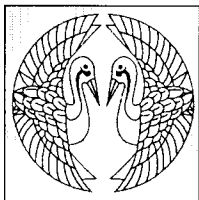


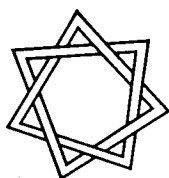
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THE MAWLID-I NABĪ BY SÜLEYMĀN ÇELEBĪ AND ITS TWO VERSIONS

Among the Turkish manuscripts in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies is a late eighteenth-century copy of a *mathnawī* poem written by the Turkish poet Süleymān Çelebī (Sulaymān Chalabī; 1351—1410) and known by the title *Mawlid-i Nabī*. The manuscript has a leather binding with a gold imprint in the centre — a medallion with floral ornamentation — and a border of small rosettes (on the outer side of the binding) with a fully gilded impressed drawing on the inner side. The dimensions of the folios are: 21.0 × 16.4 cm. The text occupies a space of 14.0 × 10.0 cm and is copied in black Indian ink in two columns framed by a gold border. The text is vocalised and each page contains 11 *bayts*. In all, the copy contains 1,204 lines of poetry. The manuscript was acquired in 1962 from relatives of the collector and Orientalist S. M. Shapshal [1].

The title of the work is given in the manuscript directly beneath the *umwān* in red ink in the form *Mawlūd-i Nabī*. The paper is European, with watermarks; it is thin and glossy. The handwriting is *naskh*. The manuscript consists of 30 folios. The end of the work is on fol. 29b. Folio 30a contains a prayer of good wishes marked with the date 27 Ramaḍān 1250/27 January 1835 (the month is indicated only by the letter *rā'*).

The work, written at the very beginning of the fifteenth century, has survived in numerous copies from various times. It is dedicated to the life of Muḥammad, more specifically, to glorifying him as the greatest and last of the prophets. The modest manuscript kept in the St. Petersburg collection is of interest as it represents one of the last in a series of copies going back to the oldest surviving manuscript. This oldest copy dates to 920/1514—15 and is held in the Topkapı Sarayı Museum in Istanbul. The distinctive feature of this oldest copy and the version it contains is the presence of a concluding section dedicated to Muḥammad's daughter, Fāṭima.

We know that the autograph of Süleymān Çelebī's poem has not survived. The Turkish scholar A. Ateş, the author of a scholarly edition of the poem, based his edition not on the oldest manuscript but on a later copy dated to 967/1558—59, now held in the library of the Mehmed Fatih Mosque in Istanbul. The manuscript chosen by A. Ateş for his edition lacks the section dedicated to Fāṭima [2]. In the view of the scholar, this section of the poem, present in the oldest copy, is obviously an interpola-

tion and could not have belonged to Süleymān Çelebī himself [3]. The absence of the section on Fāṭima is a basic feature which marks one of the two extant versions of the poem. A. Ateş observes that this section is written in a different poetic meter than the main body of the work and differs from it lexically. Not intending to take issue with the scholar's conclusion, we note only that the whole of the text published by Ateş is diverse both in the poetic meters employed and in its linguistic features. In a study which precedes the publication of Çelebī's poem, Ateş stresses also the distinctly Sunnī character of the text created by the poet. This element, more than any other, seems to compel the scholar to doubt Süleymān's authorship of the section which tells of Fāṭima and 'Alī, although he nowhere postulates this directly.

Taking into account that the section in question is, in essence, the key element in distinguishing the two extant versions of the poem, it is important to pay special attention to the origins of the supposed interpolation and the time of its possible incorporation into the text of the poem. It should be noted that the independent and persistent existence of two versions over a long period of time, along with the lack of the autograph, as well as the presence of an oldest copy which supposedly does not represent the author's version, make the task of reconstructing the original text practically insoluble. To this one should add the extremely scarce information on the author and the fact of the work's great popularity. The text of the poem exists not only in an enormous number of copies, but has been maintained in oral form as well. It is obvious that the exceptional popularity of the poem contributed to the appearance of various additions, changes and interpolations, and variant groupings of the text's parts. Taken together, these factors played an important part in creating a new hypertext, which differs substantially from what was once written down by Süleymān Çelebī.

With all due credit to the thorough work performed by A. Ateş, whose aim was to reconstruct an original text, one must say that the critical text he in effect presented seems to remain far from that of the original — the field for interpolations and editorial corrections was too broad. In these conditions, it would be more fruitful to study all of the component parts of the extant hypertext as represented by all of the existing copies of the poem. While this may not bring researchers any closer to solving the problem of

reconstructing an original text, it can help us to illuminate more accurately the history of the work and the cultural and historical circumstances which made certain interpolations possible. In any case, such study enables us to understand the reasons for the appearance of this or that interpolation. Viewed in this fashion, each manuscript of the poem represents a unique stage in the emergence of the hypertext and contains a valuable information on the history of Süleymān Çelebī's work.

In connection with the textological problems which face scholars of Eastern manuscripts, the problem of reconstructing the authorial text seems to be extremely complicated. As a whole, the work of text researchers has shown that the exact reconstruction of the original text of a work which exists in numerous copies and has at least two versions is hardly possible at all. A critical text constructed with the proper employment of all known methods of textual criticism merely brings us closer to the original text. We can, however, never be sure that this is the text that was written by the author. Russian textology provides a telling example of this in the work of the brilliant scholar A. A. Shakhmatov who failed to reconstruct the original text of the famous Russian chronicle "Tale of Bygone Years" [4]. Despite his marvellous command of the methodology of textological work, he was compelled to abandon his attempts in the end.

