

# Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries - An Historiographical Essay

## Part I : What Happened to Eşrefoğlu?\*

Bill Hickman\*\*

*XV. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Sufiliğinde İki Esrarlı Nokta - Tarih Yazıcılığı Açısından Bir Deneme Bölüm I: Eşrefoğlu'nun Sonu Ne Oldu?*

Öz ■ Eşrefoğlu olarak meşhur olan Abdullah b. Eşref, XV. yüzyılda Osmanlı Anadolu'sunun kültürel manzarasının en önemli şahsiyetlerindedir. *Divan*, *Müzekki al-Nüfus* ve *Tarikatname* eserlerinden şimdiye kadar ona ait olduğu kesinlikle tespit edilebilmiş olanlarıdır. Adı yüzyıllar boyunca devam eden tarikatına verilmiştir. Eşrefoğlu'nun hayatı defalarca anlatılmışsa da hikayenin detayları ilk olarak ancak XVII. yüzyıldan kalan bir menakıbnamede bulunur. Diğer kaynaklar -ki bazıları bugüne kadar elimize geçmemiştir- hayatının sonunu olumsuz bir şekilde yansıtır. Bu rivayetler kabul edilebilir mi? Cevap evet ise kaynakların XVII. yy. öncesi sessizliğini nasıl açıklayabiliriz? Hayır ise rivayetlerin bu zamanda doğuşunun sebebi ne olabilir?

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\* The bulk of the research on which the following essay is based was carried out in the libraries of Istanbul, Bursa and Ankara and was documented in my (unpublished) 1972 Harvard thesis: "Eşrefoğlu Rumi: Fifteenth Century Anatolian Mystic Poet." This essay was projected as part of a book, tentatively titled *Two Tekke Poets*, and several times prematurely cited as "forthcoming". Unfortunately that project was not realized. Since then research published by other writers has lengthened the relevant bibliography but has not, for the most part, addressed the questions raised in the above synopsis, or altered my earlier thinking about Eşrefoğlu. It is a pleasure, belatedly, to acknowledge the encouragement (and criticisms) of V. L. Menage and the late Andreas Tietze who both read an unfinished draft of "Two Tekke Poets" now many years ago. Thanks also, even more belatedly, to Irene Beldiceanu-Steinherr for her assistance in using the diary cited in note 41. And thanks now to R. Dankoff, Gary Leiser, Ralph Jaeckel for their more recent comments. Finally, thanks also to this journal's pre-publication readers, who further helped shape this essay. None of them are responsible for any remaining errors. Opinions expressed are my own.

\*\* Formerly Associate Professor of Turkish Language and Literature of the University of California (Berkeley)

Bu revizyonist deneme, kaynakları ve literatürü yeniden gözden geçirerek bu sorulara inandırıcı cevaplar vermeyi hedefler. Aynı zamanda Eşrefoğlu'nun hayatının bütün aydınlatılabilir safhalarını olabildiğince açıklamayı amaçlar.

Anahtar kelimeler: Eşrefoğlu Rumi, Osmanlı mutasavvıf şairleri, Azizlerin hayatına ait eserler

“Eşrefoğlu Rumi”, to use his widely accepted pen-name, is one of the major figures of 15th century Ottoman sufism: inspired teacher, author of manuals of mystical belief and practice, and poet of lasting renown. While the earliest accounts of his life reflect the interests and preoccupations of his biographers, beyond the sometimes clichéd formulations there are suggestions of a sinister end to the life of this long venerated sheikh. Other sources, heretofore overlooked, add weight to these intimations. If false, why did such rumors circulate in the first place? Why were they not then convincingly challenged and discredited? Or are they to be accepted after all? And how is it that those stories have attracted little interest among scholars? A close reading of all the sources shows that much that has been accepted about Eşrefoğlu must be reevaluated and possibly revised. In this revisionist essay I subject the relevant primary sources to a rigorous reexamination and review modern studies to reach a clearer picture of what can be known –not only about the end but also the high points– of the life of this charismatic yet apparently controversial man. It is clear that hardly a name, date, or fact can be accepted about Eşrefoğlu without question. In the notes I have therefore sometimes gone into excessive detail to fully document the foundation for further study.

### **Conflicting Narratives?**<sup>1</sup>

The story of the life of Abdullah son of Eşref, better known as “Eşrefoğlu Rumi”<sup>2</sup>, the *mahlas* of most of his poetry, traces a familiar narrative arc: following

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1 A good introduction to the cultural setting for what follows is Eric Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam*, translated by Roger Gaetani (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2010), especially pp. 1-26, where several of the terms and concepts mentioned below are discussed.

2 “Eşrefoğlu Rumi” is the form of his *mahlas* as it appears in most of his poetry. He is also (as here) known by “Ibn al-Aşraf” (the Arabic form) and “Eşrefzade” (the Persian), both emphasizing the presumed name of his father. I use all three forms, interchangeably, depending on the context. The full name of the poet sheikh is uncertain. In some early copies of his *Müzekki al-nüfus* (see below) it appears as “Abdullah ibn Eşref ibn Muhammad al-Mısri”, in others as “Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Mısri” and also “Abdullah ibn Eşref Muhammad al-Mısri”. Some modern authors name Abdullah’s father “Eşref Ahmed”. Might Eşrefoğlu’s father be the author of an early Anatolian

a dream, the scholar of early promise abandons his academic career and turns to a holy man, Abdal Mehmed, for divine knowledge; he pursues wisdom first from one sheikh, Hacı Bayram, then to another, the Kadiri sheikh Husayn in Hama.<sup>3</sup> Having married the daughter of his (first) sheikh, he returns home to devote his life to spiritual exercise, writing, and the training of fellow seekers on the path. In skeletal outline, that is the story of Eşrefoğlu's life, following a slightly amended version of a narrative first told by Abdullah ibn Veliyuddin in his *Menakib-i Eşref-zade* sometime in the first half of the 17th century.<sup>4</sup>

Abdullah was a preacher in the mosque of Seyyid Mehmed al-Buhari (“Emir Sultan”) in Bursa, and came from perhaps the lowest rank of *ulema*. His account, he wrote, came from “the late Mehmed Çelebi”, who was close to the inner circle of followers of Eşrefoğlu. In his *Menakib*, Abdullah strung together a dozen individual stories, the first of which constitute a picture of the sheikh. He thus formulated, probably for the first time in writing, a story which must have found approval among the first generations of the sheikh's followers.<sup>5</sup>

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medical treatise, *Haza'inu's-sa'adat* who names himself “Eşref b. Muhammad”? See the edition by Bedi N. Şehsuvaroğlu, *Haza'inu's-sa'adat* [sic] (Ankara: TTK Yay., 1961). Şehsuvaroğlu judges that the author, about whom nothing is known, wrote the book in the late 14th or early 15th century; the unique surviving copy is dated 1460. The author, Eşref, states that he wrote his book in Turkish: “because in this province [not named] everyone speaks only Turkish” (xiii). (For more on issues surrounding the variant names see below, note 31.)

- 3 Abdal Mehmed: Legendary figure of whose life nothing is known for certain. Abdullah calls him “one of the divinely obsessed” [*meczuban-ı İlahi'den*]. A mosque in Bursa was erected in his name, apparently by Sultan Murad II. See Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, *Osmanlı Mimarisinde Çelebi ve II. Sultan Murad Devri* (İstanbul: Baha, 1972), pp. 275-79. He is not mentioned by Taşköprüzade. For hagiographic stories about him see Mefail Hızlı and Murat Yurtsever, *Ravza-i Evliya* (Bursa: Arasta, 2000), pp. 89-92. For more on Hacı Bayram and Husayn Hamawi see below, notes 95 and 97 respectively.
- 4 Now published in modern Turkish transcription by Abdullah Uçman: Abdullah Veliyyüddin Bursevi, *Menakib-i Eşrefzade (Eşrefoğlu Rumi'nin Menkıbeleri)* (İstanbul: Kitapevi, 2009); pp. 3-13. Uçman used the Istanbul University copy of Abdullah's work, TY 270 (hereafter “TY”). See the Addendum for a cautionary note about this edition and another recension of Abdullah's work for important variant readings. When I follow that recension I am referring to Istanbul Ü. MS: İbnül Emin 3562 (“İE”).
- 5 Mehmed Çelebi was the son of Bilecik(l)i Muslihuddin Efendi whom the writer describes as “my spiritual mentor” (*benüm rubum*). Muslihuddin served as a kind of caretaker sheikh for the order in the early/mid-16th century following the death of the first halife, Abdürrahim Tirsi and apparently before a true successor came of suitable age. For more detail see below, n. 104.

The oldest source for Eşrefoğlu's life, however, is not Abdullah's but the Arabic *Al-Shaqa'iq al-nu'maniyya*. Its author, Ahmed Taşköprüzade, came from and wrote for the upper tier of the *medrese*-trained class. He placed his account of "Ibn al-Aşraf" in the seventh class [*tabaka*], corresponding to the reign of Sultan Mehmed II.<sup>6</sup> He emphasized the scholars under whom Eşrefoğlu studied and trained: Muslihuddin Mustafa, better known as Hocasade, and Alaeddin Ali al-Tusi. Eşrefoğlu himself was a model scholar. "There was no problem he could not solve." Taşköprüzade did not name his later spiritual mentors.<sup>7</sup>

Given the different perspectives of their authors, it is understandable that these two accounts emphasize different aspects of the life of their common subject. It is only in the last lines of both that two otherwise complementary texts actually diverge, seeming to describe a different person altogether.

Abdullah tells the following story, here again in much abbreviated form: After settling down in Iznik on his return from Hama (in modern Syria), Eşrefoğlu persevered in an extreme form of isolation and solitude—to such an extent that he was belittled by his fellow townspeople. The sheikh left the town to wander in the nearby hills, but was soon discovered by a villager who believed he was a runaway slave.<sup>8</sup> The man's mother recognized him as the now recently vanished sheikh from Iznik. It was she who was responsible for building a retreat (*savma'a*) for him

6 Ahmed Subhi Furat has published the Arabic text with extensive indices and a brief modern Turkish introduction: 'Isam al-Din Abu al-Khayr Ahmad bin Mustafa al-shahir Tashkuprizade, *Al-Shaqa'iq al-nu'maniyah fi 'ulama al-dawlat al-'Uthmaniyyah* (Istanbul, 1985 [İst. Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yay. #3353]). The notice on Eşrefoğlu appears at pp. 208-9. A modern Turkish translation of the text, by Muharrem Tan, also with brief introduction and indices, is: Taşköprülüzade, *Osmanlı Bilginleri* (İstanbul: İz Yay., 2007); see p. 185. For the biographer himself, see *TDVIA* v. 40 ("Taşköprüzade Ahmed Efendi"), pp. 151-52, by Yusuf Şevki Yavuz. Cf. Richard C. Repp, *The Mufti of Istanbul* (London: Ithaca Press, 1986), pp. 3-6.

7 On Hocasade and Ali al-Tusi: see Taşköprüzade, Furat ed., pp. 126-39 and 97-101; Tan transl. pp. 127-40 and 104-7 (respectively in each case). Cf. *TDVIA* v. 18, pp. 207-9 "Hocasade Muslihuddin Efendi" (Saffet Köse) and v. 41, pp. 432-33 "Tusi, Alaeddin" (Mustafa Öz). Repp surveys Hocasade's career: *op. cit.*, pp. 68-71. Eşrefoğlu's two teachers are more prominently linked as scholars whom Fatih pitted against each other in a writing competition (see Repp, p. 134).

8 The figure of the saintly or holy man as runaway slave (here *kaçgun*) has the aspect of a literary trope. For another instance see Bill Hickman, *The Story of Joseph. A 14th Century Turkish Morality Play by Sheyyad Hamza* (Syracuse: Syracuse U. Press, 2014), pp. 45-46; l. 214 ff.

at a place (“Pınarbaşı”) near Tirse [Tirs?] and became Eşrefoğlu’s first follower.<sup>9</sup> It was there he apparently lived out the rest of his life. After his death Eşrefoğlu was succeeded by Abdürrahim Tirsi, his sole named adept (*mürid*), whom Eşrefoğlu had married to Züleyha, his daughter.<sup>10</sup>

Soon after its composition, Abdullah’s account was adapted by Baldırzade, early biographer of Bursa saints, who retold the story in more florid language as part of his *Ravza-i Evliya*.<sup>11</sup> With minor changes Abdullah’s narrative, or the version found in Baldırzade, formed the basis for most later retellings.<sup>12</sup>

For his part Taşköprüzade concluded his account of Eşrefoğlu with the following words, “he tended toward the way of sufism and joined the class of sufis... He wished to travel and a group of Kalenders followed his example and took him with them by force. In the end he was obliged to travel with them for a long time, until he died.”<sup>13</sup>

9 The precise location of Tirse today is not known. It is variously described as a village or a summer pastorage, eight hours distance from Iznik. No village of that name is listed in *Köylerimiz* (Ankara, 1968). In his own time, Sheikh Üftade (on whom see below and n. 40) established a retreat at a “Pınarbaşı”, near Bursa.

