HIROAKI KAWANISHI

The Virtues of Divergence

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Mohr Siebeck

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10

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The Virtues of Divergence

ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī's Sufi Reception of *al-ʿAqīda al-Sanūsiyya*

Mohr Siebeck

Hiroaki Kawanishi, born 1993; 2025 PhD, University of Tübingen.
orcid.org/0009-0004-0955-5683

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Note on Transliteration and Dates

I have followed the transliteration system of *The Encyclopaedia of Islam Three* (EI3) for Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, and Persian. All foreign terms are italicised except anglicised names (Islam, Qur'an, Hadith, etc).

For dates, I have provided Hijri and Gregorian calendars side by side. For example, 857/1453.

Introduction

1. Ottoman Islam?

The present book will shed light on theological trends of the eleventh/seventeenth century Ottoman world, an area of research that has not been sufficiently studied and thus awaits serious investigation to uncover neglected theological traditions of the period. To this end, as a case study, the present study will closely examine the eleventh/seventeenth century polymath of Ottoman Damascus ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī's (d. 1143/1731) commentaries on the ninth/fifteenth century Maghribī theologian Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Sanūsī's (d. 895/1490) *Creed*. Through this case study, this research aims to argue Nābulusī's theological project which synthesises Ashʿarite *kalām* and Akbarian Sufism, and to present the thesis that this period is a time of intellectual prosperity. To begin with, it will be important to explore the intellectual environment in the early modern Ottoman lands through available secondary literature in the field. By reviewing existing historical assessments of early modern Ottoman intellectual history, we will outline a broader picture of the divergent strands of Ottoman Islamic thought within which Nābulusī's scholarship is situated.

Theological thinking during the eleventh/seventeenth century Ottoman period has been long overlooked by scholars. In spite of existing studies in Ottoman history that feature its different historical facets, theological research has been paid relatively less attention in Western academia. In the field of Ottoman intellectual history, secondary literature continues to leave an abundant number of individual scholars unnoticed, suggesting the need for serious research on this neglected theological tradition.

Because of this gap in Western academia, the lack of studies on theological thought in the eleventh/seventeenth century Ottoman lands has led to a discourse of intellectual stagnation. Some recent studies challenged this discourse, for example, Khaled El-Rouayheb's monograph, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century. Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb*,[1] enables us to revisit the understudied intellectual history of the

[1] Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century. Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb*, New York: Cambridge University Press,

eleventh/seventeenth century Ottoman lands and North Africa. An important contribution of El-Rouayheb's research is his convincing refutation of the discourse of intellectual stagnation in the Muslim world as of the eighth/fourteenth century through his careful case studies of intellectual currents of that period. Other than El-Rouayheb's studies, Mehmet Sait Özervarlı's writings describe the formation of Islamic theology along with the remarkable individuals and educational institutions that constitute intellectual life in the Ottoman Empire.[2] According to their findings, new theological problems and methodologies arose that had not appeared in the pre-Ottoman period.[3] Alongside their studies, Naser Dumairieh's recent work, *Intellectual Life in the Ḥijāz before Wahhabism. Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī's (d. 1101/1690) Theology of Sufism*, offers an insightful examination of Nābulusī's contemporary and renowned Akbarian theologian, Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī.[4] Dumairieh significantly contributes to the existing scholarship on Islamic thought in the eleventh/seventeenth century Ottoman context.[5] Although these studies illuminate forgotten theological traditions in the Ottoman Empire, there remains much research to be done for our comprehensive understanding of theological thought, particularly, in the eleventh/seventeenth century Ottoman realm.

In addition to the above works, other recent studies draw certain attention toward the religiosity of Ottoman society, which is closely relevant to the theological thought of the eleventh/seventeenth century Ottoman domain. The

2015. See also Khaled El-Rouayheb, "Opening the Gate of Verification. The Forgotten Arab-Islamic Florescence of the 17th Century", *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 38 (2006), pp. 263–81.

[2] M. Sait Özervarlı, "Theology in the Ottoman Lands", *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 567–86; "Osmanlı Döneminde Kelâm İlmi. Muhteva ve Yönelişler", *Osmanlı'da İlm-i Kelâm. Âlimler, Eserler, Meseleler*, ed. Osman Demir et al., Istanbul: İSAR Yayınları, 2016, pp. 3–52.

