāḍīzāde Meḥmed and his followers.

Despite such explicit protest against Kāḍīzādelis in his poems, he seems curiously reluctant to articulate in detail his own personal ties with certain Sufi orders and shaykhs in biographical encyclopedia, *Zeyl-i Şakā’ik*, in which he records every entry with great detail. This renders the question of whether he is a *mürīd*, or follower of a Sufi shaykh, a subject of debate.

The eighteenth-century biographer Müstaḥimzāde Süleymān Sa‘ade’d-Dīn noted that ‘Aṭā’ī was a *mürīd* (follower of a Sufi shaykh) to a prominent Celvetī shaykh of the time, ‘Azīz Maḥmūd Hüdā’ī, in his *Menāḳıb-i Aḥvāl-i Risāle-i Melāmiye-i Şuṭṭāriye* (“Treatise of Hagiography of Events of the Melāmī Sufi Followers”).¹³² Indeed in *Zeyl-i Şakā’ik*, ‘Aṭā’ī noted that the death of shaykh Hüdā’ī caused him great grief and composed a chronogram for this. However, Tunca Kortantamer argues that this chronogram does not serve as a valid proof, and that besides this chronogram, neither in the *Ḥamse* nor in *Zeyl-i Şakā’ik* did ‘Aṭā’ī mention such *mürşid-mürīd* relationships between him and any Sufi shaykh. Therefore, he concludes that although ‘Aṭā’ī was probably not a Sufi *mürīd* himself, he was definitely a *muḥib*, a lover and admirer of

¹³² Turgut Karacan, *Nev’i-Zāde Atāyī Heft H’ān Mesnevisi (İnceleme-Metin)* (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1974): 48.

Sufi spirituality.¹³³

As the grandson of a Sufi shaykh and the son of the prestigious poet and scholar, who was also a *mürīd*, ‘Aṭā’ī undoubtedly had close ties with prominent Sufi shaykhs closely affiliated with the elite circles in Istanbul. Given that he comes from such a conspicuously Sufi-affiliated genealogy and social circle, and does not shy away from challenging the *Ḳāḏīzādelis*’ anti-Sufi discourse with his literary flair, ‘Aṭā’ī’s silence in mentioning his personal relationships with the Sufi shaykhs seems peculiar.

Regarding this silence, Aslı Niyazioğlu offers us a more contextualized reasoning taking into account the political environment. According to her, ‘Aṭā’ī’s reluctance to reveal his Sufi affiliations might have been partly resulted from his “possible ties with the persecuted Bayrāmī-Melāmī [Sufi Order].”¹³⁴ The Bayrāmī-Melāmī Order, as its name indicates, is a branch of the Bayrāmī Order founded by Hacı Bayrām Velī (d. 1430) in the fifteenth century. This order was called *Ḥamzaviyye* or *İdrisiyye* in the seventeenth century, following two leaders of the order, *Ḥamza Bālī* (d. 1573), and *İdrīs-i Muḥtefī* (d. 1615) who succeeded the former.

According to Fatma Betül Yavuz, who conducted her PhD research on this specific Sufi order, this branch of Bayrāmīyye started to distinguish themselves among other branches in the first half of the sixteenth century under Pīr ‘Alī Aḳsarayī (d. 1539).¹³⁵ *Ḥamza Bālī* and *İdrīs-i Muḥtefī* in turn shaped the development of the order in the seventeenth century; while the former was tragically executed and made the name

¹³³ Kortantamer, *Nev’î-Zâde Atayî ve Hamse’si*, 129.

¹³⁴ Aslı Niyazioğlu, *Dreams and Lives in Ottoman Istanbul: A Seventeenth-Century Biographer’s Perspective* (London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2017): 30.

¹³⁵ Fatma Betül Yavuz, “The Making of a Sufi Order between Heresy and Legitimacy: Bayrami-Malāmī in the Ottoman Empire,” (PhD diss., Rice University), 5.

Ḥamzavī spread as a derogatory term, the latter profoundly shifted the order’s audience in Istanbul and how it functions.¹³⁶ In general, they are known for their insistence on maintaining an independent religious identity, and their reluctance to accept the Ottoman Empire’s policies to bring Sufis under the state control with institutionalization.¹³⁷

The Bayrāmī-Melāmīs had started to settle in Istanbul and garnered support among political elite in the early seventeenth century under İdrīs, and would later obtain considerable influence among the courtly circles towards the end of it. However, they were still the target of state persecution at ‘Aṭā’ī’s time due to their tendency to remain independent and anti-establishment. In 1573, just some decades before ‘Aṭā’ī’s career as a judge in the Balkans, the aforementioned Ḥamza Bālī was executed in Istanbul on the accusation of heresy and “displaying behaviors that do not suit the sacred sharia,” and referred to by ‘Aṭā’ī as “the killed” (*maḳtūl*).¹³⁸

As to ‘Aṭā’ī’s affiliation with Sufis, although he did not reveal whether he was a *mürīd*, he did recount his relationships and interactions with figures from certain Sufi orders, which include Ḥalvetiyye, Gülşeniyye, and Celvetiyye. All of these affiliations heralded his possible ties with Bayrāmī-Melāmīs.

His grandfather Pīr ‘Alī was initially a Ḥalvetī follower.¹³⁹ The Ḥalvetī Order, from which many sub-branches were born, was considered one of the most prevalent Sufi Order in the Islamic East. Yavuz also noted that Ḥalvetīs in the Ottoman realm

¹³⁶ Yavuz, “The Making of a Sufi,” 128 and 134.

¹³⁷ Yavuz, “The Making of a Sufi Order,” 2.

¹³⁸ “*Şer‘-i şerīfe nā-mülā‘im aḥvali zühūr eyledükde.*” See ‘Aṭā’ī, *Hadā’iku’l-Hakā’ik*, 396; also Yavuz, “The Making of a Sufi Order,” 124.

¹³⁹ ‘Aṭā’ī, *Hadā’iku’l-Hakā’ik*, 393.

“sustained close connections with the Bayrami-Melāmi order.”¹⁴⁰ Afterwards, Pīr ‘Alī would turn to follow the Gülşenī Order, after the founder of the Gülşenī Order, İbrahim-i Gülşenī (d. 1534), came to Istanbul and miraculously prophesied to Pīr ‘Alī the birth of ‘Aṭā’ī’s father, Nev’ī Yahya Efendi. The spiritual lineage (*silsila*) of Gülşeniyye, however, can also be traced back to the founder of Ḥalvetiyye. ‘Aṭā’ī also notes that Pīr ‘Alī wanted to follow Gülşenī to Cairo, but the latter commanded that he go back home and reunite with his wife for expecting his son and a bright future of advanced virtue and spiritual maturity (*mertebe-i feżā’il ü kemālāt*).¹⁴¹

Side Emre, when assessing the modern scholarship on Gülşeniyye, notes that the Order harbored socio-political ambition since its initiation in Cairo, “seeking to influence public opinion, exerting their reach and guidance to members of local Ottoman administrative/military clientele through their vibrant weekly rituals in their lodge.”¹⁴² The Gülşenīs in the following decades developed an extensive social network that spanned from Ottoman and Mamluk sultans and courtiers to Arab, Iranian, and Turkish laymen. Emre also notes “a distinctive *melāmī* (“path of [self] blame”) orientation” in the culture of Gülşeniyye, as well as the prominent spiritual influence from Celāleddīn Rūmī and Ibn al-‘Arabī.¹⁴³ Probably due to this affiliation from his paternal lineage, ‘Aṭā’ī seems to possess special affinity to the Gülşenī Order, despite not having any personal ties to it. Other than his grandfather’s encounter with İbrahim-i Gülşenī, in the final story of *Heft-Ĥ’ān*, the main plots evolve around two friends who

¹⁴⁰ Yavuz, “The Making of a Sufi Order,” 8.