10 Abdürrahim Tirsi: Said to have died in 926/1520. Abdürrahim is described by Abdullah, in a separate *menkibe*, as follows: Bayezid-i Fakih, his father, was the imam in Tirse; his ancestors were related to Ahmed Bey of the İsfendiyaroğlu family and were originally from Bolu. When Abdürrahim was four years old his father brought him along on visits to Eşrefoğlu at the retreat which had been built at Pınarbaşı. Eventually the boy’s father left him with the sheikh for instruction, at the latter’s insistence. From that time on Eşrefoğlu was never separated from the boy. (Uçman, *Menakıb*, 38; Abdürrahim’s father is not named in İE.)

11 For the transcribed text, based on the autograph ms., see Hızlı and Yurtsever, *Ravza-i Evliya*, 274-81. I use {} in what follows when citing sources originally used in manuscript: {Istanbul MS: Beyazit Ktp., Veliyuddin Ef. 1650, ff. 74b-77b.}

12 For my argument regarding the relationship between these primary sources see the Addendum. And see n. 111 there for another edition of the *Menakıb*. For a later writer who largely repeated (and abbreviated) the account formulated by Abdullah, and elaborated by Baldırzade, see Hafız Hüseyin Ayvansarayı, *Vefayat-i Ayvansarayı*, Ramazan Ekinci and Adem Ceyhan (ed.), (İstanbul: Buhara, 2013). {Istanbul MS: Süleymaniye Ktp., Esad Efendi 1375, ff. 2b-3a.}

13 Emphasis added. The Arabic text of Taşköprüzade’s final (quoted) lines:

مال الي طريقة الطصوف و التحق بزمرۃ الصوفية ثم رغب في السياحة و اتقدي به الطايفة القلندرية اخذوه معهم جبرا و قهرا ولم يتخلص من ايديهم حتي سار معهم في البلاد زمانا كثيرا الي ان مات

The startling culmination of Taşköprüzade's notice begs for clarification. We know something about the "renunciatory" dervishes of this time, but what band of Kalenders were these? And why did they force a man of learning, now an admired sufi given to silent retreat [*halvet*], to travel with them, apparently for the rest of his days? Taşköprüzade's notice ends abruptly and offers no explanation. There is no other reference to Eşrefoğlu, or indeed to any other Kalenders, in the *Şhaq'a'iq*.<sup>14</sup>

The Ottoman historian Ālī (d. 1600) repeated the story told by Taşköprüzade in his own *Künh al-Ahbar*.<sup>15</sup> He added to the end of his brief narrative the enigmatic remark: "And some say that he [Eşrefzade] came into possession of the elixir."<sup>16</sup> The unexplained ending of Taşköprüzade's short notice (adopted and supplemented by Ālī), with its reference to Kalenders, was largely forgotten or rejected<sup>17</sup>; their recounting of early scholarly success was superseded by Abdullah's more elaborate narrative of tales of ascetic endurance and extraordinary accomplishment.

The date of Eşrefoğlu's death is uncertain. None appears in sources before the 17th century. A frequently quoted chronogram yields the year 874 (1469-70): "*Eşrefzade 'azm-i cinan eyledi*". Other dates have been suggested, all equally lacking convincing documentation.<sup>18</sup>

14 Ahmet T. Karamustafa identifies the Kalenders as one (of several) dervish groups who pursued a form of piety he describes as "renunciation of society through outrageous social deviance." See *God's Unruly Friends* (Salt Lake City: U Utah Press, 1994) and especially pp. 61-83, and further, below, n. 79. A more detailed study, but without reference to Eşrefoğlu, is Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Marjinal Sufilik: Kalenderiler* (Ankara: TTK, 1992).

15 For Ālī see Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1986).

16 *Bazıları kavlince iksire dahi malik olmuştur*. The sections of Ālī's *Künh al-Ahbar* dealing with Fatih's time and later were never printed. His account of Eşrefoğlu was largely dependent on Taşköprüzade, as were many of his other early biographical notices. The relevant passage of Ālī's short notice reads: "[Eşrefzade] made friends with the Kalenders. Wily nilly and by force and constraint they took him and did not let him from their side, until the end of his life." {İstanbul MS: Suleymaniye Ktp., Hamidiye 914, f. 148b.}

17 Independent of Taşköprüzade, Mahmud ibn Sulayman al-Kafawi (d. 1582) mentions "Ibn al-Ashraf" among the students of al-Tusi in his *Kata'ib al'am al-ahyar min fuqaha* ... See Istanbul MS: Süleymaniye Ktp., Halet Ef. 630, f. 445a. Kafawi's Arabic compendium of biographies has never been printed. For the author see *TDVIA* v. 25 ("Kefevi, Mahmud b. Suleyman"), pp. 185-86, by Ahmet Özel.

18 A *menkabe* in Abdullah's work (Uçman, *Menakıb*, p. 33) points to the date 874; it is not found in İE however. The date 899 (corresponding to 1493-4) was proposed by

In İznik a mosque was erected in Eşrefoğlu's name, perhaps before the end of the 15th century, with a mausoleum and dervish convent (*tekke*) nearby.<sup>19</sup> A tombstone with death date likely once marked Eşrefoğlu's grave. But with the exception of one substantial minaret, nothing remains of the original structures, destroyed during the Turkish War of Independence. An early 20th century black and white photograph reveals stunning ceramic faience work, a 17th century addition (perhaps following earthquake damage to the building?), on the outer mosque wall facing the "latecomers place" (*son cemaat yeri*). The photo is all that survives to give an idea of the appearance of the mosque up until slightly more than a century ago.<sup>20</sup>

For a time İznik remained the spiritual center of the order, but following—perhaps because of—the still unexplained decline of the ceramic industry, a *tekke* in Bursa took its place.<sup>21</sup>

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Ayvansarayı (see above, n. 12), following the chronogram *tebcil-i hayat*. It would seem to be ruled out given the proposed dating of the Eşrefoğlu mosque (See the following paragraph and next note.) Evliya Çelebi visited the mosque/tekke complex in the mid-1600s but did not record any date for the sheikh. See Seyyit Ali Kahraman and Yücel Dağlı (ed.) *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Kültür Sanat Yay., 1999) v. 3, p. 10.

19 On the basis of a *vakıf* document in Bursa, Mehmed Şemseddin asserted that the founder of the mosque (in 1485) was the "mother, Mükrimme Hatun, of Sultan Bayezid [II]": *Bursa Dergahları. Yadigar-i Şemsi I-II* (Bursa: Uludağ, 1997), p. 88. As Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi has pointed out, Mükrimme/Mukrime (also called Sitt[i]) Hatun was not the mother, but the step-mother of Bayezid II. Between the two, Ayverdi, for unstated reasons, chose the step-mother as the founder of Eşrefoğlu's mosque. (See Ayverdi's *Fatih Devri Mimarisi*, p. 77 #678.) Since Mükrimme likely died in 1467 it is highly improbable that she was the founder of the Eşrefoğlu mosque. It makes more sense to believe the *vakıf* was in fact Bayezid's mother, Gülbahar Hatun, who is thought to have died before 1492.

More recently, but without documentation, Oktay Aslanapa attributes the mosque to the (unnamed) wife of Bayezid's son, Şahinşah: Aslanapa, "Turkish Architecture at İznik", in Işıl Akbaygil et al (ed), *Iznik throughout History*, p. 231.

20 For the photo: Katharina Otto-Dorn, *Das Islamische Iznik* (Berlin, 1941), plate 45.

21 A lamp which once hung in the Dome of the Rock Mosque in Jerusalem, bears a crude inscription linking its maker to Eşrefoğlu: "In the year 956 [1549] in the month of Cemaziyel-evvel [May 28 to June 26] the designer is the poor, the humble Musli [indecipherable]; oh thou holy man in Iznik—Eşrefzade." For the translated inscription: Arthur Lane, "The Ottoman Pottery of Isnik," *Ars Orientalis* 2 (1957) p. 269. For a photograph see Walter B. Denny, *Iznik. The artistry of Ottoman ceramics* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004), p. 18. Denny overreaches when he describes Eşrefoğlu as

The Iznik mosque and tekke complex remained objects of visitation for *tarikât* followers or spiritual “tourists”. A nameless visitor from the 19th century noted the grave of “Seyyid Eşref b. Mehmed al-Mısri” (Eşrefoğlu’s father?) among “other saints whose tombs I have prayed at in Iznik”. The grave was located in the middle of a field outside the “Baghdad gate” of the Iznik walls, a *ziyaretgâh* within its own walls.<sup>22</sup>

Late in the last century a well maintained Eşrefî *tekke* (“Numaniye”) survived in the Çatal Fırın quarter of Bursa.<sup>23</sup>

### Orhan Köprülü’s Interpretation

In their recent article on “Eşrefoğlu Rumi” in the *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Abdullah Uçman and Necla Pekolcay pointedly reject Taşköprüzade’s story and repeat the Abdullah/Baldırzade narrative.<sup>24</sup> They cite for support a chapter from the unpublished (and largely overlooked) Istanbul University thesis of Orhan Köprülü, written 60 years ago.<sup>25</sup> Given the respect accorded to the scholarly *TDVIA*, the account by Uçman and Pekolcay has now become *de facto* the “standard version” and must be taken seriously.<sup>26</sup> But should we believe it?

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“the patron saint of the Iznik ceramics manufactories.” (p. 147) As the lamp inscription indicates, the worker (“Musli”) revered the sheikh, but that he and his fellow artisans were in any way organized into a guild in this provincial city and, if they were, that they recognized a “patron saint”, are assertions that cannot be supported with our current knowledge. For more on Iznik in the centuries following Eşrefoğlu’s death see Heath Lowry, “Ottoman Iznik (NICAEA) Through the eyes of travelers & as recorded in Administrative Documents, 1331-1923” in Akbaygil, *Iznik*, pp. 135-74.

22 The note is found in an Ottoman manuscript *mecmua*: Istanbul MS: Süleymaniye, Hacı Mahmud 2673, f. 217b.

23 I was given an opportunity to see this building in 1969 thanks to the late Ziya Eşrefoğlu, a descendant of the sheikh.

24 *TDVIA*, v. 11 (“Eşrefoğlu Rumi”), pp. 480-82, by Abdullah Uçman and Necla Pekolcay.

25 Köprülü’s 1951 thesis is *Tarihi Kaynak Olarak XIV. ve XV. Asırlardaki Bazı Türk Menakıbnameleri*; see esp. pp. 106-10 (“*Menakıb-i Eşref oğlu Rumi*”). Except for one chapter the thesis was never published or reviewed. (See Part II of this essay for further comment on the thesis.) My thanks to Scott Redford at Koç University for assistance in obtaining a copy of Köprülü’s thesis.

26 Uçman and Pekolcay’s account now supercedes earlier ones: “Eşrefiye” in *İA*, iv, pp. 396-7, by Kasım Kufralı [1947]; and “Eşrefoğlu” in *Türk Ansiklopedisi*, xv, pp. 476-7, by İsmet Parmaksızoğlu [1968]. The *EP* entry, vol. xii (“*Supplement*”), pp. 282-3, by Fahir İz (“*Eshrefoghlu*”), is inadequate, offering no review or critical account of the sources.

Although, as we have seen, the accounts of Taşköprüzade and Abdullah are essentially complementary and possibly contradictory only in their endings, Köprülü seemed intent on discrediting the former. This is all the more curious since he made no reference whatsoever to its concluding story of Kalenders—the one narrative detail that required explanation. Köprülü asserted the superiority of the tradition recounted by Abdullah because of its author’s links with the Eşrefi community.

Köprülü found support for his thesis in the fact that Taşköprüzade had placed his notice of “Ibn al-Ashraf” among the *ulema*—not the sheikhs—of Fatih’s time, even though Eşrefoğlu’s eventual reputation derived from his later prominence as a sufi and poet, not as a religious scholar. Köprülü argued further that Taşköprüzade could be excused for not knowing about the Iznik sheikh and ignoring him in his book since Abdullah’s *menakıbnâme* was not written until after the death of the renowned biographer.<sup>27</sup>

Köprülü constructed his argument on the premise that there must have been two men known as “son of Eşref”. In his view, the man Taşköprüzade wrote about was the one whose life ended in the hands of the Kalenders. Köprülü’s other “son of Eşref” is “our” Eşrefoğlu, a man who somehow remained unknown to Taşköprüzade. The former, although Köprülü doesn’t say so, must subsequently have vanished without a trace. Köprülü thus asks us to believe the following: that two men with the same patronymic (possibly even brothers, for the name “Eşref” is not all that common) lived in the same general region of Anatolia and at about the same time, each having made enough of a name to be noticed by later biographers—but not so much as to deserve comment by those biographers for their names.<sup>28</sup> Köprülü’s reasoning is unconvincing. Yet this curious argument, Köprülü’s only explanation, is what the writers of the *DIA* entry would have us believe.

