Verifying the Truth on Their Own Terms
Ottoman Philosophical Culture and the Court Debate
Between Zeyrek (d. 903/1497-98 [?]) and Ḫocazāde (d. 893/1488)
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2 The Ottoman Age of Scholarly Debates
Cultures of Patronage, Pride, and Merit in Fifteenth-Century Scholarship

Summary   2.1 Sultan's Great Jihad. Constantinople and Meḥmed II's Education Policy. – 2.2 Setting the Standard for Learning. The Sultan's Code of Law, the Construction of the *Ṣaḥn-ı semān*, and Other Endowments by His Bureaucrats. – 2.3 Critiquing the Sultan. Scholarly Autonomy, Pride, and Academic Rivalry. – 2.4 Court Debate Culture and Palatine Libraries. – 2.5 The Social Functions of Scholarly Patronage. Legitimacy, Honor, and Prestige.

Sultan Meḥmed II's second reign (855/1451-886/1481) signaled the beginning of a new phase in Ottoman scholarship. With an imperial program that developed a highly structured bureaucratic system, Meḥmed II's new establishment set rigid rules that regulated the scholarly path by establishing prestigious institutions based on merit, codifying a hierarchical order, and creating opportunities for a lifetime career in academia that crossed paths with politics.[1] The Ottoman formation of a new learned class in the fifteenth-century also coincided with (albeit not entirely shaped by) a turning point with the conquest of Constantinople/Ḳosṭanṭiniyye in 857/1453, namely the creation of a new capital distinctly imperial and universalist Muslim in character.

In the second half of the fifteenth-century, the fledgling Ottoman principality was transformed into an empire due to Sultan Meḥmed II's efforts, vision and oft-criticized centralization policies. On the one hand, the cen-

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[1]   For the formation and transformation of the ulema in the early Ottoman Empire, Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans*, 59-74. Atçıl traces the formation of the ulema class to the centralization policies of Meḥmed II, referring to the period spanning from the reign of Meḥmed II to the first decades of Süleymān I (857/1453-937/1530) as "the formation of the Ottoman learned class vis-à-vis its inclusion as a state apparatus" (Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans*, 70-4).

tralization helped the Sultan to instigate his image as an all-powerful absolute monarch and, on the other, Meḥmed II sustained this image via cosmopolitan and universalistic claims, which set him as a patron of science and arts in a dazzling variety of disciplines. For a monarch who had the claims of a world emperor, the Sultan had to make his new empire a hub for learning. It was a common route for many Ottoman scholars before his reign to leave Anatolia for advance learning in other Islamicate centers, such as Tabriz, Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, and Samarkand. The brain drain was an imminent problem and, thus, having claims of universal patronage meant reverting this tendency to study abroad and to find ways to attract the luminaries from East and West. Through the establishment of well-funded medrese circuits in different regions of Rūm and Thrace during Meḥmed II's reign, the Ottomans were able to create a self-sustaining system of educational mobility, in which the scholars did not feel the need to relocate for other centers of culture and learning. And this institutional novice also contributed to the rise of locally-educated scholars which brought stability and uniformity of education in the lands of Rūm.[2]

The key term that described the Sultan's and his grand viziers' attitude towards the learned class and interest in sciences was *rağbet* (continual interest, favor), an expression often repeated to describe their policies on learning as well.[3] The Sultan commissioned works to the luminaries of his time and did not hesitate to arrange extremely generous rewards and favors for those who accepted the Sultan's offer and further pursued their careers in the new capital (as in the case of the aforementioned ʿAlī Ḳuşçu).[4]

Inherent among the foregoing historical and historiographical debates Meḥmed II was a great patron for sciences and the arts. His understanding of patronage was not only limited to works within the Islamicate context but also encompassed geography and maps,[5] Christian art,[6] and relics,[7] as well as philosophy, with commissions by a good number of late Byzantine and Quattrocento artists, scholars, and luminaries, some of which took active part in the Ottoman imperial court.[8] Given Meḥmed II's universalistic vision and interreligious discourse in his political mission of empire building, the patronage in Graeco-Roman art, philosophy, and religious scholarship served as a political and aesthetic medium for the Ottoman new

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2 Atçıl, "Mobility of Scholars".

3 See the phrases ʿ*ulemāʾya rağbet* or ʿ*ilme rağbet-i tāmm* (Gelibolulu, *Künhüʾl-aḫbār*, 2: 70-1). Also "Sulṭān Meḥemmedʾiň ʿulemāʾya rağbeti ziyāde olmağın" (Neşrī, *Ǧihānnümā*, 325).

4 "Bir ehl-i kemāl olsa ey İstanbulʾa götürürdi. Ḥattā Semerkandʾdan faḫrüʾl-ʿulemāʾ Mevlānā ʿAlī Ḳuşçu cemīʿ-i teʿalluḳātıyla getürdüb bī-ḳıyās meblāğ aʿtā idüb emvāle ġarḳ itmişdi" (Neşrī, *Ǧihānnümā*, 308).

5 For Meḥmed II's map atelier and the works produced there, see Pinto, "The Maps Are the Message".

6 Raby, *El Gran Turco* and Necipoğlu, "Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation". Also for various other maps, woodblocks, and drawings presented, Redford, "Byzantium and the Islamic World, 1261-1557".

7 The Sultan's treasury had twenty-one relics along with historically and religiously significant miscellaneous objects, including the bodies of the Prophet Isaiah, one of the innocents massacred by Herod, Saint Euphemia, and Saints John of Damascus and Chrysostom, as well as the Gospel of Saint John the Evangelist and Jesus' cradle (Raby, "East and West in Mehmed the Conqueror's Library", esp. 298-300).

8 See Adıvar, *Osmanlı Türklerinde İlim*, 31-57 and Bádenas, "The Byzantine Intellectual Elite".

order.[9] Unlike his father Murād II's emphasis on the use of Turkish especially in manuscript production, Arabic continued its past status as an international *lingua franca* of the polyglot interconfessional scholars during Meḥmed II's reign. It was utilized for writing on theology, law, philosophy, and science, as well as oral communication among scholars and palace visitors. A handful of Greek texts translated into Arabic (not into the Sultan's native Turkish) in the imperial setting,[10] notably including fragments from the Neoplatonist Greek philosopher Georgios Gemistos Pletho's controversial *Book of Laws* accompanied by his edition of a pagan revelation in dactylic hexameter, *The Chaldean Oracles*, which argued for religio-political reform in Christian monotheism through Pagan and Neoplatonist sources,[11] and the Aristotelian philosopher George Amiroutzes' translation of Ptolemy's *Geographia* with his son Basil/Meḥmed Bey[12] along with a cartographic study that used the book's mathematical system to create a large-scale world map in a united whole.[13]

The Sultan's library and Greek Scriptorium[14] were comprised of manuscripts like Arrian's *Anabasis* (a biography of Alexander the Great), Homer's *Iliad*, the fifteenth-century Italian humanist Leonardo Bruni's arrangement of the first book of Polybius on the Punic Wars, as well as a Greek translation of St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa contra Gentiles*, which all reflected the Sultan's political vision, interests, and models. The imperial acquisitions were included under three categories: gifts, commissions, and requisitions through conquests.[15] Meḥmed II's imperial library, which held non-Islamic manuscripts, objects, and relics, also saw a marked development in illumination, calligraphy, and bookbinding (an Ottoman variation on the inter-

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9 Casale, "Mehmed the Conqueror". For the ways in which the Sultan modified and adapted other forms of knowledge in his cultural politics, see Akasoy, "Die Adaptation byzantinischen Wissens".

10 Mavroudi, "Translations from Greek".

11 Hankins considers Pletho as the fountainhead for the Neoplatonic revival during the later Quattrocento (Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, 194). Christian and Islamic interpretations of Platonic philosophy were often associated with calls for religious and social reform (in juxtaposition with Aristotelianism in philosophical theology and Orthodoxy in creed), as well as a "universalization of religion" which sought an inner harmony between different religious systems (Mavroudi, "Pletho as Subversive". With regard to Pletho and his relationship to the Ottomans, see Akasoy, "George Gemistos Pletho and Islam", esp. 351-2 and her "Plethons *Nomoi*". Pletho often appropriated Pagan, Neoplatonist, and non-Christian (Islamic) sources in order to demonstrate that they could be compatible with the teachings of Greek Orthodoxy (De-Bolt, "George Gemistos Plethon on God").

12 George of Trebizond developed a friendship with the Sultan's close associate the Greek scholar Amiroutzes and helped the scholar to compose an introduction to Ptolemy's *Almagest* in Greek along with a dedication of the book to the Sultan before having executed its Arabic translation, together with the latter's son Basil/Meḥmed Bey (Raby, "East and West in Mehmed the Conqueror's Library", 302).

13 Casale, "Mehmed the Conqueror", 860.

14 Raby, "Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek Scriptorium". It has been argued that there is substantial evidence from reliable sources that allows scholars to eliminate certainly Greek and mostly Latin from the list of languages that Meḥmed II might have been competent (Patrinelis, "Mehmed II the Conqueror"). One reference that refutes this position is included in a panegyric composed by Amiroutzes, stating the line "many thought that you did not know this language [Greek] at all" (Mirmiroğlu, "Fatih Sultan Mehmet", 100-1).

15 For the Greek manuscripts attributed to the Ottoman court, "East and West in Mehmed the Conqueror's Library", 304-11.

national Timurid style).[16] Despite Meḥmed II's efforts in collecting a vast number of manuscripts for his imperial library, as well as procuring Greek books, there had been a wave of propaganda in the West against his religio-cultural policies, which misinformed that there were 120,000 destroyed volumes by the Barbarian Turks (an allusion to the burning of the Library of Alexandria) in the fifteenth-century Venetian humanist Lauro Quirini's note written on 15 July 1453 in Crete.[17]

The barbaric image of the Turks that lacked reason and rational assessment was a common topos in political discourse during the Quattrocento[18] as exemplified by the well-known humanist writer Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (1405-64), who later assumed the papal title Pius II in 1458. In a letter written to Meḥmed II with the 'intention' of converting him into Christianity, Pius II vilified the Turks as not having possessed a naturally rational disposition, and demonstrated the philosophical contradictions of their religion.[19] The pervasiveness of the Crusade literature and rhetoric in Renaissance Humanism may tell us a lot about the so-called 'humanistic attitude' towards the Muslim advancement,[20] yet there were other attempts at presenting an interreligious dialogue or disputation without disparaging the Sultan's philosophical inclinations.

Prior to discussing the Sultan's patronage activities, a celebrated Ottoman bureaucrat Ṭursun Beg (d. 896/1491 [?]), also known as being highly critical of some of Meḥmed II's policies in his book of history *Tārīḫ-i Ebü'l-fetḥ*,[21] regarded him as a learned ('ālim), judicious ('ādil), and intelligent ('āḳil) ruler whose words and decisions embodied divine wisdom or philosophy (ḥikmet).[22] The historian Neşrī (d. 926/1520 [?]) added to this, noting that he was a friend of scholars and virtuous ones,[23] whereas the Ottoman historian-dervish Āşıḳpaşazāde (d. after 889/1484) similarly stressed his benevolence and generosity towards the learned class, as well as poor mystics.[24]

Written upon Bāyezīd II's request, his *Tārīḫ-i Ebü'l-Fetḥ* was a book of history, which chronicled the events and deeds during and after the conquest of Constantinople with certain elements from the advice literature (nasīḥa). Though Meḥmed II was portrayed as a great conqueror, and an in-

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16   See the essays in Raby,Tanındı, *Turkish Bookbinding in the 15th Century*.

17   Pertusi, "Le Epistole storiche di Lauro Quirini", esp. 227. According to Akasoy, the Byzantine Greek Metropolitan Isidore of Kiev did not mention any concrete figures, and the fifteenth-century Byzantine historian Doukas spoke only of the "throwaway prices" for books (Akasoy, "A Baghdad Court in Constantinople/Istanbul", 140-1).

18   As a response to the Ottoman advancement, a great number of Crusade orations and histories, as well as tracts on converting the Turks to Christianity were produced. For the assessment of such works in the context of Renaissance political discourse and propaganda, see Bisaha, *Creating East and West* and Meserve, *Empires of Islam*.