¹⁴¹ ‘Aṭā’ī, *Hadā’iku’l-Hakā’ik*, 394.

¹⁴² Side Emre, “A Study of the Modern-Day Scholarship and Primary Sources on İbrāhīm-i Gulshanī and The Khalwatī-Gulshanī Order of Dervishes,” *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 15, no. 30, 109.

¹⁴³ Emre, “A Study,” 110.

boarded on a boat sailing to Egypt, where the Order exerts strong influence, in order to escape from their miserable life in Istanbul. This demonstrates not only ‘Aṭā’ī’s admiration for Gülşeniyye, but also possibly a projection of his grandfather’s unfulfilled wish.

On the other hand, the abovementioned shaykh Hüdā’ī belonged to the Celvetī Order, which was also derived from Ḥalvetiyye but also partly had its origin in Bayrāmīyye founded by Hacı Bayrām Velī in the fifteenth century.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, Hüdā’ī was reported to have granted refuge to Oğlan Şeyḥ İbrahim Efendi, a significant Melāmī figure in the early seventeenth-century Istanbul, when the latter was under suspicion of Murād IV.¹⁴⁵ Meanwhile, among the few remarks on his personal relationships with Sufī shaykhs in *Zeyl-i Şakā’ik*, ‘Aṭā’ī also noted that he received a blessing from Bayrāmī shaykh Maḥmūd Babadağī in Babadağ (in now Romania) and Ḥalvetī shaykh Sinān Efendī in Tırhala (in now Greece), when he served as judge in the respective regions.¹⁴⁶ All these traces from his genealogy and personal life trajectory suggest that he was very likely harboring sympathy and admiration for the culture and spirituality of Melāmīyye, or even established personal relationships with Melāmī followers.

This is in turn confirmed by the eighth *neḥḥa* in *Nefḥatü’l-Ezhār*, in which he explicitly expressed his admiration and respect for Bayrāmī-Melāmīs. The title of this section goes: “In the abode of rhyme I found the trace of the scent of wine of the cup of love; not according to the hollow meaning of this bewildered heart [‘Aṭā’ī], in the

¹⁴⁴ Hasan Kâmil Yilmaz, “Celvetiyye,” *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*.

¹⁴⁵ Yavuz, “The Making of a Sufi,” 147.

¹⁴⁶ Niyazioğlu, *Dreams and Lives*, 29.

statement is an asking from the Sufīs (*aşhāb-ı hāl*) in the form of Melāmīs, for the enlightenment of the ones who spread the scent of musk.”¹⁴⁷ In this section, ‘Aṭā’ī defended for the antinomian behavior of the Bayrāmī-Melāmīs:

*Meygede-i ‘ışkda ‘uzlet-nisīn,
Şekl-i melâmetde selâmet-güzīn.*

...

*Hâline ta ‘n étme Melâmīlerüñ,
Rengine aldanma şakın sağāruñ.*

(“In the tavern of love, [they] live in reclusion,
In the form of reproach [of the mundane world], [they] choose salvation.

...

Castigate not for the appearance of the Melāmīs,
Be deceived not, beware, by the color of the chalice.”)

Apparently, during ‘Aṭā’ī’s time, Melāmīs had a reputation for being intoxicated, dressed inappropriately, and behaving lunatically in the taverns. They therefore attracted strong social criticism to themselves. This renunciant and antinomian mode of piety among Sufi dervishes of the time was likely a way of reactionary resistance to the state’s institutionalization of Sufi Orders;¹⁴⁸ the Bayrāmī-Melāmīs’ tendency might have consequently forged a sharper negative image. Although ‘Aṭā’ī remained relatively silent, his poems became the alternative way to express his admiration and affinity.

Moreover, the story following this *nefḥa* narrates ‘Aṭā’ī’s personal experience of seeking spiritual help from a deviant dervish, who “sometimes joins the prayer of

¹⁴⁷ “Dār-ı mevzende eşer-i bûy-i mey-i sāgar-ı ‘aşk şöyle buldum ki degül bu dil-i dīvāne tehī mazmünca melâmiyün şeklinde olan aşhāb-ı hâldan istifāza-i enfās-ı müşk-bār etmek beyânındadır.”

¹⁴⁸ Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *God’s Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200-1550* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006): 92.

İmāmīs, friendly sometimes to Melāmīs.”¹⁴⁹ What is worth our attention here is that he admits this dervish is affiliated with İmāmīs, which is often used as a synonym of Twelver Shi‘is.¹⁵⁰ At the time ‘Aṭā’ī composed this poem in the 1620s, the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry was at its peak, and the intensity of the Ottoman Sunnitization policy and prohibition on Shi‘ism as heresy were also heightened. To profess sympathy and admiration without careful wording for a Melāmī dervish who occasionally mingles with Twelver Shi‘is would endanger his position. Taking into consideration the factors discussed above, ‘Aṭā’ī’s avoidance of elaborating his personal ties becomes more understandable.

As mentioned earlier, ‘Aṭā’ī’s father Nev‘ī was a prominent figure in Istanbul, but did not obtain much prestige such as a high-ranking position in the political center through his father, and probably struggled to secure a higher position. As he writes in *Heft-H’ān*, one of the poems in the *Hamse*:

*Ehl-i mi’yāra edelüm cezmi,
Üç yüz akçe kazāya degmez mi?*

(“We shall let the ones decide, those who possess just standard,
Is it not worth the position of a judge with three hundred silvers?”)

‘Aṭā’ī’s literary works, although they indeed bear strong Sufi connotation, reveal ‘Aṭā’ī’s very worldly consciousness and social purposes than the transcendental and ephemeral longing for the spiritual pursuit. In Niyazioğlu’s words, ‘Aṭā’ī’s poetry stands out among other works with Sufi connotation in the way that it maintains “a

¹⁴⁹ “Gāh uyub şaff-ı İmāmīlere, hem-dem idi gāh Melāmīlere.”