One can say the same about the efforts of Arabists who, for example, have struggled with the task of reconstructing the original text of the Qur'ān as it was first recorded. We see, however, that even the employment of the cleverest computer programs does not bring us nearer the goal. It seems to be impossible in principle to reconstruct the text destroyed by the Caliph 'Uthmān [5]. Surely, this does not exclude some instances when textological work can lead to the reconstruction of an original text [6].

Returning now to the text of Süleymān Çelebī's poem, the St. Petersburg manuscript of the *Mawlid-i Nabī* is only one of the latest in a long series of copies which go back to the oldest 1514/15 copy of the work. Unlike the manuscript chosen by Ateş, the St. Petersburg copy contains a section on Fāṭima, a feature that marks the version which can be traced to the oldest manuscript of the poem [7]. The very fact of the long-standing parallel existence of two versions, with or without the section on Fāṭima, each represented in a large number of copies, is of much interest. One may assume that a preference for one or the other version depended on the social milieu in which the poem circulated. Judging from the good wishes expressed toward the masters (*ustādlar*) and *pīrs*, or *shaykhs*, traditionally influential among craftsmen, as well as toward the Muslim soldiers as a whole [8], the St. Petersburg manuscript was executed in craftsmen circles. This circumstance, in my view, can shed some light on the extremely vague history of the text composed by Süleymān Çelebī.

Much remains a mystery both in the biography of the poet and in the history of his work's creation. Only a very small amount of the information we possess can be considered reliable. The text of our manuscript lacks any biographical information on the author, while the text published by A. Ateş is a bit more informative in this connection. Among the *bayts* of the version published by Ateş one can find the following:

This happened in the year eight-hundred-twelve,
This work was finished then in Bursa, oh, *akhī* [9].

And further:

His life thus squandered, this hodja,
He reached his sixty and became an elder [10].

The first of the *bayts* quoted indicates that the poem was completed in 812/1409—10 in Bursa, the Asiatic capital of the Ottoman State, when Süleymān Çelebī was sixty years old. Consequently, he must have been born in 752/1351. The address to the *akhī*-reader hints at Süleymān Çelebī's connection with the *akhīs*.

The Ottoman *tezkireci* Laṭīfī (d. 1582) provides but scanty information on the poet. He maintains that Süleymān Çelebī was the son of Hacı İvaz Pasha (Ḥājjī 'Iwaḍ Pāshā), an eminent Ottoman official, and that the poet's brother was Atayī ('Atā'yī), also a poet [11]. This information is, however, refuted by Muşṭafā 'Alī (1541—1599), who reports in his *Kunh al-akhbār* that the poet's grandfather was Shaykh Maḥmūd, who, according to Ottoman tradition, was descended from the family of the famous fourteenth-century Anatolian *akhī* Shaykh Edebalı (Adabālī) [12]. According to this tradition, the poet's father was Aḥmad Pasha, a mysterious figure in many ways [13]. As for Laṭīfī, he reports that Süleymān Çelebī was the disciple of the renowned Emīr Sulṭān (1368—1429) [14]. Information has also survived that the poet was the *imām* of the Ūlū Jāmi' mosque in Bursa built by the Ottoman Sultan Bāyazīd I (1389—1402). Ateş holds that the latter circumstance gave rise to later reports that Süleymān Çelebī was the *imām* of the Sultan Bāyazīd himself [15].

A tradition preserved by Laṭīfī tells us of the circumstances which accompanied the creation of Süleymān Çelebī's poem. This tradition, well-known to specialists, could be of some interest to those examining the text of the poem and its author. According to Laṭīfī, during one of his sermons the *wā'iz* of the mosque in Bursa gave his comment on Qur'ān 2 : 285: "We make no division between any one of His Messengers" [16]. Citing this passage in the Qur'ān, the preacher announced that there are no distinctions between the prophets and that he does not place the Prophet Muḥammad above Jesus Christ. The *wā'iz*'s commentary was intended to stress the equal force of the prophetic mission among the founders of both Islam and Christianity.

In Laṭīfī's account, this view was immediately disputed by a certain Arab present during the sermon. He announced that while he was not an expert in exegesis, he nonetheless felt that the Qur'ānic passage should be taken as meaning that there are no varying levels of prophecy, which in no way implies that the prophetic missions of Muḥammad and Jesus are equal. In support of his claims, the Arab cited another passage from the Qur'ān: "And those Messengers, some We have preferred above others" [17]. Laṭīfī adds that those present all took the side of the *wā'iz*. Irritated, the Arab departed for Egypt, later for Aleppo, and received from local theologians a *fatwā*, which confirmed the correctness of his position in the dispute with the *wā'iz*. Then a phrase follows in Laṭīfī's account which is seemingly unconnected with the main thrust of the incident in the mosque: "At that time Süleymān Çelebī was writing [his] *Mawlid*" [18].