19   Akasoy, "Mehmed II as a Patron of Greek Philosophy", 249-50.

20   Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders".

21   Specifically speaking, Ṭursun Beg criticized Sultan's policies on taxation, emergency contributions as well as the confiscation of certain endowment properties. See İnalcık, Murphey, "Editors' Introduction", 23.

22   "Sulṭān Ebü'l-fetḥ 'ālim ü 'āḳil ve taṣarrufāt-ı cüz'iyyātda māhir ü kāmil, aḳvāli zīnet-i ḥikmet ile ḫālī" (Ṭursun Beg, *Târîh-i Ebü'l-Feth*, 65).

23   "Muḥibb-i 'ulemā' u fuḍalā' melikdi" (Neşrī, *Ǧihānnümā*, 308).

24   "'Ulemā'ya ve fuḳarāya ve eyāma ve ṭūl 'avretlere ṣadaḳa virürdi" (Āşıḳpaşazāde, *Die Altosmanische Chronik*, 195).

telligent ruler, Ṭursun Beg also underlined the Sultan's hubris as one of his main vices. According to this work, the Sultan had arrogance (*'aẓamet ü kibr*) and bad temper (*ġaḍab*), and never practiced forbearance (*ḥilm*) and gratitude (*şükr*), the latter of which was rather the quality of the much-revered Byzantino-Serbian-born scholar and grand vizier Maḥmūd Angelović Paşa (d. 878/1474) who was put to death by the Sultan tragically due to a complicated series of events. Upon this unfortunate event, Maḥmūd Paşa, a much revered figure by the common people, was elevated to a position of a Sufi saint and his highly appreciated personality was praised in many posthumous hagiographies written on his behalf.[25] It is, therefore, understandable why Ṭursun Beg, who received the patronage of Maḥmūd Paşa during much of his career, put the Sultan on the spot as a powerful monarch who, at the same time, succumbed to his ego and presumptuous choices.

Sultan Meḥmed II was not the sole instigator of scholarly patronage in the fifteenth-century Ottoman world and, the scholars themselves, as well as his viziers should be also given credit in the Ottoman upsurge of scholarly activities and institution building. There were eighty-four medreses founded in Rūmili and Anatolia during the time of the first six Ottoman rulers – thirty-seven of them belonging to the reign of his father Murād II (d. 855/1451).[26] There were, in contrast, tens of mosques, medreses, and soup kitchens that were built during the time Meḥmed II,[27] both endowed by him and his viziers such as Maḥmūd Paşa, Murād Paşa,[28] and Rūm Meḥmed Paşa[29] in Constantinople along with many others.[30] Apart from these educational endowments, the Sultan's new Code of Law had the simultaneous effect of drawing clear distinctions among the members of the learned class in terms of bureaucratic hierarchy, which was both praised and presented as a model in subsequent centuries (see § 1.2 below).

2.1 Sultan's Great Jihad. Constantinople and Meḥmed II's Education Policy

The conquest of Constantinople in 857/1453 inaugurated the vision of a new imperial city as the seat of a multi-confessional world empire.[31] In order to ensure the provisioning of the city, Meḥmed II had to restore the prosperity of neighboring villages and move people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, later by way of forced resettlement, in order to repopulate and revitalize the city.[32]

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25 İnalcık, Murphey, "Editors' Introduction", 22-3. Uçman, "Menâkıb-ı Mahmud Paşa-yı" and Ortaylı, "Osmanlı Toplumunda".

26 İhsanoğlu, "Osmanlı Medrese", 897 and Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans*, 32.

27 See for a list of all structures built in Istanbul during the time of Meḥmed II, Ayverdi, *İstanbul Osmanlı Mi'mârîsinin*, and his earlier *Fâtih Devri Mimarîsi*.

28 Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul*, 123-5.

29 "Rūm Meḥemmed Paşa Üsküdar'da bir 'imāret ve bir medrese yapdı" (Neşrī, *Ǧihānnümā*, 323).

30 For the full list of fifteenth-century Ottoman viziers who established endowments in various parts of the empire, see Neşrī, *Ǧihānnümā*, 320-4.

31 Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Kostantiniyye".

32 İnalcık, "The Policy of Mehmed II", 235 and Lowry, "'From Lesser Wars to the Mightiest War'".

The resettlement policy did not work well initially,[33] and the Sultan further decided to revitalize the city by introducing other means, such as constructing prestigious educational institutions and religious spaces to attract the luminaries of his time.[34] The books of history written by Ottoman statesman Ṭursun Bey and Byzantine historian Kritovoulos (d. 1470) gave a detailed account of the vigor and effort involved in the repopulation[35] and the urban development (*istiʿmār*)[36] of Constantinople, along with the Sultan's great investment in higher education institutions that attracted the attention of many scholars to the capital of the lands of Rūm.

The new imperial scheme was generous to the learned class, partly due to the grand revitalization projects that were undertaken by Meḥmed II to renovate the city as an emerging center for learning. These projects not only shaped the political institutions but also defined the ways in which the members of the learned class could cooperate with the other agents of bureaucracy and navigate upwards in the social hierarchy. An Ottoman historian Gelibolulu Ālī (d. 1008/1600) observed how the realization of the Sultan's grand construction project, the prestigious *Ṣaḥn-ı şemān* complex, contributed to the organization and formation of the learned class, thereby preventing the outliers (*ecnebīler*) who did not have the right merit and credentials to instruct, that is, those who belonged to a non-academic lineage, from merging freely with the learned class. In other words, according to Ālī, the building of such a prestigious institution, the *Ṣaḥn-ı şemān*, set the standard for the profession.[37]

Urban development in Constantinople was a serious undertaking, so much that the Ottoman Turkish endowment charter (*vaḳfiye*) that was published by the Directorate General of Foundations in 1938 referred the conquest of Constantinople as "the smaller jihad" (*cihād-ı aşgar*), whereas the revitalization of the city was addressed as "the greater" (*cihād-ı ekber*).[38] These deeds of endowment provide important clues about the ways in which teaching and learning were perceived by the State, and how salaries and promotions were implemented during the early decades after the conquest of the city. These charters not only documented the changing features of the city but also pinpointed extant buildings from the Byzantines, which turned into Islamic educational spaces.

Besides historical chronicles, extant endowment deeds from the period constituted vital firsthand sources for the Sultan's education policy, shed-

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[33] "Sulṭān Meḥemmed Ḫān Gāzī kim İstanbul'ı fetḥ itdi [...] ve cemiʿ vilāyetlerine ḳullar gönderdi kim ḫāṭrı olan gelsün İstanbul'da olur bāğçeler bāğçeler mülklüğe gelüb ṭutsun dedi ve her kim ki geldiyse vardılar bu şehr bununla maʿmūr olmadı" (Āşıkpaşazāde, *Die Altosmanische Chronik*, 133). The Sultan afterwards resorted to the policy of forced resettlement.

[34] For an extensive account of construction projects realized in Meḥmed II's new capital in the making, see Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul*, as well as her earlier *The Ottoman Capital in the Making*.

[35] Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed*, 93-4.

[36] See the section on the Sultan's urban development projects in Constantinople: Ṭursun Beg, *Târîh-i Ebü'l-Feth*, 65-76. In addition to the term *istiʿmār*, the Sultan used the phrase "şehri ʿimāret etmek" (Neşrī, *Kitâb-ı Cihan-nümâ*, 709).

[37] "Çünki bünyān-ı medāris-i şemāniyye ki görildi, baʿdehu ʿulemā' tarīḳiniñ niẓāmına cell-i himmet buyurıldı. [...] ve içlerine, ecānibden kimse ḳarışmasun deyü silsile-i ṭarīḳleri kemāl-i intiẓāmla istiḥḳām bula" (Gelibolulu, *Künhü'l-aḫbār*, 2: 68).

[38] See *Fatih Mehmet II Vakfiyeleri*, 32, f. 37; and also Akgündüz, Öztürk, Baş, "Fâtih Sultan Mehmed'in Ayasofya Vakfiyesi", 259, f. 11.

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ding light on the construction of higher education institutions in the new capital. As in other Islamicate contexts, these deeds offer an insight into the arrangement of educational institutions[39] such that they outlined the nature and duties of the endowment by giving a detailed account of the buildings employed, as well as the personnel who got involved. Nonetheless, one problem with relying heavily on endowment deeds is that they only give a formal view about educational activities in the empire. There were, however, other informal means of scholarly interaction, such as special instructional circles on various topics in which novice students could also acquire knowledge outside the formal classroom context through the *ḥalaqāt* and *majālis*.[40]

2.2 Setting the Standard for Learning. The Sultan's Code of Law, the Construction of the *Ṣaḥn-ı ṣemān*, and Other Endowments by His Bureaucrats

Right after the conquest of Constantinople, Meḥmed II undertook a great number of projects in the new capital, by turning eight decrepit churches into Muslim higher education institutions[41] and by establishing new ones. Our sources indicate less than eight such structures, yet there are additional other churches recorded as being converted into mosques apart from this list, such as Fetḥiyye and Kenīse Ḫura (Ḳariye or Chora). Extant Arabic and Ottoman Turkish endowment charters count Ayaṣofya (Hagia Sophia), Zeyrek, Eski ʿİmāret, Ḳalenderḫāne, Silivri, and Mesadomenko in Galata (with a lecture space – *dersḫāne* – among the converted churches along with other newly built mosques in Constantinople's *Yeñi Cāmiʿ* and *Ḳulle-i cedīde* districts.[42]

Certain rules of conduct, job specifications, as well as salary amounts in these newly established institutions were listed in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish endowment deeds in detail. To this date, there are eleven extant endowment deeds from the period.[43] Some of these deeds were copied and edited in later centuries, and we have several of these extant documents highlighting the key aspects of fifteenth-century educational institutions.[44]

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[39] For a study for the Mamlūk educational context: Haarmann, "Mamluk Endowment Deeds".

[40] Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge*, 88-91 and Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 74-9. *Majalis* referred to informal gatherings, that is *salons*, not *séances* – with conversational debates overheard, not practiced (Goodman, "Rāzī vs. Rāzī", 101). With the expansion of the Ottoman Empire into the Arab lands, a new culture of salons arose which was vital in the transmission of knowledge, as well as the prevalence of Arabic literary culture among scholars, poets, and bureaucrats from the lands of Rūm, who received posts in North Africa and the Levant. The rise of salons among Ottoman scholarly and literary elite not only enabled advanced linguistic training, but also were centers where the scholars shared their recent works, seeking for instruction, debate, and feedback on works in progress (Pfeifer, *Empire of Salons*, 166-99, esp. 166-76). Medreses were highly regulated institutions, and salons started as spaces for intellectual production that refrained from the meddling of the political class as well as the detailed stipulations of medrese endowment charters (Pfeifer, *Empire of Salons*, 198).

[41] "Eyyām-ı sālifādanberi meʿabād-ı küffār ḫāksār olan kenāʾis-i nā-üstevārdan sekiz ʿaded kenīseleri medrese idüb" (Mecdī, *Ḥadāʾiḳüʾş-şaḳāʾiḳ*, 1: 117).

[42] For the list, see Akgündüz, Öztürk, Baş, "Fâtih Sultan Mehmed'in Ayasofya Vakfiyesi", 259-61, ff. 12-16; *Fatih Mehmet II Vakfiyeleri*, 33-7, ff. 40-8.

[43] For the full list, see "Giriş", in *Fatih Sultan Mehmed'in 877/1472 Tarihli Vakfiyesi*, VII-XI.

[44] Most of these documents have been recently studied and grouped by Hayashi in his "Fatih Vakfiyeleri'nin Tanzim", 94.

Three of these eleven documents are based on the original text initially drafted by Meḥmed II – though they had been also reorganized during the reign of his son Bāyezīd II (r. 886/1481-918/1512). The precise dates of these deeds cannot be determined, so it is difficult to pinpoint exactly which political decisions were pivotal in their drafting. Endowment deeds list all given landholdings of a particular institution that ensured revenue and the perpetuity of the endowment. There are strict rules for each endowment to observe, and the positions for hire and salary rates are fixed and included within each deed. Apart from the section regarding "salaries" (*veẓāʾif*), each endowment includes a section of "general terms and conditions" (*şarṭ-ı vakfiye*), which outline the rules and regulations under which each endowment had to operate.[45]

In addition to the endowment deeds, the Sultan's new Code of Law also regulated a tenure system based on rank and merit, and certain schools, such as the *Ṣaḥn-ı şemān*, were considered the epitome of Ottoman learning and teaching, a case that could be evidenced by its staffing of famed scholars and high salary levels. Nonetheless, there were also other cases in which the hierarchy of learning was not strictly maintained, and the decision-making prerogative of the Sultan still had a tremendous influence on promotions and appointments.

