

A Manuscript Community in Ottoman Istanbul (18th-19th Centuries)
Heroic Stories, Social Profiles, and Reading Space

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

to the Department of History and Cultural Studies
of Freie Universität Berlin

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Berlin, 2022

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To the memory of my dear sister,
Filiz K rođlu-Aydınlı

ABSTRACT

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Ph.D. in History and Cultural Studies

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Konrad Hirschler

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Ottoman reading and writing practices were marked by the unprecedented expansion of the reading public that went hand in hand with the changes in the social structure and urban landscape as well as the systematic transformations in Ottoman politics, economics, and education. That expansion resulted in the emergence of new literary genres, new social groups in the written world, and new definitions of literacy that have been discussed by the scholars of Ottoman history and literature. As a contribution to this scholarship, this study focuses on a group of scribes, readers, performers, and hosts of reading venues who, as this thesis argues, formed a ‘manuscript community.’ That manuscript community is formed around heroic stories, specifically, the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim, which gained popularity and circulated in 18th and 19th century Istanbul.

Performance of these stories through reading aloud in the public spaces including but not limited to coffeehouses, shops, bachelor rooms, and schools was the main reading practice that has been recorded on the pages of the manuscripts. Scrutinizing these manuscript notes written by the members of this community alongside other paratextual elements of the manuscripts, this study discusses the features of scribalship and ownership, social and moral codes of heroism in the collective memory, social profiles of the community members, locations, and venues of collective reading, aspects of textual performance, and the issues and ways of communication between the members through the physical pages of manuscripts. In this way, this study contributes to the fields of ‘manuscript studies,’ ‘history of reading,’ and ‘book culture’ as well as ‘the Ottoman literary, social and cultural history.’

ABSTRAKT

Eine Manuskriptgemeinschaft im osmanischen Istanbul (18.-19. Jahrhundert)

Heldengeschichten, Soziale Profile, und Lesestätten

Im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert waren Lese- und Schreibpraktiken im Osmanischen Reich von einer bis dahin unerreichte Ausdehnung der Leserschaft geprägt, die mit Veränderungen in der sozialen Struktur, dem urbanen Raum und systematischen Transformationen in der osmanischen Politik, Wirtschaft, und Bildung einhergingen. Diese Ausdehnung resultierte im Aufkommen neuer literarischer Gattungen, neuer sozialer Gruppen in der Welt des geschriebenen Wortes, und neuen Definitionen von Bildung, die vom Forschungsfeld der osmanischen Geschichte und Literatur diskutiert wurden. Die vorliegende Studie versteht sich als ein Beitrag zu dieser Forschung, indem sie den Fokus auf eine Gruppe von Kopisten, Lesern, Vorlesern und Gastgebern von Lesestätten richtet die, wie in dieser Arbeit argumentiert, eine „Manuskriptgemeinschaft“ bildeten. Diese Manuskriptgemeinschaft formierte sich um Heldengeschichten, insbesondere die Geschichten von Hamza und Ebū Müslim, die im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert in Istanbul zirkulierten und große Beliebtheit erlangten.

Öffentliche Lesungen dieser Heldengeschichten sind die am häufigsten vorkommenden Lesepraktiken, die auf den Seiten der Manuskripte dokumentiert sind. Sie fanden unter anderem in Kaffeehäusern, Läden, Junggesellenzimmern und Schulen statt. Diese Studie untersucht die dabei von Mitgliedern dieser Gemeinschaft geschriebenen Manuskriptnotizen und andere paratextuelle Elemente der Manuskripte und diskutiert deren Kopisten und Besitzer, soziale und moralische Normen von Heldentum im kollektiven Gedächtnis, die sozialen Profile der Mitglieder der Gemeinschaft, Orte und Lesestätten, Aspekte von Lesungen und Kommunikationswege zwischen den Mitgliedern durch den materiellen Aspekt der Manuskripte. So trägt diese Studie zu Feldern wie Manuskriptstudien, Geschichte des Lesens, Buchkultur und osmanischer Literatur-, Sozial-, und Kulturgeschichte bei.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation was written and prepared by me independently. Furthermore, no sources and aids other than those indicated have been used. Intellectual property of other authors has been marked accordingly. I also declare that I have not applied for an examination procedure at any other institution and that I have not submitted the dissertation in this or any other form to any other faculty as a dissertation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have dreamed of writing these acknowledgments for a long time; not just because it means to put a period (or rather a comma) on my dissertation research, but also because it offers an opportunity to express my gratitude to ‘the army’ of peers, mentors, colleagues and family members who supported and contributed to this study all of these years.

My first and foremost gratitude is for my supervisor, Konrad Hirschler, who embraced my project at a very critical moment after my former university, İstanbul Şehir University, shut down overnight for political reasons. As an academic whose writings inspired me, Professor Hirschler enhanced both the content and structure of my dissertation through his meticulous reading and brilliant ideas. I am also thankful to Berat Açıl, my former supervisor at Istanbul Şehir University, who planted the seeds of this study by introducing me to the field of Ottoman manuscript culture and who revised some of the chapters in their early phases. My sponsor at Boston College during my visiting year 2019-2020, Dana Sajdi, has contributed to the present study by her brilliant ideas and solutions for the structure of some chapters, and also invoked me the urge to be improved in ‘the articulation of my ideas.’

I always say that ‘one day I read an article and my whole life has changed.’ It was the day that Berat Açıl suggested me to read the article of Tülün Değirmenci, titled “Who Read What in the Ottoman Period?” I was amazed by the material that Değirmenci discussed; her work made me feel that I finally found a leak (or a crack on the wall as Cem Behar once dubbed it) in the world of ordinary people in the past. Apart from the inspiration, I am thankful to Değirmenci for being a part of my thesis committee. I am also thankful for all the members of my thesis committee.

I will always fondly remember the years at Istanbul Şehir University, during which I was part of a robust academic environment. I am especially grateful to my professors Cem Behar, Hatice Aynur, Günhan Börekçi, Nicole Kañçal, and Kahraman Şakul who prompted me to appreciate the knowledge and created the most welcoming environment for an ‘academic-to-be.’ I am indebted to Irvin Cemil Schick, my master thesis supervisor at İstanbul Şehir University who supported me not just during the master's years but until today by believing in my project. I am also thankful to the members of my first thesis committee, Abdülhamit Kırmızı and İhsan Fazlıođlu who made precious suggestions in the earliest phase of this dissertation.

I am grateful for the grant for the 2018-2019 academic year and the generous Hanfmann and Mellink Fellowship given by American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT) for the year 2019-2020, which facilitated my work as a visiting scholar at Boston College. During this year, I also had the opportunity to study at Harvard University Libraries as a research assistant for Cemal Kafadar, to whom I am also thankful for his helpful insights on several research and dissertation topics. I benefited from the sources of the ISAM library for many years and enjoyed the academic and friendly environment created by the director M. Birol Ülker, library staff, and colleagues. I offer my profound thanks to the chief advisor of ISAM and a living legend of the field of Ottoman Book and Library Studies, İsmail Erünsal, for being supportive and generously sharing some of his research with me.

I consider myself one of the luckiest young academics to have colleagues, friends, and family members who made it possible to move forward in my career, despite a *coup d'état*, the shuttering of my university, a pandemic, and the loss of several close family members. İrem Gündüz-Polat and Emine Öztaner, who are now sisters more than friends, were always available when I need any kind of academic or personal support. Görkem Özizmirli, Hikmet Toker, Mehmet Kökrek, Halil Solak, Güliz Pamukoğlu, and the friends at Berlin Colloquium (2020-2021 academic year) are others who supported this project by reading some excerpts, answering my questions, and offering their suggestions. I am also grateful to Peter Dziedzic from Harvard University for his editing and proofreading.

My mother, father, and brother have always encouraged and supported me in all of my endeavors, personal and academic. My mother, Gülseren Sezer, and mother-in-law, Fatma Aydınli, helped sustain me as a mother while training to be a scholar. Last but not least, I thank my husband, Rıdvan Aydınli, simply for sharing his life with me and also for supporting a wife whose mind has always been tangled with centuries-old issues by offering his ideas, solutions, and suggestions. I hope my young son, Mustafa, will know in the future that he was able to calm me in a minute by a hug during the most stressful days of my dissertation-writing. I dedicate this study to the memory of my sister-in-law, Filiz Köroğlu-Aydınli, whom we lost this year to cancer. I am sure she would be the proudest of seeing that, finally, I achieved to complete my dissertation.

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NOTES ON TRANSCRIPTION, DATES AND PAGINATION

For the romanization of manuscript notes in Ottoman Turkish, I use the modern Turkish orthography except long vowels including ā, ū, and ī and the consonants *ayn* (‘) and *hemze* (’). However, I do not mark the consonants in full which means a modification in the conventional transcription system of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES)*. The high degree of orthographic variation in manuscript notes plays a role in this decision.

The orthography of modern Turkish is preferred. The reader thus finds *hacı* instead of hadji, *‘immet* instead of ummah, or *ağa* and *efendi* instead of agha and effendi. Such words are given in italics unless they succeed a name.

The commonly appeared name of محمد is spelled as “Mehmed” except for the cases that the letter ح has a shadda.

For the ease of future research, the titles of the manuscripts are given as they appear on the library catalogs such as *Dāstān-ı Eba Müslim* although the actual title is *Zemcināme* for the manuscript MK 8504/27. Such as in this example, in the catalog information of the manuscripts is given with the abbreviation of the library and the catalog number such as MK 8504/7.

In the indication of pages, the folio numbers in the original source are used. In case of the lack of page numbers or multiple systems in page numbers on a particular manuscript, the necessary information is given in the footnotes in bracelets for the ease of future research on these manuscripts.

Dates are given according to the Gregorian calendar in the main text, but Hegira and Julian calendars are in the footnotes as they appear in the original source. The abbreviations for months that are used in the original source are in parallel with the abbreviations that are given in the Abbreviations section.

All translations from Ottoman Turkish and modern Turkish to English are mine unless otherwise is indicated.

ABBREVIATIONS

Lexicon: *A Lexicon English and Turkish* by Sir James William Redhouse.

DİA: *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*

EI¹: *Encyclopedia of Islam*, first edition

EI²: *Encyclopedia of Islam*, second edition

EI³: *Encyclopedia of Islam*, third edition

İBB: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi

TTK: Türk Tarih Kurumu

AK: Atatürk Kitaplığı [İstanbul]

MK: Milli Kütüphane [Ankara]

FMK: Fatih Millet Kütüphanesi [İstanbul]

YKSC: Yapı Kredi Sermet Çifter Araştırma Kütüphanesi [İstanbul]

İÜNE: İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi

İKS: İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri, İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi (ISAM)

Diss.: Dissertation

Ra: Rebü'l-evvel

R: Rebü'l-âhir

Ca: Cemâzîyü'l-evvel

C: Cemâzîyü'l-âhir

Za: Zi'l-ka'de

Z: Zi'l-hicce

Ka: Kânûn-ı evvel

Ks: Kânûn-ı sâni'

Ta: Teşrîn-i evvel

Ts: Teşrîn-i sâni'

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The 6th volume of Ebū Müslim, or “8504/5” as it is registered in the National Library at Ankara (from now on, MK) today, was completed on 30 December 1773 (15 Şevval 1187).¹ Although the scribe kept his name anonymous, Seyyid Abdi Efendi, who registered his ownership on 18 March 1774 at the gate of the Grand Bazaar (*Bedesten*) in Istanbul, and one more time on 28 September 1779, probably copied the manuscript to rent it out to potential clients.² It is highly probable, again, that he was concurrently a bookseller, based on the information given by travelers such as the French traveler Antoine Galland (1646-1715), who visited Istanbul and obtained many books from *Bedesten*. During this effort, he observed the booksellers copying such manuscripts for four or five aspers.³ As confirming that MK 8504/5 was produced to be rented out, the first dated note on a collective reading session will be registered in the district of Galata on 16 January 1783, after four years of Seyyid Abdi Efendi’s statement of ownership.⁴ According to forty such notes, MK 8504/5 will be crisscrossing the city in the subsequent centuries, including in the districts of Kapan-ı Dakık/Unkapanı, Kasımpaşa, Tobhâne, Yenikapı, Bahçekapı, Üsküdar, Sultan Ahmed, Galata, Balad, Beşiktaş and Eyüb. It was recited, scribbled on, and illustrated by many hands. It cut across many social and geographical boundaries looking at the identities of reciters including a local administrator (*muhtār*), an engraver (*hakkāk*), a glassmaker (*camcı*), herbalist (*attār*), a dervish, and a lot of coffeehouse owners/operators of Istanbul but also originally from Anatolian provincial towns such as Nevşehir, Arapgir, Kayseri, and Çemişgezek. Its copies were physically worn out while circulating in coffeehouses, private houses, shops, offices, and even the inner Palace (*enderūn-ı hümāyun*). It received the most

¹ MK 8504/5, 125b.

² Ibid, 1a and 96a.

³ Antoine Galland, *Journal d'Antoine Galland pendant son Séjour à Constantinople (1672-1673)*, vol 1, published and annotated by C. Schefer (Paris, E. Leroux, 1881), 242.

⁴ MK 8504/5, 126a.

exalted praises (*du‘a*) and the harshest curses (*beddu‘a*) uttered in collective reading sessions, and it inspired some of the most touching love poems by its readers. It inculcated an atmosphere of brotherhood, inspired by a common heroic tradition. MK 8504/5, despite the simplicity of its appearance, experienced many textual, social, and political transformations over two centuries. It survived the abolition of the Janissary corps, whose members were one of its greatest fans, it resisted the novel dominance of print in textual production, and it adapted its audience during the grand systematic changes in education and administration until the last collective reading note dated was written on it in the year 1895.⁵ In the end, it was purchased by the National Library at Ankara with other 32 volumes for 600.000.000 Turkish liras in 1997.⁶

The manuscript of MK 8504/5 was not exceptional; rather, it is a typical example among numerous volumes of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories analyzed this study in terms of its prevalence in the city and persistence over centuries. Based on hundreds of such manuscripts with special attention to their manuscript notes, this study argues for the existence of a community – including scribes, performers, readers, and hosts of reading venues– by their *sui generis* social and moral codes, the imagination of a shared heroic past, literary tastes, physical environment, sociability, and commitment to a sort of male and Muslim friendship and brotherhood. From soldiers to bureaucrats, craftsmen to religious men, from a 17th-century janissary to a 20th-century internal diseases specialist, these manuscripts gathered people from highly diversified socio-economic backgrounds in reading venues or as scribes, writers of manuscript notes, and illustrators on their physical pages. Through this, hundreds of manuscripts in circulation for centuries can be visualized as an archaeological site on which one can dig up many layers of Istanbul through different periods and societies.

This study explores the manuscripts of the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim which were produced and circulated in Istanbul from the 18th until the 20th century with special attention to the manuscript notes and drawings written by the owners, scribes, and, mostly, readers. Approximately 200 volumes that are largely preserved today in Istanbul University Rare Works Library (77 volumes), Ankara National Library (43 volumes), Fatih Millet Library (27 volumes), and Sermet Çifter Research Library (32 volumes) were selected by in-library research

⁵ Ibid, 3b.

⁶ Ibid, 125b and several other pages.

via digital copies. Hamza and Ebū Müslim manuscripts from other libraries were disregarded due to the limited scope of this dissertation and because some did not fit into the criteria of this study such as the lack of manuscript notes. For example, eight volumes at Erzurum University Atatürk Library and 72 volumes of Hamza at the Library of the Faculty of Literature at Istanbul University were reserved for future research.⁷ Therefore, this study cannot claim to cover all available manuscripts. However, its source basis is of sufficient size and representativeness to make the comprehensive arguments advanced herein.

The manuscripts of the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim are scrutinized according to questions centered on the heroic tradition, reading performance, the identities of readers, manuscripts as tools of communication, and the topography of reading. Each of these questions is at the core of one of the following chapters. The marginal notes on these manuscripts both triggered the formation of these questions and composed the main source in discussing these questions. Approximately 5000 notes were transliterated and analyzed for this study, half of them are notes on collective reading, while the other half is highly varied, including but not limited to verses composed by readers or quoted from well-known poets, reactions to the story, or other readers' notes, and visual notes such as insignias of the Janissary corps; depictions of story characters; and a wide range of doodles.⁸ The notes on reading in public venues such as coffeehouses coming in the first place called 'collective reading notes' in this study. They depict the reciters and reading venues sometimes alongside the audience and their reactions as in the following:

In the year two hundred and sixty-one, in the shop of the surgeon Mustafa Ağa across Zincirli Hân in Galata, the surgeon Elhâc Ata Efendi read, and all of the friends were delighted, 5 March 1845.⁹

⁷ For the latest inventory of the volumes of Hamza stories, see: Muhammed Yelten, "Hamza-Nâme'nin Yeni Ciltleri ve Okunma Mekânları," *Turkish Studies* 8/9 (Summer 2013): 151-165. The volumes of Ebū Müslim stories still await an exclusive research and inventorial study.

⁸ The traditional forms of manuscript notes are immensely varied in the Islamic world. For some of the terms, see: Adam Gacek, *The Arabic Manuscript Tradition: A Glossary of Technical Terms and Bibliography* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2001); Gilliot, Cl., "Sharḥ", in *EP*, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 19 October 2020 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1039> Also see: *Manuscript Notes as Documentary Sources*, eds. Andreas Görke and Konrad Hirschler (Beirut, Orient-Institut Beirut, 2011) and İsmail E. Erünsal, *Ortaçağ İslam Dünyasında Kitap ve Kütüphane* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2018).

⁹ "Bin ikiyüz altmış bir senesi, Galata'da Zincirlihan karşusunda, merhûm cerrâh Mustafa Ağa'nın dükkanında, cerrâh Elhâc Ata Efendi kıraat eylemiştir. Cümle ahbâb safâ itmiştir, 25 Safer 261." MK 8504/9, 26b. Translations of manuscript notes are mine throughout the study.

The oral and written versions of heroic stories had been popular in the Middle and Near Eastern cultural zone(s), especially since the Medieval Ages (9th-13th centuries). The stories in many languages of this zone such as Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, or Javanese were mostly narrating the heroic deeds of protagonists mythicized over historical figures such as Ali, the most widely represented figure, pre-Islamic heroes such as ‘Anter, the companions of Prophet Muhammad (*sahabe*) such as Hamza, the heroes derived from Firdevsi’s *Şehnāme* like Fīrūzšāh, or heroes from the later periods such as Zelhimme and the Mamluk Sultan Baybars alongside the Anatolian heroes such as Battal Gāzi and Sarı Saltuk.¹⁰ In light of this legacy, the urban community in Istanbul was not unfamiliar with the oral and written pieces belonging to heroic genres. On the contrary, they gained extraordinary popularity in the last Ottoman centuries as evident not just in the manuscripts of our corpus but also in many traveler accounts, chronicles, probate registers, and pamphlets that constitute other sources of this study.

The versions of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories analyzed in this study were produced in Istanbul in the 18th and 19th centuries and circulated from the 18th century to the 20th century. However, one of the most challenging aspects of this study has been the periodization of the production and circulation of these manuscripts. The majority of the manuscripts do not carry a colophon, but based on the ones with colophons, 17 of them were written in the 18th century while 11 of them were written in the 19th century. Although there is not a manuscript written in the 20th century, some manuscripts were read in the 20th century according to 90 collective reading notes. While 200 notes are dated the 18th century, the dated notes reach their peak in the 19th century with 1410 notes. Within this picture, one can observe the birth or the revival of a cultural practice, namely reading the heroic stories collectively from manuscripts, its peak in the 19th century majorly stemmed from the prevalence of coffeehouses and their gradual disappearance by the 20th century. Thus, while the exact production dates of the manuscripts are, in most cases, impossible to pin down, the reading notes leave no doubt about their popularity between the late 18th and early 20th centuries. However, periodic contextualization of the corpus in this study remains problematic, since there are many factors behind the increases and decreases of the notes

¹⁰ For an introduction to the genres and their development, see: Pellat, Ch., Bausani, A., Boratav, P.N., Ahmad, Aziz and Winstedt, R.O., “Hikāya”, in *EF²*, eds. Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 19 October 2020 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0285>

on manuscripts, such as changes in note-taking practices due to the increased education and literacy alongside the involvement of *kalemiyye* (lit. men of the plume) as the members of that particular manuscript community. Beyond all these factors, we will never be sure that the extant manuscripts display the whole picture of that practice. In addition, it has to be remembered that heroic genres other than those of Hamza and Ebū Müslim that are not included in this study and future research on these stories might change the overall periodization.

The difficulty of periodization in this study does not only stem from the production and circulation of the stories in a broad chronological line. Different social and textual dynamics of these centuries complicate the contextualization of the stories, people, and reading/writing practices. The current 19th-century discourse in the Ottoman historiography depicts the period as the era of modernization and westernization in social and political life, whereas the printing press supposedly dominated the textual production and consumption which is not totally appropriate for the cultural practice subjected to this study. Rather, we can discern the persistence of cultural practice from earlier periods while reading heroic stories from manuscripts remained – at least for our corpus– remained as a popular practice, based on manuscripts until the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At that moment, the adversity in periodic contextualization turns into an advantage to develop a new terminology in this study which is ‘the late manuscript age’ to cover the period from the mid-18th century to the early 20th centuries.¹¹ Although the centuries are given in the main title of the dissertation for practical reasons, the term ‘late manuscript age’ will be preferred throughout the study. Because this term eliminates the periodization based on centuries, which remains artificial and inappropriate while installing the manuscripts and manuscript culture at the center of the discussion. For this reason, it should not be surprising that the discussion of people and literacy in the following starts with the 17th century while the classical determinants of the 19th century such as the print and ‘modernization’ in state institutions do not play a prominent role.

¹¹ I am grateful to Konrad Hirschler who suggested me the term of ‘the late manuscript age.’

Social Groups in the Late Ottoman Manuscript Age

Reading in Ottoman Istanbul has never been on the monopoly of the Palace nor appertained exclusively to the high literati and scholars. Although reading as deciphering the letters was limited to the people who at least went to Quranic schools or had primary education (*sıbyān mektebi*), the reading sessions in public venues had continuously existed for religious, educational, and entertainment reasons.¹² What was changing by the 17th century was the multiplication in the models of readership and authorship by the increased visibility of non-elite and non-scholar people in the textual world. Before the transformation of the textual world, I will first discuss the social groups that constituted not just the urban texture but also the manuscript community of this study in terms of their increased visibility in the social and political life of the city.

The expanding importance of the households to the detriment of the central authority alongside the failures in the battlefields are denominated as “the 17th-century crisis” by Jack A. Goldstone.¹³ The Ottoman trans-regional context was not different in the sense that, “the gains in political stability made during the Köprülü period (1656-1703) did not survive the long and exhausting Ottoman-Habsburg War of 1683-99, which is generally regarded as the beginning of a definitive political decline.”¹⁴ When it comes to the 18th century, the international challenges resulted in long wars such as Prut (1711), Passarowitz (1718), and Küçük Kaynarca (1774); and the internal threats occurred due to the provincial administrators and irregular soldiers in the periphery, such as Celâli Rebellions. On the other hand, the capital Istanbul hosted social unrest and political upheavals such as Edirne Event (1703), Patrona Halil (1730), and Kabakçı Mustafa (1803), conducted mostly by Janissaries with allies among the scholars and military-administrative officials, resulting in depositions and regicides.

¹² For a detailed study on the genres of books that were read in public in the Ottoman realm since the 13th century, see: Zehra Öztürk, “Osmanlı Döneminde Kıraat Meclislerinde Okunan Halk Kitapları,” *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 5, no. 9 (2007): 401-445. On learning to read in the Late Ottoman Empire, see: Benjamin Fortna, *Learning to Read in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

¹³ Jack A. Goldstone, “East and West in the Seventeenth Century: Political Crises in Stuart England, Ottoman Turkey, and Ming China,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, no. 1 (January 1988): 103-142.

¹⁴ Suraiya Faroqhi, “Crisis and Change, 1590-1699” in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, vol.2, eds. Suraiya Faroqhi et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 413.

Given this, the period starting with the 17th century has been called “the decline period” as a prelude to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The founders and followers of the “decline paradigm,” who erected the idea of decay of Ottoman institutions and a departure from the ideals after the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566), had their reasons for making this argument.¹⁵ Apart from the decrease in the Sultan’s authority and military failures, some primary sources, such as the mirror of princes (*nasihatnāmes*), justified the declinist narrative. However, in the recent decades, the traditional paradigm in Ottoman history that calls the period after the reign of Murad III (r. 1574-1595) as “stagnation,” “regression,” or “decline” gave its place to the understanding that the Empire transformed and made itself more flexible with the changes in social, economic, military and political structures.¹⁶

One of the most nourishing fields of these “revisionist studies,” while criticizing the decline paradigm, was the cultural flourishing that started in the 17th century and accelerated through the 18th and 19th centuries. In recent decades, one can observe a kind of “cultural turn” in Ottoman historiography that especially focused on the 18th century. The studies on this cultural flourishing have ranged in topic from the Ottoman subjects,¹⁷ gardens and summerhouses,¹⁸

¹⁵ One of the most prominent writer on Ottoman decline was the historian Bernard Lewis. See, for example: Bernard Lewis, “Some Reflections on the Decline of the Ottoman Empire,” *Studia Islamica* 1 (1958): 111–127.

¹⁶ Some classics of such revisionist studies: Huri İslamoğlu-İnan and Çağlar Keyder, “Agenda for Ottoman History” in *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 43-62; Rifat Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991); Norman Itzkowitz, “Eighteenth Century Ottoman Realities,” *Studia Islamica* 16: 73-94; Cemal Kafadar, “The Question of Ottoman Decline,” *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 4, no. 1-2 (1997-1998): 30-75. Also see the recent and groundbreaking studies of Baki Tezcan and Ali Yaycıoğlu: Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crises of The Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016). For an article summarizes the main points of the critiques of the decline thesis written since the 1970s, see: Dana Sajdi, “Decline, its Discontents, and Ottoman Cultural History: By Way of Introduction” in *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Dana Sajdi (London: I.B. Taurus, 2007): 1-40.

¹⁷ Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire* (Londra: I.B. Tauris, 2000).

¹⁸ Shirine Hamadeh, *The City’s Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2007).

sexuality and homosexuality,¹⁹ consumption,²⁰ public violence and uprisings,²¹ social life,²² coffeehouses,²³ printing technology,²⁴ the localization in poetry,²⁵ development of public libraries,²⁶ and architectural and artistic patronage.²⁷ Although it has not yet been studied extensively, the common observation made by these studies is the increased visibility of the non-elite in the urban public space that was paralleled by the proliferation of coffeehouses, arrival of *meydān* fountains and public gardens such as Sādābād or the “conquest of Bosphorus” by pavilions and rowing boats so that Shirine Hamadeh pertinently called 18th century Istanbul as “the city of pleasures.”²⁸ This is especially the case in the first half of the 18th century, which witnessed relative economic stability and investment of the state in urban entertainment and luxurious consumption.²⁹ This period, which was later called the Tulip Age, is characterized by

¹⁹ Andrews and Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Dror Ze’evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900* (Berkeley : University of California, 2006).

²⁰ *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1922: An Introduction*, ed. Donald Quataert (Albany: State University of New York, 2000).

²¹ Fariba Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul: 1700-1800* (California: University of California Press, 2011).

²² Kate Fleet and Ebru Boyar, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²³ For the literature on Ottoman coffeehouses, see: Chapter 4 and 5.

²⁴ Orlin Sabev, *Waiting for Müteferrika: Glimpses of Ottoman Print Culture* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2018); Ayşe Başaran, *The Ottoman Printing Enterprise: Legalization, Agency and Networks 1831-1863*, Unpublished PhD Diss., Boğaziçi University, 2019.

²⁵ Walter G. Andrews, *Poetry’s Voice, Society’s Song: Ottoman Lyric Poetry* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985).

²⁶ İsmail Erünsal, *Ottoman Libraries: A Survey of the History, Development and Organization of Ottoman Foundation Libraries* (Cambridge : Harvard University, 2008).

²⁷ Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991); Zeren Tanındı, “Bibliophile Aghas (Eunuchs) At Topkapı Saray,” *Muqarnas* 21 (2004): 333-343; Tülün Değirmenci, *İktidar Oyunları ve Resimli Kitaplar: II. Osman Devrinde Değişen Güç Simgeleri* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2012).

²⁸ Shirine Hamadeh, “Splash and Spectacle: The Obsession with Fountains in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul,” *Muqarnas* 19 (2002): 123-148. The term “conquest of Bosphorus” belongs to Hamadeh in *The City’s Pleasures*.

²⁹ On economic stability in the first half of the 18th century, see: Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 138.

the changing dynamics of artistic patronage for painting and architecture.³⁰ The illustrated miscellanies (*mecmu'a*) accompanied to the public reading and poetic eulogies (*kasīde*) dedicated to the women and *ağas* other than the Sultan were some reflections of this shift in patronage. The dissolution of artistic elitism could also be monitored through the artists of painting and music, such as the emergence of bazaar painters (*çarşı ressamları*) or musicians of artisan-origin.³¹

What was the new urban space? Apart from the fountains, squares, and public gardens, the participation of people in the city largely occurred through the proliferation of coffeehouses.³² According to a survey on shops and overall workforce conducted in the 1790s, 1,654 coffeehouses filled the narrow streets of Istanbul, approximately one in every eight shops and this number will increase to 2,500 in the 1840s, which was enough for İstanbul to be nicknamed a “big coffeehouse” by Lumières, the 19th-century French traveler.³³ People gathered and enjoyed their beverages and conversation, reading stories on long winter nights while chattering about the deeds and future of authorities. There were times that the government perceived these developments as a threat to the dynastic future, which is evident in new regulations of the appearance of the city, such as the declaration of clothing laws or gender-space organizations in the public areas.³⁴ Coffeehouses were particularly under scrutiny; they were sometimes shut

³⁰ The stability and cultural flourishing in the first half of the 18th century, especially during the reign of Ahmed III (1703-1730) was called as the “Tulip Period” and labelled with the luxurious and excessive consumption. For the perceptions of Tulip Period in Ottoman historiography, see: Selim Karahasanoğlu, “Osmanlı Tarihyazımında ‘Lale Devri’ Eleştirel bir Deneme,” *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar* 7 (2008): 129-144.

³¹ Bazaar painters were professional Istanbulite artists, painted for the orders of their workshops in bazaars, mostly creating costume albums for their European clients. On bazaar painters, see: Metin And, *Osmanlı Tasvir Sanatları 2: Çarşı Ressamları* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi, 2018). On an analysis of musicians’ social background in the 18th century, see: Cem Behar, *Şeyhülislam’ın Müziği: 18. Yüzyılda Osmanlı/Türk Musikisi ve Şeyhülislam Es’ad Efendi’nin Atrabü’l-Âsâr’ı* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2010).

³² For Ottoman coffeehouses in making the public sphere, see: Gwendolyn Collaço, “The Ottoman Coffeehouse: All the Charms and Dangers of Commonality in the 16th-17th Centuries,” *Lights: The MESA Quarterly Journal* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2011): 61-71; Selma Akyazıcı Özkoçak, “Coffeehouses: Rethinking the Public and Private in Early Modern Istanbul,” *Journal of Urban History*, 33 (2007): 965–986.

³³ Cited from Cengiz Kırılı, “Coffeehouses: Leisure and Sociability in Ottoman Istanbul,” *Leisure Cultures in Urban Europe, 1700-1870*, eds. Peter Nigel Borsay and Jan Hein Furnee (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016): 161-181, 162.

³⁴ For these clothing laws, see: Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 144.

down by the authorities for long periods, and other times, rumors about coffeehouses were recorded under the genre of *journals*.³⁵ Considering that the owners, conductors, and visitors of coffeehouses, barbershops, and other types of shops in the 18th and 19th centuries were mainly the janissaries, and that social unrest and upheavals often erupted from these locations, such the attempts by the government can be better understood.

Who were the social groups that increased their visibility in these new spaces? Firstly, janissaries, who were also among the leading audience of heroic stories who were not merely selected military troops but were also a part of the wider city populace by the 17th century. In the cities of the imperial zone, especially Istanbul, the janissaries gradually blended into the commercial and artisanal life, dubbed as the *esnafization* of janissaries.³⁶ The janissaries' presence in the urban economy and city life was largely visible, especially via coffeehouses and barbershops. According to surety registers (*kefâlet*) of 1791-1793, 30.6 percent of all masters and shopkeepers held military titles such as *beşe*, *bostancı*, *bölükbaşı*, and *karakullukçu*.³⁷ Apart from the shopkeepers, they served the city as butchers, bakers, boatmen, porters, and workers of various artisanal crafts which proves the necessity to approach janissaries not just as soldiers but as a social entity of the 17th and 18th century Istanbul.³⁸

³⁵ For detailed information on this genre, see: Cengiz Kırılı, "Coffeehouses: Public Opinion in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire" in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, eds. Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (Leiden: Brill, 2004): 75-97.

³⁶ Cemal Kafadar, "Janissaries and Other Riffraff of Ottoman Istanbul: Rebels without a Cause?" in *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World: A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz*, eds. Baki Tezcan and Karl Barbir (Madison: University of Wisconsin Center of Turkish Studies, 2007): 113-134, 115.

³⁷ Betül Başaran and Cengiz Kırılı, "Some Observations on Istanbul's Artisans during the Reign of Selim III (1789-1808)" in *Bread from the Lion's Mouth: Artisans Struggling for a Livelihood in Ottoman Cities*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2015): 261-277, 272. Başaran and Kırılı warns for that not all military title-holders were active janissaries, they entered the corps to obtain its privileges rather than to actively serve as soldiers. For an analysis on janissary-coffeehouses, see: Ali Çaksu, "18.Yüzyıl Sonu Osmanlı Yeniçeri Kahvehaneleri" in *Osmanlı Kahvehaneleri: Mekân, Sosyalleşme, İktidar*, ed. Ahmet Yaşar (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2017): 91-111.

³⁸ For the blurred distinction between janissaries and civilian artisans in Istanbul in the seventeenth century see: Gülay Yılmaz Diko, "Blurred Boundaries between Soldiers and Civilians Artisan Janissaries in Seventeenth-Century" in *Bread from the Lion's Mouth : Artisans Struggling for a Livelihood in Ottoman Cities*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi (New York, NY, USA: Berghahn Books, 2015): 175-193; and idem, *The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries in a 17th century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul*, Unpublished PhD diss., McGill University, 2011. On the same topic for early-nineteenth century, see: Mehmet Mert Sunar, *Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826*, Unpublished PhD diss., State University of New York, 2006; and idem, "When Grocers, Porters and other Riff-raff ecome Soldiers: Janissary Artisans and Laborers in the Nineteenth Century Istanbul and Edirne," *Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 17, no. 1 (2009): 175-194.

On the other hand, janissaries also became mafia-like chieftains protecting trades for a fee, and they became one of the main actors in the city's violence and crime.³⁹ They were the major force within the Edirne Incident in 1703 and Patrona Halil Rebellion in 1730, in which people of various social ranks –including scholars ('*ulemā*')– participated.⁴⁰ They continued to act as a violent mob, serving as disruptive and aggressive components of the city throughout the reign of Mahmud I (1808-1839), until the janissary corps was abolished in the event later called “the Auspicious Event (1829).” During this event, janissaries were killed and executed and their barracks and coffeehouses –which were not just central for the socialization of janissaries but of all the city– were demolished. This exemplifies how the social scene of the city had drastically changed by the end of the 18th and 19th centuries - not just in terms of the internal dynamics within these groups (janissaries, bachelors, and migrants), but also through the emergence and reformation of state control mechanisms on these groups.⁴¹ This could be perceived as a reaction to increased crime in the city, especially after the 18th century, when we observe parallel increases in crime and violence in European cities such as London and Paris.⁴²

Apart from the “janissary-turned-artisans,” the migrants from the provincial towns contributed immensely to the transformation of Istanbul after the 17th century. As Marinos Sariyannis observes: “During the tumultuous last decades of the sixteenth century and the *büyük kaçgün* or ‘great flight’ from 1603 onwards, former peasants, known as *çift bozan* left their lands in Anatolia seeking better fortune in the big cities. These peasants were called pejoratively Turks

³⁹ Among others, the chronicle of Cabi which includes the period between 1788-1813 tells about such crimes committed by janissaries. Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbi Târîhi (Târîh-i Sultan Selim-i Sâlis ve Mahmud-ı Sâni): Tahlil ve Tenkidli Metin*, ed. Mehmet Ali Beyhan (Ankara : Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2003). On the contemporary chronicles, the researcher should always be cautious regarding the State's propaganda on the memory of janissaries.

⁴⁰ For further information on the social background of the participants on these rebellions, see: Ri'fat Abou-El-Haj, *The 1703 Rebellion and the Structure of Ottoman Politics* (Istanbul: Netherlands Historisch-Arceologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1984); Münir Aktepe, *Patrona İsyamı (1730)* (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1958).

⁴¹ For an exclusive study, see: Betül Başaran, *Selim III: Social Control and Policing in Istanbul at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2014). For the evolution of State perception on bachelors and about detailed descriptions and discussion on the bachelors barracks, see: Işıl Çokuğraş, *Bekâr Odaları ve Meyhaneler: Osmanlı İstanbul'unda Marjinalite ve Mekân (1789-1839)* (İstanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2016), 51-140.

⁴² For the comparisons of Istanbul with the European cities in terms of their crime ratio, see: Fariba Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment*.

(*Etrâk*) or ‘common Turks’ (*etrâk-ı ‘avâm*).⁴³ The chronicles of the 16th and 17th century grapple with the “rabble Turks” coming from the provincial towns (*manav*) to the city, and their discomfort in the areas of trade, politics, and delicate gatherings (*meclis*) was noted.⁴⁴ Excessive and uncontrolled migration from the provincial towns to urban centers was one of the main problems for the government through the following centuries, and they tried to manage the flows from Anatolia by some regulations such as through the surety (*kefâlet*) system or entrance warrants (*mürûr tezkereleri*).⁴⁵ The role of coffeehouses is significant in attracting migrants, especially via the surety system. For example, surety registers of Kasap İlyas Neighborhood show that two coffeehouse owners stand as sureties for 80% of the migrants from Arapgir (a town of Malatya in the Southeast part of Anatolia).⁴⁶ Thus, the central role of coffeehouses and their owners in urban society is evident. Additionally, these migrants from Anatolia (from Tokat, Ürgüp, Çankırı, and many others) were a predominant element of the community that formed around heroic stories within this coffeehouse communities.

The penetration of new groups in the city’s social, political, and cultural life also blurred the distinctions between the military (*askeriyye*) and tax-payers (*reayya*) in Ottoman society. As the main actors behind this blurring, the numbers of janissary soldiers who were born and lived as *reayya* while being linked to the military while officially – and sometimes practically–increased in number by the 17th century.⁴⁷ The position of another social entity by the 16th century called “city boys (*şehir oğlanları*)” was on more slippery ground in terms of their position between the elite and urban crowds. Sariyannis points out their in-betweenness by claiming that, “city boys

⁴³ Marinos Sariyannis, “Mobs, ‘Scamps’ and Rebels in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul: Some Remarks on Ottoman Social Vocabulary,” *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 11, no. 1-2 (2005): 1-15, 4.

⁴⁴ Such as the chronicles of Gelibolulu Ali, Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa and Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Paşa. See: *Ibid*, 4.

⁴⁵ For other immigration and settlement policies of Late Ottoman Empire, see: Başak Kale, “Transforming an Empire: The Ottoman Empire’s Immigration and Settlement Policies in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 50, no. 2 (2014): 252-271.

⁴⁶ Cem Behar’s study on the Kasap İlyas neighborhood in 19th century indicates among the 79 seals of sureties, coffeehouse owner İbrahim is mentioned for 13 times and coffeehouse owner Arapgirli Yusuf is mentioned for 12 times which points out the role of coffeehouse owners in *kefâlet* system. Cem Behar, *Bir Mahallenin Doğumu ve Ölümü (1494-2008): Osmanlı İstanbul’unda Kasap İlyas Mahallesi* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2014).

⁴⁷ See: Donal Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire: 1700-1922*, 142-174.

constituted a distinct group, filling the gap between the illiterate mob and quasi-antinomian members of the lower military and judicial elite.”⁴⁸ City boys who found their representations in the chronicles, as well as literary and visual depictions, were depicted as beardless young men who had some education but engage in small trade and wasted time in frivolous entertainment and homo-sexual affairs or prostitution.⁴⁹ City boys were both readers and subjects of some literary genres such as illustrated miscellanies, city thrillers (*şehrengîz*), and “realist Istanbul stories,” even during the 20th century around some characterizations in the early republican novel.⁵⁰

The advancement of scribal service or men of the plume (*kalemiyye*) is also worthy of mention, since the members of these services were enthusiastic readers of heroic stories, especially in the 19th century. The 18th century was the “age of men of *kalem*” as Christoph K. Neumann argues, “some of the most important politicians of the age had begun their careers as scribes in the Imperial Court (*divân*).”⁵¹ Even so, the biographical dictionaries of the judicial elite had replaced the dictionaries of ministers and secretaries.⁵² After the 1830s, this scribal service (*kalem*) was

⁴⁸ Marinus Sariyannis, “Mobs, ‘Scamps’ and Rebels,” 5.

⁴⁹ A detailed discussion on various implications of city boys in the chronicles and Evliya Çelebi’s Travellers was made in Sariyannis, “Mobs, Scamps and Rebels,” 5-8. On the visual representations of city boys within the context of group reading, see: Tülün Değirmenci, “Osmanlı Tasvir Sanatında Görselin ‘Okunması’: İmgenin Ardındaki Hikâyeler (Şehir Oğlanları ve İstanbul’un Meşhur Kadınları,” *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* XLV (2015): 25-55.

⁵⁰ “Realist Istanbul stories” is a term first proposed by Şükrü Elçin to refer to humorous stories about ordinary Istanbul people. They were also called as “*meddâh* stories” because they were generally “performed” by *meddâhs* (storytellers) in coffeehouses or sometimes as “Tıflî stories” because most of them have a common character named Tıflî. Şükrü Elçin, “Kitâbî, Mensur, Realist İstanbul Hikâyeleri,” in *Halk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Millî Folklor Araştırma Dairesi Yayınları, 1977); David Selim Sayers, *Tıflî Hikâyeleri* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2013); Hasan Kavruk, *Eski Türk Edebiyatında Mensur Hikâyeler* (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1998). Also, for the summaries of stories like *Letâifnâme*, *Tayyârzâde*, *Cevri Çelebi*, see: Mustafa Nihat Özön, *Türkçede Roman* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1993), 104-111; for other realistic and humorous stories such as *Hikâyet-i Anabacı*, see: Hasan Kavruk, *Eski Türk Edebiyatında*. Most of Ahmet Midhat’s novels have a character, an extravagant prodigal, deceived by the wiles of women and prone to the homo-sexual desires of men.

⁵¹ Christopher K. Neumann, “Political and Diplomatic Developments” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 44-65, 54.

⁵² For example, Ahmed Resmî Efendi wrote the *tezkire* of *reisülküttabs* who held positions until 1744, *Sefînetü’r-Rüesâ* (*Halîfetü’r-Rüesâ*). For a discussion on the transformation of scribal service around Ahmed Resmi Efendi’s career, see: Virginia Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace Ahmed Resmi Efendi 1700-1783* (Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1995).

under reformation through a new form that is known as the civil officialdom (*mülkiyye*).⁵³ Especially after this date, they gradually gained influence in social life as well as bureaucracy. They drastically expanded in numbers from 2.000 scribes in the year 1790 to 35.000 civil officials in the year 1900, and they were also more diversified in terms of their socio-economic background.⁵⁴ Although half of the civil officials were still coming from the families affiliated with the occupations of civil officialdom, others were coming from merchant and money changer families as well as military families.⁵⁵ The high proportion of low-rank scribes (*kātib*) and chief-scribes (*kethüdā*) as the readers of heroic stories that will be discussed in Chapter 4 in detail is another evidence of their increased visibility in the social life of Istanbul.

What role did these new visibilities in social life in a reorganized social space in relation to the transformation of the textual world in the late manuscript age? Apart from the insertion of new groups into the city's social, cultural, and artistic life, the proliferation of public gatherings, the expansion of public space, new types of visibilities and socializations drastically diversified the audience (both as readers and writers), models of reading and reading environment in the last manuscript age. In this period, Ottoman Istanbul – in addition to other cities like Damascus, Aleppo, Cairo, or Sarajevo, to various extents– witnessed ‘the conquest of texts by people.’⁵⁶ The “popularisation” of the text by the multiplication of genres, the use of vernacular Turkish, writing down the texts that were once circulated orally went in hand with the “textualisation” of the society by the development of social and historical record-keeping, increased rates in literacy, the spread of the primary education, and so on. The juxtaposition of “popularisation” and “textualisation” was claimed by Konrad Hirschler in his study on the Middle Period Egyptian and Syrian societies and largely occurred through the active participation of non-elite groups via the written word.⁵⁷ Although it had developed on totally different social and historical

⁵³ For a detailed analysis and discussion on that process, see: Carter V. Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

⁵⁴ These are the estimations of Findley based on Foreign Ministry personnel records. *Ibid*, 22-24.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 104.

⁵⁶ I am inspired from Hamadeh's term “conquest of Bosphorus by people” Hamadeh, *The City of Pleasures*.

⁵⁷ Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

dynamics, the Ottoman textual world after the 17th century was also under “the conquest of people,” namely the increased and active participation of non-elite and non-scholar groups in the textual world.

Literacy in the Late Manuscript Age

The participation of non-elite and non-scholarly individuals in the production of written works had neither started in the 18th century nor did it simply happen through an increase in literacy rates, especially since no uniform ‘literacy’ – but rather, ‘literacies’ – were always in the picture. Nelly Hanna, who studies Ottoman Cairo, claims that there were many types of literacies such as artisan literacy, Sufi literacy, and coffeehouse literacy and that a person could have one as well as all of them at the same time:

He might have attended an elementary school and learned basic reading and writing; he would then work in the marketplace, where deeds and documents were used as current practice, so he would have to read or decipher their essential content. He might spend leisure time in the coffee-house and follow the story-teller as he narrated the adventures of Antares or Baybars, and he might spend time in a *zawia*, where he could listen to religious teachings and possibly have access to books.⁵⁸

One of the main ways for “illiterate” people, as in the meaning of “not capable of deciphering the letters,” to engage with texts is perhaps as old as the invention of writing, namely through listening. Long before the 18th century, people of any social position and rank in the Ottoman realm could be engaged with the text through listening in public gatherings. Considering the importance attributed to delicate gatherings (*meclis*) and etiquette books (*adab*) dedicated to the codes of behavior in these gatherings, one can argue that it was the main environment of some texts.⁵⁹ Additionally, this environment was not just for the illiterate, but also for literate people and even for scholars and the high elite who just want to share the atmosphere and friendship during public reading sessions. The signs of “orality” and “aurality” of texts could be traced back

⁵⁸ Nelly Hanna, “Literacy among Artisans and Tradesmen in Ottoman Cairo” in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (London: Routledge, 2012): 319-331, 330.

⁵⁹ For the term “the environment of text”, I am inspired by Walter Andrews’ discussion on “the environment of *gazel*.” See: Walter Andrews, *Poetry’s Voice Society’s Song*, 143-174.

even to the first centuries of the Ottoman sovereignty in Anatolia. The physical properties of some texts such as simple layout and amateur handwriting, some phrases that address the listeners, or the visual facilitators for the reciters are some indicators of a text written to be recited. The books which were read aloud were from a wide range of genres, including storybooks, religious-mystical books, prophetic biographies, and hagiographies.⁶⁰ In addition, some of the chronicles from different periods were also written to be read aloud such as Aşıkpaşazâde's chronicle written in the 15th century or Tuğî's chronicle written in the 17th century.⁶¹ Therefore, it would not be misleading to claim that reading a text aloud has always existed in the Ottoman realm (as it had done in previous periods) as one of the main ways of textual engagement. This type of engagement could be due to an author's social background or his intention to reach a wider public. For example, Tuğî, who was a former janissary, a folk poet, and probably a storyteller, wrote his chronicle "to be read aloud to gatherings of troops."⁶² Apparently, he was successful in his purpose, considering that the manuscript of his chronicle bears some notes on public reading.⁶³

Although people of non-elite and non-scholarly backgrounds had always been engaged with texts in various forms, the transformation in the reception and production of texts after the 17th century reveals their greater and active participation in producing written works. As a sign of increased public demand for texts, one might discuss the book explosion, especially in the 18th century. Nelly Hanna, in her book about the textual production in Cairo, claims this explosion in book production and ownership for many Ottoman cities in the 18th century such as Cairo, Aleppo, Damascus, and Istanbul. Behind this explosion, some of the reasons include transformation in the

⁶⁰ Zehra Öztürk, "Osmanlı Döneminde Kıraat Meclislerinde."

⁶¹ For the "aural" environment of Aşıkpaşazâde Tarihi, see: Halil İnalçık, "Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi Nasıl Okunmalı?" in *Söğüt'ten İstanbul'a: Osmanlı Devleti'nin Kuruluşu Üzerine Tartışmalar*, eds. Oktay Özel and Mehmet Öz (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2000), 119-145. For the aural and performance through the texts of Aşıkpaşazâde, Hacı Bektaş Veli and Dede Korkut, see: Arzu Öztürkmen "Orality and Performance in Late Medieval Turkish Texts: Epic Tales, Hagiographies, and Chronicles," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 29 (2009): 327-345.

⁶² Gabriel Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play* (California: University of California Press, 2003), 74-77. P.M.Holt discusses such pieces of Arabic historiography in Ottoman Egypt in the 17th and 18th centuries with the title "popular chronicles." See: P.M. Holt, "Al-Jabarti's Introduction to the History of Ottoman Egypt," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 25, no. 1 (1962): 38-51.

⁶³ Fahir İz, "Eski Düzyazının Gelişimi: XVII. Yüzyılda Halk Dili ile Yazılmış bir Tarih Kitabı Hüseyin Tûğî Vak'a-i Sultan Osman Han," *Türk Dili Araştırmaları Yıllığı Belleten* (1967): 119-164, 122.

education system, relative economic well-being, low taxation at the beginning of the century, the cheapening of European paper, the growing book trade, easier access to books via libraries, and the penetration of oral stories to the textual world.⁶⁴

There were also new developments in terms of the characteristics of libraries in Istanbul. In the year 1678, Köprülü Library in Istanbul which is special by being the first independent library from any mosque, shrine, and Sufi lodge was established by the grand vizier Köprülü Fâzıl Mustafa Paşa.⁶⁵ However, “the golden age of libraries” was in the 18th century during the reign of Mahmud I (1730-1754), when a remarkable increase is observed by the establishment of not just palace-initiative and privately endowed libraries in Istanbul but all over the Ottoman territory.⁶⁶ Although one has to wait until the last quarter of the 19th century for a public library in modern meaning (*Kütübhâne-i Umûmî -i Osmânî* / Bayezid Library, 1881), the public role of libraries already increased in the 18th century. For example, Yavuz Sezer states that all Ottoman libraries of the 18th-century point to manual copying (*istinsâh*) as a major form of taking advantage of the collections, and they function as public scriptoria.⁶⁷ In addition, more libraries were established not just by the Sultans, but also by other members of the household and central political strata such as the founding collections of the grand vizier Şehid Ali Paşa, *darüssaâde ağası* Hacı Beşir Ağa, *defterdâr* Âtîf Mustafa Efendi, and *reîsülküttâb* Mustafa Efendi.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Nell Hanna, *In Praise of Books: a Cultural History of Cairo's Middle Class, Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003).

⁶⁵ İsmail Erünsal “Köprülü Kütüphanesi,” *DİA* 26 (2002): 257-258. Erünsal states that the library’s building was actually established as a part of the complex (*küllîye*) by Köprülü Mehmed Paşa, his son Köprülü Fâzıl Ahmed Paşa built up the independent library building and officially endowed by Fâzıl Mustafa Paşa.

⁶⁶ İsmail Erünsal claims that this proliferation should not be interpreted as the expansion of public literacy because they were established to serve the madrasa students. See : İsmail Erünsal, *Türk Kütüphaneleri Tarihi II : Kuruluştan Tanzimat ‘a Kadar Osmanlı Vakıf Kütüphaneleri* (Ankara : Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Yayınları, 1988), 54-56.

⁶⁷ For a short history of 19th century libraries, see: Frédéric Hitzel, “Manuscripts, Livres et Culture Livresque à Istanbul,” *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 87-88 (1999): 19-38. For the architectural consciousness, functions and transformation of 18th century libraries in Istanbul, see: Yavuz Sezer, “The Architecture of Bibliophilia: Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Libraries,” Unpublished PhD Diss., MIT, 2016.

⁶⁸ See for the project of Şehid Ali Paşa collection: Tülay Artan, “On Sekizinci Yüzyıl Başında Osmanlı Bilgi Üretimi ve Dağılı: Yazma Eser Koleksiyonları ve Koleksiyonerler Arasında Şehid Ali Paşa’nın Yeri,” *Müteferrika* 58, no. 2 (Winter 2020): 5-40. For the establishment and formation of these libraries, see: İsmail Erünsal, *Türk Kütüphaneleri Tarihi II*.

While the endowments of libraries provide indirect insights, probate registers and ownership records also illuminate the popular demand for books from another angle. The ownership records (*temellük*) remain insufficient in the literature for studying non-scholars, and this study will also contribute by observing the personal seals on the heroic stories. On the other hand, studies of probate (*tereke*) registers (the records of personal belongings and inheritance of a deceased) are remarkable, and some of them also deal with book ownership.⁶⁹ These registers have their own biases, such as selectivity according to the amount of inheritance or not showing a direct engagement of owners (reading) with their books. In addition, they are ambiguous when it comes to popular books, which are usually cheap; such books were cumulatively recorded under the titles of storybooks (*hikāye kitabları*) or scattered papers (*evrāk-ı perīşān*). Still, they are precious as they allow to correlate book ownership with locations of residency, occupations, and sexes of book owners.⁷⁰ Through these registers, some studies discuss book ownership of non-scholars in the 18th and 19th centuries. For example, Asim Zubceviz's claims after researching on the book ownership in Sarajevo (1707-1828) through probate registers that:

With regard to book owners in the inheritance inventories, the most important finding is that book ownership does not seem to have been limited to a particular social stratum. Books are to be found in the estates of peasants and city dwellers, men and women, the rich and those with modest estates, and both those whose professions were book-oriented (especially the '*ulamā*') and others e.g. artisans and merchants. In fact, some of the largest book collections belonged to the artisans and merchants of Sarajevo.⁷¹

The probate registers of some book dealers (*sahhāf*), by including detailed lists of popular books also provide a fresh perspective on the public demand for books. For example, the probate registers of Ahmed Efendi in Edirne and Ahmed Hoca in Istanbul, both dated to the 17th century,

⁶⁹ See: Said Öztürk, *Askerî Kassama Ait Onyedinci Asır İstanbul Tereke Defterleri (Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlil)*, İstanbul 1995, s. 64-85; Yvonne J. Seng, "The Üsküdar Estates (Tereke) as Records of Everyday Life in an Ottoman Town, 1521-1524," Unpublished PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 1991.

⁷⁰ İsmail Erünsal's meticulous studies on book ownership through probate registers present insightful thoughts on the book ownership of women and madrasa students, see: İsmail Erünsal, "Osmanlılarda Kadınlar Ne Okuyordu (XVI-XVII. Asırlar)" in *Osmanlı Kültür Tarihinin Bilinmeyenleri: Şahıslardan Eserlere, Kurumlardan Kimliklere* (İstanbul: Timaş, 2019): 69-95; "Tereke Kayıtların Göre Osmanlı Medrese Tabelerinin Okuduğu Kitaplar," Ibid: 173-205.

⁷¹ Asim Zubceviz, "Book Ownership in Ottoman Sarajevo, 1707-1828," Unpublished PhD diss., Leiden University, 2015, 267.

are remarkable for having hundreds of manuscripts belong to the heroic genres. The probate register of Ahmed Hoca of Edirne includes 301 volumes in total, which again belong to many cycles.⁷² In Ahmed Efendi's register, there are 184 volumes of *Hamzanāme*, 45 volumes of *Süleymānnāme* and 33 volumes of Ebū Müslim Stories apart from many others belong to many story cycles.⁷³ In addition, his register rises the speculation by including blank paper (*beyaz kağıd*) and multiple inkpots (*mürekkebe hokkası*), which indicate he may have been reproducing manuscripts. Meredith Quinn claims such high numbers of volumes at the same in a single register would point to simultaneous high demand for these stories, especially during winter and Ramadan nights.⁷⁴ In all cases, these registers are pieces of evidence for the existence of “cheap reading” as Quinn put in words or chapbooks in English, *kutub sufrā* (lit. ‘yellow books’) in Arabic, *bibliothèque bleue* in French or *Volksbuch* in German as precedents in other cultural zones. These massive numbers of books circulating in Istanbul and beyond show that the manuscripts used for this study – and likely the overall number of extant manuscripts of heroic stories – is only a faint echo of what used to be a very bookish world.

After the explosion of books – both in quantity and through various identities in the ownership records– increased non-elite and non-scholarly engagement with texts can be traced through the new types of ‘authorship’ in the late Ottoman manuscript age. It is argued by some scholars that the social and professional background of authors changed and diversified towards non-elite and non-scholar people. For example, Hakan Karateke argues, regarding authors of historical texts in the 18th century, that, “in addition to historians from scribal careers, or those with close connections to the court, now freelance history-writers, modernizing military officers, and journalists composed or translated popular works or textbooks.”⁷⁵ Dana Sajdi's study on a barber in Damascus as the author of the history of Damascus conducts an inspiring discussion over the

⁷² İsmail Erünsal, *Osmanlılarda Sahaflık ve Sahaflar* (İstanbul: Timaş, 2013): 519-520.

⁷³ Bkz: Meredith Quinn, *Books and Their Readers in Seventeenth Century*, Unpublished PhD Diss., Harvard University, 2016, 133. Also see: Meredith Quinn, “On Yedinci Yüzyıl İstanbul'da Ucuza Okumalar,” *Eski Metinlere Yeni Bağlamlar: Osmanlı Türkçesi Metin Çalışmaları*, eds. Hatice Aynur et al (İstanbul: Turkuaz Yayınevi, 2015): 146–69.

⁷⁴ Meredith Quinn, *Books and Their Readers*, 133.

⁷⁵ Hakan Karateke, “The Challenge of Periodization” in *Writing History at the Ottoman Court*, eds. Erdem Çıpa and Emine Fetvacı (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013): 129-155, 147.

new types of authorship in the 18th-century Ottoman realm which she calls “the nouveau literacy.” She contextualizes “nouveau literacy” into the social and cultural space of the 18th century and asserts that, although people beyond the elite circles always had access to texts, what is new at that period was the coalescence of exceptions to this pattern.⁷⁶

Personal scrapbooks (*mecmu‘a*), diaries, and dream books are other sources that one can depend on while discussing the new – and often intimate – engagements of people with text as authors. For example, Jan Schmidt, based on the scrapbooks he scrutinized in Leiden University Library claims that:

[...] many more such scrapbooks have survived after the sixteenth century. Considering that the same period also witnessed the expansion of book collections and the proliferation of middle brow literature in vernacular Turkish, it is tempting to link the number of Ottoman scrapbooks from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the expansion of the realm of writing in Ottoman society. If the collection of Ottoman manuscripts in Leiden University Library is any indication, the practice of keeping personal scrapbooks may have been particularly popular with literati of a more modest sort: low-level bureaucrats, soldiers, and minor sheiks are well-represented among the owners/ compilers of the Leiden manuscripts.⁷⁷

The “discovery” of such genres for the Ottoman textual world led to interrogations about the nature of Ottoman “self-narration,” “autobiography,” or “ego-document,” and whether one can talk about a kind of individualism by the 17th century. In the lack of “ideal” autobiographical texts, it has been usually accepted that Ottoman – or Islamic, more generally– self-consciousness had not evolved in the same manner as it has evolved in Europe. However, Cemal Kafadar, who studied the diaries of a janissary, a merchant, a dervish, and a female Halvetî mystic discusses that *Individualitätsgefühl* (the sense of individuality) is not necessarily the only or primary driving sensibility in autobiographic writing; he claims miscellanies of eloquent writing (*inşa mecmuası*), memoirs, letters, miscellanies, and even *cönks* would count as genres of self-

⁷⁶ Dana Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus: Nouveau Literacy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Levant* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

⁷⁷ Jan Schmidt, “First-Person Narratives in Ottoman Miscellaneous Manuscripts” in *Many Ways of Speaking About the Self: Middle Eastern Ego-Documents in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish (14th-20th century)* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2010): 159-170. Also see: Jan Schmidt, “Ottoman Autobiographical Texts by Lāmī’ and Others in the Collection of Turkish Manuscripts at the Leiden University Library” in *Essays in Honor of Barbara Flemming*, ed. Jan Schmidt II, Harvard, 2002 (= *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 26, no. 2): 195-201.

narration.⁷⁸ Derin Terzioğlu, through analyzing the Niyāzi Mısrî's scrapbook, asserts that various texts could carry autobiographical aspects which she called "the autobiography in fragments."⁷⁹ Another scholar who studies the miscellany collection in Leiden University, Jan Schmidt, also offered, in light of the lack of an "ideal" autobiographical texts, that one should look at fragmentary first-person narratives. He examined the miscellaneous manuscripts in these terms.⁸⁰

As seen above, the insertion of low-level bureaucrats, soldiers, minor *şeyhs*, and even merchants and artisans contributed to the development of new or mixed genres. The pamphlets written by Sufis, bureaucrats/scribes, and madrasa-trained scholars were another genre that expanded in the 18th century. These pamphlets, composed mainly in Arabic and a vernacular legal format, were cheap and short, independent texts lacking illustrations, and they were written to raise or contribute to a polemic by providing arguments such as polemic debates over smoking.⁸¹ Other than the pamphlets on legal polemics, there were pamphlets written for the "person of interest" on any issue such as Dāyezāde Mustafa's *Selimiye Risālesi*. Dāyezāde's text is unique because he had a very special target by writing his book: "to prove the grandiosity of Selimiye Mosque compared to Hagia Sophia" as a polemic he ran into during gatherings with his friends who insisted on him to write a book on the issue. More interestingly, by full awareness of "doing something new," he gives much information on his writing process, from which books at which libraries he read to the gatherings of people as stimulators for writing his book. He says:

I, the poorest of the poor and the weakest of the weak, Dāyezāde Mustafa, who always remembers God and who is known as the Rumelian Province Treasurer lieutenant, wishes to begin the subject of this book in this way: Just as it is indicated in the hadith 'tell them as much as their minds are capable of,' I endeavored to prepare this book as a simple work, far from rhetoric, understandable by all, so that it would not diminish

⁷⁸ Cemal Kafadar, *Kim Var İmiş Biz Burada Yoğ İken Dört Osmanlı: Yeniçeri, Tüccar, Derviş ve Hatun* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları: 2014).

⁷⁹ Derin Terzioğlu, "Autobiography in Fragments: Reading Ottoman Personal Miscellanies in the Early Modern Era" in *Autobiographical Themes in Turkish Literature: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives*, eds. Olcay Akyıldız et al (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft 2007): 83-100, 87.

⁸⁰ Jan Schmidt, "First-Person Narratives."

⁸¹ For the characteristics and social world of these pamphlets, see: Nir Shafir, "The Road from Damascus: Circulation and the Redefinition of Islam in the Ottoman Empire (1620-1720)," Unpublished PhD Diss., University of California, 2016, 87-165. Also, see idem, "Vernacular Legalism in the Ottoman Empire: Confession, Law, and Popular Politics in the Debate over the 'Religion of Abraham (*millet-i İbrāhīm*)," *Islamic Law and Society* 28 (2021): 32-75.

the enthusiasm for the reading of the young and the old. Yet, just as begin, I wished the book to attain a rare value like a newly blossomed bud in order to fulfill its purpose.⁸²

As Dāyezāde points out, simple usage of vernacular language was common if one aimed to reach a wider public in the 18th and 19th centuries. As a part of appealing to more people and educating them, vernacular Turkish had started to be used more commonly compared to the earlier periods, not just in literary production but also in teaching materials. Despite the dominance of Arabic, scholarly works written in and translated into Turkish have always existed for various purposes; however, as discussed by Fazlıoğlu, both students and scholars paid special attention to writing and reading in Turkish in the 18th century. New institutions of education such as *mühendishāne* (school of engineering) established in 1773 played role in writing and translating in the Turkish language for ‘clearness’ and ‘prevalence.’⁸³ Derin Terzioğlu discusses this vernacularization in language by observing the Islamic manuals of religious instruction (*ilmihāl*) that specifically targeted the “new reading public” in major cities like Istanbul. “This reading public included not just scholars, learned sufis (members of the mystical brotherhoods) and scribes, but also merchants, artisans, and rank-and-file soldiers.”⁸⁴ Besides, the vernacularization of language in the Ottoman realm was not unique to Istanbul or Turkish considering the larger Ottoman realm, literary production in the colloquial Arabic in Levant or Greek in the Balkans increased.⁸⁵

The vernacularization of language was just one part of the drastic changes at the end of the 18th century Ottoman textual world. Many scholars are in consensus that non-elite and non-scholarly individuals serving as writers, readers, –and now publishers– increased and found new avenues for engaging with the texts. There is no doubt that the emergence (the 1720s) and increased use of printing technology (after the 1830s) was a leading factor behind the accessibility of texts to

⁸² Translation: Selen Bahriye Morkoç, *A Study of Ottoman Narratives on Architecture: Text, Context and Hermeneutics*, PhD Diss., University of Adelaide, 2006, 287.

⁸³ İhsan Fazlıoğlu, “Osmanlı Döneminde ‘Bilim’ Alanındaki Türkçe Telif ve Tercüme Eserlerin Türkçe Oluş Nedenleri ve Bu Eserlerin Dil Bilincinin Oluşmasındaki Yeri ve Önemi,” *Kutadgubilig Felsefe-Bilim Araştırmaları* 3 (March 2003): 151-184.

⁸⁴ Derin Terzioğlu, “Where İlmihal Meets Catechism: Islamic Manuals of Religious Instruction in the Ottoman Empire in the Age of Confessionalization,” *Past & Present* 220, no. 1 (August 2013), 84–85.

⁸⁵ Johann Strauss, “Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire (19th-20th centuries)?” *Arabic Middle Eastern Literatures* 6, no 1 (2003): 39-76.

more people in more diversified forms.⁸⁶ As Orlin Sabev indicates: “After Müteferrika press and afterward the number of printing houses operating in the Ottoman capital increased first slowly and then so rapidly that after the reign of Mahmud II (1808-39) and by the end of the 19th century at least 77 printing houses publishing in Ottoman Turkish were in operation.”⁸⁷ The State’s policy to “modernize/westernize” and “to educate” people caused the widespread production of teaching materials such as ABCs in (*elifbā*) and children’s books in parallel with the spread of schools and modernization of the education system.⁸⁸ Apart from such textbooks “published” as a part of state initiative for their utility-value, there were also books introduced by non-state actors with an ideological and commercial awareness.

On the other hand, the transformative power of the press in the 19th century should not be overestimated considering the juxtaposition of traditional and new forms and texts, readership, and publication. This is the period – at least, until the end of the century– that there is still the dominance of manuscript production, which questions the assumption that only print can produce enough texts for mass circulation and literacy as the religious books (Quran in the first place) or literary works. Besides, the printed materials display traditional aspects both in terms of their genres and physical properties. Apart from textbooks and newspapers, there was a serious printing movement of the so-called chapbooks of popular stories but also on the legal and religious issues as parts of the “Ottoman penny press.” Such books still displayed the features of a manuscript in their appearances through the preservation of heading ornamentation (*serlevhā*) and colophons, preference of *nesih* style, or the lack of inner covers and proper titles.⁸⁹ This is comprehensible considering “early Ottoman printers were presumably nothing but unwelcome

⁸⁶ For a history and well-conducted debate on the emergence of the first “Muslim” printing house supported by the State, see: Orlin Sabev, *Waiting for Müteferrika*. By the term “emergence,” I intend the emergence of Muslim printing by the support of the State which is “Müteferrika Press.” Otherwise, the uses of printing by non-muslims in Istanbul were already documented in Johann Strauss, “Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire.”

⁸⁷ Orlin Sabev, “Rich Men, Poor Men: Ottoman Printers and Booksellers Making Fortune or Seeking Survival (Eighteenth-Nineteenth Centuries,” *Oriens* 37 (2009): 177-190, 180.

⁸⁸ A comprehensive study on these materials and on the state politics of increasing literacy, see: Benjamin C. Fortna, *Learning to Read*.

⁸⁹ For a discussion on Ottoman incunabula period and visual samples, see: Hatice Aynur and Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, “Yazmadan Basmaya Geçiş: Osmanlı Basma Kitap Geleneğinin Doğuşu 1729-1848,” *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 22 (2003): 219-255.

new players in the playground of the book business.”⁹⁰ In recent scholarship, based on the printed materials in the 19th century, it is even under discussion that this new technology was utilized for the dissemination of the Ottoman traditional culture, which challenges the narratives of 19th-century Ottoman modernization and secularization.⁹¹ All these observations and discussions acknowledge that the grey areas and hybrid forms in the transition from manuscript to print culture should be taken seriously.⁹² As a contribution to this argument, this study discusses the corpus of heroic stories that widely circulated in the city in the late manuscript age, with special reference to their physical properties as well as the special modes of ownership, readership, and reading modes developed around them.

Frame and Chapterization

This study, by speaking from the source itself, which is the notes on the manuscripts of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories, stands at the intersection of several disciplines and academic fields. This was an inevitable consequence of searching for answers to the famous 4W and 1H on the corpus, namely the questions of “what, who, when, why, and how” to discern the codes, members, and physical locations of a manuscript community.

The idea of a community (urban and specifically Istanbulite) around manuscripts (heroic in content) was developed from the concept of “scribal communities” that was firstly coined by Harold Love in 1993.⁹³ The term implies the social bonds and personal allegiances that are constructed through the exchange of manuscripts. Despite the cultural and social differences distinct in Early Modern English society and their reading (and publication) habits that Love talked about, this study argues that the social bonds constructed through heroic stories in the late manuscript age were the main motivation behind the appreciation of these stories. These

⁹⁰ Orlin Sabev, “Rich Men, Poor Men,” 179.

⁹¹ It is Ayşe Tek Başaran’s finding on her meticulous study on the period between 1831-1863, see: Ayşe Tek Başaran, “The Ottoman Printing Enterprise.”

⁹² Manuscript cultures were alive in the 19th century not just in the Ottoman realm but also other geographies as recently discussed for Iceland, see: Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon and David Olafsson, *Minor Knowledge and Microhistory: Manuscript Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, London: Routledge, 2017).

⁹³ Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

manuscripts gathered the people in a real site to enjoy the stories while sustaining personal relations and a long-standing tradition of story-telling. This function of texts was not original to that particular time and audience; on the contrary, it has existed as early as the invention of writing. The popular and elite circles of any Ottoman period enjoyed their gatherings accompanied by written texts.

Crossing the locational and social barriers has always been possible among elite and popular circles. However, there is no evidence –at least that we have of –for such a widespread involvement of people in a reading practice that persisted almost for 150 years around texts as much as the manuscripts analyzed in this study.

There are signs for the personal acquaintances between the readers when, for example, a reader suggests the book to a friend on its cover page or when a note specifically indicates the names of the ‘famous’ audience.⁹⁴ Some minor examples even show the pages were used for direct communication as in a note quoted from Tülün Değirmenci that reads:

My dearest, my sultan, I would appreciate it if you send down the book that you have recently read. If you ask which book, it is one of the hagiographies written in *ta'lik* script. Please send it down my dear sir, the end.⁹⁵

However, what is meant here by a community is not necessarily composed of people who had direct personal relations, but who also gathered anonymously on the pages of a manuscript and shared a sense of belonging with the other present or potential readers. This was coined as “ephemeral togetherness” by Roger Chartier who described it as, “a feeling of being together that remains anonymous while investigating reading aloud in Early Modern Europe.”⁹⁶ The writers of the notes on the manuscripts certainly had a sense of belonging even when a personal

⁹⁴ Such as “Ya’kub Ağa, this is highly benevolent, you read it too [Ya’kub Ağa, bu hayratdır, sen de oku].” *Hikāye-i Fîrûzşāh*, MK 1285/1, 1a.

⁹⁵ “Benim ‘inâyetmendim efendim sultânım hazretleri, geçen gice okuduğumuz kitâbı aşığa göndersez kerem ü ‘inâyet idesiz. Eđer su‘al olunursa ise kangı kitâb deyü içinde ta‘lik yazı ile menâkıblar var idi. Kerem ü ‘inâyet idüb aşığa gönderesiz efendim. [Tem]me..]” *Kıssa-i Ebû ‘Alî Sînâ ve Ebû ‘l-Hâris*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, T690, 1a. Cited from Değirmenci, “Bir Kitabı Kaç Kişi Okur? Osmanlı’da Okurlar ve Okuma Biçimleri Üzerine Bazı Gözlemler,” *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar* 13 (Fall 2011): 7-43, 41. My translation.

⁹⁶ Roger Chartier, “Leisure and Sociability: Reading Aloud in Early Modern Europe” in *Urban Life in the Renaissance*, eds. Susan Zimmerman and Ronald F. E. Weissman (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Press, 1989), 111.

acquaintance was not possible. For example, they appealed to others as friends and brothers (*yārān, ahhāb, ehībān, birāderler*) which was interpreted by Tülün Değirmenci as the signs of social bonds between the readers of these books.⁹⁷ The psychologists who wrote on “the sense of belonging” took attention to another dimension of a community other than the territorial, which is relational.⁹⁸ The manuscripts of heroic stories certainly provided this relational dimension in the formation and continuation of a community composed of readers (and listeners), scribes, and owners of the books. By keeping aside the advantages of manuscript form in the production and circulation, I think, this relational dimension is one of the main reasons for the popularity of these stories even in the second half of the 19th century as a print-dominant period. The sense of belonging to this manuscript community was very much constituted by holding, reading, owning, lending these objects. They are examples of how handwritten works survived well beyond the introduction of printing during the late manuscript age; the materiality was at least as important as the texts themselves.

Within this framework, this study has six thematic chapters that touch upon this particular manuscript community from different angles. After the Introduction, Chapter 2 investigates the main corpus of this study in terms of the content and paratext of the manuscripts of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories. It articulates the terminology of ‘the stories and manuscripts in motion’ to refer to the persistence and prevalence of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories across time and space alongside the high level of circulation of manuscripts among the manuscript community and in Istanbul. Chapter 2 further explores the paratextual elements of the manuscripts as a result of this high level of circulation, such as the worn-out and eclectic physical appearance. Through the scantiness of scribal (*ferağ* or *ketebe*) and ownership (*temellük*) notes as compared to the abundance of manuscript notes alongside the high level of intervention of the readers on the text,

⁹⁷ Tülün Değirmenci, “Bir Kitabı Kaç Kişi Okur.”

⁹⁸ Gusfield identified two dimensions of community: territorial and relational. The relational dimension of community has to do with the nature and quality of relationships in that community, and some communities may even have no discernible territorial demarcation, as in the case of a community of scholars working in a particular specialty, who have some kind of contact and quality of relationship, but may live and work in disparate locations, perhaps even throughout the world. Other communities may seem to be defined primarily according to territory, as in the case of neighbourhoods, but even in such cases, proximity or shared territory cannot by itself constitute a community; the relational dimension is also essential. J. R. Gusfield, *The Community: A Critical Response* (New York, Harper Colophon, 1975). For the definitions and theoretical background of “the sense of community,” see: David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, “Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory,” *Journal of Community Psychology* 14 (January 1996): 6-23.

it argues that these manuscripts were perceived as ‘common goods’ that belonged to the whole manuscript community.

Chapter 3 attempts to contextualize the heroic stories within a long-standing tradition of themes and storytelling. Drawing inspiration from the concepts of “collective memory” firstly coined by Maurice Halbwachs in the 1950s and “sites of memory” by Pierre Nora in the 1980s, I suggested the appreciation of heroic stories may have stemmed from the well-established heroic figures (protagonists and antagonists) and discourses of heroism (such as *fütüvve*) in the Middle and Near Eastern cultural zones. Such an inquiry was conducted to decipher the meanings behind the written – and visual - notes on the manuscript. I argue, for example, the Alid affection and symbolization such as the drawings of *zülfikār* or the phrase *lā fatā illā ‘Alī, lā seyfā illā Zülfikār* was not unique to people of Bektashi tendency, but rather were products of collective memory that were shaped since the 9th century. This chapter also contextualizes the social and moral values through which readers reacted to the stories; for example, when they praised or cursed the souls of characters. Since collective memory grounds itself through not only verbal, but also visual symbols and visualization aides, the doodles of heroic characters and weapons are also studied in this chapter.

Chapter 4, which is the longest chapter of this study, focuses on the social profiles in the manuscript community, mainly the reciters and hosts of reading venues as the coffeehouse owners/operators coming in the first place. This chapter interrogates the professions, titles, and other social positions of individuals within the urban social and historical context as reflected in the collective reading notes. From imperial servants and eunuchs to the porters and boatmen, from local officials to the pupils of the new education system, it displays the social diversity in terms of the socio-economic backgrounds of the community members.

The topography of the collective reading of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories in the late manuscript age is the focus of Chapter 5. This chapter maps the prominent districts and neighborhoods as they appear in collective reading notes to locate the prominent areas of reading and circulation. Moreover, reading venues variety greatly and included coffeehouses, houses and mansions, bachelor and *hān* rooms, offices, shops, schools, and even prisons. These are put on the table to decipher the spatial dimension of the manuscript community. The chapter ends with several examples of the manuscripts that traveled in the wide radiant of the city and across

greater Istanbul as reflections of the changing spatial perception of urbanites after the 18th century.

Chapter 6 explores the modes of reading by focusing on reading as performance. The common way of reading these stories was through reading aloud in front of an audience in a public space. Therefore, this chapter is mainly based on the group reading notes to discern different aspects of collective reading such as performers/ reciters, listeners/audience, amount, and patterns of reading alongside timing and duration of performances. In this manner, this chapter is a contribution to the history of early modern reading in general and Ottoman popular reading in particular which is still *a terra incognita*.

In Chapter 7, the focus will be on the notes taken in the private space of the readers to understand aspects of the relation between the parties of reading, which appear in the forms of sharing, quarreling, or direct communication with others. As one of the dominant forms of sharing, it discusses the content and functions of the verses on the manuscripts ranging from the poems of well-known poets to the formulaic couplets or original pieces composed by the readers themselves. The issues of the originality or anonymity of both professional and amateur parties in the literary production are also discussed. After the verses, the content and manners of speaking in the notes in prose format are discussed, such as when a reader advises or recommends to read in some particular manner or to read a particular part from the story. The praised part of the plot or the appreciated aspects of a story character gives clues to the mindset of the individuals. On the other hand, the notes addressing others were not always peaceful; sometimes they conveyed anger, used harsh language, and led to defamation.

By both drawing from and contributing to various academic branches, such as “the history and culture of books and reading,” “the Middle and Near Eastern popular epic cultures,” “authorship and readership in manuscript cultures,” “marginalia and manuscript notes,” “Ottoman/ Turkish ‘popular’ literature,” and “Ottoman visual culture,” this study thus explores the social, spatial, and literary aspects of a manuscript community through the manuscripts of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories that were produced, circulated, and highly appreciated in the late Ottoman manuscript age.

CHAPTER 2

THE CORPUS: STORIES AND MANUSCRIPTS IN MOTION

[...] One of them was titled ‘Hâzâ Kitâb-ı Nâm-ı Hamza-i Amm-i Muhammed.’ It was not signed. Tiredness was observed from its worn and straw-colored pages. Looking at the seal of an owner, it was aged at least a hundred and twenty years. It was all clear that it was circulated from hand to hand. By smelling the human scent that permeated the pages, it was possible to say the readers could not put it away easily. I could not put it away, too. Among the readers, some people should have recounted what they have listened to. I wanted to recount, too.⁹⁹

This passage is quoted from Hasan Aycın’s introduction to his novel *Sâhipkırân* (2007), based on a manuscript of Hamza that was inherited from his uncle. The impulse of Aycın, as a “modern” storyteller, to recount the story he has heard or read by adapting it in his own way was shared by the manuscript community in Istanbul in the last manuscript age. They were constantly rewriting and retelling these heroic stories while circulating them amongst themselves, from one gathering (*meclis*) to another. For this reason, I defined these accounts that constitute the main corpus of the manuscript community, and the present study as “stories and manuscripts in motion.”¹⁰⁰

As exemplified by some studies in the Introduction, the field of Ottoman Book History and Culture has relied mostly upon the studies on collections and libraries.¹⁰¹ This sort of development is expected, since, thanks to the preservation requirements of libraries, historians

⁹⁹ Hasan Aycın, *Sâhibkırân/ Nâm-ı Diğer Hamzanâme* (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2018), 9-10. My translation.

¹⁰⁰ Aslıhan Gürbüz in her recent article discusses an Ottoman practice of textual criticism through the editorial practices of İsmail Hakkı Bursevi. She dubs the margins of texts on which Bursevi’s editorial practices are visible as “the portable majlis.” Despite her implication of majlis refers to a master-pupil learning environment, the corpus defined in this study are also a majlis of literature and entertainment whose participants are very much visible on the margins of these “portable” books. See: Aslıhan Gürbüz, “A Portable Majlis: On Publishing Reliable Editions in Ottoman Manuscript Culture” in *Scribal Habits in Near Eastern Manuscript Traditions*, eds. George Kiraz and Sabine Schmidtke (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2020): 69-82.

¹⁰¹ The studies on libraries has launched and developed by the ground-breaking studies of İsmail Erünsal. See: *Türk Kütüphaneleri Tarihi; Osmanlılarda Kütüphaneler ve Kütüphanecilik: Tarihi Gelişimi ve Organizasyonu* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2015). The studies on book collections came into vogue recently, see: *Osmanlı Kitap Kültürü: Carullah Efendi Kütüphanesi ve Derkenar Notları*, ed. Berat Açıllı (Ankara: İlem Kitaplığı, 2015); Tülay Artan, “On Sekizinci Yüzyıl Başında.”

have ready access to lavishly illustrated manuscripts, catalogs, inheritance records, and endowment records. However, the studies on the collections and libraries cannot tell the full story. There were these “books in motion,” which traveled the city to be read in public and circulated from hand to hand by borrowing or renting that rarely enjoyed long-standing comfort of shelves. They escaped the attention of codicological studies, library studies, and studies of art history because such books were produced not primarily for their economic and prestigious values and they were not preserved well as apparent from their paratext such as amateur ornamentations, worn bindings, scattered pages, scribbled lines, *et cetera*. This chapter, as a contribution to “manuscript studies” and “Ottoman book culture,” discusses such books, particularly manuscripts of heroic stories in Istanbul in the late manuscript age. Before diving into the social and cultural environment of the books, this chapter pays special attention to the “documentary value” of their paratexts, such as ownership records (*temelliik*), colophons (*ketebe*) seals (*mühür*), doodles, and mainly manuscript notes.¹⁰²

Stories of Centuries-Old: Hamza and Ebū Müslim

The manuscripts investigated in this study belong to the heroic genres of *Hamzanāme* and *Ebūmüslimnāme*. Neither the content of these stories occurred with the rise of Islam, nor they did disappear in the 21st century, despite the gradual loss of their impacts in the collective memory. When the first written versions were produced, they were nourished from pre-Islamic stories and heroic figures, whereas, they are still told today as novels or shot as films. They are used as a tool of legitimation in the election campaigns of political parties and as codenames of the perpetrators in terrorist actions.¹⁰³ These stories became popular and were embraced by many cultures within the Middle and Near Eastern cultural zone(s) and adapted to many social, cultural, and political settings and discourses. Therefore, before analyzing manuscripts, one

¹⁰² It is Görke and Hirschler’s study who proposed the documentary value of manuscript notes on Islamic manuscripts, see: *Manuscript Notes as Documentary Sources*, eds. Andreas Görke and Konrad Hirschler.

¹⁰³ Some novels of Ebū Müslim stories: Corci Zeydan, *Ebu Müslim Horasani’nin İntikamı* (İstanbul: Milenyum Yayınları, 2010); Faik Bulut, *Ebu Müslim Horasani: Bir İhtilalcinin Hikayesi* (İstanbul: Berfin, 2014). For a Turkish film, see: Ebu Müslim Horasani directed by Yılmaz Atadeniz in 1969. The murderer of 39 people in a Nightclub in Istanbul had the codename Ebū Müslim Horasānī: <https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/201701041026620400-reina-ebu-muslim-horasani/>.

should discuss the content and media in the transmission of these “stories in motion” to discern the reasons behind that accomplishment, their popularity and validity over centuries in a wide geography.

The stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim are a part of a long-standing literary tradition that is constructed on the deeds of Islamized heroic figures written in many languages such as Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Malay, and Javanese across all forms of transmission—oral, written (both manuscript and print) and visual (illustrations and films). There is substantial secondary literature on these heroic genres in prose or poetic forms, *sīrat* in Arabic and *dāstān* in Persian which tell the stories of pre-Islamic, early Islamic, or medieval heroes. The scholarship of the 1990s targeted to introduce these stories to the English-speaking audience by critical editions and translations of the stories such as M.C. Lyons’ three volumes *the Arabian Epic* published in 1995 or Peter Heath’s critical edition on *Sirat ‘Antar* published in 1996.¹⁰⁴ Critical editions were also published on the Persian and Urdu stories and versions such as William L. Hanaway’s study on *Firuz Shah Nama* or Frances W. Pritchett’s edition on *the Dastan of Amir Hamzah*.¹⁰⁵ By the 21st century, in addition to editions and translation scholarship, the studies on Middle Eastern popular heroic genres also focused on the social context around these texts through discussions on the production and performance of texts, to name a few: the studies of Faustina Doufikar-Aerts on the stories of Alexander the Great, Kenneth Grant on *Sirat Firuzshah*, and Thomas Herzog, especially with reference to the *sirat* Baybars, on the aspects of story-telling and orality.¹⁰⁶ Recent scholars and projects have gradually moved beyond the goal of compiling a complete

¹⁰⁴ M. C. Lyons, *The Arabian Epic: Heroic and Oral Story-Telling*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Peter Heath, *The Thirsty Word: Sīrat ‘Antar and the Arabic Popular Epic* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1996).