¹⁵⁰ Mustafa Öz, “İmāmiyye,” *TDV İslām Ansiklopedisi*.

particular balance between this-worldly and other-worldly orientations.”¹⁵¹

Conclusion

In this chapter, I tried to contextualize ‘Aṭā’ī and his works in the political environment and religious discourse of the seventeenth century. The seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire was faced with a series of internal and external crises, as well as fervent debates over religious piety and morality. The *Hamse* presents to us a reflection of these circumstances. I demonstrated that the *Hamse* embodies a mixture of moral advice and confessional literature. This enormous corpus of religious and morally corrective literature that proliferated since the turn of the seventeenth century represents the reinforced consciousness of the sharia law and the new regime of religious morality. This regime in turn legitimized and fostered the state’s surveillance and policing over lay individuals’ private lives. Corresponding to the waves of conversion and expansion of reading public, the learned elite, especially the members of ‘ulemā, developed a distinctive language and format targeting at the newly emerged lay audience. This explains the certain intriguing aspects of its content, including the didactic tales aiming at a larger lay audience, the accentuation on regulating sexual desire, the concomitant use of vernacular language, and the repeated integration of Christian converts as well as Jesus into his narrative as a moral example.

I also argued that the *Hamse* is ‘Aṭā’ī’s indirect challenge to the Kāḏīzādeli discourse that was gaining unstoppable momentum at the time. As demonstrated above, he not only explicitly laments the preacher’s “headlong anger,” but also affirms some prevalent Sufi-minded practices, such as tomb visiting, the Unity of Being, and defends

¹⁵¹ Niyazioğlu, *Dreams and Lives*, 19.

the controversial Bayrāmī-Melāmīs. All these traces go against the Ẓāḍīzādelis' Salafist agenda and hint at his affiliation with the Melāmīs. However, his challenge and defense seem always covered with a thin veil without directly naming his target. This is possibly due to his worldly concern with livelihood, but simultaneously ensures its popularity in the following century.

In the following chapter, we will move on to the early eighteenth century, and explore how the circumstances that entailed the composition of *Ḥamse* in the seventeenth century would reflect the continuities and changes.

Chapter II.

The Illustrated *Hamse* Copies in the Early Eighteenth Century

Regarding the late ‘Aṭā’ī...the scholars of the time did not give him [a position] in the academy (*medrese*), but instead deemed him [only] suited for the judgeship of Rumelia, because “‘Aṭā’ī was an enlightened man (*ehl-i ma‘ārifden*), [yet] not a scholar (*ehl-i ‘ilm*).” As for our time, those high-ranked scholars in the academia (*şadr-ı mesned-i ‘ilmī*) are themselves either the descendants of rich tradesmen, who reside in the Capital through backdoor and bribery thanks to the mediation from either the ministers and the rich, or those wealthy individuals in Bursa, Selanik (modern-day Thessaloniki), İzmir, or Haleb (Aleppo). The exploitation of the institutional ranks (*merātib-i ‘ilmiyye pâyeleri*) and the higher-ranked appointees (*maḥrec*) step by step are happening in front of our eyes.

—*Tārīḥ*, Mütercim Seyyid Aḥmed ‘Āşım Efendi¹⁵²

Writing in the early nineteenth century, the historian and dictionarian Mütercim ‘Āşım Efendi (d. 1819) used ‘Aṭā’ī as an example to showcase the rigor of the “good old days” in contrast to the rampant corruption of the ‘ulemā of the time. It is, however, not unlike how ‘Aṭā’ī perceived the situation in his time, as well as how those prior to ‘Aṭā’ī’s generation described theirs. This discourse of decline persistent for centuries eventually engendered the thesis of decline in the scholarship on post-Süleymān Ottoman history until the recent decades. However, recent studies have shown that such discourse was always present throughout the Ottoman history as a driving force of

¹⁵² “‘Aṭā’ī merhūm hakkında, ‘ulemā’-i zemān: “‘Aṭā’ī ehl-i ma‘ārifdendir, ehl-i ‘ilm zümresinden degildir” deyü medrese vermeyüb, Rümeli kâdılığına revā görmüşlerdür. Zikri şadedinde olduğumuz devrde ise şadr-ı mesned-i ‘ilmīde bulunanlar bi’z-zāt yāḥūd vükelā’ ve kurenānıñ emr ü tevassuflarıyla açıkdan rişvet ve boğçalar ile Āsitāne’de bulunan ipekci ve iplikci aḡniyā-zādelerden başka Burūsa’da ve Selānīk ve İzmīr ve Haleb’de olan zengīn eşḡāşa pey-der-pey merātib-i ‘ilmiyye pâyeleri ve maḥrecle iḥrācları nazar-gāḥımızda manzūrumuz olur idi.” See Mütercim Seyyid Aḥmed ‘Āşım Efendi, *Āşım Efendi Tarihi: Osmanlı Tarihi 1218-1224/1804-1809*, ed. Ziya Yılmaz (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2015), 725

reform, although they come in different forms in different stages. Cornell Fleischer, for example, agrees with Hans Georg Majer's stance that "the 'literature of decline' is as much a sign of the health Ottoman society as of its problems."¹⁵³ The century-long popularity of *Hamse-i 'Atā'ī*, which simultaneously carries the spirit and characteristics of *belles-lettres*, *naṣīhat*, and *'ilm-i ḥāl*, is a reflection of this consistent self-criticism among the Ottoman learned elite, which constitutes the zeigeist of the transformation era. The illustrated copies that emerged at the turn of the eighteenth century, in turn, reflects the changes that occurred during the century.

These continuities and changes will help us obtain a more contextualized assessment of the illustrated *Hamse* copies. Through the previous chapter, I demonstrated how the *Hamse* not only embodies the zeigeist of Islamic religious confession and call for a revival of morality, but also reflects 'ulemā as well as certain Sufis' challenge to the Kādīzādeli preachers' Salafist discourse in the early seventeenth century. This chapter will focus on what occurred in the century after 'Atā'ī's death that may have entailed the commission of the illustrated *Hamse* copies, and how the paintings reflect the development of Ottoman society.

Beyond the Tulip Age: *Hamse-i 'Atā'ī* Through a Wider Perspective

The early eighteenth century presents to us a new social and political constellation, in which the illustrated *Hamse* copies were produced. Contrary to the seventeenth century, overshadowed by the wars, religious tension, deposition, declining economy,

¹⁵³ Fleischer, "From Şeyhzade Korkud," 77. Majer's original words are "Kein Zeichen für die Lebensfähigkeit des Osmanenreiches!" See Hans Georg Majer, "Kritik an den Ulema in den Osmanischen Politischen Traktaten des 16. – 18. Jahrhunderts," in *Social and Economic History of Turkey (1071 – 1902): Papers Presented to the "First International Congress on the Social and Economic History of Turkey*, eds. Osman Okyar and Halil İnalcık (Ankara: Meteksan, 1980), 153.

and frequent rebellions, the early eighteenth century is often described as an “age of tulip,” an era of prosperity and dawn of modernization. From this observation a “Tulip Age paradigm” was born. In the framework, scholars often look outward to the West when evaluating the contemporaneous Ottoman art production. However, behind this narrative is the lurking teleology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that not only binds together modernization and Westernization but seeks to integrate the Ottoman Empire and its Republican successor into the concert of Europe. Moreover, as recent studies suggest, although there is evidence that could confirm this prosperity, it is a phenomenon largely confined in the imperial center, Istanbul.¹⁵⁴