Laṭīfī's account permits the supposition that it was in fact the dispute about the supremacy of Muḥammad's prophetic mission which provoked Süleymān Çelebī to write

his poem *Mawlid-i Nabī*. The English scholar E. J. Gibb, who considered the entire tale apocryphal from beginning to end, held that it aimed to demonstrate the fanaticism of the Arabs as perceived by the Turks [19]. However, this explanation seems to be unsatisfactory. Even if one regards the tale to be apocryphal, it has the value of accurately conveying the religious atmosphere of the period. Many Ottoman authors were influenced by the creative spirit of the age, which can be explained by the practical needs of the young Ottoman State. It had absorbed numerous recent Byzantine subjects well trained in Christian theology, which gave birth to an active dialogue between two competing religions. Religious disputes were extremely popular in Ottoman circles of the time. History has preserved records of such disputes conducted as early as the reign of the Ottoman ruler Orkhān (1324—1362). One such dispute is attested in the account of Grigorius Palamas, a famous Byzantine theologian who was captured by the Turks and spent about one year in the Ottoman State. Among the questions discussed in the dispute was that of the prophetic mission of Jesus Christ and of Muḥammad. Palamas quotes one of the questions the Turks asked him: “The Sovereign wishes to ask you why it is that we accept Christ and love him, honour him and consider that he is the Son and Breath of God, that we consider his Mother to be close to God, yet you do not accept and love our Prophet?” [20].

Also, the fifteenth-century author Constantine of Ostrowitza considered it necessary to report on religious disputes which took place among the Turks. Captured by the Turks, he was forced to adopt Islam and lived for a long time in the Ottoman State as a soldier in the artillery detachment. Constantine reports about frequent religious gatherings (or discussions) in which the *‘ulamā’* and representatives of Šūfī orders took part. According to Constantine of Ostrowitza, during these discussions, questions of Muslim theology, which the Turks considered important, were treated. A favourite theme in such discussions was the prophets venerated by Muslims, among whom Jesus was the most important after Muḥammad. In conveying the essence of these disputes, Constantine writes in particular that: “Some [among participants of the discussion] recognise Our Lord Jesus Christ as a prophet; others as a prophet who stood above; others as he who on the Day of Judgement will be the highest prophet of God, creator of the heavens and the earth” [21]. Constantine also notes the special interest of the disputants in Jesus Christ, who figured in many theological discussions which juxtaposed him with Muḥammad. Here is one utterance of a disputant, a “main *‘ālim’*”, as cited by this author: “Jesus is in heaven in body and in soul; he is the only one who will not die, but will live for ages unto ages. Muḥammad was in the heavens in body and in soul, however, he remained on the earth” [22].

According to Constantine of Ostrowitza, who on the whole describes life in the Ottoman State quite accurately, serious questions of Muslim theology intermingled at these gatherings with legends current among ordinary folk. This allowed themes of a purely folkloric nature to arise in these disputes. Thus, Constantine conveys a view he heard that “when the Christian faith began, the Lord God chose eight-hundred camels which are a sort of invisible spirit; they go every night and remove bad Muslims from our (Muslim — *I. P.*) burial grounds and carry them to the burial grounds of infidels (i.e. Christians — *I. P.*). They also remove good infidels and carry them to our burial grounds. Thus, the good

unbelievers will rise together with our Muslim community, and the bad Muslims will stand before God with the community of unbelievers on the Day of Judgement” [23].

Even tales of such a character reveal Muslim theologians' efforts to assert the superiority of Islam over Christianity, which reflects the fierce competition between the two faiths in the fifteenth-century Ottoman State. In conveying the general atmosphere of the religious gatherings, at which he was present, Constantine of Ostrowitza notes the emotional atmosphere of the disputes. Thus, he reports that the Turks present at one of the disputes in the end “raised a tumult” and “began to aim books at each other, so that I thought that they intended to fight with one another” [24].

The passionate nature of religious life and the spirit of particular creativeness in intellectual life during the first half of the fifteenth century necessarily affected all spheres of Ottoman culture, with individual religious searching being no exception. It seems that Süleymān Çelebī, a man of his time, reflected this atmosphere in full, using his natural poetic talents to create a work glorifying the creator of the Muslim religion. However, as frequently occurred in Muslim literature, Süleymān Çelebī made use of an already existing literary text on the theme.

The poem by Süleymān Çelebī, dedicated to Muḥammad, shows clear traces of literary dependence on a text created in Asia Minor not long before the appearance of the poem *Mawlid-i Nabī*. Its author was Muṣṭafā al-Ḍarīr, who in the fourteenth century compiled a work on the life of Muḥammad. The work is a five-volume compilation which used as source material works by Ibn Hishām (d. 213/828 or 218/833), Abū 'I-Ḥasan al-Bakrī, and others. The composition was intended for the Mamlūk Sultan al-Manṣūr 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī (1376—1382). However, it was completed already during the reign of Sultan al-Šāliḥ Ṣalaḥ al-Dīn Ḥajjī II (r. 783/1382 and 791/1389) [25].

The literary model on which Süleymān Çelebī based his work is written in prose and includes a large number of verses in Arabic and Turkish. The poetic form chosen by Süleymān Çelebī is no doubt a tribute to the existing Ottoman literary tradition of the period. It is distinguished by a special attachment to the genre of *mathnawī*. We know that in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, even dictionaries were sometimes compiled in poetic form. Suffice it to cite the dictionary *‘Uqūd al-jawāhir* by Ahmed Daī (Aḥmad Dā‘ī), which consists of 650 *bayts*. It was written for the Ottoman prince Murād, the future Ottoman Sultan Murād II (1420—1451, with intervals). The work was a brief, poetic reworking of the well-known dictionary of Rashīd al-Dīn al-Waṭwaṭ [26].

It is interesting to note that Muṣṭafā al-Ḍarīr's work is separated from Süleymān Çelebī's poem by little more than two decades. That means that copies of popular literary works circulated in a very short time.