¹⁰⁵ William L. Hanaway, *Love and War: Adventures from the Firuz Shah Nama of Sheikh Bighami* (New York: Scholars’ Facsimiles and Reprints, 1974); Frances W. Pritchett, *The Romance Tradition in Urdu: Adventures from the Dastan of Amir Hamzah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

¹⁰⁶ See: Faustina Doufikar-Aerts, “Sīrat al-Iskandar: An Arabic Popular Romance of Alexander,” *Oriente Moderno* 22, no. 2 (2003): 505-520; in the same journal volume: Kenneth Grant, “Sīrat Firūzshāh and the Middle Eastern Epic Tradition”: 521-528; Thomas Herzog, “Orality and the Tradition of Arabic Epic Storytelling” in *Medieval Oral Literature*, ed. Karl Reichl (Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter, 2012): 629-653. Also see the chapters on Popular Prose in *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983-2006).

critical edition of these stories to a newfound appreciation for the different versions found in different cultures.¹⁰⁷

The complex and often blurred relationship between heroic texts and orality through the ‘improvisational performance of texts’ features prominently in secondary literature, such as in the articles of *Cambridge History on Arabic Literature* on popular Arabic Prose in the Post-Classical Period. Dwight Reynolds discusses that textual production was not merely limited to copying texts (written-to-written transmission); a remarkable culture of dictating texts (written-oral-written transmission) in mosques and madrasas also contributed to textual circulation.¹⁰⁸ This performative aspect has been realized by professional storytellers who read publicly from written texts while adding varying degrees of improvised commentaries. For example, “reciters of *Sîrat ‘Antar* read entirely from written texts; performers of *Sîrat Baybars* performed without books but in a normal speaking voice; while poets of *Sîrat Banî Hilâl* not only used no books but in addition performed the epic in sung poetry to the accompaniment of a musical instrument, usually the Egyptian spike-fiddle, the *rabâb*.”¹⁰⁹ Claudia Ott’s article on the oral performance, reading environment, and audience of the Arabian epic remarkably considers the performative aspects of storytelling, which has always featured prominently in Istanbul.¹¹⁰ Antoine Galland observes in 17th century Iran that the performers of *Şehnâme* used a scroll (*tūmār*) containing the summary of the tale as the basis of their oral, semi-improvised performances. He also observes in 17th century Istanbul that there was a bookstall in Istanbul which specialized in renting books of the stories to the professional storytellers of the city.¹¹¹

In Anatolia (then Balkans), a strong tradition of heroic storytelling has developed since the dominance of the Seljuk dynasty and Anatolian principalities (*beylik*) around the traditional

¹⁰⁷ For an example project directed by Beatrice Gründler on Kelile and Dimne stories, see: <https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/en/e/kalila-wa-dimna/index.html>.

¹⁰⁸ Dwight Reynolds “Popular Prose in the Post Classical Period,” *The Cambridge History Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*, eds. R. Allen and D. Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). In this context also see: Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word*.

¹⁰⁹ Reynolds, “Popular Prose,” 269.

¹¹⁰ Claudia Ott, “From the Coffeehouse into the Manuscript: The Storyteller and His Audience in the Manuscripts of Arabian Epic,” *Oriente Moderno* 22, no. 2 (2003); 443-451.

¹¹¹ Antoine Galland, *Journal d'Antoine Galland*, 268.

genres such as Hamza and Ebū Müslim but also a newly emerged genre known as *gāzī* narratives (frontier epics). These genres included *Saltuknāme*, *Battālnāme*, *Dānişmendnāme*, and *Süleymānnāme* alongside stories such as Dede Korkut which were written down after the 13th century.¹¹² The first ‘authors’ of these stories are also claimed to be storytellers; one example is Hamzavī, who wrote the first known version of Hamza stories in the 15th century. The role of *rāvīs*, *meddāhs*, and *kıssahāns* in the transmission of these genres and the evolution of these performers were discussed by pioneering names within the field of “folk literature,” such as Fuad Köprülü and Özdemir Nutku.¹¹³ The advanced culture of *meclis* for entertainment or education both in elite circles and among ‘ordinary people,’ alongside the textual and paratextual evidence on the books of these genres points at the intertwined relationship between orality and literacy, which actually did not disappear until the 20th century.¹¹⁴ The 17th-century travelers, Evliyā Çelebi and Antoine Galland recounted the performance of storytellers that were accompanied by books.¹¹⁵ In more recent scholarship, the studies of İlhan Başgöz who studied storytelling as performance art based on ethnographic research and David Selim Sayers’s studies on *Tıflī* and *Mekr-i Zenān* (Wiles of Women) stories could be counted as the studies pointing at the popular prose and its performance.¹¹⁶ Arzu Öztürkmen’s studies on late medieval Turkish texts –such as hagiographies, chronicles, and epic tales– discuss the survival of written texts from the Ottoman past as pieces of “verbal art as performance” in their historical ethnographies.¹¹⁷

¹¹² On the origins and development of these genres, see: Georgios Dedes, “The Battalnama, An Ottoman Turkish Frontier Epic Wondertale, Introduction, Turkish Transcription, English Translation, and Commentary,” Unpublished PhD diss., Harvard University, 1995. For their social and military role in the foundation period, see: Cemal Kafadar, “Gaza and Gazis in the Frontier Narratives of Medieval Anatolia” in *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (California: University of California Press, 1996; Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, *Warriors, Martyrs, and Dervishes: Moving Frontiers, Shifting Identities in the Land of Rome (13th-15th Centuries)* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

¹¹³ See: Fuad Köprülü, *Edebiyat Araştırmaları* (Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1986); Özdemir Nutku, *Meddahlık ve Meddah Hikayeleri* (İstanbul: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı, 1997).

¹¹⁴ Zehra Öztürk, “Eğitim Tarihimizde Okuma Toplantılarının Yeri ve Okunan Kitaplar, *Değerler Eğitim Dergisi* 1, no. (4) (2003): 131-155, 143-144.

¹¹⁵ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâme*, vol 1, ed. Orhan Şaik Gökyay (İstanbul: YKY, 1995), 225; Antoine Galland, *Journal d’Antoine Galland*, 242.

¹¹⁶ İlhan Başgöz, *Hikâye: Turkish Folk Romance as Performance Art* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); David Selim Sayers, *Tıflī Hikâyeleri*; idem, *The Wiles of Women as a Literary Genre: A Study of Ottoman and Azeri Texts* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019).

¹¹⁷ Arzu Öztürkmen, “Orality and Performance.” For her exclusive discussion on the folkloric, historical-ethnographical possibilities of written texts, also see: “Introduction: Performance in the Ottoman World: Thoughts on

This study extensively explores the versions of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories which were written and circulated in Istanbul in the 18th and 19th centuries. Despite variations in emphasis and length between some versions, the main plot, figures, their symbolic weapons, and the physical and moral characteristics of heroes are mainly preserved in these versions.¹¹⁸ Starting with the stories of Hamza, the events are shaped around the protagonist as a character synthesized from two figures: first, the Prophet's paternal uncle Hamza b. Muttalīb, who had been called Lion of God (*esedullāh*) and second, a Persian heroic figure Hamza b. Abdullāh, who was famous for his boldness in the Kharidji movement.¹¹⁹ He has a horse named 'Aşkar which will later be transmitted to the Anatolian heroes Battal and Saltuk according to *Battalnāme* and *Saltuknāme*. This magical horse was bestowed by Hıdır (the persona of immortality and succor) and became a lifelong, loyal friend of Hamza. Hamza had other loyal and strong companions titled, 'ayyār, referring to 'Ömer Ayyār in the first place. *Ayyarship* (brotherhood) and characters in Persian names prove Meredith-Owens' claim that "there is every indication that the stories of Hamza had Persian origins."¹²⁰ There is no reference to these stories in Arabic sources before the 13th century. Additionally, Van Ronkel draws a parallel between events in the stories of Hamza and the adventures of Rustam in *Şehnāme*.¹²¹

There are motifs in the 18th and 19th century Turkish versions that seem to share the plot of traditional Arabic and Persian versions, such as the motifs of love and union, battles with the infidels (non-Muslims), marrying or abduction of women, hunting, friendship, loyalty, disguise, and weaponry specific to characters. Some elements of the plot seem to be derived from nomadic lifestyles, such as the importance of horses (*Aşkar-ı Dīvzād*) and warrior women. The women would often organize parties to select their husbands. In these gatherings called *nevrûz*, candidates vie and battle to marry the man who bests her in battle. Falling in love and

Folklore and History" in *Celebration, Entertainment, and Theatre in the Ottoman World*, eds. Suraiya Faroqhi and Arzu Öztürkmen (London, New York and Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2014).

¹¹⁸ For a detailed discussion on these symbols and characteristics of heroes, see: Chapter 3.

¹¹⁹ Meredith-Owens, G.M., "Hamza b. 'Abd al-Muttalib", in *EP*, vol 3, eds. P. Bearman, *et al.* Consulted online on 20 September 2021 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_2691.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Van Ronkel, *De Roman van Amir Hamza* (Leiden: Brill, 1895).

fulfilling the requirements of the union –such as in the examples of Hamza and Mihri Nigār or Melik Kāsım and Tūc Bānū– is one of the pillars in the stories. However, the consistent frame story is the fight against infidels and their conversion to Islam. Before fighting, the infidels are always offered to convert Islam. Upon refusal, the hero offers a one-to-one fight with the leader of the infidels, who are also the fathers of their beloveds, such as Nūşirevān or Erjenk Hān. If the enemy refuses this request, the hero attacks, along with his companions and soldiers, and always emerges victorious, securing their conversions to Islam. Elements from different literary genres are juxtaposed in the stories of Hamza, such as fairy tale motifs (the imaginary mountain Kaf or ogres, for example) or mythical stories, such as on the tale of Süleymān and Hızır. The heroic stories also tell love, but, the battle is in the foreground in Hamza stories. By always being written in prose, these stories differentiate from epics, which were usually told, sung, and written in poetic form. They are also distinct from the *gazavātnāme* genre that claims to tell the stories of real Sultans and commanders.¹²² Some studies of the history of Turkish literature emphasized the intermediary character of the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim. Additionally, these stories were usually neglected due to the difficulty in defining them within the existent categories. In the end, the existing academic literature on Hamza stories mainly composed of M.A. theses which transcribe specific volumes, and these are based on two earlier, pioneering studies: one by Lütfi Sezen, who authored a monograph dedicated to Hamza stories, and Fuad Köprülü, who mentioned these stories under his investigation of storytellers (*meddāh*).¹²³

The second genre of ‘stories in motion’ under study is the stories of Ebū Müslim, which also has a long-standing and widespread tradition that matches the Hamza stories. Ebū Müslim stories tell the heroic deeds of Ebū Müslim, who was born in the 8th-century city of Merv in the Khorasan region and who was known for his rebellion against the Umayyad Dynasty during the foundational era of the Abbasid Dynasty.¹²⁴ As will be discussed in Chapter 3, Alid sympathy

¹²² For an analysis of the motifs and intermediary character of Hamza stories between genres, see: Derya Kökyar, *Hamzanāme'nin Otuzuncu Cildi (İnceleme-Metin)*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi, 2009.

¹²³ Some examples for these theses: Bihter Karahan, “Hamzanāme: Metin-Dizin (14.Cilt)” Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Yıldız Teknik University, 2014; Halise Aycan Akan, “Hamza-Nāme (10.Cilt) İnceleme-Metin Sözlük,” Unpublished M.A. Thesis, İstanbul Arel University, 2019. Lütfi Sezen, *Halk Edebiyatı'nda Hamzanāmeler* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1991); Fuad Köprülü, *Edebiyat Tarihi Araştırmaları*, 361-412.

¹²⁴ For more information on the historical figure Ebu Müslim, see: Ğ. H. Yūsofī, “Abu Moslem Korasani,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I/4, 341-344. Consulted online on 30 January 2020 <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abu-moslem-abd-al-rahman-b>.

and Shi'ite doctrines are more visible in Persian versions whereas they were omitted or transformed in Turkish culture in which the stories of Ebū Müslim gained huge popularity.¹²⁵ In the 18th and 19th century Turkish versions, the protagonist's name appears as Ebū Müslim Teberdār (hatchet-porter) instead of Ebū Müslim of Khorasan based on the weapon associated with Ebū Müslim.¹²⁶ The main plot is on the chivalric insurrections of Ebū Müslim and his followers as sympathizers with Ali and Muaviye followers such as Nasr-ı Sayyār, Mervān-ı Hummmār (Blood-drinker Mervān), Eşek (Donkey) Tağlu, Ebū Ca'fer, Abdülcabbār or Sekpāy. The imaginary Kaf Mountain, dragons, and ogres are involved as magical elements in the stories as well as the stories of Hamza. As distinct from Hamza, Ebū Müslim, both as the historical figure and as the protagonist of Ebū Müslim stories, does not just fight with the infidels/ non-Muslims but also rebels against the tyranny of Muslims (in Umayyad history). In some cases, he favors the help of Jews and Christians over the infidel Muāviye and Yezīd followers.

The story, in its Ottoman rendition, usually goes as such: When Ebū Müslim was a child, he received a mission, directly from the Prophet, to take revenge on the followers of Mervān in his dream. In this dream, he also sees the Angel Gabriel holding his famous hatchet, which is forged by the smith Hurdek. On the other side, the current governor of the city of Merv, Nasr-ı Sayyār, receives a sign from his astrologers that he will be defeated by a sixteen or seventeen years old young man who will take Khorasan, kill Nasr-ı Sayyār and all of the followers of Mervān. Meanwhile, *āhīs* (the craftsmen who adhered to *fütüvve* codes) in Merv take an oath of loyalty to Ebū Müslim. Nasr-ı Sayyār and his men find and surround Ebū Müslim and his fellows. They escape to the minaret of a mosque and Ebū Müslim declares to the city folks that he will save the city from Mervān and his followers for saving the religion of Prophet Muhammad. That night, Ebū Müslim is harbored in the house of Jew Mahyār, that Jew who dreams of the Prophet and receives his command to keep Ebū Müslim in secret. But, somehow, the men of Nasr catch Ebū Müslim, and Nasr orders him to be shackled. He is saved by his friends from the prison of Nasr and travels to Iraq for a while. In Merv, they gather thousands of people and rebel against the governor, and fight with the army led by Sehlān. They take the support of Muhammed

¹²⁵ Nurettin Albayrak, "Ebū Müslim Destanı," *DİA* 10 (1994): 195-196.

¹²⁶ The visual and literary imagination of protagonists' weaponry alongside other symbols attributed to the heroes are discussed in Chapter 3.

Harzemšāh and his commander in chief Mızrāb-ı Cihangīr. When they encounter the army of Nasr, Ahmed-i Zencī who was a hashish-eating dervish appears and helps them by using his stick as a rifle. That stick is made of Ali's mace; after the death of the Prophet, Ali did not use his *zūlfikār* sword, but rather that mace. Ebū Müslim and Mızrāb, along with their soldiers, attack the city of Merv and plunder the treasure of Nasr, who escapes from the city. Meanwhile, Ahmed-i Zencī campaigns towards Isfahan under the administration of Taḡlu and succeeds to conquer Isfahan. Ebū Müslim, Mızrāb, and Ahmed-i Zencī campaign against Mervān in Damascus and rescue two captives who were the sons of Abbas and heirs to Caliphate. Sometime later, the caliph Ebū Ca'fer assigns the former vizier of Mervān as his grand vizier who incites him to kill Ebū Müslim. One day, when Ebū Ca'fer calls Ebū Müslim for a feast, a man calls Abdūlcabbār is hidden behind the bushes and he assassinates Ebū Müslim. Ahmed-i Zencī and other fellows take revenge on Ebū Müslim by murdering Ebū Ca'fer and making Ebū Mansūr the caliph.¹²⁷

Manuscripts and their Paratext

It was not just the heroic stories that were in motion but also their books, specifically 18th and 19th century “popular” versions in manuscript form.¹²⁸ As discussed in Chapter 3, the cultural practices scrutinized in the present study—namely, the reading of heroic stories and the communal environment and memory this reading instilled—is a striking example of this dynamic in popular culture. On the other hand, it does not mean all the versions of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories appealed to ‘popular’ taste. There are the versions written for the patrons, which were neatly written and lavishly illustrated but not intended for wide circulation.

¹²⁷ For a detailed analysis on the story and flow of events, see: Irène Mélikoff, *Abū Müslim: The Porte-Hache du Khorasan Dans la Tradition Épique Turco-Irانيenne* (Paris: Librairie D'Amérique et D'Orient, 1962).

¹²⁸ While using the term “popular,” in this study, the intention is not to draw a binary opposition between what was produced and read by the elite and ordinary people. I inherit the conceptualization of Peter Burke who analyzed this phenomenon in early modern Europe, suggests that, while there were separate spaces for the educated elite, popular culture was informed by people from a wide range of status, social position, reputation, and wealth. Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1978). Also see: Tim Harris, “Problematising Popular Culture” in *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850* (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1995): 1-27.

The “tired and human scented” versions of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories in Aycın’s words, were chosen for that study exactly for their “popular” character. Due to the ‘overuse’ and ‘over circulation’ of these manuscripts, their paratext has become reflections on the identities of individuals, sites of collective memory, literary tastes, and reactions of Ottoman readers throughout the broader urban social history of Ottoman Istanbul. In that context, lavishly illustrated or neatly written versions of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories without the marks of social reading are omitted, whereas several manuscripts belonging to other heroic genres –such as the stories of Kerb Gazi or Mısır Valisi Koca Ca‘fer Paşa– were included for their paratextual values. The popularity of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories in Ottoman society led to the high production and circulation of their manuscripts.

In this study, the volumes of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories were selected largely from preserved collections in Istanbul University Rare Works Library, Ankara National Library, Yapı Kredi Sermet Çifter Research Library, and Fatih Millet Library. Research on these manuscripts is not an easy task starting from the entitlement in the catalogs of manuscript libraries. The manuscripts of Hamza stories are found under the title of *Hamzanāme*, whereas the manuscripts of Ebū Müslim stories were found under the titles of *Eba Müslim*, *Dāstān-ı Eba Müslim* or *Ebū Müslim Hikāyesi*. These titles do not reflect the simple and formulaic titles in the manuscripts, the hero’s name plus the volume number, such as “it is the 7th volume of Hamza the Lucid (*Hamza Bā-Safā’nın yedinci cildidir*)” or “it is the 8th volume of the venerable Eba Müslim (*Eba Müslim Hazretleri’nin sekizinci cildidir*).” Besides, some of these volume numbers do not match the numbers given in the catalogs and some volumes have distinct titles according to the story recounted in a particular volume. For example, the manuscript recorded as *Dāstān-ı Eba Müslim* with the number 8504/27 in Ankara National Library is titled the 32nd volume of *Zemcīnāme* because it recounts the deeds of another hero, Ahmed-i Zemcī in this particular volume that belongs to the series of Ebū Müslim stories.¹²⁹ For these reasons, one might suspect the existence of more Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories cataloged under other titles, which would be subject for future research on these stories. Looking at the titles used by readers in the margins, one might notice that these stories were called by many other names in contemporary daily language about the titles of protagonists and genres such as *teberdār* (porter of hatchet) for Ebū Müslim, *sāhib-*

¹²⁹ MK 8504/27.

kırān (the world emperor) for Hamza, or *kitāb-ı letāfet* (the book of charm), *kitāb-ı müstetāb* (the book of grandeur), and even as *tevārih* (book of events).

Another challenge is confirming the veracity of volume numbers. These stories were divided into volumes of various lengths, presumably to facilitate reading over a period of several nights. Similar to the TV series today, the story ends with a phrase like, “this volume has ended here,” sometimes by heralding the exciting events in the next volume. Since these stories were written throughout two centuries (e.g. Hamza stories in our corpus from 1708 earliest to 1900 latest), new series were composed concurrently by different hands or in distinct times resulted in many manuscripts titled with the same volume number.¹³⁰ The main challenge of the literature on these stories, especially Hamza stories is the total number of volumes belonging to the *Hamzanāme* cycle. The discussion on the volumes is caused by a section of 17th century traveler Evliyā Çelebi’s account on *Hamzanāmes* where he asserts the Anatolian storytellers increased the volumes of *Hamzanāmes* from 60 to 360.¹³¹ Although it is not certain whether he implies the whole volumes circulated in Anatolia or whether intends the lengthening of the plot in Turkish versions, the scholars embarked on proving the legitimacy of information given by Evliyā Çelebi. The pioneering work on the Turkish versions of *Hamzanāmes*, Lütfi Sezen’s monograph titled *Hamzanāme’s in Folk Literature* argues that a total number of 72 volumes, some of them are repeated so that the 69th volume should be the final of the series.¹³² In a recent article published in 2013, Muhammed Yelten lists 186 volumes in total and asserts the 72nd volume is the final based on a record on this volume.¹³³ The debate over the total volumes belonging to Hamza stories is complicated by the confusion of whether the intention is the total number of volumes in the whole cycle of Hamza or whether it is the total number of volumes that we have today. For example, until now, seven manuscripts titled as “the 1st volume,” or eight manuscripts titled as “the 4th volume” have been detected in libraries.¹³⁴ An inclusive study dedicated to the

¹³⁰ Dates of earliest and latest writing time of Hamza stories are based on Hamza manuscripts listed by Derya Kökyar: *Hamzanāme’nin Otuzuncu Cildi*, 8-15.

¹³¹ Evliya Çelebi, *Evliyā Çelebi Seyahatnāmesi*, vol 1, eds., Robert Dankoff, Seyit Ali Kahraman and Yücel Dağlı (İstanbul: YKY, 1999), 245.

¹³² Lütfi Sezen, *Halk Edebiyatı’nda Hamzanāmeler*.

¹³³ Muhammed Yelten, “Hamza-Nāme-‘nin Yeni Ciltleri.”

¹³⁴ Ibid.

writing process and textual content of these manuscripts would shed more light on how many distinct series we have and which volumes are lost in time.

In their outlook, these manuscripts have all the aspects of “cheap readings” as called by Meredith Quinn or “coffeehouse literature” defined by Boris Liebreuz as the latter remarked on the physical properties of epic tales in the collection of an 18th century Damascene book owner, Ahmad al-Rabbat as such:

With few exceptions this type of literature is characterized by books of a rather uniform outer appearance: They are of small size; they have the simplest cardboard or quarter-leather binding; although the script is often professional, clear, and readable, there can be no claim to calligraphic beauty; the texts are bound into many volumes of usually between 30 to 60 leaves, which leads to extremely inflated numbers of volumes for one single text that could – more economically arranged – fit into one or a few volumes.¹³⁵

In addition to these properties, with some minor uses of *rik‘a* script on the manuscripts dated the late 19th century, one might add the widespread use of *nesih* script as their counterparts written in Arabic *nesih* should have preferred most certainly for its feasibility to speed and clearance both in reading and copying. There are other signs which indicate an effort to ease reading and recitation, such as the colored sub-headings in red, blue, and rarely purple such as *bu tarafdān* (on the other side) and *rāvī eydür* (narrators tell) or its Persian counterpart *ez īn cānīb* for indicating a change or introduction in the flow of events. Apart from these features, the most visible property in the outlook of these manuscripts, are the readers’ notes and drawings (from doodles to professional sketches) on any space of the pages, namely flyleaves and margins.¹³⁶

Despite the variations, there is a remarkable standard in the binding of the texts (if there is one): a black leather cover on which the title and volume number are written surrounded by a tree or trefoil-shaped paper (see: Figure 1). Inside, the binding is supported and ornamented with marble (*ebrū*) or colored papers (see: Figure 2). This relatively standard material format rises the question of whether they could have bounded not at the time of writing but in later periods. The existence of two or three volumes bounded together supports this idea that suffers from the lack

¹³⁵ Boris Liebreuz, “The Library of Ahmad al-Rabbāt: Books and Their Audience in 12th to 13th/ 18th to 19th Century Syria” in *Marginal Perspectives on Early Modern Ottoman Culture: Missionaries, Travellers, Booksellers*, eds. Ralf Elger and Ute Pietruschka (Halle, Saale: Zentrum für Internationale Regionalstudien, 2013): 17-59, 26.

¹³⁶ For some samples of visuals, see: Chapter 3 and Appendix A.

of studies on the binding—or codicology in general terms—of manuscripts produced outside of the court patronage. To reach an ultimate interpretation about binding is not possible also because of the regulations in manuscript libraries. For example, the digital versions of manuscripts in the National Library do not include the poses of binding and there is no standardized and researcher-friendly policy to see the actual manuscripts, especially if they are abundant in numbers.

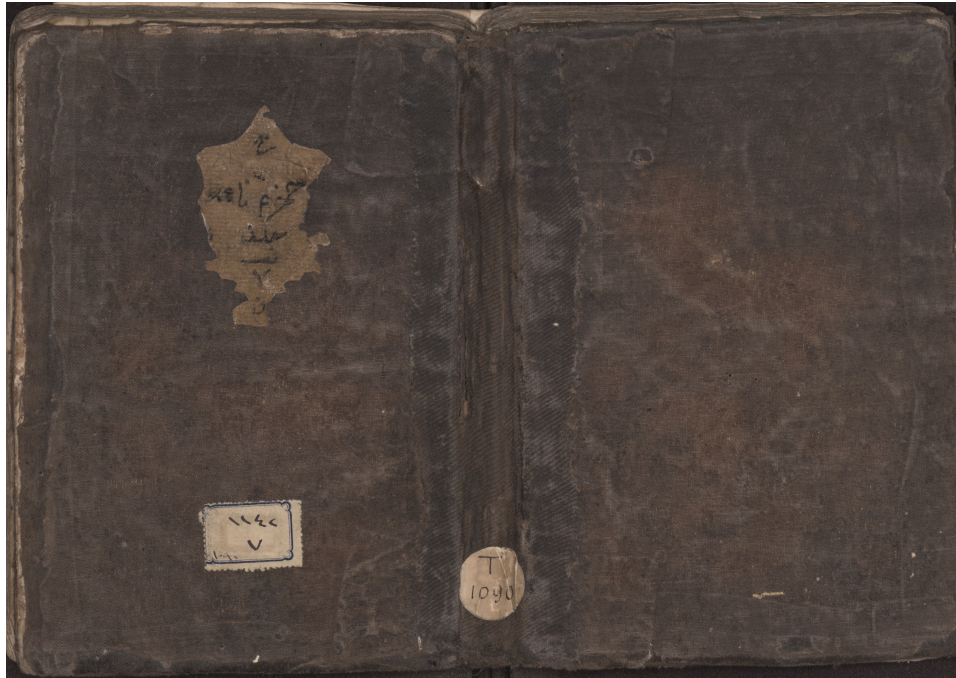


Figure 1 A typical cover, title, and volume number on black, leather binding. İÜNE 1090, cover.



Figure 2 Red paper on the inner cover. YKSC 899, cover page and 1a.

The eclectic outlook of these manuscripts is stunning and sometimes beyond the limits that frustrate some readers¹³⁷ The worn-out or deteriorated pages were rewritten by other hands. For example, on the 17th volume of Hamza, one can detect five different distinct types of paper

¹³⁷ For the reasons of readers' frustration, see: Chapter 7.

(striped, blank, in dark and light colors), four different handwritings, and two separate opening pages. (see: Figure 3).

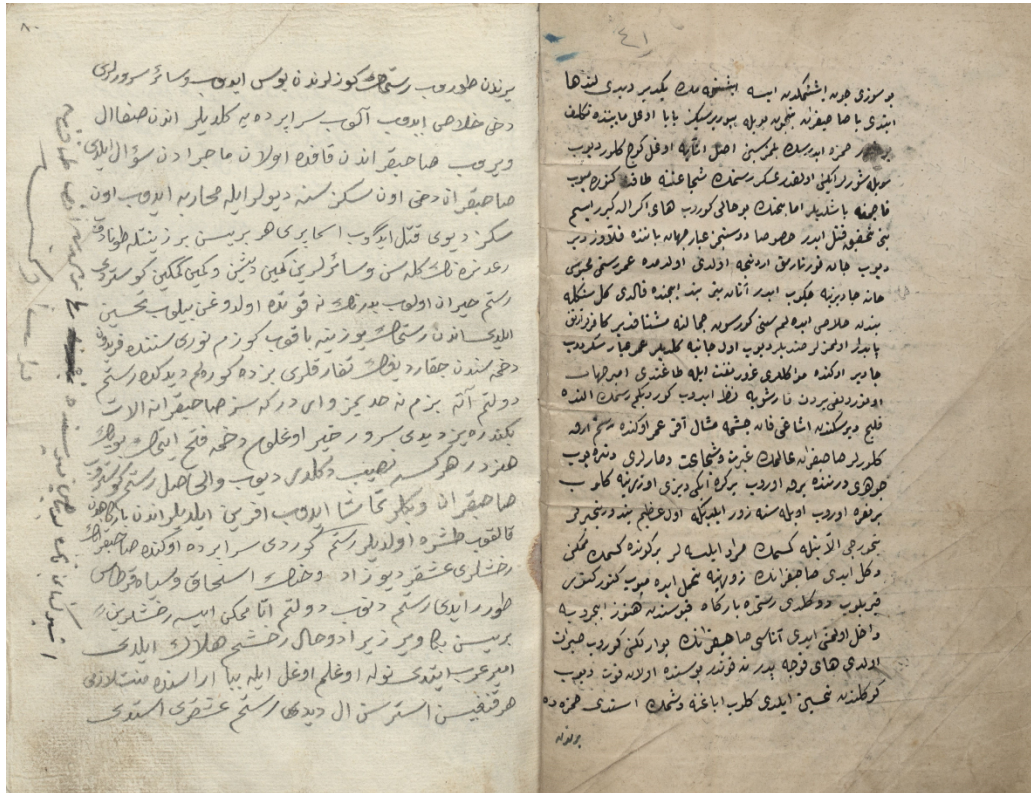


Figure 3 Sample for the change of handwriting. İÜNE 1100, 21b-22a [my own pagination].

Sometimes, the visual and written notes on the margins are taped or scribbled over. Therefore, the idea of thinking of the users of these manuscripts as a ‘manuscript community’ is valid not just on the circulation and reading manners but also in production in which many claimed the right to change the textual and physical conditions of manuscripts. These are just not only books in motion in terms of their circulation between various owners and within the topography of Istanbul. Rather, every single book also remained in motion in terms of its materiality with the frequent loss of pages and their replacement by different members of the manuscript community. These manuscripts, beyond their content and their role in facilitating exchange between people, seem precious for the materiality and physical pace offered by the pages. Any empty place on these manuscripts could be used to make calculations, write shopping lists, and –as one of the scribe warns from the beginning–practice spelling (*imlā*) and calligraphic skills. (see: Figures 4,5,6). Some of the marginal notes and textual pieces are repeated by other hands for the sake of

practice apparent in their amateur handwriting and spelling errors. Whereas it is possible to explain such uses of the paratexts of manuscripts with the shortage in the stock of paper, they are also indications that the readers perceived them as common property and how much these manuscripts were part of their daily lives.

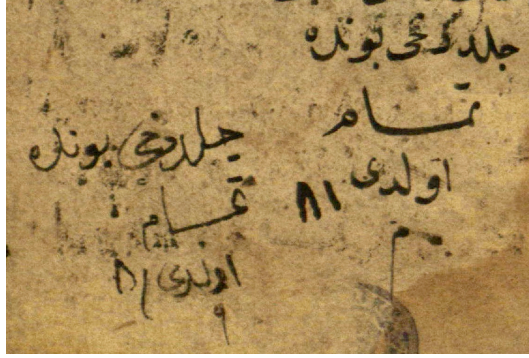


Figure 4
Repetition of the story's end probably for the sake of handwriting practice. MK 8504/24, 58a [my own pagination].

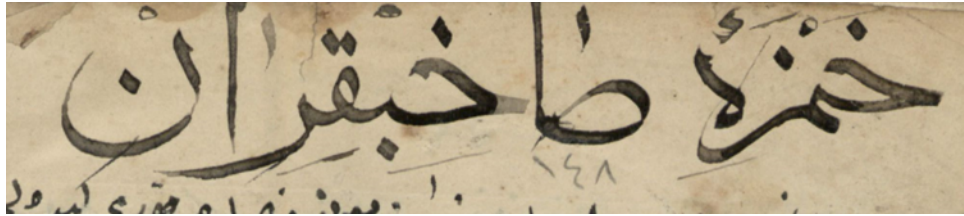


Figure 5 Simple calligraphy "Hamzullāh Sāhibkirān" İÜNE 1092, 73b.

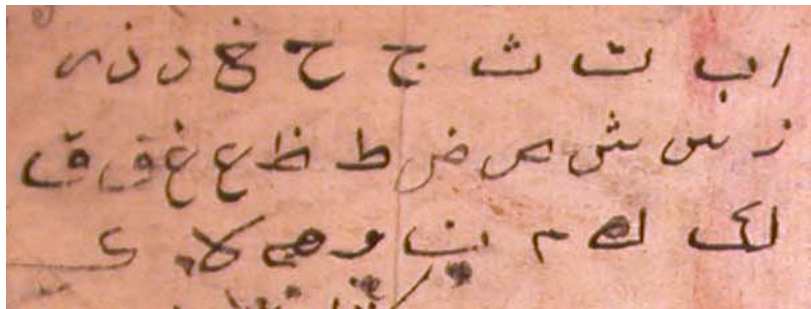


Figure 6 *Elif bā* (alphabet) practices. YKSC 907, 1a.

Colophons/ Scribal Records (*ferağ* or *ketebe*)

These manuscripts in motion stand in an exceptional position in terms of authorship. They give the impression that they were written not by a person, even if the names of scribes are given but by an entire community. The readers and reader-turned-writers constantly subject the text to their own adaptations, interfering through rewriting or completing missing parts of the text while the literary criticism towards the text and its author/scribe is always on play through the notes in margins. By that character, adapting Foucault's theory of "the death the author," one might claim the author of these books was already born dead regarding the blurred distinction between authors, scribes, compilers, and readers as later writers. In the library catalogs, all of the Hamza stories are recorded with the name Hamzavī as the writer. However, there is no connection between Hamzavī (d. 1412-3) – a 14th century storyteller who compiled and rewrote Hamza stories– and the versions in the 18th and 19th centuries in Istanbul.

The distinction between authors and storytellers has always been complicated. Each story is attributed to a name, usually a storyteller and (first) compiler of the story. For example, the author of *Fīrūzshahnāme* is accepted as Mowlāna Sheikh Muhammad Tāheri, known as Sheikh Bighami whose name appears sometimes in the text and was probably a professional storyteller of the late 15th century.¹³⁸ Or, *Samak-ı Ayyār*, for example, is supposed to have been the creation of Ibn Khuddādād Faramarz. But Henri Massé questions the authorship of such works: "It seems evident that the work was transcribed at the time of the oral performance and that the transcriber probably adopted the expressions of the teller...that it is not the work of a professional writer, in the strict sense."¹³⁹

The collectivity in the production of such texts are also apparent in the formulaic expression at the beginning of each volume: "narrators of news and transmitters of works and chroniclers of the times relate that [*rāviyān-ı ahbār ve nākilān-ı āsār ve muhaddisān-ı rüzgār şöyle rivāyet ve bu yüzden hikāyet iderler ki*]." As Değirmenci discusses, this expression alongside with no mention of the writer and the lack of "reason of writing [*sebeb-i te'lif*]" part supports the

¹³⁸ William L. Hanaway, *Love and War*, 20.

¹³⁹ Cited from İlhan Başgöz, *Hikāye*, 7.

anonymous character of these stories, they were not written by a particular writer but developed cumulatively at the hand of storytellers.¹⁴⁰

The scribes of the manuscripts under study were likely reproducing the oral or written versions of stories for the marketplace, due to high demand that would be categorized by Harold Love as “entrepreneurial scribal publication.”¹⁴¹ Frédéric Hitzel states that, keeping apart the possibility of renting the books, “when a person wished to acquire a manuscript-book, all he had to do was have a copy made from a professional, *hattat* or *yaza*.”¹⁴² These books were reproduced by a wide range of people in terms of their occupational background with book dealers coming in the first place. For example, I detected a bookdealer, a bookbinder, an herbalist (*attār*), a *mollā*, and a captain (*kapudan*) as scribes in the colophons of my corpus.¹⁴³ We can assume that anyone able to write would reproduce these manuscripts in turn for a modest fee. That is why, by the expansion of the “civil officialdom,” the clerks (*kātib*) in the governmental offices have integrated into the world of these heroic stories not just as readers/audience but also as scribes as evident in the transformation of the script (*nesih* to *rik‘a*) and neat handwriting present in the manuscripts dated 19th century. The high demand for these heroic stories did not just seem to lead to high production of manuscripts (evident in the extant copies, probate registers, and external observations), but also multiplied the identities of scribes and manners of writing. Maybe, for this reason, the readers use various terms for the writers of the main text as the writer of the book (*yazan*, *tahrīr eden*), the penman (*kalemkār*), or the inventor of the book (*i‘cād eden*).

Based on that context, the members of this manuscript community were not concerned with recording the colophons as much as they were with recording the performers, locations, hosts, and even the audience in collective reading sessions. Both the readers and copyists were aware that these stories were derived from collective oral and written literature, which has been

¹⁴⁰ Tülün Değirmenci, “Söz Bir Nesnedir ki Zâil Olmaz: Osmanlı İstanbul’unda Hamzanâme Geleneğine Göre Kamusal Okuma” in *Büyük İstanbul Tarihi*, vol. 7 (İstanbul: İBB, 2015),” 637.

¹⁴¹ Harold Love, *Scribal Publication*, 73-79.

¹⁴² “Manuscrits, Livres et Culture Livresque à Istanbul,” 23.

¹⁴³ In the given order : FMK 102, İÜNE 1096, İÜNE 1095, and İÜNE 1084.

developed through centuries by other storytellers and scribes since the identity of the scribe/author of one specific version was clearly not meaningful information within this particular manuscript community.

In the corpus of this study, the colophons are rare, and sometimes they only give the date of writing (1731 earliest and 1891 latest) or, they are just in the shape of template phrases such as “I wrote this to be remembered/ to praise on the readers and writers,”¹⁴⁴ or, “the wisdom is leaving a work behind/ the man without a work will be gone with the wind,”¹⁴⁵ or, “I wrote this because the time is faithless/ when I am dead, my writing will survive.”¹⁴⁶ Only fourteen manuscripts are determined out of approximately two hundred manuscripts that have records on their writers/scribes. The number of the dated manuscripts of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories in our corpus is only 28. And, among them, 17 are dated the 18th century and 11 are dated the 19th century. Although there are some marks and notes of reading from the 20th century (approximately 90), none of the manuscripts is dated the 20th century. This data indicates the vanishing of a genre, at least on the production level. On the other hand, five of the dated manuscripts that were given alongside the writers’ names are all dated the 19th century which is crucial to claim that recording the writers’ names became important in that period. They are the scribal records of:

Herbalist (*Attār*) Ahmed Ağa son of Muhammed Mustafa dated 1220 (1805/6),¹⁴⁷

Mullah (*Monlā*) Mülāyim dated 1227 (1812/3),¹⁴⁸

Captain (*Kapudan*) Hüseyin Bey dated 1264 (1847/8),¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ “Bunu yazdım yādigār olmak için/ okuyan yazana bir du‘a kılmak için.”

¹⁴⁵ “Ākil oldur koya cihanda bir eser/ eseri olmayanın yerinde yellere eser.”

¹⁴⁶ “Bunu yazdım bī vefādır rüzgār/ Ben öldükde hattım kala yādigār.” For the most-common patterns used in colophons of Ottoman manuscripts, see: Sami Arslan, *Osmanlı’da Bilginin Dolaşımı: Bilgiyi İstinsahla Çoğaltmak* (İstanbul: Ketebe Yayınevi, 2020).

¹⁴⁷ İÜNE1096, 93a.

¹⁴⁸ İÜNE1095, 115a.

¹⁴⁹ İÜNE 1084, 94a.

Hasan Basri dated 1311 (1893/4),¹⁵⁰

Cemal Efendi son of Baha'eddin, a clerk of The Imperial Office of Endowments (*Evkāf-ı Hümayūn ketebesinden*), undated.¹⁵¹

The rest of the colophons that indicate the names of scribes belong to the bookbinder (*mücellid*) Sālih Efendi. Sālih Efendi's position is complicated since he recorded himself as the owner (*sāhib*), bookdealer (*sahhāf*), and writer/scribe (*harrarahū, hāme, ketebe, tamka*) in different manuscripts in ten years, from 1782/3 to 1793/4. By these records refer to the different forms of interaction Sālih Efendi has with these manuscripts is one evidence of the blurred distinctions of authorship, ownership, and dealership.

Records of Temporal Ownership (*temellük*)

Unlike their palace versions, the manuscripts of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories in this study were not produced to be owned and to be held on a shelf for their material or prestige value, as their versions were produced for a patron, lavishly illustrated and meticulously written in calligraphy.¹⁵² There were indeed some owners, either individuals or book dealers, from time to time, but possibly only to benefit from renting out of the book. For example, we encounter the name of the bookbinder Sālih Efendi on seven manuscripts as the scribe and the owner (*sāhib*) of the books. He possibly rented out his books for group reading, as understood from a note that tells "the books of the bookbinder Sālih Efendi are precious."¹⁵³ In other cases, we encounter the ownership records (*temellük*) of Hacı Hüseyin Efendi (*sāhib* and *mālik*) on four distinct manuscripts.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, if we insert the 20th century owners whose names appear on the manuscripts as the sellers to the libraries, the picture of the extension of ownership throughout

¹⁵⁰ MK 8504/7, 66b.

¹⁵¹ YKSÇ 148, 44a.

¹⁵² Some heroic stories were ordered even by the Sultans such as Kānūnī ordered the story of Fīruzşah or Murad III ordered Samak-e Ayyār. See: İlhan Başgöz, *Hikāye*, 12.

¹⁵³ "Şu mücellid Sālih Efendi'nin kitabları gibi dünyada hic kitāb olmaz. Begāyet lānazīr kitablardır." MK1285/1, 2a.

¹⁵⁴ See: MK 8504/14, 2a; MK 8504/1, 1b; FMK 29, 2a; FMK 30, 2a.

history enlarges. However, these owners are not enough to invalidate the claim that these manuscripts were written not for persons but for a community.

The aspect of anonymity that we have seen for the authorship is valid also in terms of ownership regarding the low number of ownership records. The names of owners are detected on twenty manuscripts and only six of them belong to people other than the bookbinder Salih Efendi. As already mentioned, Hacı Hüseyin Efendi, as the latter appeared on seven manuscripts always in the pattern “owner and possessor Hacı Hüseyin Efendi [*sāhib ve mālīk Hacı Hüseyin Efendi*].” For the compound “*sāhib ve mālīk*,” Adam Gacek claims it could indicate scribalship with the traditional thought that the first owner of a book was its scribe.¹⁵⁵ The colophon record given above that belongs to Captain Hüseyin Bey is written as “*sāhib ve mālīk Kapudan Hüseyin Bey*,” therefore, it confirms Gacek’s claim. However, as the records of Hüseyin Efendi are not given in colophons but in the first pages of manuscripts, whether he was an owner or scribe is not certain. Other than the records of Salih Efendi and Hüseyin Efendi, the ownership records belong to:

Bookdealer *Elhāc* Hasan dated 1869/1870 [1286],¹⁵⁶

Son of Ahmed Sābit Efendi, Esseyyīd Elhāc Rızā Efendi dated 4 April 1850 [21 Ca 1266],¹⁵⁷

İzzet,¹⁵⁸

Mollā Mustafa,¹⁵⁹

Bookdealer Ali Rızā Efendi of Üsküdar [Üsküdarī].¹⁶⁰

How might one explain the ownership records of these manuscripts, which were continuously in motion? I argue, even for the manuscripts that have ownership records, one should claim these

¹⁵⁵ Adam Gacek, “Ownership Statements and Seals in Arabic Manuscripts,” *Manuscripts of Middle East 2* (1987): 88-95.

¹⁵⁶ FMK 102, 1a.

¹⁵⁷ FMK 102, 78b.

¹⁵⁸ MK 8504/16, 3a.

¹⁵⁹ MK 8504/18, 96b.

¹⁶⁰ YKSÇ 895, 34a.

names point at a sort of ‘temporal ownership.’ That sometimes means the first owner, namely the scribe of the book as Gacek demonstrated, or the holder/hirer of the manuscript at other times. For instance, the manuscript that has a dated ownership record of Ahmed Sābit Efendi (H. 1226), which was read in a coffeehouse in the year H. 1260 and a Sufi lodge in the year H.1269, shows that the manuscript was read in public just before and after Ahmed Sābit Efendi inscribed his “ownership” on the manuscript. Besides, as seen in that list, three owners were recorded as book dealers (bookbinder Sālih, Hacı Hasan, and Ali Rızā Efendi) who were, most probably, the renters of the manuscripts as another example for the temporal ownership.¹⁶¹ They should have recorded their names on the manuscripts for the sake of preventing the loss of their manuscripts as something the renters were afraid of (see: Chapter 7). In this case, one should interrogate the perception of ownership in the mindset of a member of this community. Since these stories and the books are perceived, used, and acted as common property, one might define the ownership records (*temellük*) on these books as ‘usage rights’ other than ‘property rights.’¹⁶²

The use of personal seals (*mühür*) that bear the names of its owner, sometimes with a short title (like *elhāc* or *esseyyīd*) and a date, are unexpected pieces of evidence regarding the claim that these stories were written to be rented and circulated other than to be owned by a particular person. It is a preassumption in manuscript studies that seals indicate ownership; however, indicating ownership was not the only function of seals. In his recent article, Boris Liebreuz draws attention to different uses of seals other than ownership and endowment and discussed how a judge’s seals in 16th century Egypt worked through the process of an inventory of Cairo’s endowed libraries.¹⁶³

Although they need a more exclusive and systematic survey in the future, the abundant and ‘arbitrary looking’ seals on our corpus require to estimate of their functions, especially in a manuscript community in which the ownership was not a major issue. Therefore, in my opinion, pressing a seal in that particular community did not usually mean, “I own this,” but rather, “I was

¹⁶¹ Some bookdealers had hundreds of such heroic stories in their probate registers, see: Meredith Quinn, “Books and Their Readers.”

¹⁶² I am grateful to Konrad Hirschler for the idea of “usage rights.”

¹⁶³ Boris Liebreuz, “What’s in a seal? Identification and Interpretation of ‘Abd al-Bāqī Ibn al-‘Arabī’s (d. 971/1564) Seal and Its Function,” *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts*, forthcoming.

here,” like a student writing their name on a school desk or lovers carve their names in a heart on trees. Besides, displaying presence (“I was here”) through a seal is also meant to be recognized by a friend regarding the personal acquaintances within this manuscript community.

In the Ottoman culture, other than the seals of household members, endowments, and later modern libraries, personal seals have always been in use by common people, men, and women.¹⁶⁴ Engraving seals (*hakkâklık*) has been an important profession during the intended period as well as in pre-18th century Ottoman society.¹⁶⁵ On the manuscripts under this study, there are performers recorded as engravers such as Hakkâk Emin Efendi, Hakkâk Elhac Kâmil Efendi, or Hakkâk Mehmed Efendi who could be engravers of not only seals but also of wood or precious stones. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the personal seals (*mühür*) should have been more prevalent than ever in accordance with the expansion in bureaucracy. Since a high proportion of the readers of these heroic stories were composed of low and middle-rank scribal officials, the abundance of personal seals numbering in the hundreds should not come as a surprise. For example, an Ebü Müslim manuscript bears innumerable seals that should be related with the state officials who read this book such as an undersecretary of justice affairs (*adliyye müsteşarı*), a clerk from the Treasure of the Imperial Endowments (*evkâf-ı hümayun hazînesi ketebesinden*) or a correspondence clerk in the Imperial Council (*dîvân-ı hümayûn kalemi ketebesî muhaberâtından*).¹⁶⁶ See below the dated and undated seals on just two pages of this manuscript which belong to at least seven people (see: Figure 7):

¹⁶⁴ See: Mübahat Kütükoğlu, “Mühür” *DİA* 31 (2006): 530-531.

¹⁶⁵ Evliya Çelebi tells about *hakkâk* masters and *hakkâk* shops in 17th century Istanbul, see: Evliya Çelebi, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol 1, ed. Robert Dankoff, Seyit Ali Kahraman, Yücel Dağlı (İstanbul: YKY, 1999), 295.

¹⁶⁶ MK8504-9, 6b, 81b, 78b respectively.



Figure 7 Two pages with numerous seals. MK 8504/9, 5b-6a.

The seal on the next page of the same manuscript proves that seals were not always independent but could accompany the texts. It is known that the habit of pressing the seals on the granting of *icāzet* has been developed among scholars since earlier Ottoman times.¹⁶⁷ But other than that, the readership notes in other functions that were accompanied by seals are not common. In that respect, some instances of seals under the collective reading notes are remarkable in our corpus. (see: Figure 8). One such note reads:

A coffee-maker/seller in Galata, Muhammed Ali, declares on this place of the margins that he endlessly read these books in the coffeehouse of Durmuş Ağa which situates across the fountain in the Fountain Square of Galata, 30 January [1]873/4.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ *İcāzet* means permission. In the context of Islamic book culture, see: İsmail Erünsal, *Ortaçağ İslâm Dünyasında*, 101-111.

¹⁶⁸ “Hālâ Galata’da, Çeşme Meydanı’nda, çeşmenin karşusunda, Durmuş Ağa’nın kahvesinde, Galata sandıkçılarından Muhammed Ali Ağa bu kitablari bînihâye mütâla’a eylemiş olduğunu bu mahal derkenârında beyân olundu, 11 Zilhicce [1]290.” MK 8504/9, 6b.

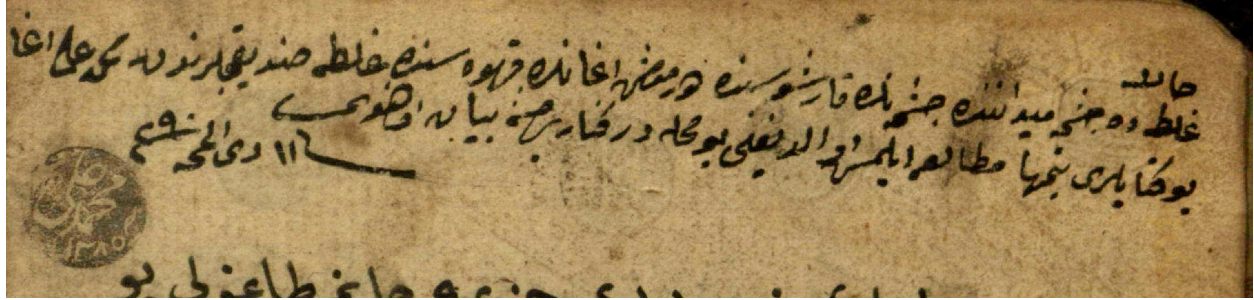


Figure 8 Seal of Muhammed Ali below his note of recitation, dated H. 1290. MK 8504/9, 8b.

After recording a note on his performance, Muhammed Ali also pressed his seal on which reads “Muhammed Ali, 1285.” From the five years gap between the date on the seal and on his note, we deduce people might have used their seals which they had carved in the precedent years. Ömer Kāmil Efendi who performed the 2nd volume of Hamza on 25 Safer 65¹⁶⁹ or, Brickmaker Mehmed Halīd Efendi who performed the 1st volume of Ebū Müslim in 1284¹⁷⁰ is other performers who pressed their seals nearby their notes. These notes with the seals confirm that it was –at least usually– performers who wrote the notes on collective reading sessions. Another value of seals is that they enable to deduce a sort of ‘reading list’ of a particular person, for instance, when, the seals of Elhāc Ali Rızā Esseyyīd dated H. 1252 appears on five distinct manuscripts (see Figure 9):¹⁷¹



Figure 9 Seals of Ali Rızā Efendi on five distinct manuscripts. FMK 27, 1b; MK 8688/1, 1b; MK 8688/2, 1b; İÜNE 1112, 1b, and YKŞÇ 892, 1b.

¹⁶⁹ İÜNE 1085, 1b.

¹⁷⁰ MK 8688/1, 113b.

¹⁷¹ For now, this study is limited to displaying some examples. After more systematic research on these seals, they might reveal their potential in the way of redefining the purpose (s) of seal impressing and reconceptualizing the ownership before the sovereignty of print.

On the subject of ownership, one should consider the signs of readership on the manuscripts in the 20th century before they were involved in the library collections through donation or selling. The marks of the 20th century readership on these manuscripts are indicative of the continuity of some cultural practices from the Empire to the Republic. As Benjamin Fortna has emphasized, “new modes of reading, new genres, new readership, and new subjects all generate –and celebrate– the sensation of breaking with the past. But reading can never be either entirely novel or completely beholden to the past; it is rather a means of linking the old and the new.”¹⁷² Although Fortna focuses on the readership from the transition period of the late Ottoman Empire to the Republican Period, one might still think the same for the later periods that some literary tastes persisted the time by transcending the huge ‘structural’ transformations such as in alphabet, textual production (print) and education system. The stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim as being written in the Arabic script and the manuscript form but still being read during the dominance of print latinized script very well exemplifies such kind of persistence of some cultural practices and readership.

Who were the readers of the heroic stories in manuscript form in the 20th century? The copies extant in the National Library of Ankara had some records on the manuscripts of the donators and sellers. Among seven modern readers that were detected on the manuscripts, İhsan Sungu (1883-1946) who donated the two volumes of *Fīrūzşāh* was a linguist on the Turkish language who served in different positions of high bureaucracy in the Eary Republican Period.¹⁷³ Ahmet Halit Yaşaroğlu (1891-1951) who sold a volume of Hamza on 28 May 1974 was an editor and author of dozens of books and the founder of a publishing house.¹⁷⁴ M. Erdem Kocapınar (1928-2016) who sold two volumes of Hamza for 15.000.000 liras on 12 December 1995, if it is not a resemblance in names, was an editor to books on Turkish Carpets and Hacı Bayram Veli and the founder of a tourism agency.¹⁷⁵ Dr. Abdullah Öztemiz was an internal diseases specialist who donated another volume of Hamza.¹⁷⁶ From the modern owners/donators/sellers whose identity

¹⁷² Benjamin C. Fortna, *Learning to Read*, 104.

¹⁷³ See his marks on MK 1245/1 and MK 1245/2.

¹⁷⁴ See his marks on MK 1856.

¹⁷⁵ See his marks on MK 8127 and MK 8132.

¹⁷⁶ See his marks on MK 3366.

could not be firmed was Orhan Apaydın who sold/donated a Hamza volume in 1998,¹⁷⁷ Vahdettin Darende who sold three volumes of Hamza in 1967,¹⁷⁸ and Aykut Ulupınar, the seller of the series composed of 33 volumes of Hamza in 1997 for 600.000 liras.¹⁷⁹ These examples invoke the thought that the educated and wealthy people owned these manuscripts in time whereas they were available to the people of any socio-economic level in the pre-20th century, or, in the pre-ownership period of these books.

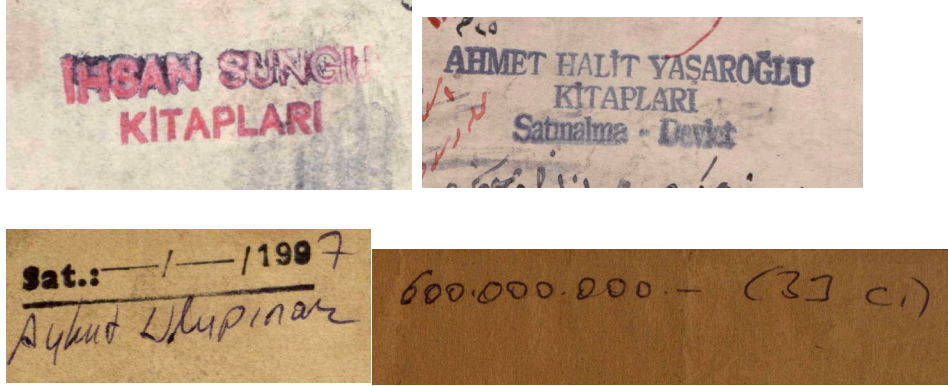


Figure 10 Ownership records of modern owners.

Another sign for the modern readership is the notes written in the Latin alphabet. Such notes usually indicate a personal reading of the books rather than collective recitations, such as “Hüseyin, son of Derviş, read it, 18 May 1937,”¹⁸⁰ or, “İsmail Cemil read this book, 8 March 1936.”¹⁸¹ These notes were written approximately ten years after the Turkish Republic had adopted the Latin alphabet by the Alphabet Reform on 1 November 1928.¹⁸² However, this does not mean that all members of society had interiorized the new alphabet immediately, as evident in some of the notes on our manuscripts. There are examples of the hybrid uses of two alphabets,

¹⁷⁷ See his marks on MK 8688/1 and MK 8688/2.

¹⁷⁸ See his marks on MK 4303, MK 4361/1 and MK 4361/2.

¹⁷⁹ See his marks on MK 8504/1 and MK 8504/33.

¹⁸⁰ “Derviş oğlu Hüseyin okumuşdur, 18 mayıs 1937.” MK 8504/15, 2a.

¹⁸¹ “Bu kitabı İsmail Cem kıra’at etmiştir, (Mart 1936.” MK8504/23, 27a.

¹⁸² For further knowledge and debates on Turkish language reform, see: Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Benjamin C. Fortna, *Learning to Read*.

such as in the case of, Hasan Güvenc, who wrote, “Hasan Güvenc read this book,” in 1946 (after 20 years of the Reform) in both notes both in Arabic and Latin Alphabet (see Figure 11).¹⁸³

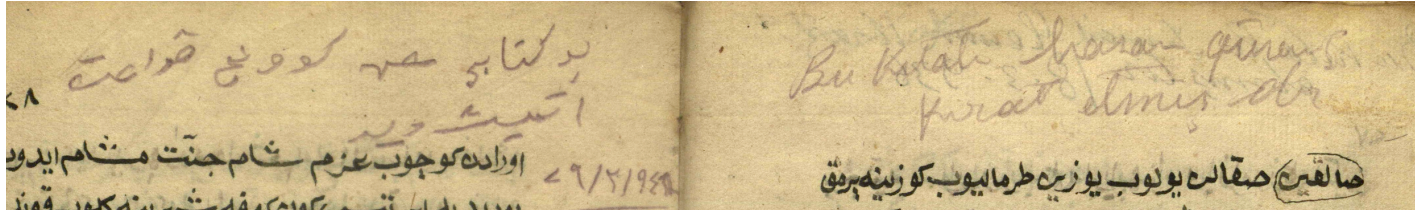


Figure 11 A note written both in Arabic and Latin alphabets. MK 8504/23, 25b and 26a.

Another example is Hocazāde Osman Nizām from Crete, who sealed his *kaşe* (the modern equivalent of seals) carved both in Arabic and Latin alphabets (see Figure 12):¹⁸⁴

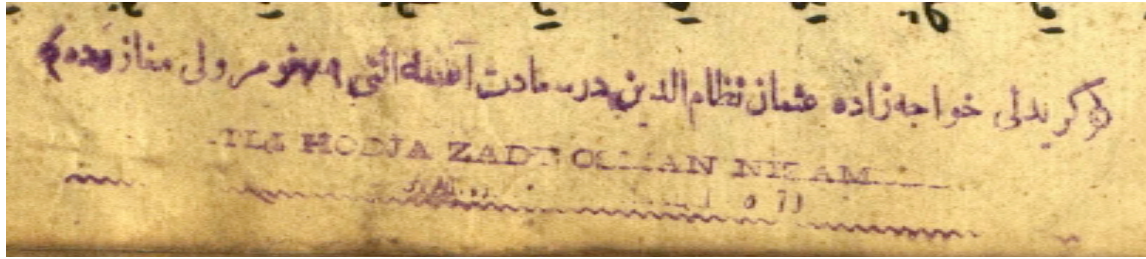


Figure 12 Personal stamp of Hocazade Osman Nizam both in Arabic and Latin alphabets. MK 8504/26, 36b.

Similar to Hasan Güvenc, İsmail Cemil wrote in both Arabic and Latin alphabets by merging the Hijra and Gregorian calendars that he read the whole series of 38th volumes to the friends (*ihvān*) on 29 March 1936.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ “Bu kitabı Hasan Güvenc kırı’at etmişdir.” MK8504/23, 26b and 27a.

¹⁸⁴ MK8504/26, 46b.

¹⁸⁵ “Bu kitabları Avrat ili karşusunda [...]zāde İsmā’il Cemil Bey 329’da bir def’a, 935’de bir def’a, 936’da bir def’a 38 cildi tamāmen kırı’at itmişdir, 29 mart 1936. MK 8504/33, 20b. 19bb. On the opposite page a note signed by Y. Cemil in Latin alphabet: “Bu kitabları üç defa hatmettim, ihvanlar dinledi, Y.Cemil, 29/3/936.” MK 8504/33, 20a.

Manuscript Notes

The most crucial component of these manuscripts' paratexts, for the main discussion of this study on a manuscript community, is manuscript notes. The notes on inner covers, first and last pages, margins –in other words, any empty spot available on manuscript pages– are testimonies to the range of motion in terms of locations and people. These notes could be classified roughly into two categories: the first one is the notes written with reference to a text or as expressions of personal records, emotions, and thoughts on any kind of issues which is under discussion in Chapter 7. The second type is the notes written for recording the performers, hosts of reading venues, and reading places of collective reading sessions. Among the notes deciphered for this study, almost half of it, approximately 2500 notes belong to the second category that one can name as the collective reading notes. As discussed in Chapter 6, this abundance mainly caused by that “performance,” namely reading aloud in front of a public with some improvisation was the main reading practice around the books under study that was dubbed commonly as *kıra'at*, but also rarely as *telaffüz*, *hatm*, *tefsir*, *şerh*, *mütāla'a*, *hikāyet*, and *tilāvet* by the note-writers.¹⁸⁶

What are the dates of collective reading notes? Unlike the colophons, recording the precise dates of the collective reading session is common in these notes, 1700 are dated among 2500 collective reading notes. The earliest date is 1140 /1727-1728 and the latest is 1350/1930-1931. From the dated notes, 200 are dated the 18th century, 1410 are dated the 19th century and 90 are dated the 20th century. By looking at these dates, one might claim that public reading of these books intensified in the 19th century. However, it is also possible that recording the experience of public reading, or taking records in the general sense, could have been a more widespread action in the 19th century. Besides, from the point of readership, the enlargement of professions related to recordkeeping as discussed in Chapter 4 might have transformed the practice of note-writing. These dates are crucial also because the same meticulousness was not regarded in terms of the date of writing. As stated earlier, only 20 of approximately 200 manuscripts are dated, as 1731 (1144 H.) the earliest and 1891 (1309 H.) the latest.¹⁸⁷ Therefore, the dates given in the group reading notes could also give clues about the approximate date of writing since these manuscripts

¹⁸⁶ For the continuity of these terms with the reading certificates (*samā'*) in the Medieval Arabic Lands, see: Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word*, 12-17.

¹⁸⁷ Earliest one is YKSÇ 889 and the latest one is İÜNE 1121.

were copied in demand or to be immediately put into the market. For example, on the 12th volume of Ebū Müslim which was dated 24 January 1874, the earliest date of collective reading is also dated as 1874.¹⁸⁸ However, one should be cautious about this claim when it comes to references to earlier manuscripts. The periodical gap between the date of writing and the earliest date of reading is larger for the manuscripts produced in the 18th century. For example, the earliest date of group reading is the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim dated 7 April 1765 was 1793.¹⁸⁹ One might explain this gap with the increase in collective reading as well as the act of writing collective notes in the 19th century.

Collective reading notes on these stories were comprised of detailed information on the names, hometowns, family relations, occupations, titles of the participants (performers, audience, and owners of the reading place) alongside the reading locations, duration of reading usually followed by precise dates. These notes did not necessarily include all of these elements but the selection was determined according to which information the note-writer wanted to focus on, sometimes the location, or the father's name of the performer, or just on someone prominent among the audience. An instance of the typical order of elements in the collective reading notes is as follows:

This volume was read nearby Hâcepaşa, in the neighbourhood of Kahveci Hüseyin Çelebi, in the coffeehouse of Hasan Ağa by Hâfiz, Calligrapher, Esseyyîd Mehmed Çelebi of Kengırı [Çankırı], 22 April 1852.¹⁹⁰

Although these notes on collective readings have not been subjected to scholarly works as the main source other than Değirmenci's article, some histories of Turkish literature touch upon them by giving several examples from the volumes they bought or gifted. For example, Vasfi Mahir Kocatürk, based on a volume on his hand states that "Hamzaname and Kıssa-ı İskender like Battal Gazi Stories were read among city folks for years, especially Hamzaname has become

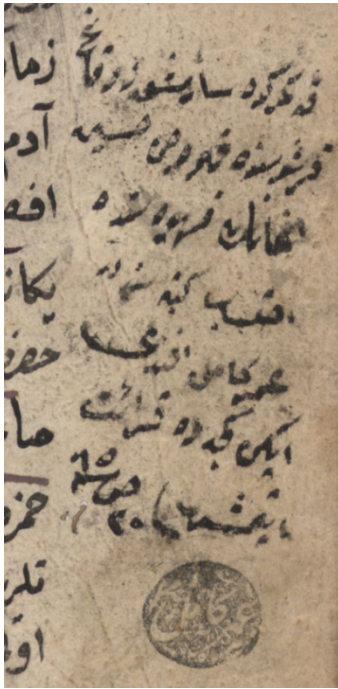
¹⁸⁸ MK 8504/11.

¹⁸⁹ MK 8504/4.

¹⁹⁰ "İşbu cildi, Hâcepaşa kurbunda, Karaki Hüseyin Çelebi mahallesinde, Nakkâş Hasan Ağa'nın kahvesinde, kengirili Hâfiz Hattât Esseyyîd Mehmed Çelebi Efendi kıra'at itmiştir, 3 Receb 1268." YKŞÇ 895, 1b.

the famous topic of storytellers in coffeehouses until the end of the 19th century.”¹⁹¹ Mustafa Nihat Özön, based on the 45th volume of Fīrūzşāh Story given to him as a gift from İhsan Sungu, refers several collective reading notes. Based on these notes, he names these stories as “the stories read in public from a written work (*halk arasında yazılısından okunan eserler*).”¹⁹² Also, Fuad Köprülü has claimed that Hamza stories were read in coffeehouses, janissary regiments, and castles after seeing these notes on collective reading.¹⁹³

Most of the time, the notes are not signed, but some signatures and seals nearby the notes suggest that the notes on group reading were written by the performers themselves. For example, the seal of Ömer Kāmil Efendi at the bottom of a collective reading note in which the performer was



Ömer Kāmil Efendi is a sign that he impressed his seal after writing a note about his performance (Figure 13).

Apart from seals, the signed collective reading notes also suggest that these notes were recorded by the reciters, such as the one written by Nureddin İbrāhim Efendi. He signed his note in which he applauds himself for reading the book at a speedy pace (see: Figure 14):

In the second troop of the third administrative battalion of the first industrial regiment of the Imperial Cannon Foundry, Nüreddin Efendi read this book in twenty-five minutes. If you don't believe, you come and see how he is reading my dear, Nüreddin İbrahim, 3 September 1891.¹⁹⁴

Figure 13 Seal of Ömer Kāmil Efendi at the bottom of a collective reading note. İÜNE 1085, 1b.

¹⁹¹ Vasfî Mahir Kocatürk, *Büyük Türk Edebiyatının Tarihi, Tahlili ve Tenkidi* (İstanbul: Baykuş Kitabevi, 1964), 191. My translation.

¹⁹² Mustafa Nihat Özön, *Türkçede Roman*, 72-99.

¹⁹³ Fuad Köprülü, *Edebiyat Tarihi Araştırmaları* (Ankara: TTK, 1966): 361-412.

¹⁹⁴ “İşbu kitabı, Tobhāne-i ‘Âmire’de, birinci sana’yi alayının, üçüncü idādī taburunun, ikinci bölüğünde, Nureddin Efendi yigirmi beş dakıkada kıra’at itmiştir. Eğer inanmaz isen gez gel de gör efendim nasıl okuyor, Nureddin İbrāhim, 22 Ağustos 1307.” MK 8504/30, 30a.

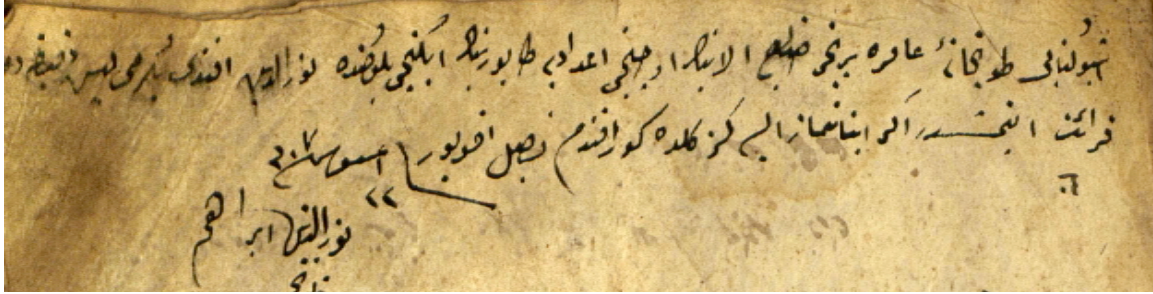


Figure 14 A collective reading note signed by Nüreddin İbrāhim Efendi. MK 8504/30, 30a.

Another clue that the performers were the ones writing the collective notes is the juxtaposition of collective reading notes written by the same hand in different reading places in distinct times. For example, İskender Efendi performed the 19th volume of Hamza in the coffeehouse of Captain (Kapudan) on 1 January 1893 in Küçük Piyāle neighborhood. Just above this note, there is the note in the same handwriting that tells “İskender Efendi performed in the coffeehouse of Mehmed Ağa in the neighborhood of Küçük Piyāle” dated 1894. Therefore, one can strongly assume that İskender Efendi wrote two of the notes after distinct reading performances of himself.

Despite its values as discussed above, manuscript notes as a resource are not deprived of some biases and problems for its researchers. Technically speaking, deciphering the handwriting on manuscript notes is not an easy task firstly because they were not usually written by professionals but by amateur hands which distorts the standard spelling of the words. Because each note was written by a different person, “the adaptation of eye” to their handwriting is never possible. Besides, the local dialects are inserted through the readers migrated from Anatolia which beclouds deciphering while they would be precious for a linguist or a migration historian. As an example for different dialects, see the various spellings of the word kıra‘at (قرائت) in Figure 15 below:

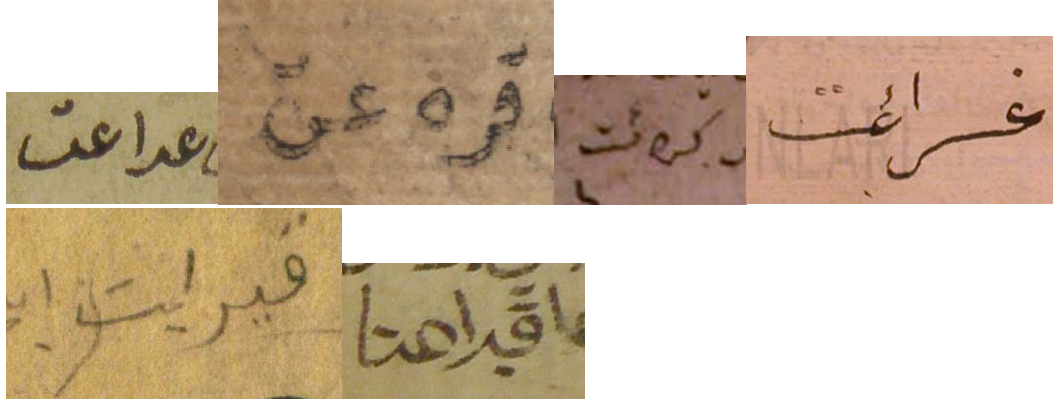


Figure 15 Various versions of the word kira'at (قرائت) in collective reading notes.

These notes are full of tricks and nuances, which present challenges for the modern researcher investigating their content and reception. For example, some note-writers write in Persian that they read the book in Isfahan.¹⁹⁵ A researcher presented with this information may accept the validity of this information and develop an interpretation on the broad dissemination of these manuscripts. However, when a frustrated reader writes under one of such notes that “I believed you, fuck your mother,”¹⁹⁶ the humor is revealed. The humor is on play on various notes. For example, some notes apply sloppy elements to the pattern of collective reading notes joke with the notes as in this note:

This book was read by Wind Efendi in between the sky and earth. Star and Moon Efendi have listened. Even, [...] Efendi listened. He delighted a lot and exclaimed with joy. İsmā'il Efendi lost his head. Esseyid [...] İsmā'il Efendi read, 5 October 1767.¹⁹⁷

In conclusion, this chapter targeted to contribute to the fields of ‘manuscript studies’ and ‘Ottoman book history/culture’ by discussing the textual and paratextual elements of the corpus of this study, namely 18th and 19th-century versions of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories. By calling them the ‘stories and books in motion,’ it discusses the aspects of collective reading, authorship, and book ownership practices developed around these stories and books. The

¹⁹⁵ İÜNE 1099, 31b.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, same page.

¹⁹⁷ “Bu kitabı beyne’s-semā’ ve'l arz olan yerde, rüzgār efendi okumuşdur. Yıldız ve ay efendi dinlemiştir ve dahī [...] Efendi ziyāde hazz idüp bir na're urup ismail Efendi bihoş olmuştur. Esseyid [...] İsmā'il Efendi kıra'at etmişdir ma'lūm ola, 11 C 1181.” AK 447, 34a.

paratextual elements such as ownership records, seals, colophons, and manuscripts notes, serve as direct testimonies to the high circulation of manuscripts and their place in Ottoman book culture. I analyze this by discussing various uses of books, definitions of authorship, and detailing the reading and note-writing practices of this community in the manuscript pages. The source-value of notes on collective reading, which composes almost half of the notes on these manuscripts, will be subject to other discussions in the following chapters such as the imagination of a heroic past, reading as performance, the members of the manuscript community, personal and communal reactions, and intense locations of reading.

CHAPTER 3

COLLECTIVE MEMORY: VERBAL AND VISUAL IMAGINATION OF A HEROIC PAST

Evliyā Çelebi, in his well-known *Book of Travels (Seyahatnāme)*, dated to the 17th century, recounts:

By the Turkish crescents in their hands and carrying the miscellanies in their bellies, there were storytellers (*meddāh*) who tell the stories with rhetoric and eloquence. The master of these storytellers was Süheyb of Rûm who already told the stories of ‘Anter. The Prophet asked him to tell the wars of his uncle, Hamza, in this way, his followers (*tümmet*) would be inspired to wars.¹⁹⁸

A century later, Süleymān Fāik, a public scholar known with his miscellany (*mecmu‘a*), asserted that there were two main motivations behind the compilation of Hamza stories: “The first one is encouraging the people of warfare (*savař ehli*), the other one is gaining supremacy over Firdevsī [*s Book of Kings*].”¹⁹⁹ Since these stories were not exclusively circulating among military ranks, as closely presented in Chapter 4, the claims that these stories were created simply to encourage the soldiers on the battlefield are dubious. Although there are many readers from military backgrounds, such as the Janissaries or other infantry troops (*kapıkulu piyādeleri*), these heroic narratives are much more inclusive in terms of their sphere of influence, which transcends certain social identities. This chapter explores the appreciation of heroic stories by diversifying identities in the manuscript community based on the verbal and visual imagination of the heroic past in collective memory.

Collective memory, as a term, was invented by Maurice Halbwachs in his book *La Mémoire Collective* published in 1950.²⁰⁰ In this book, he proposed that there is not only individual but also collective memory which is shaped by the social context. The collective memory, in both oral and textual cultures, needs to construct historical continuities to bind up fractures with the

¹⁹⁸ Evliyā Çelebi, *Seyahatnāme*, vol 1, ed. Orhan Şaik Gökyay (İstanbul: YKY, 1995), 225.

¹⁹⁹ “Sebeb-i te’lifinde iki sûret lâyh-i hâtır olur: Biri erbāb-ı harbi teşci’ için olmak, biri de Firdevsī -i Tūsī’ye yalanda galebe etmek için ihtirā’ eylemiş olmak sûretleridir.” Süleymān Fāik Efendi, *Mecmu‘a*, İstanbul, İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, MS Türkçe Yazmalar 3472, 93b.

²⁰⁰ Maurice Halbwachs, *La Mémoire Collective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950).

past. These continuities were constructed through the moments, monuments, and symbols that are called by Pierre Nora as *les lieux de mémoire*. He says:

Les lieux de mémoire is where memory crystallizes and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where the consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn-but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieus de mémoire*, real environments of memory.²⁰¹

The first authors who discussed the conceptualization of social or collective memory, such as Halbwachs, have claimed that memory was a social construct and written history aimed to be objective. However, especially after the 1970s, another angle in memory studies has occurred which might be called "the social history of remembering," according to Peter Burke. Burke appreciates this perspective on memory, stating: "Given the fact that the social memory, like the individual memory, is selective, we need to identify the principles of selection and to note how they vary from place to place or from one group to another and how they changed over time."²⁰² Among these selections, Burke especially touches upon the myths and "mytho-genic" characters (such as hero, villain, ruler, saint, bandit, and witch) and he assigns the cultural historian the task of searching for the "memory communities" which embraces unofficial alongside rival and alternative memories.²⁰³

In this regard, the manuscript community understudy here could also be named as a "memory community" by reproducing the stories, and 'mytho-genic' characters in the oral or traditional written cultures in Istanbul in the late manuscript age. While drawing a hero or a weapon on a page of a manuscript, writing down praises or maledictions on the souls of their ancestors, or presenting their moral norms in the most ostentatious ways; the Ottoman readers were not merely amusing themselves or other readers; they were constantly reconstructing a collective memory upon a long-standing heroic past. In this way, they were (re)constructing alternative – and sometimes 'contested' – memories to the official memory. 'Contested memories' will be

²⁰¹ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations*, no. 26 (1989) : 7-24, 7.

²⁰² Peter Burke, "History as Social Memory" in *Memory: History, Culture and the Mind*, ed. Thomas Butler (Maiden: Blackwell, 1989): 97-110, 100.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, 107.

discussed later, not in the sense of politics but also the dominant textual style and content. This chapter discusses through which heroic values, moments, space, figures, and symbols the collective memory of the members of this manuscript community had been regenerated in the late manuscript age. In this discussion, verbal expressions and –as distinctive from other chapters– visual images in the manuscripts of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories written/drawn by the readers will illuminate sites of collective memory.

***Fütüvvat* as the Social and Moral Basement**

Lā fetā illā ‘Alī, lā seyfe illā zūlfikār, a phrase that constantly appears on the manuscripts of Hamza and Ebū Müslim Stories analyzed in this study that means, ‘there is no hero other than Ali, there is no sword other than *zūlfikār* (see: Figure 16).’²⁰⁴ This is clearly a metaphorical expression that implies the strength of Ali, the Prophet’s son-in-law, and the fourth Caliph alongside his trademark, the two-headed sword *zūlfikār*, over other heroes and weapons. The word *fetā* or *fityān* in Arabic literally meant ‘young man’ but, in time, it implied some moral and social values that mainly focused on heroism. The gradual emergence of the figure of Ali over time has resulted as ‘the *fetā* par excellence’ has all the characteristics of a hero which gave way to his depiction as ‘the’ hero in the oral and written literature.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ It is debated whether it was uttered by the Prophet or by an unnamed man at the battle of ‘*Uhud*, or by the archangel Gabriel at the encounter at Badr. See: Farès, Bichr, “Fütüvvat” in *El’ (1913-1936)*, eds. M. Th. Houtsma, T.W. Arnold, R. Basset, R. Hartmann. Consulted online on 25 March 2020 http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1163/2214-871X_ei1_SIM_2402.

²⁰⁵ For the written and visual representations: *From History to Theology: Ali in Islamic Beliefs*, ed. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2005).

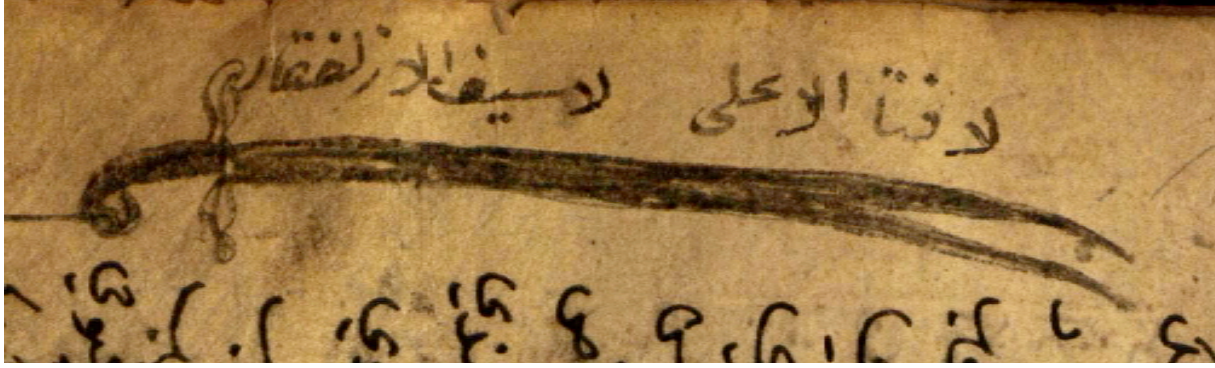


Figure 16 The image of Ali's sword Zülfikār and the phrase 'lā fetā illā 'Alī, lā seyfe illā zülfikār.' MK8504/2, 40a.

The *fetā*, and derived from it, *fütüvvet* as social phenomena after the 8th century offers an opportunity to understand the social and moral codes of the urban Muslim East in which heroism was a prized virtue. Although the implications of the term have changed over time, it has become increasingly used in reference to urban communities, especially after it denoted various movements and organizations. As Franz Taeschner states, “the *fütüvvet* must apparently be considered neither as an interesting but marginal socio-ideological institution, as most of the ancient descriptions imply, nor even solely or precisely as a form of reaction by the destitute classes, but as a general and fundamental structural element of urban society in the Medieval East.”²⁰⁶ In this manner, it acts like a supra-identity of the Eastern urban people for centuries, especially for those who belong to the guild organizations after the 13th century, when the *fütüvvet* ideas became important in organizations such as *āhīlik* (akhism) in Anatolia. Historically, *fütüvvet* had several phases: “*Fütüvvet* as a social concept in the Islam’s first century which was under the influence of Jahiliyya Period, *fütüvvet* as an organization of the youth rogues who were against the perceived tyranny of Umayyads, *fütüvvet* as a mystical concept in the 9th century, and, lastly, *fütüvvet* as an institution of merchants and artisans embodied within the codes of Akhism.”²⁰⁷ Although this study does not aim to examine these categories exclusively, *fütüvvet* provides a useful ground to understand the moral and heroic

²⁰⁶ Cl, Cahen and Fr. Taeschner, “Fütüvvet” in *EP*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 06 March 2020 http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0228.

²⁰⁷ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, “Fütüvvet,” *DİA* 13 (1996), 261.

values attributed to the protagonists, since it denotes the “chivalrous” manners and customs within the Eastern urban culture.²⁰⁸

What are the values of *fütüvvet* that affected the common motifs in heroic narratives? In the first years of the Abbasid Dynasty, the *fityān* are mentioned as the young men fond of drinking and entertainment who lived on the margins of the society.²⁰⁹ This perception was probably caused by the contemporary political atmosphere in which the *fityān* took active roles as the rebels against the Umayyad authority. At other times, even in the Jahiliya Period or after the formation of *fütüvvet* as an institution, *fütüvvet* implied favorable values of a person or a hero, as an idealized stereotype of a member of society. Virtues of this phenomenon included courage, generosity, altruism, honor, candor, humanism, and non-indulgence. Additionally, a hero should certainly be religious. Since we are speaking in the Islamic context, he should have a strong devotion (*takvā*) to God. This devotion is usually depicted not in private spaces, such as praying five times a day, but more in social interactions and on the battlefield. As the protector of Islam, this figure fought against ‘infidels (*kāfir*),’ which included the worshippers of fire (*mecūsī*) and worshippers of icons (*putperest*). He then converted them to monotheism.

Behind the development of *fetā* as the protector of belief, there is also the role of the Quranic context in which the term was used. Abraham, the famed icon-destroyer, is known as *fetā* differently from the other concepts of young men such as *sibyān*, *gilmān* or *veledān* in the verse of al-Anbiya 21:60: “قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا فَتًى يَذُكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ”: They said, we heard a young man mention them who is called Abraham." In another surah, al-Kahf, the youths who escaped to a cave to protect their religion is called as "الفتنة". In this manner, the greatest heroes are the relatives and companions of the Prophet, exemplified and idealized in Ali, or the historic characters who took active roles in the crucial religious moments, such as Ebū Müslim during the foundation of the Abbasid Dynasty. The well-known cycles of *dastān* in Persian and *sīrat* in Arabic such as the stories of ‘Anter, Benī Hilāl, Fīrūz Şāh, Baybārs, Emīr Hamza, or Ebū Müslim were written in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Malay and Javanese languages. In these sources, one could see

²⁰⁸ On the categorization of *fütüvvet* and *fütüvvetnāme* and its sources, see: Khachik Gevorgyan, “Fütüvvet Varieties and the Fütüvvet-nāma Literature: An Attempt to Classify Fütüvvet and Persian Fütüvvet-nāmas,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 1 (2013): 2-13.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 261. “Fityân” carries a similar meaning to “rogues” in English.

normative Muslim figures who fought for the faith, even if they had lived in the pre-Islamic period.

The doctrines of *fütüvvet* had a significant influence on the formation of conceptions of heroism in Anatolia in the Seljuk and Ottoman periods. Understanding these will help us understand the heroic codes of the manuscript community for this study. *Fütüvvet* as a guild organization emerged and developed after the 13th century under the name of *âhîlik* in Anatolia alongside with the development of a genre called *kitābü'l-fütüvve* in Arabic or *fütüvvetnâme* in Persian and Turkish.²¹⁰ Although the title was used within Sufi circles as early as the 8th century, the formation of the genres of etiquette (*ādāb*) and pillars (*erkān*) occurred by the 13th century.²¹¹ As a topic covered in these didactic books, *fütüvvet* doctrines included the practical and moral norms of storytelling. For example, *Vāiz-i Kāşîfî*, the well-known writer of *Fütüvvetnâme-i Sultānî* in the 16th century, asserts that the most honorable group of artists are the eulogists and storytellers. As he does for the other branches of artisanship, he lists the practical and moral norms of storytelling.²¹² Apart from the *fütüvvetnâmes*, heroic stories served for *fütüvvet* doctrines to be embraced by the community, especially for the urban and male population of artisans and craftsmen. Cahen and Taeschner divide these heroic into two groups as the 1) frontier epics that appeal to ghazis and frontier leaders (*uc begs*) by including the “war ethos” from 2) the epics of *fütüvvet* that appeal to the urban audience including the chivalric and occupational ethos and divides the protagonists of stories according to that division, they state: “whilst Seyyîd Battāl was regarded as the model of fighters for the faith, Ebū Müslim was the model for the artisans

²¹⁰ For the *fütüvvet* organization and its sources, see: Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, “İslam ve Türk İllerinde Fütüvvet Teşkilatı ve Kaynakları,” *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 11, no. 1-4 (1949-50): 3-354.

²¹¹ For the religious and spiritual principles of Anatolian *fütüvvetnames*, see: Osman Aydın, *Fütüvvetname-i Tarikat* (İstanbul: Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2011).

²¹² 1) If the narrator is an apprentice, he should have read the story to his teacher firstly, 2) The narrator should be nimble, he should not narrate slowly, 3) He should not belabor as much as to bore the audience, 4) Prose parts should be embellished with the poetry, but this should not be exaggerated as the elders warned “poetry should be like a salt in the pot,” 5) He should not tell extra-ordinary or impossible things to refrain from belittling by the folks, 6) He should not utter sarcastic and heart-breaking words, 7) He should not exaggerate the money issue as a beggar, 8) He should not cut the story short but he should not lengthen the story too much, he should find the medium length. Sultan Hüseyin Vāziü'l- Kāşîfî, *Fütüvvetnâme-i Sultānî*, Tahran 1350. Cited from Özdemir Nutku, *Meddahlık ve Meddah Hikâyeleri*. My translation from Turkish.

and the lesser people, who formed a corporate body under the name *āhī*.”²¹³ The appreciation of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories in Istanbul in the late manuscript age especially by the professions of guilds (*esnāf*) is an indication that the *fütüvvēt* codes were still alive in the collective memory of the urban audience in our manuscript community.²¹⁴

In summation, the *fütüvvēt* doctrines that developed in Islamic cultures throughout the Medieval Period and Anatolia after the 13th century under the name of *āhīlik* composed the social and moral foundation of heroic memory. Apart from the *fütüvvētnâmes*, which were the guidebooks of these doctrines, that influence is visible through the heroic stories in the Anatolian frontiers and urban centers. The manuscript community formed around the Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories in the late Ottoman manuscript age was the residual of that tradition in composing their collective memory through some symbols and sites such as the expression of ‘*lā fetā illā Ali, lā seyfe illā zūlfikār*,’ the depictions of *zūlfikār* as the sword of Ali, the presence of the professions of guilds as the prominent members of the community alongside the verbal depictions of protagonists and their companions in the content of the stories.