Due to his centralizing tendencies, Meḥmed II could intervene in the process whenever he wished since the Sultan was a law unto himself.[46] Furthermore, changing places or posts in every couple of years was common during this period. It was not necessarily the case that whenever a scholar received a prestigious position, he would continue in that post until his retirement. This suggests that the late fifteenth-century appointments were already temporary and always shifting. Many of the scholars from the period occupied numerous posts located in various towns and cities during their career spans, even relocating to less paid jobs due to losing the Sultan's favor or clashing with bureaucrats and other scholars.

The Sultan's premier educational complex was called the *Ṣaḥn-ı şemān* (The Eight Courtyards) due to the eight colleges that it housed, and the number eight also had an allusion to the Eight Heavens (*heşt bihişt*)[47] in Islamic eschatology, the alleged eight gates of the paradise.[48] The complex was built on the ruins of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, a church founded by Constantine the Great in the 330s, which was used as a burial site for the Byzantine emperors from Constantine onwards.[49] The church had been a nodal point for Byzantine ceremony, where the relics of Eastern Orthodox saints (including Timothy's relics) were housed and conferred a spiritual and political legitimacy on the dynastic claims of the em-

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45 See the Turkish translation of Ayaṣofya's endowment charter (*vakfiye*) along with the original Arabic document in Akgündüz, Öztürk, Baş, "Fâtih Sultan Mehmed'in Ayasofya Vakfiyesi", 296, f. 132.

46 Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul*, 69.

47 "Ṣaḥn medreseleri dimekle maʿrūf ve heşt-bihişt evṣāfiyle" (Gelibolulu, *Künhü'l-aḫbār*, 2: 69). Also "Ol şehriyār-ı kāmkārun dārü'l-ḳarārda heşt-bihişte vüṣūlune vesīle olmuşdur" (İbn Kemāl, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, 547).

48 Also see Ünver, *Fatih Külliyesi*, 95-7.

49 See Dark, Özgümüş, "Chapter 6. The Church of the Holy Apostles"; Downey, "The Tombs of the Byzantine Emperors" and, for a homily that included a description of the church, see James, Gavril, "A Homily with a Description".

perors newly rooted in Constantinople.[50] As recent studies suggest, the edifice was essentially square in plan, with a porticoed courtyard to its west and two broad lateral stairways giving entrance both to the main prayer hall and the courtyard, as well as a walled compound to the east, which included the mausoleums of Meḥmed II and one of his wives, Gülbahār Ḫatun.[51]

As Çiğdem Kafescioğlu has observed, the mosque at the new educational complex lacked the convent for Sufi dervishes that all prior mosques in sultans' complexes, and the iconic presence of the mosque at the summit of a hill highlighted the highest-ranking medrese within the Ottoman realm with its eight medreses placed in rows of four on opposite ends of the Renaissance-style plaza, thereby having represented the Sultan's new hierarchy of the religious establishment.[52] Endowment charters concerning the education at the *Ṣaḥn* offer no information about whether each college was devoted to a particular discipline. However, it is clear that each college at the *Ṣaḥn* was assigned and entrusted to the tutelage of a particular scholar and was consequently addressed by their name. In certain documents, some of these colleges were simply referred to as *Şeyḫiyye*, *Sinobiyye*, *Ṣālibuddīn*, and *Muṣliḥuddīn* after the name of the scholar who was in charge of the college.[53] This naming practice is not uncommon since education in Islam was structured around personal ties; and the letters of recommendation (i.e. licenses, sing. *icāzetnāme*) only bore the names of tutors and the books studied, not the institutions themselves.[54] Whether Muslim colleges could be seen as independent institutions with a unique program of education or only be taken within the context of personal connections has been debated in contemporary historiography.[55] Nevertheless, the case for Meḥmed II's endowments combines both aspects of these readings, as the hierarchy that the Sultan envisioned among educational institutions, the education policy stressed in endowment deeds, not to mention his Code of Law, all regarded the *Ṣaḥn* as an independent institution with a unique system of education.

During the reign of Meḥmed II, obtaining an appointment at the *Ṣaḥn-ı şemān* also entailed the favor of the Sultan. Appointments and teaching at the *Ṣaḥn* depended on the Sultan's permission, favor, and approval in addition to individual merit. Meḥmed II's Code of Law included a separate sec-

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50 The Holy Apostles also served as the primary religiopolitical prototype for the basilica of San Marco in Venice (Israel, "A History Built on Ruins", esp. 107-10).

51 Dark, Özgümüş, "Chapter 6. The Church of the Holy Apostles", 84. According to the Ottoman inscription on the main door, Meḥmed II's original *külliye* was constructed from February 1461 to January 1471. The large cupola was severely destroyed later by an earthquake in 1179/1766 and rebuilt under Muṣṭafā III (r. 1171-87/1757-74). Also see Aga-Oglu, "The Fatih Mosque", esp. 179-83.

52 Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul*, 76-7.

53 Ünver, *Fatih Külliyesi*, 23-7, esp. figs 2-5.

54 Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 270.

55 In contemporary historiography, this debate comprised several distinct elements, including construction, administrative organization, and potential library endowments. For instance, George Makdisi saw colleges as having an organized student body with a specified curriculum, whereas A.L. Tibawi stressed the fact that despite the foundation of rigid endowed institutions of learning, Islamic education had always remained flexible, informal, and tied to persons rather than institutions. It is right that learning could not be reduced to endowed institutions during this period since the informal ways of acquiring knowledge were also common as in the cases of certain private reading circles. For the discussion, see Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 281 and Tibawi, "Origin and Character of *al-Madrasah*".

tion about those who could teach at this institution. Due to the privileged status of the school, the Sultan did not simply see this school as a conglomerate of best scholars but a creation transcending that: a prestigious, independent institution with its own preparatory schools, in which qualified scholars were appointed upon fair judgment.[56]

With regard to the career paths of famed fifteenth-century scholars, a position at the *Ṣaḥn* was not often their last appointment. When a scholar established a reputation – whether, during early or mid-career – he would also secure a position in one of the eight medreses at the *Ṣaḥn*. In most documented cases, an appointment at the *Ṣaḥn* was temporary, since a scholar at the *Ṣaḥn*, according to the Sultan's Code of Law, could further be qualified to become a chief military-judge (*ḳāḍī'asker*). Consequently, appointments in the fifteenth-century context were usually transitory, and a certain scholar was even expected to take up posts, ranging from İzniḳ to the Balkan settlements of Dimetoḳa and Filibe depending on the vacancy.[57]

Meḥmed II's deeds suggest that the institution had to be endowed for the benefit of those competent students and tutors who were eager to learn or acquire knowledge.[58] Moreover, each college should be organized by the directives of a scholar, who could easily deal with hard problems (*ḥall al-mushkilāt*) and dispel doubts (*dafʿ al-shubhāt*) about certain issues,[59] that is, someone who could have the sufficient intelligence and capacity to grasp the classification and contents of various sciences.[60] The appointed scholar should be able to teach both rational and traditional sciences (*ʿaḳliyāt ü naḳliyāt*), which proved a scholar's prowess in different aspects of Islamic sciences.[61] As for the desired qualifications of scholars to be appointed at these colleges, the Ottoman Turkish deed further notes that the scholar (*müderris*) had to be competent in various sciences, knowledgeable in certain levels of wisdom (*ḥikem*), as well as elaborating on longer and more detailed textual accounts (*muṭavvelāt*).[62]

As for drafting, the Sultan personally supervised the preparation of each endowment deed, but also received some help from reputable scholars and bureaucrats. For instance, during the time of Bāyezīd II, Mollā ʿAlāeddīn ʿĀlī, a member of the prominent bureaucrat-scholar family of the Fenārīs, was

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56 İdrīs-i Bitlisī here equates scholars with prophets (*anbiyā'*) and mentions how the Sultan made fair appointments based on intellectual capacity and virtue (İdrîs-i Bitlisî, *Heşt Behişt VII. Ketibe*, 36).

57 For a list of the medreses and the scholars from Filibe and Dimetoka, see Bilge, *İlk Osmanlı Medreseleri*, 167-9.

58 The student or assistant to be assigned has to be someone who has the ability to address others (*muḫāṭabeye ḳābil*) and demands knowledge (*ṭālib-i ʿilmler*) (*Fatih Mehmet II Vakfiyeleri*, 146, f. 265; and also *Fatih Sultan Mehmed'in 877/1472*, 105).

59 *Fatih Sultan Mehmed'in 877/1472*, 155.

60 Ṭursun Beg narrated that Meḥmed II built the new complex so that virtuous scholars could devote themselves to teaching (*tedrīs*), articulation (*ifāde*), as well as disciplining (*terşīḥ*) their students in religious and scientific issues: "Ve efrād-ı efāżıl-ı ʿulemā'dan – ki her biri Şüreyḥ-i ʿahd ü ʿallāme-i devrdür, tedrīs ü ifādet ve terşīḥ ü ifāżat içün müteʿayyin oldular" (Ṭursun Beg, *Târîh-i Ebü'l-Feth*, 71).

61 Akgündüz, Öztürk, Baş, "Fâtih Sultan Mehmed'in Ayasofya Vakfiyesi", 296, f. 133; and *Fatih Mehmet II Vakfiyeleri*, 246 or, for the Ottoman Turkish, see 144, f. 262. Also see İdrîs-i Bitlisî, *Heşt Behişt VII. Ketibe*, 75.

62 *Fatih Mehmet II Vakfiyeleri*, 145, f. 263.

consulted with the preparation of certain endowment deeds,[63] being particularly in charge of the Ayaṣofya document.[64] Similarly, there were other cases in which certain Ottoman scholars (including the main figures of this study, Ḥocazāde and Mollā Ḥüsrev) got involved in the drafting of deeds and signed them for approval.[65]

Apart from the Ṣaḥn, Meḥmed II also ordered the establishment of other medreses in the new capital, including those of Ayaṣofya (Hagia Sophia) and Eyüb, and many skillful Ottoman and Persian architects worked in their construction, as well as in Ayaṣofya's renovation.[66] Similar to the case of Zeyrek,[67] probably the books at the Eyüb medrese were later transferred to the great library within the Ṣaḥn upon its completion.[68] An inscription in the marginalia of the Eyüb deed does not mention the status of rational sciences but has a specific emphasis on the study of religious sciences including its main and secondary branches.[69]

As mentioned earlier, Ayaṣofya equaled and even surpassed the Sultan's premier institute Ṣaḥn-ı ṣemān in rank and distinction (pāye),[70] a fact reflected in recorded salary rates.[71] Meḥmed II initially built the medrese, but Bāyezīd II extended the premises after his commissioning a second floor.[72] It is mentioned in our sources that Mollā Ḥüsrev (d. 885/1480), the arbiter of the debate at hand, was the first scholar to be appointed there, and Ḳuşçu worked and taught there from two hundred aspers a day, a position that he held until his death.

The Sultan was not alone in his endeavors of patronage. Among all the viziers of Meḥmed II's reign, Maḥmūd Paşa held a special place, since not only

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63   Erünsal, "Fâtih Devri Kütüphaneleri", 70.

64   See Ayaṣofya endowment periodic registers in Tekindağ, "Ayasofya tahrir defterlerine", 305 and Ünver, *Fatih Külliyesi*, 10-11.

65   See the endowment deed of ʿĪṣā Bey dated 839/1435-36 on page 58 in the appendix of Ünver, *Fatih Külliyesi*. Also Mollā Ḥüsrev authenticated the deed of the medrese of İznik (Bilge, *İlk Osmanlı Medreseleri*, 297).