Köprülü blamed the presumed confusion on ‘Ālī “the Historian”. It was he who, in Köprülü’s view, mistakenly linked Taşköprüzade’s accomplished scholar with a revered sufi by adding details about the books Eşrefoğlu had written and where he had lived. In so doing, Köprülü asserted, ‘Ālī managed to conflate

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27 It is unlikely that Taşköprüzade would have included such details as the *Menakıb* offers even if he had known them.

28 For a well known example of prominent (early 15th century) Turkish literary brothers recall Ahmed Bican and Yazıcızade Mehmed. Accounts of their lives are placed back to back in Taşköprüzade’s book.

Taşköprüzade's notice of "Ibn al-Ashraf" and the life of the better known Eşrefoğlu into the story of a single man.<sup>29</sup>

Before dismissing the oldest source we have for Eşrefoğlu—as Uçman and Pekolcay ask us to do—we should recall that Taşköprüzade was born (in 1495) in Bursa where, soon after his birth, followers of the poet-sheikh Eşrefoğlu were prominent in such numbers that a district there was named after them.<sup>30</sup> In his book Taşköprüzade refers more often to Bursa than to any other city. His uncle and his father, both distinguished scholars before him, had had multiple appointments in the city, and both older men supplied the younger with information useful to him in the writing of his *Shaqa'iq*. In the notice on "Ibn al-Ashraf," Taşköprüzade explicitly cites his father as a source, as he does also in his much lengthier account of Hocazade, one of "Ibn al-Eşref's" teachers, who coincidentally spent some of the last years of his life in Iznik. It is odd that Köprülü was so quick to discount Taşköprüzade's credibility.

Köprülü's interest in Eşrefoğlu (a minor chapter of barely 10 pages) hardly goes beyond what I have just summarized. To be fair, his broader concern was the use of hagiographic (*menakib*) literature to supplement or correct just such works as Taşköprüzade's. But in the case of Eşrefoğlu he seems to have muddied rather than clarified the waters.<sup>31</sup>

Hamid Algar has written, "The whole purpose of the genre of *menakib*, of hagiography, is to transmit to a believing and pious audience matters of practical,

29 Köprülü ignored Âlî's cryptic comment about the elixir.

30 See Neşet Köseoğlu, *Tarihte Bursa Mahalleleri XV. ve XVI. Yüzyillarda* (Bursa: Bursa Halkevi Yay. 17, 1956), 19. Köseoğlu notes the existence of a district ("Eşrefiler") named in a religious court register from 913/1507-8. More information regarding the Bursa *mahalle* is now given by Raif Kaplanoğlu, *Bursa Ansiklopedisi I. Yer Adları* (Bursa: 2001), 104-5. The district was still known by the same name in the mid 20th century: see Kazım Baykal, *Bursa ve Anıtları* (Bursa, 1950), p. 113 and plan vii. (The İncirli Dergah in that neighborhood presumably occupies the site of the original tekke.) The district ("Eşrefiler") apparently did not exist in 1487 when the oldest surviving census was drawn up. See Irene Beldiceanu-Steinherr, „Brousse et ses habitants en 1487," *Turcica* 31 (1999), pp. 313-73.

31 Köprülü based his discussion of Taşköprüzade on the often cited (Ottoman) adaptation by Mehmed Mecdi, not on the Arabic original. So he called attention to Mecdi's (mis) naming of the sheikh "Eşrefzade Muhyiddin Muhammad" as further evidence that the biography was not that of the Iznik sufi poet. But whatever the source of that name, the error did not originate with the author. Manuscripts of Mecdi's work that I have seen show it as given by Taşköprüzade.

spiritual value; the specifically ‘human’—the whole study of modern biography—is trivial and profoundly uninteresting from a traditional viewpoint.”<sup>32</sup> While important historical facts can certainly be found in hagiographies such as Abdullah’s *Menakibname*, extreme care must be exercised when evaluating the stories found in them.

### Previously Unrecognized Sources

It is nowhere recorded that Eşrefoğlu travelled outside Anatolia, apart from his journey to Hama. But his reputation apparently outdistanced him, for his name appears in a collection of biographies by the 17th century Egyptian writer Abd al-Ra’uf al-Munawi (d. 1621).<sup>33</sup>

[i] Aşraf al-Rumi [sic], buried in Iznik, was a sheikh possessed and overwhelmed [by divine love].<sup>34</sup> He was the source of sayings whose literal meaning ran counter to the sacred law. The errors [? *halal*] were reported to the mystic Ibn al-Wafa.<sup>35</sup> A number of sufis were killed for a single word. Things which the sacred law did not permit originated with al-Aşraf more than once. But they [the authorities] did not stand up against him. And he said: “They were by the shore of the ocean, and those [with authority] had command over them.” But al-Aşraf was in the middle of it and they did not have command over him. The mollah ‘Arabzade related it.<sup>36</sup>

Al-Munawi’s “single word” is almost certainly an allusion to the famous utterance, *ana’l-haqq* (“I am the Truth”) of al-Hallaj, mystic and poet who was

32 Hamid Algar, “The Naqshbandi Order: A Preliminary survey of its history and significance,” *Studia Islamica* 44 (1976), 134.

33 *Irgam awliya al-shaytan bi-dhikr manakib awliya al-rahman*, edited by Muhammad Adib al-Jadir (Beirut, 1999). Al-Munawi (1545-1622) was a follower of the prominent Egyptian scholar and moderate sufi, al-Sha’rani.

34 Despite the misnaming it is clear from the reference to Iznik that al-Munawi is here writing of “our” sheikh, Eşrefoğlu.

35 By “Ibn al-Wafa” Munawi perhaps refers to “Sheikh Vefa” (d. 1491), a prominent member of the Zeyni tarikat in Istanbul. On him see Taşköprüzade (Tan translation), pp. 200-202.

36 المدفون بازنیک کان شیخا مجذوبا مستغرقا یصدر عنه کلام ظاهر یخالف الشرع فقیل للعارف ابن الوفا الخلال [?] قد قتل جماعت بکلمة واحدة و قد صدر من الاشرف ما لا یساعده علیه الشرع مرارا و لم یتعرضوا له فقال هولاء كانوا بساحل البحر فتمکنوا منهم و الاشرف فی وسطه فلم یتمکنوا منه حکاه المولی الامام عرب زاده

*Irgam*, vol. 4, p. 224. {Istanbul MS: Süleymaniye, Veliyüddin Ef. 1624, ff. 284b-85a.}

executed in Baghdad in 922/309. Eşrefoğlu mentioned al-Hallaj—and “quoted” those words—several times in his own poetry.<sup>37</sup> But the “sayings” and “things” which ran counter to the shariah, and which al-Munawi refers to here, remain unexplained.<sup>38</sup>

Al-Munawi relied heavily on Taşköprüzade for his accounts of other Turkish figures. But how he obtained this account from Arabzade, his source here, is unclear.<sup>39</sup> The short notice is also marred by problematic readings. Not in doubt, however, is that “Aşraf” gained a certain reputation, not entirely savory in some quarters, and that it spread far from Iznik.

Soon after Taşköprüzade left off his writing of the *Şhaqâ'iq*, but well before al-Munawi wrote his *Irgam*, another man had been copying down his conversations with an aging sheikh, a book which is an invaluable source for the history of Ottoman sufism in the 16th century. The “Diary” of Mahmud Hüda’i (d. 1628) is the record of those conversations with sheikh Üftade (d. 1580) which took place in Bursa. Although an autograph manuscript of most of them has been preserved, they have been little studied.<sup>40</sup> For our purposes three passages are noteworthy:

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37 For the poems referencing Hallaj see: Mustafa Güneş, *Eşrefoğlu Rumi. Hayatı, Eserleri ve Divanı* (İstanbul: Sahhaflar, 2006), pp. 196-7 and 208-9. A brief, more restrained anecdote about Hallaj is included by Eşrefoğlu in his *Müzekki al-nufus*, concluding with the words: “*Fikr olunmasın ki Mansur kafir ola.*” See Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-nüfus*, Abdullah Uçman (ed.), (Istanbul: İnsan 2006), pp. 390-93. It is clear that Eşrefoğlu had profound respect for the martyred al-Hallaj.

38 Ibn Battuta used similar language, in the 14th century, when writing about the prominent Anatolian dervish Baba (Sarı) Saltuk: “They relate that this Saltuq was an ecstatic devotee, although things are told of him which are reproved of by the Divine Law” (In the translation of H.A.R. Gibb: *The Travels of Ibn Battuta* (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1962) v. 2, pp. 499-500).

39 Munawi’s editor identifies “Molla Arabzade” as follows: “The imam Muhammad b. Muhammad known as Arab-zade (919-969 H.), Hanefi faqih, Rumi, author of verses and books in Arabic. He was *muderris* in Bursa, later Istanbul. The sheikh al-Islam became angry with him and he was demoted and exiled to Bursa for two years. Then he was pardoned and returned to teaching. He was later appointed judge in Cairo. On a sea voyage he drowned off the island of Rhodes.” (*Irgam*, v. 4, pp. 224-5, n. 3) He would have been a younger contemporary of Taşköprüzade. The father of Arabzade was a staunch opponent of Shi’ites and especially followers of the Safavid tarikat. See: *TDVIA* v. 30 (“Molla Arap”) pp. 240-41, by Tahsin Özcan.

40 Sheikh Üftade was a close contemporary of Taşköprüzade. Hüda’i kept his account of the meetings which took place between the two men near the end of Üftade’s life, between the years 1577 and 1579. The groundbreaking early study of this major

[ii] [Sheikh Üftade] recalled that when they exiled the revered [mevlana] Eşrefzade from the town, he cried on the road. And his son said to him: “What is the matter? They drove out the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace!) at night, but he did not cry. And you have come away with your sons and your belongings during the day. So why do you cry?” And [Eşrefzade] said: “I only cry out of joy and happiness at this good fortune.”<sup>41</sup>

[iii] Sheikh Üftade mentioned the story of Eşrefzade and of his spiritual revelations [ma’arif]. He said that one day someone said to him [Eşrefoğlu]: “You have spoken most about what al-Hallaj and the seyyid al-Nesimi spoke of.<sup>42</sup> However they [i.e., the religious authorities] did not have the power to harm you.” He said: “From the outside one cannot reach him who is in the middle of the ocean. But both of them were on the shore and they reached them. If they had been in the middle [of the ocean] they would not have reached them.”<sup>43</sup>

[iv] The late [Eşrefzade] used to cry out: “Oh, preachers! Oh, imams! All of them are in Hell [literally ‘the fire’, nar].” And then they destroyed him [thumma ahlakuhu]. He saw a dream which pointed to his martyrdom. [Sheikh Üftade] said: “He exerted himself a great deal but the way was not revealed to him. A

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figure is Irene Beldiceanu Steinherr, *Scheich Uftade der Begründer des Gelvetijje-Ordens* (München 1961). Her study is now complemented by Paul Ballanfat, *Hazret-i Pir-i Uftade: Le Divan* (Paris 2001). I have used the English version, *The Nightingale in the Garden of Love*, as translated by Angela Culme-Seymour (Oxford, 2005; Anqa Publishing). See also Mustafa Bahadıroğlu, (*Celvetiye’nin piri*) *Hazret-i Üftade ve Divanı* (Bursa: Üftade Kur’an Kursu Öğrencilerini Koruma Derneği, 1995) and *TDVIA*, v. 42, p. 282-3 (“Üftade”) by Nihat Azamat.

41 و ذكر ان مولانا اشرف زاده لما نفوه عن البلدة بكى في الطريق فقال ابنه ما انت قد اخرجوا النبي صلي الله عليه و سلم بالليله و ما بكى و خرجت انت باولادك و اموالك نهارا فكيف تبكي قال انما ابكي فرحا و سرورا علي تلك السعادة

*al-Tibr al-Maskuk* (Ankara MS: Raif Yelkenci II/292, f. 78b.) I am indebted to Mme. Beldiceanu-Steinherr for directing me to this (and subsequent) passages from Hüdayi’s journal. No other source mentions Eşrefoğlu’s having had any sons. In the first reference here Üftade uses the word *ibnuhu*, in the second, *awlad*. Should we understand that the sheikh’s companion on the road was his early follower and eventual successor, Abd al-Rahim Tirsi? Muslim tradition places Muhammad’s hijrah at night. See W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 150-51.

42 For the Hurufi poet Nesimi, executed in 1417, see: *TDVIA* v. 33 (“Nesimi”), pp. 3-6 by A. Azmi Bilgin and ilyas Üzüm.