Lieux de Mémoire on Protagonists and their Companions

Around the aforementioned social and moral values that have been based on *fütüvvēt* doctrines, the members of the manuscript community in Istanbul in the late manuscript age imagined and idealized the heroes of Hamza and Ebū Müslim.

How did the manuscript community imagine the heroic figures of Hamza and Ebū Müslim? Hamza is usually called *Sāhib-kirān* (the World Emperor) and *Pehlivān* (Wrestler), or the faith protector. He proves his manliness through fighting with a bear, and he is armed with a sword by

²¹³ Cahen and Taeschner, “Fütüvvēt.” For a reading of the frontier identities in Anatolia (*Rūm*) through frontier epics, see: Zeynep Aydoğan, “Changing Perceptions along the Frontiers: The Moving Frontier with Rum in Late Medieval Anatolian Frontier Narratives” in *Living in the Ottoman Realm: Empire and Identity, 13th to 20th Centuries*, eds. Kent Schull and Christine Isom-Verhaaren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016). Also, see: Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, *Warriors, Martyrs, and Dervishes*.

²¹⁴ For the *fütüvvēt* ideology in *esnāf* groups, see: Eunjeong Yi, *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul: Fluidity and Leverage* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004).

Hıdır Elijah.²¹⁵ He enjoys hunting and he fights with his horse ‘Aşkar, against the fire-worshippers (*mecūsī*), and he often successfully converted them to Islam. As Hamza, Ebū Müslim proves his martial vigor as a chivalrous athlete (*pehlivān*) by fighting with a wild tiger and other wrestlers. He is armed with his famous hatchet (*teber*). It is for this reason that he is usually called Ebū Müslim Teberdārī (the Hatchet-Porter) instead of Ebū Müslim Horasānī (from Khorasan) in the Turkish versions. This hatchet is bestowed upon him after a revelation from the Prophet in his dream as is described by Kathryn Babayan:

[...] that night, the Prophet comes to Abu Muslim in a dream, places a crown on his head, and adorns him with a robe and belt to initiate him into the circle of Alids. Muhammad announces to Abu Muslim, ‘You are the one who will take revenge for my family. What I give you no human being has yet received. Take revenge from the house of *Banu Umayya* and kill the Marwanids. When Abu Muslim responds that he has no army to avenge the blood of the Prophet’s family, Gabriel appears with his famous hatchet. The visions are gone when Abu Muslim awakens, but in the palm of his hand, he finds a sketch of the hatchet Gabriel had brought him – proof of the reality of his dream and of his mission.²¹⁶

The construction of his mission as having been directly legitimized by the Prophet through his trademark weapon made his hatchet a long-standing symbol in the collective memory of the audience (see: Figure 17). Irène Mélikoff says: “the hatchet is an inseparable element of the legendary figure which becomes the symbol of *Abū Müslim* as *Zūlfikār* is for Ali.”²¹⁷

²¹⁵ A legendary character told to live in the Moses’s time. In the Islamic mysticism and literature, he is the representation of the wise helper.

²¹⁶ Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 130.

²¹⁷ Irène Mélikoff, *Abū Müslim*, 2. My translation.



Figure 17 A 16th century depiction of Ebū Müslim. Derviş Mehmed, *Sübhātü'l-Ahbâr*, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex AF, nr. 50, 9a.

There are stereotypes in the heroic stories, not just of the protagonists but of their companions (*ayyār*) as well. The Persian concept of *ayyār* became visible in the Persian textual world after Firdevsī's *Šehnāme*. The *ayyārs* or *civanmerdān* are the companions of the courtly characters, and neither could function without the other in the plot. As opposed to scholarly works in which 'ayyārship' gains pejorative meanings during some periods, the great emphasis of these *ayyārs* in the stories is placed on the qualities of justice, honesty, respect for women, hospitality, modesty, generosity, and strong loyalty to one another and the group as a whole.²¹⁸ Some 'ayyārs had their own cycles

as in the cycle of Samak-e 'Ayyār, but usually, they appear as the best companions and brothers in arms of protagonists, namely princes.²¹⁹ "The 'ayyār is a commando, a spy, a speedy messenger who is also clever with words, and a shrewd advisor to his prince. The prince is brave, strong, and handsome, while the 'ayyār is agile, clever, and self-effacing."²²⁰ Ömer 'Ayyār, in the Hamza stories of this corpus, has similar characteristic features. In the narratives, he acts as the closest companion and confidant of Hamza since his childhood; they prove their manliness and train with weaponry together. He conveys his messages to other troops and fights against the common enemies, which are mostly the Zoroastrian princes.

²¹⁸ W.L. Hanaway, *Love and War: Adventures from the Firuzshāhnāma of Sheikh Bighami* (Delmar, N.Y., Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1974), 11.

²¹⁹ Samak-e 'Ayyār is a prose narrative originating in the milieu of professional storytellers, transmitted orally and written down around the 12th century. See: Marina Gaillard, *Le Livre de Samak-e 'Ayyār: Structure et Idéologie du Roman Persan Médiéval* (Paris: Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique et l'Association pour l'Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 1987).

²²⁰ Hanaway, *Love and War*, 16.

As opposed to the one, ideal prototype of heroes, there are two types of *ayyārs* in the stories as the ones that serve the heroes and the others in the service of the antagonist leaders. For example, in the 16th volume of *Hamza*, written in 1815, ‘Ömer ‘Ayyār and Ebū’l-Feth represent the positive typology of ‘*ayyārs*, especially with their loyalty to Islam and *Hamza*, whereas, Kelbād ‘Ayyār represents the negative typology as serving the fire-worshipper princes (*ṣāh*). This may be a result of different perceptions toward the ‘*ayyārs* in the collective memory that occurred during different historical periods.

The appreciation and scorn of collective memory in the imagination of heroes are most visible through the approbations (*du‘ā*) and curses (*beddu‘ā*) as communal practices, recorded especially in collective reading notes. As we understand from these abundant notes, approbating the heroes and cursing the villains after the recitation of the story was a common practice that contributed to creating a sense of community. Through constant exalting of the hero who is ‘the savior,’ ‘the faithful’ and ‘the righteous’ over the antagonist who is ‘the evil,’ ‘the infidel,’ or ‘the Yezīd’ as the symbolic figure of cruelty, the members of the manuscript community were constantly and communally redrawing the sharp division between ‘the good’ and ‘the bad.’

The heroes that ultimately deserve to be praised in the corpus of this study are certainly *Hamza* and Ebū Müslim themselves, alongside their companions, followers, and helpers as a theme abundantly appear in the notes. The note-writers seem passionate at eulogizing their heroes as in this example:

No Sultan came to the Earth as my dear *Ferāmūz* in *Şehnāme*, *Behzād* in *Hamzānāme*, *Bedi‘üz-zemān* in *Ebū Muslimnāme*, may be known.²²¹

The note-writers are not satisfied by praising the souls of heroes on their own; they also call other readers, such as this reader who calls to recite *fātiha* for Ebū Müslim at the end of each volume, by including himself and everyone in the prayer, as in this note:

²²¹ “Şehnāme’de Ferāmuzcum, Fīrūznāme’de Behzadcım, Hamzanāme’de Bedi‘üz-zemāncım, Ebū Müslimnāme’de Mızrabcı, bunların mānendi Şehinşāh gelmemiştir, mā‘lūm ola.” FMK 30, 101b.

At the end of each volume, if you recite a *fātiha* for Ebû Müslim, Muhammed-i Dâ'î's request and wish are that you do not forget for the God's sake to recite a *fātiha* for this men and for all others, 26 February 1822.²²²

Apart from approbation, the story characters, namely antagonists and their followers, are vulnerable to the reprobation (*la'net*) of readers. They could reprobate the antagonists all at once with great enthusiasm, such as the following readers who revile Abdülcabbār:

In the coffeehouse of the Arabacı Han on the At Square, Rıza Efendi of Tokat read this, and the customers in the coffeehouse damned on Abdülcabbār three times by acclamation, 27 January 1831.²²³

By the end of a story, the audience praised the souls of protagonists and damned the antagonists; in other words, the approbation and reprobation were usually juxtaposed in after-reading sessions as in the following example:

Hâfiz İbrâhim Efendi, a school teacher from the scholars read this book in the coffeehouse of coffeehouse owner/ operator Edhem Ağa in the neighborhood of Kılıç Ali Paşa in Beşiktaş. Please curse on Mervân-ı Hammâr and pray *fātiha* for Ebû Müslim, beginning of 1860.²²⁴

This book was read by Tevfik Efendi, a kethüdâ the son of Captain Abdullah, in the coffeehouse of the Gatekeeper Mustafa Râşid in the neighborhood of Yahyâ Kethüdâ in Kasımpaşa. All fellows cursed Yezîd. Let's pray *fātiha* for the honorable souls of Ebû Müslim and Ahmed Zemcî and all other Muslim leaders, 2 December 1861.²²⁵

Yezîd – historically, the son of Muâviye– is the most hated character as is evident from notes such as:

²²² “Her cild tamâmında Ebû Müslim Hazretleri’ne bir fâtihâ idersen Muhammed-i Dâ’î’nin ricâ ve niyâzı oldur ki [...] kıra’at muhabbetinde cümlesini ve bu dâ’î’yi fâtihâ’dan ferâmuş itmeyüb fâtihâ inâyet ide, Allah aşkına fâtihâ, 4 Ca 237.” MK 8504/18, 96b.

²²³ “At Meydanı’nda, Arabacı Hanı kahvesinde, Togatlı Rıza Efendi kıra’at eylemiştir. Üç defa kahvede olan müşteri Abdülcabbâra la’net olsun diyü haykurmuşdur, 15 Ks 245.” MK/29, 23b.

²²⁴ “Beşiktaş’ta, Kılıç Ali Paşa mahallesinde, kahveci Edhem Ağa’nın kahvesinde, ‘ulemâ’ dan mekteb hocası Hâfiz İbrâhim Efendi işbu kitabı kıra’at eylemiş ve Mervân-ı Hammâr’a la’net idüb ve Ebû Müslim hazretlerine fâtihâ isnâd eyleyin efendim, gurra-i 1276” MK 8504/14, 76b.

²²⁵ Hâlâ bu kitabı Kasımpaşa’da, Yahya Kethüdâ mahallesinde, Bekçi Mustafa Râşid’in kahvesinde, kayıkçı kethüdâsından Abdullah Kapudanzâde Tevfik Efendi otuz sekiz cildi de kıra’at idüp cümle ahabb Yezîd’e la’net okuyub cümle müslümân serverlerine ve Ebû Müslim hazretlerine ve Ahmed-i Zemcî hazretlerine ve cümle serverlerin rûh-ı şeriflerine Allah rızası için fâtihâ, 29 Ca 278.” FMK 42, 42b.

This book was read by Rıf'at Ahmed Bey, the son of the Esseyyîd Mustafa Ağazâde who is the head of barbers. He delighted a lot, damn the soul of Yezîd, 1811/1812.²²⁶

Another note displays the enthusiasm of readers while probating Yezîd in which the note-writer cries and sighs for Ali and Hüseyin:

The son of Ârif Efendi read this book and he cried for the roses of the Prophet. Ah brave Ali ah ah ah/ Ah Hasan ah ah ah/ Ah Hüseyin ah ah ah. I reprobate a thousand times on the soul of Yezîd.²²⁷

The hate towards Yezîd could appear in the couplets written amateurishly by the readers such as:

I loved the Messenger of Allah, may His mercy be upon him/ I did not love Yezîd, may His [God's] malediction be upon him.²²⁸

Yezîd, in the collective memory, had become such a hatred character that his name is used inclusively for all deviant and infidels; it is also used as a term to insult someone. The readers damned Yezîd with all their hearts and they were even damning other readers, in case they don't damn Yezîd and his followers enough who were mentioned as *ehl-i* Yezîd. Through such notes, the manuscript community is clear in drawing the boundaries by excluding those from the community who did not share the same approach towards villains and common practice of reprobation: See, for example:

It was read in the coffeehouse of Hakkı Efendi, one of the Varna migrants and a hundred of thousand times damn the soul of Yezîd. I damn anyone who does not [damn] Yezîd, 1883/4.²²⁹

²²⁶ “Bu kitabı ser berber Şehreminili Esseyyîd Mustafa Ağazâde Rıf'at Ahmed Bey kıra'at eylemişdir. Begâyet hazz eylemişdir, la'net Yezîd'in canına, 1226.” MK 8504/6, 8b.

²²⁷ “İşbu kitabı ‘Ârif Efendi’nin mahdümü kıra'at eyleyüb hazret-i resûlu’llâhın gülleri için bir vâfir ağlamışdır. Merdiyâ Ali âh âh âh/ Ya hasan âh âh âh/ Ya hüseyin âh âh âh. Yezîdin cânına hezâr la'net olsun. “ FMK 32, 12b.

²²⁸ “Sevdim Allah Resûlü rahmetu’llâhı aleyh/ Sevmedim Yezîdi lânetu’llâhu aleyh.” MK 8504/10, 53b.

²²⁹ “Varna muhâcirlerinden Hakkı Efendi’nin kahvesinde kıra'at olunub ve Yezîde dahî cân u yürekden sâd hezâr la'net olsun. Canına Yezîdin kim [la'net] eylemez ise ona olsun la'net, 1301.” MK 8504/30, 30b.

Another example with the same enthusiasm in calling other readers to damn “all the Yezīds” is the following:

In the carpenter’s shop of The Imperial Yıldız Palace, the Servant Velī Efendi read. The brothers who listened were delighted. They damned on Yezīd, Mervān and Abdūlcabbār and the Shah of the West (Mağrib) Sehlān. I wish anyone who reads this book but does not damn these Yezīds will be deprived of the intercession of Muhammed Mustafa and the Four Caliphs [...], 24 December 1890.²³⁰

Apart from Yezīd, they excoriated many characters, such as Abdūlcabbār, Tağlu, Mervān, and Sekpāy. Under the influence of the emotions invoked by the plot, readers seemed furious enough to occasionally swear at the antagonists, such as: “Ah Sekpāy ah, I wish to screw your mother,²³¹” or “Donkey Tağlu could not still kick the bucket,”²³² or the bloodline of the antagonists (*soy sop*) could be involved in the excoriation: “I damn all bloodline of Abdūlcabbār.”²³³ It is also remarkable that similar to the heroes, the antagonists had their special titles, this time with pejorative meanings such as *Eşek* (Donkey) for Tağlu or *Hammār* (Drunken) for Mervān. Thus, as a mobilizer of antipathy, the stories congeal a community identifying those symbols of good and evil.

Apart from the form of *du ‘ā* as blessing the souls of heroes, other contexts of praising (*du ‘ā*) were an essential element of the Ottoman social life as well as the manuscript culture that contributes to the formation of a sense of community.²³⁴ Other than the form of *du ‘ā* as praise for the heroes, *du ‘a* appears in the manuscript notes as the invocation to God or requisition from other readers. The salvation of authors’/copyists’ or readers’ alongside their relatives’ souls is the first category in that regard. As discussed in Chapter 2, the scribal records usually end with a

²³⁰ “Yıldız Saray-ı Hümāyun marangozhānesinde, müstahdem Velī Efendi kıra’at eylemiştir. Dinleyen ihvānlar safāyāb olmuşlardır. Yezīd’e ve Mervān’a ve Abdū’lcabbāra ve Mağrib Şāhı Sehlān’a la’net itmişlerdir. Her kim bu kitabı okuyub bu yezīdlere la’net itmezlerse Muhammed Mustafa’nın şefa’ātinden ve çeharyār [...], 12 Ka 1306.” MK 8504/32, 17a.

²³¹ “Ah Sekpāy ah, avradını sikeyim.” FMK 38, 20b.

²³² “Hālā Eşek Tağlu gebermedi [...].” FMK 31, 54b.

²³³ “Abdūlcabbār’ın soyuna sopuna la’net olsun.” MK 8504/6, 42a.

²³⁴ See praises for example, as the essential components of the scribal records: Sami Arslan, *Osmanlı’da Bilginin Dolaşımı*, 225-261.

specific pattern as “I wrote this to be remembered/ to be prayed by the readers and writers (*bunu yazdım yâdigâr olmak için/ okuyan yazandan bir du‘â almak için*)” which is a pattern also repeated by the readers in various locations of manuscripts.

The praise of note-writers, found in many formats and lengths, points to an intercommunal demand to be praised. They can simply utter an intimate wish to brothers, “brother, bestow your *fātiha* upon my soul,”²³⁵ or, “the readers and listeners of this book shall not pass without reciting *fātiha*.”²³⁶ *Fātiha* itself, in its meaning, divides the ancestors as the ones on the blessed path and the others on the path of astray who have not incurred the divine wrath.²³⁷ *Fātiha* was contextually recited after death – and engraved on the tombstone – as a short supplication for the soul of the deceased to be on the path of the blessed (*sirātü’l-mustakīm*) but not on the path of those who earned the anger and who went astray (*sirātü’l-lezīn*). In this way, the first surah of the Quran – literally means “the Opener” for this reason – itself divides ancestors as the righteous and the deviants. Other than themselves, the readers can ask a *fātiha* for the souls of their deceased family members to be prayed as in this example:

This book was read by Mehmed Emīn, the son of Bezmī Ahmed Efendi at Paşakapusu and the fellows delighted a lot. Whoever reads this book may pray a *fātiha* and the prayer may come to fruition by God [...], 26 May 1747.²³⁸

Another context of *du‘â* appears when it is asked in the name of a community. This community could be the manuscript community itself, whereas asking *du‘â* for the Muslim brothers (*ümmet*) and warriors of the faith and martyrs (*gâzîyân ve şehîdân*) was also common. The following note is an example for praying on the audience named as friends:

²³⁵ “Karındaşım sen rûhuma bir fâtihâ ihsân eyle.” MK 8502/18, 62b.

²³⁶ “Bu kitabı okuyan ve dinleyenlerin cümlesi birer fâtihâ okumayınca geçmeyeler niyâz iderim.”MK 8504/6, 32b.

²³⁷ “In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God. Lord of the worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Master of the Day of Judgment. Thee we worship and from Thee we seek help. Guide us upon the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast blessed, not of those who incur wrath, nor of those who are stray.” *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, eds. Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al (California: HarperOne, 2015), 72.

²³⁸ “Bu kitabı Paşakapusu’nda, Bezmī Ahmed Efendi’nin oğlu Mehmed Emīn okumuşdur ve yârân dinlemiştir ve gâyet hazz olmuşdur. Her kim bu kitabı okursa Bezmī Ahmed Efendi’nin rûhuna bir fâtihâ okuya, Allah-u Te‘âlâ hayırlı murâdın vire [...], 16 Ca 1160.” MK 8502/16, 26b.

This book was read in the house of by Musa Bey in Yeniçeşme, Eyüp. The Glorious Allah may enlighten the landlord and make us as the listeners and friends his devoted slaves.²³⁹

In this category, particularly prisoners of Tobhâne, for the very understandable reasons, ask for salvation not just in the other world, but in this world, too:

Mollā (God) bestows upon the souls of the writer, reader, listeners and the deceased relatives of the readers, amen [...] Ali Ömer Efendi is imprisoned, pray him to be saved, and, oh Lord, show mercy on the other prisoners of Tobhâne, amen, 28 October 1887.²⁴⁰

Readers frequently ask for the salvation of *ümme*t, the community of Muslims as a whole, such as in this example: “Oh Lord! Save the soul of your slave, Osman, and all of the souls of *ümme*t of the Prophet.”²⁴¹ The *ümme*t idea is also expressed by asking a *du‘ā* for the deceased people of all times as in this example which is also remarkable with its delicate manner in praying:

This book was read in the year of one thousand two hundred and twenty-five [...] in Karaca İbrāhim neighborhood of İbrahim in the shop of the bookbinder Elhāc Efendi. The souls of the deceased leaders were commemorated. May Allah the Supreme and the Glorious bestow His intercession, amen. The beneficent supplier of this book may reach his worldly and other-worldly desires, amen.²⁴²

The *ümme*t motif is usually intertwined with the cults of *gāzīyān* (warriors for the faith) and *şehīdān* (martyrs), for example:

²³⁹ “Bu kitab Eyüb’de, Yeniçeşme’de meskūn Musa Bey hānesinde kıra’at olunmuşdur. Allah-u Te‘ālā hāne sāhibine ve bizlere dinleyen yārānı iki cihānda münevver idüb i’ mān itmiş kullarından eyleye, āmin.” İÜNE 1089, 9b.

²⁴⁰ “İşbu kitabı i‘ cād idene Mollā rahmet eyle, okuyan, dinleyen, okudanların, ölmüşlerin, göçmüşlerin cemi‘ ī cümlesinin rūhuna rahm eyle, āmin [...] Ali İbn Ömer Efendi Tobhānede mahbusdur, dua idiniz inşā‘allah kurtulsun. Tobhāne mahbuslarına Molla imdād eyle, āmin, 16 Ta 303.” MK 8504/16, 15a.

²⁴¹ “Yārāb! Bende-i Osman ve cemi‘ī ümmet-i Muhammedī kulunu azabundan āzād eyle, āmin, Sālih, 29 Şevvāl 1299.” FMK 29, 12a.

²⁴² “Bin iki yüz yigirmi beş senesinin kırk sekiz [...] Karaca İbrāhim Mahallesi’nde Mücellid Elhac Efendi’nin dükkānında kıra’at olunub serverān rūhları hayr du‘ā ile yād olunub Allah-u Azīmü’ş-şān şefa‘ātlerine mazhār eyleye, āmin. Okunmağa viren sāhibü’l-hayrın dünyevī ve uhrevī murādlarına nā‘il eyleye, āmin.” MK 8504/5, 125a.

On the date of 24 November 1884, I read this Ebū Müslim, the Porter of Hatchet with love and pleasure in the time of youth as a humble and poor slave. Afterward, I reserved a place under the earth. I ask mercy on the souls of all the Muslims and *gāzīs*.²⁴³

The cults of *gāzīs* and *şehīdān* have always lingered strongly in the collective memory, through the elegies, prays, epics stories both in textual and oral forms. Looking at the high numbers of reader notes of this character, praising the souls of *gāzīs* and *şehīdān* after reading the heroic stories seems a common action among the Ottoman readers in the late manuscript age. This note is an example:

Arpacı Durakzāde Halīl Efendi read this 53rd volume of Hamza the Delighted. All fellows listened and delighted, and they recited a *fātiha-yı şerīf* for the souls of *gāzīs*, my sir. This is recorded for their delight to be known, 25 January 1865.²⁴⁴

Or, in this note, three *ihlās* and one *fātiha* are recited, which is a common combination when someone wishes to pray a short supplication for a deceased soul:

This Ebū Müslim and *Zemcīnāme* were read by Hāfiz Nezīr Efendi, the servant of the Chief in the Registry Office, in the coffeehouse of the Ironmonger Osman in the neighborhood of [...] on the twenty-seventh Sunday night of April in 1874. The friends and fellows delighted and they bestowed one *fātiha* and three *ihlās* for the souls of *gāzīs* and *şehīdān*. May the Supreme Being not deprive them of His intercession, amen, 4 April 1875.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ “Fī 12 Ts 300 tārīhinde, işbu Teberdār Hazret-i Ebū Müslim’i hakīr ve fakīr bendeleri genc ü gulām vakitte aşk ve şevk ile kıra’at itdim. Āhir kara toprak içre mekân tuttum. Cümle mü’minünūna gāzīlerle berāber arzlarına rahmet olunmasını taleb eylerim efendilerim.” MK 8504/2, 37a.

²⁴⁴ “Hamza bā safānın elli üçüncü cildini Kapan Dakīk’de Arpacı Durakzāde Halīl Efendi kıra’at idüp cemi’i ahbablar dinleyüp gāyet safāyāb olub şehīd olan gāzīlerin rühlarına *fātihā-yı şerīf* du’ā eylemişlerdir efendim. Hazzları ma’lūm olmak için ī ‘şār kılındı, 27 Şa’ban 1281.” FMK 104, 1a.

²⁴⁵ “İşbu Ebū Müslim ve *Zemcīnāme*’yi işbu bin iki yüz toksan iki senesi Saferü’l-hayrın yigirmi yedinci bazar gicesi, [...] mahallesinde Nalbur Osman Ağa’nın kahvesinde defterhāne hākāmı bendelerinden Hāfiz Nezīr Efendi kıra’at idüb ahbāb-ı yārān safāyāb olub gāzīyānın ve şühedānın ruhlarına bir *fātihā* ile üç *ihlās*-ı şerīf okuyub ihdā eyleyüb Cenāb-ı Hakk cümlesinin şefa’atlerinden mahrūm eylemeye, āmin, 27 Saferü’l-hayr 1292.” MK 8504/30, 4b. Although this book is registered as *Dāstān-ı Eba Müslim* in the library catalog, it is the 35th volume of *Zemcīnāme*. Also, the manuscript registered with the number 8504/27 in the same collection is actually the 32th volume of *Zemcīnāme*.

The Visual Sites of the Heroic Memory

Words and discourses are not the only sites of collective memory. As individual memories, collective memory was also and usually processed through images, as is evident in the abundance of doodles and drawings on the manuscripts. The doodles and images of the heroes, alongside images of their costumes, the cities, castles, weaponry, and equipment of the heroes were some of the other sites for constructing a collective memory of the heroic past.

The manuscripts are replete with the depictions drawn by readers, which make them great sources of Ottoman popular art. Beyond that, it opens the gates of not just the individual worlds of imagination, but also the communal imagination of the manuscript community of a heroic past. The images of the heroes, their costumes and weapons, and the religiously or politically symbolic buildings such as Ka'ba, castles, or mosques are contributions to (re)construct the heroic tradition.

Firstly, it should be stated that the images, as part of the reading sessions, were not unique to the manuscript community analyzed in the present study. There are some pieces of evidence that the illustrated story manuscripts or large-scale individual sizes were supporting the performance of storytellers. According to Evliya Çelebi, the miniatures that depict Hamza's combats with the well-known giants and wrestlers (*pehlivān*) are highly prevalent among the people.²⁴⁶ See, for example, one of the depictions of Hamza in the Topkapı Palace Library dated between 1740-1760 depicts Hamza in the Arabic warrior clothes with his mace (*gürz*) in the shape of a lion's head, flying on the legendary bird Simurg which Banu Mahir presumes its utilization in public storytelling sessions judging from the large size and content of the miniature (see: Figure 18):²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ Fuad Köprülü, *Edebiyat Araştırmaları*, 370.

²⁴⁷ Banu Mahir, "A Group of 17th Century Paintings Used for Picture Recitation" *Art Turc/Turkish Art*, 10th International Congress of Turkish Art, 10e Congrès international d'art Turc, Genève-Geneva 17-23 September 1995/17-23 Septembre 1995, Actes-Proceedings (Genève 1999): 443-455. Cited from Değirmenci, "Söz Bir Nesnedir ki Zâil Olmaz,"640.



Figure 18 Hamza on the legendary bird *simurg*, Topkapı Palace Museum Library, İstanbul h. 2134, 2a. From: Değirmenci, "An illustrated Mecmua: The Commoner's Voice and the Iconography of the Court in Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Painting," *Ars Orientalis* 41 (2011): 186-218.

Another example of the verbal depiction of scenes based on images is the Guild of Fortunetellers of Illustrations (*Esnāf-ı Falciyān-ı Musavvir*), again mentioned by Evliyā Çelebi in the 17th century Ottoman Istanbul. These fortunetellers hung illustrations of heroic figures and scenes drawn by the bazaar painters (*çarşı ressamı*) and they made clients pick up an illustration and present their interpretations based on the illustration.²⁴⁸ Another relevant example in terms of storytelling accompanied by large-scale paintings would be from the Qajar Period of Iran in the 19th century. Here, the storytellers called *parda-dār* were telling the scenes of Shiite martyrology on Karbala depictions.²⁴⁹

These illustrations were probably in the collective memory of our manuscript community while the readers were depicting the characters or symbols on the manuscripts. In our context, however, the images on the manuscripts of popular heroic stories were not drawn by the illustrators, copyists, or reciters but by performers, readers, or someone from the audience – probably known with his talent in drawing. Although there is little information available, one can assume they were drawn both in public reading sessions and in the full privacy of the individual readers. Not frequently but sometimes the name of the person who drew the pictures is given at the side of the image. For example, on the 6th volume of Ebū Müslim that was recited by Bahrī, Ahmed Ağa drew the hatchet on a page,²⁵⁰ on the 8th volume of Ebū Müslim the hatchet was

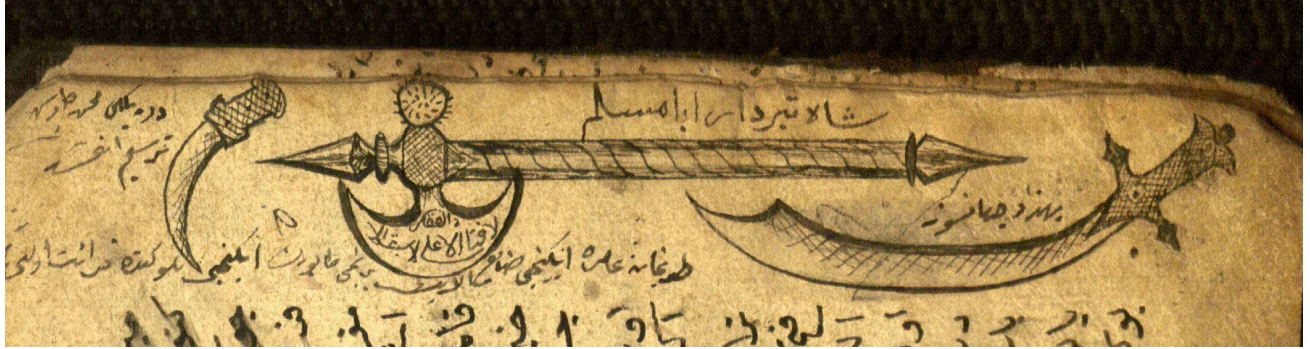


Figure 19 Drawing of weapons by a reader named Dereköylü Mehmed Çavuş. MK 8504/25, 3b.

²⁴⁸ Orhan Şaik Gökyay, *Evliya Celebi Seyahatnamesi (Topkapı Sarayı Bağdat 304 Yazmasının Transkripsiyonu-Dizini)*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1995), 292.

²⁴⁹ Peter Chelkowski, “Narrative Painting and Painting Recitation in Qajar Iran,” *Muqarnas* 6 (1989): 98-111, 101.

²⁵⁰ “Tobhāne’de, Boğazkesen’de, Kadīriler yokuşunda Emīn Rıfki Efendi’nin kahvesinde, [...] kira’at idüb Ahmed Ağa dahī teber-i hazretin resmini tersīm eylemişdir.” MK 8504/5, 81b.

drawn by İsmā‘il Hakkı Efendi,²⁵¹ or on the 23rd volume of Ebū Müslim, the dagger of Yeldā was depicted by someone called as Muhlīs.²⁵²

Apart from some minor doodles of flowers, birds, and geometric shapes, the images on the manuscripts are mostly of heroic content, and this content reveals the visual imagination of heroic figures and their belongings. From the most amateur ones to expert rendition, weapons of princes (*şāh*), protagonist warriors like Ebū Müslim, Hamza, and Ahmed-i Zemcī, and their commanders (*ayyārs and hindīs*) compose the majority of images on the manuscripts. As mentioned earlier, the weaponry of the heroes is unique and highly symbolic in the collective memory. This is deductible with the images of drawings of hatchets (*teber*), swords (*kılıç*) daggers (*hançer*), maces (*gürz, şeşper or topuz*), spears (*mızrak*), and rifles (*tüfeng*) that turn the pages into a battlefield for the readers and audience in case they were shown during the collective reading. For example, on a 56-folios manuscript, MK 8504/6, there are 22 hatchets, eight swords, three maces, and one ax, reflecting the enthusiasm of readers to draw the weapons. These could have been drawn by different readers, but some semi-professional readers drew several, well-illustrated weapons, as is evident in Mehmed of Dereköy in Figure 19. Another significant portion of the illustrations is the characters in the stories illustrated with or without their weapons. It is remarkable that not only Hamza or Ebū Müslim, but also their commanders or relatives such as Ömer ‘Ayyār, Ömer Ma‘di, Kāsım, Ahmed-i Zemcī, Behzād Cihān, and also their enemies such as Tağlu or Mervān are depicted.²⁵³

There are common physical appearances shared by the images of human figures, such as the long and curly mustaches and uni-brows. In addition to these features, one might consider that the clothes with long skirts or baggy pants and feathered turbans are the reflections of some stereotypes about the Persian warriors in the Ottomans’ minds. In a previous article, I had also claimed that the visual imagination of historical characters should have intertwined with the

²⁵¹ “Ebū Müslim hazretlerinin teberi. Şeyh cami‘i civārında İsmā‘il Hakkı Efendi tersīm eylemişdir.” MK 8504/7, 67b. In this manuscript, I followed the folio numbers situated on the left of each page since they are accurate.

²⁵² “Hancer-i bād-ı yildā. Muhlīs tersīm itmişdir.” MK 8504-20, 38a.

²⁵³ The depictions of the antagonists do not mean they were welcomed by other readers. For example, on one of the character illustration on the 13th volume of *Zemcīnāme*, somone wrote “one should take the sword from him and tuck it in his ass [elindeki kılıcı alıp götüne sokmalı].” MK 8504/30, 42b.

physical properties of janissary bodies and clothes.²⁵⁴ Peter Burke, in his cited article on social memory, explains the mythogenesis with the perception (conscious or unconscious) of a “fit” in some respect or respects between a particular individual and a current stereotype of a hero or villain.²⁵⁵



Figure 20 Figure 21 Facial close-ups of Kāsim and Bedī (Bedū’z-zemān) with long mustaches and characteristic helmets. FMK 105, 1a.



Figure 21 The outfits of some characters drawn on the manuscripts. From left to right: İÜNE 1159, 57b; 1121, 65b [folios are followed from the numbers on the corners]. MK 8504/17, 39b.

²⁵⁴ Elif Sezer-Aydınlı. “Unusual Readers in Early Modern Istanbul: Manuscript Notes of Janissaries and other Riff-Raff on Popular Heroic Narratives,” *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 9 (2018): 109-131.

²⁵⁵ Peter Burke, *History and Social Memory*,” 104.



Figure 22 Warriors in combat with their maces. İÜNE 1103, 61a.



Figure 23 A reader's drawing of a character with a mustache and special cap. İÜNE 1097, 106a.

Apart from the weapons and warrior depictions, other *lieux de mémoire* of the heroic narrative readers are the physical places, and animals, and interestingly the coffins of the deceased heroes. The castles and imperial tents (*bārgāh* or *otağ*) are frequently depicted in relation with the plot written on the page:

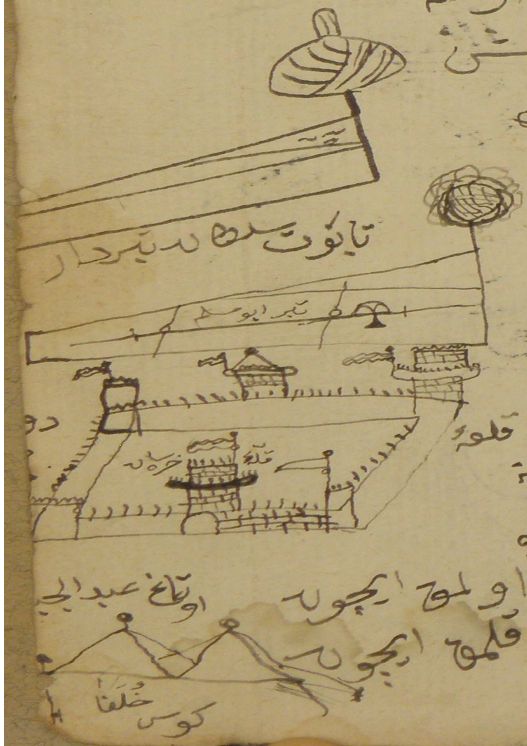


Figure 24 A reader's drawings of coffin of the Sultan hatchet-porter, the castle of Khorasan, and the tent of Abdülcabbār. FMK 36, 38a.

Lastly, it should be stated that Bektashi and Alid affection in the visual imagination of the manuscript community is remarkable through the swords of Ali (*zūlfikār*) (see: Figures 10):



Figure 25 Various readers' drawings of *zūlfikār*s. İÜNE 1158, 69b and MK 8504/2, 57a.

The Bektashi symbolism and Alid affection are visible through the innumerable manuscripts in the formulaic expressions of “the companions of Ali’s lodge [*dergāh-ı āli yoldaşları*] or *lā fetā illā ‘Alī, lā seyfe illā Zūlfikār* but also through the inscriptions of Ali, dual *vav* letters and some a few depictions of lodges. Although that does not directly imply that their drawers of these

visuals were Bektashis as will be discussed in the following, the readers coming from the Bektashi circles such as Janissaries and their sophisticated visual symbolism had an impact on these decisions of images.²⁵⁶ In the manuscripts read before 1826 (*Vaka-yı Hayriyye* or the Auspicious Event heralding the massacre of Janissaries by the State), it is possible to trace the signs of Janissary readers, as discussed in Chapter 4 who were Bektashis since its foundation during the reign of Murād I (1362-1389). On the other hand, the illustrators of these depictions were not necessarily Bektashis, since Bektashism was not perceived as a heterodox sect until the 16th century when the conflicts between the Palace and the Shiite Safavids increased after Selim I (1512-1530). Some claim that, as opposed to Alevism, Bektashism was open to non-Muslims as well as Turkish or non-Turcoman people.²⁵⁷ Therefore, these images that are related to Bektashism today might be parts of the imaginary world shared by the manuscript community in Istanbul in the late manuscript age.

Contestation and Reconciliation of Heroic Memories

The sites of collective memory – as discussed so far through the verbal and visual heroic imagination based on a large-scale social and moral basement of Islamic heroic culture– should not be perceived as either unique or common to all manuscript or urban communities in Istanbul in the late manuscript age. On the contrary, defacements, censorship, and oppositions to the heroic imagination in the collective memory also occurred in the communal, historical, and political spheres, leading to a conceptualization of ‘the contestation of memories,’ which will be discussed through the manuscripts and external sources.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ For the symbolism and visual imaginary world of Janissaries, see: Erdal Küçükyağın, *Turna'nın Kalbi: Yeniçeri Yoldaşlığı ve Bektaşilik* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2009): 40-50.

²⁵⁷ See: Irène Mélikoff, *Hacı Bektaş-Efsaneden Gerçeğe* (İstanbul: Cumhuriyet, 2004), 220.

²⁵⁸ This concept should be understood separately from Foucault's term “counter-memory” since I do not necessarily imply a resistance but rather confrontation of memories that would or would not end up by reconciliation of the memories. Michel Foucault, Language, *Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, ed. Danold F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980).

The ‘contestation of memories’ that refers to different levels of discomfort towards the verbal and visual images within the manuscript community is most visible through the defamation of the human depictions on the manuscripts (see Figure 26):



Figure 26 Examples of effacement on humanly figures. From left to right: İÜNE 1100, 9b [my own pagination]; MK 8504/27, 3a [my own pagination]; FMK 59a.

Beyond the possible interpretation of the sensitivity towards the human depictions in the Islamic tradition and religion, these defacements might be interpreted as a discomfort resulting from the contestation of heroic imaginations that were not shared by the whole community.

Apart from the humanly figures, the tendency towards defacement, erasing, and taping over is especially remarkable on the notes and insignias of Janissaries. This might be explained by the rising abomination towards Janissaries in the collective memory as bullies and rebels. On the other hand, the action of defacement of the Janissary marks over the manuscripts might be for the sake of surviving the manuscripts in the danger to be destroyed by the authorities.

Contestation of memories did not only cause discomfort to some parties within the manuscript community; it was also engaged through the heroic stories at the political level in different periods and cultural zones. There were times that the religious, official, and political authorities embraced and benefited from the functions of these stories, whereas, other times, they developed

a political discourse of degrading and even censoring. For example, the Seljuk Sultans ‘Alā’eddin Keykübād (r.1220-1237) and his grandson İzzeddīn (d.1279) cast the writing of the *Battālnāmes* (as well as the cult of other dervishes) and *Dānişmendnāme*, respectively. The 13th century was a period in which the Seljuks of Rūm had to consolidate their power by finding a respectable place in the historical consciousness of the people of the frontiers.²⁵⁹ On the other hand, there were times that the heroic stories were prohibited and reprobated by the authorities, especially because of the social environment and bonds created through these stories accompanied by the shut down of coffeehouses.²⁶⁰ For example, in the Ramadan of 1806, the Sultan issued a *fermān* to ban the telling of stories for including obscenity and political criticism.²⁶¹

Although it is totally a different period and political atmosphere, the attitude towards Ebū Müslim stories in Safavid Iran (1501-1736) by the religious and political authorities is worth mentioning to see the contested memories over heroic stories. Kathryn Babayan brilliantly investigates the uses of *Abu Müslimnāme* by the authorities in this period both as a political and cultural recasting but also as a target of censorship. Through the *fetva* of Sheikh Ali Karaki, the storytellers performing the Ebū Müslim stories were threatened with their tongues being cut off and their notebooks ordered to be washed off.²⁶² Babayan brilliantly discusses the contestation between the extremism of Alid devotees and rationalism of Shi’i scholars during the reign of Shah İsmail, she says:

A different memory of the past was preserved in an oral history recorded in epics like the *Abū Müslimnāme*. But as Karaki was attempting to consolidate a particular version of Shi’ism, he privileged

²⁵⁹ Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 66.

²⁶⁰ For a discussion on the prohibitions over coffeehouses, see: Ahmet Yaşar, “Külliyen Ref’ten İbretin Li’l-Ğayr’e: Erken Modern Osmanlı’da Kahvehane Yasaklamaları,” *Osmanlı Kahvehaneleri: Mekân, Sosyalleşme, İktidar* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2009): 36-45.

²⁶¹ For a discussion on the forms of political expression in the Ottoman public space via storytellers, see: Serdar Öztürk, “Osmanlı’da Kamusal Alanın Dinamikleri,” *İletişim* 21 (2005): 95-123; Cengiz Kırılı, “The Struggle Over the Space: Coffeehouses of Ottoman Istanbul 1780-1845,” Unpublished Ph.D. Diss., Binghamton University, 2000.

²⁶² Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 123.

another recollection of medieval Islam that relied on a distinct corpus of hadith. Such contested memories mark the dynamics of Safavi cultural history.²⁶³

What do all of these contestations mean for the manuscript community subjected to that study? Apart from the aforementioned contestations within the community that is visible through the manuscripts, the most fierce opposition towards these stories comes from the ulama or in later periods intellectuals' side. Despite their popularity among imams, *müezzins*, and *medrese* students that partook in city life actively, high-level intellectuals did not seem interested in these stories, either. For some, this 'indifference' transformed into 'discomfort' that appeared in various forms such as 'belittling' as in the writings of Süleyman Faik or in the form of "complaining" as made by the anonymous – but most likely a scholar – writer of *Risāle-i Garībe*.²⁶⁴ Besides, there are signs of discontent towards the new type of reading gatherings (*kıra'at meclisi*) as reflected on some *nasīhatnāmes* written after the second half of the 16th century by the high intellectual such as Gelibolulu Āli.²⁶⁵ In this period, the narration of popular gallantries in the public space was so prolific that a *fetva* issued by Şeyhülislām Ebüssüud Efendi in the 16th century, where he blamed the stories of *Bedi'* and *Kāsım* for detracting people from prayer (*namaz*) and calls the listeners of Hamza stories erratics (*ehl-i hevā ve dalāl*).²⁶⁶

Despite the blame by scholars and intellectuals, the heroic stories were apparently not exposed to large-scale censorship by the authorities. Apart from the intercommunal control discussed above, the manuscript community seems to have enjoyed a high level of freedom despite the obscene and vulgar language in the notes, the clear expression of reader identities including the Janissaries and the Alid affection and Bektashi tendency on the stories and the manuscript notes. The reasons for the lack of such censorship may be sought in the inapplicable dichotomies that have been sharply drawn by the modern mind and early Sunni and Shiite cultures. As Cemal Kafadar dubs for the frontier epics/ ghazi narratives in Anatolia from the 11th to 15th centuries,

²⁶³ Ibid, 142. The highlights are mine.

²⁶⁴ Süleymān Fāik, *Mecmu'a; 18. Yüzyıl İstanbul Hayatına Dair: Risāle-i Garībe*, ed. Hayati Develi (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınevi, 1998).

²⁶⁵ Mehmet Şeker, *Gelibolulu Mustafa Āli ve Mevaidü'n-Nefâis fî Kavâidi'l-Mecâlis* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1997), 197.

²⁶⁶ Mehmet Ertuğrul Düzdağ, *Şeyhülislām Ebüssüud Efendi Fetvaları Işığında 16. Asır Türk Hayatı* (İstanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1972).

the heroic stories in the late manuscript age have still shared the culture shaped by “meta-doxies.”²⁶⁷ In this way, the Bektashi symbolism or Alid affection were determinants not just a Bektashi, Shiite or Alevi memories but also acts as supra-identity makers for the collective memory of the Sunni community. In that respect, the Sunnitization process that has been discussed through the words of scholars should be interrogated one more time through the popular culture.²⁶⁸

In conclusion, the manuscript community in Istanbul in the late manuscript age was based on a long-standing tradition of heroism. *Fütüvvet*, or Akhism (*āhīlik*) as its Anatolian version as the social and moral basement of that tradition, influenced the manners of storytelling as well as the genres and audience towards the heroic stories as it has for centuries in Anatolia. Rising out of this tradition, the collective memory of the manuscript community subjected to this study has (re)produced the heroic sites through praising the heroes and companions whereas cursing the villains alongside the verbal and visual depictions of the heroes, companions, their weapons alongside and the social and moral attributions to the characters. On the other hand, that memory was not unique to the manuscript community nor common to the whole urban community, which is apparent in the contestation and reconciliation of memories in the textual, intellectual, and political levels.

²⁶⁷ He states that: “Maybe the religious history of Anatolian and Balkan Muslims living in the frontier areas of the period from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries should be conceptualized in part in terms of a “metadoxy,” a state of being beyond doxies, a combination of being doxy-naive and not being doxy-minded, as well as the absence of a state that was interested in rigorously defining and strictly enforcing an orthodoxy.” Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 76.

²⁶⁸ On Ottoman Sunnitization, see: Derin Terzioğlu, “How to conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: a Historiographical Discussion,” *Turcica* 44 (2012-2013): 301-338.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL PROFILES: TITLES, OCCUPATIONS, AND HOMETOWNS OF THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The manuscript community formed around the reading practices of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories displays a wide range of variety in terms of social profiles which is well reflected in the manuscript notes by including the titles, occupations, and hometowns of the individuals. The diversified identities of the readers, performers, and audience would be exemplified with the juxtaposition of an imperial servant in the palace with a boatman who migrated from an Anatolian provincial town on the same manuscript. As I argue in this chapter, this juxtaposition requires a revision of not just the accessibility and inclusivity of certain texts, specifically heroic stories here, to various divisions of social groups, but also of the cultural practices that transcend time and space. The investigation of these community members will reveal how a cultural practice (literary taste, reading habits, and sociability) can persist approximately two centuries despite the structural transformations in literature, social life, and political atmosphere.

The universe of this community and its members is eminently related to the internal and external dynamics of Ottoman urban society in the intended period which has been called the late manuscript age. Starting with the population, Istanbul's population was rapidly growing and diversifying after the 17th century. Although serious precautions were taken by the state to manage its population—such as frequent population censuses, surety registers (*kefālet*), or travel documents (*mürūr tezkiireleri*) especially during the reigns of Mahmūd I (1730-1754) and Selim III (1789-1807)—the population continued to grow throughout the century.²⁶⁹ İnciciyan, a contemporary Armenian historian, claims the population of Istanbul in the 18th century could not be less than one 1 million based on the amount of wheat the city was consuming.²⁷⁰ On the other hand, W. Eton claimed that Istanbul's population could not be more than 300.000 based on several parameters such as wheat consumption, housing, and residential patterns, and the death

²⁶⁹ See: M. Münir Aktepe, "XVIII. Asrın İlk Yarısında İstanbul'un Nüfus Meselesine Dair Bazı Vesikalar," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* 13 (1958): 1-30.

²⁷⁰ P.Ç. İnciciyan, *XVIII. Asırda İstanbul*, ed. Hrand D. Andreasyan (İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1956), 14.

rates due to plague, among other things.²⁷¹ Recently, Betül Başaran suggested that the estimated population for late 18th greater Istanbul was slightly above 400.000.²⁷² Coming to the 19th century, thanks to the most frequent and detailed censuses from that period, we know Istanbul and its suburbs had about 391.000 inhabitants in 1844; in 1856, the number increased to 430.000; in 1878 to 574.437; and in 1886 to 851.527- more than doubling in four decades.²⁷³ Among them, the migrants registered as bachelors (*bekār*) and ‘from the country (*taşralı*)’ as young men from the provincial towns—especially Greeks and other non-Muslims—were composed of a substantial proportion, 24,000 among 238,000 males according to the 1857 census.²⁷⁴ That is, these newcomers, alongside the locals of Istanbul, comprised a serious part of the readers’ population of our heroic stories.

Before discussing this diversity, defining the boundaries of this manuscript community also entails identifying groups that were excluded. First, reading heroic stories was, by and large, a men’s homo-social activity by the dominant presence of the male audience.²⁷⁵ Thus, the women were mostly excluded from this activity, firstly, since they have limited access to the gatherings in coffeehouses where social reading mostly happened. Secondly, there were times that moral and social concerns led to the exclusion of women from listening to heroic stories as reflected in some books belonging to the genre of the mirror of princes (*nasīhatnāme*). For example, Amāsī writes in his *Mirātü’l-Mülūk* in the 15th century that “there are three things that one should avoid while treating women [...] and the third is precluding them looking at the games and the

²⁷¹ W. Eton, *A Survey of the Turkish Empire* (London, 1799): 281-266. Cited from Nejdert Ertuğ, *Osmanlı Döneminde İstanbul Deniz Ulaşımı ve Kayıkçılar* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2001), 228.

²⁷² Betül Başaran, “The 1829 Census and the Population of Istanbul during the Late 18th and Early 19th Centuries” in *Studies on Istanbul and Beyond: The Freely Papers*, vol. 1, ed. Robert G. Ousterhout (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum Publications, 2007): 53–71, 60. Also see from the same author: *Selim III, Social Control and Policing in Istanbul*, 56-62.

²⁷³ Stanford J. Shaw, “The Population of Istanbul in the Nineteenth Century,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol 10 (1979): 265-277.

²⁷⁴ Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (London, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 102-105.

²⁷⁵ I am grateful to Dana Sajdi who offered me to think this reading activity as a “men’s homo-social activity.”

unrelated and listening to the stories of heroes.”²⁷⁶ Several female names were detected among thousands of readers of the manuscripts, but they seem to have engaged in individual reading practices. One of them is an employee or manager (*hammāmcı*) of Sultan Selim bathhouse, Sülün Kadın. Her note reads “This was read by the employee/ manager of Sultan Selim Bathhouse, Madam Sülün.”²⁷⁷ Another female reader is a girl (*dühter*) called Hasred who read the story in the Imperial Palace.²⁷⁸ Hamidiye Hanım from Eski Ali Paşa and Şerife Hanım who read the 8th volume of Hamza stories are other few examples for female readers.²⁷⁹ Apart from the physical, moral, and religious exclusion of women from the reading environment, it is documented and discussed that the women had their own ‘homo-social’ reading groups around other genres such as *Muhammediye*, and *Mevlid*.²⁸⁰ The ‘exclusion’ might thus have also been a matter of choice by female actors to stay away from readings of heroic stories.

Non-Muslims as the members of this manuscript community are also scant by a few exceptions such as Ohannes of Diyarbekir who performed the 6th volume of Hamza in Valide Han on 29 December 1751.²⁸¹ Ohannes was probably an Armenian temporal laborer from Diyarbekir in South-Eastern Anatolia since the name Ohannes is a male given name with Armenian roots and his residence is indicated as a public inn (*hān*) which is typical for migrant laborers in that period. Another example to the non-Muslims is Yohan Arabacıyan, who performed the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim together with Ali Rızā Efendi on 6 December 1879 in the neighborhood

²⁷⁶ “Ve gerek ki avrat siyāsetinde er üç nesneden ihtirāz kıla: [...] üçüncī melāhī ve nā-mahreme bakmakdan ve erenler hikāyetin dīnlemekden men’ itmek gerek dimişler [...]” Cited from Mehmet Şakir Yılmaz, *Political Thought in the Beginning of the Ottoman Empire as Expressed in Ahmed Bin Husameddin Amasi’s Kitab-ı Miratu’l-Muluk*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Bilkent University, 1998, 121. I am grateful to Mehmet Kökrek for taking my attention to this genre and that specific example.

²⁷⁷ “Bunu Sultān Selīm hammāmcısı Sülün Kadın kıra’at eylemişdir [...]” MK 8504/3, 71b.

²⁷⁸ “Sarayı Hümayun’da Hasred nāmında bir dühter kıra’at eyledi, gāyet safā kesb eylemişdir.” YKŞÇ 153, 65b.

²⁷⁹ “Eski Ali Paşa’da devletlü Lafīf Paşa’nın Hamidiye Hanım kıra’at buyurmuşdur.” İÜNE 1091, 9b. For Şerife Hanım folio 12b in the same manuscript.

²⁸⁰ Both *Muhammediye* and *Mevlid* were popular religious genres performed in groups accompanied by melody. For the popularity of *Muhammediye* and *Mevlid* in the 16th and 17th centuries through women’s probate registers, see: İsmail Erünsal, “Osmanlılarda Kadımlar Ne Okuyordu.”

²⁸¹ “Bu kitabı Vālide Hān’ında sākin Diyarbakırlı Ohannes okumuşdur, 10 Safer 1165.” İÜNE 1089, 91b.

of Yavuz Sinān nearby Kapan-ı Dakīk/Unkapanı.²⁸² Considering the density of non-Muslims in the urban population and their engagement in the city's social and economic life as laborers, craftsmen, artisans, merchants, and shopkeepers until the end of the 19th century, one would expect higher non-Muslim literacy of these stories. Because, according to surety (*kefālet*) registers, at the end of the 18th century, 41% of the total labor force who worked in the shops and gardens were Greeks, Armenians, and Jews.²⁸³ Although we can still claim the presence of non-Muslims as listeners whose names were not recorded, they do not appear as readers and performers on the manuscript notes, for now.²⁸⁴ If it would not create anachronism, one would also assume that the non-Muslims were not intrigued by these stories that tell the deeds of Muslim heroic figures.

Laying aside the relative scantiness of females and non-Muslims alongside the high-ranking scholars, the notes on the manuscripts under study reflect all the divisions of the society in Istanbul in the late manuscript age. In this way, these manuscripts and their notes contribute to the studies on Istanbulite urban society in these periods by displaying some of the dynamics of the transformation of the Istanbulite urban society. Therefore, this chapter attempts to discuss the major breakups and transformations that happened through the social dynamics of the society such as migration or external/ state forces such as social control, reforms, and modernization in official institutions through the reading practice of a manuscript community. The notes on the manuscripts of heroic stories are presented as a source for the Ottoman social history as a field which mostly had to depend on official and cumulative sources such as surety registers, population censuses, and *esnāf* inventories until now.

How was someone defined in Ottoman society in this 'pre-surnames' period? The possible answers reveal the source-value of our manuscript notes in contribution to Ottoman social history, such as familial forenames (usually referring to fathers but also fathers-in-law, brothers, and cousins), occupations and professions, hometowns, titles of religious acquisitions (i.e.

²⁸² MK 8504/4, 14b.

²⁸³ Cengiz Kırılı and Betül Başaran, "18. Yüzyıl Sonlarında Osmanlı Esnafı," *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Esnāf ve Ticaret*, ed. Fatmagül Demirel (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2011): 7-20, 17.

²⁸⁴ Based on the spy reports dated mid-19th century Cengiz Kırılı states, although the operators of coffeehouses were muslims, the clientele was heterogeneous: Cengiz Kırılı, "The Struggle Over the Space," 113.

seyīyd, hāfız, hacı), or independently from all these, the nicknames which were given to individuals or families based on a particular physical or personality trait. For the last one, the square-turban (*kare sarıklı*) Mehmed, the humpy (*kanbur*) Hasan, the little (*küçük*) Hayri, the eighty-eyed (*seksen göz*) Rāşid, and lifted-mouth (*ağzı yukarı*) İbrāhim are some interesting examples from the manuscript notes.²⁸⁵ These attributions and other familial, professional, belief-related forenames alongside the hometowns of the performers and hosts of reading venues –carrying one or more– will be scrutinized in the following to discern the social units in the urban cultural and literary landscape.

Coffeehouse Owners/Operators (*Kahveci*)

There is a group, although it was categorized as *esnāf* (lit. classes) in the Ottoman society, that deserves the utmost attention not just for the clarity of the rest of the chapter but also for being the largest group within this manuscript community: coffeehouse owners or operators written as *kahveci*.²⁸⁶ Within the manuscript community that centered around the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim, the coffeehouse owners/operators composed the largest subgroup.²⁸⁷

According to the notes that were scrutinized out of roughly 1300 reading venues indicated in manuscript notes, 900 are coffeehouses.²⁸⁸ Such kind of dominance is not surprising regarding the central role of coffeehouses to the reading practice and also thinking coffeehouse operation was the biggest sector in the economic life of the city. According to the surety registers dated to the late 17th and early 18th century, for example, the owners or operators of these coffeehouses composed the third-largest group (after boatmen and porters) in the city.²⁸⁹ Behind the

²⁸⁵ In the given order: MK 8504/29, 2b; MK 8504/28, 58b; FMK 40, 13b; MK 8504/18, 67b; MK 8504/30, 51b.

²⁸⁶ For the definition and extent of *esnāf*, see the sub-section in this chapter titled “Professions of Guilds (*Esnāf*) and Guild Masters (*Kethüdā*),” Since the notes refer them as *kahveci*, it is not clear whether they owned or operated the coffeehouse.

²⁸⁷ Instead of “sub-group,” one might dub them as the “supra-group” since all of the groups that will be discussed in this chapter could be engaged with the coffeehouse business.

²⁸⁸ This domination surely stemmed from the centralization of coffeehouses as the center of social reading as will be discussed in Chapter 5 in more attention to their localities.

²⁸⁹ Betül Başaran and Cengiz Kırılı, “Some Observations on Istanbul’s Artisans,” 269.

proliferation of coffeehouses and the engagement of people of other occupations to the sector, the financial crises after the 17th century likely played a major role in the search for a livelihood in that most profitable business. Among them, Muslims, non-Muslims, locals, migrants, and people of any professional background shared that profit. These coffeehouses were the main reading environment of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories in particular, and any other literary pieces and social entertainment in general.²⁹⁰

Reserving an analysis of the function of coffeehouses in urban socialization and reading for the following chapter, we can here focus on the social dynamics by posing the question: who owned and operated coffeehouses in Istanbul roughly from the end of the 18th century until the beginning of the 20th century? Such research is meaningful for the representative value of coffeehouse owners and operators to the whole manuscript community subjected to that study, therefore, the answer is ‘almost’ anyone in the male and Muslim world of the city.

Coffeehouse owner and operators were, by some few example, can appear as performers such as Kahveci Rāşid Efendi who performed the 11th volume of Ebū Müslim in Kasımpaşa and Kahveci Mehmed Efendi who performed the 13th volume of Ebū Müslim in the Balaban Sufi lodge in Üsküdar.²⁹¹ The forename *kahveci* here could have three meanings: a coffee-seller, a coffee maker (grinder), or a coffeehouse owner/operator, or could refer to several of these functions at the same time. On the other hand, the existence of many people indicated as *kahveci* as coffeehouse owners/operators suggest that *kahveci* is usually used for the coffeehouse owners/operators. In this case, some *kahvecis* as performers read stories in the coffeehouses of others, for example, Kahveci Ahmed Ağa performed the 31st volume of Ebū Müslim in the coffeehouse of Mustafa Çavuş in Eyüb on 12 January 1885.²⁹²

The majority of coffeehouses are written with the names of their owners and/or operators except for approximately a hundred ones that are defined with their locations, names, or street

²⁹⁰ For other entertaining activities in coffeehouses, see: *Celebration, Entertainment and Theatre in the Ottoman World*, eds. Suraiya Faroqhi and Arzu Öztürkmen (London&New York: Seagull Books, 2014).

²⁹¹ MK 8504/10, 12b; MK 8504/12, 25a.

²⁹² MK 8504/26, 1a.

numbers.²⁹³ From these notes, we learn much about the titles, second occupations, hometowns, and familial forenames of many of these coffeehouse owners and/or operators. At first glance what is remarkable is that the title of *ağa* outweighs *efendi* as the latter has only 150 examples. Among other titles, there are some military-oriented titles such as the coffeehouses of Binbaşı Halil Bey on the Grand Dock (*Büyük İskele*) of Üsküdar, or Binbaşı Hüseyin Ağa in Kasımpaşa.²⁹⁴ This is not surprising regarding the dominance of military title holders in the coffeehouse business after the 17th century. 83% percent of the coffeehouse owners/operators, as they were recorded on the inspector registers at the end of the 18th century, held military titles.²⁹⁵ Among other titles, descendants of the Prophet (*seyyid*), pilgrimages (*hacı*) and *hafizes* are also common such as the coffeehouses of Hacı Musa Ağa on Balat Dock or Hâfız Mehmed Ağa in Tobhâne.²⁹⁶ Other than these, the coffeehouse owners/operators are defined with highly diversified second occupations. See below, a list of people having second professions while operating a coffeehouse as displayed in the manuscript notes on our corpus:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| • Barber (<i>Berber</i>) | • Master of silver
(<i>Gümüüş Ustası</i>) | • Bathhouse Operator
(<i>Hammâmci</i>) |
| • Clerk of Porters
(<i>Hammallar Kethüdâsı</i>) | • Leader-to-prayer
(<i>İmâm</i>) | • Gardener (<i>Bahçevân</i>) |
| • Clerk (<i>Kethüdâ</i>) | • Maker/ Seller of
Fabrics (<i>Yağlıkçı</i>) | • Clerk of Coppersmiths
(<i>Bakircılar Kethüdâsı</i>) |
| • Seller of dried nuts and
fruits (<i>Kuruyemişçi</i>) | • Maker/ Seller of
Furniture (<i>Mobilyacı</i>) | • Clerk of Porters in
Balad Bazaar (<i>Balad
Pazarı Hammallar
Kethüdâsı</i>) |
| • Senior Accountant
(<i>Başmuhasebeci</i>) | • Gatekeeper (<i>Bekçi</i>) | |
| • Tobacco-seller
(<i>Duhancı</i>) | | |

²⁹³ For more information on the locations of these coffeehouses, see: Chapter 5.

²⁹⁴ FMK 27, 43a; MK 8688/3, 42b.

²⁹⁵ Betül Başaran, “*Selim III, Social Control*,” 151. See the chart on this page for the distribution of coffeehouse owners among the military and non-military titles.

²⁹⁶ MK 8504/1, 90b; MK 8504/29, 1a. Betül Başaran’s finding from the inspector registers dated the late 18th century is interesting that “nearly all of the men in the coffeehouse business who held *seyyid* title was affiliated with a janissary unit.” Başaran, *Selim III, Social Control*, 149.

- Clerk of Porters in Fish Bazaar (*Balık Pazarı Hammallar Kethüdāsi*)
- Headman (*Muhtār*)
- Captain (*Kapudan*)
- Surgeon (*Cerrāh*)
- *Karakullukçu*
- Ironmonger (*Nalbūr*)
- Clerk of Boatmen (*Kayıkçılar Kethüdāsi*)
- Land Tenurer (*İ'cārcı*)
- Merchant (*Tüccār*)
- Clerk of Potters (*Çömllekçiler Kethüdāsi*)
- Pickle Maker/Seller (*Turşucu*)
- Clerk of Gardeners (*Bahçevānlar Kethüdāsi*)
- Head of Treasury (*Beytü'l-māl Müdürü*)
- Callers-to-prayers (*Müezzin*)
- Minister of Imperial Cannon Foundry (*Tobhāne-i Āmire Nāzırı*)
- Adjutant Major of the Imperial Naval Dockyard (*Tersāne-i Āmire Kol Ağası*)
- Embroiderer (*Nakkāş*)
- Graveyard Manager (*Kabristanda Buyurucu*)
- Pipe Maker/Seller (*Borucu*)
- Yogurt Maker/Seller (*Yoğurtçu*)

How can we explain such a diversified professional identity of coffeehouse owners/operators? Firstly, operating a coffeehouse did not require a special talent, experience, or education besides enough capital to start their business. The significance of the title *ağa* is evidence for this since this title has gradually lost its military implication and is used for 'unskilled' people.²⁹⁷ Even barbers, who had the second largest number of shops in the city during that time, had opened their coffeehouses. As opposed to a few barbershops as reading venues, there are approximately thirty barbers as the owners/ operators of coffeehouses. Secondly, as discussed above, the economic crises and increased taxes should have directed the people in search of a livelihood in the coffeehouse business.

In terms of the hometowns of coffeehouse owners/operators, we again see a variety in the records such as Ahmed Efendi of Arapgir (Malatya), Kahveci Ali Ağa of Divriği, Albanian Sinan Ağa, Persian Mirzā Ali Efendi of Iran, Georgian Süleymān Ağa, Ali of Skopje, and Hacı Efendi of Malatya.²⁹⁸ Other hometowns of coffeehouse owners/operators include Daghestan,

²⁹⁷ Haim Gerber, *State, Society and Law in Islam: Ottoman Law in Comparative Perspective* (New York, State University of New York Press, 1994), 56.

²⁹⁸ In the given order: İÜNE 1097, 2a; İÜNE 1100, 14a [my own pagination]; FMK 32, 6a; İÜNE 1100, 50b; MK 8504/32, 9a; İÜNE 1085, 75b; YKSÇ 889, 1a.

Bursa, Ürgüp, Kasımpaşa, Tekirdağ, İşkodra, and Crimea. Overall, coffeehouse owners/operators could be named representative of the whole urban community in Istanbul in that period. As Cem Behar stated for Kasap İlyas Neighborhood, the coffeehouse owners/operators also played a crucial role in chain migration by acting as sureties for their fellow townsmen. Therefore, the social identities of coffeehouse owners/operators with their social ranks, other occupations, and hometowns seem crucial in understanding the urban social landscape of Istanbul. For that reason, they will constantly be touched upon while going through the social ladder of that particular manuscript community ranging from the imperial servants to the physical laborers, from the craftsmen to the pupils of the new education system.

Imperial Servants and Eunuchs

As the first and ‘supposedly’ at the top of the social ladder of that manuscript community stands the imperial servants and eunuchs in the Imperial Palace (Topkapı) and other palaces in the service of the Sultan and his household. In the Ottoman administrative system and political ideology, everyone was accepted as the servant/slave (*kul*) of the Sultan who is the shadow of God on earth (*zillullāh*). Therefore, one might include every social unit in the reading community under discussion here as the servants of the Sultan and the dynasty in the theoretical base. But, in the more practical sense, some performers of the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim were servants specifically serving to the Imperial Palace(s) appearing on the manuscript pages as servants (*hademe, müstahdem*), slaves (*bende, köle*), gatekeepers (*kapıcı, bekçi*), gardeners (*bağçeci*), *et cetera*.

The manuscript notes referring to the readings in the Imperial Palace by the servants close to the household are evidence for the wide range of networks of audience established around these heroic stories. For example, Nezīr Ağa who was the fourth servant of the Queen Mother (*Vālide Sultan efendimizin ağalarından dördüncü lalası*) read the 34th, 35th, and 38th volumes of Ebū Müslim.²⁹⁹ Regarding the presence of reading venue is given as the room of another imperial servant, the chambermaid of the chief harem eunuch (*dārü’s-sa’āde ağası hazretlerinin oda*

²⁹⁹ In the given order: FMK 40, 26b; MK 8504/30, 49b; FMK 42, 19b.

lalası) Tayyīb Ağa, we can assume he performed the texts to other servants of the Palace. Unfortunately, in the lack of date of these performances, it is not possible to deduce which Queen Mother Nezīr Ağa was under service. Another example is the Chief Çuhadār (*başçuhadār*) Sālih Ağa who performed the 3rd volume of Ebū Müslim in a relatively early date (1770/1) during the reign of Murād III (1757-1774).³⁰⁰ In this note, the reading venue is given as the mansion of the Clerk (*Kātib*) İsmā‘il Efendi nearby Zincirlikuyu that might be evidence for the integration of the Palace servants, and their reading practices, with the city’s social and cultural life.³⁰¹

Other than Nezīr and Salih Ağas, there are plenty of palace servants, as readers and audience of these stories who hold the positions known with their proximity to the Sultans such as *enderūn* (lit. inner) and *bābü’s-sa‘āde* (lit. the gate of felicity) *ağas*. The architectural structure of the Topkapı Palace, which was the residence of the Sultan’s household and the center of the Ottoman administration until the 19th century, was composed of interbedded circle yards. This structure was embedded with the administrative organization of the Palace consisting of the departments of *Bīrūn*, *Enderūn*, and *Harem* from outside in, and the servants (*ağas*) were named after these departmentalizations as *Bābü’s-sa‘āde*, *Enderūn*, and *Harem ağas* respectively.³⁰² These hierarchically structured ağas were recruited from local populations (*devşirme*) and eunuchs (*hadım*) for which they are also called as eunuch ağas (*hadım ağaları*). We know that these ağas, especially after the 16th century, were influential in book patronage through their prosperous collections and endowments to libraries, some of them established by themselves.³⁰³ Specifically, we also know that pages (*içoğlan*) who were recruited boys to be educated in the palace school (*enderūn mektebi*) were intrigued by reading stories in the 17th century according

³⁰⁰ Çuhadār or çukadār is “a lackey who walks by the side of his lord’s horse, and acts as a footman indoors. Baş çuhadar is a head of lackey, or valeti,” *Lexicon*, 738. Also see: Abdülkadir Özcan, “Çuhadar,” *DİA* 8 (1993): 381-2. For the organizational units of the Ottoman Palace, see: İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilatı* (Ankara: TTK, 2014).

³⁰¹ MK 8504/3, 36b.

³⁰² For an inclusive reading of the architecture and iconography of the Topkapı Palace through the dynamics of patronage, power and ceremony, see: Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, Power*.

³⁰³ Zeren Tanındı, “Bibliophile Aghas,” 333-343.

to the memoirs of Ali Ufūkī (Albertus Bobovius, d. 1675) who tells the most important learning method for pages was reading books. He also says that pages (*içođlanları*) read popular stories such as *Kırk Vezir*, *Hamzanāme*, *Kelile ve Dimne*, *Seyyid Battāl*, and *Kahramannāme*.³⁰⁴ Tahir Ađa, who read the 45th volume of Fırūzşāh Story in Enderūn’s Treasury Room should be one of these pages who also left a very nice depiction of the protagonist Fırūzşāh.³⁰⁵

Among other performers of Enderūn eunuchs/servants,³⁰⁶ there are Little (Küçük) Hamdi Hakkı from the eunuchs/servants of Imperial Enderūn who performed the 35th volume of Ebū Müslim in Seferli Kođuşu,³⁰⁷ and Hāfız Abdullah Efendi, from the eunuchs/servants of Imperial Enderūn who performed the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim in 1865/6.³⁰⁸ There are some examples that the reading venue is the imperial palace but the performer’s identity is not certain despite he should be other servants in the inner circle of the Palace when for example, Nūri Osman Bey performed the 15th volume of Ebū Müslim in the imperial Enderūn, Little (*küçük*) Hayri Efendi performed the 34th volume of Ebū Müslim, İsmā‘il of Karahisār performed the 28th volume of Ebū Müslim in the Imperial Enderūn on 12 January 1880, and Bekir Ađa performed the 19th volume of Ebū Müslim in 1813/4 in the Imperial Enderūn.³⁰⁹ Sometimes, the job description of the performers was also given such as the servant in the cellar of the Imperial Enderūn, Hāfız Ahmed Ađa, who performed the 7th volume of Ebū Müslim on 17 July 1811, or the porter of the Imperial Enderūn Hafız Hakkı Bey who performed the 14th volume of Hamza in Seferlikapu.³¹⁰ Enderūn *ađas* appear in the manuscript notes also as the hosts of reading venues, for example, the coffeeshouse

³⁰⁴ Albertus Bobovius, *Topkapı Sarayında Yaşam, Albertus Bobovius ya da Santuri Ali Ufki Bey’in Anıları*, trans. Ali Berktaş (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2002), 105-197.

³⁰⁵ “Bu kitabı, Enderūn’da, hazıne otasında, Tāhir Ađa kır’aat itmiştir.” MK 1285/1, 6b.

³⁰⁶ The word خدملرندن in the manuscript notes can be transliterated both as “from the eunuchs (*hadımlarından*)” and “from the servants (*hademelerinden*). The word hadım in Arabic gained the meaning of eunuch and transformed to Turkish.

³⁰⁷ MK 8504/30, 18b. Seferli Dorm (*Kođuş*) was situated in Enderūn as a residence and school of pages.

³⁰⁸ From another note of him, we understand he was exited from Enderūn (*enderūndan muhrec*): FMK 26, 7b. After the education in enderūn school, some of the pages were being appointed the services outside of the Palace. This could be the intended meaning of “exited from enderūn.”

³⁰⁹ In the given order: FMK 32, 41a; FMK 40, 20b; MK 8504/23, 41b; MK 8504/18, 61a.

³¹⁰ In the given order: MK 8504/6, 26a; İÜNE 1097, 105b.

of Barber Mustafa Ağa from the Enderūn *ağas* hosted the performance of the 2nd volume of Ebū Müslim in 1842/3 is another evidence of the variety in the identities of coffeehouse owners/operators. Abdullāh Ağa exited from Enderūn (*enderūndan muhrec*), who was mentioned as the performer hosted the session in his shop in the year 1848/9.³¹¹

Other than Enderūn, the servants of the imperial palace were given various definitions such as “from the servants (*müstahdem*) or ağas of the imperial palace.” Sometimes, more specific definitions are also possible from different physical and administrative departments of the palace such as *mābeyn-i hümāyūn* and *hassa-i hümāyūn*.³¹² The performer of the 1st volume of Hamza on 1 March 1882, on a Wednesday night, Nūri Bey, was an *ibrikdār*, the person in charge of bearing pitcher and basin to the household members.³¹³ *Hassa-i hümāyūn* or the Imperial Treasury (*Hazīne-i Hassa*) was the institution within the palace conducting the personal incomes and expenses of the Sultan where İhsan Efendi was working who was the performer of the 32nd volume of *Zemcīnāme*.³¹⁴ Other examples for the venues of reading in the Imperial Palace are “the chamber of *bābü’s-sa’āde ağas*” where İsmā’il Efendi performed a Hamza story and “the middle house (*hāne-i miyān*)” where it is told that Hāfız Emīn performed the 6th volume of Ebū Müslim to twenty thousand *ağas*(!).³¹⁵ The notes of Ahmed Efendi, a server of the imperial kitchen (*saray-ı hümāyūn tablakārlarından*) appear a dozen times on different volumes of Ebū Müslim stories between years of 1874 and 1877 was another servant performer defined with his occupation in the Palace.³¹⁶

³¹¹ FMK 26, 7b.

³¹² *Mabeyn-i hümāyūn* was both an administrative unit and the Sultans’ working and entertaining place in the imperial palace. For the transformation of this space, see: Ali Akyıldız, “Mābeyn-i Hümāyūn,” *DİA* 27 (2003): 283-286.

³¹³ İÜNE 1084, 94a.

³¹⁴ MK 8504/27, 29b.

³¹⁵ FMK 29, 42a. The number twenty thousand (*yigirmi bin*) should be an exaggeration to imply the uncountable crowd present in the session.

³¹⁶ Some examples: MK 8688/2, 52a; MK 8504/2, 26a; MK 8504/9, 45a.

The Imperial Palace was not the only place where readings took place, but we also find other palaces owned by the Sultan, his household, and top rank position-holders such as Yıldız, Galata, and Çifte Palaces. Yıldız Palace was constructed by Sultan Selim III (r. 1789-1807) for his mother Mihrīşāh sultan, but especially identified with the Sultan Abdülhamīd II (r.1876-1909) during whose reign the palace functioned as the Sultan’s office and residence where also the official gatherings and invitations took place. Velī Efendi, during that reign of Abdülhamīd II (one of his notes is dated 25 December 1890) who performed a series of Ebū Müslim was a servant (*müstahdem*) in the carpenter unit (*marangozhāne*) of Yıldız Palace.³¹⁷ Galata Palace was established as early as the 15th century and transformed up until today, firstly functioning as the training center of the pages in the Palace then turned into a madrasa and a French-based modernized educational institution.³¹⁸ Tülün Değirmenci, based on the reader notes on *Hikāyāt-ı Sipāhī-yi Kastamonī ve Tūtī* detects the manuscript was circulated in between the Galata Palace and Enderūn in the Imperial Palace.³¹⁹ Such exchanges and circulations between the palaces are also detected through the notes on the manuscripts of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories. For example, the 11th volume of Ebū Müslim was read in Galata Palace by Muhammed Sa‘id Ağa in 1788/9 whereas it was read in the Imperial Palace by the Tablakār (server to the Imperial kitchen) Ahmed Efendi on 28 September 1874.³²⁰

Although there are 80 years between the notes of Muhammed Sa‘id Ağa and Tablakār Ahmed Efendi, they are still evidence for the ‘horizontal’ circulation and exchanges within the palaces as well as between distinct palaces. The presence of numerous notes on some manuscripts telling the performances that took place in the Imperial Palace such as on the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim might be an indicator for the appreciation or availability of some particular manuscripts within the community of Imperial Palace.³²¹

³¹⁷ See: Tayyazâde Atâ, *Osmanlı Saray Tarihi, Târih-i Enderûn*, vol 5, ed. Mehmet Arslan (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2010).

³¹⁸ See: Fethi İsfendiyaroğlu, *Galatasary Tarihi* (İstanbul: Doğan Kardeş Yayınları, 1952).

³¹⁹ Tülün Değirmenci, “Bir Kitabı Kaç Kişi Okur?,” 11-19.

³²⁰ FMK 31, 43a; FMK 31, 53a.

³²¹ FMK 27, 1a; 57a; 69a; 90a.

However, even for these manuscripts, the range of circulation was never limited to the palace, which is not surprising, since palace attendants (remember the coffeehouse owner/operator and barber Mustafa Ağa) had ample opportunity to integrate with the urban life. Therefore, the seclusion of the Palace with its people and its culture was an illusion of the modern cultural/literary history, which is under the influence of the positions taken by the Sultan and his household (and the top rank administrators in the best-case scenario). It was not just the outmost yard of the palace that created opportunities for interchange between the palace and his “subjects” but the circulation of people—and books, in our case—between the very core of the Sultan’s residence and the most crowded urban spots shared by the “commons.” The reading community of the heroic stories shared this physical and textual space that was not created through the economic and political status, but rather through other parameters of identity formation such as gender (male), religion (Muslim), and heroic moral codes (*fütüvve*). Otherwise, one might not explain the fact that these stories were read both by the boatman Ali Efendi from Kengiri/Çankırı and the servant of the Vālide Sultan, Nezār Ağa.

At that point, it is important to reemphasize the need to define these stories as “popular” not as the opposite of elite or high but as in the meaning of “wide-spread.” It is that expansiveness as a result of the embracement of these stories by to the whole male and Muslim segments of the city that easily transcends the physical and social borders of the palace, which were blurred in the first place as discussed through the integration of some people—formerly or concurrently occupied in the palace positions—to the economic, social and everyday life of the city.

Infantry Troops and Titles of Military (*Askeriyye*)

According to the manuscript notes, another segment of society in which these stories circulated with a high level of appreciation was the readers from infantry troops and people of quasi-military title holders.

This is not surprising regarding the heroic content of the stories. It should be stated from the beginning that, the term military (*askeriyye*) had a more inclusive implication than its present usage which basically differentiates from the rest of the society by not paying taxes to the State. Besides, as will be discussed in more detail, after the 17th century, for refraining from paying

these taxes, we see the insertion of many occupational groups (*reayya*) within the military (*askeriyye*) class by purchasing or inheriting the necessary documents called as *esāme*. Also, some titles used as a military rank –such as *çavuş*, the head of a team– also had many social implications. Therefore, it is difficult to know exactly whether individuals holding these titles were from military ranks and actively taking military duties.

One of the most visible military groups as active members of urban life –and, in conjunction, as readers of the heroic stories in the 18th and early 19th century– were the Sultan’s infantry troops (*kapıkulu piyāde ocakları*), including the Janissaries. From the 17th century onwards until their abolishment in 1826 in “the Auspicious Event,” the Janissary corps became increasingly integrated into the urban society. As the main complaints about the corruption in the army and the defeats on the battlefield, the participation of Janissaries in the urban life as craftsmen, artisans, and shopkeepers whereas their refusal to accompany the imperial campaigns have been criticized in the contemporary chronicles and genre of mirrors of princes (*nasīhatnāme*). These complaints found a place in the State’s strategy towards the Janissaries not just as those responsible for the failures in the battlefield, but also as the main actors of unrest, violence, and moral corruption in the city. Recently, there is a substantial amount of literature that argues that the Janissaries were not just composed of the military force of the Empire, but that they were an indispensable part of the urban social, economic, and cultural life of Istanbul after the 17th century.³²² They were merchants, shopkeepers, artisans, and laborers of the city, as according to Yi’s examination on guild petitions and appeals by groups of guild members, half of the guilds contained military elements in the 17th century.³²³ Permission to Janissaries to marry has contributed to their presence in the daily life of the city. Gülay Yılmaz assumed 18.000 of the 35.000-40.000 janissaries stationed in Istanbul during the early seventeenth century were married and had separate households.”³²⁴ This integration of Janissaries to urban economic life

³²² For example, Cemal Kafadar coined this process as “esnāfization of janissaries”: “Yeniçeri-Esnāf Relations: Solidarity and Conflict,” Unpublished M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1981; Gülay Yılmaz, “The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries in a Seventeenth-Century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul” Unpublished Ph.D. Diss., McGill University, 2011); Mehmet Mert Sunar, “Cauldron of Dissent.”

³²³ Eunjeong Yi, *Guild Dynamics*, 139.

³²⁴ Gülay Yılmaz, “Blurred Boundaries,” 176.

increasingly continued through the 18th and early 19th centuries. In their already mentioned survey on surety registers, Cengiz Kırılı and Betül Başaran asserted that roughly 18% of the total Muslim labor force of Istanbul in the 18th century was registered in the Janissary Corps.³²⁵

While the integration of the Janissaries in economic and social life has been well-studied, there has been no significant research into the Janissaries' participation in cultural life especially in terms of reading and writing practices. However, they were always intrigued by the poetic and prosaic literary production firstly as poets of court and 'folk' literature such as Taşlıcalı Yahyâ from the 16th century or Kâtîbî from the 17th century.³²⁶ Uzunçarşılı in his exclusive books on the Sultan's household troops (*kapıkulu ocakları*) introduces some Janissary poets such as Akî, Hızrî, Belîğî, Rahîk î, Hüsrev, Sıdkî, and Ūlümî.³²⁷ Mehmet Kökrek and Necdet İşli extend this list by including other poets such as Askerî, Livâyî, Cesârî, and Adlî and they claim that these poets remarkably have an average or above-average knowledge of poetic meter and forms.³²⁸ Apart from being poets, Janissaries contributed to textual production through copying works such as the clerk of the 57th regiment who copied the *Tercüme-i Vesîle-i Metâlib* in 1722 or Muhammed bin Ahmed from the 33rd regiment who copied İsmâ'il Hakkı Bursevî's *Kitâbü'n-Necât* in 1765.³²⁹ Janissaries' presence should not be surprising regarding their promising career path through education resulted in many Janissaries being clerks and chamberlains who record and audit the documents within the Corps. The probate registers (*tereke* or *muhallefât*) are crucial sources for Janissaries' acquaintance with the books. According to registers on the properties of deceased Janissaries in the archives of Military Estates (*Kassâm-ı Askeriyye*), the Janissaries owned mainly but not limited to Quran (*Mushâf*) and Prayers Books such as *En'âm*, *Delâilü-l Hayrât* or *Dua'nâme*.³³⁰ Other than Quran and Prayers Books, the probate registers of

³²⁵ Cengiz Kırılı and Betül Başaran, "18. Yüzyıl Sonlarında Osmanlı Esnafı," 19.

³²⁶ For janissary poets, see: Reşad Ekrem Koçu, *Yeniçeriler* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2004).

³²⁷ İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtında Kapıkulu Ocakları*, vol. 1 (Ankara: TTK, 1988), 345-347.

³²⁸ Mehmet Kökrek and Necdet İşli, *Yeniçeriler: Remizleri ve Mezar Taşları* (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2017), 25.

³²⁹ Mehmet Kökrek, "Müstensih Yeniçeriler," *Türk Dünyası Tarih Kültür Dergisi* 59 (2016): 22-24.

³³⁰ I am grateful to İsmail Erünsal who generously shared his results of research on these registers with me. I project a separate study on the book ownership of Janissaries based on further research on these probate registers.

Janissaries commonly included *Risāle-i Birgivi*, written by a 16th century scholar on faith principles, prayers, and Islamic morality.³³¹ They also included *Muhammediyye*, a poetic (*manzūm*) work written in the 15th century on the Prophet’s birth and death and other events in the Islamic history, which has been popular in reading gatherings for centuries; or chronicles such as *The Chronicle of Nāimā* written in 16th century and of Neşrî’s *Tārih-i Cihannümā* written in the 17th century. Regarding the popularity of these works both in oral and manuscript forms as well as after the prevalence of print, the reading tastes of Janissaries would be claimed in parallel with other members of the population. On the other hand, in the probate registers of Janissaries, we do not observe—for now—heroic stories in abundance. This would be caused by unfortunate practices of the Treasury officials (*beytü’lmāl emīni*) that they usually did not record the “invaluable” books with their titles but as units such as Turkish books (*Türkî kitāb*), scattered papers (*evrāk-ı perişān*), or obsolete miscellanies (*köhne mecmu’a*). Therefore, some questions remain, such as whether there was a unique, Janissary type of literacy, whether their literary tastes were distinctive within the urban reading community, or whether these tastes were changing according to the ranks and positions of Janissary soldiers.