66   "ʿArab u ʿAcem ü Rūm'dan māhir miʿmārlar ve mühendisler getürüb [...]", as well as "Ve Ayaṣofya'yı ve sūr-ı Ḳosṭanṭīniyye'yi meremmet idüb bināsın tecdīd etti" (Ṭursun Beg, *Târîh-i Ebü'l-Feth*, 71 and 74-5 respectively). For the section on job specifications and salary amounts (veẓāʾif) for the case of Ayaṣofya mosque, see *Fatih Mehmet II Vakfiyeleri*, 166-70, ff. 305-13.

67   For job specifications and salary amounts at the Zeyrek mosque, see *Fatih Mehmet II Vakfiyeleri*, 170-1, ff. 314-16. There is no position for a bookkeeper or a librarian included in the deed.

68   This fact is evidenced by the colophons of certain books originally belonged to the Zeyrek medrese (Ünver, *Fatih Külliyesi*, 15-16; Cunbur, "Fatih Devri Kütüphaneleri", 6 and Şehsuvaroğlu, *İstanbul'da 500 Yıllık*, 16). A copy of *Kīmyā-ye saʿāda* included in SK, MS Hz. Halid 178 has a note stating that it was endowed to the library of the Eyüb medrese by Meḥmed II's grand vizier Ḳaramanī Meḥmed in 884/1480 (see Ünver, "Sadrazam Karamanlı".

69   "Eyyûb Vakfiyesinin Tercümesi", in *Fatih Mehmed II Vakfiyeleri*, 317.

70   "The Ayaṣofya medrese is at the same level as the Ṣaḥn medreses [...] if a professor in a medrese position of twenty-five aspers in the içil [Istanbul, Edirne, Bursa, and their environs] wants to become a judge, he is appointed to a judgeship with a salary of forty five aspers" (Meḥmed II's Ḳānūnnāme was translated and quoted in Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans*, 70-3; for the original text, see *Kanunnâme-i Âl-i Osman*, 11-12).

71   The Sultan's Code of Law assigned the salary of fifty aspers per day to a teacher at the Ṣaḥn, whereas İdrīs-i Bitlisī assigned hundred aspers per day (İdrîs-i Bitlisî, *Heşt Behişt VII. Ketibe*, 75). Compared to the salaries at the Ṣaḥn – fifty or hundred aspers a day – a two hundred-asper daily salary was twice the distinction (pāye), showing the prestige of the position (see Erünsal, "Fâtih Devri Kütüphaneleri", 60-1).

72   "Baʿde medrese ḥücerātınıñ üzerine bir ṭabaḳa daḫı binā olunub ḥücerāt ṭarḥ olunmaḳ Sulṭān Bāyezīd Ḫān'dır" (Ayvansarâyî, *Hadîkatü'l-Cevâmiʿ*, 42).

was he the longest standing grand vizier, but also was known for his patronage activities and close ties to the learned class. His tenure did not last long and, as noted earlier, Maḥmūd Paşa lost the Sultan's favor and was eventually killed due to his alleged poisoning of the prince Muṣṭafā who supposedly had an affair with his second wife.[73] During his tenure, Maḥmūd Paşa was the second most influential man in the empire as a patron of arts and sciences. He was the only grand vizier of the time to build more than one mosque under his name and was even regarded as a popular figure among common men with a hagiography assigned to his name and legacy.[74] Before falling from favor, Maḥmūd Paşa was regardless a loyal supporter of the Sultan's policies and the key figure in introducing the most accomplished scholars from the learned class to him and his entourage.[75] He showed favor and benevolence to the members of the academic community (ṭarīḳ-ı ʿulemā),[76] and was remembered for his regular scholarly gatherings (sing. meclis) and his personal support for scholars like Mollā İyās and Mollā ʿAbdülḳerīm, the latter of whom allegedly helped him quit drinking wine.[77]

Maḥmūd Paşa provided further financial support for the ulema, and he was one of the engineers of the incorporation of the Ottoman learned class into the court and religious bureaucracy. He subsequently built two medreses, one in Istanbul and another in the village of Hasköy near Edirne.[78] The latter was a granted library endowment by the grand vizier, and the books were recently transferred to the mosque of Sultan Selīm I upon the demolition of the medrese in 1914.[79] Apart from his endowments, Maḥmūd Paşa, who was also present at the Zeyrek-Ḫocazāde debate along with the Sultan, was an acclaimed patron of poets and historians. Two significant histories, the poet-historian Enverī's *Düsturnāme*, in Ottoman Turkish, and historian Şükrullāh's (d. after 868/1464) *Beḥcet al-tawārīkh*, in Persian, were also dedicated to him.[80]

Whether Maḥmūd Paşa belonged to the learned class remains debatable but Ṭaşḳöprizāde, who generously included many scholars of the day in his *al-Shaqāʾiq*, did not have such an entry for him. In some anecdotal instances, Maḥmūd Paşa, yet, had been considered as an ideal vizier with a scholarly background who was mostly remembered for his support for the learned class.[81] His portrayal had also changed over the course of the next century. Later historians like Gelibolulu Ālī in particular instrumentalized his case to criticize one of the later grand viziers such as Rüstem Paşa (d.

73 Uzunçarşılı, "Fatih Sultan Mehmed'in Vezir-i".

74 Uçman, "Menâkıb-ı Mahmud Paşa-ı"; Ortaylı, "Osmanlı Toplumunda".

75 Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs*, 388, 368-9.

76 Ünver, "Mahmud Paşa Vakıfları", 69.

77 Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs*, 302-3.

78 "Maḥmūd Paşa İstanbul'da bir ʿimāret bünyād idüb yanında bir medrese yapdı ve Edirne civārında Ḫaṣ Köy'de bir medrese ve Ṣofya'da bir cāmiʿ yapub" (Neşrī, *Ǧihānnümā*, 141).

79 Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs*, 307-9; and for the number of books in philosophy and logic, Ünver, "Mahmud Paşa Vakıfları", 69.

80 As for the Ottoman historical writing in Persian as well as Şükrullāh's contributions to the genre, see Yıldız, "Ottoman Historical Writing in Persian", 443-50.

81 "Lā-siyyemā ṭarīḳ-ı ʿulemā'dan ẓuhūr ve ṣadāret rütbesine bir ṣadr-ı meşhūr olan Maḥmūd Paşa nevverallāhu merḳadahu taʿyīn olunub merātib-i ʿulemā'ya, ol şehryār-ı ṣāḥib-i saʿādet-i maʿnā-maʿrifeti rāġıb bulması iʿtilā-i feżāʾili istidʿā eyledi" (Gelibolulu, *Künhü'l-aḥbār*, 2: 69).

968/1561), a figure accused of being one of the chief instigators of bureaucratic corruption.[82]

2.3 Critiquing the Sultan. Scholarly Autonomy, Pride, and Academic Rivalry

On the one hand, Sultan Meḥmed II's Code of Law and his endowments might have established certain fifteenth-century standards in terms of teaching, appointment, and career track; and, on the other, there were many other cases in which the critics of Meḥmed II's authoritarian tendencies raised their voices against the breach of his own conduct by direct intervention in bureaucratic and scholarly functioning.

The sixteenth-century historian Gelibolulu Ālī offered an alternative narrative in which he argued that there were certain rules observed in scholarly promotion coming from the centralizing reign of Bāyezīd I (r. 1389/791-1403/805). Having set strict rules, Meḥmed II, ironically, breached them by intervening in ulema career paths. Gelibolulu credited him with the early Ottoman structural reforms, the intellectual vision, and the scientific patronage but he also backdated the charges of bureaucratic degeneration to Meḥmed II's reign, having set him as the main instigator of decline in scholarship since he incessantly intervened in certain ulema career paths by removing them from their merited posts often on a whim.

In the cases of Ḥocazāde and the Sufi-scholar Sinān Paşa (d. 891/1486), the Sultan, for instance, violated legal conventions, as his bad temper resulted in rash decisions that contravened the rules outlined in his Code of Law concerning academic appointment and merit.[83] Again in the cases of Ḥocazāde and his junior rival Ḥatībzāde (see chapter 3), the Sultan violated the legal conventions by appointing scholars to inferior teaching posts for punishment.[84]

Fifteenth-century scholars had their code of honor, and there were many proud ones who turned down bureaucratic opportunities offered by the Sultan since, for them, this meant succumbing to the political authority and leaving the path of knowledge. Scholarly pride did not, however, deter scholars from challenging others in scholarly debates to receive favors from certain patrons including the Sultan himself. The late sixteenth-century scholar and Shaykh al-Islām Ḥoca Saʿdeddīn's biobibliographical dictionary *Tācüʾt-tevārīḫ* offered numerous references to intellectual rivalry among certain Ottoman scholars, and stressed scholarly pride and respect as common

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82 Gelibolulu Ālī, *Künhüʾl-aḫbār*, 69, 76.

83 Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 199.

84 "Eger çi ki ecdād-ı ʿiẓāmından Yıldırım Bāyezīd Ḫān merḥūmdan kendülerüñ zamān-ı saʿādetlerine gelince vāḳıʿ olan āḫāʾ-ı kirām, bu ḳavānīnüñ bir miḳdārını icrā buyurmuşlar; lākin biʾt-tamām tertīb ü ihtimām u iḫtitām niyyetini güyā ki Ebüʾl-Fetḥ Sulṭān Meḥemmed Ḫān merḥūmuñ meṣūbatı defterine taʿlīḳ ḳılmışlar. Ammā bu nehc-i laṭīf, meslūk-i vażʿ-ı şerīf olduḳdan soñra baʿżı fevāżıl-ı meşāhir ve müʾellifīn-i ṣāhib-i taḥrīr olan neḥārir zümreʾ-i celīlesinden merḥūm Ḥatībzāde ve Ḥocazāde ve anlaruñ emṣāli fużalāʾ-ı pāk-nihāda ṭayy-i merātibe riʿāyet olınub otuzar aḳça medreseden ḥāceʾ-i şehryārī ve ḳāḍıʿaskerlik gibi pāye-i kām-kārī rütbe-i sāmiye ile iltifāt ü raġbet buyurmaları vuḳūʿ buldı. Yaʿnī ki, fużalā-ı nādiredān ve feylesūfān-ı mevṣūfān-ı zīşān, ḫuṣūṣ aṣḥāb-ı teʾlīf nāmındaki rūşen-i rū-şināsān ḥaḳḳında ki, her birinüñ ḳadri "waʾl-qad iṣṭafaynāhu fī al-dunyā" ḫilʿatiyle maʿni müzeyyendür. Anlaruñ riʿāyetinde metāʿ-ı himmete endāze lāzım olmadığı remz-i vāżıḥları ile şüyūʿ buldı" (Gelibolulu, *Künhüʾl-aḫbār*, 73-4).

themes. The work interjected the lines below introducing a section exemplifying how another contemporary scholar, the competitive Ḫatībzāde (d. 901/1495), took pride in his profession as a scholar and never paid lip service to the ruling authority in order to receive high-paid judgeships.

the perpetuity of the state of the Ottomans is due to
[the autonomy of scholars]
her glory comes from such respect for scholars[85]

An utmost devotion to the academia by upholding the autonomy of scholars was a must but this code did not deter scholars to initiate personal attacks. A contemporary theologian, Ḫatībzāde was famous for being supremely ambitious in proving his superiority in knowledge. Similar to the case of Renaissance verbal fights over academic priority, it was common in the Ottoman context to challenge a fellow scholar to prove one's superiority in terms of scholarly rectitude. In cases such as that of Ḫatībzāde, this could go so far as challenging a senior scholar (whether Ḫocazāde or the celebrated sheikh al-Islām Efḍālzāde [d. 908/1503]) and making rash claims in such debates which were often negatively received by his opponents and other arbiters.