43 The Arabic text reads:

و ذكر قصة اشرف زاده و معارفه و حكي انه قيل له يوما انت تكلمت اكثر مما تكلم الحلاج و السيد النسيبي و مع ذلك لم يتقدروا علي ان يوذوالك قال لا يصل اليه من الخارج الي من كان في وسط البحر و هما كان في طرف البحر فوصلوا اليهما فلو كانا في الوسط لما و صلوا

(*al-Tibr al-Maskuk*, Ankara MS: Raif Yelkenci II/292, f. 68a-b.)

sheikh gestured to him in his grave and gave him milk to drink in a bowl. And then the way was revealed to him.”<sup>44</sup>

According to Mme. Beldiceanu-Steinherr, Üftade had associations with various heterodox groups in his early life as well as with followers of Eşrefoğlu. At one point he travelled to Iznik where he likely met with some of them. Later, however, he distanced himself from their company, although the circumstances of his visit—and the reasons for his behavior—cannot be inferred from the remarks in Hüda’i’s *Diary*.<sup>45</sup>

An anonymous poem, of uncertain date, partly echoes Üftade’s remarks and reflects, across time, even more vividly the figure which Eşrefoğlu must have

44 For the Arabic of the passage from Hüda’i’s diary:

كان المرحوم ينادي ايها الخطبا ايها الائمة كلهم في النار ثم اهلكوه و انه راي رويما يدل الشهادة قال اجتهد كثيرا فلم ينكشف له الطريق فاشار اليه شيخ في قبره وسقاه لبنا في قصعة فانفتح له الطريق

*al-Tibr al-Maskuk* (Bursa MS: Ulu Cami 1753, f. 172b. Milk had a special resonance for Üftade: At the time of his own birth his mother is said to have “dreamt that she saw her son dive into and come out of an ocean of milk”, an event which his father interpreted to mean that he (Üftade) would become a perfect saint. (See Ballanfat, *Nightingale*, p. 10). Quoting Üftade from elsewhere in Hüda’i’s diary Ballanfat states that: “Milk symbolizes knowledge, and knowledge does not refer to formal sciences, for knowledge is actually intelligible...” (p. 38) More apposite, perhaps, is the experience of Muhammad in Jerusalem on his “night journey” (*mirac*). In the words of his biographer, Ibn Hisham: He was brought three vessels containing milk, wine and water respectively. The apostle said: ‘I heard a voice saying when these were offered to me: “If he takes the water he will be drowned and his people also; if he takes the wine he will go astray and his people also; and if he drinks the milk he will be rightly guided and his people also.”’ So I took the vessel containing milk and drank it. Gabriel said to me, “You have been rightly guided, and so will your people be, Muhammad”’. A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad* (London: Oxford University, 1955), p. 182.

45 For her discussion of the “turning point” in Üftade’s life, see Beldiceanu-Steinherr, *Scheich Üftade*, pp. 108-9; for his early life contacts, pp. 103-8; and for the sheikh’s relationships with Eşrefi circles, pp. 91-2. She says Üftade had been crucial to Eşrefoğlu’s followers in getting permission to build his mosque in Iznik. Mustafa Bahadıroğlu, citing two manuscript *menakibnames* devoted to Üftade, states that the reason for the sheikh’s visit to Iznik, on an (unnamed) sultan’s request, was to lead the first Friday prayer after the mosque’s conversion from *mescid* to *cami*. See his *Hazret-i Üftade ve Divanı*, p. 61. While Hüda’i kept the diary in the last years of his sheikh’s life—and while specific passages can be precisely dated within that time frame—the years to which such passages refer, as here, are generally unclear. One of the most urgent desiderata for the study of Ottoman sufism is an annotated edition—or at least a printed text—of the autograph manuscript of Hüda’i’s *Diary*.

projected—at least among his most passionate *tarikāt* followers, and long after his death:

[v] He seized the hand of Sheikh Hüseyin,  
 Eşrefzade is our sultan.  
 He settled down in Iznik town,  
 Eşrefzade is our sultan.  
 He struck the drum of *ana'l haqq*  
 The lovers all came to his side  
 His teaching spread throughout the world.  
 Eşrefzade is our sultan.  
 The secret spread to the lovers;  
 The light of manifestation filled him.<sup>46</sup>  
 He reached the place of the BELOVED,  
 Eşrefzade is our sultan.  
 The lovers reached their desire;  
 Hypocrites remained in the dark.  
 He saw the beauty of the TRUTH,  
 Eşrefzade is our sultan.  
 He scattered pearls and gems;  
 The lovers were captivated.  
 He drank the wine of unity,  
 Eşrefzade is our sultan.  
 Let the heedless hear the secret;  
 Let them put on his saintly robe;  
 Let them surrender to his sons.  
 Eşrefzade is our sultan.  
 He fastened his name, rope-like, to Muhyi;

46 “The light of manifestation” (*tecelli nuri*): these words refer back to the opening line of a controversial poem (*şathiye*) by Eşrefoğlu. (For the text of the poem see Güneş, *Eşrefoğlu Rumi*, pp. 325-26, #85.) For a discussion of the poem and an Ottoman commentary on it: Ahmet Mermer, “Eşrefoğlu ve bir şathiyyesinin şerhi,” *Milli Folklor* 53 (2002), pp. 106-13. In the words of E. Geoffrey “(*tecelli*) consists of *mukashafa*, an ‘unveiling’, which allows divine light to ‘irradiate’ the heart of the mediator; it therefore releases human nature from its darkness in the same way that the sun chases away gloom.” *EP*, v. 10 (“Tadjalli”), pp. 60-61. The poem’s compatibility with the shari’ahshari’ah was the subject of debate, but whether it could have provoked more serious consequences has never been suggested.

He tied and bound the lovers.  
 You, men of truth, do not deny:  
 Eşrefzade is our sultan.<sup>47</sup>

The strongly partisan tone of the poem suggests a highly contentious atmosphere which may well have prevailed during Eşrefoğlu's own lifetime. The text recalls a better known poem, which the one above (were it not for its presumably late date) might have provoked. That poem begins with the famous stanza:

[vi] "Hear this, Eşrefoğlu. We are the garden, we have the rose. We are Ali's slaves. Knowledge of the seventy two tongues is ours."<sup>48</sup>

Variouly described as a "retort" [*reddiye*] or "satire" [*taşlama*], the poem has been attributed to "Hasan Dede" and dated to the 15th, 16th or 17th century.<sup>49</sup> Irrespective of its date, in each of his poem's six stanzas "Hasan Dede" challenged claims to the Truth/truth which Alevis believed Eşrefoğlu (or his followers) had made for themselves. That truth, Hasan Dede asserts, belonged instead to followers of Hacı Bektaş.

Other evidence of contentiousness can be found in Eşrefoğlu's own writing. Better known than his *Nasâ'ih*, but hardly as popular as either the *Divan* or *Müzekki'n-nüfus*, Eşrefoğlu's *Tarikatname* was only recently published, by Esra

47 The poem is found in a volume containing the *divans* of Eşrefoğlu and Abdürrahim, copied in 1742 by "Derviş Bursalı Mehmed" and is perhaps the work of the copyist. The otherwise anonymous poem cannot be presumed older than the above date. (Bursa MS: Genel 724, ff. 84b-85a.) "Muhyi" is probably a reference to Abd al-Qadir, though the poet might have meant Ibn Arabi. The language of the refrain line ("our sultan") suggests the level of devotion felt toward the eponymous "founder" of the *tarikât* by his followers.

48 For the text of the entire poem see Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, *Alevi-Bektaşî Nefesleri* (İstanbul: Remzi, 1963), pp. 29-30. Sadettin Nüzhet [Ergun] published a slightly different text in *Bektaşî Şairleri* (İstanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1930), pp. 17-18. That version incorporates differences which lessen its explicitly partisan Alevi sentiment. The poem's initial stanza still has strong resonance in the Alevi community: see below, n. 67.

49 Gölpınarlı (*Alevi-Bektaşî*, p. 12) placed the poet in the 15th century; M.F. Köprülü, S.N. Ergun (*Bektaşî Şairleri*, ) and Cahit Öztelli (*Bektaşî Gülleri: Alevi-Bektaşî şiirleri antolojisi*, p. 359) argued for the 17th. The unnamed author of the entry on Hasan Dede in *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi* (vol. 4, p. 131) places him in the 16th century. For more on Hasan Dede and the poem see Nejat Birdoğan, *Alevi Kaynakları I* (İstanbul: Kaynak 1996), pp. 83-112.

Keskinkılıç.<sup>50</sup> In her all too brief introduction she provides an overview of the book and summation of a dozen topics covered by the sheikh, starting with the need for obedience to God, the prophet and those who exercise temporal rule. In this work Eşrefoğlu discussed the importance of prayers and ritual ablution, forms of *zikir*, the significance of the dervish *tac* and cloak, and the meaning of the word “sufi”. Those topics—and Eşrefoğlu’s treatment of them—are mostly quite unexceptional. He also expressed particular reverence for the fourth caliph, ‘Ali, cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, judging him superior to the other early caliphs.<sup>51</sup>

In his “Book of the Way” Eşrefoğlu stressed the importance of having a sheikh and of professing allegiance to him. But he went further, stating: “If a person professes obedience to a true sheikh, if he takes an oath of allegiance to him, and then if he turns away from that true sheikh—if that sheikh is from the family of Muhammad and ‘Ali—then according to the *tarikât* and the true *şeriat*, that person’s killing is permitted.” A few lines further on he repeats himself, declaring that if one renounces, or denies, a true sheikh and instead follows “the people” then his killing is legitimate [*helal*], for through such renunciation or denial a person becomes an apostate.<sup>52</sup>

The high regard for ‘Ali and especially the demands on anyone professing allegiance [*bi’at*] to a “true sheikh from the family of Muhammad and ‘Ali” are striking. Reference is made a number of times in the *Tarikatname* to the Kharijites. Eşrefoğlu insists that the destruction of people like them is even more meritorious [*sevablu*] than the killing of infidels.<sup>53</sup>

50 Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, Esra Keskinkılıç (ed.), (Istanbul: Gelenek, 2002).

51 The place of ‘Ali in Sunni thought during the Ottoman period deserves further study. E. Ruhi Fıçlalı’s “‘Ali in the Sunni historical and theological tradition” in Ahmet Yaşar Ocak (ed.) *From History to Theology: ‘Ali in Islamic Belief* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2005), hardly goes beyond the period of the *rashidun* caliphs and a small handful of later writers; it does not extend to Ottoman times.

52 *Ve dahı bir kiři hak şeyhe iradet getürse, dahı bey’at itse, ol hak şeyhdan yüz çevürse, kisvesinden çıkısa tarikatda ve eger yüz çevürdüğü şeyh, Muhammed ve ‘Ali neslinden olursa tarikatda ve hak Şeriatda katli halal olur.* (*Tarikatname*, p. 26; emphasis added) Is Eşrefoğlu’s “opinion” here tantamount to a *fetva*? In early Ottoman times “anyone prominent for his learning could be asked to act as a mutually acceptable arbiter in a dispute involving a point of law, and his opinion was allowed to be decisive.” See *EP*, v. 2 (“Fatwa”), p. 866, by J.R. Walsh. Eşrefoğlu’s scholarly training would have put him in such a class.

53 *Tarikatname*, p. 54 (f. 75a, l. 14). The Kharijites (“seceders”) were involved in the struggle over early succession to the caliphate. One of their number eventually murdered ‘Ali

Connection to the family of the prophet Muhammad, through his son-in-law Ali, was actually claimed for Eşrefoğlu by Abdullah, author of the *Menakıb*. He stated at the beginning of his account that a piece of green muslin –a sign of the sheikh’s lineage– had been found in his clothing after his death. It was something, the hagiographer said, which Eşrefoğlu wished to conceal during his lifetime.<sup>54</sup>

Competition between, and rivalry among, sheikhs was certainly not uncommon in Ottoman times. It sometimes led to startling challenges. Mustafa Kara relates an instance of a sheikh declaring fellow Muslims “infidels” and liable to be killed. Interestingly, the individuals here whose killing was said to be *helal* were followers of Eşrefoğlu. According to Kara the threat was based on a difference of opinion regarding variant *silsile* traditions.<sup>55</sup>

Such threatening words, both here and in the passage from the *Tarikatname* (above), strike an ironic note given the violent end to Eşrefoğlu’s life which Üftade asserted and to which Taşköprüzade and the Historian ‘Ali seemingly alluded. Is it possible that any of these threats of killing were ever acted upon?

The *Tarikatname* was never intended for “popular consumption”. Far fewer copies of it are known than of Eşrefoğlu’s other two books.<sup>56</sup> And Keskinliç rightly notes the frequency with which the author avoids transparency in his discussion of certain topics. “Concealing is best,” Eşrefoğlu wrote; “revealing is

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in 661. Eşrefoğlu’s use of the word here is probably aimed at those viewed, in his own time, as enemies of Ali and his family.