However, the patrons who commissioned the illustrated *Hamse* copies were more likely Ottoman elite rather than European clients. Gwendolyn Collaço, for example, noted that the Ottoman state issued a decree in 1715-16, banning booksellers from selling fine books (*kütüb-i nefîse*) to foreign merchants and exporting them from Ottoman provinces, citing their growing rarity (*killet*).¹⁵⁵ Considering most of the copies in question were produced after this decree, the commission of them by European clients became unlikely. Furthermore, Ahmed III and his grand vizier Damad Ibrahim Pasha were known for their obsession with art and books. In fact, the TSMK copy is speculated to have belonged to Damad Ibrahim himself.¹⁵⁶

Therefore, I argue that we should redirect the discussion from the West to look at

¹⁵⁴ For criticism of the Tulip Age paradigm, see Can Erimtan, “The Perception of Saadabad: The ‘Tulip Age’ and Ottoman–Safavid Rivalry,” in *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Dana Sajdi (London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007), 41–62; Selim Karahasanoğlu, “The Tulip Age in Ottoman Historiography: A Critique,” in *History from Below: A Tribute in Memory of Donald Quataert*, ed. Selim Karahasanoğlu and Deniz Cenk Demir (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2016), 163–88.

¹⁵⁵ Gwendolyn Collaço, “The Image as Commodity: The Commercial Market for Single-Folio Paintings in Ottoman Istanbul, 17th–18th C.,” (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2020), 216.

¹⁵⁶ Doğu, “Nevzade Atayî’nin Hamse’si,” 90.

the larger picture, and combine it with the historical context discussed in the previous chapter. This would help us understand why and how the illustrated *Ḥamse-i ‘Aṭā’ī* copies were commissioned and produced as they are. This is because the new constellation of society and power in the early eighteenth century is the outcome of a century-long process that gradually unfolded since ‘Aṭā’ī’s time or even earlier. These copies are the results of the outcome of this process merging with the new interstate environment filled with tensions.

Vengeance and Hegemony Through Paintings: Battle Scenes

The late seventeenth and early eighteenth-centuries saw profound changes in relations between the Ottoman Empire and its neighbors. The Ottoman-Safavid rivalry subsided after the treaty of Zuhāb in 1639. According to Selim Güngörürler, after this treaty, the Ottomans’ diplomatic discourse with the Safavids shifted, as the Ottoman officials “ceased to employ religious terminology and legal concepts for the aggravation of hostilities,” and turned instead to “a unifying, inclusive, and nonsectarian agenda.”¹⁵⁷ This, however, changed after the Safavid dynasty’s downfall in 1722, which kindled the Ottomans’ ambition to reclaim hegemony in the Islamic world. This allowed the state to turn their focus on military ambition to the West with little success. The campaigns against Europe during Meḥmed IV’s reign ended with the disastrous defeat in the second siege of Vienna in 1683 led by Merzifonlu Kāra Muṣṭafa Pasha. After this defeat, the Ottomans signed the treaty of Karlowitz (tr. *Karlofça*) with the Holy League in 1699. Following the treaty, the Ottomans’ contact with European powers increased,

¹⁵⁷ Selim Güngörürler, “Islamic Discourse in Ottoman-Safavid Peacetime Diplomacy after 1049/1639,” in *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c.1450-c.1750*, eds. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 479.

and consequently European envoys became more conspicuous a part of Istanbul's landscape. Since the early seventeenth century, Ottoman artists had been painting for European clients with the European travelers increased and the commission from the palace decreased, but now the market became more vibrant.¹⁵⁸ These diplomats not only came with artists hired for producing various artworks such as city-view paintings, personal portraits, or costume albums, but also commissioned such projects to their local Ottoman counterparts, as the earlier European travelers did. Consequently, in the first half of the eighteenth century, to avenge the defeat in the West and regain control over the East, the Ottoman Empire frequently engaged in warfare with surrounding neighbors, especially Habsburgs and the forces that succeeded the Safavid Dynasty after the Afghan Invasion in 1722 ended its *de facto* control over Iran.

These interstate entanglements and warfare are important as they often drive the commission of art projects such as paintings and architecture. Tülay Artan, for example, noted an illustrated *silsilenāme* ('book of imperial genealogy') painted by the painter Muşavvir Hüseyin was presented to Mehmed IV, who passed it to Merzifonlu Mustafa Pasha before he set out for Vienna as a good omen.¹⁵⁹ This commission of art amid interstate tension is also present in architecture. In offering a revisionist reassessment of the construction of *Sa'd-ābād* Pavilion, Can Erimtan argues that what drove the construction of this extraordinary garden was not the desire to approximate to the Europeans in the West, but the rivalry between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Persia in the East.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Tülay Artan, "Arts and Architecture," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi, vol. 3 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge university press, 2006), 431.

¹⁵⁹ Artan, "Arts and Architecture," 438.

¹⁶⁰ Erimtan, "The Perception of Saadabad," 61-62.

Similar to Can Erimtan, the art historian of eighteenth-century Ottoman architecture Shirine Hamadeh also points out that, on the one hand, the obsession with newness, uniqueness, and novelty in the eighteenth-century Ottoman architectural projects in Istanbul reflects Ottoman elites' anxious response to previous military defeat against the Europeans.¹⁶¹ On the other hand, the poetic Persian naming and competition-oriented design of these architectures suggest "the emblematic power of Safavid Persia as a model to measure up to strongly resonated in early eighteenth-century Ottoman consciousness."¹⁶² Regarding this, she notes

the curious kinship of the newly acquired names of Ottoman imperial and grandees' palaces and gardens with those of the Safavid, like Sa'd-abad with Sa'adet-abad, one of Shah Abbas's private gardens in Isfahan, both meaning the Abode of Happiness. [sic] These eponymous associations with Safavid monuments and, more generally, the trend of ascribing garden palaces of the imperial and ruling elite with poetic names in the manner of their Persian counterparts, as with Feyzabad, Hurremabad, and Negatabad, dated only to the reign of Ahmed III (r. 1703-30).¹⁶³

To her, this is "a reflection of the state's anxiety to reaffirm its legitimacy in the wake of defeat, and reassert its physical presence in the capital city"¹⁶⁴

The illustrated *Hamse* copies were made at a time that they may very well be among the products of interstate tension and Ottoman elite's reassertion of legitimacy. The dates of each illustrated *Hamse* roughly correspond to a war. The earliest painting

¹⁶¹ Shirine Hamadeh, "Ottoman Expressions of Early Modernity and the "Inevitable" Question of Westernization," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 63, no. 1 (2004): 32.

¹⁶² Hamadeh, "Ottoman Expressions," 43.

¹⁶³ Hamadeh, "Ottoman Expressions," 43.

¹⁶⁴ Hamadeh, "Ottoman Expressions," 44.

in the TIEM was produced in 1691, amid the Great Turkish war; the WAM copy, made in 1721, shortly after the Austro-Turkish War between 1716 and 1718; the TSMK copy in 1728 and the PFL around the same time, after the Ottoman seized part of western Iran; and finally the BL copy in 1738, during the 1737-39 Austro-Turkish War, which ended with Ottoman regaining control over Belgrade and the Kingdom of Serbia among other regions in the northern Balkans.