The dependence of Süleymān Çelebī's poem on al-Ḍarīr's text in subject, literary form, and lexicon is not absolute, and Süleymān Çelebī displays a significant degree of freedom in his work, as was the general practice among Muslim authors who based their compositions on popular writings. But some features make both works rather close. For example, both Muṣṭafā al-Ḍarīr and Süleymān Çelebī demonstrate their devotion to folkloric and fantastic details. These are especially numerous in the section which tells of the Prophet's birth. It is clear that the authors borrow much from Muslim hagiographic literature.

In order to solve the problem of the two main versions of the poem by Süleymān Çelebī and his authorship of the section dedicated to Fāṭima, which is present in the oldest copy, it is important to know what place this figure occupies in Muṣṭafā al-Ḍarīr's work. We know that the fourth volume of al-Ḍarīr's composition is largely dedicated to Muḥammad's daughter, her birth, the circumstances which surrounded her marriage to 'Alī, and other episodes in which Fāṭima is the main character. A manuscript of this volume, abundantly illustrated with miniatures and dated to 1594/95, is held in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin. Fāṭima is the character depicted in many of these miniatures [27]. One may assume that the text of Süleymān Çelebī's poem could have contained a section dedicated to Muḥammad's daughter for that simple reason that Muṣṭafā al-Ḍarīr's work lay at the base of the poem written by Süleymān Çelebī. Surely, the corroboration of this assumption requires some additional support.

It should be noted that the mere fact of writing a work on the life of Muḥammad was generally regarded as an act of piety. The author of such a work aimed to save his soul and to cleanse himself of all that is sinful. The life of Muḥammad, the most pious of all Muslims, served for his followers as a model for righteous behaviour and greatly influenced religious souls. This holds especially true for adherents of Şūfī *ṭarīqats* with their mystical attitude of mind and their strong individual religious feeling. As for Muṣṭafā al-Ḍarīr, he was evidently a Şūfī, as his *nisba*, *al-mawlawī*, indicates.

Was Süleymān Çelebī a Şūfī as well? A. Ateş answers this question in the negative, stating that there are no signs in the poem of the poet's adherence to Şūfīsm [28]. In the form in which it has reached us, the poem in effect does not postulate directly a single tenet of any known Şūfī order. However, the text of the poem reveals some particular traits. A. Ateş explains these traits exclusively by the poet's personal piety [29]. The *bayts*, which attract our special attention in this connection, are the following:

Oh, what can I say, who forswore Your commandment,
Who turned of the path You bequeathed.

Without remnant I cast to the wind barren years,
I, who indulged every whim of my soul.

Unaware the whole time of my life's higher purpose,
Now, at life's end, I am taught.

Hair and beard grey, my soul blackest black,
No deed can now whiten the darkness.

A mutinous slave with a face which is black,*
A sinner this grave has the world never seen.

In no matter or deed did I bend to Your will,
The straight path, which You showed us, I scorned.

There is not a sin, which I have not committed,
Not once did my lips form "Alas" for my sins.

My faults exceed number, my sins exceed measure,
Among all my deeds none is righteous.

All my actions — lies, falsehood, hypocrisy **,
I sinned every day, every night.

In the path of the Truth, I took not a step,
And the path of the spirit I scorned in my fear.

No deed of mine was worthy of my Lord,
All deeds of mine were knavery and tricks.

I gave no thought to the death, which awaits me,
And left aside obedience for sin.

Not once did I speak of the life yet to come,
Not once did I think — what awaits after death?

But now, with my life at its end,
Death is the sum of my thoughts.

Some of my doings have now come to light,
Though many cruel things remain veiled.

Judge not on appearance — assess me no worth,
I know well the price of my actions.

My deeds and my nature are hidden to all,
Though He knows, who is the Great Mystery.

He knows all I have done, undertaken, committed,
Though the mercy of Him hides my deeds.

And if that which was hidden were now to appear,
No doubt, they would stone me to death.

He who in surety knows all in me,
Will, I must hope, grant me mercy.

May God protect from the loss of His grace,
From death without earning forgiveness [30].

The *bayts* cited, only partially represented in the St. Petersburg manuscript, betray Süleymān Çelebī's closeness to the views of the *malāmīs*. Typical of them was a refusal to accept any form of outer piety [31]. Early representatives of this branch of Islam were Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar b. Salma al-Ḥaddād (d. 877 or 881), Abū 'Uthmān Sa'īd b. Ismā'īl al-Ḥīrī (d. 910/11), and several others. They taught that the main task of a person who accepted their teaching was to perfect himself, to cleanse his heart and thoughts, to strictly observe the *sunna*, and to imitate the life of Muḥammad as a model of behaviour for all the Muslims. The *malāmīs* held that these activities should remain an internal matter, hidden from the eyes of others, as they were known to Allah in any case. Moreover, representatives of the Nīshāpūr *malāmīs* went so far as to recognise the possibility of outwardly sinful conduct if a person was pious within, pure of heart and thought. The Baghdad branch of *malāmiyya* recognised as the most terrible form of hypocrisy hypocrisy before oneself and saw sin in the possibility of being blinded by one's own sanctity. It was characteristic of the adherents of *malāmiyya* to express their exaggerated submission to divine will and to recognise their own nullity. The goal toward which one should strive was immersion in meditation on divine oneness during which one's own existence completely vanished [32].

For adherents of later *malāmiyya*, the distinguishing features of their faith were self-deprecation and a heightened sense of one's own sinfulness, a disapproval of the self. Viewed in this light, the composition by Süleymān Çelebī of a poem on the life of Muḥammad, which displays an exceptionally powerful sense of the author's repentance of his sins and stresses the idea of God's oneness, clearly shows the

* I.e. "I lack my honour".