[3] In his other article, Özervarlı researches a translation project of European sciences into Turkish and Arabic with a special focus on Yanyalı Esad Efendi (d. 1143/1730–31). This study also helps us understand scholarly trends of the twelfth/eighteenth century Ottoman society. A translation movement constructed an important part of Ottoman intellectual history, as Özervarlı shows, translating valuable texts and commentating on selected texts of other cultures survived from the beginning to the end of the Ottoman Empire. M. Sait Özervarlı, "Yanyalı Esad Efendi's Works on Philosophical Texts as Part of the Ottoman Translation Movement in the Early Eighteenth Century", *Europa und die Türkei im 18. Jahrhundert/Europe and Turkey in the 18th Century*, ed. Barbara Schmidt-Haberkamp, Göttingen: V&R unipress/Bonn University Press, 2011, pp. 457–72.

[4] Naser Dumairieh, *Intellectual Life in the Ḥijāz before Wahhabism. Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī's (d. 1101/1690) Theology of Sufism*, Leiden: Brill, 2022.

[5] For insights into the vibrant Sufi tradition of the early modern Ottoman period, the following works are valuable: Éric Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism. The Inner Path of Islam*, trans. Roger Gaetani, Bloomington IN: World Wisdom, 2010, pp. 126–36; Rachida Chih, *Sufism in Ottoman Egypt. Circulation, Renewal and Authority in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2019.

following studies inquire into Sunnitisation or confessionalisation in the Ottoman context from a wider perspective of global intellectual history. *Ottoman Sunnism. New Perspectives,* edited by Vefa Erginbaş,[6] and *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c.1450-c.1750*,[7] and *Entangled Confessionalizations? Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th-18th Centuries,* both edited by Derin Terzioğlu and Tijana Krstić,[8] contain articles that analyse the rise of orthodoxy from multiple approaches and argue its applicability to the global phenomenon of confessionalisation in the Ottoman context. For their case study, Terzioğlu and Krstić research a new genre of literature, *ʿilm-i ḥāl* (catechism) in an attempt to discuss the early Ottoman experience of confessionalisation promoting Sunni Islam.[9] These studies investigate the Ottoman state's concern with the religious identity of the governed subjects. Regarding the growth of Ottoman confessionalisation, these aforementioned studies situate the thesis of Ottoman confessionalisation in the context of the Ottoman-Safavid relationship, suggesting that the ongoing tension between the Sunni Ottomans and the Shiite Safavids heightened the Ottoman state's awareness of orthodoxy and heterodoxy.[10] In Krstić's view, Ottoman Sunnism was inherited by scholars from Mamluk domains after 1516–1517 when the Ottoman territory expanded to Syria and Egypt (in today's geography) or by persecuted scholars from the Safavid Empire after 1514.[11] Confessionalisation in the Ottoman context continued until the late Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, in the context of Ottoman confessionalisation, Necati Alkan examines the concept of correction of belief(s) (*taṣḥīḥ-*

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[6] Vefa Erginbaş (ed.), *Ottoman Sunnism. New Perspectives*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019.

[7] Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (eds.), Historicizing *Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450-c. 1750*, Leiden: Brill, 2021.

[8] Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (eds.), *Entangled Confessionalizations? Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th-18th Centuries*, Piscataway NJ: Gorgias Press, 2022.

[9] Derin Terzioğlu, "Where *ʿİlm-i Ḥāl* Meets Catechism. Islamic Manuals of Religious Instruction in the Ottoman Empire in the Age of Confessionalization", *Past & Present*, 220 (2013), pp. 79–114; Tijana Krstić, "You Must Know Your Faith in Detail. Redefinition of the Role of Knowledge and Boundaries of Belief in Ottoman Catechisms (*ʿİlm-i ḥāl*s)", *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450-c. 1750*, ed. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu, Leiden: Brill, 2021, pp. 155–95.

[10] For example, John J. Curry, "Some Reflections on the Fluidity of Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in an Ottoman Sunni Context", *Ottoman Sunnism. New Perspectives*, ed. Vefa Erginbaş, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019, pp. 194–95.