At that point, the reliability of the signs belonging to Janissaries in the archival and manuscript sources should be discussed. The secondary literature on Janissaries has developed the claim that the title *beşe* proves that its carrier was a Janissary. However, this title would have defined someone from other corps of the Sultan’s infantry troops (*kapıkulu piyāde ocakları*).³³² Ömer Lütfi Barkan, in his detailed analysis on the military units according to their probate registers displays that “the titles of *beşe* and the adjective *rācil* used together or separately shows people as janissaries or belonging to other infantry troops by being an artilleryman (*tobcu*), armorer (*cebeci*), and head (*bölük başı*) or sergeant (*çavuş*) of the regiment.”³³³ Therefore, this study

³³¹ Ahmet Turan Arslan, “Vasiyetnâme” *DİA* 42 (2012): 566-568.

³³² I am grateful to Mehmet Kökrek for his notice on the difficulty to define a Janissary from title *beşe* based on his research on tombstones belong to Ottoman era.

³³³ Ömer Lütfi Barkan, “Edirne Askerî Kassamı’na Âit Tereke Defterleri (1545-1659),” *Türk Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi* 3, no. 5-6 (1966), 15. My translation.

considers the title *beşe* and insignias of regiments in a broader sense to define the soldiers of any infantry troops.

The readers from infantry troops left many marks on these manuscripts, especially on the earlier ones. They define themselves as from the fellows of the Sublime Palace (*dergāh-ı ālī yoldaşlarından*) or as a fellow of a particular regiment.³³⁴ For example, the 3rd volume of Ebū Müslim was remarkably read by infantries such as Deli Beşe from the 63rd regiment, Monlā Paşa from the 59th regiment, and Deli Mustafa from the 4th regiment who performed the book in 1175.³³⁵ On the manuscript notes understudy, we see the use of *beşe* and *yoldaş* titles in fifteen manuscripts.³³⁶ The most obscure marks left by the infantries, however, are not on the written notes but through the insignias (*nişān*) that belong to various regiments. As seen in Figure 27, insignias are given by the number of the regiment after the letters of kef (ك), the abbreviation of *bölük*) and cim (ج, the abbreviation of *cema'āt*). The insignias could be in the shape of animals, letters, or swords, that sometimes imply the function of the regiments such as the Janissaries' 54th regiment's insignia as an archer unit was a bow and arrow. Although only six of the manuscripts understudy bear insignias of infantry troops, some of them seem to be read intensively by the corps.³³⁷ For example, the 3rd volume of Ebū Müslim had dozens of insignias and attributes to infantries as readers.³³⁸

³³⁴ For example: “Hālā bu kitābı dergāh-ı ālī yoldaşlarından tokuzuncu cema'atin [...] yigirmi yedi cema'atin vekīlharc ağanın hānesinde kıra'at itmişdir. Ahbāb, yārān safā itmişdir, 19 C 1212.” FMK 31, 7a.

³³⁵ MK 8504/3, 23b; 25b; 61a.

³³⁶ The manuscripts that contain *beşe*: MK 8504/2, MK 8504/5, MK 8594/18, MK 8504/25, MK 8688/3, İÜNE 1087, İÜNE 1097, and FMK 35. The manuscripts that contain *yoldaş*: MK 8504/3, İÜNE 1091, FMK 103, and FMK 31.

³³⁷ Some examples are: MK: 8504/3, MK 8504/5, MK 8594/18, MK 8504/24, and MK 8504/25.

³³⁸ MK 8504/3.

The significance of insignias for the Janissaries are displayed in some of the contemporary sources. For example, Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli (1658-1730), an Italian scholar, depicted the insignias of Janissaries according to the numbers of regiments in his detailed account on the Ottoman military system, some examples are in Figure 28:

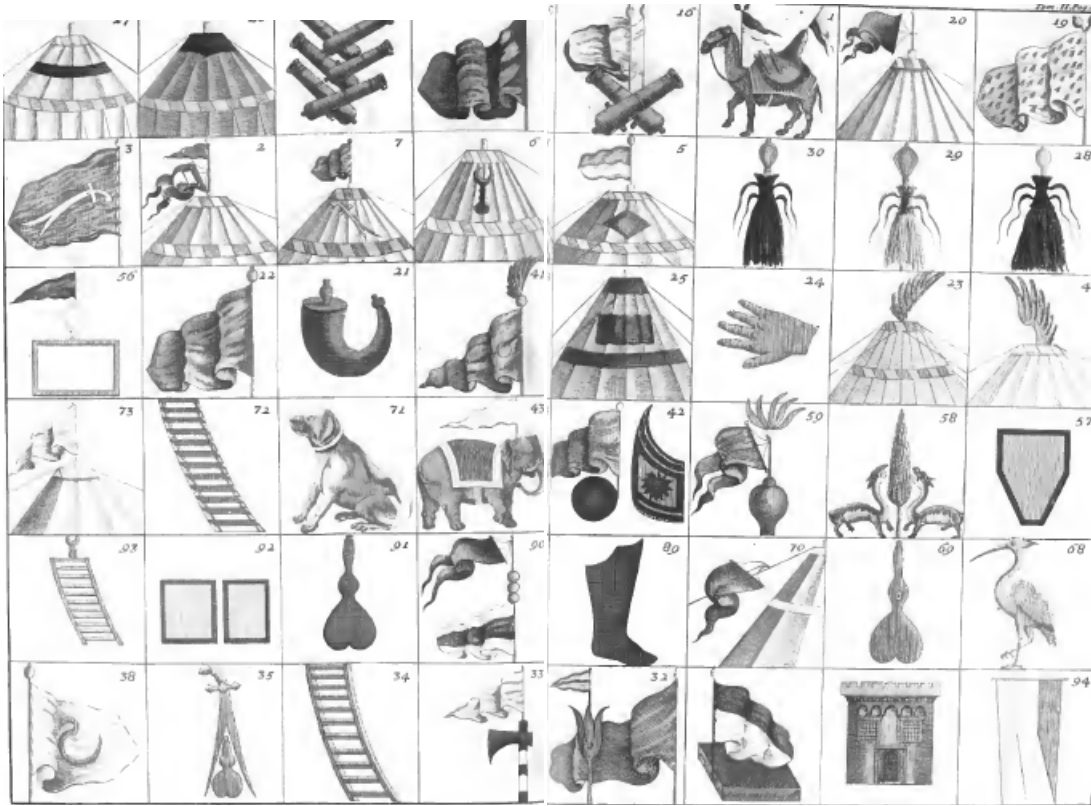


Figure 28 Some insignias of the Janissary regiments as reflected in Marsigli’s book. Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, , vol. 2, 63-64.

The chronicle of Cābī that covers the events of the late 18th and early 19th centuries illuminates the significance of insignias for Janissaries through a conflict that occurred between the government and the corps. Cābī recounts in detail that the government demanded that the insignias be removed from merchant ships but the Janissaries resisted this claim by force in the year 1808/1809.³³⁹ In the next year, the same source reports another problem that occurred

³³⁹ See: Cābī Ömer Efendi, “Tüccâr Gemilerinin Başlarındaki Yeniçeri Nişanlarının Kaldırılması [Removal of the Insignias of Janissaries on the Head of Merchant Ships],” and “Yeniçerilerin Gemilerdeki Nişanlarının Kaldırılışına Karşı Çıkmaları [Janissaries’ Opposition to the Removal of Insignias on the Ships], *Cābī Târihi*, ed. Mehmet Ali Beyhan, 244-251.

around the insignias of Janissary regiments. In the districts of Edirnekapu, Eğrikapu, and Yedikule, insignias belonging to the corps were found on the doors of Muslim and Non-Muslims houses alongside churches that were carved by knives or drawn by chalks.³⁴⁰ As Reşad Ekrem Koçu states “[...] drawing insignias of regiments was so much common that a boatman could draw his insignia on his boat, a porter on his packsaddle, a woodsman on his ax and a tradesman on his shop.”³⁴¹ The inspiring study of Mehmet Kökrek and Necdet İşli has recently shown that the insignias of Janissary regiments are still extant on the manuscripts of stories as well as on the urban monuments such as gravestones and city walls.³⁴² By these remnants, the souls of Janissaries are still wandering around the city even after two centuries of their abolishment. Interestingly, the defamation process over the marks of Janissaries by the state after the abolition of corps and Bektashi lodges disregarded some of these elements on the urban monuments, and on manuscripts. Talking for the manuscripts of heroic stories under study here, although there are some defamation attempts on the insignias and notes of Janissaries, this does not seem common or made by the State’s intervention. On the other hand, it is still possible to think that these marks were just the tip of the iceberg beyond the scope of state authority.

The interest of infantry troops –as of other military men– in these stories primarily stemmed from the heroic content of the texts, full of battle scenes, acts of revenge, and victories of Turkified Muslim heroes against ‘the infidels.’ Within the cults of heroism, more specifically for the Janissary readership, the Alid affection played a significant role. From its very first formation period, the Janissary corps was related with Bektashism as an order influenced by doctrines of Hurufism and Shiism, especially after the 15th century.³⁴³ As discussed in Chapter 3, a very sophisticated visual and literary symbolism was effective in the ceremonies, manners of attitudes, and all phases of the daily lives of Janissaries.³⁴⁴ Therefore, like the combats of Ali (*Ali*

³⁴⁰ Ibid, 408-410.

³⁴¹ Reşad Ekrem Koçu, *Yeniçeriler*, 66. My translation.

³⁴² Kökrek and İşli, *Yeniçeriler*.

³⁴³ For more information on the history and influence of other doctrines, see: Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, “Bektaşılık,” *DİA* 5 373-379. On the Bektashism of Janissaries, see: Gülay Yılmaz, “Bektaşılık ve İstanbul’daki Bektaşi Tekkeleri,” *The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, 45 (2015): 97-136.

³⁴⁴ For more on that symbolism of Janissaries, see: Erdal Küçükyağcı, *Turna'nın Kalbi*.

Cenkleri) as a popular literary genre, it is expected for Janissaries to be the prominent fans of Hamza and Ebū Müslim as the followers of Ali.

Infantry troops were not the sole element of Ottoman military organization, and they were not the only military-oriented readers who wrote notes on the manuscripts of heroic stories.

Although most of the time, the stories are not recorded by their names as under cumulative titles such as Turkish books (*Türkî kitâb*), scattered papers (*evrâk-ı perîşân*), or obsolete miscellanies (*köhne mecmu 'a*) in probate registers, it is possible to come up by some heroic stories because of the high economic value of the book or –maybe- just because of the meticulousness of the recorder. Apart from the genres of *Fîrûznâme*, *Seyyîd Battal*, *İskendernâme*, and *Kahramannâme*, some probate registers in the archives of Military Estates have the books of *Hamzanâme* and the story of Ebū Müslim, as the genres under study here.³⁴⁵ Some instances from these registers are listed as such:

Caligrapher (*Hattât*) İbrahim, the son of Hâfız Halîl Efendi dated 1748/9 had 5 volumes of *Hamzanâme* that cost 129 akçe,³⁴⁶

Sergeant (*Çavuş*) Osman, the son of Mustafa dated 1689/90 had the second volume of *Hamzanâme* that costs 40 akçe,³⁴⁷

Elhâc Yusuf bin Abdullâh dated 1712/3 had 1 volume of *Hamzanâme* that costs 100 akçe,³⁴⁸

Mehmed Efendi, the son of (...) dated 1753/4 had the second volume of *Hamzanâme* that costs 31 akçe,³⁴⁹

Doorman (*Bevvâb-ı Sultânî*) Mustafa Ağa, the son of Mehmed had *Hamzanâme* that costs 120 akçe,³⁵⁰

³⁴⁵ I am grateful to İsmail Erünsal who shared his research with me.

³⁴⁶ İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri (from now on IKS, copies studied at the Islam Araştırmaları Merkezi/ISAM in Üsküdar) 5, no. 123, 56a.

³⁴⁷ IKS, 5, no. 15. 5a

³⁴⁸ IKS, 5, no. 32, 10b-11a.

³⁴⁹ IKS, 5, no. 160, 64a,

³⁵⁰ IKS, 5, no. 170, 136b,

Esseyyīd Ahmed Ağa dated 1765/6 had various volumes (*alayı*) of *Hamzanāme* that cost 705 akçe,³⁵¹

Kazıkızāde Hasan Ağa, the son of Muhammed dated 1700/1 had various volume (*alayı*) of *Ebū Müslim* that cost 280 akçes,³⁵²

Esseyyīd Ömer Efendi, the son of Esseyyīd Hasan dated 1727/8 had *Hamzanāme* and *Ebū Müslim* that cost 1800 akçe³⁵³

Sergeant (*Çavuş*) Osman, the son of Mustafa Abdü'l-kenān dated 1689/90 had *Ebū Müslim* that cost 30 akçe,³⁵⁴

In the lack of the prices on the manuscripts themselves –except the rarely indicated fees for the performers– probate registers provide information on the economics of these books. According to that particular list, for example, the price of a single volume varies from 28 to 1800 *akçes* apparently because of the higher physical condition and more ostentatious style of the latter. Paradoxically, the manuscripts lack their prices and the prices given in the probate registers lack the books. Yet, the probate registers still have a large potential for illuminating the economics of these books.

Contrary to its modern understanding, the term military (*askeriyye*) was much more inclusive in the Ottoman society and was defined essentially as any non-taxpaying subject (*reayya*), which also excluded the high scholars (*'ulemā*). Especially when it comes to the post-17th century, the numbers of people belonging to *askeriyye* class had immensely expanded not just due to the increase in population or by the new state initiatives such as the Imperial Cannon Foundry and Imperial Arsenal, but also because of the unrighteous fulfillment of military positions by the taxpayer people. The registers of the sultanic household (*kapıkulu*) which was called *esāme* registers waived the people of non-military origin from the obligation of tax payment. Inheriting these *esāme* registers from father to son, and their sales in turn of money have been accused as one of the main reasons for the so-called decline of the Ottoman army in particular and the

³⁵¹ IKS, 5, no. 21, 91b.

³⁵² IKS, 5, no, 21, 91b.

³⁵³ IKS, 5, no. 53. 50b.

³⁵⁴ IKS, 5, no. 15, 5a.

household in general by the 17th century. It was attempted to be strictly forbidden in the 18th and 19th centuries by the government. Sultan Selim III's rebuke on the issue is worth citing:

Allah Allah! What are these irregularities? Righteous is concealed. Two barbers who came to shave me stated that they had two cannoner *esāme*. When we need soldiers for a campaign, they say there is no soldier on duty. When we search for a solution, they say not the time, assaults to the Corps are not true. We don't intend to take everyone's rights but they should be given to the people of merit. If this word is not right no one would be content, who submits to the truth but not helps may Allah devastate! It is how we lose the regime day by day."³⁵⁵

Despite the control of the government which was stricter than ever through prohibitions and regular inventories, the number of people who owned *esāme* has reached its peak in the 18th century. For example, according to a survey in 1790, most of the boatmen were registered either as imperial gardeners and guards (*bostancı*), or janissaries. And, in 1792, almost every boatman on Tobhāne wharf was registered as an imperial gardener.³⁵⁶ The scholars researching on *esāme* registers discussed that, despite their benefits, *esāme* registers had turned out to be investment tools that were sold and bought among the artisans.³⁵⁷ For the city folk, obtaining military titles meant protection from the rises in taxes and economic crisis to a certain extent. According to the survey of Cengiz Kırılı and Betül Başaran on the surety registers of the late 18th century, 2.485 shop and garden masters were holding military titles (30.6% for Muslims) and 1.035 boatmen, porters, and others were holding a military title (16.8%) for Muslims. They claim roughly 18% of the Muslim workforce in Istanbul was connected to the military establishment at the turn of the 19th century.³⁵⁸ This blurred and ambiguous distinction between the soldiers and civilians should be kept in mind while analyzing readers' profiles of heroic stories in 18th and 19th century Istanbul.

³⁵⁵ Cited from Nejdert Ertuğ, *Osmanlı'da Deniz Ulaşımı*, 29. My translation.

³⁵⁶ Ibid, 29.

³⁵⁷ Mert Sunar, "19. Yüzyıl Başları İstanbul'unda Esnaf Yeniçeriler," *Güneydoğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi* 18 (2010): 59- 86.

³⁵⁸ Cengiz Kırılı and Betül Başaran "Some Observations on Istanbul's Artisans, 272.

On the other hand, the titles provide insight to a great extent on the identities of readers in terms of their belonging to military or civilian life. The titles of performers, audience, and hosts of reading venues in the notes that are postulated as of military are corporal (*onbaşı*), centurion (*yüzbaşı*), major (*binbaşı*), *beşe*, and sergeant (*çavuş*).³⁵⁹ While the first two are more obviously referencing military ranks in the Ottoman and modern Turkish military system as ‘the head of ten soldiers’ and ‘the head of hundred soldiers,’ the social implications of *beşe* and *çavuş* was mostly elaborated based on their historical evolutions and different uses in daily social life. For the implications of *beşe* that was basically the lowest rank among the regular Janissaries, the impression of Gülay Yılmaz based on the court registers (*sicil*) is precious since she claims the title *beşe* is one evidence for the amalgamation of soldiers and civilians:

From my reading of court cases, I have gained the impression that whenever a person’s principal affiliation was with a guild or a profession the scribes were more likely to identify him as *beşe* without further details. Perhaps this usage reflects the understanding of the court scribes that the boundaries between janissaries and civilians had become blurred, and they wished to distinguish the different social types that appeared before them. Amalgamation between soldiers and artisans had thus arrived at a point at which the court found it necessary to use different titles for different types of janissary.³⁶⁰

Her impression is approved through some examples of manuscript notes. For example, the occupation of Ali Beşe who listened and enjoyed the 11th volume of Ebū Müslim in Kātib Müslihüddin neighborhood in Kasımpaşa in the coffeehouse of İmām Hāfız Mehmed Efendi is defined as a butcher (*kasāb*).³⁶¹ The same butcher, Ali Beşe shows up as a listener one more time in a performance that took place in the same neighborhood this time for the 19th volume of Ebū Müslim on 15 May 1855, and the venue is the coffeehouse of Sirkeci Müslihüddin Mosque’s *imām*.³⁶² Another example for the *beşes* who involved in the urban life by various occupations is Osman Beşe who owned a coffeehouse in Tobhāne in which the 10th volume of Ebū Müslim was

³⁵⁹ For the translations and explanations on these terms, see: “onbaşı,” “yüzbaşı,” and “çavuş” in *Lexicon*, 271, 2214, and 711.

³⁶⁰ Gülay Yılmaz, “Blurred Boundaries,” 187.

³⁶¹ MK 8688/3, 66a.

³⁶² FMK 35, 1a.

performed by the Head of Bakers (*İtmekçibaşı*) in Eyüb on 19 December 1798.³⁶³ The same manuscript was read one more time in İsmail Beşe's coffeehouse, this time by Emin Ağa accompanied by another *ağa*.³⁶⁴

Another crucial title for the blurred boundaries between the military and the civilian is *çavuş*. Many of the performers, audience, and hosts of the reading avenue were titled as *çavuş* in the manuscript notes. The implications for the title of *çavuş* are complicated as expected, given the long-standing history of the word, which some scholars have traced back 1200 years ago. Since then, this term has been used within the military system of many States up until today.³⁶⁵ Fuad Köprülü, in his still-valid encyclopedic article on *çavuş*, referred to the different positions of *çavuşes* such as *çavuşes* in the Imperial Court (*dīvān*), the inner palace (*Enderūn*) *çavuşes* or janissary *çavuşes*. Apart from these military uses, he states that in the organization of some sects such as *Rifāīs*, therefore there were *çavuşes* in the guild organizations influenced by the *fütüvve* understanding in Islamic mysticism.³⁶⁶ Evliya Çelebi in the 17th century holds guild *çavuşes* as distinct from the military *çavuşes* and counts their number as 451 in the contemporaneous Istanbul.³⁶⁷ Today, the title *çavuş*, other than the military, is used as the mediator between the workers in the field and landlords. These *çavuşes* recruit and organize people to work in the field in turn for a daily salary.³⁶⁸ All of these examples point to civilian use of *çavuş* other than as a military rank in the army. Therefore, the social status of performers titled as *çavuş* should be interpreted by keeping in the mind the fluid implications of the title *çavuş*.

As seen from the notes of *çavuşes* performers, the title *çavuş* occasionally came before and after names, such as “Halil Çavuş” or “Çavuş Mustafa,” and sometimes, in combination with other

³⁶³ MK 8504/9, 30b.

³⁶⁴ MK 8504/9, 31a.

³⁶⁵ Other than the *Lexicon* entry, for the history and etymology of *çavuş*, see: Fuad Köprülü, “Çavuşlar” in *MEB İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1963): 362-369.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 368. For a discussion on the *fütüvve* consciousness among this manuscript community, see: Chapter 3.

³⁶⁷ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, v. 1, 246.

³⁶⁸ Personal conversations with family members.

widespread titles, such as *ağa* and *efendi* as in the example of “Çavuş İbrahim Efendi.”³⁶⁹ Various contextual uses of *çavuş* in these notes confirm the diversity of its implication in the military administration and occupations such as “çavuş of Barbers,” “Yörük Halil Ağa, çavuş of Eski Ali Paşa Palace,” “Cleaner (*Müstahdem*) Çavuş Veli Efendi,” “Müezzin Ali Çavuş,” and “Kâzım from the Office of Expenses of War Department (*Bâb-ı Seraskerî Masârif Kaleminden*),” and “Mehmed, a çavuş of the Metropolitan Municipality (*Şehremānet*).”³⁷⁰ In these examples, we see the fluidity in the use of the title of *çavuş*. A *çavuş* could be used as a military rank or as other occupations that served the military (e.g. Müezzin Ali Çavuş), as a chef in a state office, and as the head of an artisans group such as the *çavuş* of barbers.

People bearing the title *çavuş*, with uncertainty whether they were from the military/ state offices or just the head of some civilian professional groups, also appear repeatedly in notes as the coffeehouse owners/operators. For example, Çavuş Ağa of Konya’s coffeehouse in Fatih District hosted the reading of Ebū Müslim’s 15th volume on 16 January 1875; Mehmed Çavuş’s coffeehouse nearby the Arab Mosque (in Galata) hosted the reading of Hamza’s 1st volume on 12 January 1900 by including 180 listeners, and Abdi Çavuş’s coffeehouse in Uzunyol/Kasımpaşa hosted the reading of 31st volume of Hamza in 1861/2.³⁷¹ Another example is Mustafa Çavuş’s coffeehouse in Eyüb District that hosted the recitation of various volumes of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories in his coffeehouse by the same performer, Coffeehouse Owner/ Operator Mahmud Efendi of Eğin. Mahmūd Efendi performed the 10th volume of Ebū Müslim on 23 December 1884, the 13th volume on 26 December 1884, the 19th volume on 2 January 1885, and the 31st volume on 12 January 1885 which is the last volume of the series.³⁷² Ten days after, the 13th volume of Hamza in the same coffeehouses.³⁷³ In this respect, his performances are in order despite it is not the situation always for other performances as discussed in Chapter 6 which is on

³⁶⁹ MK 8504/9, 56a.

³⁷⁰ In the given order: FMK 32, 80a; MK 8504/26, 1b; YKSÇ 898, 54b; İÜNE 1084, 8a; İÜNE 1096, 84a.

³⁷¹ In the given order: İÜNE 1084, 95b; FMK 32, 52b; YKSÇ 153, 1a.

³⁷² In the given order: MK 8504/9, 53b; MK 8504/12, 16a; MK 8504/18, 7b; MK 8504/26, 1a.

³⁷³ İÜNE 1096, 29b.

the features of performances. Multiplying such examples by putting one coffeehouse owner at the center could illuminate patterns of reading more clearly in future research.

The affiliations to the military are clearer in other denotations for performers and host of reading venues corporal (*onbaşı*), centurion (*yüzbaşı*), and major (*binbaşı*). The corporals, as a lower rank than a sergeant in the military, have many examples such as the 7th corporal Halil who performed the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim upon request of the head of sergeants (*serçavuş*) Hüseyin Efendi of the 5th regiment and Ahmed Çavuş of Galata, Mehmed Onbaşı who performed the 3rd volume of Hamza in the barracks of the Imperial Cannon Foundry, or Onbaşı Haydar who performed the 16th volume of Hamza in Zeytinburnu Prison in 3 hours on 20 November 1901.³⁷⁴ Yüzbaşı Hasan Ağa who performed the 7th volume of Ebū Müslim in 1856/7, a retired centurion Arab Selim Ağa who performed the 16th volume of Hamza in 1859/60 are examples to performers.³⁷⁵ For the coffeehouse owner/operators, some examples are the head of Beyoğlu municipal police Yüzbaşı Ağa whose coffeehouse hosted a performance that endured one hour on 22 February 1821, and Yüzbaşı Mustafa Ağa whose coffeehouse in Ağa Hamamı/Üsküdar hosted a performance in 1843/4.³⁷⁶ Majors appear only as the owners/operators of coffeehouses such as Binbaşı Hüseyin Ağa and Binbaşı Süleyman Ağa in Kasımpaşa and Binbaşı Halil Bey in Üsküdar who hosted performances in 1864/5, 1870/1 and 1873/4, respectively.³⁷⁷

As a concluding remark on the military members of this manuscript community, one should draw attention to the group reading sessions that took place in the Imperial Cannon Foundry (*Tobhâne-i Āmire*). It was recorded 75 times that various volumes were read in the Imperial Cannon Foundry with precise reference to the numbers of the troop, battalion, and regiment to which the performers and audiences belonged. Out of 2477 notes of group reading analyzed in this study, 132 notes (5.3%) indicate the Imperial Cannon Foundry as the venue of performance, which makes it the second most popular reading venue after the coffeehouses. Interestingly at

³⁷⁴ In the given order: FMK 27, 73a; İÜNE 1086, 64a; İÜNE 1099, 92a.

³⁷⁵ In the given order: MK 8504/6, 16b; İÜNE 1099, 57b.

³⁷⁶ In the given order: MK 8504/30, 52b; FMK 32, 70b.

³⁷⁷ In the given order: MK 8688/3, 42b; MK 8504/28, 0b; FMK 27, 43a.

first glance, many of the performers' names were not recorded with military titles but as *efendi* and *ağa* in this venue as more inclusive such as Nüreddin Efendi from “the second troop of the third battalion of the school of the first industrial regiment of the Imperial Cannon Foundry,”³⁷⁸ or, Halil Ağa from Kengirli [Çankırı] from “the fifth troop of the third executive battalion of the second industrial regiment of the Imperial Cannon Foundry.”³⁷⁹ On the other hand, there is remarkable attention paid to recording the audience in the notes written after the reading sessions in the Imperial Cannon Foundry and these audiences are always with the military titles of *çavuş*, *onbaşı*, and *yüzbaşı*.

Elaborating the personnel cadre of the Imperial Cannon Foundry may illuminate the non-military performers in front of the audience from the military. The Imperial Cannon Foundry was among the state-initiated enterprises founded during the reign of Mahmud II (1808-1839) just after the abolition of the Janissaries in 1837 in response to the need for manufacturing and labor force. The personnel cadre was mainly divided into four groups as Ersoy Zengin showed in his study on the evolution of the Ottoman war industry:

1. The specialist from abroad through contracting
2. Officials
3. Paid laborers (*Amele-i Dāima'* and *Amele-i Muvakkate*)
4. Interns (industrial/ executive regiments)

According to Zengin's research, at the end of the 19th century, there were 15-20 international specialists, 295 officers, 1300 civilian laborers, and 3.503 people from the industrial regiments, 5.115 in total.³⁸⁰ While officers were of military rank, trainees who had the opportunity to become an officer, a paid laborer, or have a completely distinct occupation in the future, and did not fulfill a military cadre. Therefore, they did not hold military titles. Our performers, recorded as from the industrial or executive regiments were entitled as *efendi* and *ağa* instead of military

³⁷⁸ MK 8504/30, 31a.

³⁷⁹ “Tobhāne-i Āmirede, ikinci sanāyi' alayının üçüncü idādī taburunun beşinci bölüğünde, Kengirli Halil Ağa kıra'at eylemiştir.” MK 8504/28, 5a.

³⁸⁰ Ersoy Zengin, “Tophane-i Amire'den İmalat-ı Harbiyeye Osmanlı Devleti'nde Harp Sanayii (1861-1923),” Unpublished PhD Diss., Atatürk University, 2015, 308.

titles if they were not *çavuş* or *onbaşı* because each regiment had one *çavuş*, eight *onbaşı*, and 120 interns. Moreover, as Zengin informs us, the curriculum of the first-year interns in these regiments included an obligatory course on stories.³⁸¹ Therefore, it is highly probable that the manuscripts of heroic stories under study were performed by the interns as a requisite of the course load. The systematic use of pencil instead of pen and ink alongside similarities in their handwriting supports this argument while these interns were under the same education system.

Belief-Related Titles (*Derviş, Şeyh, Seyyid, Hacı, Hâfız, Mollâ*)

The titles of military origin as discussed within its own diversities and ambiguities were not the only titles in defining the members of this community. But as a reflection of the diversity within this manuscript community, the belief-related titles that indicate mystical allegiances such as dervishes (*derviş*) or sheiks (*şeyh*), descendants to the Prophet's family (*seyyid*) and personal acquisitions in religious duties are also the titles commonly defined the individuals as performers and hosts of reading space.

Firstly, *dervişes* (dervish) and some *şeyhs* (sheiks) appear as performers and coffeehouse owners/operators of this manuscript community. Some dervishes are just mentioned with the title “*derviş*” always preceding the person's name such as Derviş Yusûf, Derviş Nâmık, Derviş Nesîm Hasan, or Derviş Nazîf and in compounds such as Seyyid Derviş Arif Efendi. Sometimes, the Sufî order (such as *Cerrâhî* or *Rifâî*) to which the person belonged to is also indicated, for instance, the 34th volume of Ebû Müslim was read by a *şeyh* of Rifâî order:

Esseyyid Hâfız Ahmed Efendi from the order of *Rifâî* who is the *imâm* of İskender Ağa Neighborhood and who is the son of the square sarık and miswak Eşşeyh Elhâc Mehmed Efendi from the order of *Nakşib* read [this book] nearby Tobkapı, 29 January 1858.³⁸²

³⁸¹ Ibid, 369.

³⁸² “Bu kitabı, tarîka-yı nakşib ricâlerinden meşhur kare sarıklı misvaklı Eşşeyh Elhâc Mehmed Efendi'nin mahdûmu târika-yı rifâî meşâbihinden ve Tobkapusu kurbunda İskender Ağa mahallesi imamı Eşşeyh Esseyyid Hâfız Ahmed Efendi kira'at itmişdir, 13 C 1274.” MK8504/29, 1a.

This note is an indication that family members (a son and father, in this instance) could have adhered to distinct Sufi orders. One cannot know whether his father Elhāc Mehmed Efendi was actually known as square *sarı́k* and *misvak* (stick toothbrush) or whether humor is involved in this description. But, another note belongs to the same Ahmed Efendi after three years humorously defines someone, the coffeehouse owner this time:

Eşşeyh Esseyyīd Ahmed Hacı Efendi from the *Rifāī* order who is the *imām* of İskender Ağa Neighborhood read this book nearby Tobkapı, in the coffeehouse of Mehmed Ağa whose father and brother is a confessionalist but himself is a sinner, 1 February 1861.³⁸³

In short, *dervişes* and *şeyhs* were affiliated with heroic stories as performers and coffeehouse owners/operators. Also, as discussed in Chapter 6, collective reading sessions could take place in Sufi lodges (*tekkes*) such as in the lodge of Cevrük Dede in the square of Doğancılar (*Üsküdar*).³⁸⁴

Related to Islamic belief, there are more overarching and frequently used titles than *derviş* and *şeyh* which are the indicators of allegiance to a Sufi order such as *seyyīd/esseyyīd*, *hacı/elhāc*, *hāfız*, and *monlā/mollā*. The term *esseyyīd* signifies a claim to descent from the Prophet Muhammad or the lineage of Ali and Fātima. From early on the foundation period of the Ottomans, *seyyīds* enjoyed some legal privileges. For example, they were exempted from the *avārız* tax and their legal cases were considered not by the general court, but the institution of *nakībū'l-eşrāf*. Besides, they took part in many bureaucratic and learned ranks, especially in endowments, based on the acceptance that *seyyīds*' respect should not be degraded by ordinary jobs.³⁸⁵ On the manuscript notes, approximately one hundred people as performers, hosts of reading venues, audience, and father names of performers were recorded as *seyyīd*. The occupations of these *seyyīds* are not limited to bureaucratic and learned ranks but largely vary as seen in these examples: Servant in the Imperial Palace Seyyīd Ömer Efendi of Çankırı (1858),

³⁸³ “Bu kitabı Tobkapısı kurbunda, İskender Ağa mahallesi imāmi, tarık-i rifāiden Eşşeyh Esseyyīd Ahmed Hacı Efendi, soğancı oğlu kahvecisi dimekle ma'rūf, peder ve birāderi tövbekār kendi günahkār Mehmed Ağa'nın kahvesinde kıra'at itmişdir, 20 Receb 77.” MK 8504/1, 91b.

³⁸⁴ “Hālā bu kitabı, Doğancı meydanında, Cevrük dedenin tekkesinde kıra'at olundu.” FMK 28, 20b.

³⁸⁵ Mustafa Sabri Küçükaşçı, “Seyyid,” *DİA* 37 (2009): 40-43.

Clerk of Correspondence in the Porte of the Ministry of War (*Bab-ı Seraskerî tahrîrât odası ketebesinde*) Seyyîd Ahmed (1847/8), İmām of İskender Ağa Neighborhood Seyyîd Hacı Efendi (1860), Chamberlain of Horse Drivers (*bargîrciler kethüdâsı*) Seyyîd Ağa Bey (1811), Clerk Eseyyîd Osman Efendi (1811), Carpenter Seyyîd Mehmed Tahir Efendi (1855), Bookdealer Seyyîd Ali Efendi, Minister of the Imperial Cannonry Seyyîd Mehmed Efendi, Calligrapher Hafız Esseyyîd Mehmed Çelebi (1852), Clerk of the Second Civil Chamber of Ministry of Justice Seyyîd Mehmed Halid Efendi, Baker in Zincirlikuyu Eseyyîd Mehmed Efendi (1894), Saddler Esseyyîd Ahmed Ali (1834), Mailman Esseyyîd Mehmed (1801), and School Master of the Learned Class Hafız Seyyîd İbrâhim Hakkı (1859).³⁸⁶

Hacı, or its Arabic equivalent *elhâc* might be also used to define the people who fulfilled their pilgrimage, one of the five pillars of Islam. Since making a pilgrimage was only an obligation to the people of enough wealth, this title might give clues on the level of income. As a reflection of that, laying aside the new facilities in transportation such as steamships and trains –the people in the manuscript notes given with the title of *hacı* or *elhâc*– hundreds of them give the impression that they had good levels of income. Pilgrims appear as the coffeehouse owners/ operators, the hosts of state offices, owners of houses, and even mansions (*konaks*) as reading venues of stories. Especially the owners of houses and mansions were the leading figures among this reading community in terms of wealth and prestige as deduced from the titles referring to high ranks such as *bey* and *paşa*. Among these *beys* and *paşas* are pilgrims such as Hacı Mirzâde İbrâhim Bey of Daghestan in whose house the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim was performed in 1790/1.³⁸⁷ For the occupations of pilgrims, we see a fabric maker/seller (*yağlıkçı*), *imâms*, *muhtârs*, a doughnut maker/seller (*lokmacı*), a merchant, a servant in the Imperial Palace, a slave trader, a

³⁸⁶ In the given order: FMK 29, 41b; FMK 32, 43a; MK 8504/1, 91a; MK 8504/6, 49a; MK 8504/10, 2b; MK 8504/33, 2b; MK 8688/2, 1a; YKŞÇ 153, 13b; YKŞÇ 895, 1b; İÜNE 1092, 72a; İÜNE 1095, 12a; FMK 29, 63a; FMK 29, 84a; FMK 40, 2a. For more on the development of the institution *nakîbül-esrâf*, claimers and false claimers of descendancy from the Prophet’s family and the geographical distribution of *seyyîds* in the Ottoman territory over time, see: Hülya Canbakal, “The Ottoman State and Descendants of the Prophet in Anatolia and the Balkans (c.1500-1700),” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 52 (2009): 542-578; Rüya Kılıç, *Osmanlıda Seyyidler ve Şerifler* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2005).

³⁸⁷ FMK 27, 4a.

saddler, a director (*müdür*) of shipowners, a surgeon, a clerk in the telegraph office and, for sure, coffeehouse owners/operators in the highest numbers.

Monlā/ mollā is another title used for the members of this manuscript community that comes after the person's name. *Mollā/monlā* that has derived from Arabic *mawlā* has referred to a high position in the learned class in Ottoman society: for top rank scholars holding the honor of *mevleviyyet* after serving as a *müderriş*, for *kadı*s who ranked by Süleymaniye *müderrişes* or top-rank *kadı*s assigned for a salary more than 300 akçe. In the late Ottoman period, the meaning of *mollā* has degraded and been used for madrasa students or used as a suffix for women who recite the Quran or Mevlid.³⁸⁸ The people in the reading community defined as *mollā/monlā* display a more complicated picture by not just being madrasa students (none of the students [*şākir-dān*] are defined as a *mollā/monlā*) but by having a variety of occupations. Some examples of *mollās* with their occupations are *hatīb of endowments* Monlā Ahmed of Gümülcine, *The Craftsman of Fabrics (Setreci Esnāfindan)* Monlā Hüseyin, *Coffeehouse owner/operator (Kahveci)* Ömer Monlā, *Gardener (Bağçeci)* Mollā Receb, and *Barber* Ali Mollā.³⁸⁹ Based on these examples, it could be said that *mollās* as a social and professional unit should be distinctly treated from the title of Mullah.³⁹⁰

The aforementioned belief-related titles could be found in compounds in defining a person such as *derviş-elhāc*, *elhāc-hāfız*, *elhāc-seyyīd*, *hāfız-seyyīd*, *seyyīd-derviş*, and *seyyīd-hacı* such as: *Seyyīd Derviş* Osman Efendi from Taşlıburun Derviş Lodge, Teacher (*Hoca*) *Hāfız Seyyīd İbrāhim Hakkı*, Calligrapher *Hāfız Esseyyīd Mehmed Çelebi Efendi* of Kengırı [Çankırı], and Eşşeyh *Esseyyīd Hāfız Ahmed Efendi*.³⁹¹ The most inclusive title is *hāfız* given to the people who memorized the Quran usually since early childhood. That is why, as expected, there are many individuals recorded with the title of hafız who are *imāms*. But beyond that, *hāfız* is the

³⁸⁸ See: Hamid Algar, "Molla," *DİA* 30 (2005): 238-9.

³⁸⁹ In the given order: MK 8504/13, 6b; MK 8688/1, 128a; İÜNE 1085, 16b; FMK 32, 80a; FMK 32, 29b.

³⁹⁰ İsmail Erünsal states that the title "molla" has distinct meanings according to its position as a prefix or suffix of a name. If it comes before the name, it refers that person is or was affiliated with madrasa education. On the other hand, it is used for the children of high scholars following their names. See: İsmail Erünsal, *Yirmi İki Mürekkep Damlası: Osmanlı Sosyal ve Kültür Tarihi Üzerine Sohbetler*, by Halil Solak (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2021), 258.

³⁹¹ In the given order: MK 8504/2, 8a; FMK 40, 2a; YKŞÇ 895, 1b; MK 8504/29, 1a.

title that obviously transgresses the professions, wealth, and social prestige. A chest-maker, a bread-maker, a clerk, a doorkeeper, a teacher, jeweler, seller of dried nuts and fruits (*kuruyemişçi*), they all could be a *hāfız*, just like today.

Headmen of the Neighborhood (*İmām, Müezzın and Muhtār*)

After discussing the quasi-military and belief-related titles, the discussion on the diversity of individuals within the manuscript community around Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories might be observed through their occupations. Among these occupations related to Islamic belief again, the individuals stated as leaders-to-prayers (*imāms*), caller-to-prayers (*müezzins*), and *muhtārs* in the manuscript notes deserve special attention not just for their centrality to the neighborhood life, but also for the fluidity within their identities as the leading figures of the social and religious life but also their official registering duties.

Although *imāms* and *müezzins* are anachronistically perceived only by their religious duties they were central to the social and administrative life of the neighborhoods before the emergence of *muhtārs* in the mid 19th century. *İmāms* and *müezzins* composed the largest portion of the Ottoman cadres of service and a huge variety in their working fields. Since the appointments of both groups were made by the Sultan's warrant (*berāt*), they were included in the military (*askerīyye*) and they were exempted from the obligation of tax-payment during their incumbency unless they were not lords to lands at the same time.

Müezzins as performers of the stories always appear by the names of mosques they serve for. For example, the *müezzın* of Hırka-i Şerif Mosque, Süleyman Efendi performed the 2nd volume of Ebū Müslim in the Spice Bazaar (*Mısır Çarşısı*).³⁹² The *müezzın* of Evlice Mosque in Eyüb, Hāfız Mehmed Şevket Efendi performed the 33rd volume of Ebū Müslim in a coffeehouse in

³⁹² MK 8504/2, 26a. Since Hırka-i Şerif Mosque was built in 1851 in today's Fatih District, we can assume the recitation happened in the second half of the 19th century.

Evlice Baba Neighborhood, known as the “little (*küçük*)” coffeehouse on 8 February 1875.³⁹³ The *müezzin* of Zeyrek Mosque, Hâfız İsmail Efendi, performed the 4th volume of Hamza on 16 April 1871.³⁹⁴ The *müezzin* of Āşık Nişancı Mehmed Paşa Mosque, İsmâ‘il Efendi, hosted the reading of 10th volume of Hamza in his house.³⁹⁵ And, Müezzin İsmail Efendi’s coffeehouse in Akşemseddin Neighborhood hosted the performance of Hamza’s 11th volume.³⁹⁶ Regarding the crucial role of *müezzins* in everyday social life through five times prayers (*ezan*) as well as the expected qualities such as the ability to recite Quran by heart (*hıfz*), and talents in rhetoric (*hitâbet*) and music (*mūsikî*), one might name *müezzins* as appropriate performers of stories and hosts of reading venues.

If *müezzins* have a crucial role in everyday social life, *imāms* were at the center of that social, religious, and even administrative life of neighborhoods. Until the Tanzimat reforms starting in 1839, *imāms* of neighborhoods were the representative of the state and the leading people in charge of administrative affairs.³⁹⁷ Detection of prostitution, regulation of public clothes, registering the marriages, births, and deaths, controlling the information on property owners or artisans and merchants, compensations of identity, and settlement documents were responsibilities of *imāms* of the neighborhoods. Therefore, the official deeds of *imāms* were not limited to religious affairs but also extended through the administration of social and political affairs in the neighborhoods. For instance, in the abolition of the Janissary Corps (1826), *imāms* took active roles by announcing the Sultan’s firman on the abolition of Corps and Bektashi lodges and the formation of a new army. Even, on the day of the event, *imāms* organized the representatives and madrasa students to march towards At Meydanı by shouting *tekbîr* as they were on a battlefield with the infidels.³⁹⁸ Cem Behar, in his exclusive study on Kasap İlyas

³⁹³ MK 8504/28, 0b.

³⁹⁴ İÜNE 1087, 1a.

³⁹⁵ İÜNE 1096, 2b-3a.

³⁹⁶ MK 8688-3, 66a.

³⁹⁷ Kemal Beydilli, *Osmanlı Döneminde İmamlar ve Bir İmamın Günlüğü* (İstanbul: Pınar Yayınları, 2018), 16.

³⁹⁸ Mehmed Dâniş, *Netîcetü’l-Vekâyi*, 8b. Cited from Kemal Beydilli, *Osmanlı Döneminde İmamlar*, 24.

Neighborhood of Istanbul, bases his research on the still-preserved registers of *imāms* and their later equivalent *muhtārs*. Behar also points at this “multi-functional” official portray of *imāms* in neighborhoods including *imāms* as “trustees” of the residents. Behar states that *imāms* were responsible for the residents’ safety of life and property, besides, “local endowment founders were assigning the *imāms* and *müezzins* as the trustees of their endowments. People were leaving cash assets and real estate directly for the use of these *imāms* and *müezzins*,” as the reason for that the *imāms* were dubbed as “*imāms* with forty keys” in daily language.³⁹⁹

The manuscript notes examined for this study are displaying the *imāms* as active members of the reading community around heroic stories in 18th and 19th century Ottoman Istanbul. For example, Hāfız Mehmed Efendi as the *imām* of Yeniçeşme Mosque (Üsküdar), Hüseyin Efendi as the *imām* of Hacı Hüsrev Neighborhood (Beyoğlu), Hüseyin Efendi as the *imām* of Hacı Ali Efendi Neighborhood (Kasımpaşa), Seyyīd Hacı Efendi as the *imām* of İskender Ağa Neighborhood (Tobkapı), the second *imām* of Şehīd Mehmed Paşa Mosque (Galata) are some instances for *imām* performers of the stories.⁴⁰⁰ There are approximately forty *imāms* detected in these notes and twelve of them appear as the coffeehouse owners/ operators in which the audience was gathered to listen to heroic stories. For example, the coffeehouse of İmām Halīl Efendi on Dīvānyolu (Üsküdar), the coffeehouse of İmām Hāfız Mehmed Efendi in Kātīb Müslihüddin Neighborhood (Kasımpaşa), the İmām’s coffeehouse nearby Şeyh Camii Mosque (Üsküdar), Tatar Zālīm [Cruel] İmām’s coffeehouse across Yeniçeşme (Kadıköy), İmām Hüseyin Efendi’s coffeehouse in Yalı Paşa Neighborhood (Kumkapı), and the coffeehouse of Hāfız Mehmed Emīn Efendi as the *imām* of Kātīb Müslihüddin Mosque appear as reading avenues.⁴⁰¹ Besides, the family names as “the son of the *imām* (*imāmoğlu* or *imāmzāde*)” were commonly used to describe the members of this manuscript community.

This data on the manuscript notes reveals additional qualities, such as the ability to recite the Quran by heart (*hāfız*) and the social position of *imāms*. The social and official positions of

³⁹⁹ Cem Behar, *Bir Mahallenin Doğumu ve Ölümü*, 114-122.

⁴⁰⁰ In the given order: FMK 32, 24b; MK 8504/1, 2b; MK8504/6, 20a. MK 8504/2, 69b.

⁴⁰¹ In the given order: MK 8504/11, 1a; MK 8504/29, 1b; FMK 40, 22b; MK 8504/17, 55a; FMK 40, 24a; MK 8688-3, 71a.

imāms are one of the most assorted within the Ottoman society that stems from the variety of working areas (palaces, janissary regiments, neighborhoods, small *mescids*) and the institutional transformation of *imām* through centuries. While they were included in the military (*askeriyye*) class for being appointed by the Sultan's order (*berāt*), they were assumed as a low-rank member of the learned class (*ilmiyye*) if they served as a preacher (*hātib/vāiz*). It is remarkable from the manuscript notes that almost always *imāms* are defined with the suffix *efendi* instead of *ağa*. This does not change even when they are coffeehouse operators/owners who were substantially titled as *ağa*. Although the title of *efendi* has been transformed in centuries and used interchangeably among people from different socio-economic positions, generally *efendi* is used for the learned class (*ilmiyye*) and *ağa* for the military (*askeriyye*).⁴⁰² Therefore, even if *imāms* were not categorized within the *ilmiyye* class, the notes might be a reflection of the social attributions to *imāms* as learned leaders of the society. On the other hand, we know in the last century of the Empire, there were complaints about *imāms*' low level of education. Kemal Beydilli argues, "the sources on *imāms*' educational level of *imāms* do not give the impression of a decent education except for the *imāms* holding duty in the Imperial Palace and Imperial Mosques (*selātin cāmi'i*). When *imāms* were assigned to teach reading to the army in 1838, it has been detected that most of these *imāms* did not know how to read."⁴⁰³

In this picture, in the case of the *müezzins*, *imāms* are often found to be coffeehouse owners/operators. It is related to that the notes including *imāms* are all dated the 19th century, specifically the second half of it. Since the 1830s, by the foundation of a new organization in municipalities, the local authority has gradually shifted from *imāms* to *muhtārs*. Although for some neighborhoods, that shift has happened peacefully by the replacement of *imāms* as *muhtārs* such as in Kasap İlyas Neighborhood, many *imāms* should have been dismissed from their local official duties and started to solely function as leaders to prayers in mosques. *Imāms* who were dismissed from their workload could have directed their energy, their leading social position, and profit search to the coffeehouse sector. The *imāms* as coffeehouse owners/operators which seem

⁴⁰² See: Orhan F. Köprülü, "Efendi" *DİA* 10 (1994): 455-456; Faruk Sümer, "Ağa," *DİA* 1 (1988): 451-452.

⁴⁰³ Kemal Beydilli, "İmam," *DİA* 22 (2000): 181-186.

a neglected issue in the academic literature is another evidence that people of any occupational groups could be engaged with the coffeehouse business.

The later equivalent of *imāms* in the local administration and official accountants of neighborhoods, *muhtārs*, were also part of this reading community. The organization of *muhtārs* was founded in 1829, during the reign of Mahmūd II, to control migration to Istanbul and provide neighborhood security. Therefore, the first *muhtārs* were appointed by the state although they would be elected on the following dates. Among the duties and responsibilities of *muhtārs*, provide security and order in villages and neighborhoods, controlling the internal passports (*mürür tezkiresi*) searching or becoming surety (*kefil*) for newcomers, recording the official accounts on deaths, births, and marriages. The manuscript notes in which the performers of coffeehouse owners/operators were recorded as *muhtārs* are expectedly dated after 1829 (the establishment of the organization) and some of them include the names of neighborhoods in which the *muhtārs* were entrusted: such as the Muhtār performed in Üsküdar Karacaahmet İbrāhim Efendi, the Muhtār performed in Asetāne Çeharşenbe Bazaar dated 10 May 1837, the first *muhtār* (*muhtār-ı evvel*) of Altımermer Emīn Efendi dated 25 December 1886, and the first *muhtār* (*muhtār-ı evvel*) of Galata Arap Camii İzzet Efendi dated 19 November 1882.⁴⁰⁴ On an undated note, a *muhtār* appears as the coffeehouse owner/operator: “This book was read by Herbalist Behzad Efendi in the Coffeehouse of Muhtār Cābī (?) Mehmed Efendi nearby Arap Mosque.”⁴⁰⁵

The requirement to interrogate the Ottoman social units in respect to their own environment is one more time valid for the people of local administration, especially for *imāms*, as previously discussed through the imperial servants, coffeehouse owners/operators, and people of the military. The *imāms*, as opposed to their job description only as leaders-to-prayers play active and central roles in the neighborhood’s social and administrative life by operating the coffeehouses, registering the local affairs, or monitoring the migrations and population. Besides, these findings demonstrate the value of manuscript notes in the social and administrative transformation in Ottoman society, one more time, by providing an area of observation for the

⁴⁰⁴ *Muhtārs* were elected as the first *muhtār* (*muhtār-ı evvel*) and second *muhtār* (*muhtār-ı sānī*) of the neighborhoods. In the given order: MK 8688/1, 127b; MK 8504/16, 48b; MK 8504/29, 33b; MK 8688/3, 56b.

⁴⁰⁵ İÜNE 1091, 6a.

substitution of *imāms*' local duties by muhtār. This is the transformation that we will observe through many other members of this manuscript community such as the government secretaries, officeholders, or the students of the new system of education.

Government Secretaries (*Kātib*) and Officeholders (*Me'mūr*)

Apart from the men of the sword (*seyfiyye*) as discussed through the infantry troops and titles of military and religious affairs (*ilmiyye*) which found its members only from the lower ranks through imāms, the men of the plume (*kalemiyye*) have composed the third pillar of the Ottoman administration and society. The men of the plume in the Ottoman State and earlier Islamic administrations kept the financial accounts, produced the government's correspondences, and compiled the records on land tenure. For that reason, since the foundational period of the Ottoman Empire, the role of the scribes (*kātib*, pl. *küttāb*) has been at the center of the bureaucracy.

By the 18th century, the scribes had started to gain promotions into a greater variety of roles. This diversification would later help to shape the civil officialdom (*mülkiyye*) well into the 19th century.⁴⁰⁶ On the eve of the 19th century as the era of reform, the Ottoman scribal service was a relatively small and homogenous group of men, including 2,000 officials, mostly serving in Istanbul. But, in the last decade of the century, the numbers of these scribes or government secretaries had increased approximately up to 70,000 in total, for 35,000 only being in the Foreign Ministry.⁴⁰⁷ During the reign of Mahmūd II (1808-1839), especially after the 1830s, the Sultan laid the foundations of 'ministries,' created a new hierarchy of civil ranks, founded the first secular civil schools to train officials, and it was about this time, with growing number use of the term *mülkiyye* to refer to local administration that it became common to refer to the former

⁴⁰⁶ Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980): 43-58, 64-66, 69-111.

⁴⁰⁷ Carter V. Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom*.

kalem efendileri, the gentlemen of the offices (*efendi* being then a title of address for a literate gentleman) as civil officials (*mülkiyye me'mûrları*).⁴⁰⁸

These are the scribes, titled *efendis*, that composed the majority of 19th century readers/performers –and hosts of reading venues– within the total members of the reading community around heroic stories. Their presence within this community is expected firstly, since, they were composing a significant portion of the society as numbers. According to a census in 1894/5, after religious scholars and students, government secretaries consist of the second most-numbered professional group (Figure 29). Also notable on this chart is that the aforementioned social group of *imāms*, *müezzins*, and *hāfızs* are the fourth most-numbered group, and the government officials that are treated separately from the government secretaries are the sixth most-numbered professional group⁴⁰⁹:

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid, 26.

⁴⁰⁹ Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, 218. Findley asserts one should be cautious about the numbers used in that chart in *Ottoman Civil Officialdom*, 211.

IV.10. Professions in the Ottoman State, by Number of Practitioners, 1894/95 (R. 1310)

Professional Titles	English Translations	Number of Practitioners	Professional Titles	English Translations	Number of Practitioners
<i>Ulema ve Talebeler</i> ^a	Religious scholars	395,000	<i>Eczacılar</i>	Pharmacists	7,210
<i>Hükümet Katipleri</i>	Government secretaries	353,000	<i>Şirket Katip ve Muhasipleri</i> ¹	Corporation secretaries and cashiers	6,520
<i>İmams, Müezzins ve Hafız</i> ^b	Prayer leaders, callers to prayer, Koran reciters	188,000	<i>Ebeler</i>	Midwives	6,500
<i>Amele</i> ^c	Factory workers	186,000	<i>Otel, Lokanta ve Magaza Katipleri</i>	Secretaries of hotels, restaurants, and shops	5,875
<i>Hükümet Memurları</i> ^d	Government officials	185,000	<i>Kimyagerler</i>	Chemists	5,860
<i>Mimarlar</i>	Architects	93,800	<i>Mühendisler</i>	Engineers	5,850
<i>Cami Hademeleri</i> ^e	Service personnel in mosques	91,700	<i>Cerrahlar</i>	Surgeons	5,800
<i>Muallimler ve Ulum Erbabı</i> ^f	Teachers and scientists	87,000	<i>Litografçılar</i>	Lithographers	5,600
<i>Nakkaslar</i>	Interior decorators	66,000	<i>Ressamlar</i>	Painters	5,300
<i>Ev Hizmetkarları</i>	Maids	55,000	<i>Madencililer</i>	Miners	5,000
<i>Berberler</i>	Barbers	49,000	<i>Kapıcı ve Hademeler</i>	Doorkeepers and servants	4,600
<i>Mezarlıklar ve Kuyucular</i> ^g	Cemetery personnel	31,000	<i>Demiryollarında Mustahdem Katipler</i>	Railroad officials (secretaries)	4,500
<i>Otel ve Likanta İscileri</i>	Hotel and restaurant workers	28,700	<i>Umumi Ahir İşletenler</i>	General stable keepers	4,200
<i>Banka Katipleri</i>	Bank secretaries	23,400	<i>Sigorta Kumpanyalarının Katipleri</i>	Secretaries of insurance companies	3,800
<i>Hastahane Hizmet-karları</i>	Hospital workers	19,600	<i>Muzikacı ve Muallimler</i>	Musicians and teachers	3,250
<i>Kilim ve seccade yapanlar</i>	Rug and carpet makers	18,410	<i>Tellallar</i>	Auctioneers	3,200
<i>Reji Katipleri</i>	Concession secretaries	16,200	<i>Aktör ve Aktrisler</i>	Actors and actresses	3,100
<i>Avçılar</i>	Hunters	15,200	<i>Müellifler ve Muharrirler</i>	Authors and writers	3,000
<i>Tabipler</i>	Doctors	14,000	<i>Makinistler</i>	Machinists	2,300
<i>Taş ve saire Üzerine Oyma yapanlar</i>	Stone carvers	13,750	<i>Bilardo Salonu İşletenler</i>	Billiards parlor operators	2,200
<i>Otelciler ve Hancılar</i>	Hotel and inn keepers	12,780	<i>Kitap ve Harita Neşredenler</i>	Book and map publishers	2,100
<i>Kitapçılar ve Hafız</i>	Book dealers and library guards	12,310	<i>Hokkabazlar</i>	Magicians	1,420
<i>Kütüpler</i> ^h	Factory administrators	12,300	<i>Meddahlar ve Hayalçılar, Kargözcüler</i> ¹	Storytellers, magicians, and puppeteers	1,400
<i>Fabrika Katipleri</i>	Service personnel in government offices	11,900	<i>Fotografçılar</i>	Photographers	950
<i>Hükümet Daireleri</i>	Lawyers	10,300	<i>Dişçiler</i>	Dentists	760
<i>Hademeleri</i>	Service personnel in churches	9,800	<i>Gazete ve Mecmua satanlar</i>	Newspaper and magazine sellers	750
<i>Avukatlar</i>	Bank officials	9,760	<i>Muhbir ve muhabirler</i>	Newspaper correspondents	550
<i>Kilise Hademeleri</i>	Guild heads	9,700	<i>Köprü Memurları ile İskelelerde Para Alanlar</i>	Toll collectors at bridges and ports	310
<i>Banka Memurları</i>	Veterinaries	9,650	<i>Gazeteciler</i>	Journalists	260
<i>Kethüdalar</i>	Laundryers	8,900			
<i>Baytarlar</i>	Mail and telegram deliverers	8,590			
<i>Çamaşçıları</i>	Horse caretakers	8,050			
<i>Posta ve Telgraf Müvezzileri</i>					
<i>Seyisler</i>					

Source: IUKTY 9075.

^aThe *ulema* were the top rank of the religious professions.

^bThese were Muslim religious clerks.

^cThe current term for factory worker is *işçi*.

^dThese were probably lower ranking officials. The Ottoman bureaucracy made a distinction between *memur*, i.e., an official in charge, and *katib*, a secretary who had only limited authority.

^eThese were the cleaners of the mosques. *Hademe*, the term used in the source,

refers to individuals performing menial tasks who are paid from a budget or employed by an institution (the term is still in use).

^fThese were teachers in modern schools.

^gThe original also refers specifically to grave diggers.

^hParticularly noted as dealing in religious books as well as other types.

¹These were mainly employees of European corporations.

²These were the traditional entertainers.

Figure 29 A list of professions with the numbers of their members in the 19th century. Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, 218.

Apart from their outnumbering presence in the urban society especially in the 19th century, scribes' ability and tendency in recordkeeping as a professional requirement should have directed them to record their reading experience on the manuscripts.

The performers without specific reference to the ministry or institutions are all dated the 19th century (specifically from the 1830s) and they are all titled as *efendi* and used the expression as the secretary (*kātib*) or from the secretary (*ketebeden*) as such: From the secretary (*ketebeden*) Tahsîn Efendi (27 January 1877), Kātib Abdülkāsım Efendi (2 November 1891), Kātib Mustafa

Efendi (26 May 1848), Ketebeden Ömer Kāmil Efendi (20 January 1849), Ketebeden Ömer Lütfi Efendi (26 December 1882), Ketebeden Mehmed Şevket Efendi (1868/9) and Kātib Mehmed Ali Efendi (1 March 1856).⁴¹⁰ Except for several examples, these secretaries performed the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim in coffeehouses. As later in this chapter will detail, this is distinctive for the performers given with institutions for whom the government offices (*oda*) appear as the second most predominant reading venues.

The secretaries of the Imperial Treasury (*Maliyye Hazīne-i Celīle*) loom large in the given names of secretaries as performers with the institutions they were affiliated with. The manuscript notes belonging to performers from the Treasury were dated after the 1860s, therefore, they were written after the unification of branches in the Imperial Treasury with a decree in 1840/1.⁴¹¹ According to the notes dated between 1860 until 1893, the performers from the Treasury serve for its various offices (*kalem*) as such:

- Accountants of the Treasury (*hazīne-i celīle muhāsebecileri*) Mahmud and Halīl Efendis (6 November 1863),
- From the Accountants of the Treasury (*maliyye-i hazīne-i celīlerinden evrāk-ı muhasebe odacılarından*), Zeynelabidin Efendi performed, and officials listened,
- From the Secretary of Council of Law in the Ministry of Treasury (*maliyye nāzırıyye dīvān-ı muhākemāt meclis ketebesinden*), Edhem Efendi (12 April 1868),
- The Correspondence Officer in the Treasury and Public Documents Accounting (*evrāk-ı umūmiyye muhāsebesi*), Mehmed Efendi (30 April 1873),
- Officer of boarding (*i'āşe odacısı*) in the Treasury, Mehmed Efendi (30 March 1873),
- From the Urban Real Estate Property of the Treasury (*maliyye nezāreti celīlesi dersa'ādet emlāk kalemiyyesinden*) Nūri Efendi⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ In the given order: MK 8504/1, 39a; MK 8504/5, 99b; MK 8688/1, 128a; İÜNE 1085, 1b; İÜNE 1099, 129b; YKSÇ 153, 24b; YKSÇ 1097, 1a.

⁴¹¹ For detailed information on the transformation of Imperial Treasury, see: Yavuz Cezar, *Osmanlı Maliyesinde Bunalım ve Değişim Dönemi (XVII.yy'dan Tanzimat'a Mali Tarih)* (İstanbul: Alan Yayıncılık, 1986).

⁴¹² In the given order: MK 8504/18, 27a; MK 8504/2, 11a; MK 8504/1, 10a [my own pagination]; İÜNE 1089, 29a; YKSÇ 152, 3a; İÜNE 1091, 64b.

Another institution established by Mahmūd II in 1826 was the Ministry of Imperial Endowments (*Evkāf-ı Hümāyun Nezāreti*) for the purpose to unify the endowments and reform the administration of endowments.⁴¹³ After the 1840s, the secretaries of this institution, all titled as *efendi*, appear as performers of heroic stories such as the accountant Ahmed Efendi from the secretary of endowments' accounting (*evkāf muhāsebesi kalemi kethüdālarından*) performed on 1 June 1845, from the inspection of endowments' accounting secretary (*evkāf mahkemesi ketebesinden*) Mehmed Şevket Efendi on 1 January 1869, and Correspondence officer (*mektubçu odacısı*) Mehmed Efendi and Officer at the Inspectionary Court (*mahkeme-i teftiş odacısı*) Haydar Efendi performed together on 10 January 1869.⁴¹⁴

The secretaries affiliated to different branches of the two significant Ministries of the State, Ministry of War (*Bāb-ı Seraskerī*) and Foreign Ministry of the Sublime Porte (*Bāb-ı Ālī Hāriciyye*) are also performed the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim. As a part of the reformation in the scribal corps, these ministries played crucial roles to carry the traditional manners of official scribalship to the modern systems of accounting. The breakdowns such as in the education and recruitment system of scribes were juxtaposed with the continuities in the official experience and generations of scribes. According to the survey of Carter V. Findley on the Foreign Ministry personnel records, for example, the fathers of most of the first officials in the modernized institutions were also scribes in the traditional institutions.⁴¹⁵ He also observes the high level of authorship among the personnel of the Foreign Ministry: "In the Foreign Ministry personnel records, the evidence on authorship does not cover such large numbers of individuals or years, but is both quantitatively and qualitatively impressive. Out of 366 officials under study, 53 men (14%) claimed at least one publication."⁴¹⁶ Therefore, their readership of popular stories such as Hamza and Ebū Müslim is not surprising.

⁴¹³ For more information, see: Nazif Öztürk, "Evkāf-ı Hümāyun Nezāreti," *DİA* 11 (1995): 521-4.

⁴¹⁴ In the given order: FMK 29, 49b; MK 8504/28, 0b; İÜNE 1097, 79b.

⁴¹⁵ Carter V. Findley, "Social Origins of the Civil Officials," in *Ottoman Civil Officialdom*, 87- 131. For the educational reform and its effect on the civil officials, see: *Ibid*, 131-172.

⁴¹⁶ Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom*, 176.

The notes written by the performers from Foreign Ministry are dated after the 1840s.⁴¹⁷ Mehmed Efendi from the Treasury of Foreign Ministry performed on 6 November 1846, Mehmed Efendi the accounter of the Foreign Ministry of the Sublime Porte performed on 5 February 1905, the officer of Bill Registering (*senetci kalemi evrāk odacısı*) in the Foreign Ministry Hasan Efendi performed on 21 March 1894 are some of these performers.⁴¹⁸ And, from the Ministry of War (*Bāb-ı Seraskerī*), some of the secretaries that performed the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim were Seyyīd Ahmed Onbaşı in 1848/9, the son of Mustafa Efendi of Gerece (Bolu) Nūri Bey on 25 March 1873, and Ali Haydār who performed with Ömer Lütfi Bey on 14 December 1883.⁴¹⁹ As remarkable, the official secretaries of the Foreign Ministry are titled as *bey* other than *efendi* which is an indication of whether their fathers were *paşas* or whether they were the highly educated class.

Other than secretaries (*kātib*), the government officials were recorded as officials (*me'mūr*) in the manuscript notes who were affiliated with various other institutions than the aforementioned ministries. For example, the officer of Beyoğlu Telegraph Office, Fāik Efendi who performed the 2nd volume of Ebū Müslim on 10 November 1866, the officer of the Fish Market (*Balikhāne*) İbrāhim Efendi performed the 5th volume of Ebū Müslim in the office of Süleymān Ağa from Ürgüb on 18 November 1865, the Customs Official İbrahim Ağa who hosted the reading of the 21st volume of Hamza in his coffeehouse in 1867/8, and the officials Mehmed and Ali Efendis in the Prison of the Sublime Porte who performed the 13th volume of Hamza on 2 May 1288 were some of the official members of this particular manuscript community.⁴²⁰

For the vast majority, the reading venues of the performers who were government secretaries and officials were the coffeehouses. This is also true almost for performers of any social background. In addition to the coffeehouses, their offices are also listed as the reading venues; in that case, the listeners are naturally the secretaries and officials who shared the same office or the same

⁴¹⁷ The Foreign Ministry has established after the 1830s despite the preliminary transformations in the Sublime Porte (*Bab-ı Ali*).

⁴¹⁸ In the given order: FMK 32, 24a; İÜNE 1092, 91b; İÜNE 1090, 41b.

⁴¹⁹ In the given order: FMK 32, 43a; İÜNE 1095, 47b; İÜNE 1096, 58a.

⁴²⁰ In the given order: MK 8504/2, 49b; MK 8504/16, 53b; YKSÇ 152, 51b; İÜNE 1096, 88b.

institution. For example, the accountant of the treasury, Zeynelabidin Efendi, performed the 2nd volume of Ebū Müslim to the officials (*kalem odacıları*).⁴²¹ The specific names could be indicated as the audience such as the correspondence officer Veli Ağa, Vecīhi Efendi, Süleymān, and Ali Ağa who listened to the 35th volume of Ebū Müslim,⁴²² or, the officials that were just called as ‘officials.’ (*me ‘mūrlar* or *odacılar*).” On the other hand, remarkably, most of the house (*hāne*) and mansion (*konak*) owners who hosted the collective reading sessions are from secretaries and officials such as the house of secretary Mahmūd Efendi or the mansion of Kātib İsmā‘il Efendi.⁴²³ The upper ranks of the government officials appear as the owners of mansions such as the Minister of the Imperial Endowments (*evrāk-ı hümāyūn nāziri*) Şevket Efendi who hosted the reading of 2nd volume of Ebū Müslim in his mansion on 17 November 1860, or, director to the Trusty of Public Wealth (*beytü’l-māl müdürü*) Rāşid Efendi who hosted the reading of the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim on 17 November 1850.⁴²⁴

From this, we can deduct that whether personal acquaintances were in the picture or not, gatherings for reading/listening to the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim was one of the avenues of socialization and solidarity between the government secretaries and officials. This makes them a subcommunity of readers within the larger community of heroic stories. The presence of some manuscripts that were highly appreciated by government officials and secretaries proves that the extension of the influence area of a manuscript was shaped by these subcommunities such as the manuscripts that were remarkably and specifically read by the men from infantry troops as discussed before. For example, the 1st volume of Hamza written in a relatively later period, on 3 February 1848, was specifically appreciated by the government officials and secretaries.⁴²⁵ It was performed by Mehmed Efendi from the Secretary two years later, on 17 December 1850.⁴²⁶ Then, in close dates towards the end of the 19th century, it was performed by a public accountant

⁴²¹ MK 8504/2, 11a.

⁴²² MK 8504/30, 52b.

⁴²³ FMK 41, 3b; MK 8504/3, 46b.

⁴²⁴ MK 8504/2, 67b; MK 8688/1, 127b.

⁴²⁵ İÜNE 1084.

⁴²⁶ Ibid, 91b.

in 1898, by the secretary Haydār Efendi in 1900, by the officials of the Imperial Endowments for 15 days starting by 28 October 1901, Officer of the Imperial Endowments Haydār Efendi of Divriği again on 19 March 1902 and the Officer in the Imperial Endowments Mehmed Sādik Efendi of Divriği on 22 February 1904.

In sum, through the engagement of officeholders and government secretaries in the newly introduced ministries to that manuscript community after the mid 9th century, we see the inclusivity and persistence of this particular cultural practice, namely, the reading of heroic stories in a socially interacted environment and writing that reading experience on the manuscripts.

Professions of Guilds (*Esnāf*) and Guild Masters (*Kethüdā*)

One of the largest and most diversified groups within that manuscript community was *esnāf*, including the shopkeepers, artisans, craftsmen, merchants, and laborers, or people who have professions guilds. As discussed in Chapter 3, the heroic discourse, rules, and imagination of the past were mainly transmitted from the social/moral understanding of *fütüvve* which is also the base of guilds. Therefore, both the content and reading environment of Islamic heroic stories were shaped in parallel with the tastes, rules, and doctrines of artisans and craftsmen. In the versions circulated in 18th and 19th century Istanbul, hundreds of performers described as belonging to different branches of artisanship as well as the hosts of reading that testify the still-dominance of professional groups belong to artisanship in this manuscript community.

Although it is usually translated as ‘artisans’ or ‘craftsmen’ in the academic literature, the term *esnāf* as one of the most significant social and economic units of the Ottoman society and administrative/economic system carries narrow meanings of neither artisanship nor craftsmanship. The literal meaning of *esnāf* that has derived from the Arabic root “s/ص, n/ن, f/ف” is “classes,” and as we understand from the archival sources such as surety registers (*kefālet*), court registers (*sicil*) or *esnāf* inventories, it refers to any sort of professions including the artisans, craftsmen, shopkeepers, merchants, and laborers. Also, in their notes on manuscripts of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories, it is observed that the shopkeepers (such as coffeehouse

operator: *kahveci*) and laborers (such as boatmen: *kayıkçı*) defined themselves as *esnāf* in the formula of “*kahveci esnāfindan*,” or, “*kayıkçı esnāfindan*.” Therefore, all of these groups are scrutinized under the category of *esnāf* by not implying its narrowed meaning in modern Turkish (usually for petty shopkeepers) but to the professional groups that had guilds, therefore, excluding the military classes, the learned class (*‘ulemā*), and officeholders (*me‘mūr*).

As discussed previously, the most visible and largest *esnāf* group in the reading community of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories were the coffeehouse owners/operators as evident for the dominance of coffeehouse business in the economic life of Istanbul. Cengiz Kırılı and Betül Başaran in their surveys on official inspectory registers (records of the Imperial Council, records of the Office of Chief Accountant, and Census Registers) during the reign of Selim III (1789-1808) claim that “out of nearly fourteen thousand commercial shops and some three hundred different types of professions on record in the registers, coffee houses and people operating these establishments made up the largest subgroup in the city and its environs, followed by barbershops.”⁴²⁷ Although their dates of writing extend from the 18th to the end of the 19th century, the manuscript notes on these stories prove the remarkable numerical superiority of people affiliated with coffee and coffeehouse business over people of other occupations within this reading community. Therefore, by observing their popularity based on the manuscript notes, this study presents the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim to the academic literature on coffeehouse literature and entertainment which has been until now limited in the studies with the literature of rowdies (*külhanbeyi*), puppets, or one-man/two men theatrical shows such as *Karagöz* and *Orta Oyunu*.⁴²⁸

Despite the substantiality, coffeehouse owners/ operators were not the only shopkeepers that hosted the reading sessions of heroic stories. By a few examples, barbershops, a tobacco shop (*duhancı*), and a binder (*mücellid*) also hosted the sessions.⁴²⁹ Also, shops appear as points of

⁴²⁷ Betül Başaran and Cengiz Kırılı, “Some Observations on Istanbul’s Artisans,” 267.

⁴²⁸ For more information on the genres of entertainment, see: *Celebration, Entertainment, and Theatre in the Ottoman World*, eds. Suraiya Faroqhi and Arzu Öztürkmen (London, New York and Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2014). For a recent study on the theatre in late Ottoman period in comparison with other big world cities, see: Hikari Egawa and Yuzo Nagata, *Bir Kentin Toplumsal Tarihi Açısından Osmanlı’nın Son Döneminde İstanbul’da Tiyatro ve Çevresi* (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2021).

⁴²⁹ In the given order: MK 8504/13, 15b; İÜNE 1106, 39b; MK 8504/5, 125a.

navigating the exact reading venue, for example, while giving directions for lifted-mouth (*ağzı yukarı*) İbrahim Ağa's coffeehouse, the note says it is across the shop of headgear (*börk*).⁴³⁰

Performers given with their occupations enable to draw a much more multifold picture of *esnāf* groups as given in that list:

- Druggist and herbalist (*attār*)
- Barber
- Calico maker/seller (*basmacı*)
- Garment bag maker/seller (*bohçacı*)
- Glass maker/seller (*camcı*)
- Surgeon (*cerrāh*)
- Linen washer/maker/seller (*çamaşırcı*)
- Kindling maker/seller (*çıracı*)
- Button maker/seller (*düğmecı*)
- Gunny maker/seller (*çulcu*)
- Upholsterer (*döşemeci*)
- Slave seller (*esircı*)
- Donkey seller/driver (*eşekçi*)
- Linen maker/seller (*yağlukçı*)
- Fez maker/seller (*fesçi*)
- Baker (*fırıncı*)
- Bread-maker (*ekmekçi/itmekçi*)
- Seller/maker of boxes and chests (*sandıkçı*)
- Engraver (*hakkāk*)
- Halva maker/seller (*helvacı*)
- Thrown silk maker/seller (*ıbrıřımcı*)
- Cardboard maker/seller (*kartoncu*)
- Butcher (*kasāb*)
- Boiler maker/Seller (*kazancı*)
- Bookdealer (*kitapçı/sahhāf*)
- Shoemaker (*kunduracı/pabuççu*)
- Belt maker/seller (*kuşakçı*)
- Doughnut maker/seller (*lokmacı*)
- Gum-like-candy maker/seller (*macuncu*)
- Carpenter (*marangoz*)
- Furniture maker/seller (*möbleci*)
- Painter (*nakkāş*)
- Soap maker/seller (*sabuncu*)
- Saddler maker/seller (*sarrāc*)
- Drawer of gold or silver wire (*sımkeş*)
- Water-bearer (*sucu*)
- Tanner (*tabakçı*)
- Drum maker/seller (*tabbāl*)
- Tailor (*terzi*)
- Brick maker/seller (*tuğlacı*)
- Pickle maker/seller (*turşucu*)
- Box maker/seller (*kutucu*)
- Cushion maker/seller (*yastıkçı*)
- Quilt maker/seller (*yorgancı*)
- Jeweler maker/seller (*zergər*)
- Barley-dealer (*arpacı*)

⁴³⁰ MK 8594/30, 51b.

Among these professional groups, herbalists, barbers, engravers, butchers, painters, and quiltmakers are some of the most prominent. As seen in that list, the divisions between craftsmanship and artisanship were blurred since the suffix –ci (e.g. *helvacı*, *camcı*) referred to individuals who were both makers and sellers of a single product. Through the manuscript notes in which the performers' family names are also indicated, it is observed that some of these occupations were taught/ inherited from fathers to sons. For example, the famous performer linen maker/seller (*yağlıkçı*) Selim's father was also a linen maker/seller (*yağlıkçı*), Mehmed Ağa.⁴³¹

Among these professions, that of barley merchants (*arpacı*) demands special attention, since there are approximately thirty notes, some of them repetitive, that include performers as barley merchants working in Kapan-ı Dakık, or *Unkapanı* in its current name. *Kapan* is a term used in Arabic and Turco-Islamic cultures resembled wholesales markets or purveyance stock markets today and call with the name of the product distributed such as oil (*yağkapanı*), honey (*balkapanı*), and flavor (*unkapanı*). The men known as the merchants of *kapan*s (*kapan tüccārları*) or *hacıs* of *kapan* (*kapan hacıları*) were providing 90% of the city's purveyance (*zahıre*) needs.⁴³² The working area of the barley merchants recorded in the notes as performers were mostly from the flour exchange in Kapan-ı Dakık (Unkapanı today) with some exceptions from Üsküdar and Kabataş Docks.

Among the barley merchants of Kapan-ı Dakık, Turakzāde Halil Efendi of Tokat wrote notes on his performances over seven different manuscripts,⁴³³ and Turakzāde Seyyid Ali Efendi of Tokat recorded his performances on a dozen of manuscripts at the end of the 19th century.⁴³⁴ Some manuscripts were performed both by Halil and Seyyid Ali Efendis such as the 18th volume of Hamza that was performed by Seyyid Ali Efendi on 17 December 1892 and Halil Efendi on 20

⁴³¹ İÜNE 1102, 1b.

⁴³² Salih Aynural "Kapan," *DİA* 24 (2001): 338-9. For a comprehensive information on purveyance trade, see: Salih Aynural, *İstanbul Değirmenleri ve Fırınları* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2001).

⁴³³ Some examples are: FMK 30, 24b-25a; FMK 38, 63b; MK 8504/20, 51b; MK 8504/8, 19a.

⁴³⁴ Some examples are: MK 8504/11, 43a; MK 8504/12, 34a; MK 8504/4, 100b.

January 1896 whose notes appear on the same page.⁴³⁵ Performing the same manuscript and writing their notes on the same page in close dates suggests personal acquaintance was possible between two men alongside the shared social background (family and hometown) and professional milieu. Moreover, these two men were not the sole performers in this reading community sharing the common social background, but there are five more performers detected from the manuscript notes that were from the city of Tokat, carrying the same family name Turakzāde and occupied with the business of barley merchandise in Kapan-ı Dakīk from the end of the 19th century: Mehmed, Hasan, Battāl, İsmā‘il, and Behlül.⁴³⁶ Even this very example is evidence of the possibility to identify smaller sub-groups within that large manuscript community who share close family links.

Another *esnāf*-related visible group as the performers and hosts of reading sessions is guild masters (*kethüdā*) which has also been called as a steward (*kahyā*) in some parts of the Ottoman realm especially in earlier periods. Guilds were organized urban craft/service groups that usually had an internal hierarchy and official leadership established based on professional solidarity and economic interest but also raised upon shared moral and ethical concerns.⁴³⁷ Within the internal hierarch of guilds, the position of masters (*kethüdā*) is crucial, since they were responsible for “representing the guilds against the government, announcing the orders of the government to the members of the guild and to be assured of their applications, dealing with the disagreements within the *esnāf*, utilizing the capital most properly, leading the administrative council, organizing ceremonies for the adjustment and promotion to the profession, participating to the meetings on officially fixed price (*narh*) and apply the orders to prevent unfair competition, supplying the materials required for the artisans and craftsmen.”⁴³⁸

In the collective reading notes on Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories, there is a remarkable number of *esnāf kethüdās*, approximately fifty, who occurs as the performers but mostly as coffeehouse

⁴³⁵ YKSÇ 148, 44a.

⁴³⁶ In the given order: MK 8504/31, 1a; İÜNE 1097, 3b; İÜNE 1099, 130a; İÜNE 1103, 60a; YKSÇ 1096, 1b.

⁴³⁷ For more on the evolution, doctrine and specialties of Ottoman guilds, see: Eunjeong Yi, *Guild Dynamics*; Suraiya Faroqhi, “Introduction,” *Bread from the Lion’s Mouth*, 1-47.

⁴³⁸ Mehmet Canatar, “Kethüdā,” *DİA* 25 (2002): 332-334.

owners/operators. Among them, there are the *kethüdās* of artisans and craftsmen such as the *kethüdā* of soap-makers/sellers Ali Efendi, the *kethüdā* of potters (*çömlekçi*) Hacı Hâfiz Efendi, the *kethüdā* of furniture makers/sellers (*mobyacı*) Esad Ağa, and the *kethüdās* of coppersmiths Esad Ağa and Tabur Mehmed Ağa.⁴³⁹ However, the majority of *kethüdās* were the masters of physical laborers and transportation service providers who operated coffeehouses on the major piers of the city. The visibility of *kethüdās* of the transportation service providers could be stemmed from their working place, piers, which have also the centers of trade. Besides, since *kethüdās* of *esnāf* were not directly appointed but selected by the community, one can assume the public recognition and trustworthiness of *kethüdās* –as the significant requisites for any branch of *esnāf*– should have invested their career also as coffeehouse owners/operators.

Among the *kethüdā* of physical laborers, the largest numbers belong to the *kethüdās* of boatmen and porters. This is not surprising because these two groups had the highest numbers of

⁴³⁹ In the given order: FMK 26, 41b; MK 8504/33, 34b; FMK 42, 0b; MK 8504/15, 122b; MK 8504/4, 3b.

employment of *esnāf*, even more than coffeehouses, as seen in the chart below showing the top

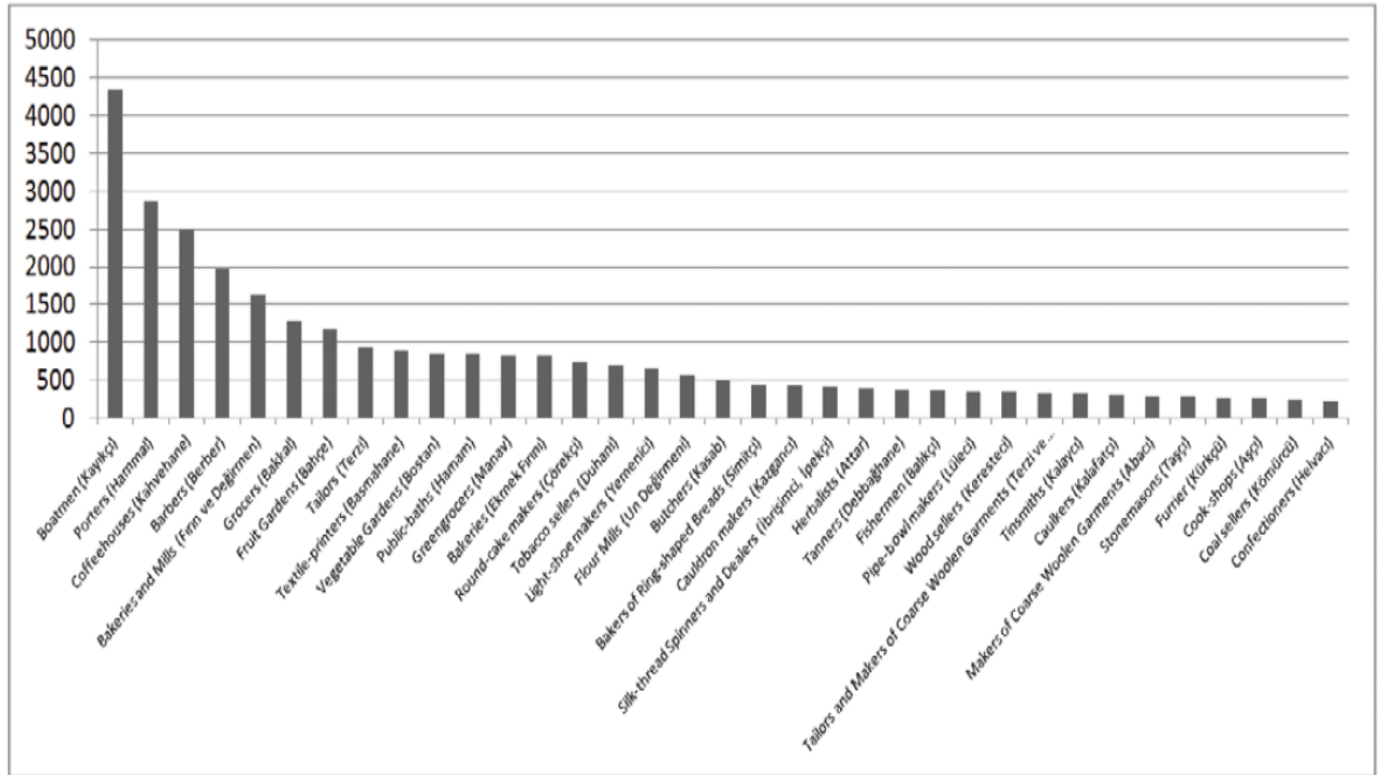


Chart 1 Top 35 numbered occupations by employment during the reign of Selim III. From: Betül Başaran and Cengiz Kırılı, “Some Observations on Istanbul’s Artisans,” 269.

occupations by employment during the reign of Selim III (1789-1808) based on surety registers.⁴⁴⁰ Their numbers rose towards the 19th century as researched by Nejdert Ertuğ who states the boatmen compose the highest number in *esnāf* inventories. According to his survey, the number of boatmen increased from 3.732 according to 1728 inventory to 6.500 in 1802.⁴⁴¹ Plenty of boatmen as performers of heroic stories might be perceived as an increase in the number of Istanbul’s boatmen population. Also, their sufficient level of literacy to perform a story in front of the public is remarkable. Some examples are the boatman Ali Efendi of Kengırı who performed various volumes of Ebū Müslim in the districts of Hâcepaşa, Timurkapı, and

⁴⁴⁰ Betül Başaran and Cengiz Kırılı, “Some Observations on Istanbul’s Artisans,” 269.

⁴⁴¹ Nejdert Ertuğ, *Osmanlı Döneminde İstanbul Deniz Ulaşımı*, 141. On Ottoman boatmen, also see: Cengiz Orhonlu, “Osmanlı Türkleri Devrinde İstanbul’da Kayıkçılık ve Kayık İşletmeciliği,” *Tarih Dergisi* 16 (2011): 109-134.