** *riyā'*.

poet's dependence on the views of the *malāmīs*. It should be noted that in the St. Petersburg copy the *bayts* of repentance are present to a lesser degree. The personal element in them is not as distinct as in the version published by A. Ateş. The admission of sinfulness sounds here rather like the collective repentance of a community praying to Allah for mercy [33].

We know that the world-outlook boundaries of *malāmiyya* were very broad. Unlike other institutionalised *ṭarīqats*, *malāmiyya* existed mostly as a “secret brotherhood” [34]. Besides, representatives of this branch in Islam could belong to any religious group or school. As O. F. Akimushkin points out, the teaching was particularly appealing to Sūfīs and craftsmen [35]. Prof. Akimushkin's observation is of much value for elucidating the history of the text created by Süleymān Çelebī. Below we shall consider the question in more detail. Here we note only that the *malāmīs* were especially influential in the Ottoman State at the beginning of the fifteenth century, when *Mawlid-i Nabī* was written by Süleymān Çelebī. There is even information that adherents of *malāmiyya* took part in the broad religious and social movement headed by Bedreddin Simavī (Badr al-Dīn Simāwī), or Bedreddin Simavna kadısı-oğlu.

To elucidate the personality of Süleymān Çelebī, it is also important to note that, according to extant tradition, Süleymān Çelebī was a disciple of Emīr Sultān Bukhārālī. The latter was an exceptionally influential figure in the early Ottoman State. Of Emīr Sultān we know that he arrived in the Ottoman principality during the reign of Bāyazīd I (1389—1402). A *manakib-nāma* dedicated to Emīr Sultān records, on the basis of his own words, that he was a seventh-generation descendent of the twelfth *imām*, Muḥammad al-Mahdī [36]. Emīr Sultān's claim of descent from the most mysterious of the Shi'ite *imāms* unambiguously points to his Shi'ite sympathies, which could only be realised in the Sunnī Ottoman State by means of Şūfism. Emīr Sultān, who acquired numerous disciples in Bursa, even married one of the daughters of Sultan Bāyazīd I. As E. J. Gibb believed, Emīr Sultān had belonged to *khalwatiyya* [37], a widespread *ṭarīqat* which was formed in north-west Iran at the end of the fourteenth century. This brotherhood arose and functioned at first in a Turkic environment, having adopted a number of ideas from the Central Asian school of mysticism represented by Aḥmad Yasawī. It is worth noting that *khalwatiyya* absorbed many of the *malāmiyya* views. The representatives of *khalwatiyya* considered themselves a Sunnī brotherhood, although their teaching was initially closely tied to Shi'ism [38].

Of course, the question of Süleymān Çelebī's possible connection with *khalwatiyya* through Emīr Sultān requires additional research, which is greatly complicated by the absence of authentic information. However, even a cursory glance at the facts cited here provides certain food for thought. The repentant excerpt from Süleymān Çelebī's poem cited above appears to fit in well with the *malāmiyya* views.

In further analysing the text of Süleymān Çelebī's poem, one cannot pass over the excerpts betraying the poet's dependence on the thought of the famous Ibn al-'Arabī (1165—1240). The influence of Ibn al-'Arabī's teaching is

clearly seen in the opening section of Süleymān Çelebī's poem. It is especially evident in the poet's presentation of the first act of Gods creation of the world:

What He, the Highest, first created,
And is first amid his creations,

Is the Spirit of Muṣṭafā *, fashioned first,
With the love of his Munificent Creator.

And if there is good fortune,
Gentle nature, good intentions,

Truth gave him this, and made him perfect,
More noble than all those who came before.

His will brought forth all things, both visible and hidden,
All in the firmament, on earth, and in the heavens,

But if Muḥammad had not been created,
Earth and heaven would have never been [39].

In these *bayts* Süleymān Çelebī follows the ideas of Ibn al-'Arabī who taught that the “essence of Muḥammad” was Allah's first creation. This thinker was the first to use the term *al-insān al-kāmil* (the Perfect, or Universal man), whose presence, according to Ibn al-'Arabī, is a guarantee of the Universe's existence. “The essence of Muḥammad”, Ibn al-'Arabī holds, found successive realisation in the persons of the prophets, messengers and saints [40]. Following Ibn al-'Arabī in this, Süleymān Çelebī develops his thesis in the following *bayts*:

Because Muḥammad was the instrument of God,
The Most High granted Adam his repentance,

And Noah found salvation from the flood,
Because this miracle ** took place before his birth.

And Jesus did not die but rose to heaven,
For he was of Muḥammad's kin, a prophet.

The staff which Moses wielded in his hand
Became a serpent to the glory of Muḥammad.

Because the Friend of Allah *** bore Muḥammad's bond,
For him made Allah paradise from fire.

All of this for love of him,
These graces in his name [41].

The poet gives also exposition of another point in Ibn al-'Arabī's teaching. He writes about the everlasting “light of Muḥammad” [42]. In the thirteenth century this notion received profound development in the writings of this Şūfī philosopher who acquired an immense popularity in the Ottoman State. Ibn al-'Arabī linked the concept of the “light of Muḥammad” with the idea of the everlasting existence of the “the truth of Muḥammad”. Following the ideas of the philosopher, Süleymān Çelebī writes in his poem:

When the Most High created Adam,
He thus adorned the world.

He bade the angels kneel before His creature,
Endowing him with all that He could give.

He marked the brow of Adam with the light of Muṣṭafā,
[And] said: “Know, this is the light of My Own love!”