[11] Tijana Krstić, "Can We Speak of 'Confessionalization' Beyond the Reformation? Ottoman Communities, Politics of Piety, and Empire-Building in An Early Modern Eurasian Perspective", *Entangled Confessionalizations? Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th-18th Centuries*, ed. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu, Piscataway NJ: Gorgias Press, 2022, p. 35.

i iʿtiqād/ʿaqāʾid) from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries. Along with Sultan Mahmud II's (r. 1223–55/1808–39) abolition of the Janissaries and the prohibition of the Bektaşi Sufi order, the adherents to the order were seen as heretics, although the founder of the order Hacı Bektaş Veli (d. 669/1271) remained revered.[12] The *taṣḥīḥ-i iʿtiqād* was imposed on the arrested Bektaşi masters and their followers. In this case study, Alkan adduces some examples of *taṣḥīḥ-i iʿtiqād* that were documented in the early thirteenth/nineteenth century. For example, the arrested Bektaşis were disciplined for their beliefs and religious rituals until they gave up their allegedly heretical beliefs and were then released.[13] The historical practice of *taṣḥīḥ-i iʿtiqād* also supports the thesis of Ottoman confessionalisation by highlighting concrete examples of the Ottoman state interfering with the religious beliefs of its subjects.

Although the above studies enable us to observe some important trends in Ottoman intellectual history, they reduce the understanding of the diversity of theological thought in the empire. As they argue, it seems true that a particular school of law was favoured over other schools, especially in the political centre of the empire. Notwithstanding, there existed a plurality of legal schools and doctrinal schools in the imperial territories. As the present research explores new trends in *kalām* in the eleventh/seventeenth century Ottoman lands, we cannot ignore such diversity in theological traditions in the whole imperial realm. During more than six centuries of Ottoman rule over three continents, we should not generalise the theological tradition in the way the above studies depict.

As Alkan's research proves, the influence of such a non-Sunni religious group as Bektaşis remained observable until the nineteenth century in the Ottoman heartlands. This finding ostensibly contradicts the aforementioned edited volumes on the formation of Ottoman Sunnism. Furthermore, it is not fully convincing whether the overgeneralisation of confessionalisation applies to the Ottoman context. In fact, in contrast to their discourse of Ottoman confessionalisation, there was an attempt at reconciliation between Sunnism and Shiism at the highest political level. Özervarlı presents 'de-confessionalisation' as an example of how the aforementioned thesis of confessionalisation as a consequence of Ottoman-Safavid rivalry does not capture the full landscape of Ottoman religiosity. This, he does by underscoring the significant reconciliation between the Ottomans and the Safavids under the initiative of Nādir Shāh (r. 1148–60/1736–47) in the twelfth/eighteenth century. Notably, this was not a diplomatic rapprochement between the two empires, but a rapprochement project embarked on by Nadir Shah involving religious scholars, including

[12] Necati Alkan, "The Ottoman Policy of 'Correction of Belief(s)'", *Ottoman Sunnism. New Perspectives*, ed. Vefa Erginbaş, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019, pp. 169–72.

[13] Ibid., pp. 173–76.

ʿAbdallāh ibn Ḥusayn al-Suwaydī (d. 1174/1761).[14] Taking this paradigm shift into consideration, the ongoing narrative of Ottoman confessionalisation does not thoroughly comprehend the religiosity of Ottoman society. Particularly, in the context of the eleventh/seventeenth century Ottoman lands that this research explores, the thesis of Ottoman confessionalisation or the concept of orthodoxy does not sufficiently describe the reality of intellectual life.

Regardless of some differences in their approaches to the intellectual life of the Ottoman Empire, what is common in the above research of El-Rouayheb, Özervarlı, Terzioğlu, Krstić, and Erginbaş is the specific context of the Ottoman Empire. However, what does the adjective *Ottoman* signify?

1.1. What is Ottoman about Ottoman Islam

To begin with, Ottoman refers to the name of the royal household which had ruled over the empire stretching from the Balkans to North Africa. The question we encounter is: is it convincing to describe the religious scholarship or intellectual history of a vast territory over six centuries with the name of a single household, as *Ottoman Islam*?[15] In the context of intellectual history, the adjective *Ottoman* does not seem to help us understand the intellectual dynamism of the whole territory. It goes without saying that theological trends cannot be confined to a framework of a single legal or doctrinal school because such a framework falls short of the clear representation of a rich diversity of doctrinal schools, legal schools, and Sufi orders that exhibit dissimilar traits from one city to another or from one era to another. Moreover, it was commonly observed in premodern Muslim society that an individual would specialise in multiple legal schools or belong to several Sufi orders.