In other words, it can be argued that ‘Aṭā’ī’s extolment of Ottoman military strength against the Europeans and his agenda of Turkish superiority were seen by the early eighteenth-century Ottoman elite as manifestation of their anxiety and aspiration. In ‘Aṭā’ī’s narrative, the Ottoman army was brave and victorious. The wars depicted included the expedition to Hungary during the Long Turkish War (1593-1606), the siege of Khotyn (1621), and the expedition to Boğdan by ‘Osmān II, all against the European powers, especially the Habsburgs. The paintings even more directly reflect the military ambition.

The painting below portrays the expedition to Hungary lead by Mehmed III. The sultan is riding on a horse with a shining golden bridle, surrounded by his retinue, grand vizier, and musketeers. In the meantime, Ottoman soldiers are bravely marching forward, slaying the Europeans. On the contrary, Europeans are portrayed in tilted position, which seems to indicate the falling from the horses. Lying on the ground in the middle are some cut-off heads and hands, probably of European soldiers.



Figure 3. Battle in Hungary, BL Or. 13882, fols. 49b–50a.

In this image, the symbolic meaning of facial hair plays a crucial role in visualizing the hierarchy of power and masculinity. In the Ottoman society, as well as in other pre-modern Islamic societies, the delineation between adulthood and youth, the dominant and the dominated, lies in the appearance of facial hair.¹⁶⁵ Therefore, the sultan is portrayed with full beard, the retinue and soldiers have only mustache, whereas the Europeans are represented as completely hairless. This in turn imposes on Europeans an image as weak, immature, and submissive, only to be slain by the brave and masculine Ottoman soldiers. This emasculation of Europeans in the painting clearly reflects the ruling elites' anxiety over Europeans' military accomplishment and the loss

¹⁶⁵ See Stefan Hanß, "Hair, Emotions and Slavery in the Early Modern Habsburg Mediterranean," *History Workshop Journal* 87 (April 1, 2019): 160–87. Ze'evi also noticed how facial hair and hair in general are related to sexual potency, see Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, 28–29.

of Ottoman military glory.

This use of facial hair as a manifestation of power domination is also present in another battle scene portrayed in the TSMK and WAM copies (fig. 4, 5). This scene from the section “*şıfat-i ceng-i řābūr ve ‘avdet-i řāh-ı manřūr*” (“the depiction of the fight of troops and the return of the divinely guided shah”) in *Sākīnāme/‘Ālemnümā* narrates the battle of Khotyn led by ‘Ořmān II. Considering ‘Ořmān II was then only seventeen years old, it was not likely that he had a full-grown beard. The fully grown facial hair on the sultan’s face seems a deliberate design. In the meanwhile, although some of the European (in this case, Polish-Lithuanian) soldiers are painted with mustache, the few beardless figures present in the fighting front, as well as the beheaded ones are again all Europeans.



Figure 4. Battle of Khotyn, TSMK R816, fols. 56b–57a



Figure 5. Battle of Khotyn, WAM 666, fol. 56b

The (dis)play of masculinity and domination through the facial hair reflects the Ottoman elite's ambition as well as anxiety amid the frequent warfare with their neighbors. While the depiction of these battle scenes seemed more as regular panegyrics and tributes paid to 'Aṭā'ī's patrons, now with the illustrations, it becomes one of the highlighted points that deserve to be repeatedly painted in the patrons' minds.

Emancipated Elite, Moral Models, and Penetrated Private Spaces

Parallel to the development of the outward military campaigns and interstate environment, the Ottomans also witnessed within the Empire several crucial historical developments that led up to this new political and social constellation in the early eighteenth. The first of them is the repeated en- and dethronement of sultans and even regicide, that was caused by and also fostered the massive expansion of bureaucrats'

power. The figure that signals the advent of the era of powerful elite is Köprülü Mehmed Pasha. After years of inflation, corruption, and rebellion following the execution of Sultan İbrahim, in order to stabilize the political situation, the mother of the then fifteen-year-old sultan Mehmed IV (r. 1648-1687), Turhān Sultan, proposed to Köprülü Mehmed Pasha the position of grand vizier.¹⁶⁶ He accepted the offer and assumed the office in 1656, which marked the commencement of the rule of the Köprülü family. In the following decades, the Köprülüs dominated the Ottoman politics; out of the forty-seven years that followed Köprülü Mehmed Pasha's appointment as grand vizier, his family or relatives held the office for thirty-eight years.¹⁶⁷ The incontestable power of the Köprülüs marked the massive increase of power among the elite that would last into the eighteenth century.

The second is the move of the court to Edirne during Mehmed IV's reign, and back to Istanbul after the deposition of Mustafa II. As this happened amid the zenith of Köprülüs' power, it was likely resulted not only from Mehmed IV's love for hunting, but also a deliberate political maneuver.¹⁶⁸ After the deposition of Muṣṭafā II and the enthronement of Aḥmed III in 1703 as the result of the Edirne Incident, the Ottoman court was reinstalled in Istanbul. After the grand vizier Silāhdār 'Alī Pasha died in the 1716-1718 Austro-Turkish War, Damad İbrahim gradually took over the power as the new grand vizier. During Damad İbrahim's tenure, he sponsored and commissioned many cultural projects from architecture to pictorial objects, and orchestrated massive

¹⁶⁶ Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 255.

¹⁶⁷ Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 327. See also, Rifaat Ali Abou-El-Haj, "The Ottoman Vezir and Paşa Households 1683-1703: A Preliminary Report," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, no. 4 (1974): 438–47.

¹⁶⁸ Tülay Artan, "Royal Weddings and the Grand Vezirate: Institutional and Symbolic Change in the Early Eighteenth Century," in *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires* (Brill, 2011), 350.

celebration events that bore conspicuous political symbolic meaning. These projects were both a manifestation of his unprecedented power, but also a strategy to reinscribe the presence of the Ottoman court back to the capital city after its decades of absence.¹⁶⁹

The final one pertinent to our discussion is the fall of *Ḳāḏīzādelis* and the permeation of *Melāmiyye* among the elite circles in Istanbul. During this time, the imperial capital saw the second and final wave of Salafist *Ḳāḏīzādeli* preachers' attack on the 'ulemā and Sufi dervishes under *Üstüvānī Meḥmed Efendi* (d. 1661) and *Vānī Meḥmed Efendi* (d. 1685) respectively. However, after years of struggle for power and influence, aiming to systematically persecute the Sufi dervishes they deemed as practitioners of innovation and even heresy, both of them failed and ended up in exile. In the meantime, as Yavuz's research shows, after a century of persecution, *Melāmīs* gained significant base among the elite circles in the early eighteenth-century Istanbul that "many high officials and intellectuals considered themselves *Melamis*."¹⁷⁰

Besides this changing power structure, the influx of population to the capital also caused the social boundary to loosen. The art projects, including paintings and architecture, mirrored this vibrant syncretic society. Shirine Hamadeh, for example, describes the eighteenth-century Ottoman architecture as "profoundly hybrid and remarkably innovative...[and] was the dominant venue for the visual enactment of the changing social and cultural landscape of Istanbul, the material visualization of what [she has] called the *décloisonnement*, or the 'opening up,' of the city's social and cultural fabric."¹⁷¹ The eighteenth-century Istanbul society is characterized by the

¹⁶⁹ Artan, "Royal Weddings," 360.