* Muṣṭafā — “the Chosen One”, one of the epithets of the Prophet Muḥammad.

** I.e. the creation of the spirit of Muḥammad by God.

*** That is Ibrāhīm (Abraham).

He placed this light on Adam's brow,
Which light has touched so many fates.

Know, this light was on the brow of Eve,
It rested there for many months and years.

When Shith* was born to Adam, He passed the light to him,
That it might shine, embellishing his brow.

This light He passed to Ibrāhīm, to Ismā'īl,
And others, far too numerous to count [43].

The lines quoted above lead us to assume that Süleymān Çelebī was under the strong influence of Ibn al-'Arabī's thought. One should stress that the name of Ibn al-'Arabī was closely associated with the *malāmiyya* ideas both among the *malāmīs* themselves as well as in wider circles. As V. R. Holbrook notes, Ibn al-'Arabī's numerous references to *malāmiyya* in his *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* were frequently cited by representatives of this branch of Islam to define their *ṭarīqat*. Holbrook also notes that the *malāmīs* were known as extremists in recognising the famed principle of *waḥdat al-wujūd* ("the oneness of being"), formulated by Ibn al-'Arabī. Long before the appearance of this Sūfī philosopher, however, one of the most important distinguishing characteristics of *malāmiyya*'s adherents was meditation on divine oneness [44].

To sum up, we have two principal versions of Süleymān Çelebī's poem. One of them, published by A. Ateş, is distinguished by (i) a number of *bayts* betraying the obvious *malāmiyya* basis of the poem; (ii) obvious dependence on Ibn al-'Arabī's thought; (iii) the absence of a concluding section dedicated to Fāṭima. The second one, represented by the St. Petersburg manuscript which can be traced to the oldest 1514/15 copy of the work, contains a smaller number of repentance *bayts*. They are distinguished by a less personal tone. This version contains also a section on Fāṭima.

In my view, the text written by Süleymān Çelebī comprised originally both highly emotional repentance *bayts* reflecting the *malāmiyya* sympathies of the poet and the section dealing with Fāṭima as well. While there is no problem with the presence of the repentance *bayts* in Süleymān Çelebī's poem, which are present, albeit only partly and in a somewhat altered form in the version represented by the St. Petersburg manuscript, the presence or absence of the section on Fāṭima in the text of the poem offers some difficulty. However, one may assume with certainty that this section could well have been written by Süleymān Çelebī if we take into consideration the text of Muṣṭafā al-Darīr, which provided a basis for the poem. As is mentioned above, a significant part of Muṣṭafā al-Darīr's work deals with Fāṭima and 'Alī. The presence or absence of the section on Fāṭima in the manuscripts representing the main two versions might be explained by the poem's circulation in different cultural milieux, namely, in craftsmen circles or among 'ulamā' and Sūfīs influenced by the ideas of *malāmiyya*.

The veneration of 'Alī and Fāṭima was traditional in craft circles in Asia Minor. 'Alī was considered the patron of the numerous craft guilds which formed the organisation of Anatolian *akhīs*. Craftsmen made up the broadest mass readership of that time for authors who did not write at the behest of a dynastic patron. As was mentioned above, the St. Petersburg manuscript, which contains the section on

Fatima, has a conclusion entitled *Du'ā'-yi munājāt* with good wishes toward master craftsmen — *ustādlar* [45]. It is also worth mentioning that the surviving tradition about Süleymān Çelebī ascribes to him, in one fashion or another, ties to the world of *akhīs*. Thus, Laṭīfī indicates, albeit erroneously, that the poet's father was Hacı Ivaz Pasha, who was a hereditary *akhī*. We know of his sons that they were also *akhīs* [46]. Muṣṭafā 'Alī, though refuting the information provided by Laṭīfī, traces the poet's lineage back to the Shaykh Maḥmūd. But, according to tradition, Maḥmūd was descended from the family of Edebalı, a well-known *akhī shaykh* in Asia Minor [47]. The direct addresses to *akhīs* in the poem seem to confirm this alleged tie between the poet and the *akhīs*:

This happened in the year eight-hundred-twelve,
This work was finished then in Bursa, oh, *akhī* [48].

In one of the *bayts*, contained in our manuscript and addressed to God, we read:

I, *akhī*, seek to reach You,
I hope You forgive me my sins [49].

Also, the basic distinguishing feature of the poem by Süleymān Çelebī is its religious elation, a passionate appeal to Allah to save the soul of a sinner. We learn from the description of the *akhīs* of Bursa left us by the Arab traveller Ibn Baṭṭūṭā, who visited the city in 1331, that they were distinguished by a special spirit of religious exaltation and exaggerated piety [50]. Of interest in this connection is Ibn Baṭṭūṭā's account of the Muslim preacher from Bursa, Majd al-Dīn Qūnawī, whom he met at a gathering of Bursa's *akhīs*. The traveller reports that this preacher led the life of an ascetic, fasting every three days and spending on his needs only what he earned himself. According to Ibn Baṭṭūṭā, he had neither home nor property and spent nights in the cemetery. He delivered such inspired sermons that certain listeners repented publicly after them [51]. But is not Süleymān Çelebī's entire poem shot through with repentance and does it not call upon listeners and readers to repent? Prominent in Ibn Baṭṭūṭā's account of Bursa's *akhīs* are evident religious devotees distinguished both by heightened religiosity and an exceptional concern for personal salvation and the salvation of other believers. In this connection, we must note the refrain concluding each section of Süleymān Çelebī's poem. It is filled with deep religious feeling and hope for the salvation of sinners:

If you wish to be delivered from the fire,
With love and sorrow offer up [your] prayer!