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[14] For a detailed discussion, see M. Sait Özervarlı, "Between Tension and Rapprochement. Sunni-Shiʿite Relations in the Pre-modern Ottoman Period, with a Focus on the Eighteenth Century", *Historical Research*, 90/249 (2017), pp. 526–42.

[15] For example, Selim Deringil, "'There Is No Compulsion in Religion'. On Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire. 1839-1856", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 42/3 (2000), p. 565; Nabil Al-Tikriti, "Kalam in the Service of State. Apostasy and the Defining of Ottoman Islamic Identity", *Legitimizing the Order*, ed. Hakan T. Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski, Leiden: Brill, 2005, p. 149; William Ochsenwald, *Religion, Economy, and State in Ottoman-Arab History*, Piscataway NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010, p. 228; Haim Gerber, "Law in the Ottoman Empire", *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Law*, ed. Anver M. Emon and Rumee Ahmed, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 478; Vefa Erginbaş, "Introduction", *Ottoman Sunnism. New Perspectives*, ed. Vefa Erginbaş, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019, p. 2; Gottfried Hagen, "*Pietas Ottomanica*. The House of ʿOs̱mān and the Prophet Muḥammad", *The Presence of the Prophet in Early Modern and Contemporary Islam, Volume 2, Heirs of the Prophet*, ed. Rachida Chin et al., Leiden: Brill, 2021, p. 22; Helen Pfeifer, "A New Hadith Culture? Arab Scholars and Ottoman Sunnitisation in the Sixteenth Century", *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450-c. 1750*, ed. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu, Leiden: Brill, 2021, pp. 31–32.

For our inquiry into the concept of *Ottomanness*, it would be beneficial to consider Ottoman identity by consulting an association (*nisba*) of a particular scholar. One's *nisba* usually provides information about their biography, intellectual background, or affiliation to a certain theological school. Premodern scholars would describe their names by intellectual and geographical *nisba*s. For example, ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī al-Dimashqī al-Ḥanafī al-Naqshbandī al-Qādirī. His given name ʿAbd al-Ghanī is followed by al-Nābulusī and al-Dimashqī. The two *nisba*s – al-Nābulusī and al-Dimashqī – indicate places which he or his ancestors hailed from. Al-Ḥanafī, which denotes his belonging to the Ḥanafite school of law, comes after his geographic *nisba*. The other two *nisba*s, i.e. al-Naqshbandī and al-Qādirī, point out his association with the two Sufi orders. Of interest is that there is no such *nisba* as al-ʿUthmānī. It demonstrates that Nābulusī does not recognise himself as an affiliate with the Ottoman Empire as to his scholarly profile. Would scholars in the Ottoman Empire identify themselves by such a political association as *Ottoman*? As shown in this example, we usually come across *nisba*s of one's intellectual affiliations or native geographies. In contrast, the *nisba* al-ʿUthmānī does not indicate scholarly information about an individual. Exceptionally, the identity of al-Rūmī refers to a certain scholarly profile as some Ottoman historians describe. Guy Burak holds that the geographic description of al-Rūmī denotes a certain doctrinal affiliation as well as a geographical epithet.[16] In addition, Cemal Kafadar outlines a historical formation of the identity of Rūm as a cultural and physical space.[17] In the Ottoman context, al-Rūmī is likely coupled with Persian (*ʿAcem*, it means those who spoke Eastern Turkish in this context) and sometimes indicates both *ʿAcem* and Arab. As Kafadar suggests, the cultural identity of al-Rūmī does not indicate ethnic categories.[18] The geographical Rūm distinguishes itself from Arab lands and lands of *ʿAcem*.[19] After the late eighth/fourteenth century, the lands of Rūm include the Balkans.[20] In some historical documentation, being a Rūmī signifies a Christian or a Greek in the former Byzantine lands.[21] It is noteworthy that Kafadar's research proves the ambiguities or vagueness of the Rūmī identity. When it comes to the identity of *Ottomanness*, it does not seem to be common for scholars to describe themselves by the title of a ruling dynasty in which the scholar enjoyed their scholarship. Although contemporary academics sometimes describe certain

[16] Guy Burak, *The Second Formation of Islamic Law. The Ḥanafī School in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 65.

[17] Cemal Kafadar, "A Rome of One's Own. Reflections on Cultural Geography and Identity in the Lands of Rum", *Muqarnas*, 24 (2007), pp. 7–25.