¹⁷⁰ Yavuz, "The Making of a Sufi Order," 157.

¹⁷¹ Shirine Hamadeh, *The City's Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 4.

expansion of urban space and the increasingly intermingled different social groups. A quest for originality and novelty in art therefore appeared in this changing social and cultural condition. In the same vein, this situation as well applies to the production of the illustrated *Hamse*s. Although she does not elaborate much in detail, Hamadeh notes that it is in this context that “[n]ew arenas for the dissemination of culture—notably painting and poetry—emerged, targeting new groups.”¹⁷² The new themes, techniques, and forms in eighteenth-century Ottoman paintings were the culmination of the century-long transformation process.

Therefore, combining the new interstate power constellation and the historical events took place within the Empire, I argue that the illustrated *Hamse* copies were the outcome of the interstate competition and cultural contact from both the East and the West, just like the architecture and other art objects. From an interstate perspective, this search for newness and uniqueness is a response to the changing military and political condition from the Ottoman court elites. In the domestic context, the changing power structure opened up a space for diverse art expression. It is well-known among Ottoman art historians that during this period, the court artists’ (*ehl-i hiref*) pictorial art style of the imperial art studio (*nakḳāşhāne*) started to demonstrate distinctive Ottoman style different from that of previous Islamicate art tradition and other Islamicate cultures.¹⁷³ This divergence can arguably be seen as yet another manifestation of the Ottomans’ effort to distinguish themselves from their enemies in the Islamicate sphere.

¹⁷² Shirine Hamadeh, “Ottoman Expressions,” 45.

¹⁷³ Serpil Bağcı et al., *Osmanlı Resim Sanatı*, 17.



Figure 6. Painters showing Plato portrait of a visitor for him to decide whether he would see him, FLP Lewis O 97, fol. 21b.

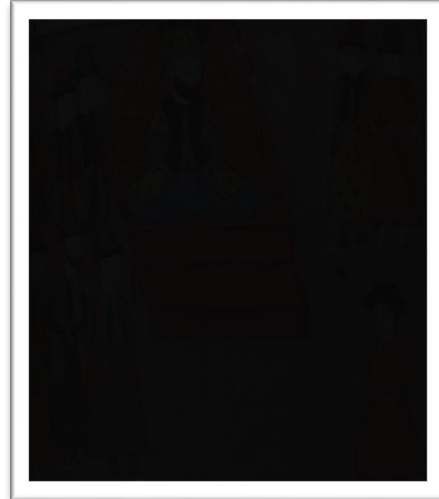


Figure 7. Seljuk Sultan Malikshāh on the throne, receiving an envoy from Byzantine, BL Or. 13882, fol. 155b.

We can see traces of these historical developments in the illustrated *Ḥamse* copies. As the ruling elite gained considerable power, they simultaneously developed a sense of responsibility to rule and educate the people on behalf of the sultan. Therefore, we see paintings that illustrate the stories of righteous rulers, heroes, and sages, as well as those of evil figures that convey moral warning (figs. 6, 7, 8).



Figure 8. Virtuous man wins the heart of killer, TSMK R816, fol. 86b.

In the meantime, as ‘Aṭā’ī’s narrative vividly tells stories of the urban life in

Istanbul, it offers the Ottoman patrons a chance to gaze upon the private space of lay individuals. This gaze upon the private space is a result of the new regime of morality coinciding with the newly developed nudity and eroticism in the paintings in the course of the seventeenth century.¹⁷⁴ The policy reinforcing religious creeds and individual morality even in their private life, along with ‘Aṭā’ī’s didactic narrative, thus gave the erotic and obscene paintings a moral highground. In other words, these paintings serve to satisfy the elite viewers’ curiosity by portraying what is otherwise contained in the private space and forbidden to be seen while providing a didactic moral narrative that sanctions this curiosity.



Figure 9. A sodomite disgraced by a music band (*mehter*), WAM 666, fol. 59a.

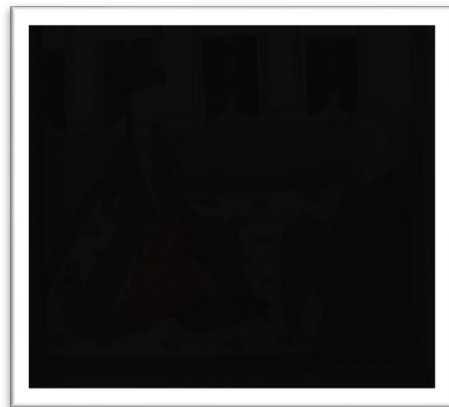


Figure 10. Deceptive old woman talking to a girl, BL Or. 13882, fol. 176b.

This intrusion into private space is often represented by the doors and windows found in the erotic paintings of the illustrated *Hamse* copies (see figure 1, 6, and 7). In the Islamicate societies, the privacy is a crucial concept that regulates social and interpersonal relationships. Privacy, barring people from seeing through the private space of a household, therefore, involves the power and honor in the gendered space.

¹⁷⁴ For the discussion eroticism see Artan and Schick, “Ottomanizing Pornotopia”; and Ahmet Dalkıran, “On Yedinci Yüzyıl Osmanlı Minyatürlerinde Sıra Dışı Bir Eğilim: Müstehcenlik,” *Idil Journal of Art and Language* 1, no. 5 (December 20, 2012).

The doorway and window thus played a crucial role in maintaining this social order.¹⁷⁵

The visual metaphor of doors and windows thus can be interpreted as a metaphor of coy and flirtatious invitation of the viewer's otherwise forbidden gaze upon others' private space.

In the painting (fig. 6), a young boy is peeking through the window, putting a finger on his mouth, showing him as surprised and curious. Interestingly, this detail is not written in the text. The detail not existent in the written text can only serve to enhance the visual representation as a means to highlight the nature of this image as a gaze upon the private sphere. In other words, the boy looking through the window is not unlike the viewer. While gazing at others is an intrusion and a sign of power that is only possible for adult men, these paintings provide their viewers with a sense of power and domination, with the line between moral judgement and entertainment at their discretion.

Moreover, according to Islamic law, especially in the early modern world, women are to be kept and protected in the private realm at home. To gaze at women's body and sexual activities in the more strictly segregated society in the previous centuries was almost impossible. These visual representations of 'Aṭā'ī's sexually charged stories give the readers a chance to transgress invisible social wall that started to loosen yet still exists without any actual legal consequences. At the same time, they also reflect the loosened and increasingly porous social boundary in the eighteenth century. With the portrayal of ancient moral models and the gaze upon urban and private life of their subjects, the *Hamse* reflect the worldview of the patrons.

¹⁷⁵ Alan Mikhail, "The Heart's Desire: Gender, Urban Space and the Ottoman Coffee House," in *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Dana Sajdi (London ; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007), 133–70.