54 Uçman, *Menakıb*, p. 3. In Baldırzade’s account (p. 274) and also that of İE (f. 3b) the linkage was said to be to Husayn, son of Ali.

55 Mustafa Kara, *Bursa’da Tarikatlar ve Tekkeler I* (Bursa: Uludağ, 1990), p. 63, citing an unspecified anecdote taken from Mehmed Şemseddin, *Yadigar-i Şemsi*. (For the relevant passage see *Yadigar*, pp. 371-72.)

56 Besides the six copies Keskinliç noted (none copied before the 19th century) there is a much older (partial?) copy in Bursa: Genel 312. It was copied in 1041/1631 by the son of Sheikh Hamdi, and so must reflect what was accepted by Eşrefi followers at that time. (I have not seen it.) Three other copies are described in *Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1968) v. 13: Part 2 [by M. Götz], #144 and 145; and Part 3 [by H. Sohrweide], #75. Another copy (also 19th century) was described by R. A. Nicholson in his *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Mss. belonging to the late E. G. Browne* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1932), p. 51 (“E. 19”). John Kingsley Birge noted a fragment of the text in a Bektashi *mecmua* in his personal library: *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (London: Luzac, 1937), p. 279. The whereabouts of this manuscript today is uncertain.

difficult.”<sup>57</sup> While the *Müzekki al-nüfus* was intended for the “general reader”, the *Tarikatname* (and probably some of Eşrefoğlu’s poems) were meant only for those who were already part way along the spiritual path. But oral communication must still have been reserved for the most advanced.<sup>58</sup> Even in his most explicit book, Eşrefoğlu still recommended and practiced considerable discretion.

In the only clearly autobiographical passage in his own writing, near the beginning of his *Müzekki al-nüfus* [“The Stages of Purification of the Self”] and after lamenting the corrupt circumstances of religious judges and teachers of his day, Eşrefoğlu wrote:

[vii] “In his own time Ja’far al-Sadiq is said to have withdrawn from the company of his fellows and retired to a cave.<sup>59</sup> Despite the pleas of his followers, that [mystic] sultan replied: ‘This is not the time for speech. It is a time for quiet.’ This is the way it was at the end of the holy month of Ramadan in the year 852, the time when this book was gathered together. It was necessary to stay at home and not mingle with the people. So I reflected... “<sup>60</sup>

While this brief passage seems to confirm the setting for the story told by Abdullah, Eşrefoğlu’s intent here was apparently not to disappear into the hills.

At least one of our sources is not being entirely candid or forthcoming. But which one(s)? Before attempting to answer that question, a brief review here of other scholars’ comments on Eşrefoğlu’s life and work will be instructive.

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57 *Tarikatname*, xxii; for the text, see p. 15.

58 In his *Müzekki al-nüfus* Eşrefoğlu several times distinguishes between the *‘amm* (“the common”), the *hass* (“the privileged”), and the *hassu’l-hass* (“the most select”). So, for example, at the beginning of his discussion of “maarifet Allah” (Uçman’s edition, 18-19).

59 Ja’far al-Sadiq, sixth Shi’ite imam who died in 765. For a story about Ja’far’s withdrawal from society see *Attar’s Memorial of God’s Friends*, translated by Paul Losensky (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 49. For more see *EI*<sup>2</sup> v. 14 (“Ja’far al-Sadeq”), pp. 356-62, by H. Algar.

60 See Uçman’s edition, p. 67 [emphasis added]. The author’s note of the date of composition is the only firm bit of chronological evidence for his life. Eşrefoğlu’s putting the date of “gathering together” his composition at such an early point in the manuscript is puzzling. It is not clear whether he actually finished the writing at this time. (Istanbul MS: Aya Sofya 2070, f. 29a.)

### Other Commentators

Orhan Köprülü was not, in fact, the first to see a disparity between Abdullah's hagiographic account of Eşrefoğlu's life and the one told by Taşköprüzade. A few years earlier, in his encyclopedic (but unfinished) *Türk Şairleri*, Sadettin Nüzhet Ergun had mentioned the tale of Eşrefoğlu's reputed involvement with Kalenders, basing his comments on the version of the story in 'Ālī's *Künh al-Ahbar*, apparently unaware of its origin.<sup>61</sup> Ergun also took pains to discredit that account, not because he thought 'Ālī had confused the Iznik sheikh with someone else, as Köprülü later argued, but rather because he found it a "groundless rumor fabricated by the [sufi poet's] enemies"<sup>62</sup> From the discussion that follows it is clear that Ergun took Eşrefoğlu's presumed "enemies" to be Kızılbaş, more specifically, unnamed Bektashis<sup>63</sup> and that he took the Kalenders for Batinis—presumably meaning Shi'ites or anyone who rejected the literal meaning of the Qur'an in favor of "hidden" interpretations<sup>64</sup>. For Ergun, 'Ālī's (and Taşköprüzade's) mention of Kalenders somehow tainted the reputation of the sheikh.

To convince his readers that Eşrefoğlu had no connection with the Kızılbaş, Ergun insisted that the sheikh from Iznik was a poet whose beliefs were firmly rooted in the shariah: "There is not a single hemistich in his collected poetry which runs counter to the Shari'ah."<sup>65</sup> Ergun acknowledged that some poems in Eşrefoğlu's *Divan* display "divine drunkenness" [*ilahi sarhoşluğu*]. But it was "true love" [*hakiki, manevi aşk*], he stressed, not physical [*maddi*] love which the poet expressed. It is hard to believe that anyone reading Eşrefoğlu's lines would have thought otherwise.

The American scholar John Kingsley Birge, who consulted Bektashi sources in Turkey and elsewhere, asserted that Eşrefoğlu was "one of the most popular poets among the Bektashis" even if (as Birge correctly understood) Eşrefoğlu himself

61 *Türk Şairleri* (İstanbul: Bozkurt 1945) v. 3, pp. 1367-75. Ergun died before completing the letter "F". Köprülü was apparently unaware of Ergun's book and its discussion of Eşrefoğlu and makes no mention of it.

62 "Muarızları tarafından icad edilen bu asılsız haber...": Ergun, *Türk Şairleri*, p. 1369 left column, emphasis added.

63 The story anachronistically linked Eşrefoğlu with Hacı Bektaş.

64 For the meaning of the term from a Sunni perspective, presumably Ergun's, see M.G.S. Hodgson, "Batiniyya" in *EP*, v. 1, pp. 1099-1100.

65 Ergun, p. 1369: *Divanında şeriat ahkâmına mugayir hatta bir mısra bile bulunmayan Eşrefoğlu...*

was no follower of Hacı Bektaş.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps, however, it was just that popularity which led Ergun to feel the need to reject categorically any insinuation of Alevi associations for Eşrefoğlu. Still, as Hasan Dede's poem [vi, above] shows, if Eşrefoğlu was popular among some Bektashis, he provoked animosity among others.<sup>67</sup>

Writing at virtually the same time as Ergun, Asaf Halet Çelebi saw the poet in a slightly different light. In a lengthy biographical introduction to his edition of the *Divan* (the first in Republican Turkey), Çelebi saw signs of *melami* temperament in Eşrefoğlu's poems—or in the character of the poet himself. Still he did not suggest that Eşrefoğlu belonged to that prominent (but controversial) wing of the Bayramiye known under that name.<sup>68</sup>

In 1967 Necla Pekolcay's name appeared as one of an advisory group which had assisted in the preparation of a new edition of Eşrefoğlu's *Divan*, the first since Çelebi's, nearly a quarter century before. Carelessly printed, the edition was more seriously marred by heavy handed expurgation: some poems long associated with Eşrefoğlu's name were missing; in others, couplets were deleted. The editing went without any comment whatsoever.<sup>69</sup>

Only a year later, and with no reference to that recently published edition of Eşrefoğlu's poetry (or her role in it), Pekolcay called for a thorough review of the best manuscript copies of the *Divan*. "Several poems have been introduced

66 J. K. Birge, *The Bektashi Order* (London: Luzac & Co., 1965; reprint of the 1937 edition), 80 and 136.

67 The second line of the first stanza of Hasan Dede's poem serves as the title of a book recently published by Erdoğan Çınar: *Bahçe Bizim Gül Bizdedir* (İstanbul: Kalkedon, 2009). The subtitle explains its subject: "Alevism from Ancient times to the Republic". Çınar published the entire poem as a kind of epigraph to his book, but without mention of its author or any other comment on its text. That would seem to confirm Ergun's assertion that any Bektashi would know the poet's name—and the poem

68 "Meşrebi itibarile melami olan Eşrefoğlu..." Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Eşrefoğlu Divanı*, Âsaf Hâlet Çelebi (ed.), (İstanbul: Ahmet Halit, 1944), p. 3. Neither Ergun nor Çelebi commented on the other's work. For the Melamati movement see below, n. 96.

69 *Eşrefoğlu Rumi Divanı* (İstanbul: Cağaloğlu, 1967). While no editor's name appears on the title page, Pekolcay's is listed (after Raif Yelkenci and Dr. Abdullah Öztemiz) among those thanked by the publisher. For a few examples of expurgated lines see the following poems, with lines beginning: "Kararı kalmadı canın nidem..." (p. 23); "Anın derdi ile daim..." (p. 23); "Aşk ile avare olan..." (p. 27); "Dün u gün ah u hasret..." (p. 44). Expurgated passages in the text are indicated only by unexplained "...". For the fully restored texts see the edition of M. Güneş. The poem mentioned above (n. 46) was suppressed in the 1967 edition, as were several others.

into the *Divan* which are not Eşrefoğlu's while others which appear to express contradictory ideas are, in fact, genuine," she wrote. (She did not identify which poems she had in mind.) Therefore, she continued, "some consider Eşrefoğlu to be a sufi within the bounds of the Shari'ah while others see him outside those bounds."<sup>70</sup> Pekolcay did not say who held which opinion, but presumably the poems and verses which she herself had recently had a hand in expurgating (most notably those with references to Hallaj) were those which caused some to view Eşrefoğlu as beyond the pale of acceptability. Presumably these were the same verses which had prompted the biographer al-Munawi's remark three centuries earlier. Publication of a critical edition of Eşrefoğlu's poetry, Pekolcay seemed to say, would resolve the issue once and for all.

In the same year (1968) Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, dean of Turkish sufi scholarship, published his own assessment of Eşrefoğlu in one of seven brief chapters he contributed to a special edition of *Türk Dili*:

"Seen through his poems, Eşrefoğlu belongs neither to Alevi-Bektashi nor to Melami-Hamzavi circles (zümre) of our popular mystic literature. Nor does he represent the pious/ascetic (zühdi) literature. He was neither unique like Yunus Emre, nor was he embraced by everyone. While Eşrefoğlu held to a metaphysical belief in "unity of existence" [varlık birliği] and while he sometimes expressed those beliefs in exuberant ways, no trace of shiism or of a batini persuasion is found in any of his poetry. Not for a moment does he step outside the bounds of sunnism; even his most ecstatic poems allow for [acceptable] interpretation."<sup>71</sup>

Gölpınarlı's summation amounted to a clear rebuttal of Pekolcay's misgivings (whether he had seen them or not) and a straightforward assertion of his own view of Eşrefoğlu's "orthodoxy". Although Gölpınarlı allows for some difference of theological opinion ("[not] embraced by everyone"), there was nothing, he seems to say, that needed to be expurgated or rejected. His reference to Batinis clearly echoes Ergun's earlier comments.

Then, a short time later and with no reference to any disagreement among Eşrefoğlu aficionados, an anonymously edited version of the *Divan* appeared in

70 "Eşrefoğlu'nu şeriat dışı bir mutasavvıf olarak da, şeriat içi bir mutasavvıf olarak da görenler vardır." *İslâmî Türk Edebiyatı. 3. Kitap*. (İstanbul: Türkiye İslâm Enstitüleri Talebe Federasyonu, 1968), p. 22. Pekolcay was undoubtedly referring to the poem mentioned in the preceding note.

71 Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, "Eşrefoğlu", *Türk Dili*, no. 207 (Aralık 1968), p. 391.

the popular Tercüman series “1001 Temel Eser”—with all the recently excised lines and poems fully restored.<sup>72</sup>

In their 1995 *TDVIA* essay Uçman and Pekolcay wrote: “...while some of [Eşrefoğlu’s] poems are written in the form of ecstatic utterances [*şathiyyat*], there is no expression in them of anything contrary to the Shari‘ah.” This seems an odd—though not inappropriate—conclusion since there had been no critical examination of the divan manuscripts in the intervening years, nor any evidence introduced to support the casting of aspersions on the poet.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, in 2000 Mustafa Güneş published Eşrefoğlu’s *Divan* yet again, based on a survey of a dozen manuscript copies. Not a single poem was removed. Quite the opposite, Güneş’s edition now included nearly two dozen poems never before counted among Eşrefoğlu’s collected work.<sup>74</sup> In his book-ending overview, and as if in answer to Pekolcay’s call some 30 years earlier (but without referring to her) Güneş wrote simply: “There are no poems in Eşrefoğlu’s *Divan* which are contrary to the formal prescriptions of Islam.” He added, “Verses which do not appear to be in accord with Islam should be viewed as things said during formal tarikat ceremonies (*cem*). Accordingly, what comes out of the mouth of any sufi (at such times) is spoken by God himself. Such poems are in no way the product of any human pretension...”<sup>75</sup>

Eşrefoğlu’s written legacy has clearly perplexed and troubled some recent commentators. But the resulting exchange seems to have taken place mostly in the shadow of the barely articulated question: just who was Eşrefoğlu? So, we have the silent expurgation of texts, anonymous editions, and a disinclination to confront key sources. Rather than a straightforward scholarly debate we seem to be watching an undeclared duel of theological positions. Does the apparent disagreement found in contemporary sources echo the divergent opinions seen in the older sources?