[18] Ibid., p. 15.

[19] Ibid., p. 16.

[20] Ibid., p. 18.

[21] Kafadar, "A Rome of One's Own", p. 11; Feride Aslı Ergül, "The Ottoman Identity. Turkish, Muslim, or *Rum*?", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 48/4 (2012), p. 638.

individuals in the Umayyad and Abbasid Empires as Umayyad or Abbasid scholars, scholars in these empires did not define themselves in such a manner. Political affiliations did not help scholars to authenticate their scholarship. Therefore, it is not surprising that Nābulusī did not identify himself as al-ʿUthmānī even though he wrote a brief history of the Ottoman dynasty entitled *al-Abyāt al-nūrāniyya fī mulūk al-dawla al-ʿuthmāniyya* ('The Luminous Verses on the Monarchs of the Ottoman State').[22]

Notwithstanding, it is plausible that we express, what Abdurrahman Atçıl defines as, specific 'scholar-bureaucrats' within the political apparatus to be *Ottoman* which denotes their corporate identity. The early eighth/fourteenth century witnessed the emergence of an indigenous scholarly tradition in Ottoman Anatolia. Therein, a new establishment of Ottoman madrasas played an important role. Atçıl examines the formation of early madrasas built by the Ottoman dynasty (Atçıl designates them royal-prestige madrasas), in the former Christian-ruled territories.[23] Meanwhile, there emerged new scholars who were educated at these new educational institutions. Atçıl observes the development of 'an indigenous educational system that could meet the Ottoman need for scholars'.[24] This historical fact hints at the presence of *Ottoman* scholarship in the specific context. However, how can we define scholars outside of the scholar-bureaucrats who settled in the periphery of the Ottoman lands? The overgeneralised framework of *Ottoman Islam* might fail to explain the intellectual dynamism of the whole Ottoman Empire.

1.2. Legal myth

The discourse of *Ottoman Islam* yields two misleading myths. The first is the myth of the Ottoman state's patronisation of the Ḥanafism-Māturīdism nexus. Some contemporary historians, and even theologians, attribute the intellectual tradition of the Ottoman Empire exclusively to the Ḥanafite school of law and the Māturīdite school of doctrine. For example, Mustapha Sheikh describes 'local Ottoman Ḥanafism' or 'a local Ottoman-Ḥanafī milieu' in the context of the emergence of the *Qāḍīzādeli*s.[25] Similarly, Krstić explains that the genre of

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[22] ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, *al-Abyāt al-nūrāniyya fī mulūk al-dawla al-ʿuthmāniyya*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad Zīnū, Amman: Maktabat al-Ghānim, 2023; *Abdülgani en-Nablusî ve Osmanlı Tarihine Dair Eseri*, trans. Gülcan Avşin Güneş and Hasan Hüseyin Güneş, Istanbul: Dönem Yayıncılık, 2020. It is worth noting that Nābulusī is also critical of the Ottoman government's abuse of sultanic law (*qānūn*). See Nir Shafir, *The Order and Disorder of Communication. Pamphlets and Polemics in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2024, p. 287.

[23] Abdurrahman Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 30–32.

[24] Ibid., p. 36.

[25] Mustapha Sheikh, *Ottoman Puritanism and its Discontents. Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī and the Qāḍīzādelis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 1 and 3.

the *ʿilm-i ḥāl* literature conformed with Ḥanafite school.[26] According to this research, it is true that the state-running madrasa curriculum in part advocated the Ḥanafite school. As Erginbaş notes 'Ottoman madrasas no doubt propagated certain elements of Sunni and Hanafi Islam'.[27] With respect to the abovementioned confessionalisation, Terzioğlu situates Sunni-Ḥanafite Islam in an Ottoman experience of confessionalisation reckoning it as part of global history. According to Terzioğlu's analysis, Sunni-Ḥanafite Islam became 'hegemonic as both state ideology and the faith of the vast majority of Rumi Muslims'.[28] In another study on Ottoman confessionalisation looking at the case of Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Kamāl's (Turk. Kemālpaşazāde, d. 940/1534) *kalām* works, Nabil al-Tikriti contends that 'Ibn-i Kemal finalized this twin Māturīdī-Ḥanafī belief preference early in the reign of Süleyman I (r. 926–74/1520–66)'.[29] Al-Tikriti reaches this conclusion by reading some creedal treatises by Ibn Kamāl, particularly one on the differences between Ashʿarism and Māturīdism. Given that al-Tikriti's research does not address other theologians of Ibn Kamāl's time, this assessment remains overgeneralised leaving various opinions and intellectual trends neglected.