Karaköy,⁴⁴² the boatman Ahmed Efendi who performed the 1st, 17th, 27th, and 28th volumes of Ebū Müslim in Hacı Musa Ağa's coffeehouse in Balat in the year 1882,⁴⁴³ the boatman Muhammed Ağa who performed on 1771, the boatman Şerîf Ağa who performed in the coffeehouse of boatmen's *kethüdā* Hasan Ağa in Eyüb Dock in 1862/3, and the boatman Hasan Yazıcı who performed the 34th volume of Ebū Müslim in Boğazkesen on 29 July 1845.⁴⁴⁴

All *kethüdās* of boatmen in the manuscript notes are coffeehouse owners/operators in the main wharves of the city which will be discussed in Chapter 5 in detail. For example, Ahmed Ağa in Üsküdar Wharf and Hasan Ağa in Eyüb Wharf are examples to the *kethüdās* of boatmen who hosted reading sessions of various volumes of stories in their coffeehouses.⁴⁴⁵ These notes are dated the second half of the 19th century during when we can assume the boatmen were still effective in urban transportation in this period despite the advancements in naval transportation new initiatives such as *Şirket-i Hayriyye* (lit. Auspicious Company) that is the anonymous partnership of passenger and freight shipment on Bosphorus from 1854 to 1945. On the other hand, the establishment of this company certainly decreased the number and significance of boatmen in Istanbul which could have directed them to turn towards other occupations, in particular as coffeehouse owners/operators.

Another visible group of transportation through their masters (*kethüdās*) are the porters (*hammāls* or *küfecis*) in the manuscript notes all dated the 19th century. Porters shared the first line among urban *esnāf* in terms of numbers and mobility, according to Ertuğ's research, 2.919 porters were registered with their sureties in the year 1822.⁴⁴⁶ Despite the lack of porters themselves as performers, there is one *kethüdā* of porters Hurşîd Ağa who performed the 3rd volume of Ebū Müslim in Küçük Mustafa Paşa on 1 November 1857.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴² FMK 29, 25a; MK 8504/19, 50b; MK 8504/32, 1a.

⁴⁴³ MK 8504/1, 2b; MK 8504/17, 55b; MK 8504/22, 29b; MK 8504/23, 40b.

⁴⁴⁴ In the given order: İÜNE 1098, 2b; İÜNE 1099, 1a; FMK 40, 38b.

⁴⁴⁵ In the given order: MK 8504/27, 25b; İÜNE 1099, 1a. For the docks and main administrative regions of boatmen, see: Nejdet Ertuğ, *Osmanlı Döneminde İstanbul Deniz Ulaşımı*.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid, 244.

⁴⁴⁷ FMK 26, 54a.

As the *kethüdās* of boatmen, the *kethüdās* of porters appear mostly as coffeehouse owners/operators in various business districts of the city. For example, the 4th, 5th, and 33rd volumes of Ebū Müslim were read in Mustafa Ağa's coffeehouse in Balıkpazarı.⁴⁴⁸ The 4th volume of Ebū Müslim was read in Hamīd Efendi's coffeehouse in Balaban Wharf of Üsküdar on 19 February 1864, and 31st volume of Ebū Müslim was read in the coffeehouse of Arif Ağa of Kengiri on 21 March 1861.⁴⁴⁹ As for boatmen, the establishment of the *Şirket-i Hayriyye* deeply affected the porters regarding the construction of dock that enabled ships to come aboard which triggered some series of legal struggles between the company and guilds of bargemen and porters.⁴⁵⁰

The *kethüdās* of service providers other than boatmen and porters also exist such as the *kethüdās* of horse-riders (*bargirci*) and water bearers (*saka*). For example, the *kethüdā* of horse-riders Esad Ağa's coffeehouse on 26 January 1890 and İsmet Ağa on 13 February 1886 hosted the collective reading sessions of heroic stories as well as the *kethüdā* of water bearer Ali Ağa hosted a session in his office in Samatya.⁴⁵¹ It is seen one more time that the reading community around these heroic stories did not just reflect the changing face of the Ottoman urban community but also the traditional/resisting one. Also, these notes contribute to our knowledge on urban social units in late Ottoman Istanbul based on archival sources and other contemporary narrative sources such as traveler accounts or chronicles.

Migrants of Anatolia

Another important piece of information given by the writers of manuscript notes, other than the titles and occupations, are the hometowns of the performers and the hosts of reading venues. There are some examples that even the local performers and hosts of reading have given their

⁴⁴⁸ MK 8504/4, 101a; MK 8504/5, 126b; MK 8504/33, 2a.

⁴⁴⁹ In the given order: FMK 27, 1a; MK 8504/26, 41a.

⁴⁵⁰ For a discussion, see: Nejdet Ertuğ, *Osmanlı Döneminde İstanbul Deniz Ulaşımı*, 286-289.

⁴⁵¹ In the given order: MK 8688/3, 63a; MK 8504/30, 17a.

quarters of origin. Some of the districts given as hometowns of local performers are Üsküdar, Kasımpaşa, Galata, Edirnekapu, Vefâ, Eyüb, Fâtih, Tobhâne, Hâcepaşa, Davudpaşa, Mevlevihânekapu, Sultan Ahmed, and Eğrikapı. Looking at the professional division of locals, it is observed that they are mostly from the governmental affairs such as Râsim Efendi of Galata from the Enterprise of Ferries (*idāre-i mahsūsā*), Ömer Lütfi Efendi of Kasımpaşa from the secretary of the Foreign Ministry (*hāriciyye kalemi*), or Mehmed Derviş Efendi of Eyüb from the calligraphy steward in the Foreign Ministry.⁴⁵²

As a reflection of the urban community in Istanbul, the manuscript community based around the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim was not just composed of the locals, but also of recent migrants from Anatolia, the Balkans, and other countries. One example is the presence of the aforementioned Turakzāde family from Tokat, who were occupied with the barley business in Kapan-ı Dakīk wharf area at the end of 19th century Istanbul. It is possible to observe some other migration chains from Anatolia from the manuscript notes thanks to the special attention paid towards hometowns. While making observations on the migrated performers, it should be regarded that the sensitivity towards recording the hometowns could be more in some cities, therefore, these hometowns could be more visible in their notes on manuscripts.

By the 18th century, the migration to Istanbul from the provincial towns of Anatolia and the Balkans had increased exponentially. In return, the State had increased its control through frequent censuses, increased registration of the working population and newcomers, the emergence of travel documents (*mürūr tezkireleri*), and the surety system (*kefālet*). Apart from individual choices, these migration patterns were shaped by forced migration resulting from the loss of imperial lands, especially in the Balkans, and economic migration. For example, Cem Behar discussed the intensified population of people from Arapgir (Malatya) in the Kasap İlyas Neighborhood.⁴⁵³ According to Cengiz Kırılı, the chain migrations from certain provincial regions (Central Balkans-Macedonia, Western Black Sea region, the Eastern part of Central Anatolia) led to dramatic population increases in some districts and professional occupations in

⁴⁵² MK 8504/23, 31b; İÜNE 1096, 91b; MK 8504/20, 59b.

⁴⁵³ Cem Behar, *Bir Mahallenin Doğumu ve Ölümü*, 160-197.

Istanbul. The connection between townsmen and the possibility of cheap labor is visible in the official registers of surety.⁴⁵⁴ The manuscript notes in which the hometowns of performers and coffeehouse owners/operators are given confirms the chain migrations from the provincial towns Kırılı has discussed such as Çankırı, Sivas, Kastamonu, and others.

Starting from Tokat, the aforementioned members of the Turakzāde family were not the only migrants from Tokat as the city has the highest number of performers, approximately 40 in total. Even more than the aforementioned Turakzāde Halīl and Seyyīd Ali Efendi, Ebyarzāde Rızā composes more than half of the total performers from Tokat by appearing for twenty-five times in manuscript notes. He performed different volumes of Ebū Müslim in five years from 1312 to 1317 in Hijra calendar in the same place, a coffeehouse in the Arabacı Han in Atmeydanı as we understand from one of his notes that he was also the owner of a carriage route.⁴⁵⁵ In this coffeehouse inside the Arabacı Han, various volumes of Ebū Müslim were performed by Ebyārzāde Rıza of Tokat during fifteen years from 1303/1887 to 1317/1901. This is the period during Abdülhamīd II's reign (1876-1909) that coincides with the interest in the carriages (*araba*) in Istanbul also by the Sultans' initiatives.⁴⁵⁶ Interestingly, the famous novel of Recāizāde Mahmūd Ekrem, *The Carriage Affair (Araba Sevdası)*, which reflects the "craze" of carriages among Istanbulites, was published in the newspaper in these years, 1895 and 1896.⁴⁵⁷

The migrants of Divriği –a provincial town of the city Sivas in central Anatolia today– compose the most second-most remarkable migrant group within this manuscript community by approximately 30 performers and coffeehouse owners/operators. As the migrants of Tokat, some of them are occupied with the barley business (*arpacı*) in Kapan-ı Dakīk whereas some of them are occupied as government officials. The official of inheritance in the Treasury Ahmed Efendi,

⁴⁵⁴ Cengiz Kırılı, "İstanbul'da Hemşehrilik Tabanlı Tabakalar/ Yoğunlaşmalar," *Antik Çağ'dan XXI. Yüzyıla Büyük İstanbul Tarihi: Toplum* (İstanbul: İBB Kültür, 2015): 72-79.

⁴⁵⁵ "At meydanında, Orta Çeşme arabacı hattı sâhibi Togatlı Ebyārzāde Rıza Efendi kahvede kıra'at idüb ahbâblar mahzûn ve safâ eylemişlerdir, 24 Şa'bân 1315." MK 8504/15, 3a. Han: Buildings accommodating trade and crafts, often with residential facilities included shops, cited from: *Bread From the Lion's Mouth*, 297.

⁴⁵⁶ Mehmet İpşirli, "Araba," *DİA* 3 (1991): 242-245.

⁴⁵⁷ For an analysis of car narratives in Turkish novel, see: Jale Parla, "Car Narratives: A Subgenre in Turkish Novel Writing," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102 (2) (2003): 535-551.

the officer of the Imperial Endowments Mehmed Essādık Efendi, the officer of the Treasury of Endowments Haydār Efendi, and the officer of Bill Registering Hasan Efendi, all dated the 19th century, are some examples for government officials of Divriği.⁴⁵⁸ And, unlike the performers of Tokat, the migrants of Divriği are not from various families such as Aşçızāde, Halīlzāde, and Elbaszāde.

The third-largest group of performers who migrated from the central Anatolian towns is the people of Kengırı (today: Çankırı). Apart from the calligrapher (*hattāt*) Hāfız Esseyyīd Mehmed Çelebi Efendi, municipal police (*zābit*) Hāfız Sālih Efendi,⁴⁵⁹ and several other coffeehouse owners/ operators; the notes of boatman (*kayıkçı*) Ali appears on eight distinct manuscripts of Ebū Müslim between the years 1304 and 1306, and he performed the stories in different districts such as Timurkapı, Hācebaşı, and Karaköy.⁴⁶⁰ Kayıkçı Ali from Kengırı supports the results of Nejdēt Ertuğ’s inclusive research on archival sources and traveler accounts in which he observes boatmen from the various cities of the central Anatolia including Kengırı/Çankırı. The majority of the boatmen in Istanbul in the 19th century when the manuscript notes were written consisted of outsiders (*taşralı*) but not the locals which are true for many other professions based on physical labor.⁴⁶¹

According to the notes of my corpus, other than the remarkable visibility of people from Tokat, Divriği, and Kengırı/Çankırı, the performers from Anatolia display a variety in terms of their hometowns as listed above with the number of times they occur in these notes:

⁴⁵⁸ In the given order: YKŞÇ 909, 1a; İÜNE 1084, 86a; İÜNE 1084, 92a; İÜNE 1090, 41b.

⁴⁵⁹ YKŞÇ 895, 1b; YKŞÇ 894, 2a.

⁴⁶⁰ In the given order: MK 8504/30, 45b; MK 8504/25; 17a; MK 8504/32, 1a.

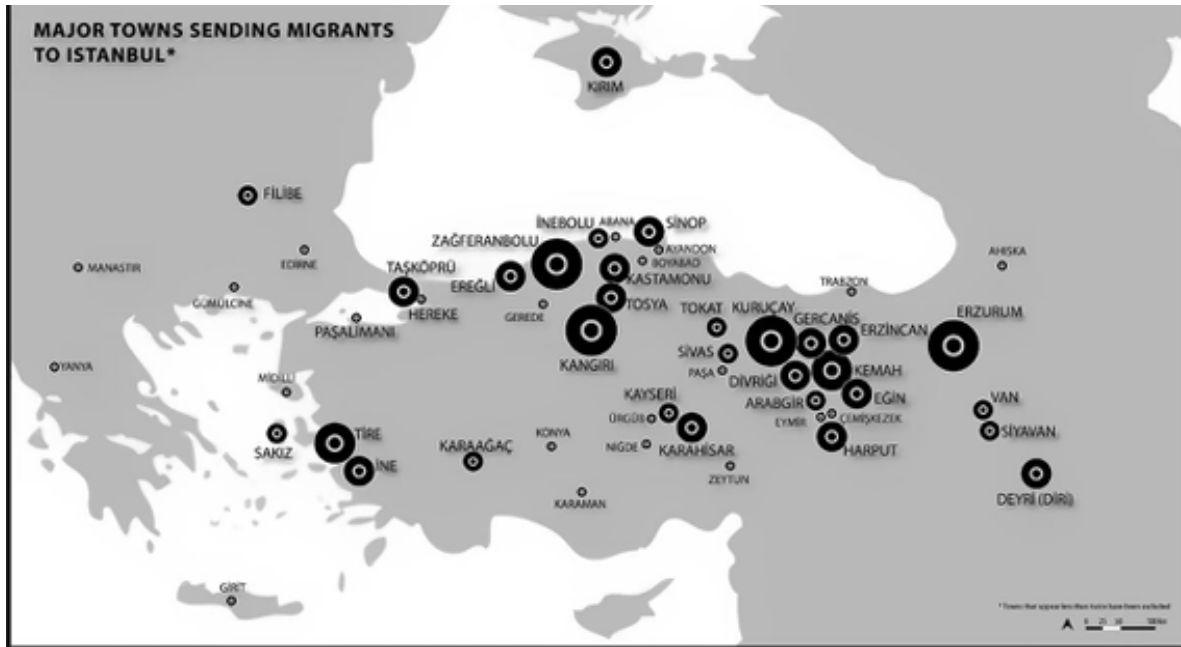
⁴⁶¹ Nejdēt Ertuğ, *Osmanlı Döneminde İstanbul Deniz Ulaşımı*, 66-71.

- Tokat: 40
- Divriği: 26
- Kengiri/Çankırı 30
- Çerkeş: 8
- Anar/Nar 8
- Harput: 11
- Ayandon: 5
- Viran: 5
- Kayseri: 4
- Nevşehir 4
- Arapgir 3
- Eğin/ Kemaliye 3
- Konya 8 (Akşehir: 2,
Karaman:2, Hisar:1)
- Ürgüp: 3
- Siverek: 3
- Kilis: 2
- Malatya 2
- Gerede: 2
- Kızanlık: 2
- Antakya: 1
- Bitlis: 1
- Bursa: 1
- Çemişgezek: 1
- Çorum: 1
- Diyarbakır: 1
- Eğirdir: 1
- Erzincan: 1
- Karahisar: 1
- Mamuretülaziz: 1
- Mersin: 1
- Sivas: 1
- Tonya: 1
- Uşak: 1
- Yorga /Denizli: 1

Other than the Anatolian provinces, the cities and countries in Balkans or Near/ Middle East also appear as the hometowns of performers such as Tunisian Mehmed Efendi, Monlā Celāleddin of Iran, İbrahim Dede of Skopje/Üsküp, Hatib Monlā Ahmed Efendi of Gümülcine [in Greece], Mollā Receb of Sofya [in Bulgaria], and Eşşeyh Yusuf Efendi's son Reşad of Baghdad [in Iran].⁴⁶² Along with the names of cities and countries, some notes point at the performers' region of origin such as Bulgarian, Albanian, Georgian, and Circassian.

To what extent do these observations in manuscript notes overlap with the data revealed in archival sources? Betül Başaran, based on the hometowns given in inspectory registers at the end of the 18th century draws a picture in which Kengiri overweighed the major provincial towns sending migrants to Istanbul that overlaps with the information derived from the manuscript notes (see: Map 1):

⁴⁶² In the given order: FMK 27, 1a; FMK 32, 80a; MK 8504/6, 29b; MK 8504/18, 14a; MK 8504/13, 6b; FMK 32, 80a; İÜNE 1087, 16b.



Map 1 Major Towns Sending Migrants to Istanbul. Cited from: Betül Başaran, *Selim III, Social Control*, 138.

For Tokat, Divriği, and Harput, where we see the major hometowns of the members of our community, the inspector registers give lower numbers. That difference could stem from various factors, such as the circulation of the particular manuscripts analyzed in this study between the people from the same regions (*hemşehrî*) and changing parameters and targets to record the migrants in different sources. For example, the inspector or surety registers could have paid attention to the more ‘problematic’ segments of the society such as bachelors, unemployed, or people of mobility such as boatmen and porters. We see one more time the cruciality to process various sources together for a clearer picture of Ottoman society in that particular time.

Another crucial question is that, through the manuscript notes, is it possible to observe if regional allegiances (*hemşehrîlik*) played any role in the allocations of migrants in the city? Cem Behar, in his book on Kasap İlyas Neighborhood, claims that the sureties of the many migrants from Arapgir (Malatya) to the neighborhood were coffeehouse owners/operators in the 19th century. For example, between the years 1885 and 1895, three coffeehouse owners/operators who were of Arapgir themselves have become sureties to thirty-one migrants from Arapgir.⁴⁶³ In our notes,

⁴⁶³ Cem Behar, *Bir Mahallenin Doğumu ve Ölümü*, 199-200.

such concentrations are not clearly observed through coffeehouses, i.e. a performer of Kayseri who performed the 15th volume of Ebū Müslim in the coffeehouse of Çavuş Ağa from Konya, or Mansūr Efendi of Tokat performed the 35th volume of Ebū Müslim in the coffeehouse Sarı Ahmed Ağa from Divriği.⁴⁶⁴ Possibly because both migrants of Divriği and Tokat were working in the same area, Kapan-ı Dakīk, as barley merchants resulted in these two groups frequently appearing together on manuscripts. There is one example of the performers and hosts of reading venues are from the same hometown when, for example, Emīn Efendi of Daghestan performed the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim in the state office of Hacı Mirzā Bey of Daghestan.⁴⁶⁵ Further research on these manuscripts notes would reveal more relationships between the migrants to Istanbul.

Because of the substantial amount of migrants enumerated above, this manuscript community does not just reflect the cross-sections of social units within the urban society, it also displays the geographical diversities constant in the urban fabric of Istanbul. Especially by the 18th century, the Sultans issued orders (*fermān*) to block the migrations from Anatolia and Rumelia due to the wars in the frontiers and internal economic unrest, and political insurrections within Ottoman territory (such as *Celālī* rebellions). The role of outsiders (*taşralı*) in the uprisings and the shortage of food and clothing in Istanbul lead Sultan Ahmed III (r. 1703-1730) and Mahmūd I (r. 1730-1754) to announce decrees preventing entrance and increasing social control over these migrant groups, which would not return with the expected results.⁴⁶⁶ By the 19th century, when most of the aforementioned notes were dated, the increase in the population in Istanbul in terms of numbers and variety has continued in parallel with other European urban centers. The forced migrations by the loss of territories, economic desperation, and the meticulous registering and inspecting of the migrated population had their own roles in making these increases more observable.

⁴⁶⁴ FMK 32, 52b; MK 8504/30, 26b.

⁴⁶⁵ FMK 27, 33a.

⁴⁶⁶ On these decrees and other issues on the 18th century Istanbul population, see: Münir Aktepe, “XVIII. Asrın İlk Yarısında.”

Pupils (*Şākirā*) of the New Education System

The transformation and diversification of the Ottoman society were due not only to the ‘outsiders’ but also to changes in structural systems especially by the mid 19th century as discussed above by the introduction of new institutions in the administration. Such as the performers of hosts of reading venues who were affiliated with this newly emergent bureaucracy, the students affiliated with the new education system in this manuscript community reveal the complexity of modernization and westernization processes, while some cultural practices persisted.

The transformation of the Ottoman education system had accelerated especially in the 19th century through the reforms in the organization, curriculum, and proliferation of schools.⁴⁶⁷ Through this transformation, a five-tiered hierarchy was established: “Quranic elementary school in every village or quarter, a *rüşdiyye* in every town of 500 households, a middle school (*idādī*) in every town of 1,000 households, a high school (*sultāniyye*) in every province capital, and higher schools, including teachers' colleges for men and women and again a university.”⁴⁶⁸

According to Carter Findley, what marks this period up until the 20th century is “an institutional duality of religious and secular groups” that stems from the continuity of madrasa-type education that was juxtaposed with the new government schools under the influence of modernization and westernization. Interestingly, among the performers and audience of heroic stories understudy, this kind of duality or juxtaposition is not observed. Either as reading venues or as the affiliated institutions of the performers, there is no traditional madrasas but only the modernized/westernized schools such as The School of Civil Administration (*mekteb-i mülkiyye*), the School of Maritime Studies (*mekteb-i bahriyye*), and the School of Medicine (*mekteb-i tıbbiye*). This dominance cannot just be explained as a reflection of the period because the majority of these manuscripts were written and also circulated before the mid 19th century during when these schools were established. But rather, the “new” educated class seems to appreciate the heroic stories more than their ancestors of the learned class including both the scholars and madrasa students. Despise the belittling over these stories in the mirror for princes

⁴⁶⁷ For an overview and main discussions on this transformation, see: Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁴⁶⁸ Carter V. Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom*, 135.

genre (*nasīhāt-nāme*) or treatises of the intellectuals (such as the aforementioned Süleymān Fāik’s *Mecmu’a*, or the anonymous *Risāle-i Garībe*) the popular flavor of these stories seems to be appreciated by the late Ottoman society. That differentiation over time gives rise to the thought that these stories are a reflection and contributor to the collective revivalism of tradition in the way they have become an “invented tradition,” a tradition that should be rescued in front of the western values and modernization. In this case, the appreciation of these ‘traditional’ stories remarkably by the officials, teachers, and students in newly emerged governmental institutions is not surprising, on the contrary, this is the social body that should resist more not to the technology and other practicalities maybe, but to the religious and moral values of the modern/western world.

Although there are several performers titled as *hoca*, they could be respectful elders of the society, or they can be a mosque *hoca* equivalent to *imām* or teachers of the Quranic schools. If someone is a school teacher (*mekteb hocası*) it is specifically indicated such as the school teacher (*mekteb-i hāce*) Hāfız İbrahim Efendi who performed the 13th, 14th, 15th, 24th, and 34th volumes of Ebū Müslim in 1276.⁴⁶⁹ Hāfız İbrāhīm Efendi seems the sole example for school teachers whereas many pupils appear as the performers and audience of the Hamza and Ebū Müslim Stories in the above-mentioned schools established by the mid 19th century. The School of Civil Administration (*mekteb-i mülkiyye*) as the predecessor of today’s Political Sciences Department at Ankara University was established in 1858 by Sultan Mahmūd II but was developed especially during the reign of Abdülhamid II (1876-1909), who ordered to split the school into two main sections—a high school/*idādī* and a college/*celīle* and to be named as “*mekteb-i mülkiyye-i şāhāne*,” because of the Sultan’s patronage.⁴⁷⁰ The performer of 2nd volume of Hamza, Mustafa Fāik Efendi who has two notes on the manuscript was a third-year student (*üçüncü sınıf şākirdānından*) from *idādī* level of the school (*idādiyye-yi mülkiyye-yi şāhāne*) in that period,

⁴⁶⁹ MK 8504/12, 1b; MK 8504/13, 34a; MK 8504/14, 77b-77b; FMK 38, 58b; FMK 40, 2a.

⁴⁷⁰ More on the School of Civil Administration, see: Ali Akyıldız, “Mekteb-i Mülkiyye,” *DİA* Addendum 2, 238-240. Also for other institutions, see: idem, *Osmanlı Bürokrasisi ve Modernleşme* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015).

precisely on 21 Temmuz 1875.⁴⁷¹ Another note dated the Abdulhamid period, precisely 15 January 1882, belongs to a student (*talebe*) of the college section (*mekteb-i mülkiyye-i celile*).⁴⁷²

The students of the School of Maritime Studies who were performers of the stories were divided into two groups. On the one hand, he notes that give the reading venue as The Imperial School of Maritime Studies (*mekteb-i bahriyye-i şahâne*), or The School of Maritime Sciences (*mekteb-i fünun-ı bahriyye*).⁴⁷³ The audience as the students are thought to be the students of the School of Maritime (the predecessor) of which the *idādî* sections were opened in the mid 19th century.⁴⁷⁴ For example, Ahmed Efendi of Kasımpaşa, a third-year student of *mehteb-i* [sic] *bahriyye* performed a volume (lack of the first page) of Ebū Müslim in “half and three-quarter of an hour (1 hour 15 minutes)” in the year 1885/6.⁴⁷⁵ From this school, we also have an undated note by a trainee (*mülâzım*) in the administration of the school, Nâbî Velî Bey, who performed the 34th volume of Ebū Müslim.⁴⁷⁶ On the other hand, the bigger community of maritime students are from the regiment of the maritime industry (*sanâyi ‘-i bahriyye alayından*) at the Imperial Arsenal or Cannon Foundry. Ömer Çavuş of Viran (?) from the regiment of maritime industry performed the 6th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 19th volumes of Hamza in Kasımpaşa barracks in the Ramadan month of the year 1804/5.⁴⁷⁷ Sometimes, there is just the mention that the manuscript was read or listened to collectively by the students (*şâkirdân*) of the regiment of industrial maritime such as “the students of the industrial regiment of maritime read.”⁴⁷⁸ As previously discussed through the example of the Imperial Cannon Foundry, the performers who define themselves as “from the industrial regiment” were probably students who read these stories as a part of their curriculum.

⁴⁷¹ İÜNE 1112, 2b.

⁴⁷² İÜNE 1099, 13a

⁴⁷³ More on mekteb-i bahriyye, see: Emin Yakıtal, “Bahriye Mektebi,” *DİA* 4 (1991): 509-511.

⁴⁷⁴ Examples: MK 8504/18, 50b; YKSÇ 148, 30b.

⁴⁷⁵ MK 8504/18, 19b.

⁴⁷⁶ FMK 40, 2a.

⁴⁷⁷ In the given order: İÜNE 1098, 90b-91a; İÜNE 1099, 0a; İÜNE 1089, 7a; İÜNE 1100, 6a [my own pagination]; İÜNE 1101, 89b and 123a.

⁴⁷⁸ İÜNE 1094, 1a.

Lastly, the students of the School of Medicine also performed and listened to the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim. The School of Medicine (*mekteb-i tıbbiyye* or *mekteb-i tıbbiye-i şāhāne*) was established in 1827 as an initiative of the Sultan Mahmūd II (r. 1808-1839) to train medical doctors (*tabīb*) and surgeons (*cerrāh*) for the new army, *Asākir-i Mansūre-i Muhammediyye*.⁴⁷⁹ İbrāhim Efendi from the second class of the *idādī* of this school performed the 4th volume of Hamza and delighted other students on 4 March 1854.⁴⁸⁰ Likely the same İbrāhim Efendi, after 13 days, performed the 12th volume of Hamza and delighted students again.⁴⁸¹ In this school, because there was a requirement for each of the regiments in the army of *Asākir-i Mansūre-i Muhammediyye* to have a surgeon, a special class for educating the selected students to be surgeons was initiated. Before that, we know that the surgeons were included within the category of *esnāf* because of the dexterity a surgeon must have and because of the lack of proper schools in the education of operational surgery.⁴⁸² A student from the class of surgeons, Said Efendi who performed the Ebū Müslim stories from the 1st to the 38th volume in the year 1858 could be from the surgery classes who were carried to the school of *Enderūn ağas* in Galatasary in October 1838 that was called as *L'Ecole de Médecine de Galata-Sérai*.⁴⁸³ In the inaugural speech of this new building attributed to Sultan Mahmūd, the acknowledgment of French as the education language was indicated to transmit the medical knowledge of the western world into Turkish and to spread this knowledge all over the country.⁴⁸⁴

In conclusion, the ultimate question that stands before us is whether there is a distinctive readership around the heroic stories in general, and Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories in particular in 18th and 19th century Istanbul? The performers display a wide range of profiles that were discussed in this chapter from a boatman of an Anatolian province to the servant of the Queen Mother in the Imperial Palace, except for a few examples of women and non-Muslims. In the same manner, the hosts of the reading venues mostly composed by the coffeehouse owners and

⁴⁷⁹ See: Nil Sarı, "Mekteb-i Tıbbiye," *DİA* 29 (2004), 2-5.

⁴⁸⁰ MK 1856, 1a.

⁴⁸¹ İÜNE 1095, 3b.

⁴⁸² See: Nil Sarı, "Cerrahlık," *DİA* 7 (1993): 423-424.

⁴⁸³ FMK 42, 2a.

⁴⁸⁴ Nil Sarı, "Mekteb-i Tıbbiye," 3.

operators were people of almost any professional and social background looking at their titles, occupations, and hometowns given in the notes of recitation. Therefore, both Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories without any remarkable difference between the two were appealing to a wide range of Muslim and men's homo-social world as performers, audience, and hosts of reading venues.

On the other hand, this inclusive universe of readership was not stable and independent from the contemporary social, historical and political atmosphere of their period. Although the dated manuscripts were produced mainly in the 18th century, their circulation was extended towards the 19th century, even to the 20th century if one also regards individual ownership and readership (see: Chapter 2). This broad period brings by its advantages and disadvantages for the modern researcher. The main challenge is contextualizing the manuscript notes within the changing social and historical dynamics specific to each period and reading environment. On the other hand, it is this slippery ground that provides some insights on individual preferences and perceptions and the multifaced feature of the urban society as well as the transformation of the conjectures and structures. For example, the westernization and modernization in the Ottoman education system accelerated by the mid-19th-century are reflected in manuscript stories by the appearance of students from new schools such as The School of Civil Administration (*mekteb-i mülkiyye*), the School of Maritime Studies (*mekteb-i bahriyye*), and the School of Medicine (*mekteb-i tıbbiye*). Or, the transformation in the central and local administrations is visible through the innumerable notes written by the state officials of various newly emerged institutions or by the administrative agents of the neighborhoods, such as the transition of *imāms* to muhtārs as the local authority owners.

The manuscript notes, as different from the archival sources –and other narrative sources to some extent– also enable us to observe the strategies and agency of the individuals within the structures. For example, the occupations and titles of coffeehouse owners/operators in the notes revealed that individuals were in search of more profitable occupations; or the fluid and common usage of military denotations have shown the penetration of civilian groups avoiding the burden of increased taxes in the second half of the 17th century. Through investigating the hometowns of readers, some migration chains, especially from Anatolian provincial towns to Istanbul in search

of a livelihood, can be detected, such as in the case of the Turakzāde family from Tokat, who were occupied as barley-dealers in the wholesale distribution center of Kapan- Dakık/Unkapanı.

The main contribution of the notes in that regard was the presentation and discussion of the fluidity of identities which makes it impossible to draw keen distinctions between the various social units. For example, *imāms* were included in the military because they were appointed by the Sultan's order (*berāt*), however, they also composed the lowest ranks of the learned class (*ilmiyye*). For that transitivity between identities, the terminology on social units should be redefined as exemplified by the mass of *esnāf* that are translated as artisans despite its implications were far more beyond that by including the medical doctors (*cerrāh*), physical laborers such as boatmen and porters, or artists such as painters (*nakkāş*). Due to this fluidity, some social attributions could be elaborated such, as the titles of *bey*, *efendi*, and *ağa* which were sometimes used interchangeably or juxtaposed in a way that could not be distinctively elaborated.

This chapter provides evidence that the categorizations of units in the Ottoman society from an economic point of view –namely through occupations and professions as the main vein of the field of Ottoman social history today– do not reveal an entirely accurate picture of everyday social life. Some titles such as *çavuş* and *mollā/monlā* seem to be expressions of respect rather than the occupation that also defines someone's position in society. Ottoman society cannot be solely understood through the lens of professions because some denotations transcend economic status and are based on other factors, such as the respectability or spirituality of a person, apart from *çavuş* and *monlā*, who was, for example, a *seyyīd*, a *dervīş*, and a *hāfiz*.

Lastly, some preassumptions on the literacy and readership attributed to particular social groups were invalidated within the wide range of the universe of performers, such as boatmen and porters. The egalitarian flavor in this manuscript community of heroic stories is evidence for the necessity of embarking on further research into bonds formed by and among different socio-economic groups instead of compartmentalizing these solely according to the wealth, status, or education level of individuals. Perhaps it was that 'democratic flavor' or 'the sense of belonging to a community,' not through wealth; profession; or social position; but through a common cultural practice, that led to the persistence/resistance of reading these stories during a period

when transformations in society, education, and administration were occurring at dizzying speeds.

CHAPTER 5

TOPOGRAPHY: LOCATIONS AND VENUES OF COLLECTIVE READING

The manuscript community of the heroic stories –specifically Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories in the late manuscript age in Istanbul– has owed its hundreds-years persistence to a cultural practice, namely, the collective reading of stories in houses, coffeehouses, shops, and many other venues. That practice has been discussed until now in terms of its formative power of the collective memory in Chapter 3 and the variety of social profiles gathered around that cultural practice in Chapter 4. This chapter, this time, articulates the spatial horizon of that practice by focusing on the locations and venues of collective reading. To this end, the topography of reading and sociability particular to that manuscript community within the larger urban landscape will be discussed through a study on the density of collective reading space according to the urban districts and neighborhoods alongside the translocation of these manuscripts within the locations and venues of the city. While analyzing the data in the collective reading notes, I argue that shared space, both in perceptual and physical terms, decisively contributed to the building of the manuscript community of the heroic stories.

Why does space matter?⁴⁸⁵ This is a question that one should certainly pose to the writers of manuscript notes in copies of the Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories. Although we do not encounter explicit answers from earlier centuries, it is worth considering possible answers. First of all, reading space is important for considering the details or performance time and duration, or the detailed accounts of the identities of performance and audience, or even descriptions of the coordinates of a collective reading session. All of these elements and more certainly contribute to precise documentation of the reading experience of these manuscripts. Below is one of among thousands of examples with a description of the location of reading:

⁴⁸⁵ Inspiring from the discussions in the field of sociology, the term ‘space’ will be used not as a strict geography but as a social production throughout the chapter. See a quote from one of the leading thinkers in this field, Henri Lefebvre for an explanation of space as a social product: “Everyone knows what is meant when we speak of a ‘room’ in an apartment, the ‘corner’ of the street, a ‘marketplace’, a shopping or cultural ‘centre’, a public ‘place’, and so on. These terms of everyday discourse serve to distinguish, but not to isolate, particular spaces, and in general to describe a social space. They correspond to a specific use of that space, and hence to a spatial practice that they express and constitute.” Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford and Cambridge, Blackwell, 1991).

Apart from the concern of precision in the documentation of that particular reading experience, the author of this note, possibly Mehmed Derviş Efendi himself, meticulously recorded the reading location because he knew the readers of this note could easily locate this reading experience in their minds. Thus, this time, the bonds between the members of that manuscript community were created through a shared knowledge –apart from the physical being– of space. In my opinion, this creation of commonality in the urban physical landscape was one of the main functions of collective reading notes which were accompanied by a certain type of location that numerically corresponds to approximately 800 out of 2500 notes.⁴⁸⁸

The reference points of this manuscript community provide insights into the spatial cohesion and receptional compartmentalization of Istanbul’s residents. A full address of a reading site as it appears in manuscript notes, which comes before or after the information on performers, starts with the name of a district, which precedes the name of the neighborhood within that district and ends with the indication of some landmarks including but not limited to mosques (*cāmi*’), fountains (*çeşme*), city quarters (*meydān*), wharves (*iskele*), bathhouses (*hamām*), bazaars (*çarşı*), well-known shops (*dükkān*), derviş lodges (*tekke*), or commercial and/or residential buildings (*hān*) by the expressions of nearby/ around (*civārında*), nearby (*kurbunda*), across (*karşısında*), or in aligning with (*intizālinda*). For example, the reading site of the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim that was performed in Şeyh Mahmūd’s coffeehouse on 20 January 1874 was defined as “in Kasımpaşa, in Uzunyol, around İplikçi Bathhouse,” or the 12th volume of Ebū Müslim was read “in the coffeehouse of Hasan Ağa around Kasımpaşa, across the fountain of Mahmūd Ağa.”⁴⁸⁹ Many of the notes locate the reading place by using one or several of these addressing elements. For example, for the reading of the 6th volume of Ebū Müslim, the neighborhood is not given, but the district name as Kasımpaşa, and the location as “across the bazaar of Mehmed Ağa,” is offered.⁴⁹⁰ As another example, for the reading place of Ebū Müslim’s 13th volume, the location is only given as Kutucular Hān, since this *hān* was a well-

⁴⁸⁸ The ratios are open to change by the further research on more of such manuscripts.

⁴⁸⁹ “Kasımpaşa’da, Uzunyol’da, İplikçi Hamām civārında [...]” MK 8504/4, 38b; “İşbu kitabı der-i ālīde, Kasımpaşa civārında, Mahmūd Ağa çeşmesi karşusunda, ikinci Hasan Ağa’nın kahvesinde [...]” MK 8504/11, 28b.

⁴⁹⁰ MK 8504/5, 110a.

known landmark of the city.⁴⁹¹ There are even some cases where the note only gives information about the reading venues, especially coffeehouses, such as the only information on the reading place of the 3rd volume of Ebū Müslim is given as “in the coffeehouse of *kethüdā* of porters, Mustafa Ağa” which is another indicator for the common knowledge shared by the members of the manuscript community over the urban landmarks.⁴⁹²

It is necessary here to note that the fluidity of the perception of space was not unique to that particular community, but rather to all Istanbul residents before the second half of the 19th century. Addressing a location or a venue was not restricted to the official administrative units but depended mostly on the urban landmarks that were crucial for everyday social and economic life. Cem Behar, based on some official registers and daily language of Kasap İlyās Neighborhood asserted that even the official registers had to use approximate addressing in the lack of systematic numbering and denomination of streets and houses before the last quarter of the 19th century.⁴⁹³ That fluidity and official regulations in the compartmentalization of units frequently create incompatibilities in the manuscript notes. For example, the wharf and residential area of Kapan-ı Dakīk appears with its novel name Unkapanı in the notes written in the late 19th century such as Paşa Kapusu that have been enumerated also as Bāb-ı Ālī. Other than the denominations, the blurring of the boundaries is visible through the interchangeable uses of some regional names such as Zincirlikuyu, which formed around the cemetery of the same name which is incorporated in Sultān Mehmed, Kasımpaşa, and Fātih in distinct manuscript notes.

Based on this fluidity in the spatial perception of residents alongside the domination of names attributed to the administrative units after the 19th century, exact coordinates of a reading site as given in the manuscript notes are not always possible. On the other hand, observing the leading districts, neighborhoods, and types of venues in hosting the collective reading sessions of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories would not just provide us to sketch the reading topography; it also

⁴⁹¹ MK 8504/12, 1a.

⁴⁹² FMK 30, 97a.

⁴⁹³ Cem Behar, *A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul: Fruit Vendors and Civil Servants in the Kasap İlyās Mahalle* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), 5-6.

allows us to assess the local consciousness and self-identification of members in that particular manuscript community.

Districts (*Semt*) and Neighborhoods (*Mahalle*) of Reading

According to the notes accompanied by a reading address, the manuscripts of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories have exclusively circulated throughout Istanbul with an exception of a Hamza volume that remarks reading sessions in a house in Çınaraltı/Bursa and a bazaar, again in the city of Bursa.⁴⁹⁴ These notes, while enlightening the topography of collective reading according to districts and neighborhoods of Istanbul, also hint at the spatial perception shared by the manuscript community.

To investigate the inclusivity of the manuscript circulation, two main components of locating the reading place as given in the manuscript notes to be discussed are districts (*sem*t) and neighborhoods (*mahalle*). The abstraction of districts and the role of neighborhoods in the local cohesion and self-identification is integral to understanding the perception of our note-writers, and urban folks in general, in a given urban space. As Cem Behar asserted in his study on Kasap İlyās Neighborhood (Davudpaşa), “the *sem*ts and landmarks were no doubt better known by the inhabitants of Istanbul at large than the names of the numerous small traditional *mahalles*. The *mahalles*, notwithstanding some remarkable exceptions, were of vital importance only to their own denizens and their names might not be known to inhabitants of distant *sem*ts.”⁴⁹⁵ Therefore, the distinction between a district and a neighborhood was vital in the perception of urban space. This explains why the manuscript notes on our corpus written by the first-hand residents of Istanbul tend to indicate the district name 1440 times as opposed to 192 notes with the names of neighborhoods.⁴⁹⁶ This tendency might be interpreted as the geographical prevalence of these

⁴⁹⁴ AK, K1180, 5a and 92a. Further research on the Anatolian libraries or revealing of manuscripts from the private collections would change the reading topography of these manuscripts.

⁴⁹⁵ Cem Behar, *A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul*, 5.

⁴⁹⁶ The statistical numbers given in this chapter should always be evaluated by considering the repetitive notes written during one single reading session or different reading sessions taken in the same reading place.

manuscripts that would require assigning a more recognizable residential area for the denizens of other distant districts.

The districts and neighborhoods that were essential elements of the collective reading notes were significant components in the spatial cohesion of the local residents, and therefore, of members of the manuscript community. As Cem Behar states, they were so much immanent to the daily lives while “fostering a durable sense of local identity and cohesion.”⁴⁹⁷ In the lack of family names before the Republican Era, the self-identification of the ordinary residents of Istanbul is reflected in their nicknames in the form of “that person from that district or neighborhood.” As discussed in Chapter 4, some of the reciters in the collective reading notes are described such as “of Üsküdar (*Üsküdarlı*), of Galata (*Galatalı*), or of Kasımpaşa (*Kasımpaşalı*)” as the nicknames that could refer to the hometown or residential area –or both– of that person. The district as it has been utilized in everyday life and language has never been legal administrative units in the first place, but, “it certainly involved a somewhat higher degree of abstraction, a sort of open topographical self-positioning and status-seeking with respect to the rest of the city.”⁴⁹⁸

How inclusive was the spatial cohesion of the members of this manuscript community, and what were the districts and neighborhoods that appear as the reading sites of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories? Firstly, to visualize the radiant of reading sessions, the map below displays the density of reading sessions according to districts as mentioned in the collective reading notes:

⁴⁹⁷ Cem Behar, *A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul*, 4.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.



Map 2 The districts of Hamza and Ebü Müslim reading according to the density of sessions as mentioned in collective reading notes dated 18th and 19th centuries (repeated notes written for the same collective reading session are disregarded). Intramural: Aksaray, Altımermer, Asetane, At meydanı, Avratpazarı, Ayasofya, Ayazmakapu Aynalıçeşme, Ayvansaray, Bâb-ı âlî, Bağçekapu, Balad , Balıkpazarı, Çemberlitaş, Cerrâhpaşa, Davudpaşa, Eğrikapu, Eski Ali Paşa, Fâtih, Halıcılar, Haseki, Haydarpaşa, Hocapaşa, Kadırğa, Kapan-ı Dakık , Karagümrük, Koca Mustafa Paşa, Küçük Ayasofya, Küçük Mustafa Paşa, Kumkapı, Lâleli, Mahmüdpâşa, Mevlevihânekapu, Samatya, Sarrâchâne, Şehremini, Şehzâdebaşı, Selverikapu, Sultân Ahmed, Sultân Mehmed, Sultân Bayezid, Tahtakale , Timurkapu, Yedikule, Yenikapu, Zeyrek. Boroughs: Arnavutköy, Bakırköy, Beşiktaş, Beyoğlu, Çatalca, Eyüb, Galata, Halıç, Kabataş, Kadıköy, Kasımpaşa, Kulaksız, Ortaköy, Silivri, Tobhâne, Üsküdar, Yağkapanı, Zeytinburnu.

As seen in this map, collective reading of these stories was expanded through a wide radiance of greater Istanbul, which was officially denominated as “the abode of felicity and the three boroughs (*dersa ‘ādet ve bilād-ı selāse*)” that corresponds to the *intramural* region and three main boroughs of Istanbul as Eyüb, Galata and Üsküdar.⁴⁹⁹ The top three districts in which the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim were read, namely Üsküdar (206 times), Tobhāne (182 times), and Kasımpaşa (178 times), were situated outside of the *intramural* region. In the first fifteen, we see the juxtaposition of *intramural* districts and boroughs, descendingly included Kapan-ı Dakık/Unkapanı (107 times), Eyüb (50 times), Galata (48 times), Davudpaşa (46 times), Sultan Ahmed (35 times), Fātih (29 times), Bahçekapu (29 times), Eski Ali Paşa (28 times), Karagümrük (28 times), Beşiktaş (25 times), Hocapaşa (16 times), and Kadıköy (14 times).

As spaces of residency, sociability, and business making, many factors original to one –or common to many– districts might be correlated with the density of collective reading in a region. Firstly, it is expected that there would be higher rates of collective reading in the most populated regions of the city. Üsküdar, which is the district that has the highest rates of reading, was one of the most populated districts in the 18th and 19th centuries. According to a population census in 1830 that counted the Muslim male population according to twelve greater districts (*kol*), Üsküdar appears as the most populated district by the number of 11.905.⁵⁰⁰ Apart from that, Üsküdar comes to the forefront as a collective reading site by the abundance of coffeehouses that were especially concentrating on the wharf areas (*iskele*), namely Balaban, Harem, and the

⁴⁹⁹ *Intramural* region is the area within the city walls (*sūr*) inherited from the Byzantine period. For some lists and discussions on the names and regional compartmentalization of Istanbul in the 18th and 19th centuries, see: Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, *Ondokuzuncu Asırda İstanbul Haritası* (İstanbul: İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 1978); Semavi Eyice, “İstanbul’un Mahalle ve Semt Adları Hakkında Bir Deneme,” *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 14 (2010): 199-216; Coşkun Yılmaz, “Bir Haritanın Rehberliğinde 1845 İstanbul,” *Antik Çağ’dan XXI. Yüzyıla Büyük İstanbul Tarihi*, vol 1 (İstanbul: İBB Kültür, 2015): 562-591; Mehmet Canatar, “İstanbul’un Nahiye ve Mahalleleri,” *Antik Çağ’dan XXI. Yüzyıla Büyük İstanbul Tarihi*, vol 3 (İstanbul: İBB Kültür, 2015): 218-245. Büşranur Bekman, “19. Yüzyılın Dönüşen İstanbul’unda Mahalleler, Kollar, Belediyeler: Bir Envanter ve Haritalama Çalışması,” Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Marmara University, 2020.

⁵⁰⁰ Başbakanlık Archive, Ibnülemin (D): 3087. Probable date 1840 [1246]. Cited from Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, 202. The boundaries and the population of Üsküdar as a greater region in the Asian Coast (*kol*) does not overlap with Üsküdar as a district (*semt*) meant in the manuscript notes, still, it gives an opinion on the population of Üsküdar as a *semt* regarding the centers as the most populated areas should have overlapped to a great extent.

Grand Wharf (*Büyük İskele*). As we learn from some of the notes, “a bunch of coffeehouses (*sıra kahveler*)” across the Grand Wharf also hosted some collective reading sessions.⁵⁰¹

As exemplified through an analysis of the situation in Üsküdar, the districts hosted the reference points crucial to economic life such as wharves and *hāns* appear as the dense reading sites.⁵⁰² This should be the main parameter behind the occurrence of Tobhāne and Kasımpaşa as districts following Üsküdar in quantity and frequency of reading sessions. Both Tobhāne and Kasımpaşa hosted the largest imperial industrial complexes, which employed thousands of workers among numerous *hāns*, the complex of the Imperial Cannon Foundry (*Tobhāne-i Āmire*) in Tobhāne named after the district and the complex of the Imperial Arsenal (*Tersāne-i Āmire*) in Kasımpaşa.⁵⁰³ Almost all of the collective reading sessions that have taken place in the Tobhāne district are located around the complex of the Imperial Cannon Foundry as discussed in Chapter 4 through the interest of workers towards the heroic stories and curriculum requirements of pupils in that complex. These districts were also central to the migration networks due to the dense economic activities around these complexes and wharf areas by the employment of Anatolian migrants for their low-cost labor. In the 1790s, 77% of the total urban workforce has situated in the wharves as the porters (*hammāl*) and boatmen (*kayıkçı*) who were the greatest fans of heroic stories.⁵⁰⁴ Besides, reading/listening to these heroic stories was cheap entertainment provided to workers and laborers who would stop and purchase a coffee.⁵⁰⁵ The wharf area

⁵⁰¹ For example: “İşbu kitab, Üsküdar İskelesinde, sıra kahvelerde, Çerkeşli Ali Efendi kıra’at eyledi [...]” MK 8504/12, 3a.

⁵⁰² *Hān* is a “semi-public and semi-private urban spaces that were open to (generally) men and used by merchants, artisans, soldiers, travelers and the city residents for trade, production, accommodation, and socialization.” Ahmet Yaşar, “The Han in Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth-Century Istanbul: A Spatial, Topographical and Social Analysis,” Unpublished PhD Diss., Boğaziçi University, 2016, 4.

⁵⁰³ For the history, administration and centrality to the urban socio-economic life of these complexes, see: Salim Aydüz, *Tophāne-i Āmire ve Top Döküm Teknolojisi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2006); Akın Tek, “The Arsenal of Ottoman Modernity: Workers, Industry, and the State in Late Ottoman Istanbul,” Unpublished PhD Diss., Northeastern University, 2018.

⁵⁰⁴ Cengiz Kırılı, “Hemşehrilik Tabanlı Yoğunlaşmalar,” 73. Kırılı based that statistics on *esnāf* surety registers.

⁵⁰⁵ 16th century historian Gelibolulu Āli, displays the coffeehouses as the space for all and only space for the poor to be socialized: “Zira ol ki mecālise varanlar, dervişān ve ehl-i irfān zümresidir ki murādları birbirlerini görüp sohbet etmektür. Ve kahvesin içüp keyflerin sür’atle yetiştirmektür. Birde āhī gurebā ve fukarā fırkasıdır ki gariblerin mesākin ve mev’aları yokdur. Nitekim fakirlerün başka cem’iyyet idecekleyin nüküd ve dünyālıkları yokdur. Ol cihetden mülāzemetleri kahve-hānelerdür.” Gelibolulu Mustafa Āli, *Mevā’idü'n-Nefāis fi-Kavā’idi'l-Mecālis*, ed. Mehmet Şeker (Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1997), 363.

between Sarayburnu and Fener are known as Kapan-ı Dakık or later Unkapanı as the supplier of wheat and other cereals followed Tobhâne and Kasımpaşa in the number of appearance in the notes as the collective readings sites for the same reason. That area was the economic heart of the city, and therefore a center of migrational attraction, as this study discusses in Chapter 4, through the performers and coffeehouse owners/operators who migrated from Tokat and Sivas not just as cheap laborers, but also as wealthy merchants. The district of Davudpaşa ranks in the top 10 sites of collective reading to the sessions taking place, due to the Davudpaşa wharf. Out of the 46 notes written in Davudpaşa, 34 notes locate reading sessions in various coffeehouses situated in Davudpaşa wharf area while some others are addressing the neighborhood of Bayezıd-ı Cedîd, the Imperial barracks (*kışla*), and the road of the police station (*karakolhâne*).⁵⁰⁶

The religious attractions inherent to districts might be estimated as another parameter in the density of collective reading sessions as in the case of Eyüb and Sultan Ahmed. The district of Eyüb was the first and one of the three biggest boroughs of Istanbul formed around the historical/spiritual site Eyüb Sultan Mosque and shrine that also functioned as an assembly point for urban entertainment, especially in the month of Ramadan, during which these stories would have been recited the most.⁵⁰⁷ Other than Eyüb, regarding the manuscript community understudy has overwhelmingly composed of the Muslim population, the Islamic centers of the city such as shrines (*türbe*), *mescīds*, and central mosques influenced the density of reading spaces. For example, the central reading site of the Galata region, known for its ethnically mixed social structure since the conquest of Istanbul in the 15th century, hosted the Arab Mosque and a surrounding neighborhood. Some of the coffeehouses in this neighborhood hosted many reading sessions, especially around the mosque and the central fountain, such as the coffeehouses of Muhtâr Hacı Mahmud Efendi, Mehmed Selîm Ağa, and Ömer Ağa.⁵⁰⁸

Some neighborhoods can be distinguished from others in terms of their repetitive visibility in the collective reading notes. The neighborhoods of Nişancı Mustafa in Eyüb, Fırüz Ağa in Sultân Ahmed, Kâtib Müslühüddin in Altımermer, Debbâğ Yunus in Sultân Selim, Emekyemez in

⁵⁰⁶ For the reading sites other than wharf, in the given order: MK 8504/4, 28a; FMK 40, 36a; YKŞÇ 899, 1a.

⁵⁰⁷ For the social life and various functionalities of Eyüb, see: *18. Yüzyıl Kadı Sicilleri Işığında Eyüb'te Sosyal Yaşam*, ed. Tülay Artan (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998).

⁵⁰⁸ In the given order: MK 8504/5, 16a; MK 8504/11, 28a; MK 8504/4, 1a.

Galata, Lala Hayreddin in Bāb-ı Āli/Paşakapusu, Kılıç Ali Paşa in Beşiktaş, Arap Cami'i in Galata, Küçük Piyāle in Kasımpaşa and Atık Ali Paşa in Çemberlitaş are some of these neighborhoods that are remarkable with the abundance of collective reading sessions. Despite a paucity of information, some notes give the exact coordinates of the reading sites through the names of avenues (*cadde*) and streets (*sokak*) in these neighborhoods. Mahmüdiyye Avenue in Galata, İhlāmür Avenue in Beşiktaş, Kutucular Avenue in Rüstem Paşa, Aynalı Bakkal Avenue in Mevlānakapı, Boğazkesen Avenue in Tobhāne and Bülbül Deresi Avenue in Üsküdar are some of the notable avenues. Like avenues, some streets are also given with the districts and neighborhoods they belonged to such as Balıkçılar Street in Galata, Kömürcüler Street in Karagümrük, and Uncular Street in Üsküdar while some of the notes are content with an indication of street names such as Pervāne Dede Street that we know in Aksaray today.

The neighborhood during the period in question was the smallest administrative and social unit of the city in terms of size and population. On the eve of the First World War, an average intramural Istanbul neighborhood population would not exceed fifteen hundred people.⁵⁰⁹

Although non-Muslims are not visible as the members of our manuscript community, most of the neighborhoods mentioned as reading sites on the manuscript notes hosted mixed populations comprised of Greeks (*Rūm*), Armenians, Jews, and other religious-ethnic communities.

Moreover, some districts and neighborhoods, such as Galata, were dominantly composed of non-Muslim communities. Numerically speaking, in the year 1871, there were 284 Muslim, 24 Greek, 14 Armenian, and nine Jewish neighborhoods in Istanbul. Alongside the neighborhoods in the boroughs, there were 587 neighborhoods of Istanbul in total.⁵¹⁰

Landmarks and reference points within a district and neighborhood were essential to the spatial cohesion of the residents in addressing a point through their value in the sociability within that area. Amid the neighborhoods that come to the forefront in the topography of collective reading, the centrality of mosques (churches and synagogues for other non-muslim communities), bathhouses (*hamām*), fountains (*çeşme*), and significant military and economic complexes (such as barracks, bazaars, and *hāns*) dominate the reading activity and social life to a remarkable

⁵⁰⁹ Cem Behar, *A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul*, 3-4.

⁵¹⁰ Coşkun Yılmaz, "İstanbul'un Nahiye ve Mahalleleri," 236.

degree. The passage in Cem Behar's study on Kasap İlyas Neighborhood succinctly describes the neighborhood of Ottoman Istanbul by focusing on the significance of landmarks as such:

Ten or fifteen streets at most, grouped around a thoroughfare or perhaps around a small square, and one or two small mosques (or a church or a synagogue, depending on the ethnic makeup of the neighborhood) defined most of the residential Istanbul *mahalles*. The neighborhood also usually contained a public fountain or two and a few shops catering to basic necessities or services. There might also be some public utility buildings (a public bath, or perhaps, a dervish convent or a primary school). Less basic goods and services were available either in the more central commercial areas, like the covered big bazaar (*carşu-yı kebir*), or in the many weekly markets serving larger slices of the urban population. Many of these Ottoman *mahalles* of Istanbul bore the name of the benefactor of the local mosque, the public bath or fountain that of a mythical figure, that of a Byzantine monument, or even, in a few cases, the name of the geographic origin of its first Muslim inhabitants.⁵¹¹

What were the centers and attraction points for the manuscript community in locating their collective reading sessions? Depending on Behar's assertions and my own observations from the manuscript notes, firstly, the mosques and *mescīds* appear as the main determinants of reading topography. The mosques of Vālide-i Atik (Üsküdar), Nūr-ı Osmāniyye (Çemberlitaş), Mahmūd Paşa, Rüstem Paşa (Tahtakale), Şeyh Cami'i (Üsküdar), Kılıç Ali Paşa (Beşiktaş), Fīrüz Ağa (Kasımpaşa), Cerrāhpāşa, Sultan Ahmed and Süleymāniye are some of the prominent centers of the city and the topography of collective reading of our manuscript community. Other than mosques, Sufi lodges were also used as readings site by note-writers such as Şeyh Murād Dergāhı/Tekkesi in Nişancı Mustafa Paşa Neighborhood in Eyüb or Kādiriler Tekkesi on Boğazkesen Avenue in Tobhāne.⁵¹²

Bathhouses (*hamām*) occur as regular reference points for the actual reading sites other than as reading venues on their own.⁵¹³ For example, the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim was performed in a

⁵¹¹ Cem Behar, *A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul*, 4.

⁵¹² MK 8504/20, 59b; MK 8504/13, 29b. For more information on the topography of tekkes in 19th century Istanbul, see: Serpil Özcan, "XIX. Yüzyıl İstanbul Tekkeleri ve Mekânsal Konumlanışları," Unpublished M.A. Thesis, İstanbul Şehir Üniversitesi, 2020.

⁵¹³ For the list and topography of Istanbul *hamāms* with their employees in 1752 according to a register (*Istanbul Hammāmları Defterleri*), see: Nina Ergin, "Mapping Istanbul's Hammams of 1752 and Their Employees" in *Bread from the Lion's Mouth: Artisans Struggling for a Livelihood in Ottoman Cities*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2015). For a comprehensive survey of Istanbul hamams in the 18th century, see: Ahmet Yaşar, "İstanbul Hamamları: 1731-1766," *Osmanlı İstanbulu II*, eds. Feridun Emecen et al. (İstanbul: İstanbul 29 Mayıs Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2014): 553-585.

the coffeehouse of Şeyh Mahmud in Uzunyol/Kasımpaşa nearby İplikçi Bathhouse, the 35th volumes of Ebū Müslim/Zemcīnāme was performed in the coffeehouse of Durmuş Ağa (known as Çingıralıklı coffeehouse) in Küçük Ayasofya across Çardaklı Hamām, or the 6th volume of Ebū Müslim was recited in a mansion in Cağaloğlu nearby Yeni Hamām.⁵¹⁴ The fountains and the city squares around these fountains were significant to the local cohesion of dwellers, as reflected in the denominations of some neighborhoods such as Yeniçeşme in Eyüb, Üsküdar, and Kasımpaşa as well as Çukurçeşme and Ortaçeşme Neighborhoods. Other than bathhouses, fountains (*çeşme*) and fountain squares (*çeşme meydānı*) are given as reference points for collective reading sites.⁵¹⁵ Among them, there are Sultān Mehmed Paşa Çeşmesi (Eyüb), Simkeşhāne Çeşmesi (Fātih), Çukurçeşme (Avratpazarı), Salı Pazarı Çeşmesi (Topkapı) Galata Çeşmesi (Galata), Mahmād Ağa Çeşmesi (Kasımpaşa), and Kızlar Ağası Çeşmesi (Üsküdar) which are included especially in the detailed address descriptions of reading sites.⁵¹⁶ For example, the 11th volume of Ebū Müslim was performed in a mansion in the region of Avratpazarı, in front of Cerrāhpaşa Mosque in Kürkçüler neighborhood across Çukurçeşme.⁵¹⁷

Other than religious buildings, bathhouses and fountains, other sorts of landmarks of the neighborhoods referred by the note-writers while addressing a reading site were the significant military schools and economic complexes such as barracks (*kışla*), military schools (*mekteb*), palaces (*saray*), bazaars (*çarşı*) and *hāns*. One neighborhood could have one or several of these reference points while locating a site in a district. As an example of the diversity of a district in terms of the reference points, the map below displays –by disregarding reading dates and frequency of reference– some locations of Üsküdar as referred to in the collective reading notes:

⁵¹⁴ In the given order: MK 8504/4, 48b; MK 8504/30, 53b; FMK 29, 87a.

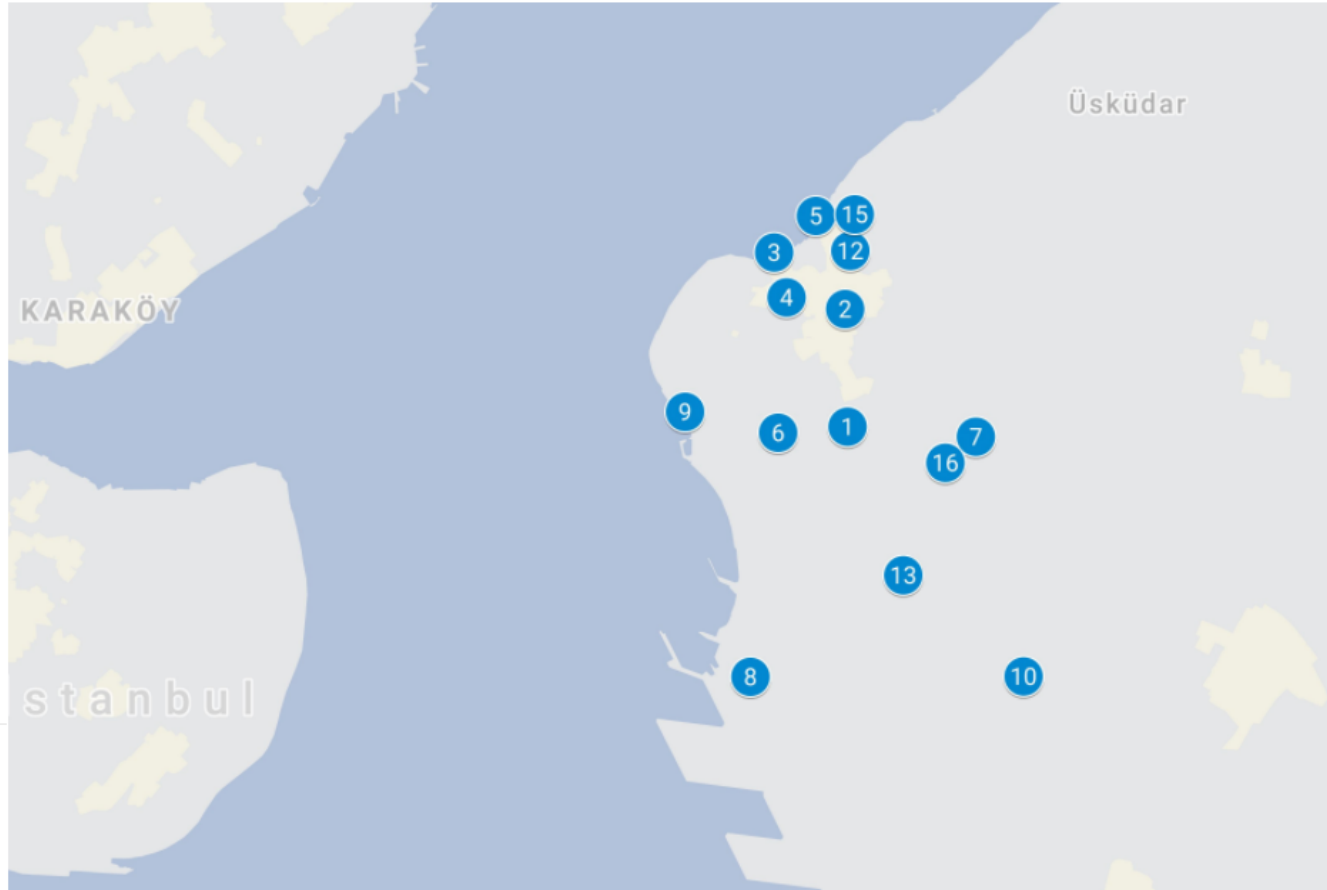
⁵¹⁵ For the rise of fountain building in new style, its patronage and social function in the 18th century, see: Shirine Hamadeh, “Splash and Spectacle.”

⁵¹⁶ For a database of inscriptions on the extant Ottoman fountains prepared by Hatice Aynur, Kayoko Hayashi and Hakan Karateke, see the website: <http://www.ottomaninscriptions.com/>

⁵¹⁷ MK 8504/10, 24b.

List of Reference Points

- 1 Ağa Bathhouse
- 2 Fish and Meat Market
- 3 Balaban Wharf
- 4 Yeni Mosque
- 5 Grand Wharf
- 6 Doğancılar Square
- 7 Eski Valide Mosque
- 8 Harem Wharf
- 9 Salacak Wharf
- 10 Karaca Ahmed Cemetery
- 11 Kızlarağası Fountain
- 12 Koltuk Han
- 13 Karaca Ahmed Shrine
- 14 Şeyh Mosque
- 15 Coffeehouse Area
- 16 Toptaşı Barracks



Map 3 The reference points in Üsküdar while locating a reading venue in the collective reading notes.

Lastly, well-known shops could be referred to describe the reading site usually by locating the shop in a neighborhood and district. For example, the shop of Pürdekâr Mehmed Efendi was used as a reference point in addressing the Circassian Mehmed ağa's coffeehouse that hosted the reading of the 18th volume of Hamza.⁵¹⁸ Or, the coffeehouse of İbrâhim Çavuş that hosted the reading of 2nd volume of Ebû Müslim was located being across the Digger (*Kazıcı*) Mehmed Usta's shop.⁵¹⁹ In the same manner, the lifted-mouth (*ağzı-yukarı*) İbrâhim Ağa's coffeehouse was located as being across from the shop of *börk*.⁵²⁰ Beyond as reference points, the shops themselves appear as the venues of reading sessions especially thanks to the innumerable coffeehouses.

Coffeehouses: Sanctuaries of the Collective Reading Topography

Among the reading venues, coffeehouses come in the forefront with their centrality in the spatial cohesion of the manuscript community of heroic stories in Istanbul in the late manuscript age. Coffeehouses sprawled all over the city and could be hailed as the 'sanctuaries of sociability' for residents, specifically of the manuscript community. Approximately 890 notes out of 2500 collective reading notes have been written in coffeehouses, which is enough to call the corpus under study also as 'the coffeehouse literature.' Moreover, the overlap between the spatial distribution of the coffeehouses as reading venues to the districts of dense collective reading, namely Üsküdar, Tobhâne, and Kasımpaşa is remarkable indicating that the main topographical components of collective reading were coffeehouses despite the presence of elite circles in houses and palaces.

The coffeehouses in the notes were defined in various manners, most commonly with the names of their owners/operators such as "the coffeehouse of Ahmed Ağa (*Ahmed Ağa'nın kahvesinde*), or with specific names (e.g. Little Algeria/*Küçük Cezâyir* or Rattled/*Çingiraklı*), or in attribution

⁵¹⁸ YKSÇ 148, 23b.

⁵¹⁹ MK 8504/2, 79b.

⁵²⁰ MK 8504/30, 51b. *Börk* is a specific type of headdress that was commonly used by Janissaries. For a historical survey and gravestones with that headdress, see: Mehmet Kökrek, *Börk: Bir Başlığın Tarihi Serüveni ve Edirne'deki Börklü Mezar Taşları* (İstanbul: Dergah, 2019).

to their locations (e.g. Balabān or Arpacı Han coffeehouse), and a professional group such as the coffeehouse of barbers (*berberler kahvesi*). The coffeehouses in the collective reading notes could also be mentioned as shops (*dükkān*) as exemplified in dozens of examples that indicate the owner as *kahveci*. For example, the shops of Kahveci Nusret Ağa and Kahveci Hacı Numan Osman were certainly coffeehouses.⁵²¹

The substantial literature on the coffeehouses has approached that central unit of the urban landscape from various angles including the history of Ottoman coffee and coffeehouses, the coffeehouses as the public space and generators of public opinion, the sizes and types of coffeehouses, and the governmental policies towards the coffeehouses.⁵²² By the 16th century, the coffeehouses in Istanbul and many other urban and rural centers emerged as the most significant site of male sociability and have served multiple functions. This was succinctly summarized by Cengiz Kırılı as such:

Coffeehouses were places of leisure where Istanbul men met, played games, smoked tobacco, listened to political fables told by storytellers, and laughed at the grotesque characters of shadow-theater that displayed profanity, irony, and humor with a highly political subtext. They served as commercial venues where merchants struck deals, ship captains arranged their next load, and brokers looked for potential customers. They were occupational spheres where practitioners of different professions and trades frequented particular coffeehouses, where employers found new laborers and laborers found new employers. They were the nodal points of migration networks where new immigrants found temporary and sometimes even permanent shelter and established contacts in setting up a new life in Istanbul. They also were spheres of manifest resistance and opposition. They were used as headquarters for the janissaries, the elite soldiers of the sultan that significantly shaped Ottoman politics from the seventeenth century until the corps was abolished in 1826.⁵²³

⁵²¹ MK8504/3, 58b; MK8504/8, 15a.

⁵²² Among that literature on Ottoman coffeehouses, the most influential studies benefited in this study are: Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1985); Cengiz Kırılı, "The Struggle over Space." *Osmanlı Kahvehaneleri: Mekan, Sosyalleşme, İktidar*, ed. Ahmet Yaşar (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2017); Cemal Kafadar "How Dark is the History of the Night, How Black the History of Coffee, How Bitter the Tale of Love, The Changing Measure of Leisure and Pleasure in Early Modern Istanbul" in *Medieval and Early Modern Performance in Eastern Mediterranean*, eds Arzu Öztürkmen and Evelyn Birge Vitz (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014): 243-269; Selma Akyazıcı Özkoçak, "Coffeehouses: Rethinking the Public and Private"; Süheyl Ünver, "Türkiye'de Kahve ve Kahvehaneler," *Türk Etnografya Dergisi* 5 (1962): 39-84.

⁵²³ Cengiz Kırılı, "Coffeehouses: Public Opinion," 76.

The multiple functions of coffeehouses as presented by Cengiz Kırılı as places of leisure, commercial venues, occupational spheres, and nodal points of migration networks also included the public performances of story-tellers sometimes accompanied with texts which is the situation for the performance of Hamza and Ebū Müslim in the late Ottoman manuscript age. That approximately 890 notes out of a total of 2500 notes of collective reading between the 1730s and 1910s indicate the reading venue as coffeehouses is enough to claim that there was a parallel between the prevalence of the coffeehouses with the increased appreciation of the ‘popular’ stories.

Because coffeehouses were the main venues of collective reading sessions, the districts, neighborhoods, and regions that display the intense presence of coffeehouses coincide with higher frequencies of reading sessions. From 750 notes which include the information of coffeehouses on their locations, the top three districts according to the numbers of coffeehouses included Üsküdar, with 123 coffeehouses, Kasımpaşa, with 103 coffeehouses, and Tobhâne, with 54 coffeehouses.⁵²⁴ Remarkably, three of these districts are the boroughs but not intramural Istanbul as a confirmation for the territorial and urban expansion of central Istanbul to the periphery in the last Ottoman period, especially in the 19th century. Also, the imperial perception of the city as “the abode of felicity and the three boroughs (*dersa ‘âdet ve bilâd-ı selâse*)” changed and is now divided into twelve regions (*kol*) which will correspond to the first municipal regions in the second half of the 19th century.⁵²⁵

The reading activity is intensified in some particular locations in these districts according to distinct reasons. First of all, Üsküdar, Tobhâne, and Kasımpaşa are known for an abundance of coffeehouses based on some archival sources, mainly *esnâf* registers. For example, an *esnâf* registration dated 1792 displays 123 out of 462 registered *esnâf* were operating coffeehouses in Tobhâne.⁵²⁶ The coffeehouses were gathered on the districts of condensed economic and industrial activity, therefore, high population of migrants, laborers, and merchants because of the

⁵²⁴ The names of coffeehouses that are repeated are included in these numbers.

⁵²⁵ For an analysis and mapping on the administrative transformation in between neighborhoods, *kols* and municipalities, see: Büşranur Bekman, “19. Yüzyılın Dönüşen İstanbul’unda.”

⁵²⁶ Ahmet Yaşar, “The Coffeehouse in Early Modern Istanbul: Public Space, Sociability and Surveillance,” Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2003, 27.

Imperial Cannon Foundry (*Tobhāne-i Āmire*) and the Imperial Arsenal (*Tersāne-i Āmire*) for the cases of Tobhāne and Kasımpaşa. Other than that, in Tobhāne, 15 notes were written on the reading sessions on Boğazkesen Avenue including the Kadiriler slope (*yokuş*) as a branch of that avenue.⁵²⁷ For Kasımpaşa, there are various centers of collective reading including Zincirlikuyu, Küçük Piyāle Neighborhood and around Mahmūd Ağa Fountain. For Üsküdar, there are attraction points such as Karacaahmet and Şeyh Mosque but the wharves of Balaban, Harem, and the Grand/ Üsküdar wharf has the most populated regions in terms of coffeehouses as illustrated on the map below:

⁵²⁷ For the sessions that took place in Kadiriler slope: MK 8504/5, 36b and 127a; MK 8504/8, 43a; MK 8504/13, 29b; MK 8504/19, 10a; MK 8504/23, 31b.

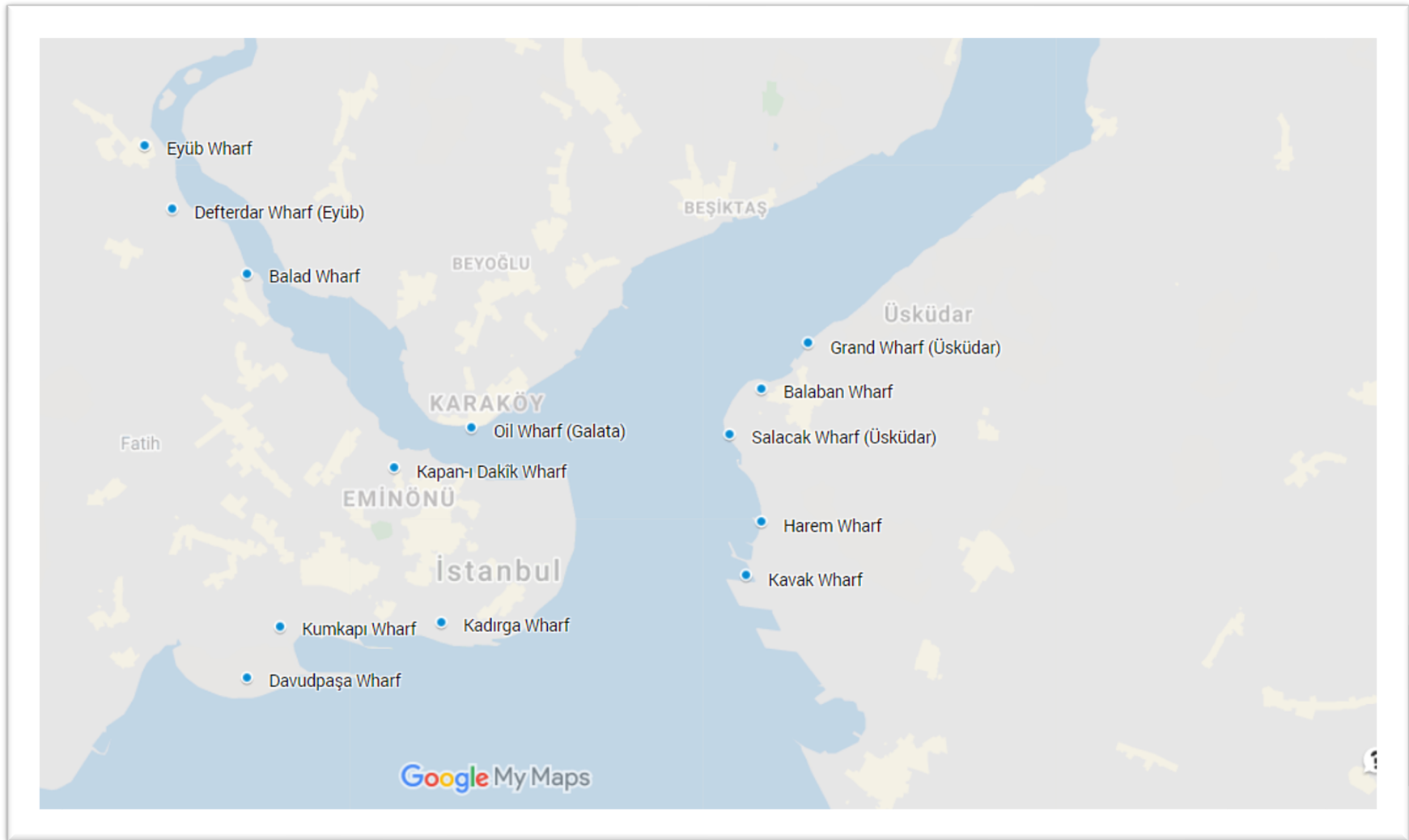


Map 4 Coffeehouses in Üsküdar as venues of collective reading sessions which were intensified (not synchronically) on the Grand wharf area and around the Sheikh Mosque. The numerated coffeehouses reflect the owners/operators of these coffeehouses whose names in order are: 1) Ahmed Ağa, 2) Ahmed Kethüdâ, 3) Azîz Efendi, 4) Gardener (Bahçevân) İsmail Ağa, 5) Balaban Coffeehouse, 6) Watcher (Bekçi) Hüseyin Ağa, 7) Barber Necib Ağa, 8) Major (Binbaşı) Halîl Bey, 9) Mehmed Ağa of Canık, 10) Circassian Ali Efendi, 11) Tobacco Seller (Duhancı) Elhac Mehmed Ağa, 12) Tobacco Seller (Duhancı) Hakkı Mehmed Ağa, 13) Paşa Mahmüd Ağa, 14) Elhac Haşim Ağa, 15) Elhac Mehmed Ağa, 16) Emin Efendi, 17) Garîz (?) Efendi, 18) Hacı Ahmed Ağa, 19) Hacı Ali Ağa, 20) Hacı Mehmed Ağa, 21) Hacı Mehmed Ağa, 22) Halîl Bey, 23) Kethüdâ of Porters (Hamallar Kethüdâsı Hamid Efendi), 24) Hasan Ağa, 25) Hüseyin Ağa, 26) Coffeehouse of İmâm, 27) Elhac Ali Ağa, 28) Kahveci Hüseyin Ağa, 29) Kahveci Kara Mehmed, 30) Kahveci Ömer Efendi, 31) Kahveci Ömer Monla, 32) Kahveci Ömer Ağa, 33) Kethüdâ of Boatmen (Kayıkçılar Kethüdâsı) Ahmed Ağa, 34) Kethüdâ Bey, 35) Kolbaşı, 36) Hasan Çavuş, 37) Mehmed Ali, 38) Egyptian Salih Ağa, 39) Yüksek Kahve/ Ahmed Ağa, 40) Lieutenant (Yüzbaşı) Mustafa Ağa.

Apart from the environs of mosques and fountains, wharves were the centers of coffeehouse business for the male population and facilitated sociability between laborers, migrants, and *esnāf*. Davudpaşa wharf, Defterdār wharf in Feshāne/Haliç, Kadırğa wharf, Yağkapanı wharf in Karaköy/Galata, Balat wharf, Kapan-ı Dakık wharf, Kumkapı wharf alongside Balaban, Eyüb wharf, Harem, Salacak, Kavak and Grand (*Büyük*) wharves in Üsküdar all hosted coffeehouses according to the collective reading notes. Among them, Davudpaşa wharf comes to the forefront in terms of the numbers of coffeehouses such as the ones of Ali Ağa, Nesīb Ağa of Arapgir (Malatya), Kızılbaşlar, Kethüdā Mehmed, Osman Ağa, Mahmūd Ağa, Ali Ağa of Divriği (Sivas), Mustafa Baba, Hayri Hacı Mehmed Baba and the *kethüdā of küfeciler*, İsmail Efendi.⁵²⁸ But the first rank with the abundance of wharf-coffeehouses is Üsküdar with the coffeehouses of Kethüdā of Boatmen Ahmed Ağa, Egyptian Salih Ağa, the Commander (*Binbaşı*) Halil Bey, Hacı Ali Ağa, Ahmed Ağa known as the high coffeehouse (*yüksek kahve*) on Grand wharf, *kethüdā* of porters Hamid Efendi, Süleymān Ağa Bey, and Tobacco-seller Hakkı Mehmed Ağa on Balaban wharf alongside Paşa Mahmūd Ağa known as the Fish Market (*Balıkhāne*) coffeehouse on Harem and Kethüdā Bey nearby Kavak wharves.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁸ In the given order: İÜNE 1112, 6a; MK 8504/15, 20a; FMK 31, 67b; İÜNE 1091, 8a; YKŞÇ 148, 45a; YKŞÇ 151, last page; İÜNE 1099, 130a; İÜNE 1099, 126b; İÜNE 1109, 3a; MK 8504/3, 49b.

⁵²⁹ In the given order: MK 8504/27, 23b; İÜNE 1087, 70a; FMK 27, 43a; FMK 26, 1a; MK 8504/17, 58b; FMK 27, 1a; MK 8504/6, 13b; FMK 31, 45b.



Map 5 Locations of wharves on which the collective reading sessions took place according to the collective reading notes.

Apart from the coffeehouses in wharf areas, some coffeehouses were situated in *hāns* as another significant economic center of the city, therefore, hosted reading sessions of Hamza and Ebū Müslim. For example, the coffeehouse of Turakzāde Rızā of Tokat in Arabacı Han, as mentioned in Chapter 4, hosted many readings sessions of Ebū Müslim volumes. Other than coffeehouses in *hāns*, the coffeehouses as reading venues are highly varied in type and size. There are the well-known and large-scale coffeehouses such as Little Algeria (*Küçük Cezāyir*) in Zincirlikuyu/Kasımpaşa that is described in one of the notes as “the famous coffeehouse known as Little Algeria (*Küçük Cezayir demekle meşhūr kahve*).”⁵³⁰ From this note, we understand that Küçük Cezāyir was a grand coffeehouse in size because it reads that the whole Kasımpaşa listened to the 28th volume of Hamza. Another coffeehouse of big size must have been the reading venues of the 35th volume of Ebū Müslim in Kadırğa wharf mentioned as the Grand Coffeehouse (*Büyük Kahve*).⁵³¹ As compared to these grand coffeehouses, we can assume the coffeehouses mentioned as the neighborhood coffeehouses (*mahalle kahveleri*) should be smaller in scale. These neighborhood coffeehouses are located in the neighborhoods of Kātib Müslihüddin in Altımermer, Yahyā Kethüdā in Kasımpaşa, Boğazkesen Avenue in Tobhāne, and Etmekçi Başı in Tobhāne.⁵³² A coffeehouse in Evlice Baba Neighborhood in Eyüb named as the Little Coffeehouse (*Küçük Kahvehāne*) hosted the 33rd volume of Ebū Müslim on 8 February 1875.⁵³³

The coffeehouses named after an *esnāf* group are also common such as the coffeehouse of barbers in Tekke Kapısı/Üsküdar and the coffeehouse of furniture makers (*möbleci esnafi kahvesi*) in Bahçekapı.⁵³⁴ Most of such coffeehouses are just mentioned as the coffeehouse of *esnāf* (*esnāf kahvesi*) such as the one in Kumkapı wharf that hosted the reading of the 27th

⁵³⁰ FMK 32, 79b. Another coffeehouse mentioned as famous or known is Çingiraklı Coffeehouse across Çardaklı Bathhouse in Ayasofya belonged to/operated by Dursun Ağa. MK 8504/30, 53b.

⁵³¹ MK 8504/30, 52b.

⁵³² İÜNE 1106,1a; MK 8504/23, 21b; MK 8504/4, 98b.

⁵³³ MK 8504/28, 0b.

⁵³⁴ FMK 32, 80a; MK 8504/30, 53b. For the definition of *esnāf*, see: Chapter 4.

volume of Ebū Müslim.⁵³⁵ We can also think the coffeehouses belong to *kethüdās* –the leaders of *esnāf* guilds– were also visited often by the people of the same professional group. The *kethüdās* of porters and boatmen are the most common professional groups which are understandable regarding these coffeehouses being around wharf areas. For example, *kethüdā* of porters Hamīd Efendi at Balaban wharf and the *kethüdās* of boatmen Ahmed Ağa at Üsküdar and Hasan Ağa at Eyüb wharves are some of such examples.⁵³⁶

Some coffeehouses are repeated often in collective reading notes. For example, Azīz Efendi’s coffeehouse nearby Şeyh Mosque in Üsküdar hosted the reading sessions of 7th, 14th, 15th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 23th, 27th, 31th, 32th, 33th, and 34th volumes on distinct days of the years between 1302 and 1305.⁵³⁷ Another frequently appearing coffeehouse belongs to Canbāz Mehmed Ağa in Kōmürçüler Street in Karagümrük in which the 1st, 4th, 14th, 27th, 33th, 37th volumes of Ebū Müslim were performed in between December 1869 and January 1870.⁵³⁸ It is certainly possible to multiply these examples regarding the serial reading of these volumes in the same place as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Houses (*Hāne*), Bachelor-*Hān* Rooms (*Oda*), and other Reading Venues

Coffeehouses were not the only reading venues shared by that manuscript community, despite their dominance to the collective reading topography. There were many sorts of reading venues that were a part of the physical reading environment and spatial cohesion of that manuscript community. In addition to coffeehouses, locations such as houses (*hānes*) and mansions (*konaks*) –of which the owners and locations are given in detail– were the second most preferred venue for collective reading sessions.⁵³⁹ According to our corpus, the earliest notes in which the

⁵³⁵ MK 8504/22, 16b.

⁵³⁶ FMK 27, 1a; MK 8504/27, 23b; İÜNE 1099, 1a.

⁵³⁷ MK 8504/6, 26b; MK 8504/13, 21a; MK 8504/14, 94b; MK 8504/16, 49b; MK 8504/17, 59b; MK 8504/18, 71a; MK 8504/19, 9b; MK 8504/22, 8a and 26a; MK 8504/23, 10b; MK 8504/26, 4b; MK 8504/27, 27b; MK 8504/29, 44b.

⁵³⁸ FMK 25, 1a; MK 8504/1, 109b; MK 8504/13, 28a; MK 8504/22, 1a; MK 8504/28, 0b; MK 8504/32, 1a.