According to our sources, Ḫatībzāde's bold remarks during exchanges were sometimes interpreted as insulting and condescending by senior scholars, and he was often criticized for his insolence and combative behavior. During a discussion with the religious scholar Mollā ʿAlāʾeddīn-i ʿArabī concerning God's speech (*kalām*) and vision (*ru'ya*) in the presence of Bāyezīd II, Ḫatībzāde's words offended both the scholar and the Sultan. In order to appease the Sultan, Ḫatībzāde later prepared a treatise that arbitrated various positions dedicating the work to His Excellency.[86] However the Sultan rejected it and, subsequently, Ḫatībzāde complained about receiving no money from the Sultan despite his dedication, threatening to move to Mecca for the rest of his life. Knowing that the Sultan would be angered by Ḫatībzāde's abandonment of his teaching post in the lands of Rūm, the grand vizier Çandarlı İbrahīm Paşa (d. 905/1499) sent ten thousand aspers from his own pocket; yet this time Ḫatībzāde, who was full of himself, got angry for receiving such a trivial amount.[87] This anecdote suggests that the fifteenth-century scholars were not easily intimidated by the ruling authority and were instead able to exercise their autonomy, professional pride, in spite of the Sultans' prerogative.

Despite Meḥmed II's determined interference with scholars' decisions and lives, scholarly pride was tolerated to a certain degree, and scholars

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85   "Devām-ı devlet-i ʿOṣmānīyān bu vażʿladır | riʿāyet-i ʿulemāʾdır medār-ı cāhları" (Ḫoca Saʿdeddīn, *Tācüʾt-tevārīḫ*, 2: 484).

86   Two copies of this work, *Risāla fī baḥth al-ru'ya wa'l-kalām*, are recorded at the Topkapı Palace, MS TSMK 4947 and 4948 (see Karatay, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi*, 90). Also there is a copy recorded in SK, MS Ayasofya 2276.

87   "Bir gün Sulṭān Bāyezīd Ḫān Ḥażretleri ʿaḳd-ı meclis-i ʿulemā idüb Ḫatībzāde ile Mevlānā ʿAlāʾeddīn-i ʿArabī meyānında baḥs-i ʿilmī cereyān idicek Ḫatībzāde'niñ baʿżı kelimātı bā-iş-i inḥirāf ḫāṭır-ı ḫāṭīr pādişāhı olıcaḳ keyfiyet-i ḥāle mütefaṭṭen olub mebḥaş-ı rü'yet ve kelām taḥḳīḳine müteʿalliḳ bir risāle yazub ism-i sāmī-i Sulṭān-ı zemān ile taṣdīr idüb vezīr İbrahīm Paşa eliyle meclis-i hümāyūna īṣāl itdükde maḥz-ı ḳabūle vuṣūl olmayub renceş-i ḫāṭırlarıñ iẓhār buyurdılar. Ḫatībzāde recā-ı cāʾize ideriken ḫilāf-ı melḥūẓı ẓuhūr idecek vezīr-i mezbūre varub Mekke mücāveretine icāzet istedi vezīr gördi ki ʿarż iderse vaḥşet-ziyād olmaḳ muḳarrerdir. Birḳaç günden ṣoñra kendi mālından on biñ aḳçe cāʾize-i Sulṭāniye ṣūretinde irsāl eyledi. Lākin Ḫatībzāde cāʾizeniñ te'ḫīr ve taḳlīli vezīrden ẓann idüb iẓhār-ı renceş eyledi" (Ḫoca Saʿdeddīn, *Tācüʾt-tevārīḫ*, 2: 484).

were afforded respect and immunity as the members of the learning class. In contrast to the sixteenth-century ulema, the scholars of this age were not fully incorporated into the bureaucratic apparatus. In other words, their actions were not fully controlled by the ruling class, and it was common for a scholar to take easily pride in refusing high-paid judgeships. For instance, prior to a royal meeting, the future Shaykh al-Islām Efḍālzāde would greet any high-ranking bureaucrat entering the room. Having hit his chest hard with the back of his hand, the proud Ḫatībzāde again told Efḍālzāde that he ruined the reputation of the ulema by submitting to the ruling authority.[88]

In this sense, there was a code among fifteenth-century scholars that receiving a non-academic job was something to be looked down upon, and a great number of scholars actively took pride in their decision to reject various bureaucratic posts. In this vein, the famed fifteenth-century theologians Ḫayālī and Ḫatībzāde bragged about their decisions to never stray from the path of knowledge (*'ilm*) by assuming judgeships.[89] Similarly, Mollā 'İẕārī claimed that the only mistake that the master Ḫocazāde committed in life was his choosing to take up non-academic posts as in the cases of the judgeships of Edirne, Constantinople, and İzniḳ – though it was known that he was in some way forced to make these decisions, having ended up regretting them.[90]

Similar to the early Abbasid context, there were also theological debates with certain Christian scholars or monks in an attempt to proselytize.[91] These religiously motivated debates were common features of the fourteenth-century Ottoman world, especially when Thrace and western parts of Anatolia belonged to the Byzantine realm. As the Ottomans established strong educational institutions in now fully integrated territories of Thrace and Anatolia, the attention shifting from proselytization to the reconciliation of Avicennan thought with philosophical theology. One example of such proselytizing debates was the case of a certain Zeynī shaykh known as 'Alī, one of the successors of 'Abdurraḥīm-i Merzifonī. Likewise, it was reported that before the conquest, Mollā Ḫayrüddīn debated forty Christian monks at Ayaṣofya and, due to his finesse in theological assessment, all the monks allegedly converted to Islam, yet keeping this fact a secret.[92]

Many scholars of the early Ottoman world were members of religious groups, and the Zeyniyye order, which was known for its strict work ethics, was among the most popular. An often-recorded maxim in biographical sources is that a good scholar should not pursue worldly gain. This code of conduct possessed affinities with the Sufi concept of renunciation of worldly affairs. It was due to this maxim that many of the fifteenth-century figures had humble outfits and, aside from their achievements in religious and ra-

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88 "Efḍālzāde erkān-ı saʿādet ṭarafına meyl idüb selām vericek el aṛkası ile göğsüne urub 'arż-ı 'ilmi hettiñ eylediñ didi" (Ḫoca Saʿdeddīn, *Tācü't-tevārīḫ*, 2: 483).

89 Ḫoca Saʿdeddīn, *Tācü't-tevārīḫ*, 2: 483.

90 Ḫoca Saʿdeddīn, *Tācü't-tevārīḫ*, 2: 472.

91 For an overview of the early Ottoman polemical literature, see Krstić, *Constested Conversions*, 6-12, 51-74. And for a fifteenth-century case of an autobiographical narrative of conversion (Abdallāh al-Tarjumān's *Tuḥfa*) influenced by the genre of Muslim disputation/polemic, see Szpiech, *Conversation and Narrative*, 200-13; Krstić, "Reading Abdallāh".

92 "Şeyḫ ile İsṭanbul'a feṭḥ olunmamış iken varub Ayaṣofya'ya girdiñ anda sākin olan rāhibler ile Şeyḫ Ḥaẓretleri mübāḥaṣe idüb ilzām idecek ḳırḳ rāhib İslām'a gelüb İslāmlarını ketm itdiler" (Ḫoca Saʿdeddīn, *Tācü't-tevārīḫ*, 2: 466).

tional sciences, they never boasted about their riches, worldly gains or bureaucratic jobs that they accepted.[93]

Religious etiquette did not mean that there was no open rivalry among religious scholars. Jealousy (*ḥased*) among scholars was a serious challenge, and many anecdotes in biographical dictionaries concern bold exchanges between scholars, as well as the machinations initiated by various state dignitaries. For example, Persian émigré scholar ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's student Mollā ʿAbdülḳādir[94] was also a tutor and an advisor to the Sultan. Prior to an appointment with the Sultan, Mollā ʿAbdülḳādir was feeling weak, being excused from meeting him. It is recorded that Maḥmūd Paşa, who will be later replaced by another of Ṭūsī's students through palace intrigue, convinced the young scholar for a walk on that same day through the intermediary of certain hypocrites at the palace, and having heard that the scholar accompanied Maḥmūd Paşa in the palace garden, the Sultan believed that Mollā ʿAbdülḳādir lied to him about his sickness. Meḥmed II, later on, dismissed him from his post.[95]

As a common deal-breaker among scholars, jealousy generally manifested in fights over the protocol. When a senior scholar or a high-ranking official entered the room, the other parties were expected to rise out of respect. If a scholar sat on the left of the Sultan instead of the right, this could signify that the former held an inferior position. All these particularities of saluting and demonstrating respect were figured in the motivations behind verbal exchanges among scholars. For instance, Mollā Ḫüsrev and Mollā Gürānī (d. 893/1488) were the most reputable jurist-scholars of the time, and there was a known scholarly rivalry between them. In court meetings, controversy often emerged over who would sit on the Sultan's right. Knowing that Meḥmed II thought highly of Mollā Ḫüsrev, Mollā Gürānī sent a humble message to the Sultan explaining that he would rather prefer to stand during the meetings to come. In response to this act of humility, Meḥmed II decided that Gürānī should sit on his right during meetings. Upon hearing this, Mollā Ḫüsrev was reported to have said that teaching and learning (*ʿilm*) superseded political affairs. Thereupon he excused himself from official meetings and moved to Brusa to establish his own medrese.[96]

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93 Wealth and affluence might have played a role in the production and transmission of knowledge especially in educational novelty, but it should also be noted that there was already an early generation of Ottoman scholars who relied on the (Zeynī) principle of poverty, who rejected any career opportunities outside academia that would instigate their incorporation into the bureaucratic apparatus. While the economic means do have an impact on scholarly novelties, one could imagine other context where money was not the only determiner (see the discussion in Shafir's review article of Küçük's monograph *Science without Leisure*, "The Almighty Akçe", 269).

94 "Ṭūsī'niñ tilmīẕi" (Ḫoca Saʿdeddīn, *Tācüʾt-tevārīḫ*, 2: 501).

95 "Sulṭān Meḥemmed Ḫān Ḥażretlerine muʿallim olub taḳarrubı bir ṭabaḳaya irişdi ki Maḥmūd Paşa ḥased idüb bir güne engīz ile ḥayzüʾl-iltifātdan dūr itdi". The marginalia of the text further comments on the incident as follows: "Ṣūret-i engīz bu idi ki bir gün Pādişāh esneyüb mizācında nevʿ-i fütūr olmaġın iʿtiẕār itmişidi. Baʿzı muṣāḥibleri ki ṣoḥbetinde münāfıḳ ve nihānī Paşa ile muvāfıḳ idiler. Tenezzüh içün bir baġçe seyrine taḥrīk idüb Paşa'ya ḫaber virmişler. Paşa daḫı Pādişāh'a ʿarż idüb istiʿlām buyurıldıḳda seyre gitdüği ṣābit olıcaḳ rençeş-i ḫāṭırların ẓāhir idüb ʿizz-i ḥużūrlarından dūr itdiler" (Ḫoca Saʿdeddīn, *Tācüʾt-tevārīḫ*, 2: 501).