Melāmīs's Mirror: Sufis in and behind the Paintings

Finally, I shall point to the role 'Aṭā'ī's affinity with Melāmīs and Sufism in general plays in the painting. In four of the five copies, the story mentioned in previous chapter telling 'Aṭā'ī's seeking guidance from a Melāmī dervish in a tavern was illustrated (fig. 8). Considering this story did not present any sensational plots nor spectacular lessons on morality, this repeated illustration does not seem a coincidence but a reflection of the patrons' religious affiliation. Yavuz's research on Melāmīs further confirms this hypothesis.



Figure 11. 12. 13. 14. 'Aṭā'ī and a Melāmī dervish in a tavern.
From top left to bottom right: TSMK R816, f. 85b; WAM 666, fol. 44a; BL Or. 13882, fol. 79b; FLP
Lewis O 97, fol. 168b.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, while analyzing the illustrated *Ḥamses*, Artan

noted the repeated appearance of Pîr Mehmed Efendi in both the text and the paintings. Pîr Mehmed Efendi served as judge in Üsküb prior to ‘Aṭā’î and appears in three stories among the total twenty in *Nefḥatü’l-Ezhâr*, and was the only figure that repeatedly appeared in ‘Aṭā’î’s poems. Besides this, ‘Aṭā’î also dedicated an entry of considerable length in his *Şakā’ik Zeyli*. In this entry, he mourned Pîr Mehmed’s death and extolled his personality with flowery metaphor: “[Pîr Mehmed] was like the blossom of poppy that grows of itself, becoming the cushion-like candle to the withered daffodil,”¹⁷⁶ and “[he] is worth God’s divine attention and one that could make laugh the dead of great sorrow.”¹⁷⁷ According to ‘Aṭā’î, Pîr Mehmed joined the Bektaşî Order in his early age, and later developed profound inclination to a Sufi path.¹⁷⁸

As a known fact, Sufis had enjoyed considerable privilege through their ties with Ottoman courtly elites since the early years of the Empire. Artan suggests that many immigrant artists in Istanbul during the early eighteenth century sought refuge and socialized in various Sufi lodges.¹⁷⁹ The fact that the Sufi Pîr Mehmed, who was an important model to ‘Aṭā’î, was also repeatedly portrayed in the early eighteenth-century copies, suggests that ‘Aṭā’î’s Sufi inclination, especially his sympathy for the Melâmîs, played a certain role behind the design and selection of these paintings. Not only the artists had a Sufi background, the patrons very likely also had close tie with, or were among the follower of Sufi orders that had strong presence in the city.

At the same time, we should bear in mind that in the early modern Islamicate world,

¹⁷⁶ “*Lâle-i nu‘mân-i ḥod-rû gibi ol nergis-i ḥazân-dîdeye şem‘-i bâlîn olmuş idi.*”

¹⁷⁷ “*El-ḥaḳḳ nazar-i iltifâta şâyân ve ḥande-fermâ-i mürde-i aḥzândur.*”

¹⁷⁸ “*Evâ’il-i ḥâlinde zümre-i Bektaşiyâna iltihâk, ba‘dehu meyl-i tarîḳa-i isti‘dâd ü istihkâk eylemiş idi.*” For the quotes above, see ‘Aṭā’î, *Hadâ’iku’l-Hakâ’ik*, 1424.

¹⁷⁹ Artan, “Patrons, Painters, Women in Distress,” 131.

Sufi orders constructed a massive transregional network. This network certainly played a crucial role in the transregional migration, and fostered the transregional entanglement within the Islamicate world. I consider this as one of the directions that bears potential for further exploration for expanding our understanding the entanglement in the cultural and art sphere within the Islamicate context.

Text-Image Relationship

Overall, the *Hamse* paintings showed certain discrepancies from the text. The boy looking through the window in fig. 9 and the crowd and waiter in the tavern next to ‘Aṭā’ī and the dervish in fig. 12, for example, are all not written in the text, but a rendering of the artist(s). Figure 1. shown in the very beginning of this thesis is another example. Although the tautological phrases referring to masturbation (i.e. *nākihü’l-yed* and *istimnā*) seems to be well reflected in the painting, the scene is in fact not from the story written beside it, but the story following the twenty-second *şoḥbet*. In a similar manner, the FLP copy also contains a number of paintings that are painted on a textless folio, perhaps added after the entire book was scribed. In the TIEM copy, we also find nine folios illustrated with flowers that are completely unrelated to the text written beside it.

The patrons and artists seem to have designed the books with their discretion. The paintings sometimes reflect the text, but with the patrons’ or the artists’ own interpretation and addition of details. This renders the painting complete in itself and creates a free dynamic between the text and the image. This arrangement is not unlike albums. According to Emine Fetvacı, this is a trend that started since the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Coincident with the increased popularity of albums in

the seventeenth century, the image grew more loosely attached to the text.

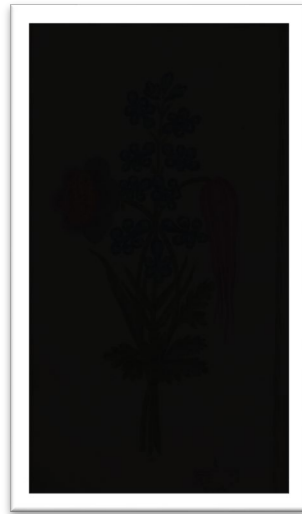


Figure 15. A bouquet. TIEM 1969, fol. 55a.

In Fetvacı's words, "...[the images] are no longer subordinate to the verbal accounts contained in the book. Text and image instead act as equal partners in conveying the meaning; they complete one another."¹⁸⁰ Since the early seventeenth century, correlated with the popularity of albums, the Ottoman illustrated books developed a

"shifting relationship between words and images in manuscripts, such that the images become the main drivers of narrative, and the texts are often compilations of shorter pieces, either anthologies, collected stories or poems, or a collection of different texts on similar themes, rather than books with a single linear narrative running through them."¹⁸¹

Again, on this matter, the illustrated *Hamse-i 'Aṭā'ī* represents an example and culmination of this development. This development since the early seventeenth century

¹⁸⁰ Emine Fetvacı, "Enriched Narratives and Empowered Images in Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Manuscripts," *Ars Orientalis* 40 (2011): 254.

¹⁸¹ Emine Fetvacı, *The Album of the World Emperor: Cross-Cultural Collecting and the Art of Album-Making in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul* (Princeton Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019), 37.

signaled the *décloisonnement* that Shirine Hamadeh attributes to the eighteenth-century Istanbul, and the copies in question mirrored this development.

Aftermath

The journey of the illustrated *Ĥamses*, however, did not stop there. After the Patrona Halil revolt in 1730, the short-lived prosperity in Istanbul often referred to as the Tulip Age came to an end. As Akile Doğu notes, there is evidence that Damad İbrahim's house was sacked and his collection of fine books was thus brought outside to the market.¹⁸² In the following centuries, several of the sexually explicit paintings in the TSMK copies were scraped (figs. 16, 17). In a similar manner, the corresponding scenes in the FLP copy were also removed and inserted back after being censored with a decorated color patch that resembles a screen and a tray (figs. 18, 19).¹⁸³



Figure 16. Two sodomites having coitus, TSMK R816, fol. 169b.