⁵³⁹ For a discussion on the Istanbul houses as public space in terms of their similarities with the coffeehouses in function and structure, see: Selma Akyazıcı Özkoçak, “Coffeehouses: Rethinking the Public and Private.”

reading venue is a house or mansion are dated to 15 July 1728 earliest when the 35th volume of Ebū Müslim was performed in the house of the apprentice of Hatibzāde Çorbacı İbrāhim Ağa. The latest performance was on 2 March 1901 for the performance of the 6th volume of Hamza in the house of Muharrem Bey on the İhlāmūr Avenue in Beşiktaş.⁵⁴⁰

The titles of the house or mansion owners as *efendi*, *paşa*, and *bey* as signs of more prestige and wealth as compared to the owners/operators of coffeehouses most commonly titled as *ağa* are remarkable. Mansions (*konaks*) built by dignitaries such as rich merchants and officials approximately compose ¼ of the residential buildings among the total number of residencies (50 out of 200 in approximate).⁵⁴¹ The owners of these mansions were likely the uppermost class in that particular manuscript community, as it is understood from their occupational titles such as “the Minister of the Imperial Arsenal Seyyīd Mehmed Efendi,” “the Minister of the Imperial Endowments Şevket Efendi,” or the District Governor (*kāimmakām*) of Erzurum Seyyīd Bey.”⁵⁴² The lack of locations and descriptions of these mansions is a sign that everyone living in contemporary Istanbul would have known where these mansions were located. Another description of a mansion appears with the formula of the location and position of the owner, this time with the lack of the person’s name again would be common knowledge for the residents of a particular neighborhood. For example, the owner of a mansion nearby Yeni Hamām in Cağaloğlu district is only given as the Senior Accountant or the owner of the mansion nearby the Asylum in Haseki is only given as the head of *derviş* ceremonies, Zākırbaşı Efendi.⁵⁴³

For approximately 130 houses named in the corpus of this study, the spatial distribution of the houses comprises both intramural Istanbul and its boroughs including the districts of Aksaray, Bahçekapı, Beşiktaş, Davudpaşa, Eski Ali Paşa, Eyüb, Galata, Hocapaşa, Halıcılar, Kadıköy Kasımpaşa, Küçük Ayasofya, Kumkapı, Läleli, Mahmūdpaşa, Nişantaşı, Şehremini, Süleymāniye, Sultan Ahmed, Sultan Bayezıd, Tobhāne, Üsküdar, Yenibahçe, Yenikapı, and

⁵⁴⁰ FMK 41, 66b; İÜNE 1089, 2b.

⁵⁴¹ For the Ottoman house types, see: Maurice Cerasi, “The Formation of Ottoman House Types: A Comparative Study in Interaction with Neighboring Cultures,” *Muqarnas* vol 15 (1998): 116-156. Specific to the mansions, see: Doğan Kuban, “Konaklar” *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol 5 (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1994): 50-55.

⁵⁴² In the given order: YKŞÇ 153, 13b; MK 8504/2, 66b; MK 8688/1, 128a.

⁵⁴³ FMK 29, 87a; FMK 39, 95b.

Zeyrek.⁵⁴⁴ As compared to the mansions, the owners of these houses vary greatly in terms of their occupations and titles. Some examples for that variety in the owners of houses as reading venues are remarkable examples in terms of the diversity in the identities of the owners of houses in comparison to mansions can be given such as the houses of bookdealer (*sahhāf*) Seyyīd Ali Efendi and bookseller (*kitapçı*) Hacı Hüseyin Ağa, the *müezzin* of Aşık Nişancı Mehmed Paşa İbrāhim Efendi, the butcher Arab İbrahim Agha, quilt maker-seller Hakkı Efendi, and the officer of Internal Affairs Şemsi Bey of Kahta.⁵⁴⁵

Other significant residential units in which the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim were read collectively were *hān* (khan) and *bekār odaları* (bachelor rooms). In the last quarter of the 18th and early 19th century, 56% of bachelors were residing in *hāns* and rooms while 33% were staying in the shops and 11% on the wharves.⁵⁴⁶ As discussed in the previous chapter, the population of Istanbul increased due to individual and chain migrations from Anatolia and the Balkans, comprising migrants who sought a livelihood in the city. These migrants were mostly unqualified laborers serving as porters and boatmen. This population, typically single men – either bachelors or who had left their spouses in their hometown– resided in complexes composed of small rooms under the strict surveillance of the State. These rooms for single men were various and included rooms in autonomous buildings, *hān* rooms, or the rooms above the shops (including coffeeshouses), and boathouses on the wharves.⁵⁴⁷

The topographical overlap of the bachelor population with the density of collective reading action is revealed through the abundant mentions of *hāns* and bachelor rooms as venues of collective reading.⁵⁴⁸ The most widespread bachelor groups in the city were porters and boatmen, and they appear as the performers and hosts of rooms in *hāns* and bachelor rooms. For example,

⁵⁴⁴ For the locations of these districts, see: Map 3.

⁵⁴⁵ In the given order: MK 8688/2, 1a. MK 8504/2, 55a; İÜNE 1096, 2b-3a; FMK 42, 19a; İÜNE 1084, 93b.

⁵⁴⁶ Işıl Çokuğraş, *Bekār Odaları ve Meyhaneler* (İstanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2016), 79.

⁵⁴⁷ For example, the 11th volume of Ebū Müslim was performed in the room above the grocery store (*bakkal odası*) in Hocapaşa/Hacepaşa. FMK 31, 57a.

⁵⁴⁸ For the dense areas in terms of bachelor rooms, see: Işıl Çokuğraş, *Bekār Odaları*, 100-138. For an exclusive spatial, topographical and social study of the *hāns* in 18th and 19th centuries Istanbul, see: Ahmet Yaşar, “The Han in Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century Istanbul.”

in Hocapaşa nearby the Supreme Gate (*Bāb-ı Āli*) the boatman Ali Efendi of Çankırı performed a volume of Ebū Müslim in his bachelor room.⁵⁴⁹ The *kethüdās* of porters and boatmen were also residing in these rooms on wharves such as the *kethüdā* of Eyüb wharf Süleymān Çavuş who hosted a reading session in his room during the merchant İbrāhim Edhem Efendi recited the 17th volume of Ebū Müslim in 1859/60.⁵⁵⁰ Another room as the reading venue of the 3rd volume of Ebū Müslim belonged to the Janissary and mason (*taşçı*) Mehmed located in Üsküdar nearby Ayazma Mosque according to his own note accompanied with the insignia of 47th regiment dated 1757/8. This Mehmed most likely was one of the residents of the rooms nearby Balaban wharf in Üsküdar that is known for hosting the janissaries and porters as one of the crime centers before they were destroyed by the government in the year 1811.⁵⁵¹

Among the *hāns* that hosted the reading sessions, there is Arabacı Han in At Meydanı in which the aforementioned (in Chapter 4) Ebyarzāde Rızā Efendi of Tokat recited various volumes of Ebū Müslim in his coffeehouse. The *hān* controller (*hancı*) İsmail Ağa's son Painter (*Nakkāş*) Abdullah Efendi performed some volumes of Ebū Müslim in Kolluk Han of Üsküdar wharf.⁵⁵² The room of dried fruits-seller (*kuruyemişçi*) Süleymān Ağa of Ürgüp, situated in Kutucular Han in Tahtakale, hosted the serial reading of Ebū Müslim volumes by the same performer, the clerk of İmamoğlu İbrāhim Efendi, who was an official in the Fish Market.⁵⁵³ Other than Kolluk, Kutucular and Arabacı, some of the *hāns* appearing in the topography of this manuscript community are Kuşakçılar Hān and Yanyanlı (Yanyalı?) Hān in Fātih, Bastırmacı Hān in Mercan, and Doğramacı Hān in Sultan Bayezid.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁴⁹ The number of volume unknown due to the lack of first page. MK 8504/19, 45a.

⁵⁵⁰ MK 8504/3, 74b.

⁵⁵¹ For the State politics over bachelor rooms, see: Shirine Hamadeh, "Invisible City: Istanbul's Migrants and the Politics of Space," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 50, no 2 (Winter 2017): 173-193. For the bachelor rooms of boatmen and porters around Balaban wharf and the rumors about these rooms as the centers of crime in Üsküdar, see: Reşat Ekrem Koçu, "Balaban İskelesi, Balaban İskelesi Hanları, Bekâr Odaları, Kahvehaneleri, Kayıkhaneleri," *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, v. 4 (İstanbul: İstanbul Ansiklopedisi ve Neşriyat Kolektif Şirketi, 1960): 1949-1955.

⁵⁵² MK 8504/33, 29b.

⁵⁵³ MK 8504/33, 29b. In some other notes, he records himself with many duties as seller, clerk, officer and fisher of the seashore (*kenarçı*).

⁵⁵⁴ MK 8504/26, 4a; MK 8504/9, 11b; MK 8504/2, 58a; FMK 28, 21b.

In the parlance of the city residents and the writers of collective reading notes, another remarkable utilization area of the term ‘room (*oda*)’ is for state offices. For the difficulty in distinguishing the meaning behind *oda* whether as a residential room or an office room, the identities of performers and hosts of the rooms as well as the names of reading venues are consulted.⁵⁵⁵ For example, the Account office of the Imperial Treasury (*māliye-i hazīne-i celīlesinde muhāsebe odasında*), on 6 and 19 December 1863, hosted the reading of Ebū Müslim stories by Mehmed and Ali Efendis.⁵⁵⁶ In the same manner, a room in the Imperial Endowments hosted the reading of whole volumes of Ebū Müslim endured for 15 days in October 1901.⁵⁵⁷ Other contexts of the term *oda* as reading venues include the palace rooms such as the room of the *oda lalası of dārü’s-sa’âde ağa*, Tayyib, the guild rooms such as the guild room of tanners (*debbag*), or the rooms in a mosque such as the room in Yağkapanı Mosque in Galata on 14 October 1860.⁵⁵⁸

As has already been shown through the coffeehouses and residential units of single men, and even houses that occasionally functioned as a public space, the reading topography of our manuscript community intensified based on the locations and venues of collective lifestyles. In other words, collectivity in economic, social, and daily life reflected upon the formation of the topography of collective reading. Therefore, it is not surprising that the venues of collective reading other than the ones discussed in the preceding are the Sufi lodges, barracks, huge industrial complexes such as the Imperial Arsenal and Cannon Foundry, schools (*mekteb*), and prisons (*mahbūshāne*). An example for the Sufi lodges (*tekke*) as reading venues is Kādiriler Tekkesi in Boğazkesen/Tobhāne, where the 14th volume of Ebū Müslim was performed by Ömer Lütfi Efendi on 20 November 1891.⁵⁵⁹ On the other hand, the prison of the Imperial Cannon Foundry, the prison of Zeytinburnu, and the prison of the Supreme Gate (*Bāb-ı Āli*) are examples

⁵⁵⁵ Fikret Yılmaz remarks on room (*oda*) as a site of popular entertainment of which the implications are complicated as reflected in the archival records in the 16th century Western Anatolia, see: Fikret Yılmaz, “What About a Bit of Fun? Wine, Crime and Entertainment in the Sixteenth-Century Western Anatolia” in *Celebration, Entertainment and Theatre*, 145-172.

⁵⁵⁶ FMK 31, 1b and FMK 42, 11b.

⁵⁵⁷ İÜNE 1084, 50a.

⁵⁵⁸ In the given order: MK 8504/9, 49b; FMK 28, 78b; MK 8688/2, 1a.

⁵⁵⁹ MK 8504/13, 29b.

of the prisons as reading venues in which sometimes the names of the prisoners with their institutional numbers are given.⁵⁶⁰ For the presence of barracks as the reading venues of this manuscript community such as the barracks in Imperial Arsenal in Kasımpaşa, Kolluk barracks, Hunbaracı barracks, or the Imperial barracks in Davudpaşa could be perceived as the tradition of reading books collectively in barracks.⁵⁶¹

As discussed in Chapter 4 through the students as a profile in the manuscript community, schools that arose as reading venues according to the collective reading notes include the School of Civil Administration (*mekteb-i mülkiyye*), the School of Maritime (*mekteb-i bahriyye*), and the School of Medicine (*mekteb-i tıbbiye*). The notes written during in these schools are dated the 2nd half of the 19th century sometimes by the corporals (*onbaşı*) and sergeants (*çavuş*) but usually by the students such as the third-year student (*üçüncü sene şākirdānından*) Mustafa Fāik Efendi performed the 2nd volume of Hamza in the school of civil administration or Tayyīb Efendi who performed the 12th volume of Hamza in the school of medicine on 15 February 1854.⁵⁶² For some sessions such as the 12th volume of Hamza and 3rd volume of Ebū Müslim, the audience is recorded as the students (*talebeler* or *şākirdān*).⁵⁶³ Apart from these schools, the Imperial Cannon Foundry also hosted the reading sessions participated by the interns whose curriculum included these heroic stories to invoke the heroic emotions and collective spirit.⁵⁶⁴

Manuscripts Travelling the City

In addition to the lifestyles and manners of reading, the collectivity among that particular manuscript community is also evident from the practices of exchanging the manuscripts which

⁵⁶⁰ In the given order: MK 8504/3, 34a; İÜNE 1099, 92a; İÜNE 1096, 88b.

⁵⁶¹ For some examples to barracks: MK 8504/25, 10b; MK 8688/3, 65a; MK 8504/9, 6b; FMK 40, 39a. The assertion of Zehra Öztürk on that reading heroic stories in barracks has survived a long time even after the janissary barracks were destroyed is confirmed through our collective reading notes: Zehra Öztürk, “Osmanlı Döneminde Kıraat Meclislerinde,” 442.

⁵⁶² İÜNE 1112, 9b; İÜNE 1095, 2b.

⁵⁶³ İÜNE 1084, 1b; MK 8504/3, 45a.

⁵⁶⁴ Ersoy Zengin, “Tophane-i Amire’den İmalat-ı Harbiye’ye,” 369.

have defined the topographical boundaries of a particular manuscript. Beyond the locations and reading venues, bringing the manuscripts into the focus would enhance the circulation zone of the manuscripts and the exchanging practices of manuscripts, which were called the ‘manuscripts in motion’ in Chapter 2. The wide-spread mobility of manuscripts played a significant role in the sustainability of the manuscript community, providing the transmission of the message, and this will be discussed as communicative notes in Chapter 7. This also contributed to the sense of belonging to the same community inclusive to the whole city by extending the borders of neighborhoods.

At first glance, it is remarkable that, except for the manuscripts carrying a few notes, there is no manuscript limited to a particular region of Istanbul. All manuscripts in the corpus of this study crossed the Bosphorus and/or Golden Horn (Haliç) at least one time in their lifetime and did not stay within a limited district, intramural region, and borough of Istanbul. The increased social mobility in the city especially by the 19th century was facilitated by advanced transportation technologies, was likely an additional factor influencing the high mobility of the manuscripts. Other than that, the borrowing and exchanging networks may have been improved by the development of new types of collectivities and social bonds in the newly introduced institutions, such as the schools and industrial complexes. In the textual world, the trade and borrowing networks of books improved through the technologies in book production and the expansion of primary education. One might count more reasons for the social and historical background behind the high circulation of these books across the city, but the affection of the residents towards these heroic stories and their collective reading sessions would be on the top of the list. This affection induced them to borrow or rent a manuscript of Hamza and Ebū Müslim from each other or a bookdealer and to set the manuscript on a journey. In the end, it would not always be possible for a manuscript to return from that journey by being worn out or because of a borrower or renter who decided to keep the copy for himself.

Two manuscripts have been selected for that chapter as examples of the broad circulation zone of the manuscripts that exceed specific regions in contribution to the building of a community across the lands and sea amid all sorts of reading venues. The first one is MK 8504/4 or the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim, completed in the mid-18th century, precisely on 7 April 1765 according

to its colophon.⁵⁶⁵ However, according to 35 dated notes on the manuscript (45 notes in total), its journey amidst the collective reading sessions started and endured during the 19th century, from 1813 earliest and 1895 latest. Disregarding the undated notes that point the readings in Tobhâne, Şehremîni, and Şeyh Camii (Üsküdar), MK 8504/4 firstly appears in Gümüſsuyu/Eyüb in the year 1813 in the coffeehouse of Râgıb Ağa where Vâsi Efendi performed it.⁵⁶⁶ Afterward, it travels to intramural Istanbul, to Fâtih – specifically, around Hırka-i Şerîf– in 1864 to the coffeehouse of Elhac Ata Efendi to be performed by Mehmed Zekî Efendi from the secretary of the Ministry of War.⁵⁶⁷ In between these two notes with 50 years, there is only one reading note dated 16 January 1862, possibly referring to the private reading by Abdurrahman Çelebi of Eğrikapu who was a gunny make/seller.⁵⁶⁸ In the same year with Mehmed Zekî Efendi, Hüseyin Efendi from the Ministry of Urban Treasury (*bâb-ı velâyi hazînesinden*) performed the whole of the friends (*cümle refîkler*) and they cursed the soul of Yezîd in an unknown place but possibly in one of the offices in the Ministry.⁵⁶⁹ Next year, the manuscript was read by Hâfız Abdullâh Efendi, who was a eunuch of Enderûn despite it is not certain whether he performed or read in or outside of the Palace.⁵⁷⁰ In 1866, MK 8504/4 was performed in the coffeehouse of Kapıcı Ağa in Eğrikapu during when 20 aspers were collected from each participant of the session.⁵⁷¹ On 2 December 1867, Şevki Efendi recited in the house (*hâne*) of his father-in-law fez maker/seller Mustafa Ağa in Eski Ali Paşa nearby a school. The next year, MK 8504/4 travels to Kômürcüler Street in Karagümrük to be read by Mehmed Şevket Efendi from the Inspectionary Court of the Imperial Endowments (*mahkeme-i tefîſ-i evkâf ketebesinden*) in Ali Ağa’s coffeehouse.⁵⁷² This has become the earliest performance of Mehmed Şevket Efendi, who will continue to perform

⁵⁶⁵ MK 8504/4, 100b.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid, 78b.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid, 1b.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid, 2b.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid, 59a.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid, 94a.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid, 2a.

⁵⁷² Ibid, 3b.

Ebū Müslim volumes in the coffeehouse of Canbāz Mehmed Ağa in the following years.⁵⁷³ After that session in 1868, MK 8504/4 was regularly performed and noted almost every year until 1895 usually in coffeehouses except one prison and *hān*. The locations of these sessions are shown on the map respectively as Unkapanı, Sultān Ahmed Square, Kağıthāne, Molla Aşkī Neighborhood of Fātih, Latīf Paşa Neighborhood in Yenibahçe, nearby İplikçi Hamām in Kasımpaşa, Beyazıd-ı Cedīd Neighborhood in Davutpaşa, Eyüb, Bozahāne-i Āmire in Kapan-ı Dakīk, Hacı Ferhad Neighborhood then the Ekmekçi Avenue in Kasımpaşa, Balad wharf, Galata, Eski Paşa in Üsküdar, Tobhāne, Şeyh Cami'i in Üsküdar, Tobhāne, Bekçikapısı, Arap Mosque Neighborhood in Galata, Kapan-ı Dakīk and Divanyolu in Beşiktaş. After this dazzling traffic including the one way and round way trip, the manuscript ends up in the coffeehouse of Çubuklu in the city of Ankara in 1939 when Hüseyin Efendi who resides in Bağlıkara Farm has performed it.⁵⁷⁴ In the end, it was purchased by the National Library in Ankara by Aykut Ulupınar for 600.000 Turkish liras for the 33 volumes in 1997.⁵⁷⁵ The journey of that manuscript is visualized in the following map:

⁵⁷³ MK 8504/13, 28a; MK 8504/22, 1b; MK 8504/28, 0b; MK 8504/32, 1a; MK 8688/1, 126b.

⁵⁷⁴ MK 8504/4, 17b.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid, 2a.



Map 6 The circulation net of the manuscript MK 8504/4.

In comparing this with MK 8504/4, the undated 3rd volume of Ebū Müslim (MK 8504/3) is a manuscript that certainly was produced –and therefore read– in an earlier period which is apparent in the worn-out outlook of the manuscript and also on the dates of its manuscript notes. The sequentiality of MK8504/4 and MK 8504/3 in the library’s records should not be deceptive since there is a great time lapse between the dates that rises the thought that the 4th volume should have been reproduced in the 19th century. On the other hand, despite its lack of the original date of writing, MK 8504/3 was likely written in the first half of the 18th century, since the earliest date on this manuscript is 1758.⁵⁷⁶ As typical for such manuscripts written before the abolition of the Janissary corps (1826), MK 8504/3 is abundant in terms of the notes written by Janissaries. The manuscript is also abundant in terms of visual notes, including the insignias of various regiments and depictions of characters and monuments from the story. Another remarkable aspect of that manuscript is that the marginalia of many pages of this manuscript are taped, and therefore, the notes on the margins are covered, likely due to the defacement attempt of marks belonging to Janissary readers/ note-writers.

The earliest dated note on reading on MK 8504/4 belongs to a Janissary mason, Mehmed, who recited it in his bachelor room in Ayazma/Üsküdar in the year 1757/8.⁵⁷⁷ Among them, there is Janissary-Crazy (*Deli*) Mustafa from the 4th regiment who read the book 4 years later and who informs us that he found the book very challenging but enjoyable, and his note was accompanied by the insignia of the 4th regiment.⁵⁷⁸ After this date, despite the lack of dated notes belonging to janissaries, the abundant presence of the insignias and notes of janissaries (10th, 42th, 48th, 59th, 63th, and 94th regiments) which has also been discussed in Chapter 4 indicate the manuscript retained its mobility among the janissary circles possibly up until the abolition of the corps in 1826.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁶ MK 8504/3, 61a and 74b.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid, 74b. In the same year (10 Receb 1758), there is another dated note nearby an insignia depiction, but not on reading/performing that tells the insignia was drawn by Mustafa working in the drill field (*tālimhāneci*): Ibid, 21b.

⁵⁷⁸ “[...] dördüncü bölük yoldaşlarından Deli Mustafa pür zahmet kıra’at idüb gāyet safā itmişdir, böylece ma’lūm oluna.” Ibid, 59a. The note dated the earliest is above the drawing of an insignia that tells Mustafa from *tālimhāneciler* has drawn that picture dated 10 September 1758.

⁵⁷⁹ For the insignias in the given order: Ibid, 17a, 4a, 2b, 74b, 27b, 25b, 75a.

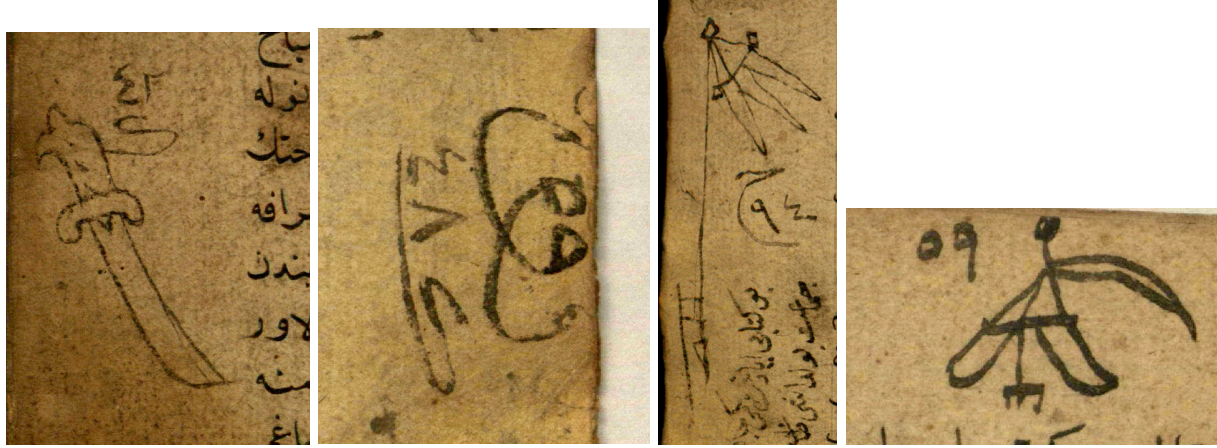


Figure 30 Some insignias belonging to the Janissary corps on MK 8504/3.

MK 8504/3 was not read/performed just by the janissaries before and after the abolition of the corps. The next dated note, three years after the note of Deli Mustafa, the book was performed in the house of the boatman (*sandalcı*) İbrâhim Agha nearby Hocahan in Mahmûdpaşa on 28 November 1764.⁵⁸⁰ Six years later, Chief Çuhadâr (*baş çuhadâr*) Sâlih Ağa recited the book in the mansion of the Clerk İsmâ‘il Efendi nearby Zincirlikuyu in Koska in 1770/1.⁵⁸¹ After a remarkable time-lapse regarding the dated notes, the MK 8504/3 appears in Kapan-ı Dakîk in 1801/2 approximately after 30 years maybe stemmed from that the Çuhadâr Sâlih Ağa owned it for a while.⁵⁸² After Kapan-ı Dakîk, MK 8504/3 travels to Beyoğlu on 12 January 1818 and Çukurçeşme on 10 January 1841.⁵⁸³ In the 2nd half of the 19th century, there is a more regular sequence between the dated collective reading sessions. In 1867/8, it was performed in the shop of Refet Efendi in Yeniçeşme/ Üsküdar.⁵⁸⁴ On 26 February 1872, it was performed by the officials of Rikâb-ı Şâhâne.⁵⁸⁵ On 2 December 1880, it was performed in a coffeehouse on

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid, 47b.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid, 39b. For the definition of *çuhadâr*, see: Chapter 4.

⁵⁸² Ibid, 45a.

⁵⁸³ Ibid, 16b.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid, 56a.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid, 42a.

Defterdār Street in Tobhāne by the imam of Hacı Ali Mosque.⁵⁸⁶ Three years later, MK 8504/3 continued its journey to the coffeehouse of Murād Ağa in Zincirlikuyu/Fātih before continuing to Tobhāne, this time to be recited in the prison on 14 October 1887.⁵⁸⁷ In 1890, it stopped by in the Imperial Factory of Zeytinburnu to be performed by Hasan in rush (*ale'l-acele*), then turned back to Tobhāne on 27 October 1890 to be read again by prisoners.⁵⁸⁸ On 18 Ta 1309, it was performed in the coffeehouse of Nusret Ağa in Sarraçhane.⁵⁸⁹ After the last dated collective reading session it participated in Davudpaşa wharf in 1896, MK 8504/3 ended up in the hands of Aykut Ulupınar –the 4th volume - before the National Library in Ankara have purchased it as a bulk of 33 volumes for 600.000.000 Turkish liras in 1997.⁵⁹⁰

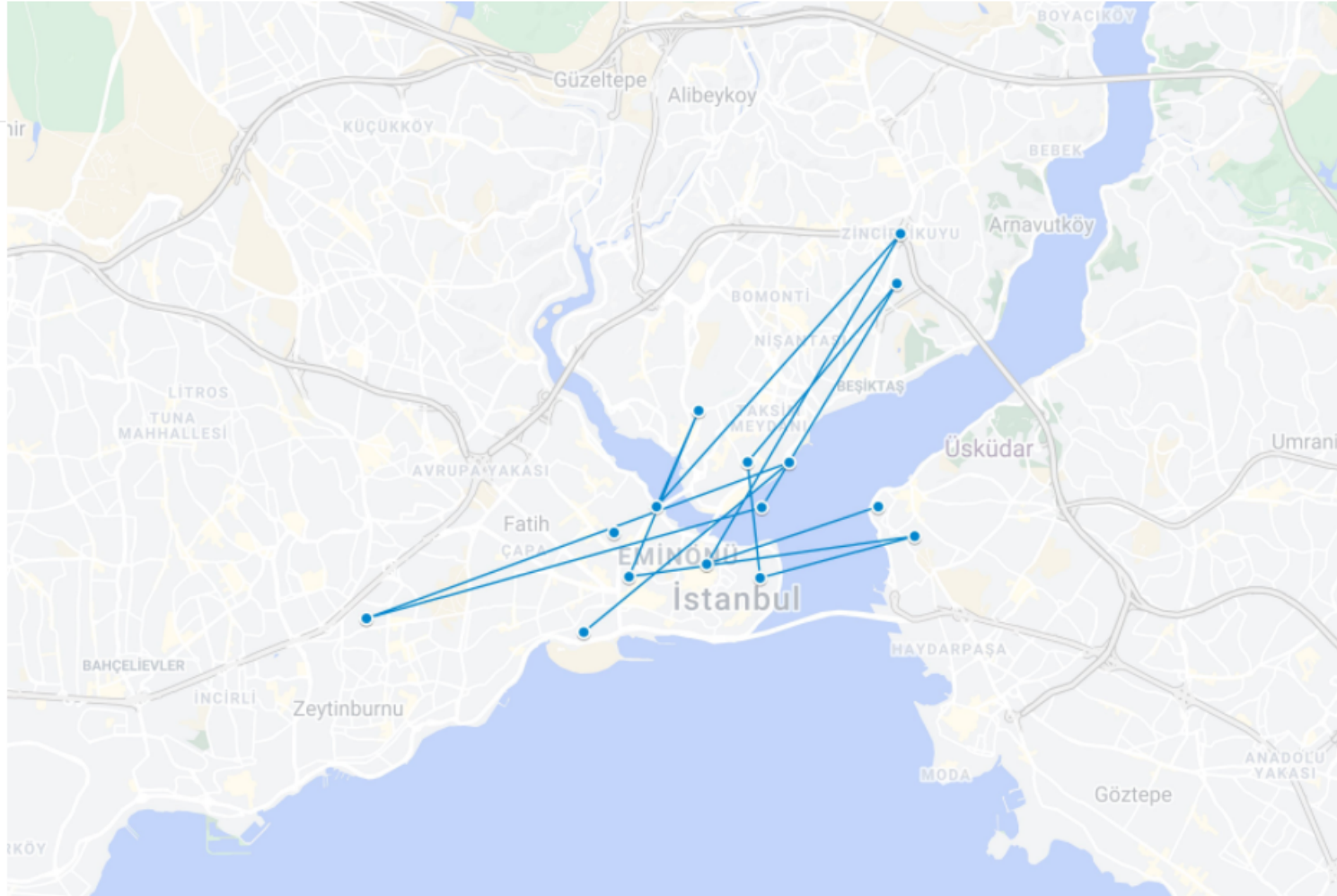
⁵⁸⁶ Ibid, 34a.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid, 28a and 31a.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid, 63b and 32b.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid, 59b.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid, 49b; 102b.



Map 7 The circulation net of the manuscript MK 8504/3.

To conclude, this chapter scrutinized the locations and venues as reflected in the collective reading notes to decipher the spatial aspects of the manuscript community formed around Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories in Istanbul in the late Ottoman manuscript age. The spatial cohesion of this community within the urban landscape of the period was considered based on landmarks and reference points in the urban landscape, which addressed the precise location of their sessions alongside the districts and neighborhoods according to the frequency of readings. Supported by the visualization of data recruited from notes via maps, the frequency was evaluated within the socio-economic conditions of the districts that come forefront as space of socialization, residency, business, or transportation.

On the other hand, the reading venues were the space of physical encounters between the members of the community who will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6. The leading site of entertainment and sociability of these members was coffeehouses, which gained prevalence in the city in the 18th and especially 19th century. This is reflected in the collective reading notes. Other than coffeehouses, the houses, mansions, offices, bachelor rooms in *hāns* or wharves alongside any sort of venues remarked with the collective lifestyle such as prisons or schools appeared as the venues of reading and socialization. In terms of community building as an issue that has been discussed in other chapters from various perspectives, these venues became the physical and social nexus of meeting, sharing, and confronting with the other members. In this analysis, the manuscripts themselves serve as another physical space of meeting, sharing, and confronting as argued in Chapter 7 contributing to the sustainability of social bonds within the community by circulating widely across the city.

CHAPTER 6

PERFORMANCE: AUDIENCE, TIME AND ATMOSPHERE OF READING SESSIONS

Reading has never been solely a silent and private practice that required the seclusion of the individual from the public. As found in examples of reading groups or children's storytime, reading aloud to a person or in collective reading sessions is still a widespread practice today.⁵⁹¹ This has always been valid for the early modern Ottoman context for leisure or teaching purposes.⁵⁹² As I argue in this chapter, 'performance' of the texts, specifically Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories, was still a continuing practice in the late manuscript age, and these performances contributed to the creation of social bonds, friendship, and sociability by gathering the members of the manuscript community. Previous chapters have discussed this manuscript community in abstract terms, namely the community formed around the same heroic tradition (Chapter 3), the social profiles of performers, audience, and hosts of reading venues of the collective reading sessions (Chapter 4), or the identities and locations of the community spread through centuries in distinct reading venues (Chapter 5). This chapter, based on the collective reading notes again, opens up the question of sociability with the focus on the performance of stories for the people physically present in the same reading session by focusing on the aspects and elements of these performances such as performers, audience, timing, duration, serialization, and reading atmosphere.

As has been touched upon elsewhere in various contexts, the collective reading notes compose approximately half of the total manuscript notes examined for this study. One of the typical examples is given in the following:

⁵⁹¹ Even in the most calligraphic, textual and typographic cultures, the oral residuals subsisted which was called by Walter Ong as "the secondary orality." Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London, New York, Methuen: New accents, 1982).

⁵⁹² Roger Chartier, "Leisure and Sociability: Reading Aloud in Early Modern Europe," in *Urban Life in the Renaissance*, eds. Susan Zimmerman and Ronald F.E. Weissman (Newark : University of Delaware Press): 103-120, 104. What Roger Chartier claimed for early modern Europe is that, "reading was not always, nor everywhere, a gesture of reclusive intimacy."

This book was read by the linen seller/washer (çamaşurcu) Ali Efendi in the coffeehouse of Paşa Mahmud Ağa in the coffeehouse of the fish market on Harem wharf in Üsküdar, 18 February 1861.⁵⁹³

These notes could be easily distinguished from others by considering a similar pattern. Although some of the elements could be missing or interchangeable, a collective reading note habitually involves the location (district/neighborhood/street) and reading venue where the collective reading session happened with the name and information on the host of this reading venue. Afterward, the name of the performer (s) possibly alongside the title, occupation, and hometown is given. These notes start as ‘this book (*bu kitabı*)’ or ‘the present book (*işbu kitabı*)’ and ends with the verb of reading it (*kıra’at itmişdir*) that implies the reading aloud. This was not a verbatim reading, which will be evident in the following discussion through the changing duration of sessions. These sessions were shortened and lengthened according to the contributions and preferences of the performer and the audience, the dynamic which turned readings into performances. After the verb “he read/recited/performed it (*kıra’at itmişdir*),” the audience reaction is described usually with the pattern “they delighted a lot (*azīm safāyāb oldular*)” while other minor reactions are also possible as discussed in the following. Finally, the majority of the collective reading notes end with a date of the performance as a reflection of the diligence of note-writers (likely the performers themselves) on dating their collective reading experience.

Before considering the aspects of these performances particular to the manuscript community in Istanbul in the late manuscript age, it should be noted that other ways of consuming a text other than the silent and secluded reading have always existed in the Islamic textual tradition. The rich vocabulary for the reading action, among them *hıfz* (memorization), *qırā’a* (recitation), *samā’* (listening), *mütāla’a* (deep reading), and *tāla’a* (individual/silent reading) is an indication that there were many ways to interact with the text in the Islamic tradition.⁵⁹⁴ In the transmission of hadith (words and deeds of the Prophet), *isnād* lines, reading certificates (*samā’*) to construct reliability through lineages of readers (*rāvī* records) points to the significance attributed to

⁵⁹³ “Bu kitabı Üsküdar’da, Harem iskelesinde, balıkhāne kahvesinde, Paşa Mahmūd Ağa kahvesinde, Çamaşurcu Ali efendi kıra’at eylemiştir, 7 Şa‘ban 1277.” FMK 26, 25b.

⁵⁹⁴ George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 10-11;

listening in textual transmission and production.⁵⁹⁵ Aural participation in the reading circles juxtaposed with the silent, secluded and visual reading was a frequently preferred relationship with the book. Khalid el-Rouayheb states that before the rise of deep reading in the 17th and 18th century, “premodern Islamic education was often characterized as a personal rather than institutional, and as oral rather than textual. [...] The private reading of texts, by contrast, played a subordinate and auxiliary role.”⁵⁹⁶ Konrad Hirschler discusses the centralization of popular and scholarly reading sessions in the Medieval Arabic lands, and states that “aurality, in the sense of reading aloud a written text to a group of listeners, remained a prominent practice throughout the Middle Period.”⁵⁹⁷ In the 12th century, for example, *Ibn Asākir* (d. 1176) published his monumental *History of Damascus* during reading sessions, which endured for eighty years under different teachers.⁵⁹⁸

Orality and aurality have remained as the dominant ways of relationship with the text and in the transmission of artistic and scholarly knowledge in the early modern Ottoman context. The inclination towards master-apprentice relationship (*meşk*) in learning sciences and arts, the ongoing gesture of text memorization, and the ever-existing reading sessions around text recitation endured in the Islamic world for centuries in varying degrees. The master-apprentice learning (*meşk*) and memorization dominated the musical and fine arts such as Ottoman/Turkish music and calligraphy.⁵⁹⁹ In this way, as Sayyed Hossein Nasr put in words for early Islamic

⁵⁹⁵ For the manuscript notes related to reading in the Islamic manuscript tradition, see: *Manuscript Notes as Documentary Sources*, eds. Andreas Görke and Konrad Hirschler; İsmail E. Erünsal, *Ortaçağ İslâm Dünyasında*.

⁵⁹⁶ Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Magreb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 97.

⁵⁹⁷ Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word*.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 32.

⁵⁹⁹ On the transition of Ottoman/Turkish musical knowledge, see: Cem Behar, *Aşk Olmayınca Meşk Olmaz: Geleneksel Osmanlı/Türk Müziğinde Öğretim ve İntikal* (İstanbul: YKY, 2019). On master-apprentice learning in calligraphy, see: İrvin Cemil Schick, “İslâmî Kitap San‘atlarında Standartlaşma: Usta-Çırak İlişkisi ve İcazet Geleneği,” *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 49 (2017): 287-322.

education, oral transmission has always complemented the written text, as the spoken word made possible the full understanding and correct ‘reading’ of the written text.⁶⁰⁰

The aurality of text in the Ottoman context operated through many genres, including heroic stories such as Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories. For example, Gabriel Pieterberg claimed that Tuġi’s chronicle written in the 17th century was, “[...] meant to be read aloud to gatherings of troops,” by looking at its content, language, and notes on the manuscripts.⁶⁰¹ The targeted audience of writers played a crucial role in the degree of orality on and within the text. Speaking through Tuġi’s example, that audience was janissaries and the function of the text was to promote rebellious sentiments against the government. Another example is Tulū‘î, who rewrote his *Paşanâme*, an illustrated *gazânâme* (campaign narratives on victorious heroes) in the 17th century to make it appropriate for reading aloud.⁶⁰² Zehra Öztürk displays the extension of genres involved in the category of “the books read aloud,” such as the books of religious-mystical content, religious-epic stories of heroes, hagiographies, and folktales. Arzu Öztürkmen also evaluates the epic tales, hagiographies, and chronicles in late medieval Anatolia in terms of orality and performance.⁶⁰³ Among this wide range of genres, the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim that compose the main corpus of this study stand in a crucial position in terms of the orality and performance of texts. This is the reason for Mustafa Nihat Özön righteously calling these “the stories to be read in public as the residues of an old culture that satisfied the need for story-telling of a vast public.”⁶⁰⁴

Before the collective reading notes themselves, there are some para-textual elements on the manuscripts which serve as pieces of evidence for that performance of the texts in front of an audience. This was a common way to establish a textual relationship for that manuscript

⁶⁰⁰ Nasr, Sayyed Hussein. “Oral Transmission and the Book in Islamic Education: The Spoken and the Written Word” in *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East*, ed. George N. Atiyeh (Albany: State U of New York, 1995): 57-71.

⁶⁰¹ Gabriel, Piterberg. *An Ottoman Tragedy*, 74-77. It was Fahir İz who mentioned about these manuscript notes: Fahir İz, “Eski Düzyazımın Gelişimi,” 122.

⁶⁰² Tülün Değirmenci, “Sözleri Dinlensin, Tasviri İzlensin: Tulû‘î’nin Paşanâme’si ve 17. Yüzyıldan Eşkiya Hikâyeleri,” *Kebikeç* 33 (2012): 127-148.

⁶⁰³ Arzu Öztürkmen, “Orality and Performance.”

⁶⁰⁴ Mustafa Nihat Özön, *Türkçede Roman*, 78. My translation.

community with Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories. For some examples, one might mention the highlighted or colored introductory phases such as *rāvi eydür* (the storyteller says), *ez ın cānib* or *bu tarafdan* (on the other hand), or the Arabic phrases that seem to serve for the facility in the performer’s reading. The figure below depicts the colored phrases of *ez ın cānib* and its Turkish equivalent *bu tarafdan* to transit between two events taking place at the same time in two different places that resemble ‘cross-cut’ or ‘parallel montage’ techniques in cinematography today:

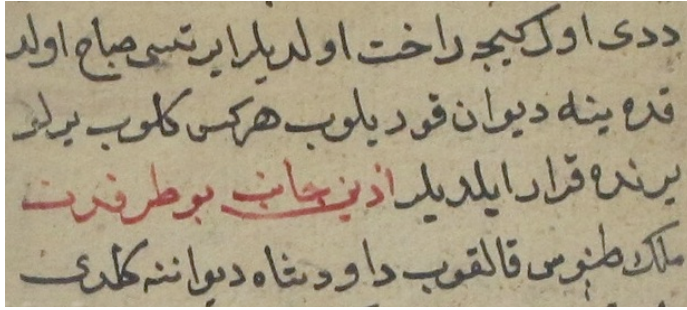


Figure 31 The use of *ez ın cānib* in red ink to indicate a transition between two events. AK, K0503, 5b.

The transition between events is provided also with other expressions that resemble the residuals from oral storytelling such as: “you listen to the story also this way” which marks passing on to another sub-story or “our story has now come to Mihrī Nigār.”⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰⁵ For these examples on the 8th volume of Hamza stories, see: Nurhayat Şimşek Akın, “Hamzanâme (8.Cilt Yapı Kredi Sermet Çifter Ar. Kütüphanesi) Metin-İnceleme, “ Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Çukurova University, 2006, 24.



Figure 32 The frame on the first page drawn by the copyist or a reader as the original heading and embellishment (*ser-levhā*) was lacking. FMK 34, 1b.

The physical properties, as discussed in Chapter 2, support the idea that these books were produced to be circulated in collective reading sessions in the first place. They were small in size to facilitate transportability and the text is readable in *nesih* script. Although the originality is doubtful –namely, we do not know either they were bound with the text or rebound in later periods –the simple cardboard and binding are also signs that these books were not produced or held as prestigious objects, but were rather created to facilitate performance in collective reading sessions. Additionally, they lack proper titles and offer, instead, an indication of the volume number and the name of the protagonist. They also lack illustrations and embellishments other than the readers have drawn themselves, as displayed in Figure 32.⁶⁰⁶

Apart from the physical appearance, these books lack the ‘the reason of writing (*sebeb-i te’lif*)’ part in which typically situates *besmele*, *hamdele*, and *salvele* parts with the author’s name and orientation the reader to the subject of a book.⁶⁰⁷ Besides, they directly start with a phrase in the derivatives of *rāviyān-ı ahbār ve nākīlān-ı āsār öyle rivāyet iderler ki* (revivers of old tales and renewers of past legends relate that) that refer to the anonymity of the texts as well as their strong connection to the oral storytelling. As a contribution of these features, the most visible signs that

⁶⁰⁶ For more on the textual aspects of the texts that were written to be listened in gatherings, see: Zehra Öztürk, “Eğitim Tarihimize Okuma Toplantılarının Yeri,” 143-144.

⁶⁰⁷ Baki Tezcan’s study on the invocation parts argues that these parts were not unfunctional but they make the reader foresee the central argument or the socio-political context of the text, “The Multiple Faces of the One: The Invocation Section of Ottoman Literary Introductions as a Locus for the Central Argument for the Text,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 12, no: 1 (London: Routledge, 2009).

this manuscript community was related with the stories of Hamza and Ebū Müslim through performance are the aforementioned collective reading notes. They illuminate the sociability among the members of the manuscript community this time through gatherings in physical places are precious in revealing the phases and aspects of the performance.

Performers

Preliminary to the performance, the borrowing process is significant in obtaining texts for the collective reading sessions. Some of the probate registers, such as the one that belonged to Ahmed Efendi or Ahmed Hoca in the 17th century Istanbul and Edirne, indicate some book dealers specialized in renting the volumes of heroic genres to these sessions.⁶⁰⁸ These book dealers in the Grand Bazaar (*Bedesten*) also copied such texts at cheap prices (4 or 5 aspers) as observed by a 17th-century traveler Antoine Galland.⁶⁰⁹ On the manuscript pages themselves, the bookbinder (*mücellid*) Salih Efendi who was discussed in Chapter 2 could be counted as another example of book dealers who wrote and rented out these manuscripts.

When it comes to the aspects of the performance, although we do not have information on the renting prices of books (other than the actual selling prices of books based on probate registers), we have some evidence on the prices of performances. One of the notes reads that the listeners spent 20 aspers for the performance of the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim in the year 1866.⁶¹⁰ In another example, the performer was paid 30 aspers for two volumes of Hamza and 20 aspers for two volumes of Şahnâme and one volume of Ebū Müslim stories as such:

⁶⁰⁸ Meredith Quinn, *Books and Their Readers*, 134; İsmail Erünsal in Erünsal, *Osmanlılarda Sahaflık ve Sahaflar*, 516 and 519–520.

⁶⁰⁹ Antoine Galland, *Journal d'Antoine Galland*, 42.

⁶¹⁰ “İşbu Eba Müslim hazretlerinin dördüncü cildi Eğrikapu arasında, Kapucu Ahmed Ağa'nın kahvesinde, bin ikiyüz seksen üç senesi kıra'at olunub dinlemeğe dahi yigirmi päre alınmışdır, 17 Şaban 283” MK 8504/4, 2a.

[...] İsmâ‘il Efendi, read two volumes of *Hamzanâme* and two volumes of *Şahnâme* and until the 6th volume of *Eba Müslim Teberdâr*. He read two volumes of *Hamzanâme* for thirty aspers and *Şahnâme*’s two volumes with *Eba Müslim Hazretleri* twenty aspers, 18 March 1883.⁶¹¹

The affordability of this entertainment was an attraction for the audience and the coffeehouse owners/operators in drawing clients. Ralph Hattox, based on some traveler accounts, states that:

The coffeehouse proprietor had to spend very little out of his own purse to provide such entertainment: in return for his performances, the management sometimes gave the entertainer a meager remuneration. In other circumstances, the coffeehouse owner did not have to pay for such services at all; he merely provided a forum for the performer's eloquence, which was rewarded by voluntary contributions of a few coins apiece from the customers. Even this, though customary, was in no way obligatory [...] ⁶¹²

Therefore, it is possible to deduce that some of the performers were paid for their performances while others gained voluntary contributions based on the reading environment and the relationship between the audience and hosts of the reading venues. When, for example, the performer was the host of the reading venue, it is expected that the audience did not pay for the performance. Turakzâde Seyyîd Ali Efendi performed the 6th, 13th, 14th, 30th volumes of *Hamza* in his own coffeehouse,⁶¹³ or, Abdülkadir Ağa who performed the 11th volume of *Ebû Müslim* as the owner of the house might be some examples for such performer hosts offering their services for free.⁶¹⁴ Moreover, when the performer was a relative of the host of the reading venue –especially in houses but also in coffeehouses –payment for viewing the performance was not expected. Among these examples, the sons (*mahdûm*) of coffeehouse owners/operators performed the stories such as Osman Efendi, the son of Kahveci Ömer Monla in Üsküdar nearby the atelier of candle-making (*mumhâne*) on 9 November 1850.⁶¹⁵ Also, in the house of fez

⁶¹¹ [...] İsmâ‘il Efendi, *Hamzanâme*’nin iki cildini ve *Şahnâme*’nin iki cildini ve *Eba Müslim Teberdâr*’ın altıncı cildine kadar kıra’at idüb safâ itmişdir. *Hamzanâme*’nin iki cildini otuz pâreye ve *Şahnâme*’nin *Eba Müslim Hazretleri* ile berâber iki cildi yigirmi pâreye kıra’at itmişdir, 6 Mart 99.” MK 8504/5, 25b.

⁶¹² Ralph Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, 104-105.

⁶¹³ İÜNE 1089, 26a; İÜNE 1096, 92b; İÜNE 1097, 75a; İÜNE 1106, 68a.

⁶¹⁴ FMK 31, 30a.

⁶¹⁵ İÜNE 1085, 16b.

maker/seller Mustafa Ağa, his groom Şevki Efendi performed the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim on 2 December 1867.⁶¹⁶

These performances were not always hosted by a single performer but were sometimes joint recitations. The popularity of this style of performance is noted in approximately 40 collective reading notes. For example, Hayreddīn Efendi from the secretary of the Imperial Endowments (*evkāf-ı hümayūn*) performed the 35th volume of Ebū Müslim in a coffeehouse known as Çingiraklı in Küçük Ayasofya across Çardaklı Bathhouse with his sons.⁶¹⁷ Other examples are Hāfız Efendi and Tevfīk Efendi who performed the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim together (*müştereken*) on 24 August 1847,⁶¹⁸ or Abdi Efendi and Emīn Efendi who performed the 11th volume of Ebū Müslim together (*ma'an*) on 18 January 1846.⁶¹⁹ These individuals could perform a series of stories together, for example:

Abdi Efendi and Emīn Efendi read this book from the first to the eleventh volume together in the office of Ömer Beççe İbrāhim Usta from Sivas, at the Kadırğa wharf, 23 December 1847.⁶²⁰

Joint performance is more common in the collective living or working venues such as barracks or military schools. For example, Hüseyin Efendi, Bekir Çavuş, Ahmed Çavuş of Galata and Hüseyin Çavuş performed the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim in the barracks of the Old Palace (*eski saray koğuşlarında*).⁶²¹ Therefore, joint performances may have reinforced social bonds between members of this manuscript community.

Among the performers, some names are prominent, appearing in multiple sessions or are highlighted by words of appreciation. One of the prominent examples is Yağlıkçı Selīm, a *mollā*, who was a popular performer at the end of the 18th century, especially in the neighborhoods of Aksaray, Beşiktaş, and Kabataş as seen in these notes:

⁶¹⁶ MK 8504/4, 19b.

⁶¹⁷ MK 8504/30, 53b.

⁶¹⁸ MK 8505/4, 28a.

⁶¹⁹ MK 8504/9, 70a.

⁶²⁰ “Kadırğa Limanı’nda Sivashlı Ömer Beççe İbrāhim Usta’nın odasında evvel cildinden başlayub on birinci kitaba kadar Abdi Efendi ile Emīn Efendi ma’an kira’at eylemişlerdir.” MK 8504/9, 70a.

⁶²¹ FMK 27, 71a.

In the neighborhood of Hayreddin Paşa in Beşiktaş, Yağlıkcı Selīm Ağa read it, 15 April 1794.⁶²²

In Aksaray, Selīm Ağa read it, 15 February 1802.⁶²³

In Kabataş, Yağlıkcızāde Monlā Selīm Ağa read it, 4 February 1792.⁶²⁴

As will be discussed in Chapter 7 in terms of the communication between note-writes, Yağlıkcı Selīm was as popular as the reader of Fīrūzşāh Story and was much annoyed after a note: “read by Yağlıkcı Selīm Ağa, in Kabataş.”⁶²⁵ He retorts “it is no surprise that Yağlıkcı Selīm Ağa read this book [...] this son of a bitch has read all the books that exist.”⁶²⁶ Although the exact reason for his annoyance is not known, this reaction shows that Yağlıkcı Selīm Ağa was one of the favorite performers of the audience at the end of the 18th century. Perhaps because of this popularity, someone defends Yağlıkcı Selīm by responding to the annoyed reader as such: “What is it to you, why are you blubbering like this? Selīm Ağa is much better than you [...] If you are a man, then you too read [as much as he does].”⁶²⁷

We understand the popularity of some performers from some expressions such as “famous (*meşhūr*).” For example, the famous Ali Efendi of Konya performed a volume of Ebū Müslim on 3 February 1895.⁶²⁸ Another performer defined as famous is Circassian Mehmed Efendi who performed the 18th volume of Hamza in the coffeehouse of Circassian Mehmed Ağa.⁶²⁹ In these examples, the reasons for their fame are not related directly to their identity as a performer. One

⁶²² “Beşiktaş’da Hayreddin Paşa mahallesinde, Yağlıkcı Selīm Ağa kıra’at eylemiştir, 14 Ramazan 1208.” *Mısır Vālisi Koca Ca’fer Paşa’nın Hikāyesi*, İstanbul, Süleymāniye Library, MS Hacı Mahmud 6264, 4a.

⁶²³ “Aksaray’da Selīm Ağa kıra’at itdi, 12 Şevvāl 1216.” MK 1285/1, 13a.

⁶²⁴ “Kabataş’da Yağlıkcızāde Monlā Selīm Ağa kıra’at eyledi, 10 C 1206.” MK 8504/18, 2a.

⁶²⁵ “Kabataş’da Yağlı[k]cı Selīm Ağa kıra’at etmiştir.” MK 1285/1, 8b.

⁶²⁶ “Ne aceb bu cildi Yağlıkcı Selīm kıra’at eylemiş [...] Bu pūzeveng ne kadar kitāb varsa kıra’at etmiştir.” Ibid, 8b.

⁶²⁷ “Ya senin ne vazīfen? Niçün nāfile boş laf urursun? Selim Ağa’ya pūr kurbān olasun. Çok kitāb okursan (...) adamsan sen de oku!” Ibid, 8b.

⁶²⁸ FMK 42, 19b.

⁶²⁹ YKŞÇ 148, 23b.

of the examples directly refer to the fame of the performer in his storytelling (*hikāyeci*) and history-telling (*tevārīhçi*):

This book was read in the coffeehouse of Kurdish Habīb Ağa in the yard of Mahmūd Paşa Mosque in Istanbul. It was recited by the famous story and history teller Tatar Şa‘bān Efendi who was graduated from Soğuk Çeşme elementary school. The friends who listened are delighted, this year 17 December 1803 and last year 16 December 1802.⁶³⁰

At this point, we should ask whether we can include them in the traditional forms of storytelling. On looking at the aspects of the performances, one can observe continuities and discontinuities with the *meddāh* (lit. eulogizers) tradition. The performers were not merely reading what they read on the page; in most cases, they were improvising some parts or commenting and discussing some parts of the stories with the audience. For example, İsmā‘il Ārif discussed (*mütāla‘a*) the six volumes of Ebū Müslim stories after reading it on the Sultanlic ferry, or, Sālih Efendi commented (*şerh*) on the 15th volume of Ebū Müslim in an educational gathering.⁶³¹ Or, such as in other storytelling sessions, the duration of reciting was varying due to the improvisational reading of the performer as will be discussed in the following. From a statement in the miscellany of Süleymān Fāik Efendi dated the 18th century, we understand that the memorization was also in play: “a bunch of rascals (*süfelā*) who can memorize read these stories from their memories.”⁶³²

Süleymān Fāik Efendi defines, and blames, these performers for having “*meddāh* appearance (*meddāh sūretinde*)” in his miscellany (*mecmu‘a*) dated the 18th century. In my analysis, this definition displays the lack of perception towards these performers as ‘full *meddāh*’ and a kind of deviation from the *meddāh* tradition. This ‘deviation’ should be related to the transformation in education, literacy, and textual perception after the 17th century as discussed in the Introduction in detail. As Fuad Köprülü claims, there is a remarkable gradual disappearance of the people in sources defined as *meddāh* or *kıssahān*. However, that disappearance could not be

⁶³⁰ “Bu kitāb, İstanbul’da, Mahmūd Paşa Cāmi‘i Şerīf havlusında, Kürd Habīb Ağa’nın kahvesinde, Soğuk Çeşme Rüşdiyyesi’nden bā-şehādetnāme neş‘et eden meşhūr hikāye ve tevārīhcilerden Tatar Şa‘bān Efendi, ikinci def‘a olarak kıra‘at eylemiştir ve dinleyen yārān safāyāb olmuştur, geçen sene 4 Ka 1316, bu sene 5 Ka 1317.” YKŞÇ 151, 1a.

⁶³¹ MK 8504/5, 34b; FMK 32, 70b.

⁶³² Süleymān Fāik Efendi, *Mecmu‘a*, 93b.

explained by the insignificance of storytellers, on the contrary, they increased in number by the proliferation of coffeehouses in the 18th century.⁶³³ The professions of *meddāh* and *kissahān* must have been disseminated over the whole society for those who were literate. As Tülün Değirmenci argued, these stories that have been oral *meddāh* narratives throughout the 16th and 17th centuries had been transformed by the 18th century when the books have become more accessible and widespread.⁶³⁴

Audience

Other than performers, another crucial element for sociability in the collective reading sessions was certainly the audience. Based on the extant numbers of manuscripts and then-contemporary accounts, Hamza and Ebū Müslim seems to have gained unprecedented popularity among the urban community in Istanbul by the 17th century. Especially in the winter nights or during the month of Ramadan, reading heroic stories was an essential part of urban entertainment. Meredith Quinn explains the presence of the same stories in the probate register of a book dealer to meet the high demand in the busiest rental periods such as the month of Ramadan.⁶³⁵ The accounts in the 18th century such as Süleymān Fāik's *Mecmu'a* and anonymous *Risāle-i Garībe* blame the affection of these stories among the people as a sign of popularity. While the former prays God to save the souls of addicts to these stories, the latter condemns the lovers of *Şahnāme* and *Hamzanāme* books by defining them as “the liars who don't read the Quran and treatises and the History of Taberī, but read *Şahnāme* and *Hamzanāme*.”⁶³⁶

The appreciation of these stories by diverse audiences can be discerned from their expressions in the collective reading notes, especially in notes detailing their emotions/reactions after or during the collective reading sessions. As discussed in the Introduction, the community sense in these

⁶³³ Fuad Köprülü, “Türklerde Halk Hikâyeciliğine Ait Bazı Maddeler Meddahlar,” *Edebiyat Araştırmaları*, 399-400. Özdemir Nutku also asserts that there were many *meddāh* in the 18th and 19th centuries, for their names and Nutku's discussion, see: Özdemir Nutku, *Meddahlık ve Meddah Hikâyeleri*, 29-40.

⁶³⁴ Değirmenci, “Söz Bir Nesnedir ki Zâil Olmaz,” 642.

⁶³⁵ Meredith Quinn, *Books and Their Readers*, 134.

⁶³⁶ *Risāle-i Garībe*, 32.

sessions is given with the words that define the members of the community as friends such as *ahbāb*, *ehibbā*, *yārān* as the most common ones and rarely as *refīkler* and listeners *sāmihān* (listeners). For example, the listeners delighted when the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim was performed in the coffeehouse of the *kethüdā* of porters, Mustafa Ağa in Balad Bazaar.⁶³⁷ Other terms refer to the audience cumulatively again, especially if the reading session was a reflection of the sociability within the same occupational group. On the other hand, the audience is usually defined cumulatively as all the friends (*cümle refīkler*), pupils (*şākirdler*), merchants (*tüccār ağaları*), officemates (*odacı arkadaşlar*), officials of the municipality (*şehremānet çavuşları*), the servants in the kitchen of the old palace (*saray-ı cedīde tablakār ağaları*), officials (*me'mūrlar*), residents of the neighborhood (*mahalleliler*), and several or many friends (*birkaç ahbāb*, *birçok ahbāb*).

To what extent do the collective reading notes provide information about these ‘friends’, namely, the audience who comprised the major element of sociability during performances? Although the occupations, hometowns, and other information about the audience are not well indicated –at least not as well as the performers (as discussed in chapter 4)– some respectful and well-known names could be given among the audience. Among approximately 90 manuscript notes with an indication on the audience, some examples are:

This book was read by Hunbaracı Derviş in the mansion of Sādık Ağazāde Emīn Ağa in the Mollā Aşık neighborhood near Balad. Torlak [...] Gürcüzāde Şeyh Hasan Efendi, Chief of Doorkeepers Seyyid Ömer Ağa, Seyyid Nuri Efendi listened and delighted, 12 June 1807.⁶³⁸

In the fourth troop of the first battalion of the school of the first industrial regiment of the Imperial Cannon Foundry, in the [...] of Ali Çavuş from Kasımpaşa, Üsküdarlı Hasan Efendi read, even corporals İbrahim and Osman listened.⁶³⁹

⁶³⁷ “Balad pazarı hammāllar kethüdāsı Mustafa Ağa’nın kahvesinde kıra’at olunub, sāmihān safāyāb olmuştur, 9 Ks 1299.” MK 8504/4, 101a.

⁶³⁸ “Bu kitabı Balad kurbunda, Mollā Aşık Mahallesi’nde Kolluk Sādık Ağazāde Emīn Ağa’nın konağında, Hunbaracı Derviş kıra’at itmişdir. Torlak [...] Gürcüzāde Şeyh Hasan Efendi, Kapıcılar Kethüdāsı Seyyid Ömer Ağa, Seyyid Nūrī Efendi dinleyüp safāyāb olmuştur, 5 Receb 1222.” *Mısır Vālisi Koca Ca’fer*, 0b.

⁶³⁹ “Tobhāne-i Āmire birinci sanāyi’ alayının birinci idādī taburunun dördüncü bölüğünde, Kasımpaşalı Ali Çavuş’un [...] da Üsküdarlı Hasan Efendi kıra’at idüb İbrahim Onbaşı ve Osman Onbaşı dahī dinlemişlerdir.” MK 8504/17, 17a.

Other than the leading social position and recognition in the present reading community, the names could be given if the numbers of listeners are few enough to record their names, as was likely the case when Esseyyīd Osman Efendi performed the 11th volume of Ebū Müslim in the coffeehouse of Mūsā. Here, the coffeehouse owner/operator Mūsā listened with Elhac Mehmed Ağa and Yağlıkçı Seyyīd Ahmed Monlā.⁶⁴⁰ If the stories were read in an institution such as military schools or prisons, the names of the audience could be given in a long list with their institutional numbers as in this example such as the audience of the Ebū Müslim’s 3rd volume.⁶⁴¹

The sociability in the collective reading sessions is most visible through the notes in which the reactions and emotions of the audience were given. The audience, – as a formulaic expression– often became greatly becomes delighted (*azīm safāyāb oldular*), as in the following examples:

This Fīrūzşāh [story] was read somewhere by Hāfız Efendi, chief of the boatmen, and all were delighted, February–March 1815.⁶⁴²

This book was read by Hacı Mehmed Halīd, the telegraphy secretary, in the coffeehouse of Mustafa Ağa behind the Eyüb Ensari Mosque in one and half hour and the friends delighted in it.⁶⁴³

[This book] was read in the coffeehouse of *ketühāda* of porters Mustafa Ağa and the listeners delighted in it, 21 January 1884.⁶⁴⁴

Besides these formulaic expressions, some notes indicate more specific emotions and reactions expressed by the audience such as being “downhearted (*mahzūn*).” For example, when the quilt maker/seller Abdi Ağa performed the 13th volume of Hamza in the house of İbrāhım Efendi, “the *müezzin* of Nişancı Mehmed Paşa Mosque, the friends (*ahbāb*) became happy and cheerful (*şād*

⁶⁴⁰ MK 8404/20, 2b.

⁶⁴¹ MK 8504/3, 35b.

⁶⁴² “Bu Fīrūzşāh’ı, Sandalcılar Kethüdāsı Hāfız Efendi, bir mahalde kıra’at edüp azīm safāyāb oldular, Ra 1230.” MK 1285/1, 42b.

⁶⁴³ “İşbu kitabı Eyüb Ensāri radiyāllāhuanh efendimiz hazretlerinin cāmi’i arkasında, Mustafa Ağa’nın kahvesinde, telgraf ketebesinden Elhac Mehmed Halīd bizlere bir buçuk saatde kıra’at idüb ehıbbālar dahī safāyāb olmuşlardır.” MK 8506/6, 36b.

⁶⁴⁴ “Balad pazarı hammāllar hethüdāsı Mustafa Ağa’nın kahvesinde kıra’at olunub, sāmihān safāyāb olmuşdur, 9 Ks 99.” MK 8504/4, 101a.

u handān), but they also became a little downhearted in the 82nd folio.”⁶⁴⁵ Other than being delighted or downhearted, we know the audience also felt excitement or anger, as it is seen in the anecdotes telling the physical and verbal fights among the audience supporting different characters or the praises and curses they commonly uttered on the protagonists and their enemies.⁶⁴⁶

The last question one might direct about the audience is the size of the audience who were present in the collective reading sessions. Some of the collective reading notes with the numbers of listeners display the variety in the size of the audience in these collective reading sessions. For instance, the 15th volume of Ebū Müslim was read in Zeyrek neighborhood during the night of Ramadan eid in the year 1866 among three-four people.⁶⁴⁷ On the other hand, a volume of Hamza was read “approximately (*tahmīnen*)” to three to four hundred people as indicated in this note:

Nearby Kapan-ı Dakık, in the Neighborhood of Garıbler, İzzet Efendi, the son of *Hacı* Ahmed Efendi, in a glorious and grand shop, read this book in one and half hour by scaring from the troubled time and winter season, approximately with three or four hundred people from the locals and other neighborhoods, 21 January 1848.⁶⁴⁸

Despite three to four hundred is an estimated number, it still shows how crowded the reading sessions could be. On the other hand, there are extremely exaggerated numbers such as the notes state that twenty thousand people participated in the performance of the 6th volume of Ebū Müslim, probably to imply the massive size of the audience.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁵ İÜNE 1096, 2b-3a.

⁶⁴⁶ See Chapter 3 for examples of curses and prays.

⁶⁴⁷ FMK 32, 3a.

⁶⁴⁸ “Kapan-ı Dakık kurbunda, Garıbler mahallesinde, Hacı Ahmed Efendi’nin oğlu İzzet Efendi, yine mahalle-i mezburda, kāin kebīr dükkanda, ahāli-i mahalle ve cümle ahbāb ve sā’ir mahalden tahmīnen üçyüz dörtyüz kişi muvācehesinde esnā-yı fasīh ve vakt-i şitādan korkarak, mumā-ileyh İzzet Efendi işbu kitabı bir sa’atde kıra’at itmışdir ve cümle ehıbbā hayrān olmuşlardır, 14 Safer 1264.” YKSC 910, 1a. The numbers of audience is probably an exaggeration to imply the crowdedness of the session.

⁶⁴⁹ FMK 29, 42a.

Serialization of Performances

The sociability within a specific group of the audience could be sustained by the serialization of performance, which often extended over dozens of nights. As discussed in Chapter 3, the cycles of *Hamzanāme*, *Eba Müslimnāme*, and other heroic genres in ‘popular’ versions circulated in the Near and Middle Eastern cultural zone were divided and organized into numerous volumes. The main purpose behind such divisions, as deduced from the collective reading notes on our corpus, was the facilitation of the performance of these stories which were usually extraordinary in length. In this way, each volume could be an inappropriate length to be read in one session, so it would take a whole month to finish the series. For example, the series of Ebū Müslim consisted of thirty-eight volumes that were read in twenty-seven days.⁶⁵⁰

Although reading one or more specific volumes from a series was also possible and common, the intention to complete the whole series is also remarkable on some of the collective reading notes. For example, Elhāc Mehmed Ata Efendi performs Ebū Müslim stories from the first and to tenth volume, and the group intended to read until the last volume (*cild-i āhirine dahī t̄ṣār kılındı*). Another example for the intention of completing the entire series appear in a note that reads the group wishes to complete the entire series until the last volume:

This book was read by Halīfe Hafız Hüseyin Hacı Efendi from Üsküdar Kadı Karyesi [Kadıköy] in the coffeehouse of Mehmed Ağa in the Üsküdar Kadı Karyesi, we wish that we can complete the whole series, 14 December 1863.⁶⁵¹

Remarkably, these notes are not from the first volumes, but rather from the 10th, 11th, and 35th volumes of the Ebū Müslim series, which are composed of 38 volumes in total. Therefore, these notes can be perceived as a way to demonstrate the decisiveness as well as the wish and promise of the performance to complete the entire series in the middle of it, as also seen in the following examples:

⁶⁵⁰ MK 8504/33, 6b.

⁶⁵¹ “Hālā bu kitab Üsküdar’da kadı karyesinde, Mehmed Ağa’nın kahvesinde, Üsküdarlı Halīfe Hāfız Hüseyin Elhac Efendi kıra’at itmışdir. Bu kitaba kadar okuduk, inşallāh sonuna kadar tekmil itmek murādımız, 3 Receb 80.” MK 8688/3, 3a.

In the year 1873/4, starting from the 9th day of Şevvāl month, this book was read by Ahmed Efendi from the first to the 8th volume in Āşıklar Square in Bekdaş Abbās Ağa Neighborhood. He will read the rest, too.⁶⁵²

The volumes until here were read by Mehmed and hopefully, he will read the volumes until the end.⁶⁵³

It was read in the third troop of the first battalion of the second industrial regiment of the Imperial Cannon Foundry, hopefully, the rest will be read, too.⁶⁵⁴

Reading of Eba Müslim book is ended at the 5th volume, and we have decided to continue to reach the 38th volume in Ali Ağa's office, *kethüdā* of water-bearers, in Samatya.⁶⁵⁵

These notes indicate that serialization of the performances and promises to complete the entire series was a sort of strategy to build stable reading groups for longer periods. When the reading groups reached the last volume of this 38-volume series of Ebū Müslim, it was time to celebrate and announce the success of both the performers and audience in completing the entire series. Among the numerous note in this manner, one of them reads that the entire series of Ebū Müslim from the first to the 38th volume was read in the coffeehouse of Ahmed ağa, the clerk of boatmen in 1301.⁶⁵⁶ In the same volume, a note reads that Rüşdi Bey performed from the beginning to the end of the Ebū Müslim stories (*evvelden nihāyetine*) in the coffeehouse of gatekeeper Mustafa Ağa in Kātib Müslihüddin Neighborhood on 19 December 1897.⁶⁵⁷

On the other hand, reading the volumes in the sequence was not the only manner of performances in these collective reading sessions. Based on the details given in collective reading notes, various other ways were also possible. One of them was reading the same volume

⁶⁵² “İşbu kitabı bin iki yüz doksan senesi mäh-ı şevvāl-i şerîfin dokuzuncu gününden itibaren birinci cildinden sekizinci cildine kadar, Bekdaş Abbas Ağa mahallesinde, Āşıklar meydânında, Ahmed Efendi kıra’at eylemiştir. Bākisini dahî kıra’at edecektir.” İÜNE 1091, 14b.

⁶⁵³ “[...] buraya gelinceye kadar olan cildlerini okuyup ve nihāyete kadar olan cildlerini inşallāh kıra’at edecektir Mehmed.” İÜNE 1091, 57a.

⁶⁵⁴ “Tobhāne-i Āmire’nin ikinci sanāyi’ alayının birinci taburunun üçüncü bölümünde kıra’at olunub, inşallāh tekmîli kıra’at olunacak.” İÜNE 1095, 107b.

⁶⁵⁵ “Bu Eba Müslim kitabı başdan beşinciye kadar karār olundu, otuz sekize kadar okumak karār olunmuştur, Samatya’da sakalar kethüdāsı Ali Ağa’nın odasında.” MK 8504/30, 18a.

⁶⁵⁶ MK 8503/33, 4a.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid, 8b.

over and over. In the following examples, it is seen that the same volume could be performed by the same person for the second and third times:

In the fifth troop of the second industrial regiment of the Imperial Arsenal, Edhem Efendi read for the second time, 24 December 1791.⁶⁵⁸

The aforementioned Halil Efendi, in the office of Janissary Muhsin Efendi, read the book for the third time, 3 February 1793.⁶⁵⁹

In the 5th day of Ra in the year 1886, the nephew of Yusuf Elhac Hüssam Efendi, Süleyman Tevfik read it for the second time, 2 December 1886.⁶⁶⁰

Between the performances, there could be a long pause. For example, the aforementioned Tatar Şa‘bân Efendi, who was a famous story and history teller (*meşhûr hikâyeci ve tevârîhcilerden*), performed the same volume on 17 December 1803 in the present year and 16 December 1802 in the previous year.⁶⁶¹ Another exemplary note for one year gap between two performances by the same person belongs to İskender Efendi, who wrote two notes on the same page. According to these notes, he performed the same volume in the same place, in the coffeehouse of Mehmed Ağa in Küçük Piyâle Neighborhood, one on 1 January 1893 and another in 1893/4 (see: Figure 33).⁶⁶²

⁶⁵⁸ “Tobhâne-i Âmire’de ikinci sanâyi’ alayının üçüncü idâdî taburunun beşinci bölüğünde Edhem Efendi ikinci def’a olarak kıra’at eylemiştir, 13 Ka 205.” MK 8504/30, 45b.

⁶⁵⁹ “Merkûm Halil Efendi, ocaklı Muhsin Efendi’nin odasında, üçüncü def’a olarak kıra’at itmiştir, 23 Ks 206.” MK 8504/20, 45b.

⁶⁶⁰ “Sene bin üç yüz dört târihiyle, rebîyü’l-evvelin beşinci günü, ikici def’a olarak, Yusuf Elhac Hüssam Efendi’nin birâderzâdesi Süleyman Tevfik kıra’at itmiştir, 5 Ra 1304.” MK 8504/28, 41a.

⁶⁶¹ YKSÇ 151, 1a.

⁶⁶² YKSÇ 892, 64a.

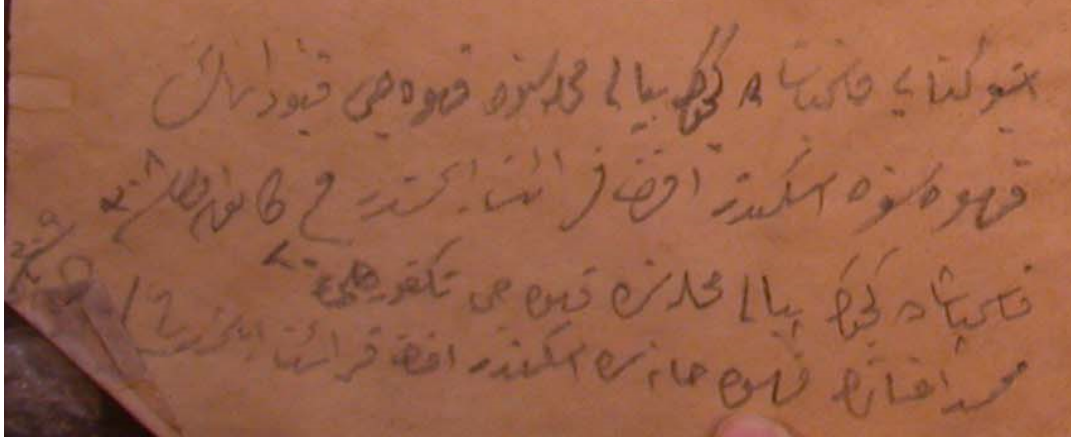


Figure 33 Two notes belonging to İskender Efendi who performed public readings of the same volume in the same place one year apart. YKSC 892, 64a.

Other than the repeated readings of the same volume, various volumes belonging to the same genre or from different genres could have been performed in one session. This kind of performance might have catered for a different taste by selecting and performing the ‘bests’ of the series in distinct genres. The following collection reading notes inform on the tastes in such kinds of performances:

In the fourth troop of the third school of the battalion of the first industrial regiment of the Imperial Cannon Foundry, Hüseyin Osman read two volumes of *Şahnâme*, *Hamzanâme*, *Anternâme*, and *Kahramannâme* and *Eba Müslim* for many times, 1756/1757.⁶⁶³

The son of Hacı Muhsîn, Tevfik Süleymân, who is a resident of [...], on the twenty-ninth day of saferü'l-hayr, read us Hamza, Zaloğlu Rüstem but he read Hamza for two times and Rüstem for one time and Eba Müslim for two times. The friends who listened delighted, 27 November 1886.⁶⁶⁴

Apart from the mixture of volumes belonging to distinct genres, some serial performances display disorders within a particular series. The performances of Ebyärzâde Rızâ of Tokat in his own coffeehouse in the Carriage (Arabacı) *Hân* provide some insights on the orders and

⁶⁶³ “Tobhâne-i Âmire birinci sanâyi’ alayının üçüncü idâdî taburunun dördüncü bölüğünde, Hüseyin Osman Şahnâme’yi, Hamzanâme’yi, Anternâme’yi iki cild, Kahramannâme’yi Eba Müslim’i nice def’a bunları kıra’at itmişdir, 1170.” MK 8504/31, 8a.

⁶⁶⁴ “[...]de sâkin Elhâc Muhsîn Efendi’nin birâderzâdesi Tevfik Süleymân bizlere ikinci def’a olarak saferü'l-hayrın yigirmi tokuzuncu gününde kıra’at eylemişdir. Hazret-i Hamza ve Zuloğlu Rüstem ve likin Hazret-i Hamza’yı iki def’a, Rüstem’i bir def’a Eba Müslimi iki def’a kıra’at idüb dinleyen ehlibâlar safâyâb olmuşlardır, 29 Safer 1304.” MK 8504/23, 40a.

disorders in the performance of a series. His performances of the 14th volume on 1 January 1898, and the 11th volume in the following week might be examples of disorder since it would not be possible to complete the entire series and perform the 11th volume in the second tour within a week. In the same manner, his performance of the 22nd volume on 11 February 1898, and 33rd volume the next day should be a result of selections out of order. It may have been that these arbitrary selections were due to the demand of the audience. The sequential performances in the successive days are also noticed such as the performances of the 33rd, 35th, 36th, and 38th volumes on 11, 12, 16, and 17 February of the year 1898. The following list shows the performances of Ebyārzāde Rızā of Tokat with the volumes in the chronological order although it should be interpreted cautiously since these readings can also be part of distinct reading series:

Dates in Gregorian	Dates in Hijra	Volume numbers
January/February 1898	Ramazān 1315	31 st volume
1 January 1898	20 Ka 1313	14 th volume
9 January 1898	15 Şa'bān 1315	11 th volume
10 January 1898	29 Ka 1313	13 th volume
18 January 1898	24 Şa'bān 1315	16 th volume
6 February 1898	14 Ramazān 1315	27 th volume
11 February 1898	30 Ks 1313	22 nd volume
12 February 1898	20 Ramazān 1315	33 rd volume
16 February 1898	4 Şubat 1313	35 th volume
17 February 1898	5 Şubat 1313	36 th volume
20 February 1898	8 Şubat 1313	38 th volume
12 November 1899	8 Ramazān 1317	17 th volume
12 November 1899	8 Ramazān 1317	19 th volume
16 December 1899	12 Şa'bān 1317	6 th volume
19 December 1899	15 Şa'bān 1317	7 th volume
21 December 1899	17 Şa'bān 1317	7 th volume

24 December 1899	20 Şa‘bān 1317	15 th volume
4 January 1904	22 Ka 1319	31 st volume
14 January 1904	1 Ks 1319	33 th volume

Table 1 The volumes performed by Ebyārzāde Rızā of Tokat in his coffeehouse in Atmeydanı in chronological order.

In the overall picture, the serialization of the performances and the order/disorder of volumes indicate the presence of various patterns in the collective reading sessions of the manuscript community. Although we would expect linearity of the narrative with the sequential performance of the volumes, the performance of selected volumes from different genres in one session, repeated readings of the same volume, or the ‘out of order’ readings within a series displays the diversity in different attitudes, expectations, and tastes of the performers and audience.

Timing and Duration of Performances

The manuscript community that found its social platform through the collective reading sessions had their patterns also in terms of the timing and duration of performances. Additionally, the duration of performance in the collective reading notes raises questions about the preferred seasons for various performances.

Firstly, as we deduce from collective reading notes, performing Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories was a winter activity. They always happened during December, January, February, and March, except for Ramadan, in the case it fell during the summer months. These sessions might have substituted the outdoor, convivial gatherings of the spring and summer as indoor and nocturnal entertainment. A French traveler and bibliophile Antoine Galland supports this observation by stating that, “reading epic tales such as *İskendernāme* which could exceed a hundred numbers volumes was the main occupation of ‘Turks’ during the long winter nights.”⁶⁶⁵

Secondly, as Galland notes, the performances of heroic stories were a part of urban nocturnal entertainment activities. Scholars like Süheyl Ünver emphasized reading heroic stories as a

⁶⁶⁵ Antoine Galland, *Journal d’Antoine Galland*, 242.

nocturnal entertainment activity by claiming that coffeehouses nearby mosques hosted people after the evening prayer (*akşam*) since they waited around for the night prayer (*yatsı*). While waiting, they listened to those who recited the books rented bookdealers. Examples include the stories of Ali and Hamza, Kan Kalesi, Battāl Gāzī, and Ebū Müslim.⁶⁶⁶ This is likely the case since we know that these stories were not performed and listened to only in coffeehouses. That the duration of some sessions could extend to 3.5 or 5 hours discredits the idea that these sessions would take place in the time between the evening and nighttime prayers, since this was a much shorter period. Besides, the start time of the sessions is also given in the notes which shows the sessions could be late-night entertainment. For example: “Hāfız Hasan Efendi started to read around 2.5 and completed at 3.5 o’clock”⁶⁶⁷ or “[...] it was in the Sunday night, at 3.5 o’clock, Mahmūd Hāşim Efendi visited and honored [...]”⁶⁶⁸ These hours of two and a half or three and a half corresponds to the time after the sunset prayer because the Ottomans were using a clock system called *gurūbī sa‘at* (sunset clock) before the reformation on 26 December 1925.⁶⁶⁹ The timing of the performances mattered for the manuscript community. As discussed in various other contexts in this study, the note-writers were diligent in dating the performances. Dating was so much inherent to the note-writing that a note-writer used the term “writing date” as a substitution for the action of “note-writing” as such: “In the dormitory of kitchen servants in the imperial palace, Ahmed Efendi of Nār read [the book] and wrote this date.”⁶⁷⁰ The dates could be given as inserted to the notes such as “in the year of one thousand two hundred and four, during the 19th night of the month Muharrem, it was read in [...],”⁶⁷¹ but commonly at the

⁶⁶⁶ Zehra Öztürk, “Eğitim Tarihinde Okuma Toplantılarının Yeri,” 137.

⁶⁶⁷ “Hāfız Hasan Efendi sa‘at iki buçuk karārlarında kıra‘at idüb sa‘at üç buçukta tamāmına erdirmiştir, 2 Şubat 87.” FMK 42, 51a.

⁶⁶⁸ “[...] Pazar gicesi sa‘at üç buçukta idi, Mahmūd Hāşim Efendi ziyāret teşrīf eyledi [...]” *Hikāyet-i Müslim ve Cuhūd ve Kadı-yi Hums*, İstanbul, Atatürk Kitaplığı, MS Belediye Yazmaları 0270/4, 32a [pagination over the Arabic numbers].

⁶⁶⁹ For further information and discussion on the Ottoman time and clock-system, see: Avner Wishnitzer, *Reading Clocks, Alla Turca: Time and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

⁶⁷⁰ “Sarayı hümāyūnda, tablakārlar koğuşunda, Nārlı Ahmed Efendi okuyub tārīh yazdı.” FMK 27, 1a.

⁶⁷¹ FMK 28, 78b.

end of the notes in the form of “*fī* 10 Muharrem 1272 [on 22 September 1855].”⁶⁷² This diligence is also discerned in hundreds of notes that give the dates in both of the calendars, namely in Hijra and Julian calendars after 1840 since this marks the official adoption of the Julian (*Rūmī*) calendar. For example:

This book was read by the slaves of Hāfız Mahmūd in the coffeehouse of Ironmonger Osman Ağa in the neighborhood of Ya‘kūb Softa Sinān in five hours and friends enjoyed, 23 Saferü’l-hayr 292, 19 Mart 91 [31 March 1875].⁶⁷³

On the other hand, the existence of some notes that give dates according to the Hijra calendar after this date might be interpreted for the daily habits of individuals. This is understandable since adopting a new calendar takes time. For example, some note-writers date according to the months of the Hijra calendar, such as Şa‘bān or Receb, despite being officially abandoned after the adoption of the Julian (*Rūmī*) calendar.

In addition to dates, reading times also mattered for this manuscript community, and registering the duration of a performance, especially by the 19th century was also seen as an element to note. Remembering Wishnitzer’s discussion on the increased time-consciousness, especially among the emerging groups of officials; bureaucrats; and urban professionals in the 19th century, this development could be interpreted as a transformation in the Ottoman temporal culture.⁶⁷⁴ Look at the note, for example, of Şevkī Efendi, who performed a Hamza volume in an office in 1858/9, noted the duration of his performance precisely as 3 hours and 9 minutes.⁶⁷⁵

The collective reading notes include the duration time illuminate some aspects of performances and lead one to consider the reasons for variable durations. The table below is an indication for that variety in which the performer’s speed varies from 0.2 to 5.4 pages per minute:

Manuscript	Number of folios	Duration	In minutes	Minutes spent per page
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⁶⁷² FMK 27, 90a.

⁶⁷³ MK 8504/28, 0b.

⁶⁷⁴ Avner Wishnitzer, *Reading Clocks, Alla Turca*, 45-68.

⁶⁷⁵ YKSÇ 906, 1a.

FMK 42	62	1 hour	60	0.9
AK 0270/04	126	3.5 hour	210	1.6
FMK 101	78	1.5	90	1.1
FMK 29	107	Half an hour	30	0.2
FMK 32	71	1 hour	60	0.8
FMK 32	71	3 hours	180	2.5
MK 8504/02	90	3 hours	180	2
MK 8504/02	90	2.5 hours	150	1.6
MK 8504/12	128	5 hours 5 minutes	305	2.3
MK 8504/12	128	2 nights	unknown	Unknown
MK 8504/06	56	1.5 hours	90	1.6
MK 8504/06	56	3 quarters	45	0.8
MK 8504/9	89	1.5 hours	90	1
MK 8504/13	43	Half an hour	30	0.6
MK 8504/14	107	3.5 hours	210	1.9
MK 8504/28	62	5 hours	300	4.8
MK 8688/2	78	3 hours	180	2.3
MK 8504/16	81	5 hours	300	3.7
MK 8504/16	81	Half an hour	30	0.3
MK 8504/30	56	1 hour and 1 quarter	75	1.3
MK 8504/30	56	25 minutes	25	0.4
MK 8504/29, 30, 31	136 (sum)	3.5 hours	210	1.5
MK 8504-30	56	1 hour	60	1.0
MK 8504-30	56	Half an hour (for the 8 th time)	30	0.5
MK 8504-31	33	3 hours	180	5.4
MK 8688-01	113	3 hours	180	1.5
MK 8688-01	113	2 hours	120	1.0

Table 2: Variety in the reading speed of performers according to the time they spent per page.

Looking at this table, maybe it is expected that MK 8504/2 (consists of 90 folios) would be read in 3 and 2.5 hours in two distinct sessions, but the time difference between two performances of

MK 8504/16 which comprises 81 folios as 5 hours in one session and 1.5 hours in another point at the necessity to think about the factors that affect the lengths of performance.

The acquaintance of performers with these stories and repeated reading would likely have affected the speed of performance. For example, MK 8504/30, which consists of 56 folios, was read in 1 hour by one performer but in half an hour by another who states that he read the book eight times.⁶⁷⁶ As another example, the performer who performed a 113 folios-length manuscript in 2 hours explained his success by saying, “it was possible when my eyes got more and more familiarized.”⁶⁷⁷ Apart from the familiarity of the performers, the performative aspects including the audience reactions and performers’ improvisation must have played crucial roles in the length which is exactly the reason for calling these sessions ‘performances.’ Other than the reactions of the audience, the improvisations of the performers while performing these stories may have been the main reason behind the variability in the lengths of reading. The ornamentations or detailed descriptions of some events which were appreciated in the oral storytelling could also be a matter for the text-based storytelling which determines the length of a performance.⁶⁷⁸ Some of the ornamentations and detailed descriptions are reflected in the text itself; however, the performer may have enjoyed more freedom in the performance as a residual aspect of oral storytelling traditions. The battles, separation moments of lovers, dialogues between the heroes are some of the events that were expected to be depicted deeply and lively.