In his study of the Ottoman legal system during the reign of Süleyman I, Colin Imber discusses the dominance of the Ḥanafite school of law. Imber's careful research shows that legal rulings of the chief jurist (Arab. *shaykh al-islām*, Turk. *şeyhülislam*) Abū l-Suʿūd al-ʿImādī (Turk. Ebussuūd Efendi, d. 982/1574) incorporated Ḥanafite laws in harmony with secular laws for administrative affairs. Imber explains the presence of the Ḥanafite school in the Ottoman Empire as follows:

> By the mid-sixteenth century, the Hanafi School, both in practice of the courts and in the curriculum of the colleges, had spread with the Ottoman conquest to the Balkan peninsula and Hungary, and had become the predominant School in the Middle East to the west of Iran.[30]

The aforementioned criticism of Ottoman confessionalisation also applies to Imber's thesis. While the ruling elites and the majority of the population in

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[26] Krstić, "You Must Know Your Faith in Detail", p. 166.

[27] Erginbaş, "Introduction", p. 2.

[28] Derin Terzioğlu, "Confessional Ambiguity in the Age of Confession-Building. Philo-Alidism, Sufism and Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, 1400-1700", *Entangled Confessionalizations? Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th-18th Centuries*, ed. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu, Piscataway NJ: Gorgias Press, 2022, p. 565.

[29] Nabil Al-Tikriti, "Ibn-i Kemal's Confessionalism and the Construction of an Ottoman Islam", *Living in the Ottoman Realm. Empire and Identity, 13th to 20th centuries*, ed. Christine Isom-Verhaaren and Kent F. Schull, Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2016, p. 106.

[30] Colin Imber, *Ebu's-su'ud. The Islamic Legal Tradition*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997, p. 25.

Ottoman Anatolia supported the Ḥanafite school, this support cannot be assumed to represent the entire imperial territory over the course of centuries. Although Al-Tikriti's and Imber's thesis may hold true for the political centre of the empire,[31] it is still reductive to apply such a framework to all of the lands under Ottoman rule.

The existing scholarly literature presents the discourse of Ḥanafism-Māturīdism in the Ottoman Empire through case studies of Ottoman Anatolia. A similar situation is observed also in Ottoman Damascus. In *The Second Formation of Islamic Law*, Burak proves the state's official support for the Ḥanafite school in Ottoman Damascus. According to his research, the Ḥanafite school was the Ottoman state's official legal school in the case of the Ottoman province of Damascus (*Bilād al-Shām*) from the second half of the ninth/fifteenth to the late twelfth/eighteenth centuries. To support his thesis on the rise of the state madhab, Burak outlines the following developments: first, 'the rise of the imperial learned hierarchy' (by this concept, Burak means imperial teaching institutions and their regulated curriculum), second, 'the emergence of the practice of appointing muftis by the dynasty', third, 'the dynasty's/state's regulation of the structure and doctrine of the school', and fourth, 'the rise of dynastic law in the post-Mongol eastern Islamic lands'.[32] Based on these proofs, Burak demonstrates the presence of the state madhab in the context of Ottoman Damascus but does not ignore the plurality of different legal schools. As Burak indicates, despite the fact that officially appointed muftis exercised the monopolised legal institution, there was a complex relationship between officially appointed muftis and locally revered jurists who did not hold an official appointment. In support of his argument, Burak points out a plurality in legal rulings within the Ḥanafite school in Ottoman Damascus.[33] In addition to the case of Ottoman Damascus, in Ottoman Cairo, legal rulings of the four Sunni schools, i.e. Ḥanafite, Shāfiʿite, Mālikite, and Ḥanbalite schools, were undertaken at the Sharia courts.[34] With such legal diversity in mind, even though the Ottoman rulers declared the Ḥanafite school as the official school (*mezheb-i resmiye*) in the Hamidian period,[35] we should not exclude the possibility of diversity in other Islamic sciences.