96 "Ḥattā Sulṭān-ı ʿaṣr ittiḫāẕ-ı velīme idüb üstādı olan Mevlānā Gürānī ḫāṭrını taṭbīb içün ne maḥalde cülūs iderler deyü istiḫbār itdiler Mevlānā Gürānī daḫı böyle ḫayr gönderdi ki bize lāyıḳ olan oldur ki ol meclisde cülūs itmeyüb iḳāmet-i ḫıdmet-i mevḳıfında ḳıyām ide ve bu ḫaber-dīlāvīz ve żamīr-menīr-i pādişāhīye teʾs̱īr idüb cānib-i yemīnlerini Mevlānā'ya taʿayyun itdiler. Mevlānā Ḫüsrev ve cānib-i yesārda cülūsa rāżī olmayub gayret-i ʿilmiyye böyle iḳtiżā ider ki ben ol meclisde ḥāżır olmayım meżmūnı müştemil bir mektūb bedīʿüʾl-üslūb inşā idüb

2.4 Court Debate Culture and Palatine Libraries

The debate examined here likely took place at the Topkapı Palace's ashlar masonry building called the 'Inner Treasury' in its L-shaped suite of four halls, whose architectural features and multifunctional design have been recently studied by Gülru Necipoğlu.[97] The Treasury-cum-Bath, also known as the Meḥmed the Conqueror's Pavilion (*Fātiḥ Köşkü*) in the later centuries, was the first royal edifice built by Meḥmed II around the year 866/1462-63. This complex was also a preferred site for philosophical and theological discussions, including those about the principles of the Peripatetics.[98] As detailed by Greek chronicler Kritovoulos (d. 1470), Meḥmed II preoccupied himself with philosophical debates in the summer of 869/1465, in the company of the grand vizier Maḥmūd Paşa, as well as other scholars, including George Amiroutzes and his two sons.[99] The Zeyrek-Ḫocazāde debate dated as 871/1466 may very well have unfolded in Meḥmed II's palatine library, which housed the most quintessential book collection of its time with more than 5,700 volumes in the inventory. Its library holdings surpassed those of premier libraries in Europe, such as the semi-public library at the Vatican, the library of Palazzo Medici, as well as those by Matthias Corvinus, the King of Hungary (r. 1458-90), and Federico da Montefeltro (1422-82), the Duke of Urbino.[100] Some of the theological, philosophical, and scientific debates might have taken place in the Sultan's throne room with a niche on the upper right corner for the throne seating, which most probably also housed the Sultan's library (see Room no. 2 below located in **[fig. 1a]** Ground plan and its recent photos in **[figs 2a-b]**).[101]

Meḥmed II had a keen interest in Arabic Peripatetic (Avicennan) philosophy, as well as those of other schools, such as Suhrawardī's Illuminationism, an aspect of his patronage in rational sciences also praised in certain panegyrics. This is evidenced in the poems of Persian Sufi-poet ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī (d. 898/1492) and Amiroutzes, which praised his thoroughgoing support for Aristotelian and Platonic strands of thought.[102] It is no coincidence that the philosophy corpus, numerically dominated by Avicenna's works and their commentaries, was the second largest set of manuscripts in librarian ʿAṭūfī's famed palace inventory prepared for Bāyezīd II in the year 908/1502-03.[103] The inventory, which also includes the book acquisitions bequeathed by Meḥmed II, has been recently studied and analyzed in

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dīvān-ı ʿālīye gönderüb hemāndem keştīye girüb Brusaʾya vardı. Bu belde-i mezbūrede bir medrese binā' idüb tedrīse şurūʿ eyledi" (Ḫoca Saʿdeddīn, *Tācü't-tevārīḫ*, 2: 464).

[97] Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge", 3.
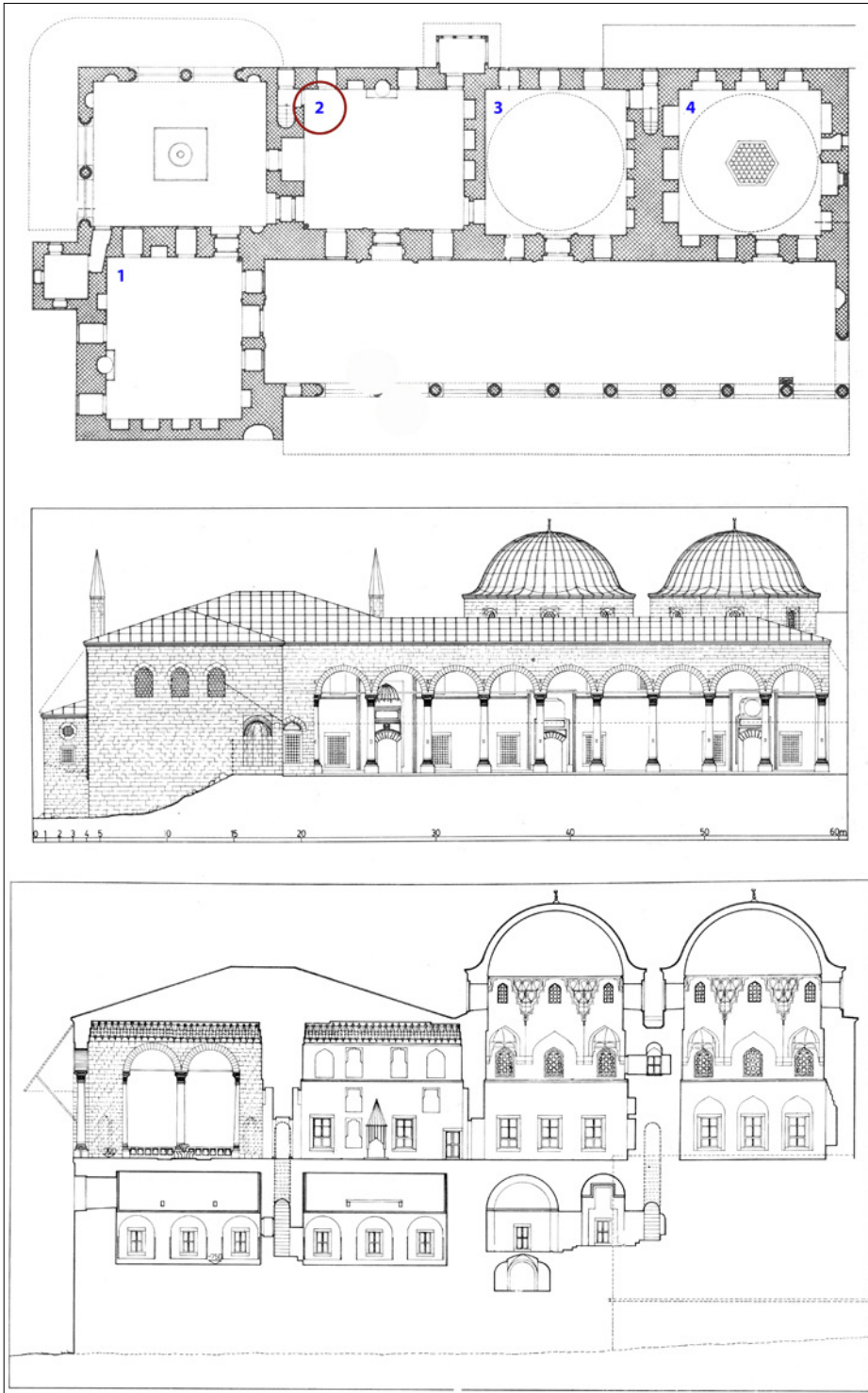
[98] Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed*, 14.

[99] Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed*, 177, 209-10 and Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge", 10. Amiroutzes had two sons, Basil and Alexander, who might have converted into Islam after Meḥmed II's death in 1481 in order to save their position under his son (Argyriou, Lagarrigue, "Georges Amiroutzes et son Dialogue", 41-4; Monfasani, *George Amiroutzes*, 10).

[100] Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge", 16-17. Also see Csapodi, *The Corvinian Library*; Tanner, *The Raven King*, 8-12 and Arbizzoni, Bianca, Peruzzi, *Principi e signori*.

[101] Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge", 10.

[102] "Rāh-e Mashshaʾiyān ze tu wāḍiḥ | nūr-e Ishrāqiyān be tu lāyiḥ || ṭabʿ-e pāk-e tu rā ki vaqqādast | fahm-e ḥikmat-e ṭabīʿī uftādast || bar dilat ḥikmat-e ilāhī tāft | ke rukh az ẓulmat-e malāhī tāft" (al-Jāmī, *Dīwān*, 174). For Amiroutzes' panegyric, see § 2.6.

[103] Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge", 44.

Figures 1a-c Inner Treasury (Treasury-Bath complex). [1a] Ground plan. [1b] Elevation from the third courtyard. [1c] Cross-section from the third courtyard (Reproduced from Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge", 4. Drawings: Eldem, Akozan, *Topkapı Sarayı*, pls 71-4)

Figures 2a-b   Inner Treasury. [Left] Second hall (throne room) interior with throne alcove and fireplace. [Right] First hall interior with multi-tiered niches and fireplace. (Reproduced from Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge", 6; Photos: Devrim, "Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi", 90-1)

two volumes by a number of leading contemporary academics with invaluable contextualizations, who commented on each genre based on the scholarship of the day. Observing that the collection encompassed non-Islamic philosophical and scientific works alongside others reminiscent of pre-Islamic universalism, Cemal Kafadar has underscored Meḥmed II's universalist and cosmopolitan ambitions in the same line with the competitive post-Timurid scholarly traditions.[104]

With regard to God's unicity and his lack in participation in other beings, Amiroutzes defined God, in an attempt at assimilating Aristotelian metaphysics with late Greek Neoplatonism and Christianity,[105] as "incommunicability in itself, which, whatever it is, subsists from itself, sufficient in itself and unchangeable, existing in radical unity and oneness, transcending all communion, sharing no relation and being unparticipated in".[106] With certain affinities with the Avicennan paradigm, Amiroutzes further defined God

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104   Kafadar, "Between Amasya and Istanbul", 1: 99-100. Contrary to the commonly held misperception that medrese libraries represented a strict Sunnī Orthodoxy in terms of inventory holdings, Konrad Hirschler has argued that the books held at the Ashrafiyya library in medieval Damascus were equipped with the rationalist way of approaching theological questions (Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus*, 102-32, esp. 122). On the other hand, an opposite trend can be observed in Persia especially during and after the Mongol invasion: the Mongol rulers preferred not to subsidize religious or theological titles over science and literature, a fact that might reflect the Mongol's reversal of Seljūq Sunnism and scholarly standardization (Biran, "Libraries, Books, and the Transmission of Knowledge", 489 and al-Ṭiqṭaqā, *Al-Fakhri on the Systems of Government*, 16). Also see for the underrepresentation of theological and philosophical sciences in the library of a thirteenth-century Shīʿite scholar, Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work*.

105   Monfasani, *George Amiroutzes*, 41. Almost no philosophical writings of his were known, yet Monfasani has recently come across a group of fifteen tractates of Amiroutzes in a manuscript in Toledo, which were later edited and published by the author. In a work written against the Platonic *metempsychosis*, Amiroutzes brought a Christian-Aristotelian bent when demolishing the position (Monfasani, "A Note on George Amiroutzes", 125-6).

106   Monfasani, *George Amiroutzes*, 38.

as the One, the Indefinite Dyad, i.e. God, "that cannot be predicated other than oneness itself".[107] Conceptually speaking, oneness can be "combined with being Being"; however, it is not necessarily combined with oneness since oneness is prior to being. In the words of Amiroutzes, "if a particular thing were self-existing, it would not be said that something is added to it, making what exists by virtue of itself and by its own existence prior to what participates in it".[108] This, in turn, sets the One's precedence over the many.

Philosophical discussions commissioned at palace libraries were common features of the 'connected histories' of early modern intellectual history.[109] For instance, Pico della Mirandola (1463-94) completed his treatise *De Ente et Uno* (On Being and Unity) during his residency at the Badia Fiesolana near Florence in 1490-91.[110] Pico's work, similar to the content of the debate at hand, covers the question of God's oneness, singularity, and simplicity with regard to the contingent multitude in the world, yet different from the Aristotelian-Avicennan scope of the Ottoman context,[111] his treatise does not hold the validity of the Peripatetics but tries to reconcile Aristotle and Plato in light of other traditions of the past, including schools as wide as Christian Neoplatonism (Dionysius the Areopagite), Christian Latin tradition (St. Anselm, Duns Scotus, St. Thomas etc.), Arabic Aristotelianism (Avicenna, Averroes), as well as Kabbalah.[112] Despite his use of a greater range of sources, Mirandola, in line with Ḥocazāde's mission of verification, aims to "vindicate truth"[113] with an attempt at synthesizing different schools of thought.

The Badia Fiesolana was one of the most spectacular libraries of its time, with a richness comparable to the size of Bāyezīd II's library, where, in a similar fashion, Aristotelian works were given much more weight in the li-

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107 Quoted from Monfasani, "Tractate I. The Philosopher What the Ancients Taught Concerning Being", *George Amiroutzes*, 71.

108 Quoted from Monfasani, "Tractate XIV. The Same Author Concerning the First Principle", *George Amiroutzes*, 187.

109 With regard to the notions of universalism and humanism under the broad head of 'historical anthropology' in the connected early modern world, see Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories", 739-40.

110 Dressen, "Peripatetici pariter et platonici", 376.

111 Maybe with the exception of the term *al-i'tibārāt*'s connotation in Suhrawardī's Illuminationism, the terms (and scholars) cited and commented in the Zeyrek-Ḥocazāde debate tend to be rather related to the Arabic Peripatetic tradition or its post-classical critique by certain theologians. There does not seem to be any direct Platonist figures cited in response to the Aristotelian-Avicennan worldview. Due to the dominance of the latter school during this period, there does not seem to be any medrese handbooks positing Illuminatonist doctrines. On the contrary, there tend to be parts in certain treatises, in which Suhrawardī's doctrines were criticized (İbn Kemāl, "Risāla fī ziyāda al-wujūd", 9-49). With regard to the question whether there was an Ottoman Illuminationist school, see Arıcı, "Osmanlı İlim Dünyasında İşrâkî Bir Zümreden Söz Etmek Mümkün mü?".