What was the attitude of the audience towards the slow or fast reading? The speed in performance was certainly appreciated by some audiences as evident in the notes that the performers were showing off on their fast reading and competing with each other. For example, Nūreddin Efendi claims that he read the book in 25 minutes and challenges others by saying “if

⁶⁷⁶ “[...] yarım sa‘atde sekizinci def‘a olarak okudum.” MK 8504/30, 53b.

⁶⁷⁷ MK 8688/01, 126b.

⁶⁷⁸ For a case study on the determinants of the oral performances’ length, see: Albert Bates Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000). Lord observes the performances of Avdo from a village in Montenegro: “Avdo's singing of this or any other song was always longer than anyone else's performance, because he belonged in a tradition of singers who habitually "ornamented" their songs by richness of description, and because he had himself always had a fondness for this "ornamentation." His technique, and that of his fellows, was expansion from within by the addition of detail and by fullness of narrative. Catalogues are extended and also amplified by description of men and horses; journeys are described in detail; assemblies abound in speeches,” Ibid, 62. Also see: İlhan Başgöz, *Hikâye*, 165-201. He says that a storyteller in Kerkük does not read what he exactly sees on the paper but he changes it according to the context and audience.

you don't believe, come and see for yourself.”⁶⁷⁹ The verbal quarrel between the readers of the 4th volume of Ebū Müslim (MK 8688/01, 113 folios) reveals this type of speedreading competition. One note reads that:

Osman Efendi read the book in 3 hours. No one could read this book shorter than 3 hours. If someone reads it in 2 hours, then I would congratulate him by putting a flower arrangement (*çelenk*) on his hands, 18 March 1834.⁶⁸⁰

A reader accepts this challenge and tells:

I finally dared to read this book in 2 hours and friends enjoyed it if you ask me [...] it was possible while my eyes getting more and more familiarized [to the script].⁶⁸¹

Another reader does not believe that someone could read this book in 2 hours and resembles the reader's mouth to a train –which is one of the modern signs for speed –:

The one who read this book for 2 hours is the son of the devil and son of bitch's mouth was a train, how is it possible?⁶⁸²

Another reader mocks the reader who read the book in two hours, saying that:

If it is just a matter of telling, then I read the book in a half minute by just scanning through it.⁶⁸³

Although the possibility of reading a book of 113 folios in 2 hours seems difficult since another reading duration was 5 hours of the same book,⁶⁸⁴ there are other examples in which the book was performed one page in a minute, such as FMK 42 or MK 8504/9. In these sessions, the

⁶⁷⁹ MK 8504/30, 31a.

⁶⁸⁰ “İstanbullu Osman Efendi üç saatde kıra’at eylemiştir. Bu kitâb üç sa’atde okunur ve likin iki sa’atde her kim okur ise eline çelenk takarım, 6 Mart 49.” MK 8688/01, 126b.

⁶⁸¹ “İşbu Müslimnâme’nin dördüncü cildi nihâyet yürek olundukda iki sa’atde kıra’at olunub ahbâb dahî safâ eylemiştir. Eğer su’âl iderseniz [...] gözü alışmış olarak kıra’at olunmuşdur.” Ibid, 126b.

⁶⁸² “İşbu kitabı iki sa’atde okuyan kerata ve pūzevingin ağzı kara vaporı imiş nasıl okunur?” Ibid, 126b. The meaning of vapor is a ferry in modern Turkish, however, “kara vaporı [vapor of land]” should refer to train. I am grateful to Cemal Kafadar for taking my attention to it.

⁶⁸³ “Eğer söz ile ise ben dahî yarım dakıkada kıra’at eyledim. Nasıl kıra’at eyledim su’âl olunursa gözden geçerek kıra’at olunmuşdur.” Ibid, 126b.

⁶⁸⁴ “[...] tarîk-i bedevî fukarâlarından Dervîş Elhac Muhsîn Efendi bu cildi beş sa’atde kıra’at eylemiştir, 24 Ramazan 67.” Ibid, 127a.

reader was probably reading through the pages, and there was no room for any contribution, emphasizing some events or pauses to take the attention of the audience.

While there are some signs for the appreciation of speedreading, the majority of the members in this manuscript community were not in consensus regarding rebukes of speedy performers. For example, the audience in the coffeehouse of Caucissan Ali Ağa on Üsküdar wharf got into conflict with the performer Monlā Yusūf Efendi by rebuking “why do you read so fast!”⁶⁸⁵ Or, the following note calls the competitors over reading speed as fools:

The readers did not delight the book who read in hurry and some fools gave their names and said I read in 3 hours or I read in 5 hours, they hurried up because of their foolishness.⁶⁸⁶

Therefore, the juxtaposition of temporalities rather than a unique, systematic, and standard consciousness of temporality should always be kept in mind for this manuscript community, as On Barak calls it “countertempos,” who claims “transportation and communication did not just drive social synchronization and standardization but also a discomfort with the time of the clock and disdain for dehumanizing European standards of efficiency, linearity, and punctuality.”⁶⁸⁷

Reading Atmosphere

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid, 56a.

⁶⁸⁶ “Bu kitabı kıra’at idenler acele kıra’at edüb hazz eylemediler ve bazı ahmaklar isimlerini yād etmişler, ben üç sa’atte kıra’at eyledim, diğeri ben beş sa’atde diyü acele itmişler, ammā ahmaklıklarındandır.” İÜNE 1089, 59b.

⁶⁸⁷ On Barak, *On Time: Technology and Temporality in Modern Egypt* (California: University of California Press, 2013), 5.

Regarding the sociability of the manuscript community provided by collective reading sessions, there were other elements, besides the performance, that created a congenial atmosphere. They included games, tobacco and smoking pipe (*çubuk*), chatting (*sohbet*), and reactions from the



Figure 34 Depiction of a 17th century Ottoman coffeehouse. Chester Beatty Library, T439.9.

audience. Especially within the atmosphere of the coffeehouses, where these collective reading sessions usually took place, performing and listening to the stories was only one part of the entertainment. As seen in Figure 34, in which a scene from a 17th-century coffeehouse is depicted, some clients are chatting while dancers making their rounds and others are reading books.

For later periods, some travelers depict these scenes of entertainment. For example, Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson (d. 1807) described the activities taking place, emphasizing the fables and stories told with fervor on winter nights:

In the cities, idle people spend whole hours there, smoking, playing checkers and chess, and chatting about the weather. This is where novelists and jugglers deploy their talents, especially in winter, by telling fables and stories, with this grace and energy that are specific to the national language.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸⁸ Ignatius, Mouradgea d'Ohsson, *Tableau Général de l'Empire Othoman*, vol 4 (Paris, 1788-1824), 81.



Figure 35 Depiction of Kız Ahmed, a *meddāh* in 19th century Istanbul. Allom, *Character and Costume in Turkey*, London 1845. Taken from Özdemir Nutku, *Meddahlık ve Neddāh Hikāyeleri*, 57.

Tobacco and smoking pipes were an essential part of the reading atmosphere for most storytelling sessions. The woodcut below in Figure 35 published in 1845 displays a storyteller known as a *meddāh* (lit. eulogizers) when the audience smokes their pipes with long sticks are known with the name of *çubuk*. This woodcut resembles the storytelling sessions that Ralph Hattox describes when he remarks on the coffeehouse entertainment. He says the performers could sit on a stoop called as *mastaba*, around which the listeners from the opposite or adjacent shops or in the narrow confines of the shop itself and even the meanest coffee shop could, especially during Ramadan, host such story-tellers and attract patrons.⁶⁸⁹

Cyrus Adler and Allan Ramsay are other observers of the reading atmospheres in the 19th century. They describe the atmosphere of storytelling that took place in coffeehouses as such:

In the course of a number of visits to Constantinople, I became much interested in the tales that are told in the coffee houses. These are usually little more than rooms, with walls made of small panes of glass. The furniture consists of a tripod with a contrivance for holding the kettle, and a fire to keep the coffee boiling. A carpeted bench traverses the entire length of the room. This is occupied by turbaned Turks, their legs folded under them, smoking nargilehs or chibooks or cigarettes, and sipping coffee. A few will be engaged in a game of backgammon, but the majority enter into conversation, at first only in syllables, which gradually gives rise to a general discussion. Finally, some sage of the neighborhood comes in, and the company appeals to him to settle the point at issue. This he usually does by telling a story to illustrate his opinion. Some of the stories told on these occasions are adaptations of those already known in Arabic and Persian literature, but the Turkish mind gives them a new setting and a peculiar philosophy. They are characteristic of the habits, customs, and methods of thought of the people, and for this reason seem worthy of preservation.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁹ Ralph Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, 105.

⁶⁹⁰ Cyrus Adler and Allan Ramsay, "Preface," *Told in the Coffee House: Turkish Tales* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1898), 5-6.

Although Adler and Ramsay were collecting another type of literary piece called *fıkra*, specifically, short and funny stories that offer a moral lesson, this atmosphere would also have been similar for the reading sessions of heroic stories. According to this quote, the ambiance seems intimate and relaxing, with the kettle is boiling in a small room and accompanied by other pleasure-inducing substances such as water pipes (*nargile*), tobacco pipes (*çubuk*), or cigarettes with coffee.

Tobacco smoking was certainly an important part of the reading atmosphere for the manuscript community of Hamza and Ebū Müslim in the late manuscript age. See Figure 36, for example, where the readers of a Hamza story even imagined a story character, Melik Bahaeddin while smoking his pipe on a horse. Some minor examples of notes give insights on tobacco smoking as the crucial element of collective reading sessions. For example, in *Mısır Valisi Koca Ca'fer*



Figure 36 A reader's drawing of Melik Bahaeddin smoking pipe while riding his horse. YKSC 901, last page.

Paşa'nın Hikāyesi, two notes read “Muhammed Ali smoked here,” who can be the same person as Derviş Muhammed who is mentioned in the next page as reciting the story at Galata Palace.⁶⁹¹ In another manuscript, two notes appear as “let us smoke a bowl here” by the same hand in ten pages apart, which makes one think that it was a performer who wrote these notes as a way to entertain other readers. However, it may also have been a reminder to himself for the exact moment where he could smoke his pipe.⁶⁹² As for another example, it is implied that the audience drank coffee and smoked: “Here, they drank coffee and smoked so let the friends comfortable.”⁶⁹³ In this way, the performers

⁶⁹¹ “Bu arada bir duhān içmiştir Muhammed Ali.” *Mısır Vālisi*, 9b.

⁶⁹² “Burada bir lüle-i duhān içelim.” 8504/18, 13b and 17a.

⁶⁹³ “Burada bir kahve, bir lüle içmişler, yārān biraz rahāt olsun.” *Ibid*, 36b.

interrupt the social atmosphere that was created by the performance of stories and give breaks for other shared activities with the members of the manuscript community.

The heating and lighting in the places of performances should also be considered since these performances mostly took place on winter nights. Given the lack of regular electricity use in the city before the late 19th century, it is expected that we would see information about the lightning available during the reading sessions that took place at night.⁶⁹⁴ For example, a note states that Ahmed Efendi holds the candlestick (*şemdān*) while Monlā Hüseyin was performing a book. While the note is dated the year 1854, we can assume the unknown region of reading did not receive electricity, or it was just cut out regarding the emphasis on a candlestick that is used during the electricity outage instead of oil lamps.

Sociability was not only visible through convivial evenings of shared stories, pipes, and coffee, but in also shared reactions and disputes. Sometimes, tension among audience members grew, especially during battle scenes which include a lot of blood and thunder. Having a plot with a lot of blood and thunder (*cengli*) was the first and foremost feature of a story to be enjoyed by the audience during these sessions as a reader says “if all of the storybooks were alike in blood and thunder with this book that would be great!”⁶⁹⁵ It is a common gesture that the audience showed their excitement in the face of *cengli* scenes by yelling “Allah Allah Allah Allah” as if they were a part of the battles to which they were listening.⁶⁹⁶

Sometimes, the atmosphere grew heated, insomuch that it sometimes ended up with a physical fight. Chief Gardener Emin Efendi, for instance, was overexcited (*cūş u hurūş*) during a reading session of Ebū Müslim and finally entered into a fight.⁶⁹⁷ The high level of blood and thunder

⁶⁹⁴ On the introduction and development of electric power systems in Istanbul see: Emine Öztaner, “Technology as a Multidirectional Construction: Electrification of Istanbul in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” Unpublished M.A. Thesis, İstanbul Şehir University, 2014. On the perceptions of Ottoman intellectuals on electrification on that period, also see of her: “Aydınlatılan Gecelerden Aydınlanan Zihinlere: Osmanlı Münevverlerinin Gözünden Elektrik,” forthcoming.

⁶⁹⁵ “Her bir hikāye kitabı bunun gibi vurdulı olaydı pek iyi olur idi.” *Mısır Vālisi*, 21a.

⁶⁹⁶ AK, K1180, 14b.

⁶⁹⁷ “Eyüb Ensāri radiyallāhuanh efendimizin civārında bağçevānlar kethüdāsı Emīn Efendi’nin kahvesinde kıra’at olundukda, kahveci Hasan cūş u hurūşa gelüb işbu koburla (?) tavuk cengine girmiştir, 25 Ra 1272.” MK 8688/1, 125b.

involved in a story would make the audience over-excited as happened with the story of Bediü'z-zemān and Kāsım. Latīfī (d. 1585), while describing Tahtakale as one of the centers of entertainment in Istanbul, tells that the audience was divided into two groups as the fans of Bedi'ı and the fans of Kāsım. While some of them were swearing that Kāsım will win over Bedi'ı, the fans of Bedi'ı were believing them and attacking the *kıssahāns*.⁶⁹⁸ The extreme example during the reading sessions of Bedi'ı and Kāsım is also narrated by İsmail Belig (d. 1789) in Bursa as such:

In the year 1616, while Rāzī Efendi was the Bursa Kadı, the number of *meddāhs* in coffeehouses increased slightly. One day, when the poet Hayālī Ahmed Çelebī from Bursa sitting in a coffeehouse, a *meddāh* was telling the story of Bedi'ı and Kāsım. The people in the coffeehouse were listening to the story with so much excitement that some of them were supporting Bedi'ı, and others were supporting Kāsım, and they were yelling when they hear the names of their heroes. Hayālī Çelebī was among the supporters of Kāsım and was bubbling over the story. When a storyteller from the opposite side called Saçakçızāde mocked the poet who has weak eyesight by asking “by which of your eyes you saw?” The poor poet lost his self-control and killed the guy by stabbing him two times.⁶⁹⁹

In conclusion, the elements of the performances –such as the performers, audience, serialization, timing, duration of the performance, and general reading atmosphere chapter – all indicate how seriously the members of this manuscript community were taking their reading and listening sessions of heroic stories. For them, sharing these stories was far more than mere entertainment; these stories served to compose an artistic taste, a social atmosphere, and a collective spirit. These sessions had many common features with TV series today, such as in the story subjects and compartmentalization of the plot, but their impact on bridging social bonds and providing integration –and disintegration – among the audience was arguably even more drastic. For this reason, studying these performances would not just lead us to perceive that the various forms of reading and perception of texts have existed, but also that these performances are gates opening onto an offering glimpse into public codes, spacial partitions, *clichés*, and patterns in individual reactions during the process of community-building around manuscripts.

⁶⁹⁸ Cited from Tülün Değirmenci, “Söz bir Nesne ki Zâil Olmaz,” 640.

⁶⁹⁹ Fuad Köprülü, “Meddahlar,” 382-383. My translation.

CHAPTER 7

COMMUNICATION: SHARING, ADVISING AND DISPUTING OVER PAGES

The members of the manuscript community who were formed around Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories in Istanbul in the late manuscript age, engaged with each other not just through collective reading sessions, but also on the very pages of manuscripts. They shared verses and opinions in the margins, guided others on the content and reading of stories, and reacted against other notes in many ways including approving, teasing, disputing, and even cursing. This opportunity of communication and accession of their words to others recalls, in a way, communication on social media today. I argue, on one hand, the enjoyment of sharing, interaction, and communication with other members of the manuscript community through the pages of manuscripts was one of the main reasons for the appreciation and persistence of these stories throughout the centuries. On the other hand, that opportunity contributed to the formation of that particular community who called each other endearingly friends and brothers (*ahbāb/yārān* and *birāderler*).

The power of manuscripts in connecting people has already been discussed by several scholars. The term “scribal community” was coined by Harold Love in 1993; he claimed that manuscript transmission had an important function of, “bonding groups of like-minded individuals into a community, order or political faction with the exchange of texts in manuscript serving to nourish a shared set of values and to enrich personal allegiances.”⁷⁰⁰ Likewise, The British literary scholar Jason Scott-Warren later used the concept of “manuscript community” and “manuscript networks” to define a “group of people who bond through the exchange of handwritten texts.”⁷⁰¹ The socializing and friendship around the manuscripts, whether through exchanging or reciting to a group, was one of the natures of the manuscript cultures. Roger Chartier, in his article on reading aloud in Early Modern Europe, argues: “reading can itself create a social bond, unite people around a book, foster convivial social relations, on the condition that it be neither solitary

⁷⁰⁰ Harold Love, *The Culture and Commerce of Texts: Scribal Publication in Seventeenth Century England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 177. The book was originally published in England five years earlier under the title *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth Century England* which was referred previously.

⁷⁰¹ Jason Scott-Warren, “Reconstructing Manuscript Networks: The Textual Transactions of Sir Stephen Powle,” in *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric* (Manchester; New York : Manchester University Press, 2000), 18-35.

nor silent.”⁷⁰² In the European context, the genres of *album amicorum* (lit. albums of friendship), the book of hours, or some folk tales such as *Canterbury Tales* or *Gargantua and Pantagruel* that were derived from the oral culture are some examples from Medieval Europe. Socially read, collectively consumed texts have been discussed in other cultural contexts as well such as in the Icelandic scribal community around the *sagas* studied by David Olafsson and Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon.⁷⁰³

In the context of this study, Tülün Değirmenci asks of the note-writers, “why have they written these notes?” By drawing inspiration from Roger Chartier, who drew attention to the social bonds of collective reading, she claims, “these notes are sort of signs for that Ottoman readers and listeners gathered around a book were sharing similar worldview or at least a common pleasure.”⁷⁰⁴ According to her, the note-writers were aware of that community and they were appealing to the next readers of the manuscripts which recalls the concept of “ephemeral togetherness” offered by Roger Chartier.⁷⁰⁵

There is some evidence that the note-writers had personal acquaintances with each other, when, for example, a reader invited a friend to read the book by his name such as “Ya‘küb, this is benevolent, you read it too.”⁷⁰⁶ But, most of the time, they targeted an anonymous audience with the desire to increase the reach of their words. For this reason, this chapter focuses specifically on the use of notes written in the personal space of readers/note-writers on manuscript pages. Through these notes, readers/note-writers seem to enjoy a bit of authorial freedom and the potential of accessibility to others through the high circulation of these manuscripts.

⁷⁰² Roger Chartier, “Leisure and Sociability,” 104.

⁷⁰³ Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon and David Olafsson, *Minor Knowledge and Microhistory*.

⁷⁰⁴ Tülün Değirmenci, “Bir Kitabı Kaç Kişi Okur?,” 40.

⁷⁰⁵ Roger Chartier, “Leisure and Sociability,” 111.

⁷⁰⁶ “Ya‘küb, bu hayrâttır, sen de oku.” MK 1285/1, 1a.

Sharing Verses

In expressing personal emotions such as love or pain in reaction to the plot and characters, sharing verses in the form of one or two couplets from well-known poems is one of the most common ways that the note-writers engage in manuscript discourse. Ranging from the small details of everyday life to lofty topics in mysticism, note-writers (now turned into poets now) seem to be fond of expressing their inner and outer world in verse. Just like our exhibitionist friends on Facebook, who post their emotions and tribulations through their own mediocre verse or classic poems by famous poets, the authors of marginal notes exhibited their own literary prowess by their amateurish couplets. Besides, some of them, as in *nazīre* tradition are in correspondence with each other.⁷⁰⁷ See, for instance, two couplets below composed of two distinct people that in communication with each other:

Couplet 1:

I wrote that [but] my ink is watery
The author of that is the servant of the reader

Couplet 2:

Well done! What a beautiful manner of thinking
Who becomes a servant becomes a Sultān⁷⁰⁸

These couplets that seem simple in the first look have many layers of meaning and reference to various literary traditions. The first couplet refers to the paleness of his script because of the overabundance of water mixed with the ink. This was the formulaic expression used by the scribes and calligraphers of the period while testing the density of their ink.⁷⁰⁹ These two couplets (*beyt*) have everything in representing the ideas and discussions in this part such as the poetic expression, the wise messages stem from mystical traditions, the perceptions on authorship and readership, and above all, the interaction between the readers as in the form of acknowledgment in this example.

⁷⁰⁷ *Nazīre*: Poem written in correspondence to another poetic piece. See: W. G. Andrews, *An Introduction to Ottoman Poetry* (Minneapolis, Bibliotheca Islamica, 1976), 166.

⁷⁰⁸ “Yazı yazdım mürekkebim suludur/Bunu yazan okuyanın kuludur” MK 8504/9, 48b. “Āferin ne güzel zan, kul olan sultān olur.” Ibid, 48b.

⁷⁰⁹ Uğur Derman, “Eski Mürekkebçiliğimiz,” *İslam Düşüncesi Mecmuası* 2 (June 1967): 97-111, 102.

The long-standing Ottoman lyric poetry tradition has always functioned to provide a sense of group participation and involvement in terms of its production phases and the reading environment embodied in *meclīs* culture. Halil İnalçık who extensively surveyed the delicate gatherings (*meclīs*) in the Iranian, Seljukian, and Ottoman periods, positions lyric poetry as an essential part of these courtly entertainments.⁷¹⁰ Walter Andrews, by focusing on close readings of the poetry itself, explains the indication of group participation and involvement through poetic syntax, vocabulary, and metaphoric structure and conceptualizes it as a poetic communality as in the following:

Another function of the *gazel* is that *it provides a sense of group participation and involvement*. There are several indications intrinsic to the *gazel*, which point strongly to a sense of poetic communality. The intimacy of style mentioned above as a significant feature of the poetic syntax is one such indication. Clearly, another is the limited poetic lexicon with its radical preservation of a traditional poetic vocabulary distinct from common usage and dense with meanings derived from centuries of multilingual poetic experience. Each of these features and others, such as a “difficult” and complex metaphoric structure, contributes to the creation of an in-group, a circle of cognoscenti who cross locational, and, to some extent, social barriers, who can share emotional experience because they also share the “secret” of its transcendent significance and the “gift” of special sensitivity.⁷¹¹

While Walter Andrews analyzing the classical *meclīs* tradition, he also points at the “parties” of other social elements such as the mystics/*dervişs* as well as the *āhī* brotherhoods, merchant association, and artisan guilds. He claims that the activities of these group activities include “*gazel* as an element is determined by an interest in and ability to appreciate the classical poetic tradition.”⁷¹²

The verses which were written on the manuscripts of the Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories are at the heart of this discussion since they are situated at the crossroads of the given and relevant categories in the scholarship of Turkish literature, such as high and popular or elite and folk literature. The examples given below, whether anonymous or given with the poet’s name, have

⁷¹⁰ Halil İnalçık, *Has-Bağçede ‘Aş u Tarab: Nedîmler, Şâirler, Mutribler* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2010).

⁷¹¹ Walter G. Andrews, *Poetry’s Voice, Society’s Song*, 121. Italics belong to the author himself.

⁷¹² *Ibid*, 159-160.

commonalities with the syntax, metaphors, vocabulary, and poetic imaginary with multiple traditions, and they compose the under-studied and under-represented examples of poems that arise from that multiplicity. While these poems offer ample opportunities for further studies in the field of Ottoman urban popular poetry, they are a great laboratory for the literary and imaginary repertoire of the city in the intended period.

Looking at the content, many of these couplets were instant and compact reactions of readers to the plot and the deeds of characters in the story. For example, one reader is clearly in anger towards the antagonist Mervān and seem to instantly utter this couplet:

If Ebū Muslim did not come to the world
The donkeys would pee on this Mervān⁷¹³

Many readers praised or damned the souls of the protagonists and antagonists, as was explored extensively in Chapter 3. The following couplet offers an example in which the composer curses the soul of Yezīd as ‘the’ villain for murdering Ali’s sons Hasan and Hüseyin in poetic form this time:

Damn on the soul of Yezīd
How he does not have mercy to the Şāh!⁷¹⁴

Cursing the soul of Yezīd as ‘the’ antagonist was a popular theme among these “readers-cum-poets” as also exemplified in this couplet:

We damned his soul so much [because]
He killed the four caliphates in the Kerbelā Square⁷¹⁵

Another reader makes a rhyme with the word *geldi-geldi* (came-came) in a couplet in which he irrelevantly tells the coming of Ebū Muslim to the world in the first line and the things that came over during his own life in the second:

Sultān the Hatchet-Porter came to the world before us

⁷¹³ “Ebā Müslim gelmeseydi cihāna/ Eşekler işer idi Mervāna” MK 8504/4, 77a.

⁷¹⁴ “La‘net olsun ol Yezīdin cānına/ Nasıl kıydı Şāh cānının kanına”⁷¹⁴ MK 8504/32, 18a.

⁷¹⁵ “Bunca la‘net eyledik biz bunun her dem cānına/ Kerbelā meydānında girdi ol çehāryārın kanına” MK 8504/33, 33b.

I am young but a lot happened to me in this life⁷¹⁶

A significant portion of the verses was irrelevant to the story and focused on the personal lives and feelings of the readers themselves. Most of the couplets of this nature were about the declaration of love and sorrow caused by the separation from the beloved. This is something expected since sorrow is like a trademark of forlorn lovers not just in Ottoman but in most ancient and early modern cultures. Ottoman court (*dīvān*) and folk (*halk*) literature have depended on the ‘platonic’ and ‘melancholic’ love and appreciation of the sorrow of separation instead of the joy of union.⁷¹⁷ The amateur poets who show up on the pages with their *naïve* couplets seem to be inspired by these traditional perceptions of love: they look at their beloveds, whom they address as ‘my master/mistress (*efendim*)’, from a distance, and they are in sorrow and shy enough to reveal their love. Although they demand union, they also accept separation as a required essence of love. In this context, the concepts of *firāk* (separation) and sorrow constantly show up in the poems as such:

Ah, my master/mistress! affection is such a trouble
That no one can know it until being mingled
No lover can enjoy, until suffering from it⁷¹⁸

Not one, eleven, or ten thousand times
But maybe for a hundred thousand times the moon/ beloved gives sorrow⁷¹⁹

No one should be acquainted with the grief as of mine
No one should be informed that I am on fire⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁶ “Sultān Teberdār Hazretleri dünyāya bizden evvel geldi/ Böyle yaşıım küçük ama başıma çok şeyler geldi” MK 8504/9, 45a.

⁷¹⁷ For an exclusive study on love and beloved relationship in Ottoman lyric poetry, see: Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds*.

⁷¹⁸ “Ah efendim, sohbe bir belādır ki giriftār olmayan bilmez/ Cefāyı çekmeyen aşık safānın kadrini bilmez” MK 8504/2, 35a. For this couplet, although there are some attributions to the poet Halīmī of Bursa lived in the 16th century, it has become anonym and composed as a musical piece both in the classical Ottoman/Turkish music in the 18th century and as a folk music compiled from the city of Diyārbekir.

⁷¹⁹ “Bir değil on bir değil, on bin değil/ Belki yüz bin kere üzer mäh” MK1285/1, 22b.

⁷²⁰ “Benim derdüm gibi derde giriftār olmasun kimse/ Kudurdum ki yanayım haberdār olmasun kimse” İÜNE 1091, 112a.

Although the composers of these poems are not part of the literary elites based on their simple use of language; inharmonic rhymes; and limited vocabulary, they are acquainted with the themes and vocabulary of an extensive poetic tradition. For example, the imageries of sapling (*nihāl*), rosebud (*goncagül*), and rose (*gül*) in this poem are taken from the imagery world of the Persian, Arabic, and Turkish cultures created within the most textual and courtly to the most oral-based, popular social and literary milieus:

I have been captured by a sapling
I was a rosebud but have turned into a rose
I searched for you and found you,
My master/mistress! If only you would come to me⁷²¹

The acquaintance with the poems by a large community after the 17th-century was both a result and cause of the various literary registers ranging from what scholarship has framed as ‘high/elite’ to ‘low/popular’ literature and of the oral and written technologies. This interwoven relationship was threaded by the new social dynamics of the urban centers in this period. Both in terms of content and technicalities such as vocabulary, meter, or imageries, the poems circulating among our readers could be characterized beyond the imagined distinctions and categorizations such as court (*dīvān*) or folk (*halk*) literature. The poems under study here, however, arose from the intersections of artistic zones and agents, moving beyond such clear dichotomies. Therefore, they require to discuss a much more complicated and puzzling picture that necessitates thinking beyond the totalistic and exclusionist dichotomies such as anonymity and originality.

As an indicative to this puzzling picture, the couplets that were not composed by the readers had the features of oral poetic forms and content as in this quartet:

Roses for the vineyards
Nightingales for the roses
For you such a leader
You need a slave like me⁷²²

⁷²¹ Nihāle giriftār oldum/ Goncagül idim gül oldum/ Aradım pes seni buldum/ Efendim bir gelsen bana” MK 1285/1, 42b.

⁷²² “Bağlara gül gerek/ Güllere bülbül gerek/ Senin gibi bir selver/ Bencileyin kul gerek.” İÜNE 1091, 17a.

This quartet, which was repeated many times, displays the characteristics of a *māni*. *Māni* is a form of the so-called “folk” literature which is described as an anonymous quartet that primarily circulates orally. The first two lines of *mānis* (such as roses for the vineyards/ nightingales for the roses) are not connected with the message of the quartet but they enable the listener to be accustomed to the meter and rhyme of the poem. The margins are full of such anonym poems from the oral repertoire of the city that would even be perceived as a cumulative transmission of poems from oral to the written environment. It seems there is a specific repertoire shared by this manuscript community that is carried from the oral literature and daily life. For example:

I wrote down two lines to the board of a beloved
Who grinds me out, I wish, will not be living within a week⁷²³

Another example for such patterns details the reasons for writing. It was repeatedly written both by the readers and by the scribes who wrote this couplet at the end of the books:

I wrote this to be remembered
To be praised by the readers and listeners⁷²⁴

Some poems need a special elaboration to discern the blurred distinction between the oral and literary influences since they show up on the manuscripts many times by many hands. However, they do not seem to be written by the amateurs looking at the vocabulary and technical capability. This poem was written twice on the 11th volume of Hamza:

It is hard but not right to reveal love
It is hard but not right to reveal the secret
My mouth! what you search for, you think I am mad?
Even if you lose your head, it is not right to reveal the secret⁷²⁵

Although this quartet was attributed to many poets such as Server Dede, Adnī Mahmūd Paşa, Lāmi‘ī Çelebī, or Ahmed Paşa, no one is certain of the identity of the actual poet. Among the potential poets, Server Dede, a high officer of Registry (*Defter Emīni*) who became a

⁷²³ “İki satır yazı yazdım dilberin tahtasına/ Bana kim cevri iderse irmesin haftasına.”

⁷²⁴ “Bunu yazdım yādigār olmak için/ Okuyan dinleyenden bir du‘ā almak için”

⁷²⁵ “Müşkil imiş aşkı nihān eylemek olmaz/ Müşkīl bu ki her sırrı āyān eylemek olmaz/ Ağzım ne ararsın beni mestāne mi sandın/ Ser virmek olur sırrı āyān eylemek olmaz.” İÜNE 1094, 69b and 73b.

mystical/legendary figure (*evliyā*), is the protagonist of a legend in which the Sultan (Mahmūd I, r. 1730-1754) cuts his head off because he denied bringing a document from the archives.

According to the legend, a paper was found inside of his mouth after his execution on which this quartet was written. Then the all phrase “even if you lose your head, it is not right to reveal the secret” becomes meaningful in this context. According to another legend, the reason for his execution was hiding a secret that belongs to the Bektashi Sufi order. It is not hard to imagine how these stories were embraced by the readers of our storybooks who –some of them –were affiliated with the bureaucratic duties and came from a Bektashi orientation.

What interests us with these legends is that such poems, whether or not their composers were known, have become the property of a whole community in time. These poems were naturally composed by some individual or group, and that is why the definition of the term anonym in Ottomanised Arabic, “*lā-edrī*,” which meant “I don’t know the teller.” This term was mostly used for the short couplets and quartets when the composer’s name was not known or recalled. The poems composed by a specific person but then exposed to minor changes were also noted by the term “*lā-edrī*.”⁷²⁶ This conceptualization points to indifference towards boundaries of anonymity and originality. This indifference may have been due to the commonplace understanding that such couplets and quartets were public goods of the urban community. Thus, these poems were inscribed not just on paper, but also on physical and public monuments such as tombstones, epitaphs, or calligraphic albums. See below, for example, the tombstone of the aforementioned Server Dede:



Figure 37 Epitaph on the tombstone of Server Dede reads: “Ser virüb sır vermeyen Server Dede, rühuna ihlās ile el-fātihā [Server Dede, who gave his head away but did not give the secret, ihlās and el-fātihā on his soul]. This tomb is still visited today as a shrine in the backyard of General Directorate of Land Registry. <http://www.istanbultarih.com/memurlarin-evliyasi-server-dede-226.html>.

⁷²⁶ İskender Pala , “Lâ Edrî,” *DİA* 27 (2004): 40-41.

Another example from the poems for the indistinctive relationship between the anonym and the original (*te'lif*) is in the following:

Oh, mighty friends! Do you know that doomsday approaches?
Heretofore, the time has passed in many ways
Humans have always been beautiful at different times
Now they are intriguers, who are to blame the doomsday!⁷²⁷

These are the first two couplets from the Treatise of Other Time (*Risāle-i Āhir Zamān*) composed by Ahmed of Tonya (1851-1918). Since the name of the poet is not indicated on the manuscript, one can raise the question that whether Ahmed of Tonya put these very well-known and admired couplets that were once orally circulated among the people at the beginning of his *Treatise* to make a spectacular entrance, or, whether the readers did not know its poet regarding these couplets have become *lā-edrī* or common property over time. If we also single out the possibility that Ahmed of Tonya himself copied his couplets on these manuscripts, the readers should have not felt a necessity to record his name because anyone could immediately assign the poet.

The note-writers cited not only so-called anonymous poems but also the *berceste* (very well-known couplets of a poem) of poets. For example, this couplet of *Fuzūlī* (1483-1556) was quoted many times by the readers without indicating his name:

I am tired of myself, is the beloved not tired of rigor?
Skies are burnt by my *āh* [voice], is the candle of my desires not lit?⁷²⁸

This poet who composed a *Dīvān* (compilation of poems in various forms) with Chagatai Turkish seems to be popular among the readers, thanks to his relatively simple language and laconic expressions alongside his compelling imagery. For the modern reader, it is not always easy to ascribe a couplet to a certain poet, as in the case of *Fuzūlī*, without in-depth research of the compilations of the period. However, attributing a couplet to a certain early-modern period

⁷²⁷ “Ey azîzler bildiniz mi bu zamān āhir zamān/ Bundan evvel geldi geçdi nice bin dürlü zamān/ Güzel iken iş bu insān güzel idi her zamān/ Şimdi insān fitne oldu neylesün āhir zamān.” MK 8504/4, 57b and 8504/5, 41a. For an analysis of Ahmed Efendi of Tonya’s mesnevī, see: Lokman Taşkesenlioğlu, “Tonyalı Ahmed Efendi ve Risāle-i Ahvāl-i Āhir Zaman,” *The Journal of Karadeniz İncelemeleri* 27 (2019): 143-164.

⁷²⁸ “Beni candan usandırdı, cefādan yar usanmaz mı/ Felekler yandı āhımdan murādım şemi yanmaz mı?” FMK 106, 1a.

poet would have been much easier for an Istanbulite in the 18th and 19th centuries, which resulted in this common lack of attribution.

Looking at the relationship between authorial anonymity and content, it is remarkable that the couplets with wise and moral messages tend to turn into be *lā-edrī* over time. They have similar characteristics with the proverbs in terms of being succinct and didactic with a certain obscure or implied message. There are many such anonymous couplets on the manuscripts giving moral advice such as being a merciful person, appreciating the value of time, etc. Such poems are a great laboratory for observing the social and moral values of this community, a topic that deserves a separate study. Here are several examples for poems with a social or moral message:

My advice has been tested, benefit from it
As your capital your charity is enough, benefit from it⁷²⁹

Don't be unwary hey blind because of the time
The day is today, the hour is this hour⁷³⁰

The man comes to this ostentatious era for once
Know the value of life since man comes to the earth once⁷³¹

The taste of bread comes from the salt
The one of loudmouth will eventually fall from favor⁷³²

There is no measure more than [...]
There is nothing wiser than to know your faults⁷³³

The uneducated do not know the manners
The donkey is a donkey even it wears a golden cone⁷³⁴

⁷²⁹ “Bu nasihā amel ile dir hayrın gör/ Sana sermāye hayrın yeter ve hayrın gör.” MK 8504/9, 62a.

⁷³⁰ “Gāfil olma ey gaflet çok çün zemān/ Gün bugün sa‘at bu sa‘atdir hemān.” MK 8504/3, 75a.

⁷³¹ “Ādem bu bezm-i devr-i dilārāya bir gelü/ Bil kadr-i ömrünü kişi dünyāya bir gelü.” İÜNE 1111, 23b.

⁷³² “Ekmek lezzetini tuzdan çıkar/ Söz bilmez ākıbet gözden çıkar.” MK 8504/4, 56b.

⁷³³ “Çeşme-i (?) insāf gibi kāmīl mīzān olmaz/ Kişi noksanın bilmek gibi irfān olmaz.” MK 8504/9, 65a.

⁷³⁴ “Kişi mehteb görmeyince bilmez nedir mezheb/ Eşek altun külāh giyse gene merkeb gene merkeb.” FMK 40, 2a.

As opposed to the predominant portion of the unsigned poems, there are some poems signed by the names of their composers.⁷³⁵ For example, Hasan Ağa from the Palace of Galata signed his name on the side of his couplets as seen in Figure 4:⁷³⁶

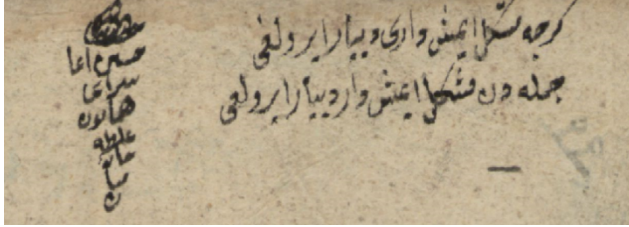


Figure 38 Hasan Ağa from Galata Palace signed his name on the side of his couplet. İÜNE 1091, 99b

There is one poet who stands out by giving extra information on his identity. The composer of the two poems below, Abdi Efendi, who will be mentioned later as the trigger of another reader's frustration, deserves special mention also in the context of poetic production. There are two poems written by Abdi Efendi on the first and last pages of *Firūzşāh Story* as such:

This is the consensus of the times
That each union ends with separation⁷³⁷

The bird of the heart has succumbed to passing desires
It was put into a cage by the very hand of destiny
Its trapper is the servant Abdi Efendi⁷³⁸

Abdi Efendi was from the infantry (*kapıkulu piyādeleri*), probably janissary, as evident in his signature as “the servant (*bende*) Abdi Efendi,” and, also, he recorded the sign “kef (س) 56” to show that he belongs to the fifty-sixth regiment of the corps. Therefore, he might be counted within the category of “janissary-poets.” It has been discussed in Chapter 4 that the Janissaries were not just a social unit that was solely engaged in military affairs but they also had a

⁷³⁵ For more on the signatures and seals of the readers, see Chapter 2 on corpus.

⁷³⁶ “Gerçe müşkıl imiş dār-ı diyār ayrılığ/ Cümleden müşkıl imiş dār-ı diyār ayrılığ.” İÜNE 1090, 99b.

⁷³⁷ “Budur devr-i zemānın ittifākı/Ki vardır her visālin bir firākı. “ MK 1285/1, 45a.

⁷³⁸ “Her mürğ-i dili düşdi hevā-yı hevese/ Felek eliyle kor imiş kafese/ Anın sayyādı Bende-i Abdi Efendi.” Ibid, 0b.

significant impact on the social life as well as in the literary and artistic production of the city. In this regard, the term “janissary poets” was coined in reference to poets who were engaged with the Janissary corps.

The poems composed by janissaries indicate they were not just great fans of these stories, but also that they were prominent agents in the various registers of literary expression and literary domains as readers and authors. The janissary-poets seem to be producing both within the form and genres of court and folk literature. For example, a 16th-century well-known poet, Yahyā of Taşlıca, composed verse within the forms and imagery of court literature, and he was patronized by the Sultan Selim I (r. 1512-1520) and Süleymān the Magnificent (r. 1520-1566). Another Janissary poet, Bahşī in the same period, presented his poems to Selim I, but, he was writing in the syllabic meter and singing with his instrument called *sāz*.⁷³⁹ In this respect, Abdi Efendi’s poems above including the themes of union and separation or the imageries of bird-heart/soul or cage-body display both the aspects of lyric and *aşık* literature in terms of its meter and imagery.

The eclectic display of the poetical compositions presented up to this point –defined by the juxtaposition of oral and anonymous registers with the most refined registers from the poetry of the well-known court poets– stands as a reflection of the social plurality within the manuscript community. Besides, this social plurality that is discussed in Chapter 4 was not an obstacle for the intense communication among the members of the community conducted through the pages of the manuscripts.

Advising and Recommending

The readers of heroic stories in the 18th and 19th centuries also interacted with each other in more direct ways than through the verses and laconic expressions. The content of this direct addressing and interaction usually included advice and recommendations on the subjects of reading and treatment of the manuscripts. These notes will provide a basis to discuss the alternating definitions and blurry distinctions between the scribes and the readers in this reading community. Overall, as argued previously, direct appealing to others and immediate interference on the

⁷³⁹ Or *bağlama*, an instrument with three double strings usually accompany the improvisational songs of folk poets.

content and the form of the manuscripts were the prominent reasons for the popularity of these books, even in predominantly print culture.⁷⁴⁰

The tone of authorial advice or recommendation depends on the context and intention of the note-writer. Commonly, the note-writers appealed to others through gentle and friendly tones, such as with the title “my master (*efendim*)” or with the expressions that were used while appealing to the Sultan as in this example: “My Almighty, Merciful, Benefactor, Master and Sultān, please bestow a *fātiha*.”⁷⁴¹ On the other hand, some quarrelsome and even pedantic ways of expression are also visible on the notes, while, for example, a reader sarcastically noting “good for you, [you] who wrote this” in proximity to the obscene words of another reader.⁷⁴² This ethical tone did not just target other audiences, but also the characters of the story. For example, on the page where the valor of *Erdevān*, son of the Persian nobleman *Ferrūhzād*, is praised because he killed forty enemies, a note reads, “killing a man is not valor, but keeping him alive is.”⁷⁴³ In addition, some foul-mouthed readers would curse and use vulgar language, such as one reader who wrote, “I wish for the ones who ruined the pages of this book to be deprived of the mercy of Prophet Muhammed,”⁷⁴⁴ or, “I wish the dicks of the ones who wrote their names on this book would be on their asses.”⁷⁴⁵

For the content, most of the notes of advice and recommendations targeted the easiness of the reading process of others, such as cross-referencing among the pages. Such notes direct readers

⁷⁴⁰ Harold Love in his article “Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England” argued that the preference of scribal publication, long after the establishment of printing in England depended on many reasons such as the lack of censorship, the authors’ wish to avoid the ‘stigma of print,’ and the rapid duplication of key texts. Through the particular examples that will be presented one can also add the possibility to interact and communicate others as another factor of high production and circulation of manuscripts in predominantly print cultures.

⁷⁴¹ “Devletlü, atüfetlü, velinimetim efendim, sultānım, kirām idüb bir fātihā-yı şerife okuyasız.” İÜNE 1099, 50a. The parallel between these appeals with the appeals to the Sultan in imperial language as reflected on the archival documents is remarkable.

⁷⁴² “Āferin şunu yazana.” MK 1285/1, 0b.

⁷⁴³ “Adam öldürmek pehlivanlık değildir, onu diri tutmaktır pehlivanlık.” Ibid, 3a.

⁷⁴⁴ “Bu kitabın yapraklarını zāyi’ idenler, yevm-i kıyāmette hazret-i peygamberin şefa’ātinden mahrum olsun.” İÜNE 1092, 101a.

⁷⁴⁵ “Bu kitaba ne kadar isim yazanlar var cemi’ bunu yazanın siki anun götüne olsun.” *Mısır Vālisi Koca Ca’fer Paşa’nın Hikāyesi*, 4a.

to other folios (*kağıd*), such as, “look at the eighty-second page from the beginning,”⁷⁴⁶ or, “my dear look at the ninth page,”⁷⁴⁷ or, “for God’s sake look at the fifth page.”⁷⁴⁸ Other than facilitating ease of reading, there were other reasons to direct the reader to another page. One example is recommending a battle scene; as a note reads, “if you enjoy the battles, look at the fifth page,”⁷⁴⁹ or for challenging as another note reads, “reading these parts is not a real success but reading the page fifty-six is.”⁷⁵⁰ Some note-writers invite others to read his other notes which might be perceived as self-referencing. For example, a note reads, “if you ask my opinion, look at the fifth page,”⁷⁵¹ and when we look at the fifth page, we face up with a note that declares his joy of reading the book, “live long you, the writer of this book [...] read and delighted a lot, year 1780/1.”⁷⁵² These notes are particularly strong examples that our community was not only formed around texts but also – as this chapter argues – around specific manuscripts as the material manifestation of the texts. In a manuscript culture, each material manifestation and each manuscript had its own peculiar shape, and these references to page numbers obviously only worked for this one particular manuscript.

Apart from the internal references, the intertextual suggestions that might be perceived as further reading create a potential repertoire for the relevant manuscript community. The writer of the following, for example, suggests a group of stories for those who enjoyed the present story, *Mısır Vālisi Koca Ca’fer Paşa’nın Hikāyesi*: “My brother, I read this book but there are two more books, they call one of them as Cāsıb and another as Tanbūrī Ahmed Çelebī. The ones who read them will see how gallant mankind is and what happened to them, my Sultān.”⁷⁵³ This note is

⁷⁴⁶ “Başdan seksen ikinci kağıda nazār eyleseniz.” MK 8504/9, 4b.

⁷⁴⁷ “Benim cānım dokuzuncu kağıda nazār idesin.” MK 8504/2, 3a.

⁷⁴⁸ “Allāh aşkına olsun beşinci kağıda bak.” MK 8504/6, 3b.

⁷⁴⁹ “Ceng seversen beşinci kağıda bak.” MK 8504/3, 80a.

⁷⁵⁰ “Ma’rifet bunları okumak değildir/ elli altmışıncı kağıdı okumaktır efendim.” FMK 31, 50a.

⁷⁵¹ “Benim derdim sorarsan beşinci kağıda bak.” FMK 30, 70b.

⁷⁵² “Bu kitabı yazanın eli var olsun mukarrer okuyub azīm safāyāb olmuştur, sene 1195.” FMK 30, 5a.

⁷⁵³ “Benim birāderim bu kitabı okudum ve likin bundan başka iki kitab var birine Cāsıb diyorlar ve birine Tanbūrī Ahmed Çelebī diyorlar. Onları okuyanda bakın bir kerre dünyāda ādem ne cengīz imiş ve neler gelürmüş onların başına bakın sultānım [...]” *Mısır Vālisi*, 16b.

also significant for that it shows the readers that enjoyed the story of Mısır Vālisi Koca Ca'fer Paşa would coincide with the stories of Cāsıb and Tanbūrī Ahmed Çelebī for being narrations about the gallantries of mankind.

Besides other books, the note-writers would acknowledge and recommend the books which were being written at that time. They could even address a specific person, as in the example, “Ya'kūb, this is useful/good, you [should] read it too.”⁷⁵⁴ The reason behind leaving such notes would be a friendly suggestion, in the case that Ya'kūb, a friend of the note-writer, read the text. Additionally, these notes could also serve as advertisements for potential readers. Hypothetically, Ya'kūb could be a customer in a bookstore, looking for a book to borrow or purchase. He scans the shelves and all of a sudden, he sees a friend who suggests he read the book and he decides to borrow it. In any case, the note-writer could envisage the literary tastes of Ya'kūb by sharing the same manuscript community.

Through such notes, we can deduce the prominent features of a book to be recommended, among them telling of wars (*cenkli*) and sorrow/love (*firāklı*). Fighting with the enemy and loving the beloved are essentially two prominent features expected from a hero. For this reason, a high portion of the feedback favors the stories for being gallant, heroic, and sorrowful (*firāklı*). These are the features that the readers express their joy of reading and gratitude towards the scribes and bookdealers. For example, the audience gathered in the house of the book-keeper İbrahim delighted the story of Fīrūzşāh because it was so sorrowful:

The humble Assistant Book-keeper İbrāhim, a clerk at the Chief Accounting Office, read this book of Fīrūzşāh in his house and he delighted the companions. They enjoyed this volume a great deal, but this 45th volume was so sorrowful, 11 February 1797.⁷⁵⁵

In my analysis, this feedback is not merely the repetition of the *clichés* or some facile critics of the stories; they reflect real literary tastes and expectations shared by the community. In this regard, the books of specific scribes and book dealers are favored. For example, the books of a

⁷⁵⁴ Ya'kūb bu hayrāttır, sen de oku.”MK 1285/1, 1a.

⁷⁵⁵ “Hālen bu kitāb-ı Fīrūz Şāh'ı, Hācepaşa'da, baş muhāsebe kātiblerinden defterci yamağı bende İbrāhim ki silāhşori kendü hānesinde kıra'at etmişdir ve ehıbbāyı bāsefā işbu ciltte gerçi pek safā eylediler amma pek firāklı imiş bu cild-i 45, 13 Şevvāl 1211” Ibid, 11a.

bookbinder, scribe, and bookdealer Sālih Efendi are particularly preferred as apparent in this note:

No books in the world resemble the ones of that bookbinder Sālih Efendi, they are really unique. But, unfortunately, there are lots of missing pages which vitiates the pleasure of reading, if it did not have any missing pages no one could drop it from his hand.⁷⁵⁶

On the colophons of many manuscripts, there is the signature of Sālih Efendi and one of the readers noted that the books of Sālih Efendi are unique. Such critiques would have contributed to the marketing and sales of certain manuscripts by evoking the interest of other readers. Beyond that, these notes compel us to understand the agency of readers who had preferences and decisions on the books they read and who were conscious of their own literary tastes and critiques.

As expected, the readers in this manuscript community had distinct judgments on the same books. For example, the concept of separation (*firāk*) while appearing as a favorable feature in the note cited earlier, “they enjoyed this volume a great deal, this 45th volume was so full of separation sorrow, 11 February 1797.”⁷⁵⁷ However, in the same manuscript, on the page where the disappearance of Hūrşid Çehre and Fīrūzşāh’s grief is narrated, a note reads: “O penman, curse you, why did you write so sorrowfully?”⁷⁵⁸ Even if the latter could be just a matter of sarcasm, the existence of both approaches in the same reading community signifies different tastes and expectations from a book.

Criticism is equally crucial while discussing the tastes of a reading community. In addition to their affirmative notes on the books, the readers frequently expressed their distastes and discontent towards the books by targeting the incomprehensibility of plot, irresponsible treatments of readers, indecipherable handwriting of scribes, and missing or degeneration of the pages. The comments on such issues illuminate the reading habits and expectations of the

⁷⁵⁶ “Şu mücellid Sālih Efendi’nin kitābları gibi dünyāda hic kitāb olamaz. Begāyet lānazīr kitablardır. Lākin neyleyeyim cildler arasında çok kağıd noksandır, zevke haleb veriyor. Yani şu hic noksanı olmasa ādem elinden bıragmaz [...]” Ibid, 2a.

⁷⁵⁷ “Ehibbā-yı bāsefā işbu ciltte gerçi pek safā eylediler amma pek firāklı imiş bu cild-i 45, 13 Şevvāl 1211” Ibid, 11a.

⁷⁵⁸ “Niçün böyle firāklı yazdın ellerin tutulsun ey kalemkār” Ibid, 26a

reading community alongside the relationship between readers and scribes as well as in between the readers. Besides, they should have equal influence as the affirmative notes on potential readers while borrowing or purchasing a book.

The first reason for the discontent of the readers is the difficulty of handwriting, which naturally targets the scribe of the book. The readers of the 4th volume of Hamza, for example, had a difficult time discerning the handwritten script, so much so that they uttered curses on the scribe, saying, “the scribe of this book should be a fool like me, it just cannot be read,”⁷⁵⁹ or, “I wish a donkey will chase the writer of this because it cannot be read,”⁷⁶⁰ or, “whoever wrote this script, I will fuck both his mother and wife, [signature] Īsmā‘il.”⁷⁶¹



Figure 39 A rewritten page by a reader. IÜNE 1087, 18b-19a.

Looking at the Figure above, to the right page, the scribe of this manuscript seems indeed an amateur as compared to other manuscripts that were typically written with a standard clear *nesih*

⁷⁵⁹ “Bu kitabı kıra’at eyledim ama nasıl kıra’at eylediğimi bunların niçün deyü su‘al buyurulur ise bu kitabı yazan benim gibi bir ahmak olmalı, bir dürlü okunmuyor [...] IÜNE 1087, 0b.

⁷⁶⁰ “Bu kitabı yazanın anasını eşek kovalasın zīrā okunmuyor.” Ibid, 8a.

⁷⁶¹ “Bu yazıyı her kim yazdı ise ben hem anasını hem de avratını sikeyim, Īsmā‘il.” Ibid, 15b.

script. It is clear for this reason that most of the pages in this manuscript were rewritten as in the left page by another scribe before circulating the city again.

The notes on the story of *Kıssa-i Kerb Gāzī veyā Hikāye-i Muhammed Hanefī*, one of the most hated books among this manuscript community, are informative regarding other reasons for the discontent towards a story, such as the incomprehensibility of the plot and inconsistencies in the flow that frustrated the readers. Some of the complaints of this book are as such: “it is an endless, empty talking you have in this volume,”⁷⁶² “the readers and listeners of this book are fools,”⁷⁶³ “we have seen a lot of empty talks but not in this level,”⁷⁶⁴ and, “the writer of this book is ignorant that masqueraded as a scribe.”⁷⁶⁵ As seen in these examples, the author/scribe is accused of belaboring in a complicated and confusing manner.

One of the reader’s reflections on the plot is remarkable since it shows the confusing manner of the author’s narration. He complains that it is hard to follow the flow of events and the relations between characters and events by asking these questions:

Does *ceng-i İshāk* belong to *Kerb Gāzī* and he forgave *Muhammed Hanefī*? Or, did *Kerb Gāzī* left his horse behind? Or, *Muhammed Hanefī* seized it by violence? Or was there another *ceng-i İshāk* that belongs to *Muhammed Hanefī*? I don’t know what the crap about this guy!⁷⁶⁶

Hence, comprehensible plot and clarity in the manner of writing were evidently priorities among the readers. Discrepancies in the story made the plot convoluted, they were easily discerned and condemned by the readers. For the same story, *Kerb Gāzī*, the lack of consistency between the volumes was also a problem, hence, readers complained about the characterization of *Kerb Gāzī*.

⁷⁶² “Bu cildde bī nihāye eyledin lāf u güzāf.” AK 0270, 1a

⁷⁶³ “Bu kitabı okuyanla dinleyen ahmak.” Ibid, 1a

⁷⁶⁴ “Çok lāf u güzāf gördük amma bu mertebe görmedik.” Ibid, 79a.

⁷⁶⁵ “Şu lafif hikāyelerin mü’ellifi yazduđu üzerine komuyor. Bir söz bilmez cāhil kātibe girip haltlar itmiş ki haddi yokdur.” Ibid, 63b.

⁷⁶⁶ “Ceng-i İshāk didüđi Kerb Gāzīnindir de Muhammed Hanefī’yi bađışladı mı? Yohsa Kerb Gāzī giderken atını unuttu mu? Yohsa Muhammed Hanefī güc ile le mi alıkoydu? Yāhüd bir ceng-i İshāk dahī Muhammed Hanefī’nin mi vardur? Bilmem bu harif ne pohlar yer [...]” Ibid, 63b.

One reader said that the author who wrote *Kerb Gāzī* vowed not to drink in the first volume but now he is depicted while drinking wine in the third volume.⁷⁶⁷

Apart from the problems in the manner of storytelling, the physical deformities of the manuscripts could also deprive the readers of the joy of reading. The mistreatments of manuscripts were the nightmares of the whole community including the readers, scribes, and reciters of the stories. Above, we have already seen the fan of the books of the bookbinder Sālih Efendi, however, he continues with a critique that, “[...] but, unfortunately, there are lots of missing pages which vitiate the pleasure of reading, if it did not have any missing pages, no one could drop it from his hand.”⁷⁶⁸

Such as the writer of this note, some readers were frustrated over others who cut the pages, and they sometimes defamed parts of the text or left notes in the margins. The adjective “scattered (*tār ü mār*)” is frequently used as in this example in which the reader inveighed the defacers, such as, “I wish the ones who mistreated and scattered this book will be scattered like this book.”⁷⁶⁹ A reader resembles the ones who cut the pages to Yezīd who was the symbolic figure of evil by saying, “whoever cuts this is the Yezīd the son of Yezīd.”⁷⁷⁰ Another reader curses on the reader who cut the pages and defames the inscriptions by saying, “someone cut the pages and defamed the inscription [...] I wish he will get his share from Hamza’s sword and be deprived of the mercy of the Prophet.”⁷⁷¹ Some readers were irritated by the notes on the margins and expressed their irritations paradoxically by writing, “whoever wrote on this manuscript, I wish their dicks to be in their asses.”⁷⁷²

Missing pages and degeneration of manuscripts pages was not just a problem for readers, but also for scribes who sometimes wrote down their ultimatum at the beginning of their books to the

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid, 69b.

⁷⁶⁸ MK 1285/1, 2a.

⁷⁶⁹ “Bu kitabı hor tutup böyle tār ü mār idenler bu kitab gibi tār ü mār olsunlar.” FMK 101, 69b.

⁷⁷⁰ “Bunu her kim keserse Yezīd oğlu Yezīddir.” MK 8504/16, 9a.

⁷⁷¹ “Kitāb yapraklarını kesib ve yazıları silmiş [...] hazret-i Hamza’nın kılıcına uğrasın ve Cenāb serverinin şefa’atinden mahrūm kalsın [...]” YKSC 146, last page.

⁷⁷² “Buna ne kadar isim yazdın ise cümlesin siki götüne olsun.” *Mısır Vālisi Koca Ca’fer Paşa’nın Hikāyesi*, 4a.

readers. For example, the scribe of *Süleymānnāme* gently and desperately asks not to damage his book by foreseeing the great danger that will be befallen to his manuscript. He says:

It endows pleasure to the reader. Please have mercy and pity not to ruin my book by damaging or writing on the margins. My dear, I beg my friends. Because *Süleymānnāme* could not be found everywhere and when it is found, it doesn't give pleasure to the friends. I just want [to give] the moral, that's it.⁷⁷³

On the very same page, another note confirms how right the scribe is in his concern. It tells that twelve people among the audience supported the character Ecābez in the story, eight people supported Kāhīr and four people supported Rüstem and they started to fight each other. It also tells that the son of a tailor, Ahmed, attempted to tear the book but, being ashamed of the Münīr Mollā, the book was saved.⁷⁷⁴ This example demonstrates that the fevered reading atmosphere could have resulted in the victimization of the manuscript and also shows how these material manuscripts, and not only the texts, would be a point of contention among this manuscript community.

Another remarkable example for such kind of warning in a more strongly-worded note is that the scribe of the several volumes of Hamza stories declared on the opening and end page of the manuscripts:

When this book and other books were rented and the servants read them and whoever tears and damages this book and other books and write poppycock on their margins to practice their spelling and prose, I wish, they will be cursed by the God and a hundred and twenty-four Prophets, amen.⁷⁷⁵

This severe warning of the scribe clearly reveals that these manuscripts suffered from the common attitude of readers to tear pages or damage the pages for various physical uses of manuscripts which were discussed above.

⁷⁷³ “Okuyan ehıbbāya safā bahş ider. Kerem [ü] ‘ināyet idüb bozayım yāhūd kenārına bir şey yazayım diyüb kitabımı berbād itmeyesin. Efendim ehıbbāya niyāz olunur. Zırā Süleymānnāme her yerde bulunamıyor, bulunur da ol da ehıbbāya safā virmiyor. Murād olan kıssadan hissedir, ve’s-selām.” *Süleymānnāme*, London, British Library, MS Or 14944, 91a. Cited from Tülün Değirmenci, “Bir Kitabı Kaç Kişi Okur?,”²⁵ My translation.

⁷⁷⁴ Cited from *ibid*, 26.

⁷⁷⁵ “Bu kitabın vesāir kitabların sāhibi kirāya virüb halāyık okuyub imlā ve inşā öğrenüb ve bu her kim bu kitabı vesāir kitabları yırtar ise ve bozar ise ve kenārına olur olmaz şeyler yazar ise Hakk te‘ālānın lāneti ve yüz yigirmi dört [...] la‘neti ol ādemin üzerine olsun, āmīn.” İÜNE 1110, 1a.

Not just scribes, but also performers complained about the misuse of the books. For example, from the note of Mehmed Nüreddin Efendi, the performer of the 11th volume of Ebū Müslim, we understand delaying the due date of borrowed books was also a problem. In the note he left after his performance, he asks readers not to tear and damage the pages and to return the books on time.⁷⁷⁶ Regarding his manner and tone of speaking, some members of the community were seriously annoyed and made uncomfortable by the treatment of other readers:

Whoever rents this book reads and ruins it or tears it or he claims, after finishing it, that he returned it although he has not [...] I wish would be deprived of the mercy of our Prophet and he also applies (?) with the dog shit as Tağlu Abdurrahmān. And, I ask you, my fellows, please do not tear or damage these books after reading them and I ask you, my brothers and *ağas* and *efendis* and *beys* to return it immediately, 21 December 1869.⁷⁷⁷

If they were so troubled with the harsh treatments of readers and the physical deformities of manuscripts developed in time, it is expected that the readers and temporary owners would find

⁷⁷⁶ I infer the note was written by Mehmed Nüreddin by looking at the note just before this note written in same handwriting on the same date, 17 Ramazan 1286, the night of Monday. MK 8688/3, 61b.

⁷⁷⁷ “Ya her kim bu kitabı alub okuyub bozar ise veyāhud yurtar ise veyāhud hatm idüb virmeyüb virdüm deyü inkār iderse dilerim peygamber efendimizin şefa‘âtinden mahrûm kalsun ve hem dahî Tağlu Abdurrahmān gibi köpek bohu ile ense ursun (?) ve bu kitablari okuyub dinleyen ahbāblar sizlerden ricā iderim ki bu kitablari okuduktan sonra yırtub ve bozmayub hemen teslīm itmenizi ricā ve niyāz iderim birāder, ağalar ve efendiler ve beyler.” MK 8688/3, 61b.

ways of repair and restoration. Indeed they did, looking at the patchy and eclectic appearance of manuscripts which could be a size of a paragraph as in Figure 40:



Figure 40 A rewritten paragraph on a teared page (left) on IÜNE 1098, 1a and a rewritten page on IÜNE 1093, 31b-32a.

Patches and additions should have complicated the reading as much as that the pages of volumes were reorganized and renumbered by the readers. For example, the reader who reorganized a manuscript announces, “after reading this page, the last page should be read because the folios were reorganized.”⁷⁷⁸ These notes raise the question that whether were these manuscripts bound when they were produced or whether the bindings were a later intervention into the book’s materiality which would be possible to answer after systematic research on the bindings particular to that corpus.

The eclectic appearance of some manuscripts raises the issue that these manuscripts may have been cumulatively written while being influenced by the interferences of any member in the manuscript community, as could be exemplified by the manuscripts IÜNE 1093, of which one of the pages is given above (figure 40). This 137-page manuscript starts with a beautiful, clear script as the phrases were separated with red dots. After the 31st folio and spanning five pages, a

⁷⁷⁸ “Bu sāhifeyi kıra’at ittikten sonra nihāyetindeki sāhife kıraat olunacaktır çünkim kağıdları tebdil olmuştur.” FMK 102, 80b.

more amateurish script starts that gives the impression that the handwriting was of one of the readers of the book. He meticulously uses catchwords as opposed to the pseudo-original scribe. From the 35th to the 40th folio, the handwriting of the original scribe endures and is interrupted for two pages by a third hand for the preceding two pages. For the next four pages, the original handwriting continues, but we cannot discern whether they are in order since the catchwords are cut and the pages are not properly numbered. Then, the amateur scribe writes two more pages by inserting his own paper (distinctive in their color and age) and he uses the backside of that folio for writing some notes with an attention word by saying, “look at the other side.”⁷⁷⁹ Then, the original script continues until the last several pages, in which again the amateur scribe took his place and wrote an end for the book.

The eclectic and highly complicated appearance of the manuscripts was not created just in the size of pages but there are attempts of scribes and readers to make corrections and additions which is a more common ‘editing’ action in tradition (see Figures 41 and 42).⁷⁸⁰ These additions and corrections would also be evaluated as another type of note on the manuscripts of our corpus:

⁷⁷⁹ “Öte tarafa nazār oluna.” İÜNE 1093, 45a [according to the pagination on the left corners of pages].

⁷⁸⁰ For the marginal texts in the Ottoman textual world, see: İsmail Kara, *İlim Bilmez Tarih Hatırlamaz: Şerh ve Haşiyeye Meselesine Dair Birkaç Not* (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2013).



Figure 41 An addition to the story probably by the scribe himself. IÜNE 1098, 63a.



Figure 42 Additions to the story distinctive from the scribe's handwriting. MK 8504/2, 32b-33a.

Teasing and Disputing

The notes in communication to other members of the manuscript community did not just aim to ease the reading process of other readers or improve the stories and physical appearance of manuscripts. On the contrary, the main reason for readers leaving interactive notes seems to have been the feelings of frustration towards others' notes and the direct disputes which erupted amongst the readers. Such notes include insults, teases, quarrels, disputes, and fractions between different parties of readers, and they often entail a vivid exchange of ideas and words between readers. Around the issues of missing and degenerating of the manuscripts, the previous section investigated how readers inveighed over others. In these notes, communication has usually remained one-sided and without responses or extensive commentary. This section, on the other hand, discusses the manners and issues of the reciprocal conflicts between readers that have contributed to the sense of belonging to the same manuscript community.

The discomfort towards the degeneration of readers' notes and pages of the manuscripts also appears as a forwarding issue in the communicative notes. One of such examples illuminates different perceptions on note-writing of the readers as being affirmative and non-affirmative. In this flow of notes, firstly, the aforementioned note of a scribe occurs on the 35th volume of Ebū Müzlim, but this time with its last sentence defamed. It reads, "When this book and other books were rented and the servants read them and whoever tears and damages this book and other books and write poppycock on their margins to practice their spelling and prose,"⁷⁸¹ but it lacks the sentence, "I wish, they will be cursed by the God and a hundred and twenty-four Prophets, amen"⁷⁸² because this was crossed out (see: Figure 43). This crossing-out was probably caused

⁷⁸¹ "Bu kitabın vesāire kitabların sâhibi kirāya virüb halāyık okuyub imlā ve inşā öğrensün deyü her kim bu kitabı vesāire kitabları yırtar ise ve bozar ise ve alub da inkār ider ise ve kenârlarına olur olmaz şeyler yazub kitabları bir akçelik ider ise [...] MK 8504/30, 1a.

⁷⁸² "[...] Allāhu tealānın, yüz yigirmi dört peygamberlerin laneti ol ademin üzerine olsun, āmin." MK 8504/19, 79b.

by the severeness in its cursing that wishes the damagers and note-writers to be cursed by God and Prophets.

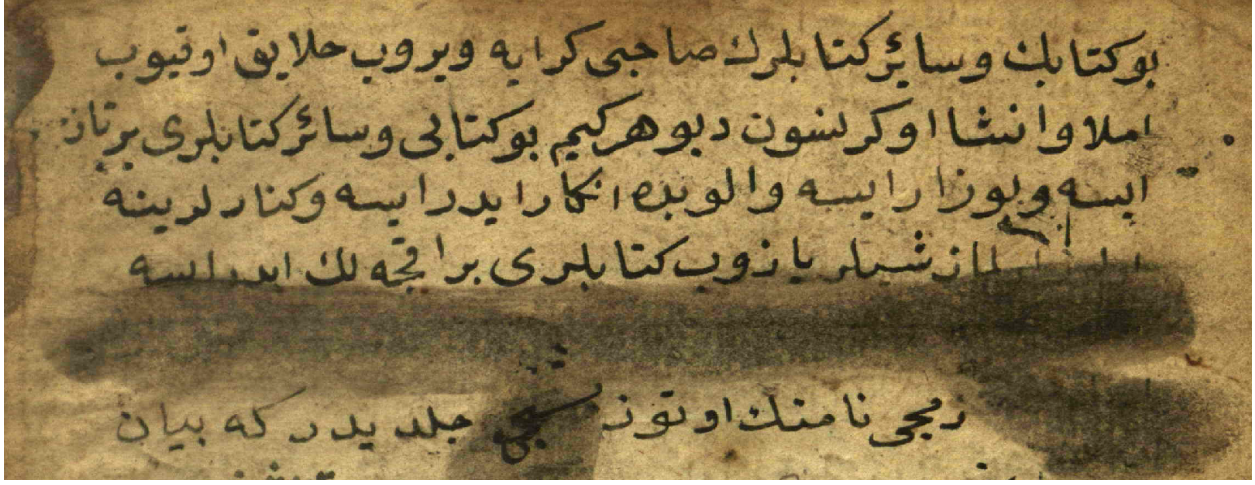


Figure 43 The curse of the scribe he utters for the tearers and damagers of pages and damages is defamed by someone. MK 8504/30, 1a.

Then, a reader could be offended by this curse – probably he was the eraser – and he replies the scribe’s note by another curse, to be incurred the wrath of an antagonist, “They damned the people who wrote on the margins of this book, whoever damned I wish will incur the wrath of Abdülcabbār.”⁷⁸³ To understand the severeness of that malediction, one should know that Abdülcabbār was one of the antagonists who kills Ebū Müslim by hiding behind bushes. The reason for such an extent of the offense may have been personal; in other words, he could be a note-writer who commonly leaves his marks on the pages. Afterward, a third person gets involved in the debate and corrects the so-called misunderstanding by implying that writing marginal notes does not degenerate the book, such as in the example, “Oh, you blind one! They damned on the people who damage [the book], not on the people who write on the margins.”⁷⁸⁴ Although the scribe clearly cursed on the people who “write poppycock on the margins to practice spelling and prose,” this reader objected that he did not mean it. One can interpret his reaction as self-defense regarding he was also one of the note-writers. In any case, although the scribe explicitly uttered his damnation on the authors of marginal notes, two readers interpreted

⁷⁸³ “Bu kitabın kenarlarına yazı yazana la‘net itmişler, her kim la‘net itdi ise Abdülcabbār’ın hışmına uğrasun.” Ibid, 1a.

⁷⁸⁴ “Behey kör! Kenarlarına yazana değil bozana la‘net itmişler.” Ibid, 1a.

his note differently: the first reader’s offensive reply to the scribe as opposed to the latter’s willful misinterpretation. The juxtaposition of two types of attitudes designates that while some readers (and scribes) judged note-writing as a malignant action other did not.

On the erasure, the reaction of a note-writer towards the person who defamed a sentence from the text is remarkable (see: Figure 44). The note-writer furiously reacts as, “I fuck his mother, whoever ruined here,”⁷⁸⁵ then the manuscript returned to the reader who was offended by the insult and he says, “Hey, you the one from the bloodline of Yezīd, the dog son of a dog, the pig son of Bahtek, what did I do if I blackened here? Curse on you and to your bloodline, you the dog.”⁷⁸⁶ This example is significant not just for the vivid dialog between two members of the community, and as a piece of evidence for that the manuscripts could be held by the same person but also for that the offended did not erase the offender’s note but instead tolerates his curse and constructs a communication with him.

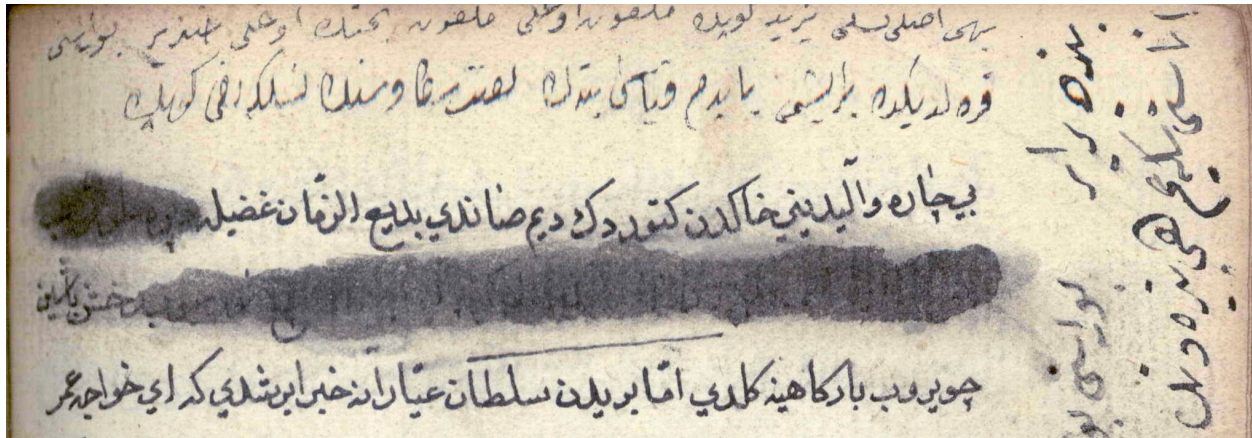


Figure 44 A quarrel between two note-writers occurred because of the defamation of the text. MK 3366, 69b.

Teasing among note-writers displays continuous and in-person acquaintances between the members of that community. For instance, the use of the soft cussword “fool (*ahmak*)” is remarkable while teasing other readers or listeners for not understanding the story such as in this example, “While the Doorkeeper Mustafa Ağa read the story, the Barber Osmān Beşe was

⁷⁸⁵ “Burasını bozanın anasını sikeyim.” MK 3366, 59b.

⁷⁸⁶ “Behey aslı nesli Yezīd, köpek oğlu köpek, me‘lūn oğlu me‘lūn, Bahtek oğlu hınzır, burasını karaladık da bir iş mi yaptım kıyās itdin la‘net sana ve senin nesline dahī köpek!” Ibid, 59b.

looking around foolishly for not understanding anything.”⁷⁸⁷ Such notes would not certainly aim to leave a mark for future generations but they intended the contemporaries. For Mustağa Ağa, it should be most likely that Osmān Beşe or the people who knew Osmān Beşe will see his note, otherwise, his message would mean nothing in the deprivation of a contemporary and familiar receiver.

Another addressee for the use of the word ‘fool’ was the slow reciters of public reading sessions. The duration and speed of reciting as discussed in Chapter 6 was a prominent topic among the readers as observed especially in the late-dated notes of readers, namely the 19th century. As convenient to ‘the spirit of the time (or *Zeitgeist*),’ the readers seem obsessed with the time of reading and started to record their experiences and compete with each other on their speed by the 19th century. The authors of such notes were very proud of their speed of reading and they blamed the ones who could not read or perform the story as much as he did. For example, one of them wrote on two different pages that he read (performed) the story in 3 hours but the others read in 5 hours and it is because of their foolishness.”⁷⁸⁸ A quarrel between readers on the speed of reading is fascinating by including all the acts of challenging, teasing, and insulting. A reader tells that Osmān Efendi read the book in three hours and he asserts that one can read this book in not shorter than three hours. He says, “if someone reads it in two hours, then he would congratulate the reader by putting a *çelenk* (arrangement of flowers) on his hands.”⁷⁸⁹ Another reader accepts this challenge and writes “I finally dared to read this book in 2 hours and friends enjoyed it if you ask me [...] it was possible while my eyes getting more and more familiar [with the text].”⁷⁹⁰ A third reader does not believe that someone could read this book in 2 hours and compares the reader’s mouth to a train which is one of the modern signs of speed. He says, “this son of devil and son of bitch’s mouth should be a train, how is it possible?”⁷⁹¹ Then a fourth

⁷⁸⁷ “Kapıcı Mustafa Ağa kıra’at idüb, lākin Berber Osmān Beşe bir şey anlamayub ahmah ahmak bakıyor.” MK 8504/2, 60a.

⁷⁸⁸ İÜNE 1089, 60b.

⁷⁸⁹ MK 8688/01, 109b. The notes of these flow has been transliterated in Chapter 6.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid, 109b.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid, 109b.

party is involved and mocks the reader who read the book in two hours and says if it is just a matter of telling, then he read the book in a half minute by just scanning through it.⁷⁹²

A quarrel over the performer named Yağlıkçı Selīm has already been mentioned in the context of the appreciated performers within the manuscript community. It is worth mentioning again in terms of the involvement of different parties in a quarrel conducted over the pages. The first reader says, “[This was] read by Yağlıkçı Selīm Ağa, in Kabataş” which seems quite ordinary. But, another reader reveals his frustration towards Yağlıkçı Selīm after this note, such as, “It is no surprise that Yağlıkçı Selīm Ağa read this book... This son of a bitch has read all the books that exist.” Then involved a third party to the discussion and says, “What is it to you, why are you mouthing off, Selīm Ağa is much better than you (...) if you are a man, then you too read [as much as he does].⁷⁹³

Beyond the personal relationships alongside the aspects and phases of reading, such reciprocal notes between note-writers can illuminate the historical and political events and fractions within the urban society in the period. The reaction of a reader towards the aforementioned Abdi Efendi from the 56th regiment of infantry troops (*kapıkulu piyādeleri*), possibly, Janissary corps display such an illuminative character. As discussed in Chapter 4 on social profiles within the community, the Janissaries comprised a significant number of the readers of popular storybooks. They were drawing their insignias belonging to their regiments on the manuscripts of storybooks as they were drawing on their muscles, coffeehouse windows, or tombstones.⁷⁹⁴ Abdi Efendi was one among such readers who left his marks on the 45th volume of *Firūzşāh*: his regiment number

⁷⁹² Ibid, 109b.

⁷⁹³ MK1285/1, 8b.

⁷⁹⁴ “In this period, the insignias of companies became so commonplace that the boatman drew the sign of his Janissary regiment on his boat, the porter on his packsaddle, the woodsman on his axe, and the tradesman on his shop.” Reşat Ekrem Koçu, *Yeniçeriler* (İstanbul: Nurgök Matbaası, 1964), 66. My translation. Koçu talks about the 56th regiment in particular by their habit to tattoo their insignias on their arms, biceps and calves. See: Reşad Ekrem Koçu, *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Neşriyat Kollektif Şirketi, 1965), 4521. My translation.

as 56 with the letter kef (ك) and the insignia of the 56th regiment. This insignia was in the shape of a galley:



Figure 45 The insignia drawn by a certain Abdi Efendi, member of the 56th regiment. MK 1285/1, 0b.

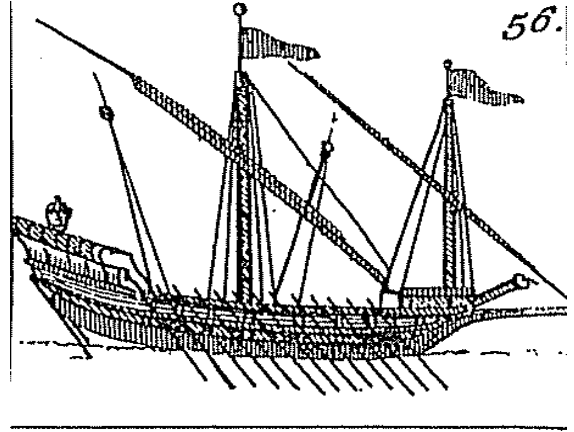


Figure 46 The insignia of the 56th regiment in Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, *Stato Militare dell'Imperio Ottomanno*, 1732.

Another reader wrote some insults around these insignias and couplets written by Abdi Efendi such as, “I shit on the insignia of that pimp” or, “done by that pimp.”⁷⁹⁵ At the end of the book, this foul-mouthed reader wrote a long and mysterious note that reads, “This Abdi Efendi, I think was previously Hasan Süleyman and he had his wife screwed by the fifty-sixths on the date of twenty-three, he became a pimp and murderer, [you the reader] should not suppose that this is [mere] slander.”⁷⁹⁶ On the date of 1223 (1808/9 CE), the 56th regiment attracted the anger of other regiments because of the Çardakçı Incident.⁷⁹⁷ The 56th regiment was charged with controlling the Istanbul market of fresh and dried fruits, groceries, fuel, and timber, and other building materials while Çardakçı was a port near the Golden Horn where they were making imports and exports. They were distinct from other regiments by this tradesmen character and they were kept away from the administrative and military affairs of the Janissary Corps and deemed to have lost the spirit of soldiery. In this picture, the foul-mouth note-writer could have

⁷⁹⁵ “Sıçayım nişanına püzevingin” MK 1285/1, 0b; “Püzevingin yapıdı” Ibid, 0b.

⁷⁹⁶ “Bu Abdi Efendi evvelî zannım Hasan Süleymânmiş. Yigirmi üç târihinde avretini elli altılara sikdürmüşdür. Kendüsü püzeving, kâtilin olmuşdur. Efendim ya’ni iftirâ sanman.” Ibid, 45a.

⁷⁹⁷ Georg Oğlukyan, *Ruzname: 1806 - 1810 İsyanları: III. Selim, IV. Mustafa, II. Mahmud ve Alemdar Mustafa Paşa* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1972).

been a member of another regiment, and he swore on the drawings and writings of Abdi Efendi by his anger towards the 56th regiment caused by the Çardakçı Incident.

In conclusion, the manuscript culture formed around Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories provided spaces of communication where social actors could participate whose voices were hardly heard anywhere else. The notes discussed in this chapter show that the material manuscripts also functioned as sites of communication, either in direct response to another note, or as in the form of sharing personal ideas, emotions, and values to all. These notes provide significant insights into the language, content, and manners of communication between the members who call each other friends (*ahbāb, yārān*) and brothers (*birāderler*). From the scale of esteemed address - ‘sir (*efendim*)’ –to derogatory comments– ‘son of a bitch (*pūzeveg*)’ -we see that members of this community could display different attitudes towards each other. Additionally, they had different reactions to and difficulties with the content and structure of the story, the textual practices of scribes and note-writers, and with the configurations of private and collective reading. However, the collectivity in reading, writing, and reacting is still marked by the sense of brotherhood and belonging to that particular manuscript community.

CONCLUSION

ENCAPSULATING THE COMMUNITY

The journey of this study started with the journey of a manuscript, MK 8504/5 or the 6th of Ebū Müslim story, which was produced in the second half of the 18th century and circulated among readers approximately for one-and-a-half centuries. This manuscript crisscrossed dozens of districts of Istanbul while being read—and performed—by people of diverse social profiles including muhtārs, engravers (*hakkāk*), glassmakers (*camcı*), herbalists (*attār*), dervishes (*derviş*), and many coffeehouse owners/operators. This manuscript is not exceptional; rather, it is typical of the corpus of this study, approximately two hundred manuscripts that belonged to Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories and which were scrutinized in terms of their para-textual elements, including manuscripts notes, doodles, and pictures. Based on these elements, this study argued the existence of a manuscripts community that was composed around their sui generis social and moral codes and common imagination of a heroic past alongside their own textual perception and consumption, physical reading environment, communication, and sociability within the community of whose members were committed to a sort of male and Muslim friendship/brotherhood.

The idea of a community (urban and specifically Istanbulite) formed around manuscripts was developed from the concept of “scribal communities” that was firstly coined by Harold Love in 1993. The term implies the social bonds and personal allegiances that are constructed through the exchange of manuscripts. Despite the cultural and social differences distinct from the Early Modern English society and their reading (and publication) habits that Love talked about, this study argues that the social bonds constructed through heroic stories in the late manuscript age were the main motivation behind the appreciation of these stories. The manuscript community under study here was not only constructed by the personal allegiances but also on the physical pages of the manuscripts as an “ephemeral togetherness” or by a sense of belonging to the anonymous male-Muslim community in addressing them as friends (*yārān*, *ahbāb*, *ehibbān*) and brothers (*birāderler*). Perhaps it was that sense of belonging not through wealth, profession, or social position, but through a common cultural practice that led to the persistence—or resistance—of reading these stories during a period when transformations in society, education, and

administration were occurring at dizzying speeds. Therefore, an investigation of these community members reveals how a cultural practice (with elements such as literary taste, reading habits, and sociability) can persist despite the ‘structural’ transformations that may occur in textual production (print), education, migration, and changes in local and official administration.

The denomination of the intended period as ‘the late manuscript age’ that covers the second half of the 18th century, 19th century, and early 20th century stemmed from the need to speak out of the textual culture itself and to refrain from the periodization of which the reference point is modernization as in the division of ‘early modern’ or ‘pre-modern’ and ‘modern’ period. This denomination was especially necessary to contextualize the wide circulation of stories in manuscript form in the 19th century even though the production of manuscripts had decelerated. Especially in the period after the 1830s, printing as new technology was adopted and has become the dominant technology of publishing. However, it is usually neglected that the production and consumption of manuscripts have persisted even in the 2nd half of the 19th century as were best exemplified through the corpus of this study.

The versions of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories analyzed in this study were produced in the second half of the 18th century and the 19th century according to scant numbers of colophons. As opposed to the scantiness of colophons, the abundant numbers of manuscript notes that were called collective reading notes are usually dated. According to these dates, the manuscripts have circulated in Istanbul in the 18th (200 notes), 19th (1410 notes), and 20th centuries (90 notes). Within this picture, this study cautiously observes the gradual disappearance of textual production of these genres, but the persistence even the rise of A cultural practice, namely the performance of heroic stories in front of an audience towards the 19th century.

This study has positioned within the scholarship on the urban, social and textual transformations of Istanbul after the 17th century through the lenses of the production and perception of heroic stories in the late Ottoman manuscript age. The emergence and development of that particular manuscript community of heroic stories were intertwined with the new types of visibilities in the urban landscape and new uses of the social space that was in correspondence with the diversification of urban literacy. The janissary-turned-artisans, Sufi dervishes, madrasa and school pupils, middle-rank bureaucrats, migrants from Anatolia who increased their visibilities in the social, economic, and even political physiognomy of the city were the components of that

community. Other dynamics of the period, such as the expansion of *mejlīs* culture from elite circles to the whole city especially through the coffeehouses; the vernacularization in textual production; and changing dynamics of authorship and ownership of books as discussed in the Introduction, contributed to the formation of the manuscript community under study.

This study has made some claims and remarks concerning its central argument on the existence of a manuscript community around heroic stories in the late Ottoman manuscript age. These claims and remarks can be encapsulated under the following points:

- 1) The manuscripts of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories analyzed in this study have been characterized by mobility and anonymity, as reflected in their paratexts.
- 2) This particular manuscript community of heroic stories was bound together by aspects of Muslim-male friendship/brotherhood, which shared common social and moral values alongside the collective memory over a Turco-Persian-Arabic heroic past.
- 3) The social profiles within the manuscript community were highly diverse and inclusive to the contemporary Muslim and male urban community despite the scantiness of female and non-Muslim readers.
- 4) The main way of interacting with these texts and manuscripts was the performance of the texts in front of an audience in a certain reading venue.
- 5) The collectivity in reading/listening of the manuscripts through performance was also reflected on the reading topography of this manuscript community in analyzing the intense districts and venues of reading.
- 6) The material of these manuscripts functioned as a space for the members of this community to gather, share and communicate.