All these observations allow us to suppose that the poet meant his poem to be read primarily in craftsmen circles. The highly charged religious feelings and intensive spiritual life which influenced the atmosphere in Ottoman society during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries were, up until the final rout of Bedreddin Simavi's movement, characteristic of the *akhī* environment and craftsmen circles. Characteristic of these circles was also a special attitude toward the figure of Fāṭima.

We know that Fāṭima played a special role in Muslim beliefs. Islamic folklore, which did not recognise strict

* Shith — the son of Adam, one of the ancestors of Muḥammad as related in Ibn Hishām's biography of the Prophet.

Sunnī or Shi'ite frameworks, included Fāṭima among its most popular characters. Constantine of Ostrowitza, who was well familiar with the folk beliefs of the Ottoman Turks, notes that Fāṭima was considered a “great enchantress” who possessed the ability to grant sharpness to ‘Alī’s sabre [52]. Under a certain Christian influence, the cult of Fāṭima was enriched with a number of themes which go back to the cult of the Virgin Mary. Fāṭima’s epithet, *al-Batūl* (the Virgin), provides vivid evidence of this. This epithet is also used in reference to Fāṭima in the section dedicated to her in the St. Petersburg manuscript [53]. It seems only natural that Süleymān Çelebī, who followed in his work *Muṣṭafā al-Ḍarīr*’s writing, with its stress on the figure of Fāṭima, wished to make his poem popular in the *akhī* audience. That might be the reason why he included in his composition a special section dedicated to the daughter of Muḥammad. The folkloric character of legends about Fāṭima, which circulated among the people, may have caused the poet to use a special verse form in this section. However, this special verse form serves as the principal argument of A. Ateş, who rejects Süleymān Çelebī’s authorship in relation to the section on Fāṭima. In my view, the problem of the lexical, grammatical, and stylistic features of the section in question requires further examination. Here it is only important to note that Ateş employs one more argument to prove the section dealing with Fāṭima could not have been written by Süleymān Çelebī. The scholar stresses the fact that in many copies of the poem the section in question comes after the concluding part of the work. We should point out, however, that in the earliest of the surviving copies the section on Fāṭima comes before the conclusion of the poem, and this copy is no exception [54]. Note, in the St. Petersburg manuscript the section dedicated to Fāṭima concludes with the same refrain which distinguishes parts of the work undoubtedly written by Süleymān Çelebī.

If one accepts the thesis of Süleymān Çelebī’s authorship in relation to the section on Fāṭima, a question arises: why is this section missing in another version of the poem. To answer the question, one must take into account that the oldest copy in which the given section is missing dates to 967/1558—59. That is, it was copied soon after the conclusion of the long-term religious and military confrontation (1514—1555) between Shi’ite Iran and the Sunnī Ottoman State, which ended in victory for the Turks. The reasons for this confrontation were not only religious. But one must admit that the religious rivalry was exceptional and it is most probable that this very circumstance spurred the appearance in the second half of the sixteenth century of a manuscript of Süleymān Çelebī’s work cleansed of all traces of alleged Shi’ism. This manuscript was purified of the concluding story of Fāṭima and ‘Alī. The version represented in this purified manuscript may have begun circulating primarily in ‘*ulamā*’ and Süfī circles with their particular fears of being blamed for Shi’ite sympathies. This very version also preserved an extremely prominent note of personal repentance in the text.

The other version, with the section dedicated to Fāṭima, continued, however, to circulate among readers who were primarily craftsmen and, in a later period, most likely Janissaries. In the St. Petersburg manuscript we encounter an appeal to pray for the Muslim soldiers and for all those taken captive by infidels. Thanks to the existence of the Bektāshī order, especially influential among craftsmen and Janissaries, there was no fear of accusations of Shi’ite heresy despite Bektāshī’s pronounced Shi’ite sympathies. In this version, retaining the section on Fāṭima and intended for community readership, the *malāmiyya* elements of the poem gradually disappeared, being replaced by a less personal tone of repentance verse.