112 Hamm, *Pico della Mirandola of Being and Unity*. Mirandola's discourse on unicity covers the similar ground with the Zeyrek-Ḥocazāde debate, especially when questioning how God's four attributes did not go against His unicity. Here Avicenna's view is given in light of Averroes' criticism, and by using Platonic vocabulary, Mirandola defined unicity as the most expense *genera*, a view that the Arabic Avicenna would go against since God, for him, cannot be defined by logical categories, such as genus and species (Hamm, *Pico della Mirandola of Being and Unity*, ch. 8, 28).

113 See Pico's letter to his friend Ermolao Barbaro, where he refers to his project as "vindicating truth" translated by Hamm in *Pico della Mirandola of Being and Unity*, 6.

brary holding over Platonic texts.[114] To evaluate the quality of the Badia library stock requires some thoughtful attention to the conventions of reading and study and, having studied the inventory, Angela Dressen notes that the size of patristic and theological works at the Badia have often been downplayed to the extent that the biggest collection at the library constitutes theological scholastic works. The fifteenth-century study practices suggest that the influence of theology, especially in the philosophical discourses produced at the Badia, was far more reaching than previously assumed.[115] An avid collector of books and a denizen of the ancient Near East, Pico was even accounted as having penned a treatise "defending the scholastic philosophers against the charge that their barbarous style disqualified them as thinkers".[116] Ḥocazāde's synthetic method reconciling different aspects of knowledge, including Avicennan philosophy and post-classical theology, had an affinity with Pico's syncretic approach due to his constant dialogue with different schools of thought and attempts at scholarly arbitration.[117]

2.5 The Social Functions of Scholarly Patronage. Legitimacy, Honor, and Prestige

To conclude, patronage was a productive and dynamic system that propelled clientele-fostering networks and thought processes, rewarded ingenuity, crafted scientific approaches, and legitimized knowledge based on the trends of the day. The context of Ottoman courtly life and scientific patronage indeed shaped the practice and presentation of the sciences in the eyes of the learned class, but given the fact that getting bureaucratic favors or posts at the Ottoman court was looked down upon by many fifteenth-century reputable scholars, it would be an oversimplification to limit the scientific culture only to distinction and social taste,[118] i.e. not amounting to content and scientific criteria. The fifteenth-century Ottoman scholarship did not establish a fitting discourse based on court satisfaction but, rather, fostered objectivity within the confines of the present scholarship. The rule of scholarly aptness was based on arbitration and verification, both of which depended on the correct use of syllogisms, rigorous argumentation, and the knowledge of past scholarship.

Court culture was a recognized tool to legitimize the sciences and, in turn, the study of sciences also sought legitimization through patronage. Recent scholarship with a sociological bent tended to overpower the role of courtly life, by reducing the cultivation of science and the arts to courtly manners,

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114 Dressen, *The Library of the Badia Fiesolana*, 48. I would like to thank the author for sharing a copy of her monograph with me.

115 Dressen, "Peripatetici pariter et platonici", 371-3. Also see other secondary literature regarding the weight of theology in Pico's philosophy: Monnerjahn, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola* and Dulles, *Princeps Concordiae*, 144-64.

116 See Pico's another letter to Ermolao Barbaro mentioned in Grafton, *Commerce with the Classics*, 109.

117 Behind the synthetic formulations of both Italian and Ottoman contexts, there also lied developments in library classification and cataloguing systems which were becoming more diversified and, in some ways, universalistic based on the idea of the unity of science (see Besson, *Medieval Classification and Cataloguing*).

118 Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

social propriety, and decency. In his tendentious study Mario Biagioli has pushed on the image of the Italian polymath Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) as a courtier, arguing that his courtly role was integral to his scientific achievement and artisanship to a degree that Galileo had to refashion himself as a successful philosopher – thereby downplaying his interest in mechanics to receive sustained favor and patronage.[119] It is true that scholars did not live in a vacuum and their concern for patronage and social climbing, thus, were not external to Galileo's scientific pursuits. On the one hand, Galileo's increasing commitment to Copernicanism and his self-fashioning as a successful court client fed off each other, constructing a socio-professional identity that led him to put forth a new natural philosophy within the confines of his tenure and professional choices;[120] on the other, it would be simplistic to treat the patronage networks as no more than labels and resources to be tapped into by clever opportunists playing language games.

The modes of behavior and etiquette in court debates indeed had close ties to the sociogenesis of the ruling class and its actions. As in Norbert Elias' coinage "civilizing process" regulated the self-image of the Sultan and his domain, which were shaped by a wide variety of facts determining his political absolutism based on the level of technology, the type of manners, the development of scientific knowledge, religious ideas, and customs.[121] Yet, for the sympathizers of the 'patronage-first' approach, it is a problem that the imperial patronage directed at scientific objectivity and scholarly argumentation may not still garner the sincere attention of patrons and influence their worldviews. In other words, the court debate might simply be a showcase of power, as well as a legitimizing tool for political absolutism to a degree that the patrons might simply lack commitment to the issues addressed.

It could be argued that court debates had an inner fallacy of associating the power's acknowledgment with objectivity and verity. On the one hand, the discourse of power may simply dismiss certain options and alternative explanations but, on the other, utilize them in its favor – whether through the utilization of physical objects (e.g. maps, commemorative coins, and medals), works of art imbued with a religious/cosmic undertone (e.g. Lorenzo de' Medici's commissioning of votive images at churches,[122] Louis XIV's ostentatious display of his sun image in plays), or theological and philosophical justifications (e.g. the Catholic theology of the *Corpus Mysticum* or the polymath Blaise Pascal's political commentary). In this regard, the Ottoman context was not significantly different from its other European and Islamicate counterparts.

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119   See Biagioli, *Galileo, Courtier*. In his first review, Michael Shank has argued that Biagioli downplays the scientific achievements of Galileo in order to assign a crucial role to the prevalent aristocratic culture, thereby playing by the evidence to bolster his point concerning his "social context-first approach". The trap of microhistory, for Shank, has the perils of disregarding the trajectory of intellectual continuity and scientific eruditions of a particular scholar. For Shank's review, Biagioli's reply, and the former's rejoinder: Shank, "Galileo's Day in Court"; Biagioli, "Playing with the Evidence" and Shank, "How Shall We Practice History?".

120   Biagioli, *Galileo, Courtier*, 1-8.

121   Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 1:, 3. As in the words of Huizinga, culture arises in the form of contest, proceeding in the shape or the mood of the game, and contest, in this regard, contributes to civilizing functions (Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 50).

122   Lowe, "Patronage and Territoriality", esp. 262. For a survey, Gombrich, "The Early Medici as Patrons of Art" and, for the role of Cosimo de' Medici (1389-1464) in artistic and religious propaganda for the new republic, see Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy*, 48-94 and Kent, "The Dynamic of Power".

The court society is undoubtedly connected to the advancing centralization of state power and might, and the image of the king, as in the classical case of Louis XIV, the *Roi Soleil*, has been often taken as an utmost model of the omnipotent absolute monarch.[123] In a similar fashion, Sultan Meḥmed II, who was known for his centralization policies in administration and had turned the fledgling principality into a world empire, attracted many scholars, artists, and literati from East to West.[124] He was never portrayed as an ignorant monarch. He was rather portrayed as meticulous in his decisions and determined to give the utmost chance to deserving philosophical and artistic traditions, at all costs.

Meḥmed II was an absolutist monarch, who was said to have gleamed like the Sun possessing divine wisdom – even by the Byzantine scholars and Italian humanists of the period.[125] The late Byzantine philosopher Georgios Amiroutzes (1400-70), whose acquaintance with the Sultan went back to the conquest of Trebizond in 866/1461, also praised the Sultan's patronage of Graeco-Arabic philosophy in a panegyric with allusions to both Aristotelian and Platonic traditions, and paralleled his virtuous character to the glimmering quality of the encompassing sun:

> O the Greatest Autocrat of Autocrats
> O the Khan above, the Highest of the Highest Ones,
> O the Most Brilliant Sun, the One, with your golden gleaming
> Rays, illuminating everything that yields
> O the One that shines, delighting most abundantly,
> O the One that holds the scepter over the universe, may You rejoice.[126]

In his panegyrics, Amiroutzes refers to Plato and Aristotle along with the latter's father-in-law Hermias (d. 341 BC) as the Sultan's ultimate virtuous models. Amiroutzes' second fragment above was adapted from Aristotle's "Hymn to Virtue" written in commemoration of Hermias, a funerary hymn that was recited by the initiates of Aristotle's school and philosophy.[127] Hermias, the tyrant of Atarneus and a companion of Platonists, was a great patron of philosophy who sponsored Aristotle during his exile in Assos, and the philosopher ultimately married to her daughter Pythias. Aristotle and the Peripatetics were indebted to him to such an extent that they had a reason to portray him as a devout student and patron of philosophy.[128]

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123   See Marin, *Portrait of the King*; Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, vol. 2 and Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*. Also a ruler of the Anatolian Seljūqs ʿAlā al-Dīn Kayḳubād I (d. 1220/616-1237/634) and the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen (r. 1220-50) refashioned themselves in their coins and seals after the models of pagan solar cult, such as that of Apollo and Sol Invictus and the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 963/1556-1014/1605), who was also the instigator of eclectic belief systems like 'Divine Faith' (*dīn-e ilāhī*) and 'Universal Peace' (*ṣulḥ-e kull*), was also preoccupied with the divine light imagery (see the articles by Suzan Yalman on Suhrawardī's use of light imagery in assigning a cosmic rulership to the Seljūq Sultan: "'Ala al-Din Kayqubad Illuminated", her research précis "Light of the Heavens and Earth" and "Repairing the Antique", 226-31).

124   Akasoy, "A Baghdad Court in Constantinople/Istanbul", 136-47.

125   Babinger, "Fatih Sultan Mehmet ve İtalya" and "Mehmed der Eroberer".

126   Janssens, van Deun, "George Amiroutzes". I want to thank Aslıhan Akışık for sharing this source and translating Amiroutzes' panegyric verse on the Sultan for this study. Also see Mirmiroğlu, "Fatih Sultan Mehmet", 98-9.