72 Eşref-i Rumi, *Eşrefoğlu Divanı*, Tercüman 1001 Temel Eser (İstanbul 1972?).

73 “Eşrefoğlu Rumi,” *TDVIA*, xi, p. 482 (emphasis added). Pekolcay’s short 1992 article, “Eşref-oğlu Abdullah Rumi’nin Tasavvufi Şahsiyetinin Gelişme Seyri” in *İslâmî Edebiyat* #15 (1992), pp. 8-11, does not offer any reconsideration or revision of views previously expressed by the author, and so provides no explanation of her apparent change of heart regarding the acceptability or authenticity of Eşrefoğlu’s poems.

74 See Güneş’s edition. The questionable poems have been newly expurgated, again without comment, by Mustafa Özdamar in his *Eşrefoğlu Abdullah-i Rumi* (İstanbul: Kırkkandil, 2002).

75 Güneş, p. 439. Güneş did not provide a source for the paragraph from which I have translated, but it was virtually a word-for-word quotation from Ergun (p. 1369, right column).

### Whose Testimony to Believe?

As we have seen, the statements of the key primary sources, especially for the latter part of Eşrefoğlu's life can only be squared with difficulty.

In the final lines of both Taşköprüzade's and Abdullah's accounts of the life of Eşrefoğlu there is an odd sense of incompleteness or ambiguity. In the former it is hard to tell where Eşrefoğlu's enthusiasm for journeying ends and where his fellow travellers' coercion begins. If Eşrefoğlu "wished to travel" why did this group of Kalenders have to resort to force? This ending of Taşköprüzade's story is uncharacteristically elusive, unlike other accounts in the *Şhaqâ'iq*.

For his part, Abdullah introduced a *deus ex machina*-like figure in his *Menakıb* to resolve a curious episode which he had introduced into his narrative. Recall that after Eşrefoğlu returned from Syria, he had persisted in extreme seclusion, causing him to become the object of belittlement (even harassment?) by his fellow townspeople. As if on cue, a man said to have witnessed Eşrefoğlu's spiritual prowess in Hama appeared suddenly in İznik to intervene on the sheikh's behalf. He persuaded the people to refrain from their intrusive behavior. Unwilling to accept his countrymen's ensuing apologies and requests for forgiveness, Eşrefoğlu left his home to wander in the nearby hills. Eventually discovered, and his identity revealed, the sheikh lived out the remainder of his life in new found contentment.

Üftade related a somewhat different story: After being forcibly driven out of İznik with other members of his family—and for unexplained reasons—Eşrefoğlu was later martyred.

While al-Munawî's brief notice seems to contradict the statement of the Bursa sheikh, it too is ambiguous and points to possibly violent controversy.

Üftade's words were presumably taken down, faithfully and accurately, by his disciple, Mahmud Hüda'i. I can see no reason for the elder man to have fabricated stories about a long dead predecessor. What explanation could there be for the Bursa sheikh to have made up such a violent act? And if his statements were untrue, that would soon have been realized, for there were already then followers of Eşrefoğlu in Bursa. On the other hand, Üftade was near the end of a long life; he was speaking, presumably, to a very small circle of intimates. By merely alluding to a devastating story of what happened to someone who failed to exercise discretion Üftade would have been teaching a valuable lesson. Üftade's remarks should be taken at face value.

It is difficult, however, to accept Taşköprüzade's story with the same confidence. Despite a history of transgressive behavior and occasional violence<sup>76</sup>, it is unclear why a band of Kalenders would somehow have kept Eşrefoğlu a virtual prisoner, against his will, as Taşköprüzade's wording implies—even if he chose to involve himself with them at first. Surely the story in the *Şhaqa'iq* (and repeated in the *Künh*) begs to be taken seriously, but perhaps to be read only figuratively.

Yet Ahmet Karamustafa, who has made a broad and persuasive study of “deviant renunciation” in the Islamic Middle Period (1200-1500), accepted Taşköprüzade's account at face value. Basing his brief comments solely on Mecdi's adaptation (see above, n. 32), however, and with no apparent awareness of the divergent interpretations of the scholar/sufi's life, he found “Eşrefzade Muhyiddin Mehmed” a perfect example of one type of “deviant dervish”, the middle aged scholar with a distinguished career behind him who “rejects his cultural status and becomes a dervish.”<sup>77</sup>

My own reading of that story sees respect on the biographer's part—the very fact of Eşrefoğlu's inclusion in the *Şhaqa'iq* is noteworthy. But that respect is tempered by caution and veiled bewilderment: how could Eşrefoğlu, a scholar of such obvious capability (“there was no problem he could not solve”), have come to such a bad end? Is there here an endorsement of the scholar, but simply an unwillingness to discuss his later actions? Taşköprüzade invoked the “Kalenders”, sufis who in his view had crossed a line of acceptable speech or behavior, to suggest something unspeakable. Perhaps knowing Eşrefoğlu's involvement with Hacı Bayram, the biographer considered him to have been affiliated with the *melami* wing of the Ankara sheikh's followers? Those circles were sometimes described as Kalenders<sup>78</sup> Taşköprüzade's placement of his notice about Eşrefoğlu gives no hint of any association with the Ankara sheikh.

Taşköprüzade was writing for an educated audience, men of similar background and experience, readers who would recognize a veiled reference when they

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76 Basing himself on contemporary sources, Simon Digby described a number of attacks by Kalenders on sufi sheikhs in the Delhi Sultanate in the 13th and 14th centuries: “Qalandars and Related Groups” in Yohanan Friedmann (ed.), *Islam in Asia*, v. 1 (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University 1984); see esp. pp. 91-99. There is no comparable evidence for Anatolia in the 15th century.

77 *God's Unruly Friends*, pp. 67 and 93.

78 Eşrefoğlu's preoccupation, in his *Müzekki al-nüfus*, with disciplining the “self”, loosely suggests a *melami* orientation. See Hamid Algar's discussion: “Malamatiyya” in *EP*, v. 6, pp. 224-5.

saw it, and could draw an appropriate conclusion—if they did not know the actual facts of the matter. There is nothing puzzling about that, certainly not an excuse for rejecting Taşköprüzade’s account outright.

In a perceptive recent essay about Taşköprüzade, Aslı Niyazioğlu wrote: “He preferred not to include controversial figures in his work.”<sup>79</sup> He certainly included some (Sheikh Bedreddin for example), but he is often satisfied with vague, clichéd characterizations. In the case of Hacı Bayram, the student, Eşrefoğlu, receives more attention than the mentor, even though the Hacı Bayram’s influence in Anatolia was more widespread and historically of greater significance. On the other hand, Ömer Dede, who led the *melami* wing of the Ankara sheikh’s followers, receives only the most cursory notice and with no reference whatsoever to any principles of *melamat* teaching.

As for Üftade’s statement about Eşrefoğlu, it is disappointingly vague: no motive, no actors; only “they”. Üftade was exercising great caution, as Eşrefoğlu had done a century before, writing in only the most guarded terms.

Mme Beldiceanu-Steinherr has written about the reign of Selim I as a “turning point” for the Ottoman Empire.<sup>80</sup> As a turning point also in Üftade’s life, when he chose to distance himself from Eşrefoğlu’s followers, it was a time of severe dervish persecutions. Already in the last year of the life of Selim’s father, Sultan Bayezid II, uprisings later associated with the name Shah Kulu had shaken southern and western regions of Anatolia. They briefly even threatened the city of Bursa. Once established in power, and in anticipation of his campaign against the Safavid Shah Ismail, Selim ordered the execution of “40,000” suspected Shi’ite sympathizers.<sup>81</sup> Whatever the specific charges brought against the accused, guilt by association would likely have played a role in their fate. For many in the early

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79 Aslı Niyazioğlu, “In the dream realm of a sixteenth-century Ottoman biographer. Taşköprüzade and the Sufi shaykhs,” in *Sufism and Society*, edited by John J. Curry and Erik S. Ohlander (New York: Routledge 2012), pp. 243-57. The quote is from p. 247. For an older, broader overview see Barbara Flemming, “Glimpses of Turkish Saints: Another look at Lami’i and Ottoman Biographers”, *JTS/TüBA* 18 (1994), pp. 59-73 and especially pp. 61-62.

80 Irene Beldiceanu-Steinherr, “Le Regne de Selim Ier: Tournant dans la vie politique et religieuse de l’empire Ottoman,” *Turcica* 6 (1974), pp. 34-48.

81 The round figure of those killed is routinely quoted by Ottoman historians. See İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi* (Ankara: TTK 1964) v. 2, pp. 257-8; H. İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600*, Norman Itzkowitz and Colin Imber (tr.) (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1973), p. 33.

16th century, Selim's extreme measures would have amounted to a reign of terror. This would certainly have engendered a pervasive climate of fear throughout society and especially in circles which nurtured special reverence for 'Ali.

Selim's persecutions came many years after Eşrefoğlu's death—no matter in which year that occurred. They had nothing to do with his own apparently violent end. But the witch hunt atmosphere which prevailed for decades afterward and had a pervasive influence throughout Ottoman society. Halil İnalçık has written about the “triumph of fanaticism” somewhat later in the 16th century.<sup>82</sup> That prevailing mood, which was generally antagonistic toward much sufi practice, quite likely had some of its roots in Selim's anti-Safavid actions. And it no doubt also had a chilling effect on the writing of history—perhaps on the writing down of anything which could prove incriminating in the event of a renewed outbreak of regime sponsored violence. Working on his compendium of biographies Taşköprüzade was likely not immune from this mood.

Is it possible that an untimely and violent end to Eşrefoğlu's life was kept hidden for so many years? While difficult to imagine it would not be unprecedented. Carl Ernst has written persuasively about an Indian sufi, Mas'ud Bakk, who was martyred late in the 14th century but whose death was not openly acknowledged for two and a half centuries.<sup>83</sup> Given the chill which must have continued in the Ottoman realm for many years, those closest to the leadership of the Eşrefi order would not have wanted to broadcast this fact. To the contrary, they would most likely have wanted to keep his fate shrouded in mystery. Still, as the anonymous poem [xi] above shows, Eşrefoğlu's name continued to be associated with controversial words and notions, like “*ana'l-hak*” and “*tecelli*”, for many years. With the passage of time Eşrefoğlu's significance on the historical landscape faded. It is natural that his name mostly disappeared from the biographical compendia of an empire with a very long life.

### **The Rest of Abdullah's Story**

If we cannot trust the literal accuracy of Abdullah's *Menakıb* in the matter of the end of Eşrefoğlu's life—and we should not—can we trust it anywhere else?

82 In a chapter of the same name in *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 179-85.

83 Carl Ernst, “From Hagiography to Martyrology: Conflicting testimonies to a sufi martyr of the Delhi Sultanate”, *History of Religions* 24 (1985), pp. 308-27. Ernst's unraveling of the traditions surrounding Mas'ud Bakk's death is instructive and documents a situation in certain respects parallel to the one I suggest for Eşrefoğlu.

In his Istanbul University thesis Orhan Köprülü gave full credibility to Abdullah's 17th century hagiography. Uçman's recently published transcription of that work is based on the frequently cited Istanbul University manuscript, TY 270 (henceforth "TY"). But neither he nor Köprülü seems to have noticed that there are at least two recensions of Abdullah's *menakıbnâme*, and that the one represented by TY is almost certainly not the most reliable. For better readings, one should use instead İstanbul Ü. MS. İbnül Emin [Mahmud Kemal Inal] 3562 ("İE").<sup>84</sup>

Close comparison of the two versions shows that Baldırzade, in his slightly later book, followed the recension represented by İE, with the result that there are occasional differences between his telling and the narrative in TY. If noted at all, these differences have been ignored by scholars, with the result that some details of the Eşrefoğlu biography have been distorted.<sup>85</sup>

The most important of these narrative points has to do with Eşrefoğlu's purported marriage to the daughter of Hacı Bayram. Following TY, writers have generally asserted that the Ankara sheikh gave the younger man his daughter, Hayrünnisa, in marriage, and that she accompanied him and their young daughter, Züleyha, on the arduous journey to Hama.<sup>86</sup> No such statement appears in İE, where it is only remarked that after Eşrefoğlu returned to İznik, following his stay in Ankara, he married and had a daughter, unnamed.