My first remark was on the mobility and anonymity of the manuscripts of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories. The most explicit evidence for the mobility of manuscripts is their paratexts themselves. Worn bindings, scattered pages, scribbled lines, and missing or trimmed pages due to overuse and wide circulation compose the most common physical features of these manuscripts.

More than any other paratextual element, a particular type of manuscript note that approximately composes half of the total manuscript notes – dubbed as ‘collective reading notes’ in this study – are the best indication for the mobility of these manuscripts as exemplified in the following:

In Surūrī neighbourhood in Kasımpaşa, Kavak Kāzım Efendi in the house of Quilt-Maker/Seller Hakkı Efendi performed. The friends who listened were delighted, 8 January 1893.

In this study, these notes have been analyzed to discern the social profiles of the community members in Chapter 4, the reading topography of collective reading in Chapter 5, and the aspects of textual performance in Chapter 6. The detailed and dated information on the reading locations and venues of manuscripts enabled to draw the wide radiant of circulation and to exemplify the geographical journey of some manuscripts in a diachronic manner.

As opposed to the precise documentation of the names of performers, hosts of reading venues, and sometimes the audience, the anonymity of the scribes/ authors and owners of the manuscripts was remarkable. As discussed in Chapter 2 on the corpus, there are a few manuscripts of which the colophons (*ferağ* or *ketebe*) carry the names of a scribe which is understandable regarding the strong ties of these stories with the tradition and repertoire of oral storytelling. Although there are some particular names as the owner (*sāhib*), it is claimed that these were either the scribes of the manuscripts or the book dealers who rented out the manuscripts. Therefore, these ownership registers (*temellük*) indicated temporal ownership over the manuscripts and functioned to say “I was here,” more than “I own that.”

This study claimed that the members of this community were bonded together with Muslim-male friendship and brotherhood. As Tülün Değirmenci evaluated through inspiration from Chartier, the most visible signs for these bonds were the phrases displaying personal acquaintances between the readers and the appeal words such as “friends” (*ahbāb, yārān, ehibbā*) and “brothers” (*birāderler*). On the other hand, as I argued in Chapter 3, the sense of belonging to that community was constituted through more obscure ways such as the unwritten social and moral codes and collective memory of a heroic past. That memory and common social/moral values were put forward as the main reason for the appreciation of traditional heroic stories in the manuscript from when new literary forms were adopted and published with printing technology.

Among other social/moral/cultural bases, I highlighted the role of *fütüvve* for the (re)imagination of the heroic past of a manuscript community in the late Ottoman manuscript age in Chapter 3.

The wide coverage of the *fütüvvet* culture alongside Alid affection in the collective memory of our manuscript community is reflected in the abundant use of the phrase "*lā fetā illā Ali, lā seyfe illā zülfikār* (there is no hero other than Ali, there is no sword other than zülfikār)," or the depictions of Ali's sword *zülfikār*. Other than that, the social and moral norms of that culture were effective in the reactions of the audience besides the keen distinction between the hero with his companions and the villains with his companions that determine 'who is to be praised' and 'who is to be maledicted.' As a part of the imagination of the heroic past, the visual depictions of heroes, their companions, and the sacred places or the scenes from the stories are put on the table differentiating from the other chapters that substantially depended on the written manuscript notes. Common social/moral values and heroic memory were claimed as the main reason for the appreciation of traditional heroic stories in the manuscript by a community of highly diverse social profiles when new literary forms were adopted and published with printing technology.

My third claim is that the manuscript community of heroic stories was characterized by a high degree of social diversity, which resulted from the transformation in authorship and readership after the 17th century. The components of this community – including the scribes, readers, performers, audience, and hosts of reading venues – are traceable through their first-hand notes on the manuscripts. These notes also indicate titles, occupations, names, sex, and religious affiliation. The variety in the social profiles of members is striking in ranging from a high-rank servant in the Imperial Palace to a boatman who migrated from an Anatolian provincial town to search for a livelihood in Istanbul. Other than being limited to the Muslim and male population of the city despite few female and non-Muslim examples, this community embraced people of any socioeconomic background from imperial servants and eunuchs to the infantry troops, from local administrators and men of religion to artisans and craftsmen, or from Sufi derviş to the pupils of the new education system. In analyzing these profiles, I also claimed in this chapter that the social units in the Ottoman society should not be categorized only according to the wealth and occupation of individuals. The fluidity in the uses of titles such as *effendi* and *bey* coming in the first place but also other titles like *beşe*, *çavuş*, and *monlā* that were interpreted with their limited meaning in the scholarship could have a variety of implications even in the 19th century. Also, the respectability or spirituality of a person could transcend the economic boundaries as seen in the titles of *hacı/elhāc*, *seyyīd*, *derviş*, and *hāfiz*.

My fourth claim in this dissertation is that the main way of interacting with these texts was the performance of these texts in front of an audience in a certain reading venue, as documented in the collective reading notes. The performance of texts in front of a group of the audience was one of the common ways of storytelling in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish cultures for the purposes of education and entertainment. The abundant number of the collective reading notes in the corpus of this study prove that the textual performance was still a continuing practice in the late Ottoman manuscript age which contributed to the creation of social bonds, friendship, and sociability by gathering the members of the manuscript community in the actual/physical space.

Based on this claim, Chapter 6 analyzed the collective reading notes in terms of the pre-performance, actual performance, and post-performance phases that started by the borrowing of a manuscript continues by the single or joint performance of the text and ends by receiving the audience reactions and writing a note on their reading experience. The stories that were divided into many volumes were written first to be performed, as is reflected on the manuscripts themselves through the neatness and simplicity of the script, the cheap and amateur layout of the pages, and some facilitators for the performers, such as uses of different colors and marking in the change of events. After borrowing from a 'temporal' owner or a book dealer specialized in such books, one volume or many volumes belong to the same genre or volumes from different genres as a 'best of' reading may have been performed. The performers could be among famous names with their ability in storytelling or anybody within the present audience, such as the sons of coffeehouse operators or the grooms of the house owners. In turn, they may have been paid a small fee or with free coffee by the coffeehouse operator who draws clients to his coffeehouse by organizing storytelling sessions.

The performer(s) performed the stories on a performative basis, as is evident in the varying duration of performances. This is indicated in the collective reading notes on a particular manuscript, such as the extreme example of MK 8504/1, which was performed in five hours by a performer and a half-hour by another. Looking at the competitions over the duration of performances in the notes especially dated the 19th century, some performers were flattered by their high speed in performing the text, while some audience still appreciated loitering over listening. The audience has always been a significant part of these performances not just in terms of determining the duration, but also in terms of their participation in the performances with their

after-performance reactions. Although these reactions could vary, there were some patterns written in the notes such as the aforementioned “they delighted a lot (*azīm safāyāb oldular*)” Also, collective praise over heroes or malediction over the villains were other patterns in the audience reactions that resulted in the formation of a collective soul in the physical environment of reading as discussed in Chapter 2 on heroic imagination. In the creation of the reading atmosphere, the audience played a significant role in their joys and pleasures accompanied by coffee and tobacco.

The fifth claim in this study is that the collectivity in reading/listening of the manuscripts through performance was also reflected in the reading topography of this manuscript community through the intense districts and venues of reading. Among the highly diversified venues of collective reading, the coffeehouses stamped over the reading topography of the manuscript community as they have over to the urban landscape in Istanbul especially in the 19th century by increasing numbers and sprawling to the city. The coffeehouses as reading venues displayed variety in terms of size, location, and the profiles of their owners/operators according to the collective reading notes. And, they were situated in locations that were prominent to the collectivity in social, economic, and religious life such as on the wharves, around the central mosques, or the most crowded residential areas.

The coffeehouses were called ‘the sanctuaries of that manuscript community’ and coffeehouse owners/operators (*kahveci*) composed almost half of the total hosts, as indicated in the collective reading notes which confirm the archival sources. Coffeehouse operators were the third-largest professional group comprising this community after porters and boatmen. Alongside their high numbers, the remarkable variety in the social profiles of the people engaged in the coffeehouse business proves it as a profitable business that required no special knowledge or initial capital. In the collective reading notes, the coffeehouse owner and operators are described alongside other occupations including the guild masters of porters and boatmen, barbers, craftsmen, imāms and müezzins, merchants, and many others.

It is argued in terms of the reading topography that the significance of the collective lifestyles in the intensity of reading is also evident in the reading venues other than the coffeehouses. The bachelor rooms mostly the residences for the Anatolian migrants, industrial complexes (Imperial Arsenal and Cannon Foundry), *hāns*, wharves, schools, offices, Sufi lodges, barracks, and

prisons were also significant for the reading topography. The leading districts in the topography of collective reading such as Üsküdar, Kasımpaşa, and Tobhâne also reflect that collectivity as being significant social, commercial, and religious/spiritual hubs of the city.

In search of the spatial cohesion of this particular manuscript community, this study also considered the urban landmarks and reference points that have been referred to in addressing a reading location. Since these manuscripts were traveling all over the city as exemplified by the circulation zone of two manuscripts in Chapter 5, the note-writers were more diligent in indicating the districts and landmarks notwithstanding some remarkable exceptions such as the neighborhoods of Nişancı Mustafa in Eyüb, Fırüz Ağa in Sultün Ahmed, Arap Cāmi‘i in Galata, or Küçük Piyāle in Kasımpaşa. On the other hand, note-writers benefited from the landmarks that could be recognizable by the denizens of other districts, such as mosques, fountains, major thoroughfares, bathhouses, khans, and others in addressing the reading location. Search for the recognizability of a reading location for the other readers has been interpreted as an attempt to draw not just social but also topographical boundaries for their community although these boundaries have always been opened to fluidity and transformation.

My last claim related to the overall argument on the existence of a manuscript community is that the physical bodies of these manuscripts have functioned as a space for the community of gathering, sharing, and communicating. As I discussed substantially in Chapter 7, the manuscripts themselves through their very physical pages have acted as a medium of communication even between the people who did not have personal acquaintances as a way of reminding social media today. The readers frequently shared verses to express themselves either as poets on their own or by citing from the verses of well-known poets alongside anonymous (*lā-edrī*) poems from a hub of literary works common to the manuscript community. These couplets that seem simple at the first glance have many layers of meaning and reference to various literary traditions ranging from oral and folk literature to lyric poetry in their metaphorical language and content. Apart from the similes such as rose-nightingale (*göl-bülbul*), the ‘platonic’ and ‘melancholic’ love that is reflected as the pain but joy of separation from the beloved constantly appear in verses on manuscripts. Related to the plot of stories, the note-writers reflect on the events immediately on the same page by praising the heroes or companions and cursing the villains, which signaled the reactions of the audience in the collective reading sessions.

Additionally, Turkish folk literature such as quatrains (*māni*) and the proverbs in verse is used for encapsulating the moral of the story or any sort of daily issues whether related or unrelated to the plot.

The readers of Hamza and Ebū Müslim stories in the late manuscript age interacted with each other in more direct ways other than the verses and laconic expressions. The content of this direct addressing and interaction usually included advice and recommendations on the subjects of reading and treatment of the manuscripts. A bulk of notes targeted the easiness of the reading process of others such as cross-referencing among the pages. Such notes direct readers to other folios (*kağid*) such as “look at the eighty-second page from the beginning,” or “my dear look at the ninth page,” or “for God’s sake look at the fifth page.” Besides internal cross-referencing, some recommendatory notes are related to suggestions on further reading such as “if you enjoy the battles, look at the fifth page,” within the story, or on stories in other genres that the others in the community would enjoy in a way that reveals the literary tastes of this community who were in search of the stories telling the wars (*cenkli*) in a sorrowful (*firākli*) manner.

On the other hand, the communication between the readers – and the scribe in that context– through the manuscript notes were not always friendly, suggestive, and peaceful, but the main trigger for getting interaction with others was the feelings of anger and disapproval. Through the reflections of these feelings, one can deduce the literary tastes and expectations of the members of their community. The story of K1ssa-i Kerb Gāzī, for example, stands as the most ‘unliked’ story and the readers accuse the author/scribe of belaboring a complicated and confusing manner of writing such as by saying: “it is an endless, empty talking you have in this volume,” “we have seen a lot of empty talks but not in this level,” or “the writer of this book is an ignorant masqueraded as a scribe.” The physical deformation of the books by cutting the edges, tearing the pages, scribbling lines, and harming the outlook of the manuscript also triggered the anger of other readers and scribes. Despite the warnings of the scribes and the rebukes of other readers, the users continued to interfere with the physical layout of the manuscripts, actions which have sometimes been interpreted as degeneration. Apart from the intentional individual interferences, the vicissitudes of time and the intense circulation of the books have also resulted in the eclectic and patchy layout of the manuscripts. The deformation and degeneration of the manuscripts appear as one of the issues within the vivid dialogs between the users of the books alongside the

reactions and tribulations on the content and structure of the story, on the textual practices of scribes, and note-writers, and the configurations of private and collective reading.

This study is an initial step in our understanding of the manuscript community of heroic stories in the late Ottoman manuscript age, which will hopefully offer a foundation for further research in various fields and subjects. This study firstly aimed to introduce and display the potential source value of manuscript notes for a wide range of interdisciplinary scholarship on the sub-fields of literary, social, cultural, and economic history. This study could be developed in several directions by expanding the corpus to include other manuscripts and genres which share the same potential source value. Firstly, the heroic narratives in the Near and Middle Eastern cultural zone(s) might be traced back to discerning the heroism and Muslim male brotherhood and its impacts on the historical and current discourses on power and authority. Secondly, the persistence of manuscript production and the culture of collective reading in the Ottoman age of print might be enriched by analyzing the production and performance of manuscripts belonging to popular genres. Thirdly, the topography of urban reading might be systematically examined and visualized by expanding the corpus of manuscript notes documenting the locations and venues of reading. Fourthly, this study might be a role model for research into other reading communities in the Ottoman or post-Ottoman period that have developed their own textual and communal practices.

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APPENDIX A
PHOTOGRAPHS FROM NINETEENTH CENTURY ISTANBUL



Constantinople Café Turc

Figure 1 Turkish coffeehouse. Anonymous, ca. 1900. Engin Çizgen, *Photography in the Ottoman Empire*, 34.



Figure 2 Turkish Coffeehouse. Iranian, ca. 1900. Engin Çizgen, *Photography in the Ottoman Empire*, 205.



Intérieur d'un café Turc. N°282.

G. Berggren

Figure 3 Interior of a Turkish Coffeehouse. Guillaume Berggren, ca. 1880. Bahattin Öztuncay, *Dersaadet'in Fotoğrafçuları*, 458.



Figure 4 People sitting in front of a coffeehouse. Catherine Pinquet, *İstanbul Fotoğrafçılar Sultanlar*, 302.



Figure 5 Coffeehouse in Şeyhli Karye (Kartal). Adnan Genç and Orhan M. Çolak, eds, *Photographs of Istanbul*, 606.



Figure 6 A coffeeshouse in the late Ottoman period. http://www.turkishculture.org/picture_shower.php?ImageID=5079. Accessed October 12, 2021.



Figure 7 Coffeehouse. Sébah & Joaililer, 1880-1900. <http://www.eskiistanbul.net/3827/kahvehane-sebah-joaillier-1880-1900-loc-arsivi>.



Figure 8 Coffeehouse. Sébah & Joaililer 1880-1900. <http://www.eskiistanbul.net/3243/kahvehane-sebah-joaillier-fotografi>.



Figure 9 Men drinking coffee, Abdullah Frères, ca. 1865. Bahattin Öztuncay, *Dersaadet'in Fotoğrafçıları*, 461.



Figure 10 A coffee-maker/seller, Pierre de Gigord, ca. 1860. Engin Özendes, *Abdullah Frères*, 38.



Figure 11 Street Barbers. Abdullah Frères, ca. 1870. Engin Çizgen, *Photography in the Ottoman Empire*, 144.



Figure 12 A charioteer carrying load to a barge. Abdullah Frères, 1891-2. Bahattin Öztuncay, *Dersaadet'in Fotoğrafçıları*, 523.



Figure 13 Galata Bridge. Abdullah Frères, undated. Nurhan Atasoy, *Yıldız Sarayı Fotoğraf Albümlerinden*, 125.



Figure 14 Boatmen in Eyüb. Pierre de Gigord. Engin Özendes, *Abdullah Frères*, 172.



Figure 15 Boatmen on Yemiş wharf. Abdullah Frères. Engin Özendeş, *Abdullah Freres*, 35.



Figure 16 Üsküdar seashore. Abdullah Frères, 1891-2. Bahattin Öztuncay, *Dersaadet'in Fotoğrafçıları*, 666.



Figure 17 Porter carrying a barrel. Sebah & Joaillier, 1889. Bahattin Öztuncay, *Dersaadet'in Fotoğrafçıları*, 510.



Figure 18 A boatmen, a porter, and a water-bearer. Osman Hamdi Bey and Marie de Launay, eds., *1873 Yılında Türkiye'de*, 20.



Figure 19 A mevlevi dervish, a bektashi dervish, and a mullah. Osman Hamdi Bey and Marie de Launay, eds., 1873 *Yılında Türkiye'de*, 25.



Figure 20 Two of the ten shops which were part of the buildings of Gazi Hasan Paşa in Kışla Square in Kasımpaşa. Anonymous. *Photographs of Istanbul from the Archives of Sultan Abdülhamid II*, 590.

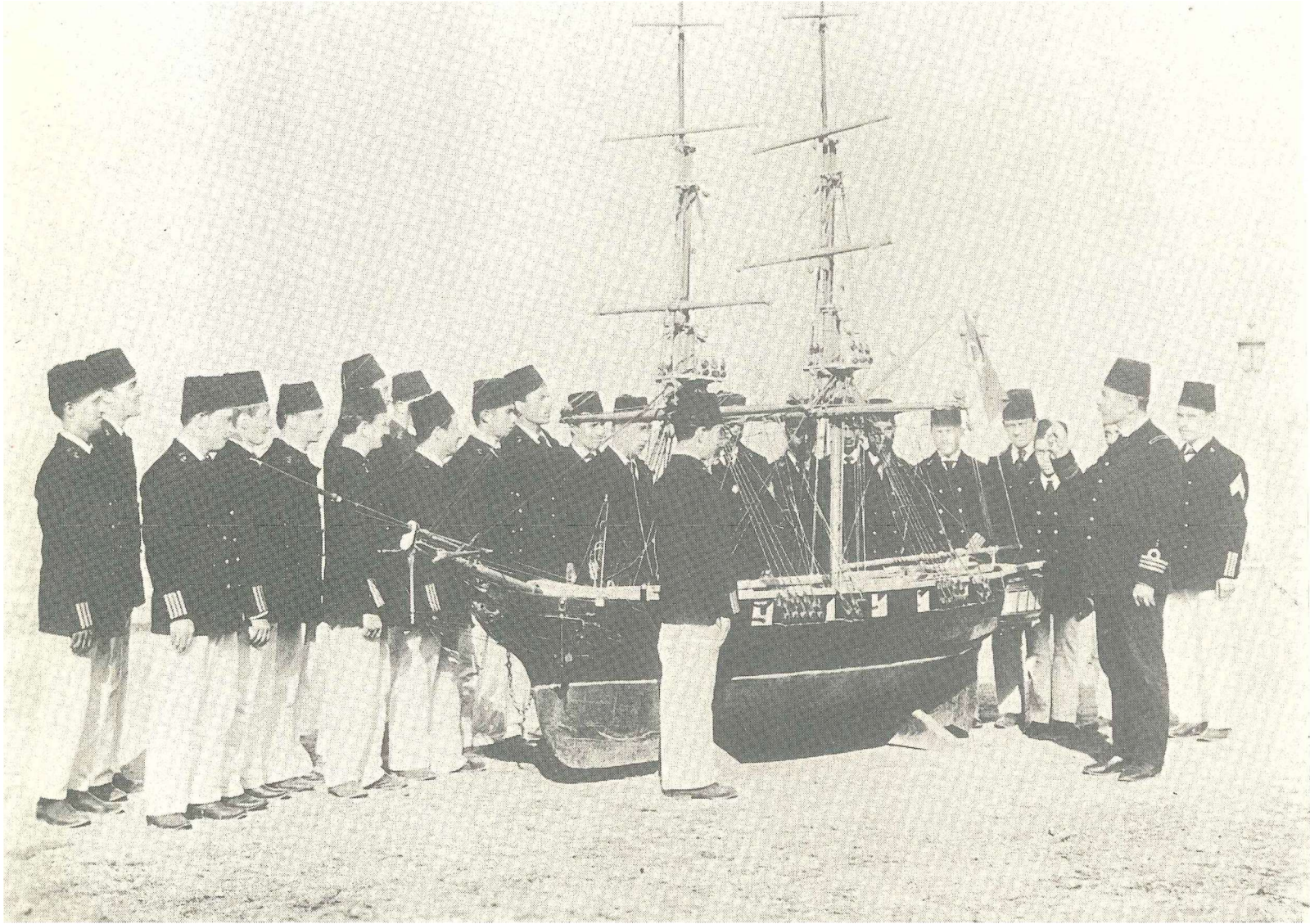


Figure 21 Naval Cadets receiving instruction at the Imperial School of Naval (*Mekteb-i Fünün-u Bahriyye-i Şāhāne*). Bahriyeli Ali Sami, ca. 1900. Engin Çizgen, *Photography in the Ottoman Empire*, 196.

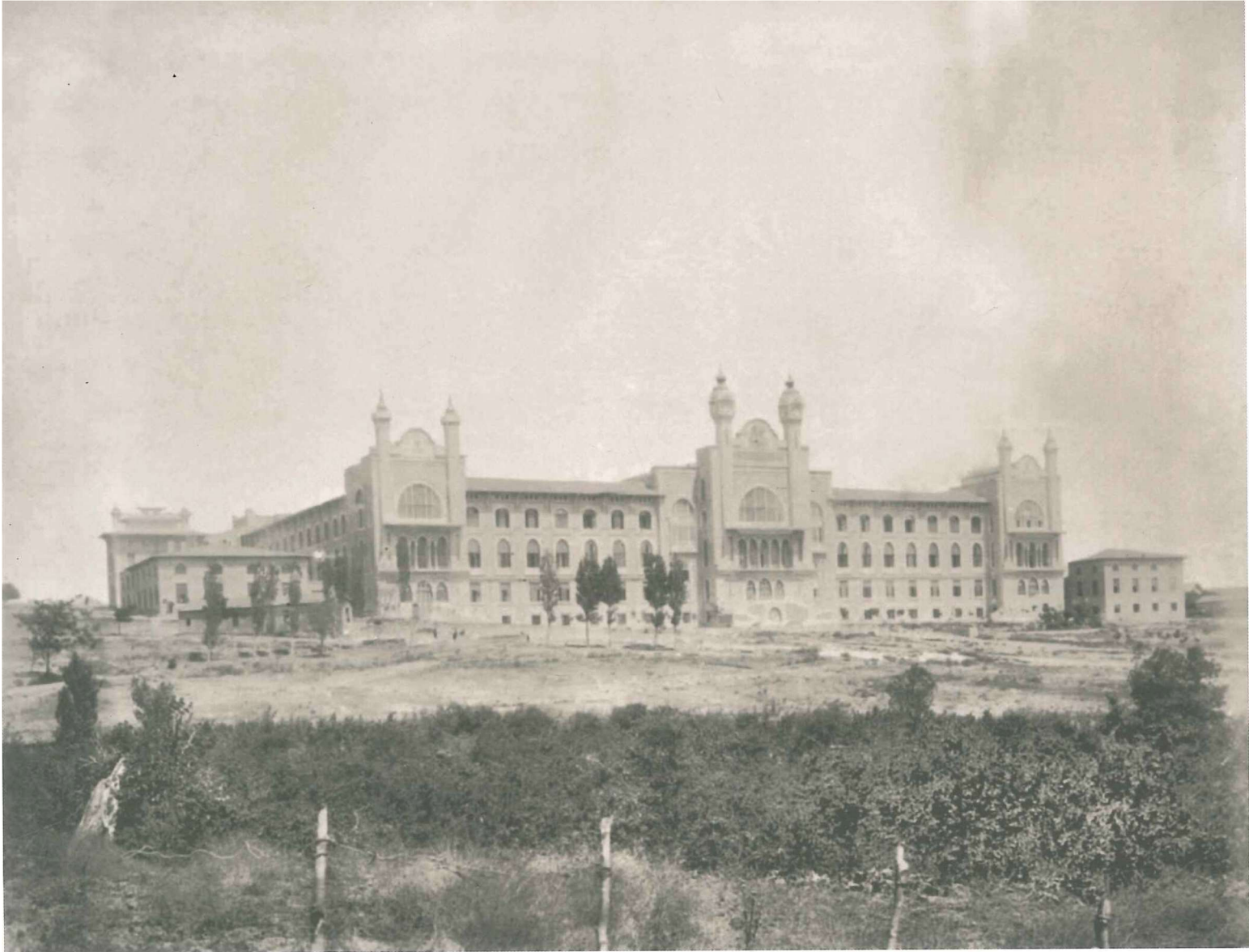


Figure 22 *Mekteb-i Tıbbiye-i Şāhāne* 1904 (Haydarpaşa). Kaymakam Ali Sami. *Photographers of Istanbul*, 466.



Figure 23 Gate of the Ministry of War (*Seraskerlik*) and Beyazit Fire Observation Tower. B. Kargopoulo. *Photographers of Istanbul*, 482.



Figure 24 The Imperial Arsenal (*Tobhāne-i Āmire*). <https://www.eskiistanbul.net/tag/tophane/>.



Figure 25 Unkapanı from Galata. Probably Sèbah & Joaillier, ca.1870. <http://www.eskiistanbul.net/6584/galata-kulesi-nden-unkapani-1870-ler>.

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE PAGES FROM MANUSCRIPTS



Figure 1 A typical black leather cover on the 1st volume of Hamza. İÜNE 1084, cover.



Figure 2 A worn-out cover of the 4th volume of Hamza. MK 1856, cover.



Figure 3 A reader's drawings of a young lady and the ownership statement of Dr. Abdullah Öztemiz, an internal diseases specialist. MK 3366, 0b-1a.

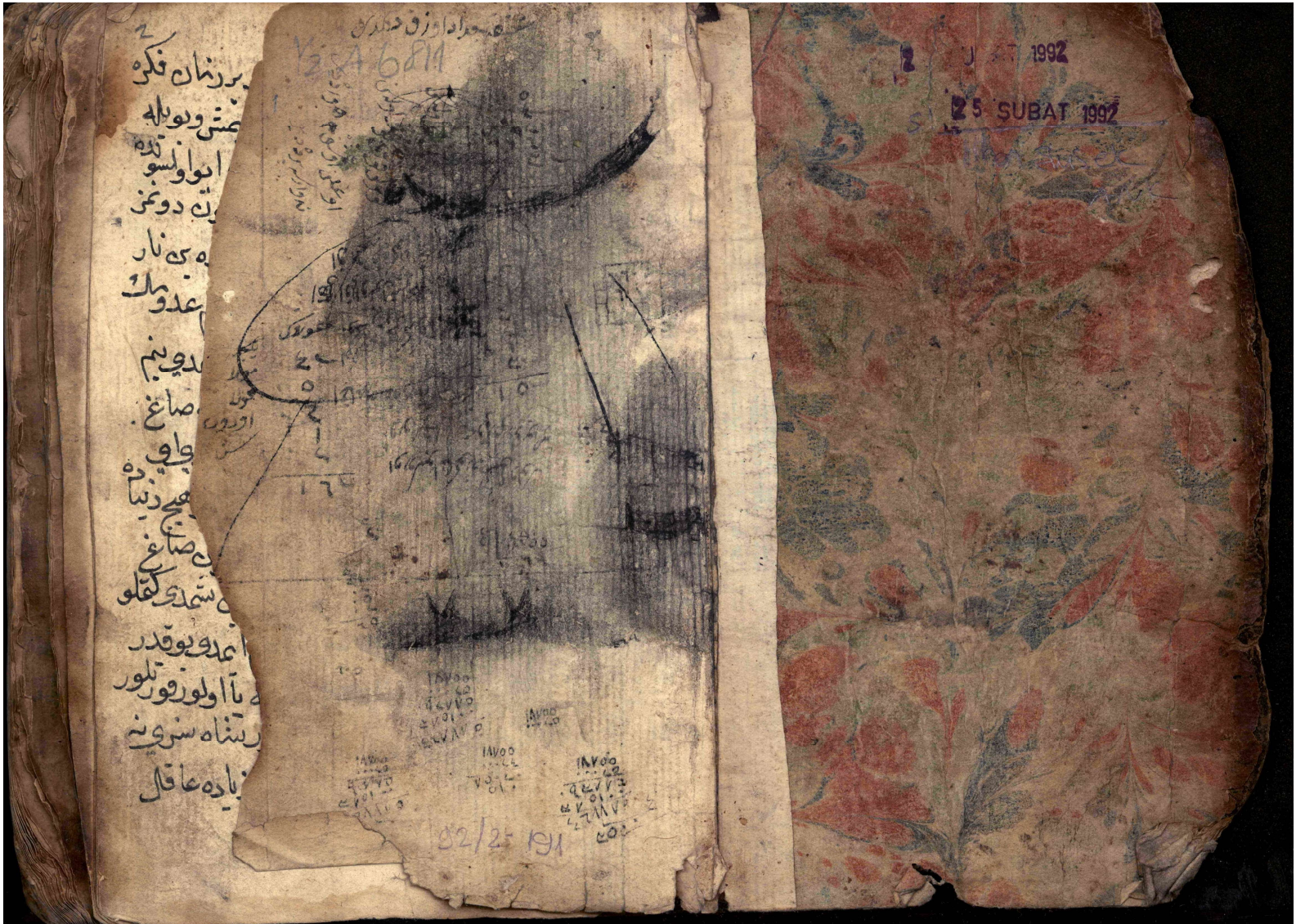


Figure 4 The use of marble paper in the inner cover. MK 6811, 0b-1a.



Figure 5 Taping over the margins. MK 8594/3, 1b-2a.



Figure 6 Typical opening page with no ornamented frontispiece, and a purchase statement of Aykut Ulupinar. MK 8504/4, 1b-2a.

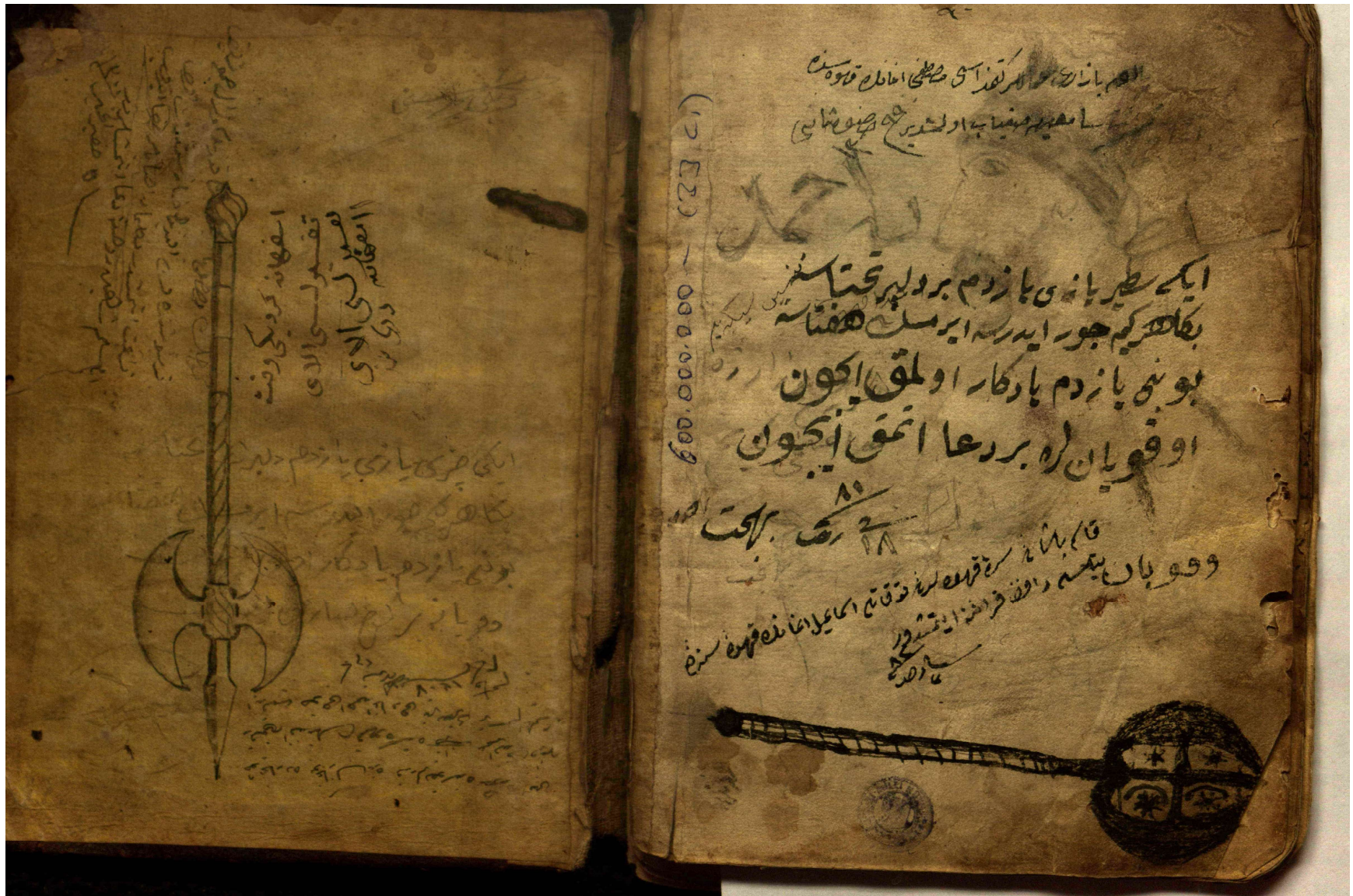


Figure 7 Readers' drawings of hatchets that belong to the protagonist Ebū Müslim. MK 8504/5, 126b-127a.



Figure 8 The last page including the scribal record of the bookbinder Sālih. MK 8504/6, 55b.



Figure 9 Worn-out last pages of an Ebū Müslim volume. MK 8504/15, 122b-123a.



Figure 10 Last pages of a manuscript including the date of writing. MK 8504/23, 40b-41a.



Figure 11 Last pages of a manuscript including the manuscript notes and drawings. MK 8504/23, 41b-42a.



دوست تو نیمی دو تمام اله کبر من ددی زنگبار
 و ایندیله کوزل بیورر سنا نجه ابد مزای
 آدم قاشنی سئل کی اقتدر باشدا یا قالتند
 غلطان اولدی قباردی کنته اردن بینه لر
 دوردی بویز قندن جوک صباغ اولدی کور کوردی
 کوردی زنگبار کوردن کوردن با و کس یوقد
 همان ایخو بر برین ویشلر خایلی هفتدکم اقدام
 الای اشکن ایچنده بر یاد آدم قالمدی بیعی
 یاد آدم بولا مدی خیران اولوب قالدی شرف ایدر

شز آره بلک بوکلند پیر یورد و باخور جنلود سا
 و باخود د یورد ستماق زنگون دبر سین ددی مزای
 زنگی ایدر سا اگر آدم اولای یی بزدن یوقدر آت
 آدم فیل کرکدان قالدی حساب یوق یا خود اولدند
 بر قاجی قلمز میدی ددی شمر آق زنگی ایدر واقعا
 ایو دیدول اولحن اولغلی بهزاد بولن جنباره
 بو بلره حکم ایدر میدی و ادایست اولدور یوب
 بشی بهلوان آت کرکدانه کواد اولوب اولعکرک
 طرف بظرف ایچتی اما دیلوشولقد کوز دیکه ایاقلم
 با احمد قیر قالمدی جمله عکری ایاقلمی التسه
 ال دیلوشولقد آت فیل کرکدان هلاک اولدجه ایاقی
 التسه قالمشکه حدی با یاقی یوق اولدور جار اولد

علا بویای صحیح است و این صحیح اندر قرات الحشر

Figure 12 Handwriting of an amateur scribe and defamation of some lines. MK 8504/27, 31b-32a.

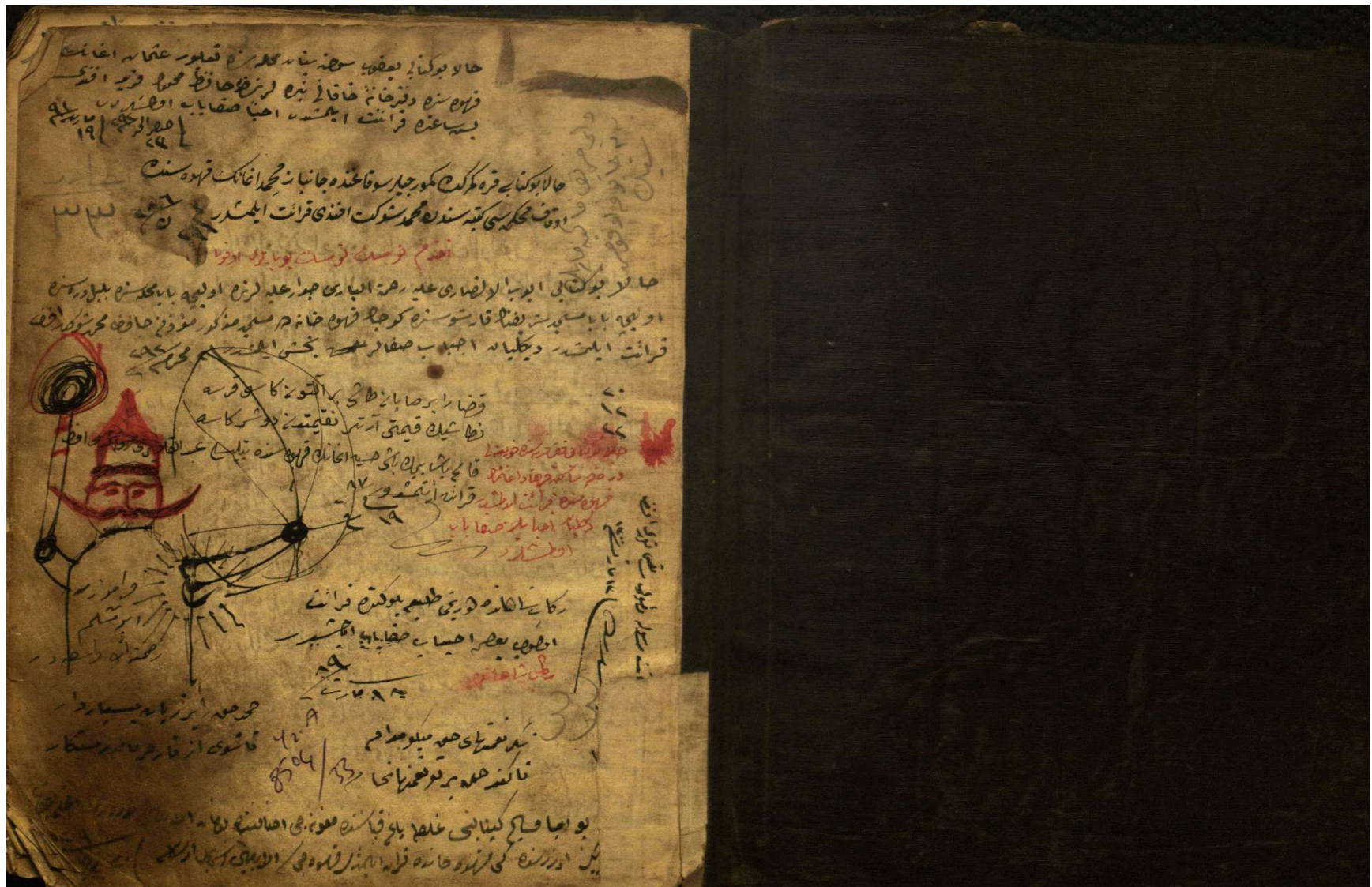


Figure 13 A typical inner cover and first page typical with an abundance of drawings and manuscript notes. MK 8504/28, 1a.



Figure 14 Last page and the colorful inner back cover. MK 8688/1, 128b-129a.

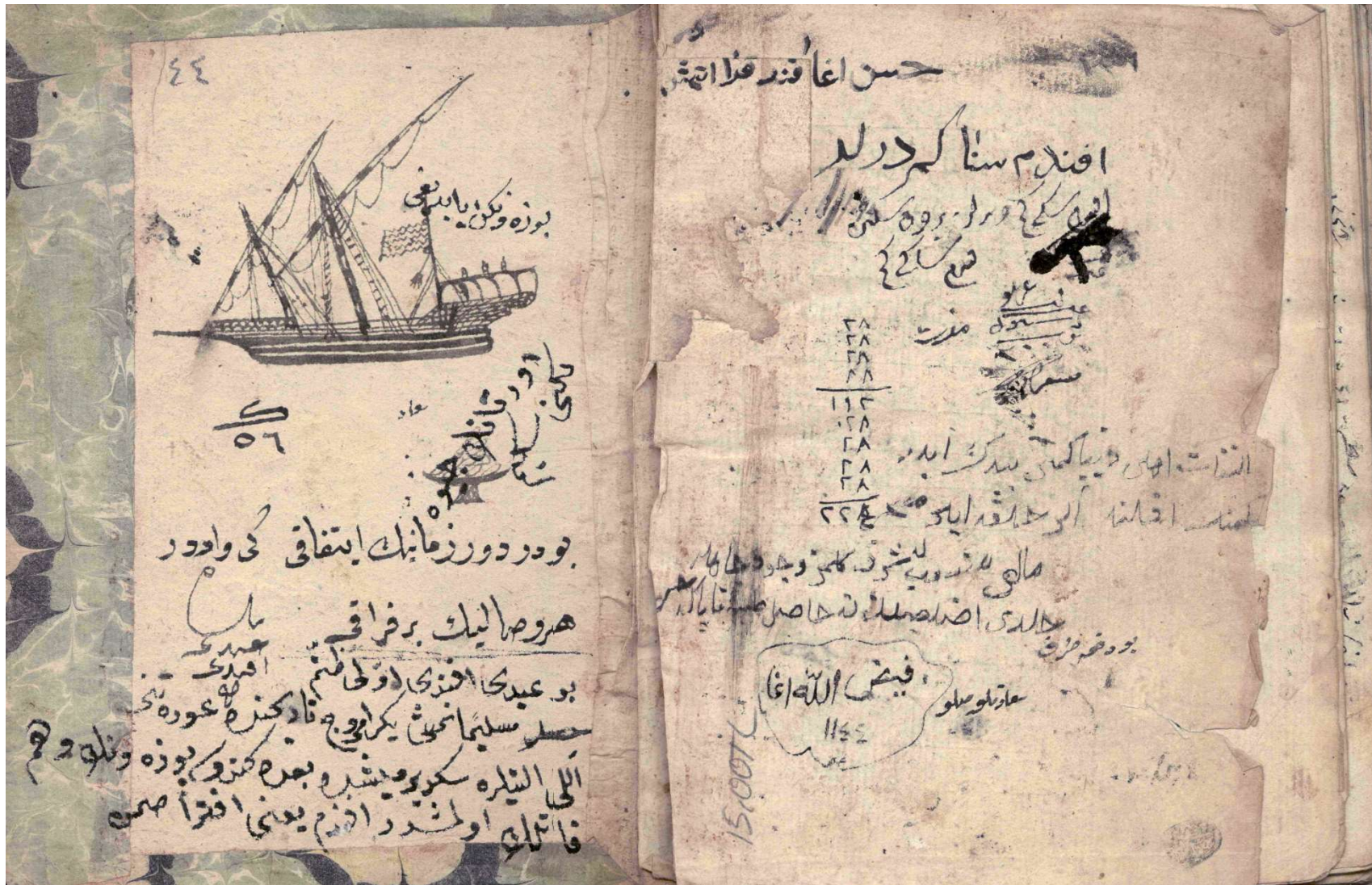


Figure 15 Last page and inner back cover of the 45th volume of Firuzshah. MK 1245-1, 44b-45a.

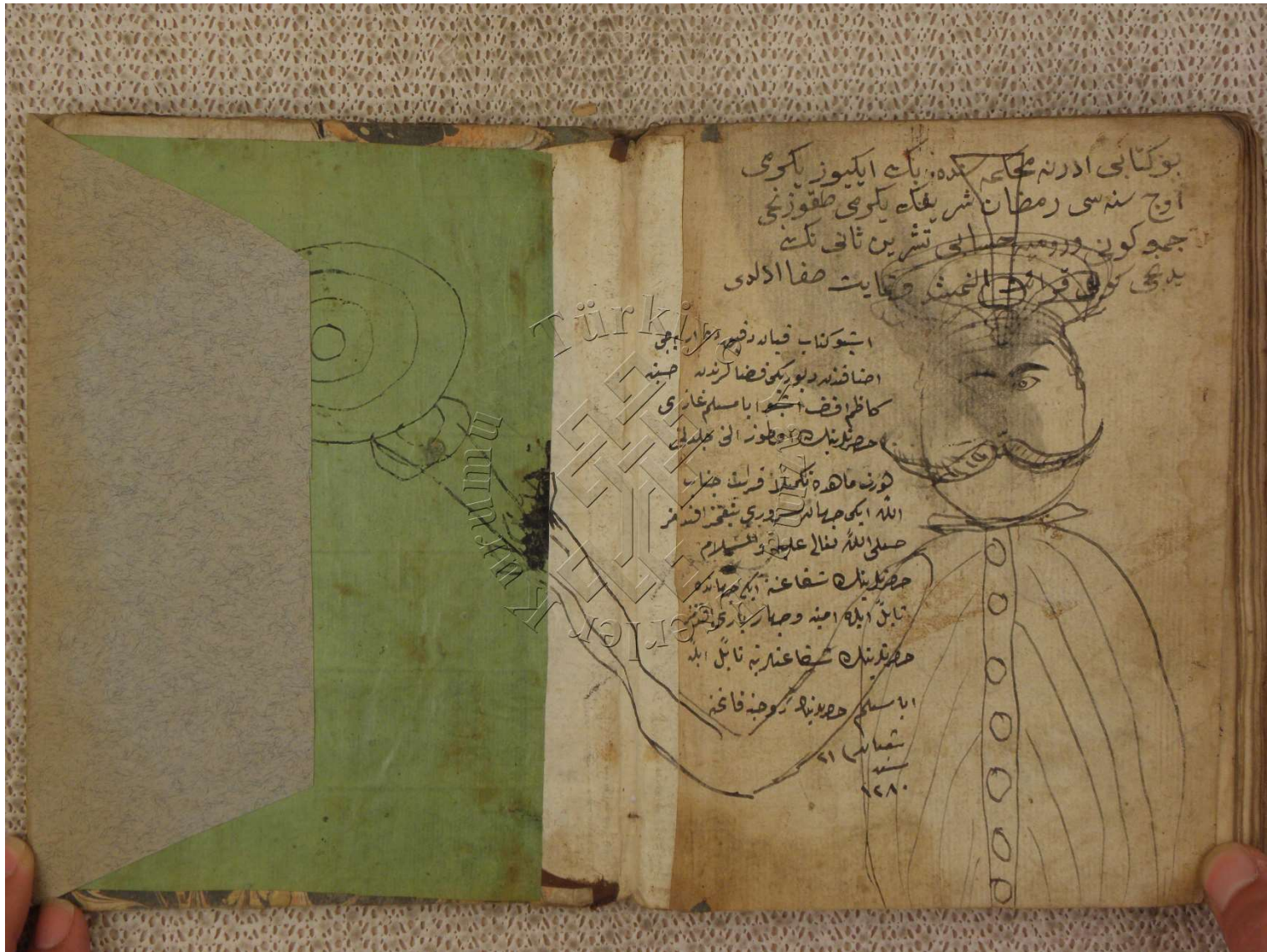
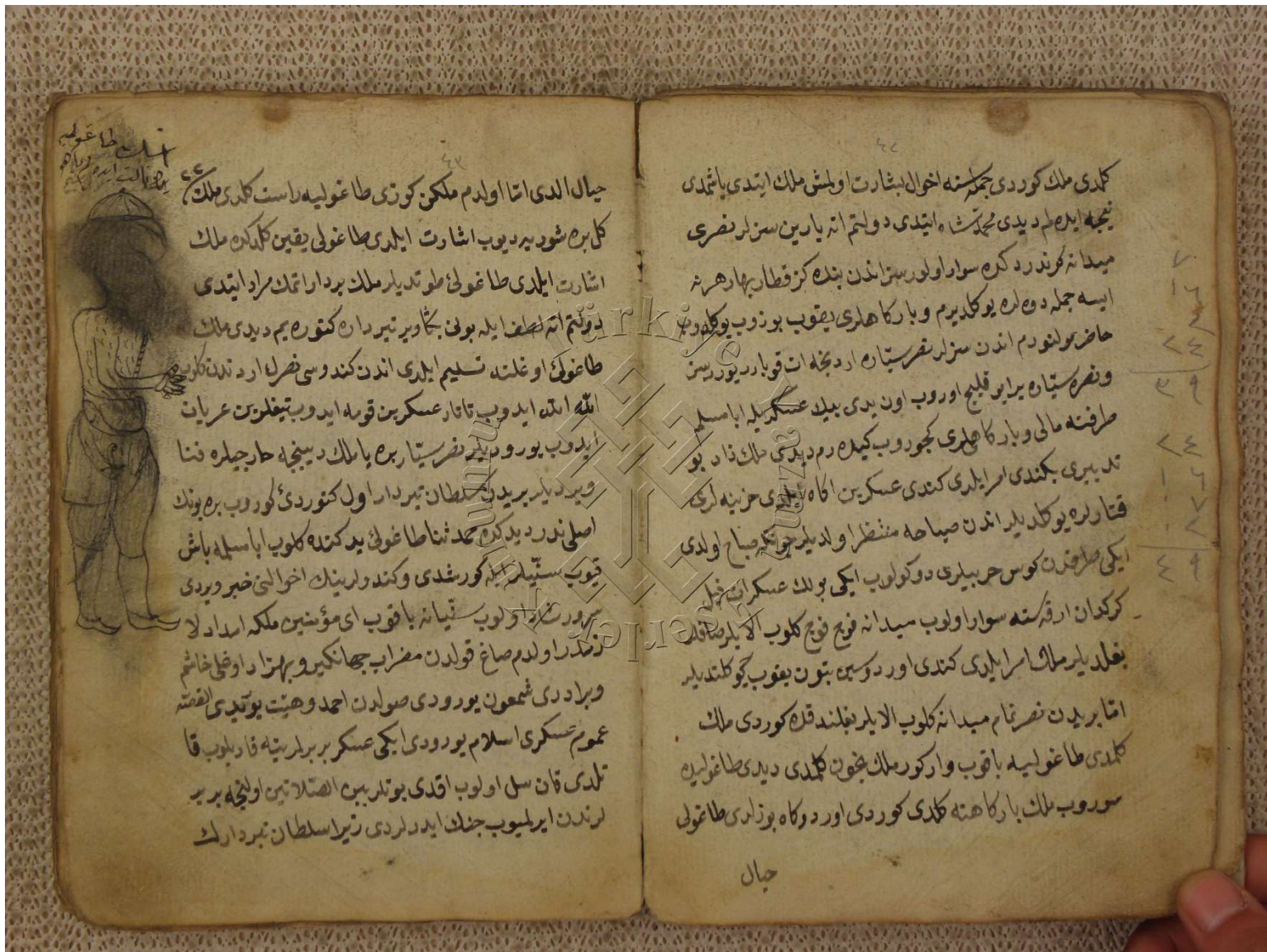


Figure 16 Last page and inner back cover depicting a large-scale drawing of a character. FMK 27, 77b-78a.



کلدی ملک کوردی جملگه انحال بشارت اولمش ملک ایندی یا ایتدی
 بنجه ایله لم دیدی بجه شاهی ایندی دولتتم انه یارین سز لر نصری
 میدانه کوردی کور سوار اولور سز اندن بنده کز قطار بهار هر
 ایسه جمله ده لره یوکله بریم و بار کا هله یی یقوب بوزوب و کوردی
 حاضر بولنورم اندن سز لر نصرتیان ارد بجه ات قوبار بوزوب سز
 و نصرتیان بربو قلیج اوروب اون بدی بیلک عسکر بیلک با اسله
 طرفنه مالی و بار کا هله یی کجور و بیکده رم دبدی ملک ناد بو
 تدبیری بکندی امر ایله یی کندی عسکرین آگاه ایله یی حرنیه لری
 قنار لره یوکله یلر اندن صباحه منظر اولدیلر حرنیه یی صباغ اولدی
 ایکی طرفدن کوس حرنیه یی دو کولوب ایکی بولک عسکران بیل
 کر کدان ارفه سنه سوار اولوب میدانه فوج فوج کلوب ایله یی
 بغلدر یلر ملک امر ایله یی کندی اور دو سیم بنون یقوب کولکندیلر
 انا بریدن نصرتنام میدانه کلوب ایله یی بغلندر کوردی ملک
 کلدی طاغولیه باقوب وار کور ملک بخت کلدی دیدی طاغولیه
 سوروب ملک بار کا هته کلدی کوردی اور دو کا ه بوزوب طاغولی

۷
 ۱۶
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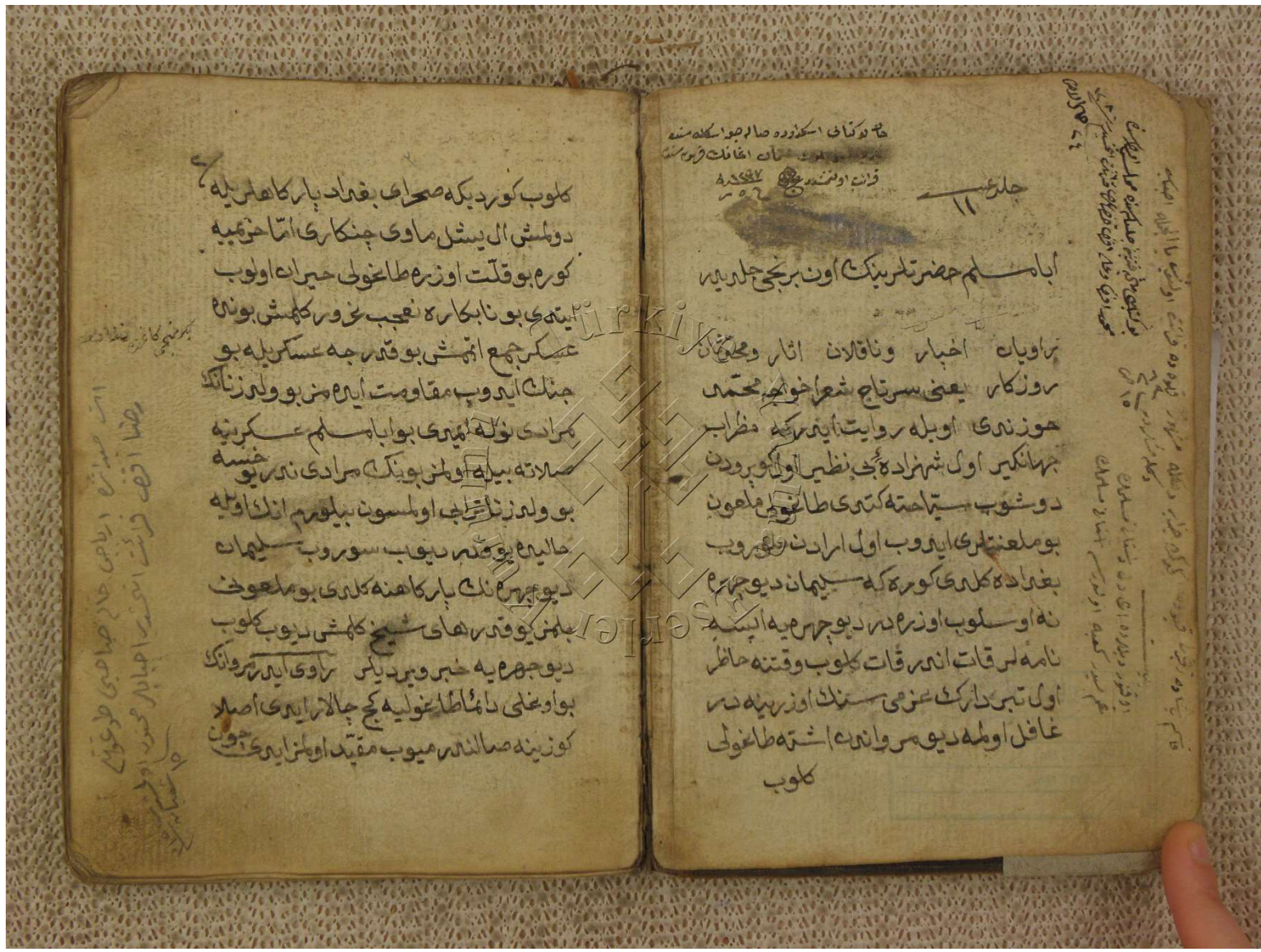
جان

هت طاغولیه
 بهت ایله یی
 بهت ایله یی



حیال الدی انا اولدم ملکن کوزی طاغولیه راست کلدی ملک
 کل برع شود بیدریوب اشارت ایله یی طاغولی یقین کلدن ملک
 اشارت ایله یی طاغولی طو تدیلر ملک بردار اتمک مراد ایندی
 دولتتم انه لطیف ایله بونی بجا ویرنیر دان کنور هم دیدی ملک
 طاغولی او غلته نسیم ایله یی اندن کندوسی ضرر ارد ندن کلوب
 الله الله ایروب قاتار عسکرین قوره ایرو بختلرین عربان
 ایروب یورو و بیلر نصرتیان برع با ملک دینجه طر جیلره فنا
 ویردیلر بیلر سلطان تبردار اول کوردی کوردی برع بونک
 اصلی ندر د بکنده محمد ثنا طاغولی بد کنده کلوب با اسله باش
 قوب سستیلر ایله کور شدی و کند و لرینک اخوانی خیر دیدی
 هرور کور اولوب نیسانه باقوب ای مؤمنین ملکه امداد لا
 زنده را اولدم صاغ قولدن مضرب جهانگیر و بهتراد اوضی خاشم
 و برداری شمعون یورودی صولدن احمد و هیت بوتیدی نصرت
 عموم عسکری اسلام یورودی ایکی عسکر بر برلرینه فار بلوب قا
 تلدی فان سل اولوب اقدی بوتلر بین الصلواتین اولنجیه بر بر
 لرندن ایرلی یوب جنگ ایدر لر دی زیر اسلطان نبرد ارک

Figure 17 Defamation on the face of Eşek (Donkey) Taġlu. FMK 29, 22a.



هذه کتاب اسکندریه صاحبها اسکندریه
فراغت او منتهی به
۱۱

جلد ۱۱

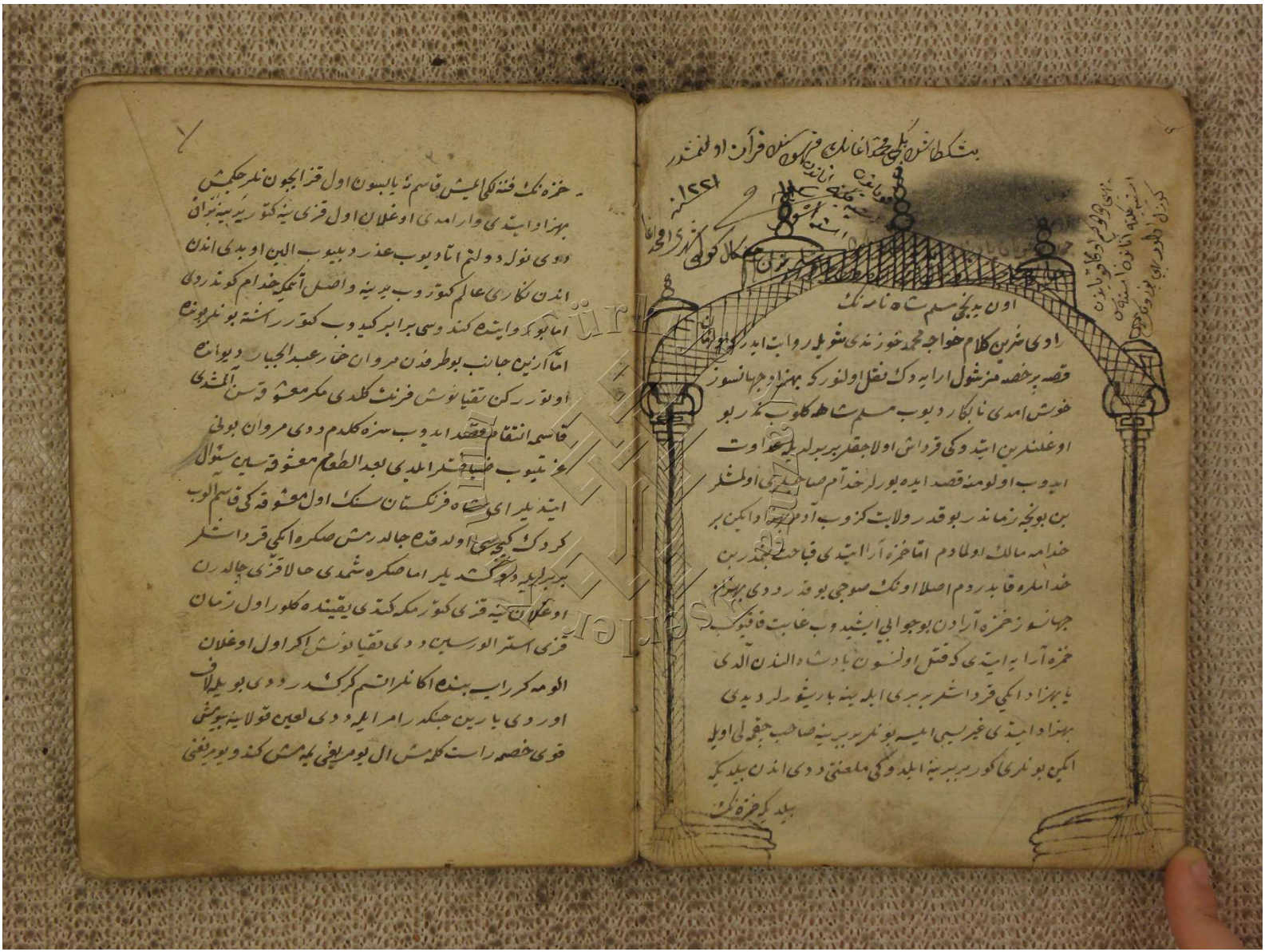
ابا مسلم حضرت نرینک اون برنجی جلیدیر
تراویات اخبار و مناقب آثار و معجزات
روزگار یعنی سرتاج شعر خواجه محمد
هوزندی اوبله روایت ایندی که مظهر
جهانگیر اول شهرزاده کی نظیر اول و پرورد
دوشوب بیاحتی که کی طاعون ماعون
بوملعنتر کی ایروب اول ارادت و کوروب
بغزاده کلری کوره که سیمان دیوچهرم
نه اوسلوب اوزر در دیوچهره به البسه
نامه لرقات انمرفات کلوب وقتنه حاضر
اول تیر دارک عز می سنک اوزرینه در
غافل اوله دیومس وانده اشتره طاعون
کلوب

کلوب کوردیکه صحرا بغزاد پارگاهس یله
دولمش الیشل ماوی چنکاری اماخر میبه
کوره بو وقت اوزره طاعون حیران اولوب
ایته ی بونا کاره نجیب نرور کلهش بونده
عسکر جمع ایشی بو قدر جه عسکر یله بو
جنگ ایروب مقاومت ایرم من بو ولز ناکلا
مرادی بولکله ایبری بو اباه سلم بکرینه
صلاته بیله اولمن بو نیک مرادی ندر بو
بو ولز ناکلا اوستون بیلورم انک اوله
حالیه بو قدر دیوب سوروب سیمان
دیوچهرم نیک پارگاهنه کلری بوملعون
جلهس یوقدرهای شیخ کلهش دیوب کلوب
دیوچهره یه خبر ویردیس تراوی ایبر وانک
بو اوغلی دایمطاعونیه کج چالان ایبری اصلا
کوزینه صالاندر میوب مقید اولن ایبری بون

بهرمنی کافر صلا
ایضا اقد فرقت انصرا جبار محمد اول
ایضا صلیان ایچین حاج صاحبی طوعون
و...

بهرمنی کافر صلا
ایضا اقد فرقت انصرا جبار محمد اول
ایضا صلیان ایچین حاج صاحبی طوعون
و...

Figure 18 The first page with the title "this is the 30th volume of Ebū Müslim." FMK 31, 1b -2a.



۷

بشکافش نه بی خفا نماند و چون فرزان او نماند
 خزه نیک فتنه کما عیش قاسم نه با بسون اول قرا بچون ندر حکیش
 بهزا دایه ی وار آمدی او غلان اول قزی نیه کتوریه بینه بزانی
 دوی نولد و ولخ اتاد یوب عذر و بیوب البین او بدی اندن
 اندن نگاری عالم کتور و ب برینه و اصل آنجیکه خدام کوندری
 اما بویک وایتش کند و سی برابر کید و ب کتور رکنه بو نر پونج
 اما ازین جانب بو طرفدن مروان خنر عبد الجبار دیوانع
 او نور رکن تقی انوش فرزند کلدی مکرمه و سن المشی
 قاسم انتقام عتد اید و ب سزه کلدم دوی مروان بونی
 عزتیوب ضیاء خسترا ایلدی بعد الطعم معنوقه سین سوال
 ایتدیلدی ای سزه فرنگستان سنک اول معنوقه کی قاسم البوب
 کردک کی سچی اولد قده جالدر مش صکره اکی قرداشتر
 بر بولید و بویک شد یلر اما صکره شمدی حال قزی چالدرن
 او غلان نیه قزی کتور مک کندی یقینده کلور اول زمان
 قزی استر الور سین دوی تقی انوش اگر اول او غلان
 الومد کر ایب بنه اکان نراتم کر کتور دوی بو یلار
 اوروی یارین جنگه رامر ایلد دوی لعین قولایه بوش
 قوی خصم راست کله مش ال بو مریغی یلر مش کند و بو مریغی

اون بیخی ستم ه نامتک
 راوی نترین کلام خواجه محمد خوزندی شیخ روات ایدر
 قصه بر خنده منقول ارایه دک نقل اولور که بهزا او جها نسوز
 خوش آمدی نابکار دیوب مسم شطه کلوس کتور بو
 او غلندین ایتدی قرداش او لاجصر بر بر لیلر عداوت
 ایدوب اولومند قصد ایدر لور خدام مساجیدی اولشتر
 بن بو بجز زماندر بو قدر ولایت کتور ب ادر بجا و اکی بر
 خدامه مالک اولماد اما خزه آرا ایتدی قاضی بکدر بن
 خدامره قادر دم اصلا اونک مسوچی بو قدر دوی بهزا
 جهانسوز خزه آرادن بو جوی ایشیدوب غایت قافیک
 خزه آرایه ایتدی کقتل اولسون بادش ه الذن الدی
 یا بهزا دایه کی قرداشتر بر بری ایلدینه باریشتر لر دیدی
 بهزا دایه کی غیر سبی ایلد بو نر برینه صاحب جوقی اولد
 اکین بو نری کور بر برینه ایلد و کی ملحق دوی اندن بیلدیک
 بیلد که خزه ن

کوزل ایلد
 ایستکله ایلد
 ایستکله ایلد
 ایستکله ایلد

Figure 19 The lack of frontispiece is compensated by a reader's drawing. FMK 34, 1b.

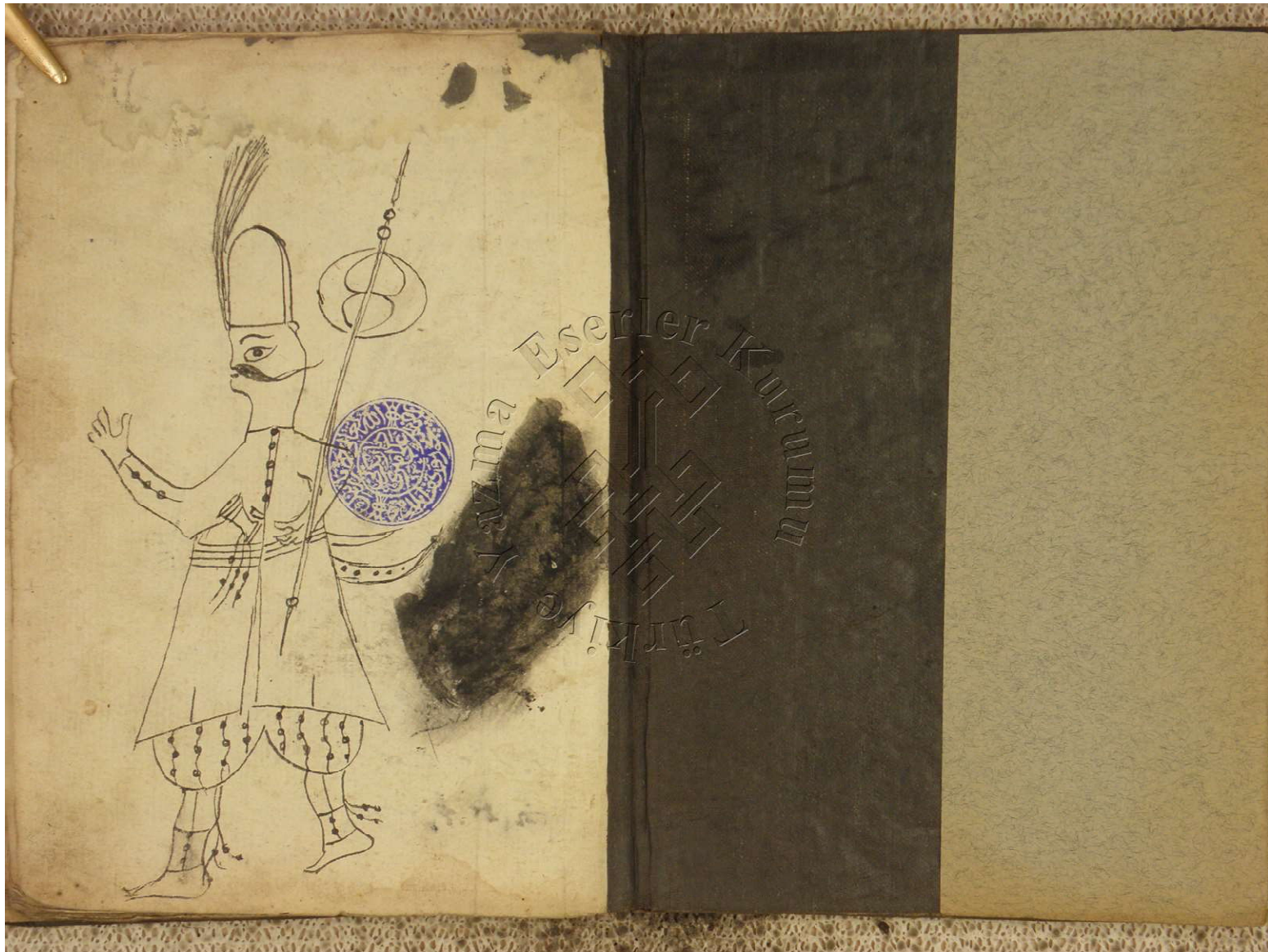


Figure 20 A reader's depiction of –probably– Ebü Müslim. FMK 36, 46b.



کوندر مش ابدی بو کتره عبد الجبار لعینی
 الوب کمد لر کن سلطان تیر دارک مخاتوف
 اولان الف خما بی بانونک بار کاهی اوخته
 هو غزا دیر الف خاتون جونکه لعین عبد
 الجبار کور ووب بلدی لهای لعین ابدی
 خنزیری سرمدی ابو الیمه یردک سن اول
 لعین خنزیر کلمی بیخی که سلطان تیر دار
 بی بو وجود شریفه حیف در بخ ابدک
 دیوب کتور سب میدانی سیاسته
 چو کردیب شاه برخان اولان دیل و رانه
 قومک ابدک بوده اوخته التونی یعوب
 بر کتور صولتله پور ایدوب صلوات ابدی
 لعن شاه باشنه بر التون بلکه بشر التون
 و یردی کل امدی کور سیرانی اول توکو
 قوتلو دیل و رلر ایلری کلوب عرب الجبار
 اعینی نطع سیاست اوزره چو کردیب
 انرین اول صویله صوفوب الرین اصل دیب



حکایات زنجی ناسید که نقل بیاف اولمور
 ۲۴
 اخبار و ناولان
 و متحدان
 روزگار اوله نقل روایت و بو طرز اوزره
 حکایت ابدی که بوندن اقدم و اشدان
 دیستان اول اراده قرار ایتمد که اشته
 سلطان الفرجی احمد الزنجی حضرت تارک عبد
 الجبار سر دودک اله کتور ووب یارین
 ان شالله تعالی سحری بر طار ایدوب
 وجودین صحیفه روزگار دن قالدیرم
 دیوب دیواندن قلدیر ووب کندک بار کافنه
 کوندر مش

Figure 21 The first page of the 24th volume of Ebū Müslim titled as *Zemcīnāme*. FMK38, 1b-2a.

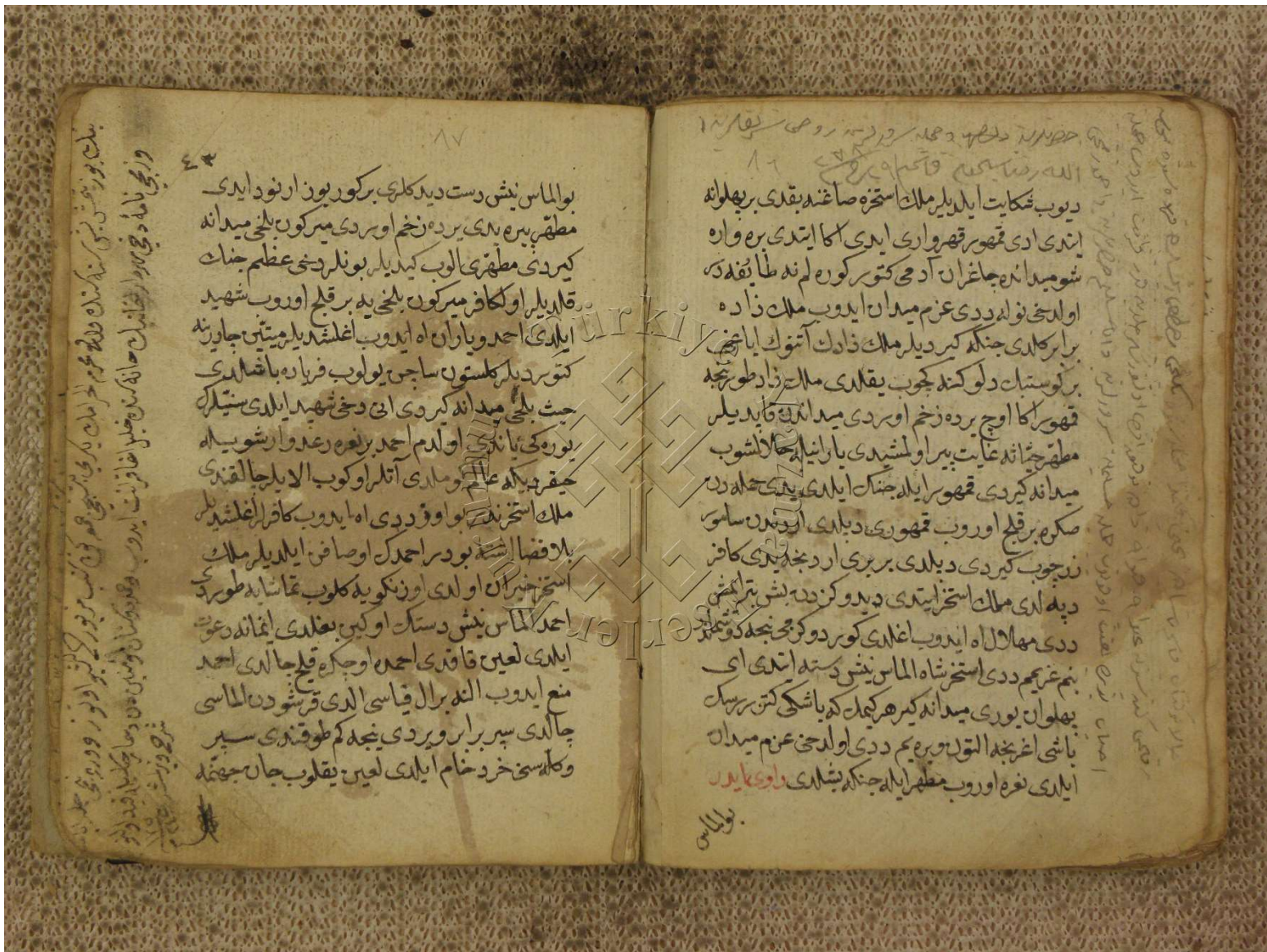


Figure 22 Random pages from a manuscript. FMK 42, 42b-43a.



جملة ادراك كتابي او قريبت ختم ايديهم
 قاضي فوزيه كورغا تمار البغداديشلي
 الكتاب معوية الغزالي
 جلد
 صدر قريبو
 احمد قريبو
 حمزة باصفانك التي ارضي حلي

راويان اخبار وناقون انار و محدثان بوزكار
 ادبلة نقل و بوبوزون راوي سي اويله عيان و بيلا
 ايوب اشته قصه من اوله اراده قرار بولسيك اشته
 اول زمانله زلازل يك هشتم نام بهلواني لقاي ملعون
 كاولنكينه امداده كونده روب بولنره نبي كيروب

اما

اماروز كار بولنري سوروب يار مغرب كتوردي ملعونده
 طبعه قلعه اوزرينه دو شوب عظيم جينكارا يايوب مقبله
 نوجوان شهيد المدي بعد قلعه محاصره ايدي
 ردی ايجرودن متقال شاه و نوجوان شاه اول
 حالي كوروب حمزه و صاحب قرانه اوغرون قبورن آدم
 او جودوب نامده كوندردى بعد كندولردى قاعده
 قيبولرين بند ايديوب جنك يرلرين الكويا و نور نلره
 انشته و هفتدن صكوه زلزال دد كلدى ملعون بوز
 بيدر عيلايم قلعه او كنه او نورب تكلور نامده
 او قيلم قاسم اند يلاهل فاجده اول نامه بولعوب
 مستر نامه كتورديلو اوله نامه اليتم الويا جوب
 اوغدى مقوموند و عيشكده اي نابكار رولر اقدام
 ايديسم بنم حله نه قلعه تختل ايدي و اولومه
 نه عكرو نه بهلوان قلعه ايجر المدي نامه و صولن
 كركلده عشاره و مخالفت اتيوب كلب لقا و كرم
 ايدي سزيوخه قاسمق ايده بوليد المدين كورون
 سكره يوب بوليد جوايلو يازوب كورون متقال
 كوروب بوليد جوايلو يازوب كورون متقال

Figure 23 The first page of Hamza's 53th volume, not written by the scribe. FMK 104, 1b-2a.



Figure 24 Readers' depictions of Ömer Ma'di and Kāsim on the first page. FMK 105, 1a.

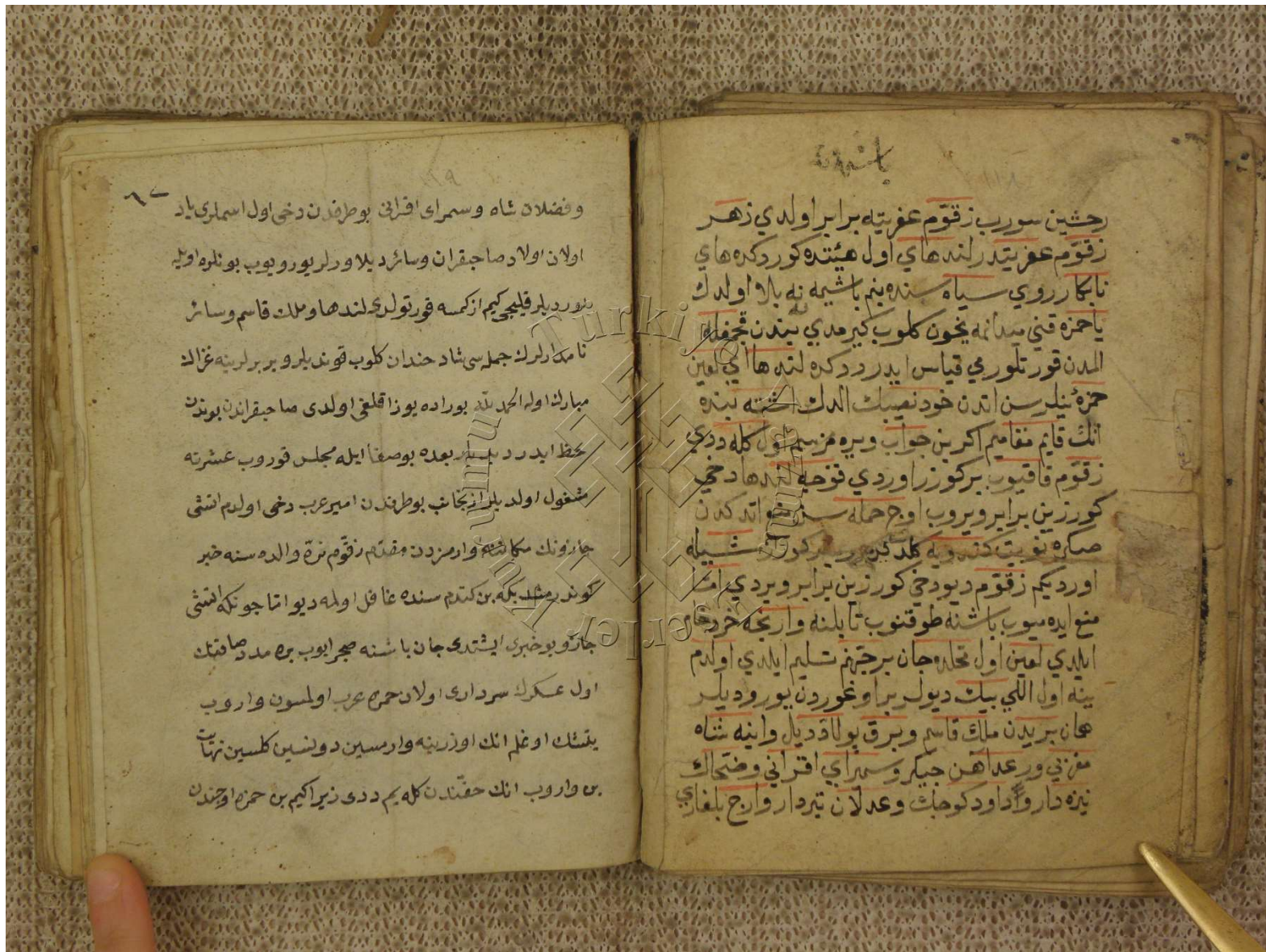


Figure 25 Example for the change in handwriting. FMK 105, 61b-62a.

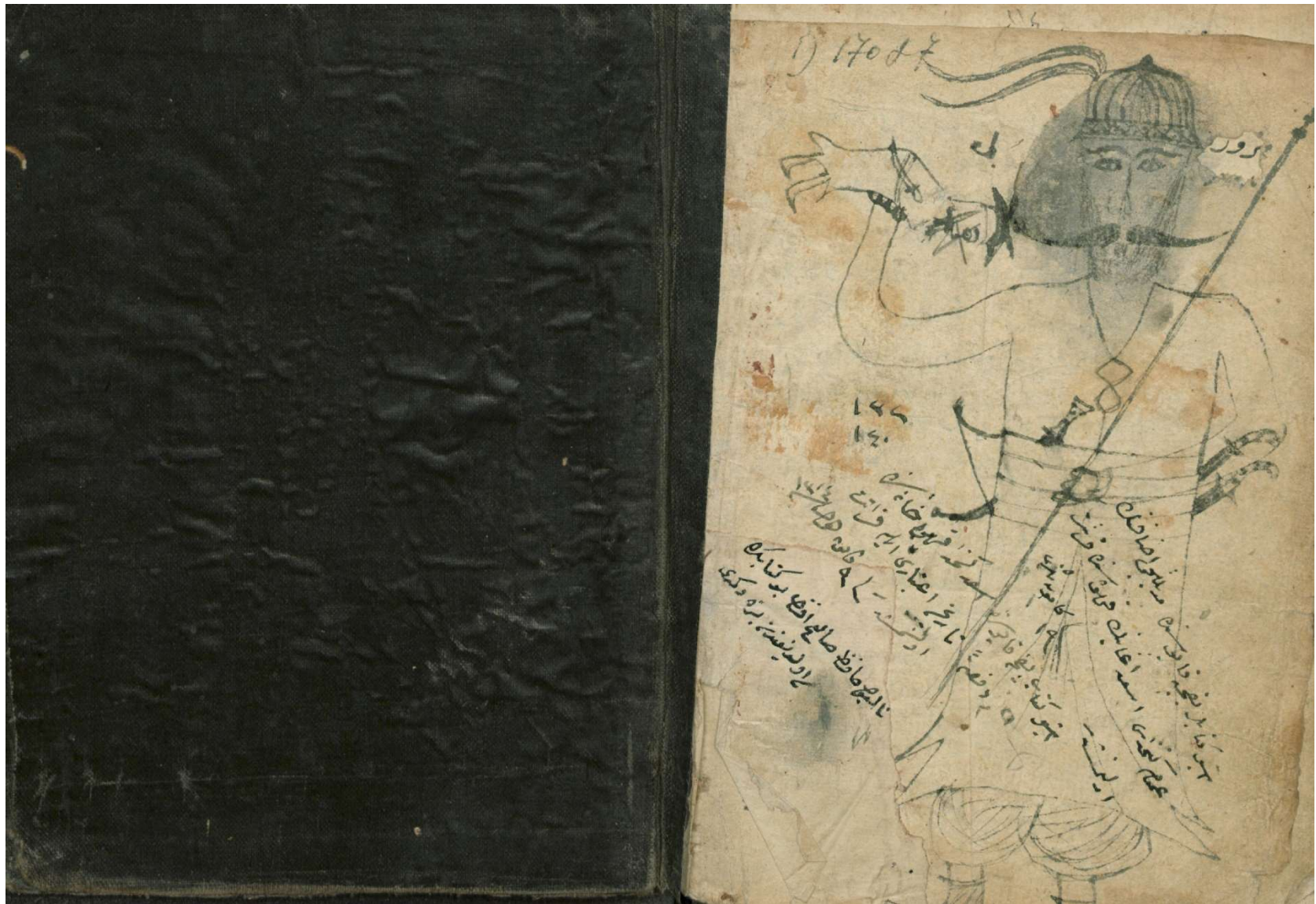


Figure 26 A reader's large-scale drawing. İÜNE 1159, 57b.



Figure 27 Two full page depictions of story characters in distinct styles. YKŞÇ 148, 44b-45a.



Figure 28 The 46th volume of Hamza belonging to the bookbinder Mollā Sālih. YKSC 150, 0b-1a.



Figure 29 Last pages of a manuscript with innumerable notes and depictions of characters. YKSC 906, cover page.