127   Renehan, "Aristotle as Lyric Poet" and LeVen, "Aristotle's Hymn to Virtue".

128   Ford, *Aristotle as Poet*, 18.

The cases of scientific universalism, syncretism, and encyclopedism were common grounds for early modern Islamicate ideologies, which were often shaped by the prevailing religio-political imperial vision of a 'cosmic sovereign', and the doctrinal accumulation of Islamicate domains of knowledge coming from different sources. It is in this context that the image of Sun as 'the Absolute' emphasized Meḥmed II's illuminating quality of patronage in philosophy, a motif tied to the Neoplatonist cosmology inherited by certain strands of Graeco-Arabic thought – whether the Muslim Peripatetics or Illuminationists. The Sultan here is portrayed as the 'Necessitating One', an 'Unmoved Mover', emanating beams of existence and truth. In certain other Ottoman works, the Sultan was also depicted as a fountainhead that beget the divine light of philosophy when radiating wisdom and knowledge. It is, therefore, not a coincidence that in his Persian book of history *Hasht bihisht*, the Kurdo-Ottoman historian İdrīs-i Bitlisī counted *ḥikma*, a term that may refer to a wide range of meanings, including Avicennan philosophy, Suhrawardī's thought, or 'divine wisdom' in its most general sense,[129] among the Sultan's natural faculties (*malaka*). Bitlisī's account may resonate strongly with Jāmī's and Amiroutzes' panegyics due to its utilization of Neoplatonist vocabulary. For this reason, the Kurdo-Ottoman historian here links the Sultan's 'overflowing wisdom' to the 'Active Intellect' (*ʿaql-e faʿāl*) in Aristotelian-Avicennan cosmogony.[130] The Sultan as the 'Active Intellect' or the 'ever-present Sun' here governs both the celestial and the sublunary, so that he can enable the actualization of potential intelligibles within the material intellect, giving a push to the sublime and, at the same time, initiating the patronage of Muslim Peripatetic and Platonist schools of philosophy in the Ottoman world.[131]

It has been recently argued that Meḥmed II's cultural politics was deeply inflected by a particular thread of Renaissance philosophy called the *Prisca Theologia*, the Renaissance dialectic between humanism and scholasticism. This strand of thought, in many ways, could be associated with the sixteenth-century Mughal emperor Akbar's *Ṣulḥ-e kull* that motivated the revival of more eclectic and mysterious forms of ancient learning (including Neoplatonism) along with a political narrative of reasserting himself as a 'renewer' (*renovatio/mujaddid*) and restoring the world to its pristine order under a universal ecclesiastical authority.[132] Matthew Melvin-Koush-

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129   For an analysis of different sections in philosophical genres (*ḥikma falsafiyya* and *ḥikma islāmiyya*) in the Török manuscript prepared by the fifteenth-century palace cataloguer ʿAṭūfī, which includes the full list of books belonged to Bāyezīd II's palace library, see Gutas, "Philosophical Manuscripts". Also see ch. 4 in Balıkçıoğlu, *A Coherence of Incoherences*, 206-13. For the fifteenth-century Ottoman nuances among *falsafa*, *ḥikma* and *kalām*, see Ṭaşköprizāde, *Miftāḥ al-saʿāda wa-miṣbāḥ*, 1: 311-12, 2: 150, as well as the Ottoman Turkish version translated by his son Ṭaşköprizāde Meḥmed, see Ṭaşköprizāde, *Mevżūʿātüʾl-ʿulūm*, 1: 331-5, 2: 256. Ṭaşköprizāde's definition of *ḥikma* also follows Jurjānī's dictionary of terminology (al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-taʿrīfāt*, 97).

130   For the uses of Neoplatonic vocabulary in the fifteenth-century Ottoman poetry, see the cases of Tācīzāde Caʿfer Çelebi (d. 921/1515) and Mihrī Ḥatun (d. after 917/1512), in Andrews, "Ottoman Poetry" and Havlioğlu, "Mihrî Hatun and Neoplatonic Discourse", 169-87 and 188-202 respectively. Especially in Caʿfer Çelebi's case, love always had its grounding in a cosmic connection through the use of Neoplatonist imagery in a series of emanations descending from a primal unity loosely signified by notion of "God as the [ultimate] Truth [*el-Ḥaḳḳ*]" (see Andrews, "Ottoman Poetry", 171-4). For Mihrī Ḥatun, also see Havlioğlu, *Mihrî Hatun*, 18-19, 104-6.

131   İdris-i Bitlisî, *Heşt Behişt VII. Ketibe*, 36.

132   Casale, "Mehmed the Conqueror", 846-50; "From Parallels to Intersections", 23-5. With regard to the Mughal cases of religious conciliation, universalism, and mixing of cultures

ki has recently observed that early modern Islamicate empires in the post-Mongol world include certain common forms of religiopolitical legitimacy, such as messianism, apocalypticism, ecumenism, occultism, and the principle of saint-philosopher-kingship. The latter aspect is a common feature that implies cosmic universalism at the nexus of mysticism, political legitimacy, and philosophical studies.[133]

It is no coincidence that Meḥmed II was regarded as the 'Second Renewer' (*müceddid-i şānī*) of the Hagia Sophia, who appropriated and embodied its sacred power for a firm religio-political mission by way of a discourse steeped in the Neoplatonic *renovatio/tajdīd*. In İdrīs-i Bitlisī's history, the Sultan was depicted as having seen himself as a 'cosmic sovereign', a conduit between the world of men and the divine, which was a quality comparable to the Byzantine emperor Justinian I (r. 527-65), who was the edifice's first founder.[134]

It should be noted that despite that many descriptions of Meḥmed II accentuated the Platonic aspects of his patronage in philosophy, there could be found other representations of him as a supporter and resuscitator of studies in Arabic Aristotelianism.[135] In most descriptions included in history books, I argue that there is a fine balance between Aristotelian and Platonic features of Meḥmed II's scholarly interests, the latter being more highlighted in contemporary scholarship due to its terminological resting on the image of sun rays. On the other hand, there is a plenty of evidence that Meḥmed II was an instigator of Aristotelian sciences and, in the case of the Ottoman medrese, this would amount to the study of Avicenna and Avicennism that diffused into the disciplines of *ḥikma* and *kalām*.

George Amiroutzes, who was allegedly related to the grand vizier Maḥmūd Paşa,[136] gave an alternative account of Meḥmed II's philosophical interests in his "Dialogue with the Sultan on Christus' Faith",[137] in which the philosopher rather emphasized the Sultan's familiarity with Aristotelian doctrines based on the model of Alexander the Great.[138] In this work, Amiroutzes saw Meḥmed II as the harmonizer of Christianity and Islam *par*

(*āmīzish-e farhang*) including Akbar's *Ṣulḥ-e kull*, see *Modern Asian Studies*' May 2022 special issue on Mughal political theology (volume 56): Moin, "*Sulh-i kull* as an oath of peace"; Gommans, Huseini, "Neoplatonism and the Pax Mongolica"; Sheffield, "Exercises in peace"; Pye, "The Sufi method behind the Mughal 'Peace with All' religions". Also see Kinra, "Revisiting the History and Historiography of Mughal Pluralism" and Amanat "Nuqṭawī Messianic Agnostics of Iran".

133 Melvin-Koushki, "Early Modern Islamicate Empire", 356-62.

134 Casale, "Mehmed the Conqueror", 853-5.

135 As in the case of Meḥmed II exemplified previously, the term *faylasūf* generally refers to an Avicennan philosopher who acknowledges the cosmological and ontological assumptions of Arabic Aristotelianism. See astronomer-mathematician Fatḥullāh al-Shirwānī's (d. 891/1486) designation of Ulugh Bey as "al-sulṭān al-faylasūf" in a text included in his *Sharḥ al-tadhkira fi 'ilm al-hay'a* (Fazlıoğlu, "The Samarqand Mathematical-Astronomical School", 41).

136 Monfasani has written that there are two sources regarding the connection between the two men: the first source suggests that their mothers were daughters of Iagari, a Greek noble man Marko Yagari; and, according to Laonicus Chalcocondyles' account, Amiroutzes might be Maḥmūd Paşa's cousin, *exadelphos*. See Monfasani, *George Amiroutzes*, 8.

137 For the edition of the text, Argyriou, Lagarrigue, "Georges Amiroutzes et son Dialogue".

138 According to Kritvoulos, Amirutzes was a late Byzantine philosopher who was learned in physics, dogmatics, mathematics, geometry, as well as Peripatetic and Stoic philosophy. For Kritovoulos on Meḥmed II's generosity towards Amiroutzes, see Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed*, 117 and Mirmiroğlu, "Fatih Sultan Mehmet", 94-100. For a full survey of the Sultan's patronage activities, see Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, 462-93. For Amiroutzes' praise

excellence under a unified rubric from the Aristotelian religio-philosophical point of view.[139]

Another such text is the late Byzantine philosopher and Aristotelian polemist George of Trebizond's (1395-1484) "Preface to Meḥmed II for the *Isagoge* to Ptolemy's *Almagest*". As John Monfasani has suggested, this work was written while George was in Constantinople, where he had gone in the spring of 1465 and remained until early 1466. The scholar was not able to present this dedication during his visit; he, instead, proposed to send it to the Sultan along with his dedication of the Latin *Comparatio* and other writings from Rome, including *The Difference between Plato and Aristotle*, a work in comparative philosophy that the Sultan would highly appreciate.[140] A Byzantine theologian, humanist, and convert to Catholicism, Cardinal Bessarion (1403-72), who was a pupil of Pletho and a supporter of Platonism, got hold of George's Latin letters, found out about George's flattering words for Meḥmed II and, along with the Spanish theologian and diplomat Rodrigo Sánchez Arévalo (1404-1470), led the scholar to be imprisoned for a period of four months due to his 'heretical' assertions that Meḥmed II "succeeded by divine right to the universal monarchy of the Roman emperors and popes over the whole world".[141] Having described His Excellency as *peritia philosophiae peripateticae, doctrina in multis disciplinis* (being learned in terms of peripatetic philosophy and various other sciences) in these letters,[142] George also extolled the Sultan's interest, familiarity, and patronage in Aristotelian philosophy as follows:

> I have the praise of your power, thinking that there is nothing better in the present life than to serve a wise king and one who philosophizes about the greatest matters. For in addition to your other manly virtues which befits a king, Your Mightiness is also said to study Aristotle even more than those who have a professional responsibility to study Aristotle.[143]

In the rest of the preface, George counted the Sultan's stated interest in Ptolemy's *Great Synthesis* (i.e. his *Almagest*) among his virtues, a work that synthesized cartography, topography, and astronomy with mathematical precision, so that it was highly practical for military strategy, territorial mapping, as well as apocalypticism and political prognostication.[144] An-

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of the Sultan's knowledge in Aristotelian[-Avicennan] philosophy, see Akasoy, "Mehmed II as a Patron of Greek Philosophy", 253.

139 Bádenas, "The Byzantine Intellectual Elite", 28.

140 Monfasani, *Collectanea Trapezunitiana*, 281-2. George dedicated this work to the Ottoman sultan, whom he believed to be an "Aristotelian" (Shank, "The *Almagest*", 58).

141 Trame, *Rodrigo Sánchez Arévalo*, 185-6.

142 Akasoy, "Mehmed II as a Patron of Greek Philosophy", 255.

143 Monfasani, *Collectanea Trapezunitiana*, 281. Also see another treatise by George that depicted the Sultan's penchant for Aristotelian philosophy titled "On the Divinity of Manuel", a text that might have been written in 1467 for the Sultan's hypothetical conversion, stating that the Sultan "mastered the works of Aristotle" (Monfasani, *Collectanea Trapezunitiana*, 566-7).

144 Berggren and Jones have observed that the primary contributions of Ptolemy's *Geography* were supplying "a detailed and extensive topography of the entire known parts of the world (i.e. Europe, Africa, and Asia), a clear and succinct discussion of the roles of astronomy, and other forms of data-gathering in geographical investigations", in which the scholars would be able to write down "the coordinates of latitude and longitude for every feature drawn on a world map so that anyone possessing Ptolemy's work could reproduce a precise world map at any time, in

na Akasoy has recently suggested that the conviction that the Sultan was familiar with Aristotelian doctrines is highly striking in another treatise called "On the Eternal Glory of the Autocrat".[145] After having mentioned that the Sultan's qualities outshined those of the Byzantine emperor Constantine the Great (r. 306-37) – "just as the sun outshines the moon" – George, in this work, talked about the Sultan's interest in Ptolemy's *Great Synthesis* and introduced the theme of the Aristotelian canon in order to justify certain Christian doctrines in the eyes of Aristotelianism.[146] Chapter II of this treatise concerned the Holy Trinity with regard to God's unicity, in which, by applying Aristotelian definitions (i.e. statements that designate the essence of something) to Christian theology, the Trinity concurred with Aristotelian propositions, such that the statement "God is one in Trinity" did not clash with "He is one but not in Trinity" per se.[147] With another work dated in July 1453 called "On the Truth of Christians' Faith", which was reelaborated into two treatises, George of Trebizond regarded the Sultan as the new Emmanuel, i.e. Jesus Christ in the flesh, unifying all the people of the world. This vision that he developed was an original vision of the providential role of Islam as a protector and renewer of the Church, as well as Meḥmed II being the emperor of a universal kingdom.[148]

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whole or in part, and at any scale" (Berggren, Jones, *Ptolemy's Geography*, 3). For the translation history of Ptolemy's *Almagest*, see Dalché, "The Reception of Ptolemy's Geography".

145   Akasoy, "Mehmed II as a Patron of Greek Philosophy", 254.

146   Monfasani, *Collectanea Trapezunitiana*, 493.

147   Monfasani, *Collectanea Trapezunitiana*, 497.

148   Bádenas, "The Byzantine Intellectual Elite", 29-30; Akasoy, "A Baghdad Court in Constantinople/Istanbul", 144.