Notes

1. The description of this manuscript is given in L. V. Dmitrieva, *Opisanie tiurkskikh rukopisei Instituta vostokovedeniia* (Description of Turkic Manuscripts in the Institute of Oriental Studies). Fasc. 3: Poetry and commentaries on poetry, poetics (Moscow, 1980), p. 34.
2. Süleyman Çelebi, *Vesiletü'n-Necât*. Mevlid, yazarı ve Mevlid hakkında araştırmalar ile birlikte bilinen en eski elyazması nüshalara göre bastıran A. Ateş (Ankara, 1954), henceforth cited as Ateş, *Süleyman Çelebi*.
3. Ateş, *Süleyman Çelebi*, p. 63.
4. See A. A. Shakhmatov, “*Povest' vremennykh let*” po Lavrent'evskomü spisku (The “Tale of Bygone Years” in the Lavrentyev Manuscript) (St. Petersburg, 1910).
5. See E. A. Rezvan, “Koran i koranistika” (“The Qur’ān and Qur’ānic studies”), *Islam. Istoriograficheskie ocherki* (Moscow, 1991), pp. 7—84.
6. O. I. Smirnova, “Nekotorye voprosy kritiki teksta (“Sbornik Letopisei” Rashid ad-Dina, “Shakh-name” Firdousi i “Istoriia Bukhary” Narshakhi)” (“Some problems concerning the critiques of texts: “Compendium of Chronicles” by Rashīd al-Dīn, “Shah-nāma” by Firdawsī and “History of Bukhārā” by Narshakhī”), *Pis'mennye pamiatniki Vostoka. Ezhegodnik, 1968* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 155—65.
7. The version lacking the section dedicated to Fāṭima was edited by F. K. Timurtaş, see *Süleyman Çelebi, Mevlid*. [*Vesilet-ün-Necât*], hazırlayan F. K. Timurtaş, 3. baskı (Istanbul, 1980).
8. Manuscript B 4614 in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fol. 29 a.
9. Ateş, *Süleyman Çelebi*, p. 26. Here and elsewhere the translation is given in blank verse for aesthetic reasons; it does not, however, significantly depart from the original text.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
11. *Latîfî tezkiresi*, hazırlayan M. İsen (Ankara, 1990), p. 62.
12. Ateş, *Süleyman Çelebi*, p. 23; see also İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı tarihi* (Ankara, 1961), i, pp. 561—2.
13. Ateş, *Süleyman Çelebi*, p. 23.
14. *Latîfî tezkiresi*, p. 62.
15. Ateş, *Süleyman Çelebi*, p. 27.
16. The Qur’ān, 2 : 285 (here and elsewhere the Qur’ān’s translation by A. J. Arberry is used).
17. The Qur’ān, 2 : 254.

18. *Latîfî tezkiresi*, pp. 62—3.
19. E. J. W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry* (London, 1900), pp. 234—5.
20. G. M. Prokhorov, “Prenie Grigoriia Palamy ‘s khiony i turki’ i problema ‘zhidovskaia mudrstvuiushchikh’” (“The dispute of Grigorius Palamas ‘with Khions and Turks’ and the problem of ‘those devoted to Judaism’”), *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoï literatury*, XXVI (Leningrad, 1972), p. 368.
21. *Zapiski ianychara. Napisyany Konstantinom Mikhaïlovichem iz Ostrovitsy* (Notes of a Janissary, Written by Constantine Mikhaylovich of Ostrowitza), introduction, translation and commentaries by A. I. Rogov (Moscow, 1978), pp. 42—3.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Istanbul Kitaplıkları Tarih-Coğrafya yazmaları katalogları. I. Türkçe tarih yazmaları*, 5. fasc.: Biyografiye ait eserler: a — Siyerler (Istanbul, 1945), pp. 404—5. For Muştafâ al-Ḍarîr and the history of his texts, see also V. Minorsky, *The Chester Beatty Library. A Catalogue of the Turkish Manuscripts and Miniatures*, with an Introduction by J. V. S. Wilkinson (Dublin, 1958), No. 419, pp. 30—1. See also Ch. Rieu, *Catalogue of the Turkish Manuscripts in the British Library* (London, 1888), pp. 38—9.
26. G. Kut, “Ahmed-i Dâî”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 1989), ii, p. 57.
27. See Minorsky, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
28. Ateş, *Süleyman Çelebi*, p. 42.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 33—4.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 124—5.
31. For details, see V. R. Holbrook, “Ibn ‘Arabi and Ottoman dervish traditions: the Melâmî supra-order”, *Journal of the Muhyiddin ibn ‘Arabi Society*, IX (1991), pp. 18—35.
32. E. È. Bertel’s, “Proiskhozhdenie sufizma i zarozhdenie sufiïskoï literatury” (“The origins of the Şūfism and Şūfî literature”), *Izbrannye trudy. Sufizm i sufiïskaia literatura*, pp. 30—2.
33. Manuscript B 4614 in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fol. 18 a.
34. Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: the Classical Age. 1300—1600*, 2nd edn. (London, 1995), p. 191.
35. O. F. Akimushkin, “Malâmatîia” (“Malâmatîyya”), *Islam. Èntsiklopedicheskii slovar’* (Moscow, 1991), p. 155.
36. Information on Emîr Sultân is drawn from *Istanbul Kitaplıkları Tarih-Coğrafya yazmaları katalogları*, fasc. 6 (Istanbul, 1946), p. 528.
37. Gibb, *History*, p. 232.
38. O. F. Akimushkin, “Khalvatiia” (“Khalwatiyya”), *Islam. Èntsiklopedicheskii slovar’*, p. 267.
39. MS B 4614, fol. 2 a—2 b.
40. A. Knysh, “al-Insân al-kâmil”, *Islam. Èntsiklopedicheskii slovar’*, p. 101.
41. MS B 4614, fol. 2 b.
42. I. P. Petrushevskii, *Islam v Irane v VII—XV vekakh* (Islam in Iran between Seventh to Fifteenth Centuries) (Leningrad, 1966), p. 264.
43. MS B 4614, fol. 3 a.
44. Holbrook, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
45. MS B 4614, fol. 29 a.
46. Uzunçarşılı, *op. cit.*, pp. 566—7.
47. See *ibid.*, pp. 560, 562. See also Ateş, *Süleyman Çelebi*, p. 24.
48. Ateş, *Süleyman Çelebi*, p. 30.
49. MS B 4614, fol. 28 a.
50. [Ibn Baṭṭūṭa], *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. AD. 1325—1354*, translated with revisions and notes from the Arabic text edited by C. Defrémery and B. R. Sanguinetti by H. A. R. Gibb (Cambridge, 1962), ii, p. 450.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Zapiski ianychara*, p. 37.
53. MS B 4614, fol. 28 b.
54. Ateş, *Süleyman Çelebi*, p. 66.