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[31] In his recent work, Ayoub argues there was a recognised role of the Ottoman sultan in certain areas in the Ḥanafite legal literature that was written in the eleventh-twelfth/seventeenth-eighteenth centuries. Samy A. Ayoub, *Law, Empire, and the Sultan. Ottoman Imperial Authority and Late Ḥanafī Jurisprudence*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 24.

[32] Burak, *The Second Formation of Islamic Law*, pp. 10–11.

[33] Ibid., p. 205.

[34] James E. Baldwin, *Islamic Law and Empire in Ottoman Cairo*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017, p. 12.

[35] See Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains. Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876–1909*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1998, pp. 46–50.

1.3. Kalām myth

Alongside the myth of Ḥanafism-Māturīdism, another generalising tendency arises in an assessment undermining the Ashʿarite doctrine in the Ottoman intellectual environment. In fact, there was an important reception of Māturīdite texts in the Ottoman realm. İhsan Timür examines the influence of Māturīdism in the Ottoman milieu through commentaries on *al-ʿAqīda al-ṭaḥāwiyya* ('The Ṭaḥāwī Creed') written by the fourth/tenth century Ḥanafite theologian Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933).[36] Furthermore, to prove the reception of Māturīdism in the Ottoman lands, another piece of evidence is the presence of Abū l-Muʿīn al-Nasafī's (d. 508/1115) *Tabṣirat al-adilla* ('The Exposition of Proofs'), the importance of which is proven by numerous copies of its manuscripts. As Philip Dorroll explains, during the Ottoman era, the doctrines of Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944) were studied through the works of his followers, particularly Nasafī's *Tabṣirat al-adilla*.[37]

These writings prove a certain impact of Māturīdism, however, more dominant was Ashʿarism in the Ottoman realm. This is evident by the number of commentaries and supercommentaries written upon Ashʿarite texts and their incorporation into the Ottoman madrasa curriculum. As Özervarlı assesses, theologians of the Ottoman lands were profoundly influenced by and engaged with Ashʿarite scholars from Central Asia and Iran.[38] In addition to Özervarlı's assessment, Osman Demirci explains that Ottoman theologians favoured Māturīdism over Ashʿarism in creedal writings (*ʿaqāʾid*) while they preferred Ashʿarism in speculative theology (*kalām*). Demirci supports this thesis by looking into textbooks of the madrasa curriculum in Ottoman Bursa, Edirne, Iznik, and Istanbul.[39] Moreover, Yahya Raad Haidar reveals a conciliatory opinion that the difference between Ashʿarism and Māturīdism is verbal and not doctrinal, a view attributed to ʿAlī al-Qārī (d. 1014/1606), ʿAbd al-Salām

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[36] Commentaries authored during the Ottoman period include Abū ʿAbdallāh Maḥmūd ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥanafī al-Qusṭanṭīnī's (d. after 916/1510) *Sharḥ ʿAqāʾid-i Imām Ṭaḥāwī* ('A Commentary on The Ṭaḥāwī Creed'), Ḥasan Kāfī al-Āqḥiṣārī's (known as Pruščak in Bosnian, d. 1024/1615) *Nūr al-yaqīn fī uṣūl al-dīn* ('The Light of Certainty in the Principles of Religion'), Shaykhzāde ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn ʿAlī al-Amāsī al-Rūmī's *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid Abī Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī* ('A Commentary on the Creed of Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī'), and ʿAbd al-Ghanī ibn Ṭālib ibn Ḥammāda al-Maydānī al-Ḥanafī's (d. 1298/1881) *Sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-ṭaḥāwiyya* ('A Commentary on The Ṭaḥāwī Creed'). İhsan Timür, "Osmanlı Mâturîdî Kelâm Geleneğine Yansımalarıyla el-Akîdetü't-Tahâviyye Şerhleri", *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, 15 (2019), p. 336.

[37] Philip Dorroll, "Māturīdī Theology in the Ottoman Empire. Debating Human Choice and Divine Power", *Osmanlı'da İlm-i Kelâm. Âlimler, Eserler, Meseleler*, ed. Osman Demir et al., Istanbul: İSAR Yayınları, 2016, p. 226.

[38] Özervarlı, "Theology in the Ottoman Lands", p. 576.

[39] Osman Demirci, *Osmanlı Medreselerinde Kelam Öğretimi (İznik, Bursa, Edirne, İstanbul)*, PhD diss., Marmara Üniversitesi, Istanbul, 2012, p. 301.

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