However, in another *menkıbe* in Abdullah's work, common to both recensions, the daughter Züleyha recounted that when Eşrefoğlu died [1469?] she had not yet reached the age of maturity and was taken into the Ottoman palace until she was old enough to marry her father's successor, Sheikh Abdürrahim Tirsi<sup>87</sup> In

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84 Uçman published the *Menakıb* as the work of "Abdullah Veliyyuddin Bursevi" which is how the author's name appears in TY (f. 1b). In the more reliable copy (İE) of the work, however, the name appears as "Abdullah [i]bn Veliyyuddin" and I take that to be correct. Uçman followed Köprülü, correctly, in describing Abdullah as preacher in the Emir Buhari mosque in Bursa even though, oddly, there is no mention of that fact in TY. For my argument in favor of İE's readings, see the Addendum.

85 Köprülü did not refer to Baldırzade's version of the story.

86 Uçman, *Menakıb*, p. 6.

87 Uçman, *Menakıb*, p. 43. Cf. İE, f. 15a. This story has, oddly, been ignored by almost all writers on Eşrefoğlu and the early history of the order, notably by Uçman and Pekolcay and also by Nuri Özcan: *TDVİA* v. 1 ("Abdürrahim Tirsi"), p. 293. The influence of Tirsi's family, said to be connected to the İsfendiyaroğulları (see above, n. 10), may also be detected in this story because of the historical links between that dynasty and the Ottomans.

that case she must only have been a child of Eşrefoğlu's later life and could not have been taken to Syria at a young age.<sup>88</sup>

Züleyha's brief account is interesting in its own right,<sup>89</sup> but her naming "the mother of Sultan Bayezid [II]" as benefactor in the story has significance in another *menkıbe* in Abdullah's work linking Eşrefoğlu with the same woman. Called to Istanbul by the padishah, the sheikh quickly cures the woman's illness, something no one else had been able to do.<sup>90</sup>

Taken together these stories add weight to the identification of the patron of Eşrefoğlu's mosque in Iznik as Gülbahar Hatun, not Mükreme (Mukerreme) Hatun as has been generally accepted.<sup>91</sup> Should we understand that Eşrefoğlu's effective intervention on behalf of a female member of the Ottoman family in the palace was effectively rewarded, some years later, by an essentially charitable act (the foster parenting of the young Züleyha), and even later by the endowment of the Iznik mosque?

Finally, it is difficult to synchronize the story of Eşrefoğlu's would-be involvement with Mahmud Pasha, as related in yet another *menkıbe*.<sup>92</sup> The former grand

88 Had Züleyha been born when Eşrefoğlu was still a young man it seems unlikely that she would have been married many years later to Abdurrahim who, from the testimony of the *Menakıb*, was still a small boy late in Eşrefoğlu's life. Çelebi (p. 18) insisted that Züleyha was Eşrefoğlu's only child, but acknowledged the awkward chronological problem introduced by her account of being taken into the palace, at a young age, after her father's death. Furthermore, Hayrün-nisa's name is not independently confirmed by Bayram family records. In his survey of the life and family of his ancestor, Fuat Bayramoğlu also indicates that his family had no connection with later followers of Eşrefoğlu. See Fuat Bayramoğlu, *Hacı Bayram-i Veli. Yaşamı-Soyu-Vakfı* c. 1 (Ankara: TTK 1983): "*Soy kütüklerinde—şecere ve silsilenamelerde [Hayrün-nisa] adı yazılı olamamakla beraber ...*" and "*(Eşrefiye tarikatı) kolunun Hacı Bayram soyu ile bağı kesilmiştir.*" (pages 87 and 83 respectively).

89 I know of no other story about young Muslim Turkish women being taken into the palace in similar circumstances. Despite its seemingly authentic source (Züleyha herself), the story has gone almost entirely unremarked upon.

90 İE, ff. 9b-11b. In the version published by Uçman (*Menakıb*, p. 22-6 [*menkıbe* vi]) the woman is first said to be the mother of Sultan Mehmed II, then part way through the narrative she is named as "Mükreme Sultan". This confusion should be a tip-off that something is wrong: Fatih's mother was Hüma Hatun (d. 1449); Mükreme, his wife.

91 See above, n. 18.

92 See Uçman, pp. 36-7 (*Menkabe* xiii). In İE (f. 17a-b) the *hikaye* brings the collection to an abrupt end, the last of the stories. In TY transitional paragraphs prepare the reader for stories about Eşrefoğlu's successor sheikhs. For more on these points see the Addendum.)

vizier, imprisoned by his onetime patron, Fatih, for uncertain reasons, is said to have sought the intervention of Eşrefoğlu on the eve of his execution. The sheikh seems to have been willing, but his beneficent intent was trumped, so to speak, by the miraculous 11th hour involvement of the prophet Muhammad himself. By general agreement, however, the pasha's execution took place in 1474, some years after the date generally accepted for Eşrefoğlu's own death.<sup>93</sup>

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The hagiographer Abdullah is concerned, above all else, with the men who inspired and initiated the founding father of his *tarikāt*. And his collection of stories is intended to show the superiority of Eşrefoğlu's perception of the unseen world, his charisma (*keramet*), and the efficacy of his prayers.

Whether or not Eşrefoğlu's interactions with Abdal Mehmed<sup>94</sup> and Hacı Bayram actually took place, and in the manner described by Abdullah, they would have communicated to the reader of the *Menakīb* an aura of their subject's saintliness. Eşrefoğlu is portrayed as a model of self denial and unswerving discipline, dedication, and tenacity, enviable traits which a seeker after greater spiritual awareness ought to emulate.

Eşrefoğlu's tutelage under Hacı Bayram is stressed in the *Menakīb*, but the *hacı's* name does not appear anywhere in Eşrefoğlu's poetry or other writings, or in

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93 This story is told in greater detail in a *menakībname* devoted to the life of the (grand) vizier Mahmud Paşa. For a summary and discussion see Theoharis Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelovic (1453-1474)* (Boston: Brill 2001), pp. 369-96. While Stavrides does a convincing job of explaining many of the issues and problems arising from that *Menakīb*, he has no comment on this story or on Eşrefoğlu's role in the legend. If, as he suggests, the anonymous work was written down in the 16th century, then it could be the source of the version in Abdullah's work, rather than the other way around. The proposed dating of one copy of the anonymous *Menakīb-i Mahmud Paşa-i Veli* to 1569 supports that contention. Unlike other stories in Abdullah's work, this *menkıbe* fails to highlight any wisdom of the İznik sheikh. Lacking any instructive value it is hard to justify its presence in Abdullah's collection.

94 An "Abdal Mehmed" is mentioned in a quasi-initiatory role in hagiographic accounts also of Sheikh Üftade. Presumably because of chronological difficulties, both Ballanfat and Bahadıroğlu go out of their way to dissociate him from the *meczub* of the Eşrefoğlu story. Karamustafa sees the Abdals as "fervent Twelver Shi'is". (See *God's Unruly Friends*, p. 75.) There is nothing in Abdullah's account, however, to point to such an affiliation for Mehmed.

verses written about him, such as the anonymous poem [v] above. What specific practice or principles Eşrefoğlu drew from his time in Ankara is unclear.<sup>95</sup> A *melami* preoccupation with the “reproachful soul” (*al-nafs al-lawwama*) is clear in Eşrefoğlu’s *Müzekki al-nüfus*, but whether his concern, in that book, owes in any way to his time with Hacı Bayram is impossible to say.<sup>96</sup> Hacı Bayram himself left virtually nothing in writing beyond a few fragmentary verses, and there is nothing on which to base any sort of comparison.

Eşrefoğlu’s subsequent apprenticeship under the Kadiri Husayn in Hama is represented by Abdullah as the culminating event of the sheikhs apprenticeship and the pivotal experience for the remainder of his life.<sup>97</sup> His return to İznik

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95 From a biographer’s perspective it is hard to take literally the *Menakıb*’s account of Eşrefoğlu’s time with the Ankara sheikh. The Yeşil Medrese of Sultan Mehmed I, where Eşrefoğlu is said (by both Abdullah and Taşköprüzade) to have had a distinguished early career, was likely not finished until 1419. From other sources it is understood that Hacı Bayram returned from a pilgrimage only shortly before 1418; he died in 1430.

96 See *EP*, v. 6 (“Malamatiyya”), p. 223-28, and especially #2. “In Iran and Eastern Lands”, p. 224-25, by Hamid Algar. Cf. Victoria Rowe Holbrook, “Ibn ‘Arabi and Ottoman Dervish Traditions: the Melami Supra-Order, Part Two”, *Journal of the Muhyiddin ‘Ibn Arabi Society* v. 12 (1993), pp. 15-33. Gölpınarlı mentions Eşrefoğlu’s name only in passing in his study *Melamilik ve Melamiler* (Istanbul 1931). As noted above, Gölpınarlı did not consider him a representative figure of *melami* thought.

97 The *tariqat*, which was given structure by Eşrefoğlu’s followers and which supposedly coalesced around the teachings of its charismatic “founder”, has generally been viewed as an Anatolian branch of the vastly ramified Kadiri order. Apart from his initiation at the hands of Husayn Hamawi, described in the *Menakıb* in only the most clichéd terms, Eşrefoğlu’s connection to the Kadiriye is nowhere elaborated upon. Abdullah describes Husayn as a descendant of Abd al-Qadir in the “fourth generation” [Uçman, *Menakıb*, p. 6]. Copyists of the *Müzekki al-nüfus* often went further and clarified the relationship with the following *silsile*: from Abd al-Qadir to his son Şams al-din Muhammad to his son Husam al-din Sharshiqi (or Sharqiqi) to his son Shihab al-din Ahmad to his son Husayn [Hüseyin], and so to Eşrefoğlu. A different succession from Abd al-Qadir to an otherwise unidentified “Husayn Nur al-Din” (died probably in the 15th century; the same as Husayn Hamawi?) is given by Zaim Khenchelaoui and Thierry Zarcone in “La famille Jilani de Hama-Syrie (Bayt al-Jilani)”, *Journal of the History of Sufism* (2000), p. 75. Mustafa Kara’s contribution to the same volume (“Bagdat’tan Bursa’ya bir yol: Eşrefiye,” pp. 397-429), does not clarify the matter. For a useful overview of Abd al-Qadir’s life and his order see Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, “The Qadiriyyah Order” in Seyyid Hossein Nasr (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality. Manifestations* (New York: Crossroads 1987), pp. 6-25. To elaborate the relationship between the later Eşrefi order and its presumed parent Qadiri order in a more nuanced way is beyond the scope of this essay.

was followed, we are to believe, by a period of mature, self-disciplined spiritual practice and writing.

Later accounts place the order which took its name from Eşrefoğlu squarely in the tradition of the Qadiris. But there is almost nothing in Eşrefoğlu's writing, or what passes for the historical record, to support, unambiguously, that identification. Abd al-Qadir's name is mentioned in both the *Müzekki al-nüfus* and the *Tarikatname*, but in neither work with any special frequency. Several poems in Eşrefoğlu's *Divan*, as published now by Güneş, contain the name of Abd al-Qadir, but they are of questionable authenticity, not being found in the oldest manuscript copies.<sup>98</sup> Another *tarikât* eponym named nearly as often in Eşrefoğlu's prose writings is Safi al-din, founder of the Safavid order.<sup>99</sup> And it seems quite possible—even likely—that the Qadiri “assignment” has more to do with pragmatic politics of the Ottoman 16th century (or later) than with any particular loyalty which Eşrefoğlu himself may have felt toward followers of the 12th century Baghdad mystic and preacher. In the end there is no way to tell whether Eşrefoğlu professed any narrow *tarikât* affiliation at all, despite later emphasis by his followers on a Qadiri lineage.

Derin Terzioğlu, in a recent perceptive article, has written of the “rapprochement between sufism and Shi'ism” which she finds taking place in the Ottoman 15th century, taking Eşrefoğlu as a case in point. Calling him a “self-identified Sunni” who nevertheless viewed positively both the descendents and the followers of the caliph Ali, Terzioğlu finds “considerable religious and doctrinal fluidity” in a “crucial transitional period...before the strident sectarianism of the sixteenth [century].”<sup>100</sup> My review of the sources for Eşrefoğlu's life, now complete, should add weight to her finding. In light of the many discrepancies between copies of Abdullah's *Menakib* and between it and other sources, one may be justified in asking whether much of that narrative is not a fabrication intended to legitimize a *tariqat* whose early history is still obscure. We know that the Bektashi order underwent a significant transformation in the 16th century.<sup>101</sup> Perhaps the Eşrefi order also experienced a quiet reorientation due to political circumstances?