Figure 17. Husband committing adultery with his maid pushed by a goat into the house and exposed, TSMK R816, fol. 104a.

¹⁸² According to Doğu, the registry of these books did not include *Ĥamse-i 'Aṭā'ī*. However, considering the well-known *Sūrnāme* (TSMK A.3594) which is known to be dedicated to Damad İbrahim was also not in this registry, this registry is likely incomplete. Doğu, “Nevizade Atayî'nin *Hamse'si*,” 90.

¹⁸³ See the note 19. in Artan, “Patrons, Painters, Women in Distress,” 140.



Figure 18. Two sodomites having coitus, FLP Lewis O 97, f. 57b.



Figure 19. Husband committing adultery with his maid pushed by a goat into the house and exposed, FLP Lewis O 97, f. 195a.

However, such scenes in the WAM, TIEM, and BL copies remained the same without any censorship (figure 1, 6, 20, and 21). While the censoring in the TSMK and FLP copies can be attributed to the gradually changing concept and discourse regarding sex and sexuality in the process of Ottomans' contact with Europeans and the westernization program, the reason why the WAM, TIEM, and BL copies remained untouched could be the owners' discretion. Nonetheless, the disparate life journey between the five copies still awaits further exploration, as how they ended up outside of Turkey remained unknown.

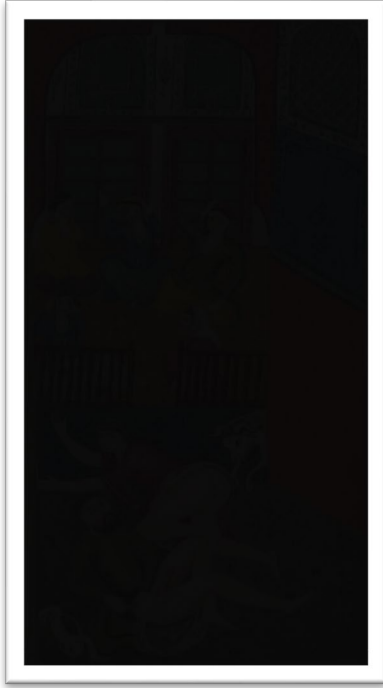


Figure 20. Husband committing adultery with his maid pushed by a goat into the house and exposed, TIEM 1969, fol. 55b.

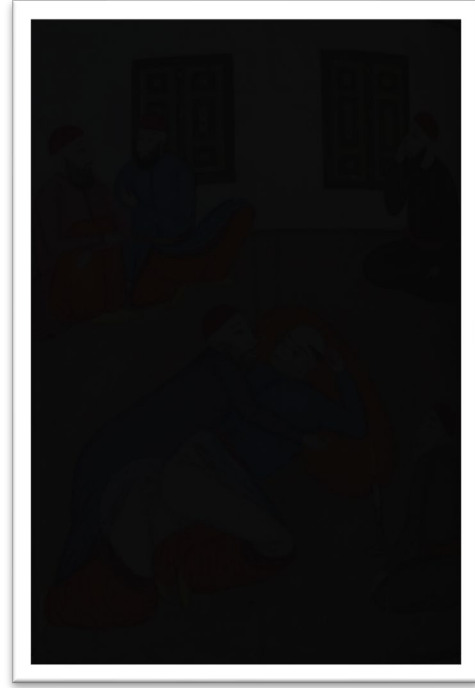


Figure 21. Man raping a drunk beardless young boy caught by other guests, BL Or. 13882, fol. 103a.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter revealed how the *Hamse* reflected the continuities and changes in the course of the seventeenth century in several aspects. From the perspective of interstate tension, the *Hamse* is a product of the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century elite's anxiety facing defeats against European power, as well as their aspiration to regain control and hegemony within the Islamicate realm when Safavids' rule was hanging by a thread. The *Hamse* thus served as a self-reminder and boast of confidence while they strove to revive the Ottoman glory.

On the other hand, the Ottoman, especially Istanbulite society went through considerable change. The flattening of power structure entailed the further emancipation of the learned elite from the control of sultans' personal rule. The urbanization as the result of population influx to the city led to the loosening of social

boundaries. However, transformation and change often entailed disorder as the previous norms gradually broke down but the new ones were yet to crystalize. Consequently, the three waves of *Ḳāḍīzādeli* movement, as well as the burgeoning advice as well as orthodox confessional literature represented the reactionary forces that aimed to slow down this process of transformation. The illustrated *Ḥamses*, in turn, also reflect the culmination of this process.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the patronage from sultans and their family members declined in the seventeenth century, affected by the state's fiscal difficulty, warfare against European powers, and the Salafist discourse, and the Ottoman artists turned to make art for other clients. At the same time, the opening up of society and blurred social and spatial boundaries also offered a fertile ground for the artists to develop new visual idioms and themes. This development enabled a new mode of book illustration correlated to the increased popularity of albums and culminated in the short-lived cultural boom in Istanbul during the so-called Tulip Age. 'Aṭā'ī's affinity and sympathy with the still persecuted Melāmīs manifest in the text might have contributed to the delayed appearance of the *Ḥamse*'s illustrated copies. All in all, we see that through the same material yet different social, political, and religious landscapes, the discrepancy between the *Ḥamse* and its paintings mirrors gradual shift of paradigm in the course of the long seventeenth century.

Conclusion

This thesis proposes an alternative framework for evaluating the illustrated *Hamse-i 'Aṭā'ī*. Writing in the early seventeenth century, 'Aṭā'ī's agenda was to convey moral lessons under the heightened state policing on faith and morality and to defend his faith of Sufism amid the growing Ẕāḍīzādeli movement. His motivation and why he designed the text in this particular way would become clearer once we put his *Hamse* in the context of the social changes, the heightened religious policy, and the rapidly expanding corpus of *naṣīḥat* and *'ilm-i ḥāl* texts of the time. As a member of the 'ulemā, he participated in reinforcing the Ottoman state's policy, albeit with his own agenda that seeks to defend Sufi or specifically Melāmīs.

Coming to the early eighteenth-century, however, 'Aṭā'ī's text became a site of intervention. As 'Aṭā'ī's narrative touches upon a wide range of issues and social phenomena, it opens up a space for interpretation and intervention in the process of converting the text to image. The growing popularity of albums and increased freedom in illustration eventually enabled a new mode of book illustration. The early eighteenth-century patrons and artists sifted through and remolded the text with the paintings that satisfy their curiosity, reflect their political and military ambition, and demonstrate their religious affiliation.

All in all, by situating the *Hamse*, its author Nev'īzāde 'Aṭā'ī, and the illustrated copies in question in the historical context of the long seventeenth century, it demonstrates how the *Hamse*'s text and paintings mirrored the changes amid the continuities. Just as Emine Fetvacı concludes, “the artistic products of the Ottomans are

best understood not as timeless products but in terms of their historical specificity.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Fetvacı, “Enriched Narratives,” 243.

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