98 See my thesis, p. 303.

99 Eşrefoğlu is the purported author of a commentary on a work by Safi al-din.

100 Derin Terzioğlu, “Sufis in the age of state-building and confessionalization”, Christine Woodhead (ed), *The Ottoman World* (New York: Routledge 2012), pp. 86-99; quotation from p. 91.

101 In this connection, Karamustafa's discussion of Bektashi history is instructive: “Kalenders, Abdals, Hayderis: the Formation of the Bektaşîye in the sixteenth century”,

## Conclusion

I have tried to show that the sheen of tranquility which surrounds most modern accounts of Eşrefoğlu's life is not justified by a close reading of the handful of relevant surviving primary sources. The ongoing publication of Eşrefoğlu's writings attests to his enduring influence. But if a climate of fear in the 16th century (or even later) can explain the seeming "cover-up" of the exact circumstances of the end of Eşrefoğlu's life, what explanation can there be today for the continuing, mostly unspoken "debate" regarding the content of his work and the nature of his beliefs? Should we conclude that there is reluctance to write openly about those views? We are almost certain never to know what Eşrefoğlu may have said in confidence to Abdürrahim Tirsi, or other close followers, in the privacy of the Pınarbaşı retreat. But in the 21st century we can hope for open-minded scholarly investigation of a major figure of 15th century Ottoman life, whether or not his views may still be considered, by some, outside the Shari'ah.

## Addendum

Abdullah ibn Veliyuddin's *Menakıb-i Eşrefzade* has been quoted by nearly all previous writers on the life of Eşrefoğlu. They have relied on the Istanbul University copy (TY) despite its obvious late date. (See above.)

On the basis of internal evidence alone one might prefer the readings of İE: its language is somewhat less florid and also shows slightly more archaic features than that of TY.<sup>102</sup> But there is a more persuasive reason to favor İE over TY (and over Köprülü's manuscript as well, about which we can draw only the sketchiest of conclusions).<sup>103</sup>

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Halil İncılık and Cemal Kafadar (ed.), *Suleyman the Second and his Time* (Istanbul: Isis 1993), pp. 121-29.

102 On meeting Eşrefoğlu, Abdal Mehmed put him to an initial test. Having satisfied himself of the would-be sufi's willingness to follow the older man's demands, Abdal Mehmed comments "If not you, then who!" [*Sen olmayub kim olsa gerek*] (İE f. 4a, 6). The passage is garbled in TY. Uçman reads it as "*Yinür bir şey olmayub kim ölse gerek.*" (TY f. 3b, ) Baldirzade follows İE.

103 At least six copies of Abdullah's work are known to exist. İstanbul MS: Süleymaniye, Hüsrev Paşa 185 includes four folios devoted to Abdullah's *Menakıb*. It appears to belong to the recension of İE but is too brief to be of much use. In addition to those listed by Uçman (p. viii) another copy is said to be in the private library of Fuad Bayramoğlu. See his *Hacı Bayram-i Veli. Yaşamı-Soyu-Vakfı*, v. 1, p. 87. Asaf Halet Çelebi also mentioned a copy in his library (*Eşrefoğlu Divanı*, p. 55).

While Köprülü and Uçman curiously ignore it, Baldırzade’s account of Eşrefoğlu’s life (in his *Vefayat*) plays a key role in assessing the relative merits of the two recensions of Abdullah’s *Menakıb*.

It is generally agreed—if not always explicitly stated—that Baldırzade’s account, written in 1649, derives from Abdullah’s.<sup>104</sup> While the date of the latter composition (i.e., the original recension of the *Menakıb*) is not known, Uçman argues for a time after 1034 H<sup>105</sup> Assuming that a second recension did not appear immediately after the work’s original composition, the recension of the *Menakıb* used by Baldırzade is likely to be the one closest to Abdullah’s initial rendering.

Critical for my argument, Baldırzade follows İE (not TY) at a number of places in the narrative where the two texts (witnessing the two recensions) disagree. Four points of divergence will illustrate my point. In each, TY has details not found in İE. These are: the brief appearance of Emir Sultan in the course of Eşrefoğlu’s search for a suitable *murşid* after his initial “trial” with Abdal Mehmed<sup>106</sup>; Eşrefoğlu’s marriage to Hacı Bayram’s daughter, Hayrünna, at the end of his long stay in Ankara<sup>107</sup>; the date of Eşrefoğlu’s death<sup>108</sup>; and the explicit mention of Eşrefoğlu’s books, by title.<sup>109</sup> None of these details in TY are found in Baldırzade’s account. In my view these details have all been added to the *Menakıb*

104 This can be confidently asserted for the following reason: Abdullah states that he obtained his information about Eşrefoğlu principally from “the late [*merhum*] Muhammad Çelebi”, a *mürîd* of Bilecikli Muslihüddin, whom Abdullah calls “*benüm ruhum*”. Since Baldırzade relates his account of Eşrefzade on that same authority, Muhammed Çelebi, but makes no claim of any connection with the Eşrefî order, his source must have been Abdullah’s *Menakıb* itself—not the other way around. Baldırzade’s account is a more florid version of the story told by the preacher Abdullah, with most of the anecdotes of the latter work removed.

105 Uçman argues for a date of original composition after 1034 H on the basis of an incident which Abdullah placed in that year. The fixity of that date must be questioned, however.

106 Uçman, pp. 4-5 (f. 3b). Emir Sultan is said to have told Eşrefoğlu that because “the end of my life is near” the latter should seek guidance instead from the Ankara sheikh, Hacı Bayram. Most sources agree that both Emir Sultan and the Hacı died in 1429-30.

107 Uçman, p. 6 (f. 4b).

108 Following the chronogram (see above), TY (Uçman, p. 13) gives the commonly accepted year 874 (1469). The events of Abdullah’s eleventh *menkıbe* are also said to have taken place in 1034, “160 years” after Eşrefoğlu’s death (Uçman, p. 33). Neither the date nor the *menkıbe* appears in İE.

109 Uçman, p. 13 (f. 10a). The books named are the *Müzekki al-nüfus* and the *Tarikatname*. There is no mention of Eşrefoğlu’s *divan*.

as it stands in its TY recension. It makes little sense to assume that they belonged to Abdullah's original composition, only to have been removed soon after.

To put it another way, since Abdullah, the author of the *Menakıb*, was close to an inner circle of successor sheikhs of the young Eşrefî *tarikât* it is not clear why, in his original composition, he would have omitted details (none of them seemingly controversial) which should have been well established in the oral tradition if they were based in reality. Much more likely, it seems to me, they have been added by a later redactor—and must be treated with caution. When they were added—that is, when the second recension was produced—is impossible now to say. (The presence or absence of the titles of Eşrefoğlu's written works, following my argument, must have been merely a matter of taste. Furthermore there is no possible controversy regarding them.)

A few more discrepancies between the two recensions are worth noting:

First, in both İE and TY we read the following. "It is reported from Eşrefzade as follows: 'I came into the presence of 17 sheikhs and served each of them. One of them is Hacı Bayram; another is Sheikh Hüseyin.'" In İE (ff. 6a, 25-6b, 3) the text continues: "He did not name the others [*gayrisini ta'yin buyurmazlar*]." But in TY (Uçman, p. 10) the text goes on: "One of them is Ak Şemseddin; one is Emir Sultan." (Baldırzade's text makes no reference at all to this passage.) Perhaps the appearance of Ak Şemseddin's name reflects an effort to emphasize Eşrefoğlu's connection with the "moderate" (non-Melami) wing of Hacı Bayram's followers?

Second, in İE (and Baldırzade) Eşrefoğlu's lineage [*neseb*] is said to go back to Husayn [ibn 'Ali]. In TY the genealogy is traced directly to 'Ali.

Third, as noted above, the *valide sultan* who suffers from a gangrenous tongue is said, in TY, to be both the mother of Sultan Mehmed II and his wife; in İE she is named as the mother of Bayezid. In light of the story about Eşrefoğlu's daughter, Züleyha, being taken into the saray, for consistency (if nothing else) it makes sense to prefer the reading of İE. (The story is not told by Baldırzade.)

The texts of İE and TY differ in another way altogether, one which better justifies perhaps my use of the term recension. Not only are the individual stories (called *hikaye* in İE, *menkibe* in TY) arranged differently, but İE includes a number of stories about, and sayings of, Abd al-Qadir, *tarikât* ancestor of Husayn of Hama. These are entirely absent from TY. While these seem to underline Eşrefoğlu's connection with the Qadiri order, their absence from TY focuses the reader's attention exclusively on the Anatolian sheikh and his followers.

Finally, while İE is of uncertain date, TY is a very late copy (dated 1291/1874) and includes four *menkıbe* with stories about followers of Eşrefoğlu who lived long after the death of the *Menakıb*'s author, Abdullah. Those narratives include dates ranging from 1046/1636 to 1153/1740. None of those stories are found in İE, adding support to my contention that TY represents a later recension of Abdullah's work. There is also evidence in TY that some copyist aimed to bring order to an older, more haphazard sequence of the individual narratives. So after the conclusion of the 13th *menkıbe* (about Mahmud Pasha), we read, “[Now] twelve stories, like the number of the twelve imams [!] have been recorded...”<sup>110</sup>

Orhan Köprülü called the *Menakıb* a “sound document” [*salih bir kaynak*]—and Uçman and Pekolcay (and many others) have enthusiastically followed his lead. But it is clear that over a period of time Abdullah's text has been deliberately altered and manipulated in ways which fundamentally change our view of his subject. In his introduction to the transcribed text of TY 270, Uçman called for a critical edition of the *Menakıb* text. But now that he has published one version of Abdullah's work there is likely to be little interest in such a project.<sup>111</sup> Hopefully this review and comparison of two key manuscript copies will serve instead as stimulus for an investigation of the history of how, and when, the two recensions came about, and what motivated an unknown redactor to make the changes noted above. In the meantime, anyone wishing to use Abdullah b. Veliyuddin's instructive *Menakıb-i Eşrefzade* would be well advised to read carefully the İbnül Emin manuscript first.<sup>112</sup>

110 Uçman, p. 37; TY text: f. 21a. Clearly, the writer had lost count of the number of *menkıbe* which he had copied.

111 Uçman, *Menakıb*, p. x. He makes no reference at all to an earlier edition of Abdullah's work by Mustafa Güneş: Bursalı Mehmed [sic] Veliyyuddin. *Menakıb-i Eşrefzade* (Istanbul: Sahhaflar 2006). While this “edition” has one advantage over Uçman's—it presents a facsimile of the Istanbul University codex (misidentified as “T.Y. 920”) facing both a transcription of the Ottoman text and a modern Turkish rendering of it—it is marred by several careless errors. Besides the title page misrepresentation of the *Menakıb*'s author, initial footnotes are incomplete, and the relationship of the index to the text is unclear. Güneş notes only two manuscript copies of Abdullah's *Menakıb* and appears completely unaware of the different recensions.

112 Walter Andrews has described the regrettable situation of Ottoman text editions in a paper delivered to the most recent meeting of the Western Ottomanists' Workshop, held in Seattle in April 2014. I am indebted to Professor Andrews for a copy of his remarks. In his paper (“Ottoman Textual Studies: Challenging the Past, Visualizing the Future”) Andrews specifically addressed problems found in editions of Ottoman *divan* poetry and *tezkiye* literature. His arguments could well be generalized to include

*Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries - An Historiographical Essay  
Part I: What Happened to Eşrefoğlu?*

Abstract ■ Abdullah son of Eşref, better known as Eşrefoğlu, is a major figure of the cultural landscape of 15<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Turkey. At his death he left a small divan of mystical poems, a much favored prose work on the prerequisites for a mystically life, and a shorter treatise on the beginning stages of “the path”. Other works have been mentioned—but none satisfactorily accounted for. His life story is only sketchily known, mainly from a 17<sup>th</sup> century hagiographical work. Previously overlooked sources cast a shadow over the end of the poet sheikh’s life and raise questions about the general reliability of the widely received tradition. This historiographic essay attempts to explain the mystery of the end of his life. Reviewing the modern scholarly (and popular) literature on Eşrefoğlu’s life and work, it also explores reasons why writers, past and present, have been reluctant to confront certain 15<sup>th</sup> century realities.

Key Words: Eşrefoğlu Rumi, Ottoman mystic poets, Islamic hagiography

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hagiographic texts such as the *Menakıb-i Eşref Zade*. For the now published version of his paper in Turkish translation: “Osmanlı metin çalışmaları: geçmişe meydan okuma, geleceği tasarlama”, Veysel Öztürk (çev.), *Eski Edebiyat Çalışmaları, Eski Metinlere Yeni Bağlamalar: Osmanlı Edebiyatı Çalışmalarında Yeni Yönelimler*, H. Aynur et al (ed.), (İstanbul Klasik Yayınları 2015), pp. 34-59.

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